

SEPTEMBER 2020

# WOW-E

The official newsletter of  
Working on Wellness Environments

## WHAT IS INSIDE

WELCOME TO THE FUNNY  
FARM!

WHAT IS FARM TO  
SCHOOL?

GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

RESOURCES



## WELCOME!

BY VALERIE JAUREGUI

Fall is evident with many teachers and students returning back to school, either virtually or in person! For the past month, the Working on Wellness Environments team and coalition members have been hard at work planning and working through individual projects.

In this issue, you can find highlights of the business planning webinar done in collaboration with R.T. Barrera Elementary and Roma ISD, as well as new grant opportunities and resources to keep us safe and guide us through COVID-19. As always, you can reach out to us if you have any questions here: [valeria.jauregui@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:valeria.jauregui@ag.tamu.edu).





# WELCOME TO THE FUNNY FARM!

BY VALERIE JAUREGUI

In Roma, TX, the Funny Farm is the pride of R.T. Barrera Elementary. Spearheaded by physical education teacher Mr. Rolando Munoz, the Funny Farm has expanded from a small garden to a 105 by 150 sq ft "farm". The Eagle's Orchard is the newest addition to R.T. Barrera's Funny Farm.

The orchard was established in January 2020 as part of a Starr County Farm to School initiative with the Working on Wellness Environments program and the Farm to School program. Partners such as Roma ISD, the students and staff at R.T. Barrera Elementary, Texas A&M Agrilife Extension, and the local community have helped sustain and move the orchard forward. The orchard includes 43 trees with 8 varieties of grapes, peaches, pineapple oranges, mandarins, limes, figs, grapefruits, and guava trees. Everyone at the school has a role, from food service staff to principals, and down to the students.

The Funny Farm began 9 years ago as a small school garden with just a few plants. The same practice of involving staff, parents, and students has been held to this day. The school attributes this, and constant support from administration as a way the garden has been sustained throughout the years.

Students are especially involved in the farm. They make sure the animals are well taken care of, feed them using measuring cups to make sure they get the right amount of food, harvest produce like lettuce and cucumbers, and make sure that produce goes back to the cafeteria. Additionally, students are allowed to take some of the produce home, where they can prepare a meal and bring it back for show and tell.

Through the farm, students learn agricultural and nutritional practices and introduces them to new fruits and vegetables. Trees in the orchard are watered through a drip irrigation system, and the amount of water depends on the season. The school allows visitors to visit the Funny Farm, where they can learn sustainability practices.

Volunteer involvement has been immense from planting trees to digging holes to pulling weeds. Surplus fruit will be sold at festivals, farmer's markets, and ag clubs in order to ensure longevity. The farm is looking to adapt an adopt-a-tree program to help sustain the the orchard for many years to come.

With COVID-19- the "farm" has seen its challenges. With students not physically in school, garden maintenance has been done through school administrators themselves. The next phase for the farm is to add pollinator garden beds, and a high tunnel which have all been approved. The farm has also recently been awarded an NRCS grant to help cover costs. The main goal of this project is for Roma ISD to expand to other schools in the district.



# WHAT IS FARM TO SCHOOL?

BY VALERIE JAUREGUI

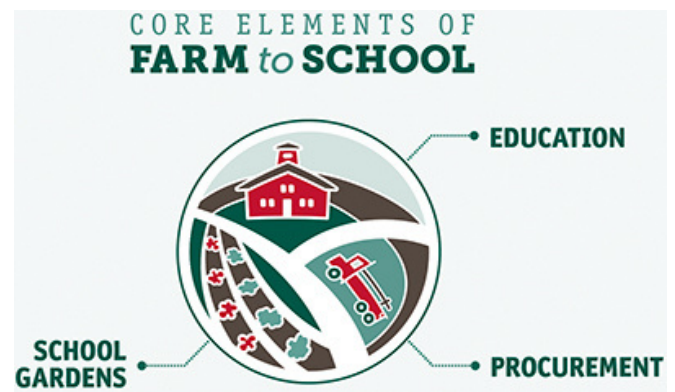
The Eagle's orchard at R.T. Barrera has been partially funded by donations and most recently, as part of a Starr County Farm to School grant. The National Farm to School effort sprouted in 1996-1997 from the desire to support community-based food systems, strengthen family farms, and improve student health by reducing childhood obesity. In 2004, the National Farm to School Program was officially authorized, and included 400 programs in 22 states. The Farm to School Network was founded in 2007. The National Farm to School network's first decade of efforts focused on developing a strong network of partnerships across sectors, building awareness about farm to school and increasing activities at the state and regional levels through training, capacity building, and policy advocacy.

