Maintaining County Websites

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Before we get started

- If any of the following apply, "Raise your hand"
  - Have a degree in website design

  - Received training about using county WordPress website

  - Received training on website design and content management

- NO COUNTY AGENTS/STAFF in AgriLife have been **thoroughly trained** on how to use our WordPress websites, **let alone how to make using them easy and efficient**

- So, don't feel bad if your website needs some extra TLC...all of them do

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Assumptions for TODAY

- That folks know **how to** do most of what we're talking about
  - Add/delete/edit
    - Pages
    - Events
    - Menus

- That folks didn't know **they should do** some of these things a particular way

- If you need help with these, email me at plrogers@ag.tamu.edu and we can set up a one-on-one meeting.

What we ARE discussing TODAY

- Most common (and bad) mistakes counties make

- Scratch the surface of WHAT to do for basic website maintenance
  - Events
  - Pages
  - Menus
  - Widget area
  - Edit some content

What we are NOT discussing TODAY

- Doing fancy things
  - html coding
  - Soliloquy Slider
  - Shortcodes Plugin
  - Gravity Forms
  - Other tricks

- Content (written/media)
  - Is it up to date?
  - Is it relevant?
  - Is it succinct?
  - Is it high quality image/video/audio?

- Fancy things, website content, and other expert tricks are for websites 2.0 training (date TBA)

Why you should update website

Website may be FIRST interaction with client

- Make a good first impression

- Eye opening statistics (https://www.sweor.com/firstimpressions)
  - **Takes <u>0.05 seconds</u>** (50 milliseconds) for users to **form opinion** about your website, whether they like it or not, whether they'll stay or leave

  - <u>**75%** of consumers</u> make judgements on a **company's credibility** based on company's **website design**

  - <u>**38%** of people</u> will **stop engaging** with a website if the content or layout are unattractive

  - <u>**88%** of online consumers</u> are **less likely to return** to a site after a bad experience

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Bottom line

- Bad websites = bad user experience

- Bad user experience =
  - Reduced credibility
  - Reduced chances of client coming back
  - Waste of clients time, and Extension staff's time
  - Too many reasons to list

- Remember, we are competing with private businesses, bloggers, and misinformation websites for the same clientele

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Who and how often?

Who should be doing website stuff?

- Probably MOST, if not ALL of staff in Extension office

- Agents and support staff should work TOGETHER to
  - Decide basic design (what pages, menu options)
  - Add/delete pages and events
  - Maintain/update static and semi-static content

Housekeeping Item

- ADD users that need access. DON'T share login credentials

- DELETE users that no longer need access

- Create FirstCall ticket (by email), AgriLife IT will add or delete users accordingly

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How often should updates be made?

- Update **events** as needed (should be continuously)

- Update **static content** weekly (according to IT)
  - WHAT?!?!?!
  - Definitely aim for it, but make sure it happens monthly

- TIP: The more time you spend UP FRONT (organizing, editing) the less you have to worry about maintenance. Example
  - If you never upload soil testing forms to your website (which expire annually), you never have to update them.

  - Instead, from your website, direct clients to where the forms are originally stored at http://soiltesting.tamu.edu/

What are biggest issues with county websites

- According to AgriLife folks smarter than me

- "Top 5 Mistakes" counties do wrong
    1. Blank pages, too many pages, using pages for events
    2. Navigation bar (poorly designed, titles too long)
    3. Overloading the Widget area
    4. Broken links
    5. Alt Text for pictures – easy fix, start adding text to "alt text" for images

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Posts, Events, & Pages

When to use Posts, Events, or Pages?
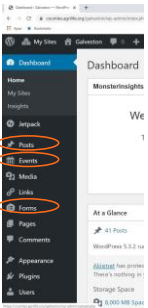
- **Posts** – blog content, displayed in reverse chronological order

- **Events** – a *post* for an event, displayed in chronological order (usually)

- **Pages** – static content, not listed by date, instead displayed by how website is designed
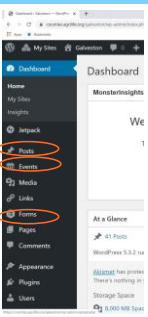
Posts, Events, Pages

