

Ag Matters



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ★ COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



June 2016

It's Race Day, Time to Start Your Engines For GO TEXAN!



I was so excited at the beginning of the year to share with all of you that the Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) GO TEXAN program had joined forces with AM Racing for the 2016 NASCAR Camping World Truck Series season. This [partnership](#) was designed with one goal in mind, and that's to promote the GO TEXAN program and the best of Texas.

This week, the Camping World Truck series heads to Texas Motor Speedway in Fort Worth for the Rattlesnake 400 race on Friday.

NASCAR driver Austin Wayne Self and AM

Racing will be sporting the GO TEXAN logo and promoting businesses that call Texas home. As Texans, we have a great sense of pride for our state and our heritage, and I couldn't be more excited to share GO TEXAN with NASCAR fans all over the world.

AM Racing is the perfect partner for the GO TEXAN program. It's a Texas-based company, owned by Texans and represented by Self who is also a native Texan. Just like GO TEXAN, AM Racing is the best of Texas.

I'm proud to join Self and AM Racing up at the Texas Motor Speedway this Friday as we work to share the GO TEXAN message and encourage NASCAR fans to reach for Texas-made, Texas-grown products first.

You can follow our trip on TDA's social media pages, and if you have a chance, tune into the race on Fox Sports 1, beginning with the pre-race broadcast at 7:30 p.m. (CDT) and then the race at 8 p.m. (CDT). I'll see you at the races!

Your servant,

Sid Miller

STAR Fund Helps Farmers and Ranchers in Need

Are you a farmer or rancher who has been impacted by recent flooding? Assistance is available to help you rebuild from the destruction caused by Mother Nature through the [State of Texas Agriculture Relief Fund](#) or STAR Fund. The STAR Fund was created to collect monetary contributions from private individuals and businesses to assist farmers and ranchers in responding to and recovering from natural disasters. Funds may be used to rebuild fences, restore operations and pay for other agricultural relief efforts.

TDA is currently accepting applications for grants, which are available in areas where a state of disaster declaration has been issued by the governor. If you are a farmer or rancher in need of assistance, you can apply [online](#) or by contacting TDA's [Grants Office](#).

"Recent flooding across the state has left our neighbors in need, many of whom are the farmers and ranchers who dedicate their lives to supplying Texas and the nation with food and clothing," Commissioner Miller said. "Here at the Texas Department of Agriculture, we are standing by ready to help in any way we can."

As Texans, we step up to the plate when our neighbors are in need. Commissioner Miller is asking his fellow Texans to lend a helping hand to those in need by donating to the STAR Fund. Donations can be made [online](#).

Last Call: Family Land Heritage Application Deadline Extended

Commissioner Miller is calling on all Texas families who have kept their land in continuous agricultural production for at least 100 years to apply for TDA's Family Land Heritage (FLH) program. FLH pays tribute to these hardworking Texas families and honors them as true Texas pioneers. Each fall, TDA hosts our FLH ceremony at the State Capitol in Austin, and this year, Commissioner Miller will honor farms and ranches established in 1916 or earlier.

"Family farms and ranches are key to our agricultural heritage in Texas and instrumental to our future success," Commissioner Miller said. "The Family Land Heritage program gives us the opportunity to recognize Texas families for their enduring commitment, perseverance and hard work, all of which has helped make our state's agriculture industry the powerhouse that it is today."

The deadline to apply for the 2016 FLH registry has been extended until **July 1, 2016**. To learn more about FLH and download an application, [click here](#).

One ... Two ... Three Ways to Find Summer Meals for Children in Need

This summer, any child age 18 or younger can receive healthy meals at **no cost** by visiting a Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) meal site. The goal of the summer food program is to help build a healthier future for the Lone Star State. By providing children with access to healthy meals this summer, we are ensuring Texas children will be nourished and ready to return to school in the fall.



Last summer, Texas children in need accessed more than 14 million meals at SFSP sites across the state. Many families located nearby meal sites using the same easy methods that are available again this year.

Choose one of three easy ways to find a summer meal site:

- Call 211
- Visit TDA's online meal site locator at www.SummerFood.org or
- Text FOODTX to 877-877

Meal sites are managed by schools and nonprofit organizations that partner with TDA to make these healthy meals available in the summer. Many sites offer enriching activities and serve various combinations of meals including breakfast, lunch, snacks and even dinner (dates and times may vary).

[Click here](#) to learn more about summer feeding programs.

ICYMI: Final GROW Award Winner Honored, Seguin Becomes a Certified Community, Shrimp Committee Appointments Announced

Commissioner Miller honored Olivia Wise-Dent, a junior from James Madison High School in San Antonio, as the winner of TDA's monthly GROW award in May — this marks the final GROW award of the 2015–2016 school year. Olivia is a very motivated young woman who has the will, dedication and desire to succeed in every task she undertakes. Olivia is involved in numerous school organizations including FFA, where she is a Star Chapter Farmer. [Read](#) more about why Olivia was selected as a GROW recipient.



