



**NOMINATION FOR
Chapter Diversity Recognition- Individual
is Being Nominated For
Epsilon Sigma Phi, Alpha Zeta Chapter – Texas**

Nominee's Name: Caroline Cruz

Title: County Extension Agent - Urban Youth Development

Address: 9020 Airport Road

City, State Zip: Conroe, Texas 77303

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Phone Number: 936-539-7823

Year Initiated into ESP: 2009

Position and Dates of Extension Employment:

County Extension Agent – Urban Youth Development, Montgomery County
October 29, 2007 to present

Education:

B.S. in Animal Science, Sam Houston State University, 2002

Currently enrolled in Master's Program to obtain Masters of Education at the Graduate School in the College of Education at Prairie View A&M University, Major: Curriculum & Instruction, Program Concentration: Agriculture Education

Outstanding Professional Accomplishments:

2011: Texas Association of 4-H Agents (TAE4HA) "Golden Clover"

2011: TAE4-HA Exhibit Award - Team

2010: TAE4HA Communicator – Published Photo Award

2010: National AE4HA Southern Regional Winner – Communicator Award – Published Photo

2009: TAE4HA Excellence in Camping Team Award and the Diversity Award

2009: NAE4HA Southern Regional Winner – Excellence in Camping Team Award

2009: TAE4HA Diversity Award

2009: Extension Superior Service Team Award – 4-H Kidz with Biz Ideaz State Team

2009-2011: District 9AE4-HA Alternate Director (will serve as Director beginning fall 2011)

2009-2011: District 9AE4HA 2011 State Conference Planning Committee Co-Chair; Hospitality Committee Chair

2010-2011: Attended AE4HA State Association Board Meetings

2010-2011: State AE4HA Association Diversity Committee Chair

2009-2010: State AE4HA Association Diversity Committee Chair-Elect

Outstanding Programmatic Accomplishments:

The Montgomery County 4-H & Urban Youth Development programs include non-traditional programs with diverse audiences that Caroline works with including 4-H Afterschool programs, Camp Fun Quest summer programs, Discovery College youth summer programs, the Deerwood Familia Project, Conroe Kidz Fest, Texas Wildlife Expo and partnering with the Amigos Del Bosque U.S. Forest Service project and the Conroe Hispanic Task Force. The 4-H Afterschool programs and Camp Fun Quest summer program are delivered in partnership with the City of Conroe Parks & Recreation Programs. Caroline trains City of Conroe Afterschool & summer staff several times a year to deliver "Yea 4-H" afterschool curriculum, as well as training on ages and stages and youth development. The Camp Fun Quest summer program reaches 235 youth each week during the summer months. The audience is approximately 40% Hispanic, 42% White, and 16% Black. The 4-H Afterschool programs reach approximately 30 youth, 50% Hispanic, 25% Black, and 20% White. Caroline has also worked with the Conroe Hispanic Task Force staff of Conroe ISD, United Way Hispanic Outreach Program, Deerwood Familia Project, and the Texas Latino Leadership Roundtable to offer Extension and 4-H programs, trainings, and volunteer support for community projects including youth horticulture and gardening programs, bullying prevention programs, wildlife and outdoor education, and others. The "Deerwood Familia Project" serves a residential community east of Conroe with over 350 Hispanic families. Resource professionals including Extension and Master Gardeners assisted in empowering residents and guide them

to develop programs and services that utilize their own internal assets. In addition, Junior Master Gardener programs are delivered to youth while adults learn gardening techniques from Master Gardeners. Caroline also partners with the staff of the U.S. Forest Service "Amigos Del Bosque" Latino Legacy program to connect urban and rural minority youth and families with outdoor experiences including wildlife and forestry.