- Regardless of type used, keep in mind:

- Never put **actual content** in more than one place
  - Clutters your website
  - Waste of time for webmaster

- If want content to be accessible in multiple locations, use
  - Shortcode
  - Hyperlinks
  - Widgets, plugins, and other website features

Content in 1 place, accessed in 3 urls

Content **placed** in **EVENT**
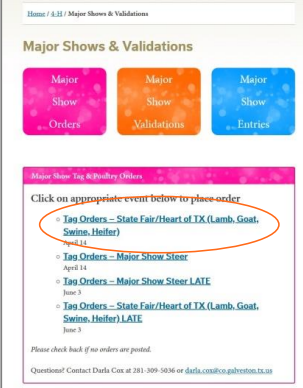galveston.agrilife.org/event/tag-orders-state-fair-tx

Tag Orders – State Fair/Heart of TX (Lamb, Goat, Swine, Heifer)

Content **accessed** on **PAGE**
galveston.agrilife.org/4h/major-show/

Major Shows & Validations

Content **accessed** on **EVENT PAGE**
galveston.agrilife.org/events/
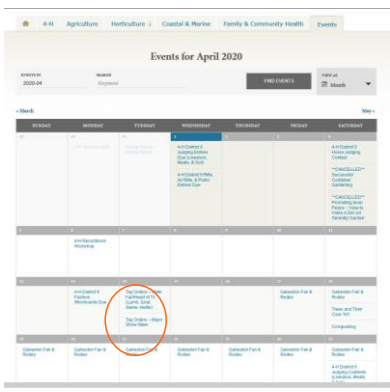
Content **accessed** on **EVENT PAGE**
with a **Category** filter for Events with **4-H Category**
galveston.agrilife.org/events/category/4-h/
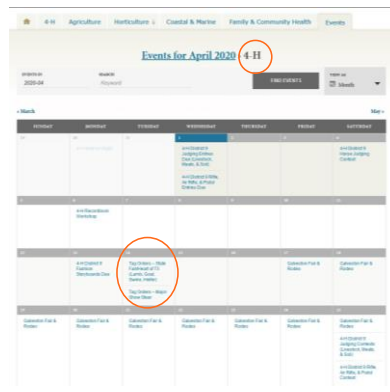
When to (and not to) use Posts
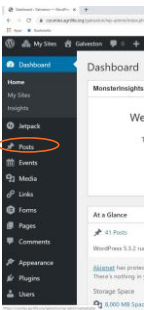
- **DO NOT** use **Posts**, unless you have legitimate blog...**you probably don't**

- Blogs are a website that contains online personal reflections, comments, and often hyperlinks, videos, and photographs provided by the writer (Merrian-Webster)

- Blogs updated REGULARLY...daily or weekly.
  - If you can't commit, don't start
  - If you started but didn't commit, **DELETE IT**
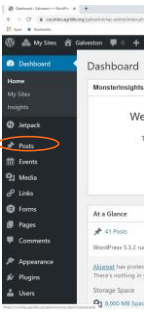
When to (and not to) use Posts (cont'd)

- Really want to be a blogger? Check out
  - https://bosque.agrilife.org/blog
  - https://travis-tx.tamu.edu/category/horticulture/
  - https://d114-h.tamu.edu/blog/
  - https://agrilife.org/agnewsandviews/

  Used these as examples because they are updating weekly(ish)

- If you have a blog
  - Use your county WordPress site (that's what WP was originally created for)
  - DO NOT use a blogspot.com or other site

Housekeeping Item

- If you have a blog
  - Update it (add/schedule new posts, edit content, edit pictures)

  - If you aren't blogging anymore (it's been at least 6-12 months since last post), DELETE page where blog is posted
    - Consider keeping blog posts on website so you can use them later if want to
    - If you know you're not going to use old posts, consider deleting them
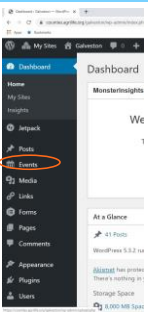
When to (and not to) use Events

- **DO use** the **Events** feature for:

  - All local Extension office events…seriously

  - Select local events important to your clientele (e.g., county fair, others?)

