An Educational Program Sponsored by Texas Cooperative Extension and Texas Parks and Wildlife

Presented by: Kayla Neill
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Rural County Report

The county I have chosen for my community leadership program is Mitchell County, located in the heart of West Texas. In my search for rural areas I wanted to concentrate on counties that were near my home town of Sweetwater, Texas. Disappointed by Nolan County’s responses in the 2004 Texas Community Futures Forum, I chose Mitchell County, for the issues that were addressed were very specific, and if given the chance to implement proper programs, the results could be very beneficial both economically and socially for the county. The focus will be on the second issue addressed in the Futures Forum, which was Mitchell County’s wildlife and outdoor recreation potential. With this they would like to increase awareness of the hunting, birding, fishing, and other wildlife opportunities that community members and tourist have access to.

Mitchell County is comprised of four communities which include, Colorado City, Loraine, Westbrook and Buford. Evolving out of a Texas Ranger camp, Mitchell County was established in 1876 and continues to be recognized for some of the Texas Rangers who are buried in the Colorado City Cemetery, including: R.C. “Dick” Ware, Y.D. McMurry and William Marion Green (Colorado City Chamber of Commerce). The county is named after Asa and Eli Mitchell who were both participants in the Texas Revolution (Handbook of Texas Online). Colorado City is the largest community in the county and serves as the County Seat. According to TexasEscapes.com, Colorado City is “the oldest established town between Weatherford and El Paso.” In 1880 the Texas Pacific Railroad was built through Mitchell County turning Colorado City into a major boom town, competing with both Dodge City and Abilene (Handbook of Texas).
Eventually the boom died away and farming and ranching became the livelihood of the county and still is today. The production of cotton, sorghum, dry hay, wheat, and petroleum along with the ranches in the area are what drives the local economy. Texas Electric Service Company is also a large employer to many of the 9,698 residents of Mitchell County, because of the Morgan Creek Power Plant.

There are a number of recreational areas in Mitchell County including Lake Colorado City State Park, Champion Creek Reservoir, Lake Gregory, Lake Butler, Ruddick Park, and Friendly Park (Chamber of Commerce). Both Ruddick Park and Friendly Park are city parks located in Colorado City and are “Keep Texas Beautiful” affiliates (Chamber of Commerce). Hunting is also very prominent in this area with species that include Pronghorn Antelope, deer, Javelina, wild turkey and migratory birds (Handbook of Texas). The hunting is sponsored by the Spade Ranch and many local ranchers who lease out their lands. For the Naturalists, there are a number of migratory birds and also many species of butterflies that can be found in the area.

Sue Lowrance of the Chamber of Commerce informed me of the large impact tourism has on Mitchell County’s economy. In 2002, an estimated $2 million was generated by tourists alone, with each person spending approximately $788 during their stay (Lowrance). Some of the events that draw in tourists include Rail Head Trade Days, a number of cook-offs, and ranch rodeos (Chamber of Commerce). There are also many historical attractions such as the Branding Wall, which contains all of the brands found in Mitchell County from past to present, The Heart of West Texas Museum, and Historic Downtown Colorado City (Chamber of Commerce).
Mary McMullen, the FCS Agent in Mitchell County, discussed some of the current Extension programs that are being implemented, including the BLT program which is focused towards the area schools with 124 students involved, a Masters of Memory program that has an average attendance of 6 to 9 people, and a Hunter Appreciation program. She also noted that Colorado City was recently recognized as a “Texas Main Street City” because of the efforts put forth in their Historic Downtown Revitalization program. The collaborators of these programs include Texas Cooperative Extension, the Chamber of Commerce, Texas Parks and Wildlife, City Council, City Manager, Board of Economic Development and many other city officials.

I believe that by using the number of resources available in Mitchell County, a program can be developed that will provide education about identifying and enjoying the wildlife and plant life that are native to the area, in turn increasing recreation of community members and tourists. Encouraging knowledge of the wildlife and plant life potential will also have a positive impact on the environment by providing safe and clean habitats for plants and animals. Also, the local parks, lakes and hunting leases will see an increase of campers, patrons and hunters that want to experience what they have learned in the program, thus increasing revenues in these camp sites and hunting leases, resulting in a positive impact on the local economy. Once the locals get involved then tourists will be more likely to be encouraged to visit the lakes, parks, and hunting leases Mitchell County has to offer. It is very obvious from the previous programs mentioned, that community members are interested and active when it comes to community development. This program is another way to increase community involvement and strengthen Mitchell County as a result.
References


**Target Audience**

The focus of this program is directed towards parents who are looking for new, exciting and cost efficient ways to spend time with their children. Promoting the local recreational and hunting areas by emphasizing the positive influences they have on family involvement should catch the attention of these community members. I feel that this audience will show the most interest, and is the largest population of community members that can be impacted by the program.
Program Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

Program Goal

Mitchell County community members will utilize and promote local recreational areas leading to increased tourism and revenues.

