

Seeking Healthy Texas Youth Ambassadors

Want to become trained and recognized as a student health and wellness leader in your community?

Become a trained student assistant to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agents, helping to provide leadership with programs.

Become knowledgeable and skilled in the healthy lifestyles subject matter.

Learn to coordinate and present educational events that will encourage better health in your community.

Give 50 hours of service to improve the health of your community.

This is an opportunity for all youth entering at least 9th grade regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, national origin or disability. Ambassadors will serve a two-year term beginning summer prior to the start of the school year.

If interested, please contact Melissa Wright at 325-732-4304 or ma-wright@tamu.edu

...West of 98

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George Washington was an incredibly wealthy man, even by today's standards (estimated over \$500 million when adjusted for inflation). He came from a prosperous family, but rather than resting on his laurels, he launched his family into an entirely new stratosphere of success, inheriting a sizeable estate called Mount Vernon, but ultimately becoming one of the largest landholders in America. Washington built a distillery that became the largest in America. He experimented with various brews of beer and whiskey. He grew a wide variety of crops, fruits, and vegetables at Mount Vernon and was the quintessential American entrepreneur, long before anyone ever thought to invent "entrepreneur" as a word.

Washington's honesty and integrity has long been discussed. He was also a slave owner, but he ultimately saw the repugnancy of the institution and freed his slaves. He remains the only slave-owning President ever to do so.

Washington was something of a reluctant President and ran for a second term to quell tension between factions that were competing to replace him. He abhorred political parties and remains the only President never to join one. In his farewell address, he said something that bears deep consideration in 2019:

"However [political parties] may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines

which have lifted them to unjust dominion."

One of the most remarkable aspects of George Washington is that he was a successful man who answered a call for public service, and then, after his time was complete, he quietly stepped back into his successful private life. Presidential leadership was never an end goal, nor was it something that changed the trajectory of his post-presidential life. He simply answered the call, then went back to his life's work at Mount Vernon.

As we celebrate Presidents' Day, and as we navigate our own opportunities for leadership and service, may we never forget the life of George Washington, nor minimize it into abstract generalities. Washington's integrity, his willingness to serve for service's sake with no desire to turn it into something bigger, and his disdain for political parties are all things we could learn from today.

James Decker is a lawyer, farmer, and mayor in Stamford, Texas, and the creator of the forthcoming "West of 98" podcast and website. He may be contacted through Facebook at [facebook.com/james.decker](https://www.facebook.com/james.decker).

Mountain Creek Golf Course Memorials

Jewell Wallace

The Buddy Wallace Family

Texas Snakes Are On The Move

By Keith Randall, Texas A&M University Division of Marketing & Communications

It's almost springtime in Texas, which means snakes are beginning to slither away from their comfortable winter surroundings and are on the move.

Dr. Jill Heatley, associate professor of veterinary medicine at the Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences (CVM), said active snakes could mean bad news for people and their pets. Heatley and veterinarians in the Small Animal Hospital at the CVM are expect to see an increase in snakebite cases as the temperatures rise.

"If you believe your pet has been bitten by a snake, you need to seek veterinary care and the doctor can determine what kind of treatment is necessary," Heatley said.

"We have already seen snakebites in dogs this year," said Christine Rutter, a small animal critical care veterinarian in the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital. "One pet required significant care after being bitten by a coral snake, but is thankfully going to be fine.

Coral snake bites and rattlesnake bites are uncommon, but are life threatening when they occur. Copperhead and cottonmouth bites are extremely common during the summer, as are bites from grumpy non-venomous snakes."

Beware of the Texas big four

A snakebite on a human can be painful — and also expensive. It is not uncommon for a person bit by a venomous snake to have hospital bills up to \$50,000. Hospital treatments can range from one day to several weeks, and include care for damaged tissues and antivenom treatments that can run into the thousands of dollars, according to Heatley. Even nonvenomous snake bites can cause serious infection.

Although snakes are found in most parts of the world — Ireland, Iceland and New Zealand are some of the few snake-free countries — only four types of snakes found in Texas are venomous: the coral snake, copperhead, rattlesnake and cottonmouth (also known as the water moccasin).

"The thing to remember about snakes is that they generally want to be left alone," Heatley said. "They are probably more afraid of you than you are of them.

"Venom can spread quickly inside the animal, potentially resulting in kidney failure within 12 to 24 hours."

"Of the four types of venomous snakes in Texas, the coral, copperhead, and rattlesnake are almost never aggressive unless they are provoked," she added. "The cottonmouth has a reputation of being less avoidant of humans, so you should be a little more wary of it, especially if you are near a creek or lake where they are frequently seen." However these snake rarely bites humans and when startled they usually coil and open their bright white mouth as a warning sign. They are much more interested in their prey: small fish and frogs.

Heatley says an inquisitive pet could also be a snakebite victim. If bitten, a dog usually suffers the bite on its face or nose, while cats tend to get nicked on their paws.

"The area that has been bitten will usually begin to swell almost immediately, which is a tell-tale sign of a snake bite," Heatley said. "Venom can spread quickly inside the animal, potentially resulting in kidney failure within 12 to 24 hours."

"Dry" snake bite?

"I would add that weakness, collapse, blood clotting disorders and neurologic changes are also of immediate concern," Rutter said. "In the emergency



Caution! Michael Lanty submitted this photo of some deadfall in the trees at the park in Bronte on Sunday, February 17, 2019. With spring comes the wind and that wind could knock the dead limbs to the ground. Visitors to the park should use caution and be observant of the trees.

department, veterinarians will be immediately evaluating cardiovascular stability, neurologic status, pain level, blood cell counts, organ function and blood clotting before deciding on the best course of action."

Heatley said it is important to know that not all snakebites are the same.

"Sometimes an animal or person will get just a small amount of venom from a bite, and sometimes it's much more," Heatley said. "There is also such a thing as a 'dry bite' in which no venom is injected at all. Interestingly enough, larger snakes tend to have lesser amounts of venom than smaller ones."

Although many of us may be fearful of snakes, snakes do have a useful purpose — they control the rodent, lizard and even bug populations.

"One of the questions we often get in the veterinary hospital is, 'How can you tell a venomous snake from a harmless one?'" Heatley said. "The answer is that it is difficult because there are numerous types of snakes that are not venomous that look very similar to a venomous one." Heatley suggests looking for a triangular-

shaped head in identifying poisonous snakes but does not encourage getting too close.

Be mindful of your surroundings

Another frequently asked question in the Small Animal Hospital is how to keep snakes away. Heatley explains that most chemicals tested to do this are also quite toxic to pets and people. "It is better to be mindful of our surroundings, especially in places with pets and children. Try to create an open habitat, which will be less attractive to snakes," she added.

"When cleaning up brush and leaf piles, it's a great idea to wear closed toed boots, heavy pants and garden gloves for protection against snake bites," Heatley said.

"While we don't want an owner to put themselves at any risk, having a photo of the offending snake is always helpful for the ER clinicians to help us determine the appropriate treatment and diagnostics for each patient," Rutter said. "We rely heavily on Dr. Heatley and her team to help us be sure we can tell the venomous bites from the pretenders."

For more information, Heatley and Rutter suggests the Texas Parks and Wildlife at website tpwd.texas.gov.

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