  - Important district/regional events (e.g., District 4-H, MG trainings, Childcare Conferences, others?)

Events – Features

- **DO** add Event
  - Venues
  - Organizers
  - Categories

Events – Category Feature

- DO create and use **Parent & Child Categories**
  - Parent (4-H)
  - Child (4-H County)
  - Child-child (Horse)

- Allows you to sort/filter events, **huge time saver**
  - Can update all 9 "4-H County Horse" events **in minutes**

Events – don't be this county

Screen shots taken on February 4

Events – what makes your county unique

- LOCAL events is what makes YOUR Extension Office UNIQUE

> If you only hear ONE THING TODAY, make it this
>
> Put events on your website

Housekeeping Item

- Update Events on your website (in this order)
  - Create/Update items in Events Plugin
    - Categories (Parent, Child, Child-child)
    - Venues
    - Organizers

  - Delete past events that will probably never occur again

  - Add/update current events (or past ones that are recurring)
    - Add Category, Venues, and Organizers
    - Assess Event title, permalink, feature image. Do they tell the story you want them to?
    - Make content generic so it can be reused
      - Do NOT put date, location, time, place in CONTENT, put these in the appropriate Event fields

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When to (and not to) use Pages
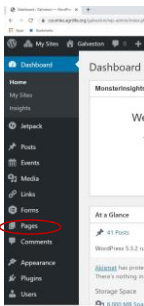
- **DO use Pages** (primarily) for STATIC content on your website

- According to AgriLife people smarter than me, county websites should average 30-75 pages (absolute max 100)
  - If you have more than 100...time to purge

- Pages that **ALL OFFICES** should have
  - Home Page
  - Contact Us
  - Events
  - Something for Program Areas (4-H, AGNR, etc.)

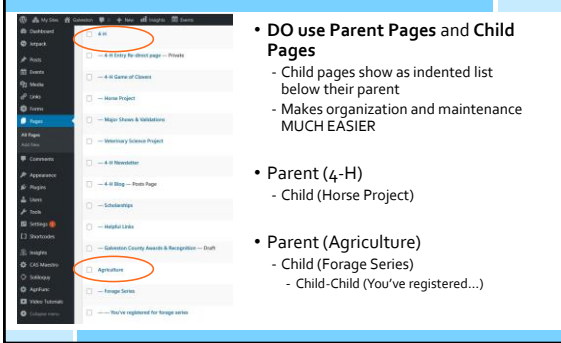## Pages – Parent Page

- **DO use Parent Pages** and **Child Pages**
  - Child pages show as indented list below their parent
  - Makes organization and maintenance MUCH EASIER

- Parent (4-H)
  - Child (Horse Project)

- Parent (Agriculture)
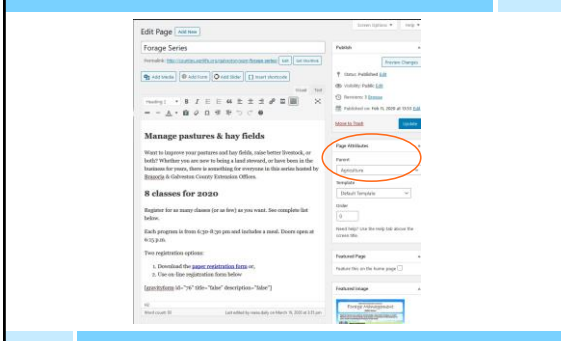 - Child (Forage Series)
    - Child-Child (You've registered…)

Pages – Parent Page (cont'd)

When to (and not to) use Pages (cont'd)

- **Do NOT have the following Pages**
  Top 5 Mistake

  - Generic RSVP or Registration page

  - Generic Links or "Helpful Info" page

  - Generic Resources or Publications page

  - Pages for content that should be in an Event

- I showed web-designer examples of these and they said *"counties should NEVER do these things"*