Process Objective

To develop an educational curricula for Mitchell County for the promotion of local recreation and hunting areas by May 5, 2006.

Output Objectives

i. 80% of Mitchell County community member participants will be satisfied with the program.

ii. 100% of Mitchell County community member participants will attend four of the six meetings.

Outcomes

i. 80% of the program participants will increase their knowledge in subjects related to:

- Native Wildlife Species
- Hunting Safety
- Fishing and Birding
- Camping
ii. 75% of the program participants will utilize the proper skills to:

- Identify Native Wildlife Species
- Use a Birding Checklist
- Properly Assemble Camping Gear
- Recognize Safe/Unsafe Practices in a Hunting Setting

iii. 60% of the program participants will become active in local outdoor recreational opportunities including:

- Hunting
- Fishing
- Birding
- Camping

Impact Objective

There will be a significant increase in community members and tourists visiting local hunting and recreational areas, resulting in a positive economic impact for the community as well as a positive environmental impact.
Potential Collaborators

Colorado City Chamber of Commerce
City Council
Commissioners Court
City Manager
Board of Economic Development
Texas Parks and Wildlife
Texas Cooperative Extension
Marketing Plan

- Explore Your Own Backyard Flyers. Are you looking for fun and exciting ways to spend time with your family? Well look no further!! (flyer and brochure on next page)

- Advertisements in local newspapers and radio stations.

- Promotional Items: By participating in the Explore Your Own Backyard program, you will receive 2 free day passes for Lake Colorado City State Park, an optional hunter education certification, a first aid kit, and a starter tackle box.
Explore Your Own Backyard

Are you looking for new and exciting ways to spend time with your FAMILY?

Well look no further because Mitchell County has plenty to offer in outdoor recreational activities for the whole family.

Do you want to get involved, but just don’t know where to start?

WE CAN HELP!!!!!!

Contact: Mitchell County Extension Office
440 East 2nd Street
Berman Bldg.
Colorado City, Texas 79512
Phone: 325-728-3111
E-mail: Mitchell-tx@tamu.edu
Program Format

30 Maximum Participants

$50 Fee/Person, $40 Fee/Couple

Six Week Program

2 Hours Every Tuesday Evening

Snacks Provided

Lecture/Application

Note: It is very important to keep in mind the individuals that make up your target audience. A room should be set aside to provide childcare for the parents attending. It is also important to have supervision in this room while the program is being conducted. It is recommended that a television and board games be provided so that the children can occupy themselves during the two hour period.
Topics

Session One: Recreational Areas and Activities
- Lake Colorado City State Park
- Ruddick Park
- Lake Gregory
- Champion Creek Reservoir
- Spade Ranch
- Hunting
- Birding
- Fishing
- Camping
- Boating

Session Two: Native Wildlife
- Birds
- Mammals
- Reptiles

Session Three: Hunting Safety
- Four Rules of Gun Safety
- Choosing the Appropriate Firearm
- Hunting Skills – field carry, tracking, and zones of fire
- Hunting Ethics and Responsibilities
- Optional Hunter Education Certification

Session Four: Fishing and Birding
- Fishing Licenses
- Tackle Box Gear
- Birds of Colorado City
- Birding Checklist
Topics Contd.

Session Five: Setting Up Camp
- Selecting a Campsite
- Packing the Appropriate Gear
- First Aid Kit
- Setting up a Tent

Session Six: Review and Evaluation
- Review
- Post-Test
- Direct Observation Checklist
- Direct Observation Adoption Measurement
Explore Your Own Backyard

Session One: Recreational Areas and Activities

Note:
This initial meeting will also be used as a meet and greet. Provide participants with name tags and allow approximately twenty minutes for participants to get to know each other.

Who’s Hungry:
Snacks such as cookies, chips and drinks.

Objective:
To introduce the participants to the recreational areas that are located in Mitchell County and the activities that are available to them.

