A Growing and Costly Issue

- Texans spend approximately $146 billion annually on health care, or about $5,924 per capita. More than 75 percent of health care costs are due to chronic conditions.
- Higher diabetes incidence rates and increased costs in the future are expected due to the growing population of Hispanics, who are at greater risk for the disease.
- Obesity prevalence in Texas has risen sharply from 12 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 2009.
- The cornerstone of health and wellness for Texans of all ages is prevention. As such, health education, nutrition and exercise are vital to the future livelihood of Texans.

Extension’s Response

- The Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service delivers a variety of educational programs focusing on health-related issues for adults and youth, including diabetes education, nutrition and exercise, food safety, and early cancer detection.
- Using a network of volunteers and partnerships, these programs teach participants the skills to effectively reduce the risk of developing diabetes, better manage diabetes, reduce the risk for complications, prepare nutritious meals, stretch food resources, and safely handle and prepare food. Extension programs are also working to increase awareness of the importance of cancer screenings for early detection and are connecting women in underserved areas with health clinics to obtain those screenings.

Economic Benefit

- The economic benefit of six AgriLife Extension health and wellness programs was measured in terms of lifetime health care cost savings, avoidance of lost wages (fewer sick days from work), and nutrition-related food resource cost savings.
- In 2011, diabetes education programs reached in excess of 1,100 participants, with potential economic benefits estimated at $70.3 million. Physical activity programs reached more than 18,500 participants, with potential lifetime economic benefits estimated at $265 million.
- Programs targeting nutrition, food resource management, and food safety reached more than 14,000 participants in 2011, with economic benefits totaling $4.1 million.
- These programs delivered 15,230 educational events in 2011, resulting in 406,700 youth and 244,800 adult educational contacts, with potential economic benefits estimated at $340 million.

Added Individual and Community Benefits

- Communities and individuals with limited access to health-related education are the target audience for these Extension programs.
- These programs enhance quality of life and productivity for people with diabetes and other health-related illnesses.
- Strain on medical services and state funding are reduced by these programs.

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