DO NOT have Generic RSVP/Registration Page

- Users should be accessing RSVP through Event post
  - Adding event registrations/RSVP to generic registration page is **duplicating** work and guarantees you will **spend more time maintaining**

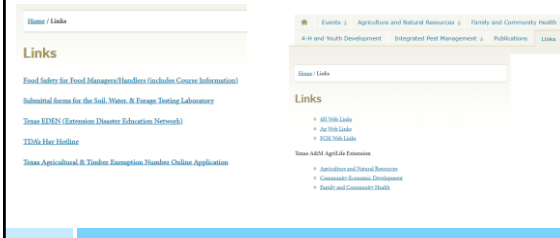- Think about user experience, on Amazon.com first you shop around (find your event) and then check-out (register), not the other way around
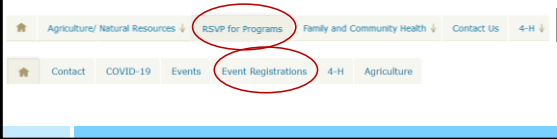
DO NOT have Generic Links/Helpful Info Page

- These items should be placed in content of relevant page/post, possibly widget

When using links

- **DO put links in content** of page/post

- **Ensure links aren't broken**
  - One of worst mistakes on websites

- **Use descriptive anchor text**
  NO:
  Click here to learn more about Master Gardener classes
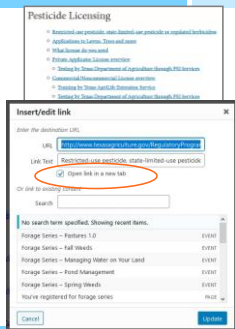
  YES
  Learn more about Master Gardener classes

When using links

- **Do NOT have a bullet list** of links on ANY page

- Choose appropriate setting for same OR new window
  - **Same** if linking internally to page/post on YOUR website
  - **New** if linking internally to DOCUMENT (pdf, jpg, video, etc.) on YOUR website
  - **New** if linking to ANOTHER WEBSITE

This is the EXACT same list of hyperlinks, just displayed differently (left is wrong approach, right is correct approach)

These are NOT perfect examples, there are some "click here" and other poor anchor text choices (too many words)

DO NOT have Generic Resource/Publication Page

- These should be placed in content of relevant page/post

- Do NOT upload agency documents to county website
  - Direct users (via hyperlink) to website where publication is housed (e.g., texas4-h.tamu.edu, fch.tamu.edu, soiltesting.tamu.edu)
  - Uploading to county website **duplicates** work and **requires maintenance**
    - District and State 4-H rules are updated ANNUALLY…using hyperlinks to the PAGE where rules are housed is one of the **BEST TIME SAVERS**

- DO upload COUNTY specific documents (flyers, local fact-sheets) to your county website

DO NOT have Pages for content that is an Event

- **Do NOT** create a **unique Page** to house content **for a unique Event**

- Instead, create Event so announcement automatically displays on your calendar

- Creating Pages for Events **duplicates** work and **requires maintenance**
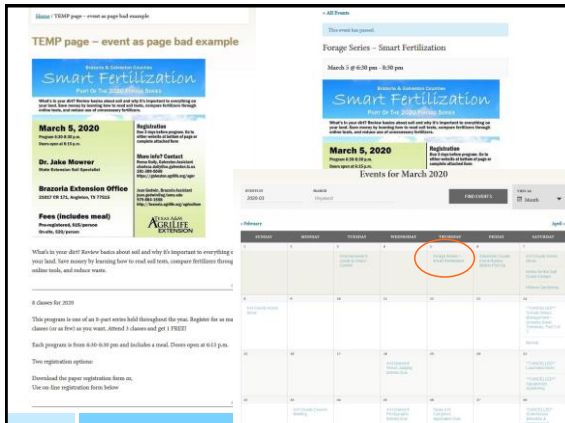
Housekeeping Item

- Update Pages on your website (in this order)
  - Decide what your Parent pages are
    - At a minimum Parent page for each major program area (4-H, AGNR, FCH, if have…Horticulture and Marine)