Materials Needed:
- Participant Name Tags
- Notebook Computer
- Projector
- Recreational Areas and Activities Power Point Presentation
- PPT Handouts for Participants

Lesson
1. Slide 1, Explore Your Own Backyard Opening Slide
2. Slide 2, Recreational Areas in Mitchell County: The Spade is a great place to hunt for Proghorn Antelope, Deer, Jave-Lina, Wild Turkey, and Migratory birds (Handbbok of Texas). You will also find a number of activities such as fishing, boating and birding at Champion Creek Reservoir and Lake Gregory
3. Slide 3, Welcome to Lake Colorado City: Where you can experience the Heart of West Texas but cool of very quickly
4. Slide 4, Activities at Lake Colorado City State Park such as campsites where you can set up a tent, rent a cabin or hook up a trailer. Clean restrooms and showers are available.
5. Slide 5, Ruddick Park
Session One: Recreational Areas and Activities
Contd.

6. Slide 6, Activities at Ruddick Park: has everything you need from setting up a tent or hooking up a motor home. There are birding opportunities in the park, and pavilion areas if you are looking to escape the sun.

7. Slide 7, Friendly Park: a Keep Texas Beautiful Affiliate (McMullen), and a great place to catch a quick bite to eat while shopping for antiques.

8. Slide 8, Explore Your Own Backyard “What’s to Come”

9. Slide 9, Questions and Meeting Reminder

Application
1. Use the first 20-30 min to let the group introduce themselves to one another.
2. Pass out the Pre-Test Evaluation and have participants complete.
3. Ask the participants if they have ever visited any of the recreational areas discussed and what activities they participated in.

References
http://tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/MM/hcm15.html
CONGRATULATIONS!!!!!!! You have completed your first session of the Explore Your Own Backyard program. We have been given the great opportunity to become involved community members and meet some wonderful people.

Topics Discussed:
Mitchell County Recreational Areas and Activities

Areas:
- Lake Colorado City State Park
- Ruddick Park
- Friendly Park
- Lake Gregory
- Champion Creek Reservoir
- Spade Ranch

Activities
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Birding
- Boating
- Hiking
- Camping

What new and exciting topics will we explore in our next adventure?

Native Wildlife: The feathers, fluffy, and no so furry world of:
- Birds
- Mammals
- Reptiles

If you should have any questions before our next meeting please contact:

Mitchell County Extension Office
440 East 2nd Street
Berman Bldg.
Colorado City, Texas 79512
Phone: 325-728-3111
E-mail: Mitchell-tx@tamu.edu
Explore Your Own Backyard

Session Two: Native Wildlife

Who’s Hungary:
Snacks such as cookies, chips and drinks.

Objective:
To introduce participants to the native wildlife that can be found in the area.

Materials Needed:
- Participant Name Tags
- Notebook Computer
- Projector
- Native Wildlife Power Point Presentation
- PPT Handouts for Participants

Lesson
1. Slide 1, Explore Your Own Backyard Opening Slide
2. Slide 2, Birds, Mammals, and Reptiles of Mitchell County
3. Slide 3, Mallard Duck
4. Slide 4, Scaled Quail
5. Slide 5, Mourning Dove
6. Slide 6, Armadillo
7. Slide 7, White-tailed Deer
8. Slide 8, Ground Squirrel
9. Slide 9, Diamondback Rattlesnake
10. Slide 10, Texas Horned Lizard “Horny Toad”
11. Slide 11, Questions and Meeting Reminder
12. Slide 12-13, References
Session Two: Native Wildlife Contd.

Application
1. Ask the participants if they are familiar with these animals.
2. If they have seen the Native Wildlife mentioned, ask where they saw them.

References

Images:


Text

Session Two: Native Wildlife Contd.


Explore Your Own Backyard

Session Three: Hunting Safety

Note:
A representative from Texas Parks and Wildlife, such as a Park Ranger at Colorado City State Park, will be the expert presenter for this session. Suggested topics are included.

Who’s Hungry:
Snacks such as cookies, chips and drinks.

Objective:
To discuss and identify safe/unsafe hunting practices.

Materials Needed:
- Participant Name Tags
- Texas Parks and Wildlife Park Ranger
- Notebook Computer (if needed by presenter)
- Projector (if needed by presenter)
- Optional Hunter Education Certification Home Study Packet

Suggested Topics for Presenter:
- Four Rules of Gun Safety
- Choosing the Appropriate Firearm
- Hunting Skills – field carry, tracking and zones of fire
- Hunting Ethics and Responsibilities
- Optional Hunter Education Certification

Application
1. Offer participants who are interested the chance to obtain a Hunter Education Certification (Home Study Packet)

References
Explore Your Own Backyard

Session Four: Fishing and Birding

Who’s Hungary:
Snacks such as cookies, chips and drinks.

