

# Ag Matters



TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ★ COMMISSIONER SID MILLER



October 2016

## October is All About Eating Local!

Every day at the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), we work hard to promote the value of Texas agriculture, and it's hitting close to home this October as we celebrate healthy living initiatives in Texas schools. From our Local Products Challenge to National School Lunch Week, we're striving to connect children to Texas agriculture and teach them how their food ends up on their plates.

Sure, anyone can head off to their local grocery store and find some of the freshest produce around. But do they know where that food comes from? It didn't originate at the local grocery store — rather it was grown by a farmer or raised by a rancher. That's what we're trying to teach young Texans about this October through our Local Products Challenge and National School Lunch Week activities. You can read more about these exciting initiatives in a coming story.

You'll often hear me talk about the *3E's of Healthy Living – Education, Exercise and Eating Right*. These are the three pillars we live by here at TDA. I look forward to encouraging Texas children to eat locally grown, fresh foods and live a balanced, healthy lifestyle this October and all year long.

Your servant,

Sid Miller

## Nominate a Promising Young Student For The GROW Award Today



TDA needs your help! Every school year, we give out GROW awards to recognize outstanding student achievement and leadership. If you know a promising young student in your area, head over to our website today and submit your [nomination](#).

We need teachers, school administrators and community leaders across Texas to nominate promising students for the GROW Award, which **G**ives **R**ecognition for **O**utstanding **W**ork to middle and high school students who demonstrate leadership and excellence in their pursuits inside and outside the classroom.

"Thanks to young leaders across the Lone Star State, the future of Texas and our agriculture industry looks brighter than ever," Commissioner Miller said. "Every day, we hear about young Texans doing great work in their communities,

leading their peers and demonstrating excellence. I am honored to recognize these young folks for their hard work and amazing contributions to our state."

To nominate a promising middle or high school student in your area, click [here](#). Awards will be announced around the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month, so keep the nominations coming!

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## State Fair of Texas Officially Underway

Nothing says Texas like the State Fair, and it's time to hit the road to Dallas! The State Fair of Texas officially kicked off last Friday and runs through **Oct. 23**. We hope you'll stop by the GO TEXAN Pavilion, presented by Southwest Dairy Farmers, and experience a wonderland of Texas treats and family fun.

People from all over the world come to the State Fair to sample the sights, sounds and unusual fried foods of Texas. One of the best places to visit on the fairgrounds is the GO TEXAN Pavilion. Not only can visitors shop for the best of Texas in the GO TEXAN Pioneer Brand General Store, we have various ag-related exhibits that teach everyone the importance of agriculture in our daily lives. Inside the Pavilion, you'll also find live music, exhibits and demonstrations taking place daily. It's the best place to celebrate your Texas pride and GO TEXAN!

[Check out](#) the list of daily events happening in the Pavilion, and we hope to see you at the State Fair!

If you're in Dallas for the Fair on **Tuesday, Oct. 11**, be sure to check out TDA's [Facebook](#) page for more about the Scavenger Hunt we're hosting that day to celebrate Ag Awareness Day at the Fair.



## Calling Volunteers! AmeriCorps Apps Now Being Accepted

One in four Texas children is food insecure, meaning they don't always have access to enough food for an active, healthy life. That's why TDA has embarked on a partnership with AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), in collaboration with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, to promote healthy living in communities across Texas and connect food-insecure children with the healthy meals they need to thrive in school and life.

TDA's collaboration with AmeriCorps VISTA will bring highly motivated volunteers to Texas communities facing food-insecurity challenges with the goal of engaging local leaders and developing strategies for decreasing food insecurity, increasing availability of fresh local products and enhancing the community's overall health and wellness.

Applications are now being accepted for this program. Volunteers will live in a designated region and work to identify barriers to the success for federal nutrition programs. Applications must be submitted through the AmeriCorps portal.

For more information about how to apply, click [here](#).

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## So God Made a Farmer

Check out the latest video from TDA featuring Paul Harvey's *So God Made a Farmer*.



## ICYMI: GO TEXAN on *Good Morning Texas*, Young Farmer Grants, Student Art Contest Winners

Just a few weeks ago, Commissioner Miller visited WFAA-TV in Dallas to promote the GO TEXAN program, its members and the GO TEXAN Pavilion at the State Fair. Special thanks to WFAA for their hospitality, and in case you missed it, check out Commissioner Miller's appearance [here](#).

Commissioner Miller, along with the Texas Agricultural Finance Authority Board, announced grant awards for 20 young farmers and ranchers totaling more than \$175,000 through TDA's Young Farmer Grant program. These grant awards are part of a larger effort to promote and sustain the Lone Star State's position as an agricultural powerhouse by supporting younger ag producers. Click [here](#) to read the full announcement.