  - Delete Pages you shouldn't have
    - Pages for events
    - Generic pages for registration, links, publications, resources, and other items that should be in content of relevant page/post

  - For Pages you keep, edit
    - Parent/child designation
    - Titles (remove county name, extra words)
    - Permalink (remove extra words)
    - Content
    - Feature Image
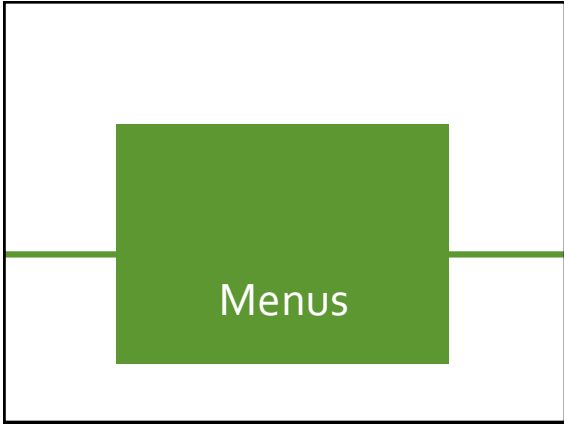
Menus

Menus

- Primary (header) Menu
  - At top of EVERY page
  - Called "main navigation"

- Sidebar Menu
  - On right side of DESIGNATED pages on your website
  - Found on Dashboard Widget area

- DO NOT put identical navigation items in both the Primary and Sidebar menus (pick one place)

Menus (cont'd)

- Keep "like" material together

- Arrange menus so user logically moves from broad topic (4-H) to specific topic (4-H newsletter)

- Use specific (but short) menu titles so user can **EASILY FIND** what they came for

Primary Menu

- **EVERY county SHOULD have** following **STATIC items** in their Primary Menu
  - Home (1ˢᵗ in menu)
  - Events (or in widget area), do NOT title this "Calendar"
  - Program Areas
  - Contact Us (last in menu)

Extension Education
in Galveston County

"Contact Us" should be here

🏠 4-H Agriculture Horticulture ↓ Coastal & Marine Family & Community Health Events

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Primary Menu (cont'd)

- **DO NOT** put any of following in your Primary (header) Menu

Top 5 Mistake

- **Changing/Variable items** in Primary Menu
  - Specific events (camps, new land owner, child-care, etc.)
  - Orders/Entries
  - RSVP/Registrations
  - Online Courses
  - Links
  - Newsletters
  - Resources

- **Names for outside entities** (county fairs, wildlife associations, etc.)
  - Should be placed under relevant sub-menu, page, or post

Primary Menu (cont'd)

- I showed web-designer examples of these and they said "*counties should NEVER do these things"*

🏠 Contact 4-H & Youth ↓ Agriculture ↓ Family & Community Health
Master Gardener ↓ Master Naturalist ↓ Disaster Recovery Information
Food Safety Conference Registration Youth Cooking Camp Registration

🏠 Contact Information 4-H ↓ Agriculture & Natural Resource ↓
Wildlife Management Association ↓

Amazon.com example

- Amazon.com header menu
  - does NOT change their header menu every time they add another product

  - does NOT direct people to outside businesses
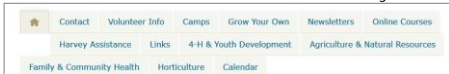
Primary Menu (cont'd)

- **DO NOT** have primary navigation menu flow past ONE row
  - Is hard to read/follow and breaks rules of basic web design

🏠	Contact	Volunteer Info	Camps	Grow Your Own	Newsletters	Online Courses
	Harvey Assistance	Links	4-H & Youth Development		Agriculture & Natural Resources	
	Family & Community Health	Horticulture	Calendar			

Top 5 Mistakes

- Solution:
  - Have less items in primary menu (put items in sidebar menu)
  - Use shortened names for menu items
    - NO: 4-H & Youth Development   YES: 4-H
    - NO: Galveston Bay Master Naturalist Chapter   YES: Master Naturalist
  - Try different naming strategies to see what fits on **ONE row**