Objective: To inform participants of fishing regulations and introduce participants to the common birds of Colorado City

Materials Needed:
- Participant Name Tags
- Notebook Computer
- Projector
- Fishing and Birding Power Point Presentation
- PPT Handouts for Participants
- Birding Packet for each participant
- Small Tackle Box for each participant
- Small spool of fishing line for each participant
- Small nail clippers for each participant
- 2-3 hooks for each participant

Lesson
1. Slide 1, Explore Your Own Backyard Opening Slide
2. Slide 2, Fishing and Birding Topics
3. Slide 3, Fishing Licenses
4. Slide 4, A Fishing License and Stamp Endorsement is not Required if:
5. Slide 5, Common Tackle Box Gear
6. Slide 6, Fishing Tips
7. Slide 7, Birding Packet
8. Slide 8, Questions and Meeting Reminder
9. Slide 9, References
Session Four: Fishing and Birding Contd.

Application

1. Introduce the birding packet to the participants. The first section is a list of common birds found at Lake Colorado City State Park. The second session includes the birding checklist for the area, and the final section is a descriptive booklet of birds found in Texas.

2. Review the legend of the birding checklist and see when some of the common birds of the area can be expected during the year.

3. If any of the participants have questions of what a specific bird looks like or its habitat, look the bird up in the “Learn About Texas Birds” handout.

4. Present the participants with the tackle boxes and supplies.

References


Explore Your Own Backyard

Session Five: Setting Up Camp

Who's Hungry:
Snacks such as cookies, chips and drinks.

Objective: To discuss and utilize the skills of selecting a campsite and setting up camp

Materials Needed:
- Participant Name Tags
- Notebook Computer
- Projector
- Setting Up Camp Power Point Presentation
- PPT Handout for Participants
- 3-4 two person tents
- small first-aid kits for each participant

Lesson
1. Slide 1, Explore Your Own Backyard Opening Slide
2. Slide 2, Setting Up Camp Topics
3. Slide 3, Planning Ahead
4. Slide 4, Common Dangers
5. Slide 5, Proper Clothing
6. Slide 6, Food and Supplies
7. Slide 7, Food and Supplies Contd.
8. Slide 8, First-Aid
9. Slide 9, First-Aid
10. Slide 10, Setting Up a Tent
11. Slide 11, Questions and Meeting Reminder
12. Slide 12, References
Session Five: Setting Up Camp Contd.

Application

1. Break the participants up into groups and have them practice setting up a tent.
2. Present participants with the first-aid kits

References


Explore Your Own Backyard

Session Six: Review and Evaluation

Who’s Hungary:
Snacks such as cookies, chips and drinks.

Objective: Review topics presented in the program and participant evaluation

Materials Needed:
Participant Name Tags
Notebook Computer
Projector
All power point presentations
Post-test evaluations

Application

3. Discuss any questions participants might have over any subject presented during the program.
4. Pass out the Post-Test Evaluations
5. Direct Observation Checklist
Explore Your Own Backyard

Pre-Test (knowledge)
Instructions: Select “yes” for the correct statements, “no” for the incorrect statements, and if you are not sure select “don’t know”.

1. When fishing you must always have a Texas Resident Fishing License. Yes No Don’t Know
2. The Mallard duck, Ground Squirrel and Texas Horned Lizard can all be found in this area. Yes No Don’t Know
3. Ruddick Park does not have any accommodations for camping. Yes No Don’t Know
4. The Texas Horned Lizard can shoot blood from its nostrils. Yes No Don’t Know
5. The first Saturday in June is Free Fishing Day. Yes No Don’t Know
6. It is okay to drink from natural water sources if you do not have a filter, as long as the water is clear. Yes No Don’t Know
7. Park Rangers at Lake Colorado City State Park will take patrons on conservation walks. Yes No Don’t Know
8. The male Mallard Duck can be identified by its purple head. Yes No Don’t Know
9. When fishing you should keep the fish in the water as much as possible. Yes No Don’t Know
10. It is not very important to familiarize yourself with the campsite. Yes No Don’t Know
11. The Spade Ranch only provides leases for deer hunters. Yes No Don’t Know
12. The Diamondback Rattlesnake is the most common venomous snake in Texas. Yes No Don’t Know

Check the box for the statement that best describes how you feel about recreational areas and activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree (1)</th>
<th>Disagree (2)</th>
<th>No Opinion (3)</th>
<th>Agree (4)</th>
<th>Strongly Agree (5)</th>
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Explore Your Own Backyard

Post-Test (Knowledge)

Instructions: Select “yes” for the correct statements, “no” for the incorrect statements, and if you are not sure select “don’t know”.

