



Public School Partnerships for Training Beginning Hispanic Farmers & Ranchers

M. J. Ortez, K. Rojas, T. Duch-Carvallo, B. Brenes, J. Lopez and R. Williams
Texas A&M University-Commerce



Introduction

- The Breaking Barriers for Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers is a program that provides Hispanic producers and their families with knowledge and skills to enhance the success of their farm and ranch operations.
- Extension programs for Hispanic people are facing challenges, including the lack of participation from the target population, and decreasing human and financial resources for extension services (Olsen and Skogrand, 2009).
- One strategy to respond to those challenges has been established partnerships with other federal agencies, private industry, non-profit organization, and other educational institutes (Mitrofanova, 2004).
- The Breaking Barriers Program has established partnerships with public schools in Hunt and Hopkins Counties to train Beginning Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers of that area.

Need for Innovation

- The low participation rates from the Hispanic audience in extension and outreach programs is partially due to the lack of trust of the participants towards the institutions that works on extension. For this reason, it is important for extension programs to form partnerships with institutions that are already trusted by the Hispanic community (Crosby and Hamernik, 2002)
- These partnership helps to create stronger relations between the Hispanic community and the public school, especially the high school agriculture programs and teachers (Kennedy, 1999).
- These relationships also lead to positive increases in Hispanic participation in secondary agriculture courses and FFA activities.



Objectives

- To provide beginning Hispanic farmers and ranchers with knowledge, skills and tools needed to make informed decisions about their agricultural activity and to enhance the sustainability of their operations.
- To assist beginning Hispanic farmers and ranchers in successfully entering, establishing, and managing their own farm or ranch.

How It Works

- A family-based model was developed by the Breaking Barriers program at Texas A&M University Commerce in 2011 to provide Hispanic farmers and ranchers with training in sustainable agricultural management practices and complement their knowledge. Two partnerships between the Breaking Barriers program and school districts in the service area were established in 2012.
- The partnership with District A involved the use of the high school's facilities during the Spring 2012 to develop a series of gardening and farm welding seminars. The gardening seminars were taught in Spanish and involved the use of a classroom and a greenhouse. The welding seminars were taught by the high school agriculture teacher at the school's shop with translation provided by a Breaking Barriers staff member. The school cafeteria was used to conduct children's enrichment activities and support the family-based concept.
- The partnership with District B was established in the Fall 2012 and consisted of the use of two classrooms at the elementary school, one for gardening seminars and one for children's enrichment activities. A community garden was also established in the school.



Results to Date

- Training for 29 adults and enrichment activities for 12 children were provided. This represented an increase of the participation from the Hispanic community in the extension programs taught by the Breaking Barriers program in the past.
- The relationships between Hispanic families and the schools were strengthened in 2012.
- Hispanic Farmers and ranchers also participated in farm tours and in specialized trainings outside the service area.

Future Plans

- The BHRDP is seeking additional partnerships with other schools districts that would like to participate. The idea is to diversify the seminar topics and learning experiences, emphasizing livestock, forages, and fruit production as well as the continuation of workshops on gardening and farm welding with new partners.
- Create partnerships between providers of training for beginning farmers and socially disadvantaged farmers, including but not limited to Hispanic audiences.

Resources

- The Breaking Barriers for Hispanic Farmers and Ranchers is funded by the USDA-NIFA Beginning Farmers and Ranchers Development Program. The schools received stipends for the use of the schools facilities, their collaboration with the seminars, and their help with the children's enrichment.

Acknowledgements

- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program grant, USDA-NIFA #2010-49400-21729.



References

- Crosby, G. and D Hamernik 2002. Exploring New Opportunities for Extension. CSREES., USDA.
- Kennedy, E. 1999. University-Community Partnerships: A Mutually Beneficial Effort to Aid Community Development and Improve Academic Learning Opportunities, Applied Developmental Science, 3:4,197-198.
- Mitrofanova, Y. 2004. Building Community-Schools Relations.
- Olsen, C. and Skogrand, L. 2009. Cultural Implications and Guidelines for Extension and Family Life Programming with Latino/Hispanic Audiences. The Forum for Family and Consumer Issues, 14 (1).
- Warner, M, Hilarichs, C., Schneyer, J. & Joyce, L. 1998. From Knowledge Extended to Knowledge Created: Challenges for a New Extension Paradigm. Journal of Extension [On-line], 36(4).
- White, B. A., & Burnham, B. 1995. The Cooperative Extension System: A Facilitator of Access for Community-Based Education. Washington, DC: National Institute on Postsecondary Education, Libraries, and Lifelong Learning. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED385260).