Housekeeping Item

- Update Primary Menu on your website
  - Verify Primary menu has pages for
    - Contact us (last in menu)
    - Program areas (4-H, AG) or similar descriptions
    - Events (may be housed in sidebar instead of primary menu)

  - Delete any menu options for
    - Specific events (camps, new land owner, child-care, etc.)
    - Orders/Entries
    - RSVP/Registrations
    - Online Courses
    - Links/Newsletters/Resources
    - Outside entities

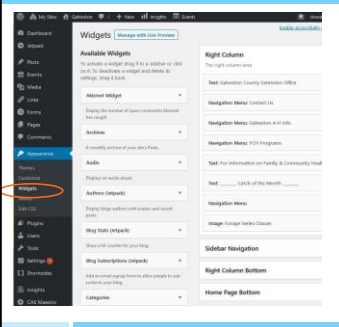 - Work to get Primary Menu to display on ONE row (rename menu titles and/or delete menu items)

Sidebar Menu (widget area)

- Numerous items can be put in the Widget area

  - Events (calendar, list)
  - Page list
  - Navigation Menus
  - Recent posts (for blogs)
  - Facebook plugin
  - Gravity Form
  - Soliloquy
  - Twitter
  - Text
  - Video
  - Contact Info & Maps
  - Custom html
  - Images (individual or as gallery)

Sidebar Menu (cont'd)
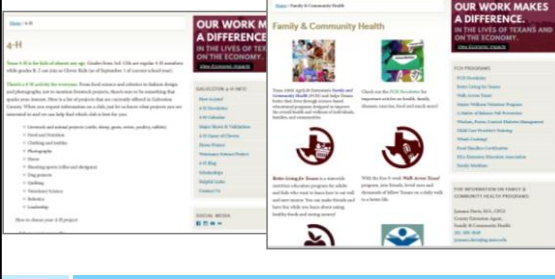
- What is displayed in the sidebar can change from page to page

Sidebar Menu (cont'd)

- If user scrolls more than **ONCE**, you have **too many items** in that particular sidebar

- Solution
  - Create different sidebars
  - Place them on appropriate pages based on sidebar content
  - Example: Sidebar with info on how to join 4-H, 4-H newsletters, etc.
    - SHOULD be on ALL 4-H pages
    - Should NOT be on Horticulture pages or FCH pages

Housekeeping Item
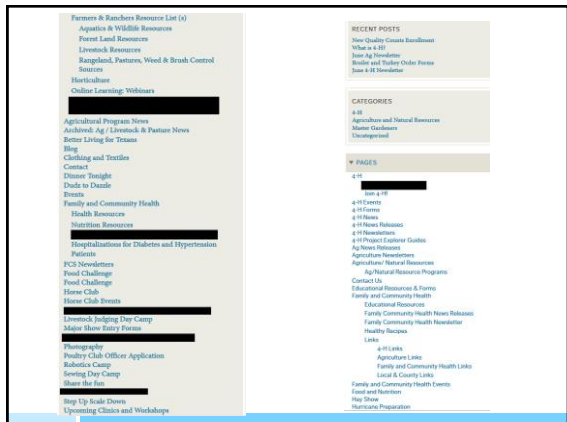
- Update Sidebar Menu (Widget Area) on your website
  - Unclutter Widget Area
    - Are any too long?
    - Should there be different sidebars for different pages?

  - For items you keep
    - Is order of Widget items ideal? If user only sees first widget, are you happy with what they saw?
    - Are Titles in Widget area specific and clear?
    - Are text/picture and other content succinct and specific?

Summary

Basic web maintenance includes

- Updating users
- Managing Events & Pages
- Tidying Primary Navigation Menu & Sidebar Menu (Widget Area)
- Editing content
  - Is it up to date?
  - Is it relevant?
  - Is it succinct?
  - Are hyperlinks working?

- There are TONS of resources online for WordPress. Few below
  - https://wordpress.org/support/category/basic-usage/
  - https://www.wpbeginner.com/
  - Google
  - YouTube

Questions?