The city of Seguin has officially been recognized as a GO TEXAN Certified Retirement Community (CRC). The CRC program encourages retirement in Texas and certifies communities that have shown they are a great place to retire. Seguin is a small town with tree-lined streets graced by Queen Anne-style mansions and charming bungalows. More than 25,000 residents enjoy a range of cultural and recreational opportunities, including a park along the Guadalupe River and the Sebastopol House Historic Site. Seguin has a moderate climate, beautiful waterways and lush natural surroundings. To learn more about Seguin and the CRC program, [click here](#).

The shrimp industry in Texas is booming, and the Texas Shrimp Advisory Committee assists TDA in the marketing and promotion of Gulf Shrimp. Commissioner Miller recently announced new appointments to the advisory committee. Together with the committee members, Commissioner Miller will help advance and strengthen the shrimp industry in Texas. [Read](#) more about the appointments.

Forum Spotlights Small Business in Texas, New Capital For Texas Loan Program



In celebration of National Small Business Week, TDA hosted the Capital For Texas Small Business Forum in early May. Through the forum, small businesses were able to learn about the new Capital For Texas (C4T) Small Business Loan Program, which works to increase access to capital for small businesses in rural communities and enable private entrepreneurs to make market-driven decisions to grow jobs. The forum also was a great opportunity for small, minority- and women-owned, disadvantaged and historically underutilized businesses to attend workshops on how to grow their business and receive small, minority business certifications.

[View](#) photos from the day's event here, and check out the video above recapping the event and why TDA works hard to celebrate small business in Texas.

Bringing The Rural Texas Experience to College Students



One might not picture rural Texas towns and urban college students mixing together, but that's exactly what the Texas Rural Internship Program (TRIP) is working to do. TRIP is a joint initiative between TDA and the Center for Rural Studies at Sam Houston State University that is intended to expose urban college students to rural Texas communities.

In early May, TDA employees met with Courtney Crowley, a May 2016 agriculture communications graduate from Sam Houston State University, about her experience working in a small town as part of TRIP. Crowley grew up in San Antonio and became

interested in pursuing a degree in agriculture after participating in FFA during high school. She did her internship through TRIP in Grimes County.

"My family has no idea where I came from," Crowley said. "My dad had never even seen a cow up close until I started showing them."

Through TRIP, Crowley worked for Grimes County under the guidance of a county commissioner. She overhauled and updated the county website to include a calendar, election updates and translator function for non-English speakers. Crowley also assisted in updating the county's AgriLife extension office website and Facebook page. This was great experience for a college student and one that helped prepare her for working in the real world, post-graduation. Crowley is now pursuing a career at an online and live-bidding cattle auction company.

TRIP has been around for six years and sent more than 35 interns to 25 rural communities all across Texas. TDA works with Sam Houston State University to select communities to participate in TRIP through TDA's Office of Rural Affairs. Communities must be able to provide examples of community service opportunities and how the internship would benefit the student in understanding the unique challenges faced by rural communities in both government and non-government organizations. The community must also provide a stipend, along with room and board, for each intern.

To learn more about this program and see how students like Crowley can get a firsthand look at life in rural Texas, [click here](#). TDA is working hard to promote and encourage development in rural Texas; TRIP is one way of doing just that.

Appeal Dropped For Lesser Prairie Chicken

Just last month, the U.S. Justice Department dropped its appeal to have the lesser prairie chicken listed as a threatened species under federal protection per the Endangered Species Act. Previously, the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Texas ruled that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service failed to take into account a multi-state voluntary conservation plan prior to listing the species as threatened. After this ruling, the lesser prairie chicken lost its "threatened" designation.

"We believe in sound decision-making, private property owners' rights and the fact that government is not the answer to every problem, and I'm pleased to see the U.S. Justice Department has dropped its latest attempt to impede our rights," Commissioner Miller said. "The latest action is a tremendous victory for Texas landowners who have been battling the burden of an overreaching federal government and can now work to protect the lesser prairie chicken through conservation methods that are working across many states."

[Read](#) the complete statement from Commissioner Miller regarding this decision.

Craft Brewing Going Local in The Lone Star State

Craft beer is growing in popularity all across the nation, and it's experiencing quite a growth spurt right here in Texas. Are you asking yourself, "What exactly is craft beer, and why is it so popular today?" Like its name implies, craft beer is carefully made by smaller, independent breweries. By the end of 2015, there were more than 4,200 craft breweries in the United States, which made up 12 percent of all the beer brewed in the nation. The Lone Star State is helping fuel these numbers, with 123 brew pubs and 108 breweries calling Texas home.

This growth is helped by the popular "go local" movement. In line with the philosophy GO TEXAN promotes, Texans feel that products, like beer, made right here in Texas taste better than others that have had to travel further to get here.

The growth in the number of brew pubs and breweries was also given a legislative boost with the passage of several bills back in 2013 that allowed breweries to sell beer at their locations for customers to drink on-site. Previously, the breweries could only sell souvenir pint glasses during tours, which visitors could then use for free samples. Now visitors can still come in for tours, but they can also sit down and enjoy full pints right at the brewery.

For a list of breweries in Texas, visit the [GO TEXAN](#) website and type in "beer" in the product search. Remember to *Go local and GO TEXAN* this summer!