TDA launched the *You Art What You Eat* art contest to get students involved in promoting good nutrition and healthy lifestyles. Last month, TDA recognized Ashley Porter of Thrall High School in Thrall and Jake Schultze of Marion Elementary School – Karrer Campus in Marion as the winners of the statewide student art contest. The winning artwork illustrates this year's theme, *Vote for a Winning Lunch*, and inspired the creation of TDA's posters that Texas schools will feature during National School Lunch Week 2016. Ashley earned the top honor in the middle/high school category and Jake won in the elementary contest. [Read](#) more about the winners.



## Upcoming Grant Opportunities: Home-Delivered Meals, Organic Certification Reimbursement

As a reminder, TDA is currently accepting applications for the Texans Feeding Texans: Home-Delivered Meal (HDM) grant program. This program helps supplement and extend current home-delivered meal programs for seniors and/or disabled Texans being offered by applicants. Nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies meeting certain requirements are eligible to receive HDM funding. Applications are due by **Nov. 1, 2016**. Click [here](#) to learn more and download an application.

Additionally, organic producers or handlers who incurred expenses for obtaining or renewing their organic certification between Oct. 1, 2015 and Sept. 30, 2016 are eligible for reimbursement through TDA's Organic Certification Program. The deadline to submit an application in Texas is **Monday, Oct. 31, 2016**. To learn more and download an application, click [here](#).

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## Local Products Challenge, National School Lunch Week Celebrated This October



All this month, Texans will find fun opportunities to share in the excitement that TDA's Food and Nutrition division brings to learning about healthy lifestyles and Texas agriculture. For October's 2016 [Local Products Challenge](#), more schools are participating than ever before, and millions of Texas students will have a chance to taste healthy foods from local agricultural producers. It's all about creating the connection between our food, the people who produce it and living a healthy lifestyle.

Additionally, the importance of school nutrition will take center stage during [National School Lunch Week](#), which takes place Oct. 10-14. Schools will use TDA resources to encourage students to get excited about school meals and "Vote for a Winning Lunch." All week, students will cast ballots for their favorite lunches. This allows them to share their feedback on what meals they liked best and gets them excited

about eating healthy.

At the State Fair of Texas, TDA's Food and Nutrition division is encouraging visitors in the GO TEXAN Pavilion to "Discover the Great Plate of Texas" with a highly interactive exhibit. Visitors also can enjoy a fresh apple from Top of Texas, while supplies last. [Farm Fresh Fridays](#) will remain front and center in October with billboards, TV, radio and digital ads, as well as events like the [Farm Fresh Jump with Jill Live Tour](#) taking center stage at Texas child care centers. Be sure to catch *Jump With Jill* live at the State Fair in the GO TEXAN Pavilion this **Friday, Oct. 7**.

Please join TDA's Food and Nutrition division this October in celebrating healthy lifestyles and Texas agriculture across the Lone Star State.

## STEP Program Helps Small Business Increase Exports

TDA is excited to be a part of a joint effort between the Office of the Governor's Economic Development and Tourism Division, the University of Texas at San Antonio - International Trade Center and the U.S. Department of Commerce to support small business in Texas. It's all being done through the recently awarded State Trade and Export Promotion (STEP) grant program from the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The program's objectives are to increase the number of small businesses that are exporting and increase the value of exports that are currently being exported by small businesses. TDA's STEP program will encompass all areas of small business development, including recruitment, training and planning, as well as the execution of export trade activities, including trade show involvement and assistance with export development.

Here at TDA, our Grants Office, along with the Office of Marketing and International Trade, will help small businesses take the necessary steps to create or expand their export capacity and provide financial assistance to help them achieve success. Small businesses will learn how to export, participate in foreign trade missions and trade shows, obtain services to support foreign market entry, develop websites to attract foreign buyers and design international marketing campaigns.

To learn more about how your small business can benefit from STEP, click [here](#). You can also contact TDA's Grants Office at (512) 463-4406 or [Grants@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:Grants@TexasAgriculture.gov).

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### Spot The GO TEXAN Mark And Win Prizes

Grab your mobile devices and get ready to win some prizes! All you have to do is send us pictures of the GO TEXAN mark — on products on the shelf or in your hands, on signs, vehicles or printed materials — and you'll be entered for a chance to win some cool GO TEXAN swag.

Get creative, as we're judging your entries based on originality, creativity, composition and the "fun factor."

To enter, tell us where you saw the product and GO TEXAN mark, and post your photo (be sure to use the #GOTEXAN hashtag) on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) or [Twitter](#). We will share your posts and select winners once per month. Prizes include GO TEXAN t-shirts, glasses and hats. You may also enter by [emailing](#) us your photo.

Have fun .. and happy hunting!