Robotics is another program area that has been started in the county. Caroline works with Conroe High School Academy of Science and Technology to introduce 4-H Robotics to non-traditional students. These high school age youth are serving as mentors for elementary and middle school youth in robotics and are training for the First Lego League 2012 Robotics Challenge. Caroline has worked with team mentors to charter a new 4-H Robotics Club in the county that will expose youth to 4-H Science projects and allow them to have a new 4-H experience. There are approximately 30 youth involved in this new project. Through Caroline's work the county has met or exceeded most of the 5 year goals for enrollment, special interest, and curriculum enrichment. The largest curriculum enrichment and special interest program is the Junior Master Gardener program, through either stand-alone JMG Group registration or through short-term or other enrichment methods. The largest increase has been in official JMG Group registrations with 13 recognized JMG Groups/Clubs in the county. In the past few years, 6 to 10 clubs have registered. In working continually with the JMG Leadership Team and hosting JMG Teacher/Leader Certification classes each August, Caroline has helped to increase the number of trained adult volunteers that sign up to manage their own JMG groups. She has been able to certify from 20 to 30 new JMG Leaders each August.

Other accomplishments: *County Director for the Kidz Biz with Ideaz designed to reach urban, low income, at-risk minority youth ages 11 to 13 through a series of competency building entrepreneurship enrichment activities provided during afterschool hours and to address the need for trained staff by implementing a 4-H Afterschool Teen.

*Conducted Teacher/Mentor Training Program therein developing life and leadership skills of teen teachers Collaborations between Extension, Conroe ISD and improved the quality of academic enrichment programs delivered to over 350 under-served, low income minority youth from high risk communities. *Youth and adult partnerships were developed to train a bi-lingual team of ten teens to teach afterschool sessions with the support of site staff. In 2007 a total of 71 youth, 10 adult staff, 19 4-H Teen Teachers, and 3 Extension staff participated over 25 weeks.

*Began a county-wide Tech Team (now the SET & Robotics Project) open to any 4-H or non 4-H youth that wants to learn about Lego robotics, science, technology, and discovering the scientific method. *Part of the state 4-H Robotics grant, which will allow the start a new 4-H Club focusing on robotics *Held a "Take A Stand" Teacher Certification in January and certified 17 educators to deliver the program. The largest school District, Conroe ISD, is typically resistant to Extension programs especially at the high school level; however 5 staff from Conroe High School were trained as part of this group. The Conroe High School group included the Assistant Principal and 2 counselors, as well as the District-wide Hispanic Task Force staff. *Hosted National Youth Science Day 2009 –130 youth from 1 Conroe ISD intermediate campus participate. Then hosted National Youth Science Day 2010 – In one year the program grew from 130 to 935 youth from 7 Conroe ISD campuses and after school programs. *Trained several teachers and afterschool program providers in how to teach the "4-H2O" experiment. Funds won from the previous year were used to purchase enough supplies for all 935 youth to participate. This is almost a 720% increase in one year. *Revived the County Youth Board by collaborating with the City Parks and Recreation Department and their new Teen Court initiative. *Became a National Junior Master Gardener Specialist, which is the highest level of educational leadership for the JMG Program. Being a JMG Specialist will even further strengthen an already high-performing JMG program. *Began a county-wide JMG project club so youth already enrolled in 4-H can have the JMG project experience. *Developed plans and securing grants for new JMG Children's Discovery Garden at the Extension office. This will serve as education for children and for teachers. *Grew new program areas such as Food Challenge and new Fashion Story Board projects with assistance from co-workers. *Held a "Literature in the Garden" JMG Program at the county library for the first time and taught 17 youth and 4 adults about carnivorous plants in southeast Texas, plant growth and development. *Led the county Youth-In-Action Adopt-A-Spot Program to win the Keep Texas Beautiful Ruthe Jackson Youth 2nd Place Award; Texas Recreation and Parks Society Community Sponsor Award, and Texas JMG County Program Award.

Support Statement (approximately 75 words): Caroline Cruz is dedicated to diversity by offering both traditional and innovative opportunities to the youth of Montgomery County through 4-H base programming as well as JMG, Kidz Biz, Robotics, Technology and any other way she can integrate variety into her everyday programming efforts.