1. When fishing you must always have a Texas Resident Fishing License. Yes No Don’t Know
2. The Mallard duck, Ground Squirrel and Texas Horned Lizard can all be found in this area. Yes No Don’t Know
3. Ruddick Park does not have any accommodations for camping. Yes No Don’t Know
4. The Texas Horned Lizard can shoot blood from its nostrils. Yes No Don’t Know
5. The first Saturday in June is Free Fishing Day. Yes No Don’t Know
6. It is okay to drink from natural water sources if you do not have a filter, as long as the water is clear. Yes No Don’t Know
7. Park Rangers at Lake Colorado City State Park will take patrons on conservation walks. Yes No Don’t Know
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9. When fishing you should keep the fish in the water as much as possible. Yes No Don’t Know
10. It is not very important to familiarize yourself with the campsite. Yes No Don’t Know
11. The Spade Ranch only provides leases for deer hunters. Yes No Don’t Know
12. The Diamondback Rattlesnake is the most common venomous snake in Texas. Yes No Don’t Know

Check the box for the statement that best describes how you feel about recreational areas and activities:

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Explore Your Own Backyard

Checklist (Direct Observation)

1. When given a photo or description the participant could identify the wildlife species being described (only use the wildlife that were discussed in the program). YES  NO

2. The participant could properly use a birding checklist and identify the time of year a bird would be in the area. YES  NO

3. The participant could properly assemble a tent. YES  NO

4. The participant could recognize safe/unsafe practices in a hunting setting. YES  NO
Potential Economic Indicators

Short Term Indicators:
- 3 month follow up surveys to see if participants have visited the local recreational areas, and an estimated expense list.
- 6 and 9 month follow up surveys, with the same format of the 3 month survey.

Long Term Indicators:
- Annual attendance of Lake Colorado City State Park
- Revenues of Trailer Hook-Up rentals in Ruddick Park

Example of 3 Month Survey

Have you or your family members visited a recreational area in Mitchell in the past three months?

If “yes” how many times?

What were the recreational areas visited?

Did you utilize any of the skills learned in the Explore Your Own Backyard Program?

What skills were used?

Please give an estimate of the expenses incurred during these activities (include gas, food, admittance fees, renting fees, supply expenses, and leasing fees).

Have you recommended any of the recreational areas and activities to other community members or tourists?

Thank You for Your Time
Interpretation Plan to Stakeholders

Explore Your Own Backyard Program – Mitchell County

Introduction

Mitchell County Extension implemented a recreation education program for parents in Mitchell County. The goal of the program was for community members to utilize and promote local recreational areas leading to increased tourism and revenues. In order for community members to promote these local recreational areas and activities we must provide community members with an educational curricula that describe these areas and activities and what they have to offer. The participants of the 2004 Texas Community Futures Forum voiced their concern that local recreational areas were not being utilized to their full potential, and that they would like to increase awareness of the hunting, birding, fishing and other wildlife opportunities that community members and tourists have access to.

Program

As a result Texas Cooperative Extension, Texas Parks and Wildlife, and the Economic Development Board implemented an educational program to inform community members of the recreational areas and activities that are available in Mitchell County. This program was focused towards parents who were willing to learn and explore new, exciting, and cost efficient ways to spend time with their families.

Texas Cooperative Extension in Mitchell County implemented the Explore Your Own Backyard program to educate parents about recreation in Mitchell County. The program includes:

- Recreational Areas and Activities
- Native Wildlife
- Hunting Safety
- Fishing and Birding
- Setting Up Camp
Evaluation Method

A pre-test/post-test was presented to the participants to determine the knowledge that was gained and also to provide participants with the opportunity to express their feelings on local recreational areas and activities. A total of _____ out of ______ completed the pre-test/post-test evaluation.

- _______ out of _______ (___%) properly identified native wildlife species and
- _______ out of _______ (___%) utilized the skills needed to identify safe/unsafe practices in a hunting setting.

Table 1. Results of participants expressing their feelings of recreational areas and activities. Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = no opinion, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

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<thead>
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<th>Pre-test Mean</th>
<th>Post-test Mean</th>
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The results indicate that the Explore Your Own Backyard program in Mitchell County was successful/not successful in increasing awareness of local recreational areas and activities. The greatest change in knowledge was in topics relating to

__________________________________________________________________________.

This program must attribute much of its success to the support received from Texas Parks and Wildlife and their local Park Rangers from their expert presentations. We would also like to send our appreciation to the Economic Development Board of Mitchell County and Texas Cooperative Extension.

For more information on this program please contact:

Mitchell County Extension Office
440 East 2nd Street
Berman Bldg.
Colorado City, Texas 79512
Phone: 325-728-3111
E-mail: Mitchell-tx@tamu.edu