Farm to school enriches the connection communities have with fresh, healthy food and local food producers by changing food purchasing and education practices at schools and early care and education sites. Like at R.T Barrera, students gain access to healthy, local foods, as well as education opportunities such as school gardens, cooking lessons and farm field trips. Farm to school empowers children and their families to make informed food choices while strengthening the local economy and contributing to vibrant communities

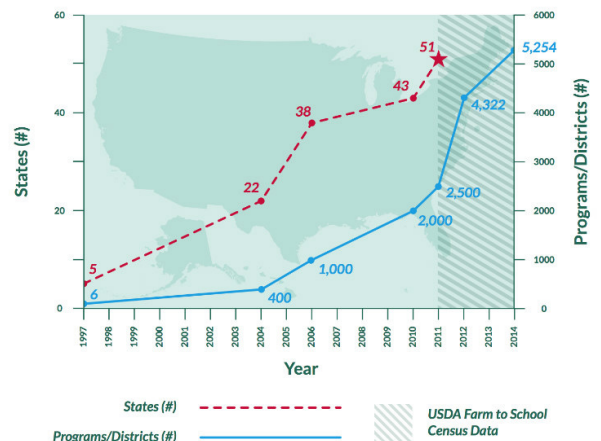
Farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following:

- **Procurement:** local foods are purchased, promoted and served in the cafeteria or as a snack or taste-test.
- **School Gardens:** students engage in hands-on learning through gardening; and
- **Education:** students participate in education activities to agriculture, food, health or nutrition

Today, there are 42,587 schools involved, 42% of US schools, 23.6 million students engaged, \$789m spent on local food, 46 states with supportive policies, and 20,000+ nfn members. To learn more, you can go [here](#).



Growth of Farm to School in the U.S. (1997-2014)



# *GRANT OPPORTUNITIES*

## **NACCHO GRANT TO ADVANCE CLIMATE CHANGE & ACTIVITIES IN LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS**

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) supports local efforts to track, prevent, and mitigate the health effects of climate change. NACCHO, with support from the Climate and Health Program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, intends to award up three entities with a range of \$16,000-24,000 each. You can find more information [here](#).

## **LISA LIBRARIES GRAND PROGRAM**

Nonprofit organizations that serve low-income or underserved areas are eligible to apply for in-kind donations from The Lisa Libraries. Lisa Libraries provides donations of free books for community facilities to host their own small libraries or operate programs where children can take the book home. Learn more and apply [here](#).

## **THE FRUIT TREE PLANTING FOUNDATION GRANT PROGRAM**

Municipal entities, local nonprofits, and public schools are eligible to apply to support the planting of fruitful trees and plants to alleviate hunger, combat global warming, strengthen communities, and improving the surrounding environment. Learn more and apply [here](#).

## **KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL'S COMMUNITY RESTORATION AND RESILIENCY FUND**

Keep America Beautiful's Community Restoration and Resiliency Fund benefits Keep America Beautiful Affiliates that serve communities directly affected by natural and environmental disasters. Learn more and apply [here](#).

# RESOURCES



## GUIDANCE FOR CHILDCARE PROGRAMS

*This document by CDC is meant to help administrators create emergency operations plans and tailor them to their community's level of transmission. Read more [here](#).*

## LOCAL PARKS GRANT WRITING WEBINAR

*Texas Parks & Wildlife program staff will host a grant writing webinar to introduce program requirements for the Local Park Urban, non-urban, and small community outdoor program. Register [here](#).*



## RECREATION GRANTS OPENING SOON

*The Recreational Trails Program provides funding for both motorized and non-motorized recreational trail program. Applications will open November 1, 2020 with a deadline of February 1, 2021. You can find more information [here](#).*



## CLEANING AND DISINFECTION GUIDELINES IN HOUSEHOLD SETTINGS

*Texas A&M Agrilife Extension has created a mini webinar on cleaning and disinfection guidelines in household settings for COVID-19. Check out the video webinar [here](#).*



## CLOTH FACE MASK STEPS

*Texas A&M Agrilife Extension's departments of Family & Community Health and Disaster Assessment and Recovery have created a video tutorial on how to properly put on, take off, and clean cloth face masks. Watch it [here](#).*



## HOW SHOULD PHYSICAL ACTIVITY MAKE YOU FEEL?

*Howdy Health, an initiative of Texas A&M Agrilife Extension has a mini video on how you feel before and after physical activity matters. Watch it [here!](#)*