

# The Hog Call



*Figure 1. Texas A&M University-Kingsville, Office of Employee Services*



*Figure 2. New Year 2026*

## Employee Spotlight!



**Albert Rios - Human Resources Specialist II**

**How long have you been with Texas A&M University-Kingsville?**

I have been with Texas A&M University-Kingsville for 12 years.

**Where did you graduate from?**

I graduated from Texas A&M University-Kingsville with a Bachelor's in General Business.

**What do you enjoy most about your role?**

What I enjoy most about my role as an HR Specialist II at Texas A&M University–Kingsville is the opportunity to support people in meaningful ways. Every day brings a chance to help employees navigate important moments in their careers and lives, whether it's guiding them through benefits, answering questions, or simply being a reassuring point of contact. I love knowing that the work I do contributes to a positive experience for our faculty and staff. Being part of a community that truly cares for its people is what makes my role fulfilling and inspires me to give my best each day.

**What is your fondest memory at TAMUK?**

My fondest memory at Texas A&M University–Kingsville is the first time I truly felt the impact of the work we do in HR. I remember helping an employee through a challenging benefits situation, and the gratitude they expressed afterward reminded me why our role matters so much. That moment made

me realize that TAMUK isn't just a workplace—it's a community built on support, kindness, and connection. Being able to make a positive difference, even in small ways, is something I carry with me every day.

**If you could switch roles with another employee for a day, which role would you choose and why?**

If I could switch roles with another employee for a day, I would love to experience a day in the life of one of our academic advisors. They play such an important role in guiding students through their academic journeys, and seeing firsthand how they support, encourage, and empower students would be inspiring. I think it would give me an even deeper appreciation for how every part of our campus community works together to help our Javelinas succeed.



*Figure 3. Employee Development*

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We are excited to share that we have been working behind the scenes on a new employee training program designed specifically for our university community. This initiative reflects our continued commitment to professional growth, collaboration, and a positive workplace culture.

We are pleased to announce the launch of our **first training session**, which will take place on **February 5 and February 24**, with two opportunities to attend each day: a **9:00 a.m. session** and a **2:00 p.m. session**. We encourage employees to sign up for the session that best fits their schedule.

The training will focus on **Empathy & Humility in the Workplace**. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another person. It involves recognizing emotions in others, imagining what they may be experiencing, and responding with care and concern. In the workplace, empathy is a foundational element of emotional intelligence and is essential for building strong interpersonal relationships. Unlike sympathy, which involves feeling pity, empathy requires a deeper level of connection and understanding. It allows individuals to relate to one another on a human level, fostering



a culture of respect, collaboration, and trust. Empathy can be both cognitive—understanding another person’s perspective—and emotional—sharing in their feelings. Both forms play an important role in improving communication and navigating complex workplace interactions.

We look forward to launching this training and hope you will join us as we continue building a supportive, respectful, and engaged campus community. Be on the lookout for registration details and additional information soon.

**Sign-up Here: [Empathy in the Workplace Sign-up – Fill out form](#)**



*Figure 4. Benefits*

### **Introducing Our SEBAC Representative**

Texas A&M University–Kingsville is proud to be represented on the System Employee Benefits Advisory Committee (SEBAC) by **Derek Gonzales**, who serves as our voting representative through August 2027.

SEBAC is composed of employee representatives from across the Texas A&M University System. The committee reviews employee benefit programs and provides input and recommendations related to benefit plan design and administration. This work plays an important role in ensuring that benefit offerings continue to meet the evolving needs of employees across the System.

### **Role of the SEBAC Representative**

As TAMUK’s representative, Derek serves as a vital connection between university employees and the Texas A&M University System. He actively participates in SEBAC meetings, shares employee questions and feedback related to benefits, and helps communicate relevant updates to campus when appropriate.



*Figure 5. Derek Gonzales*

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**Barnyard Bliss: On-Campus Wellness Event** Join us for Barnyard Bliss

Come take a break, enjoy some snacks and meet the cute friends of Mimi's Mini Petting Zoo!

Where: Mesquite Village Lawn

When: Tuesday, January 27

Time: 2pm-5pm

Sponsored by Student Health & Wellness, University Housing & Residence Life & Javelina Wellness

Hosted by Student Health & Wellness, University Housing & Residence Life, and Javelina Wellness

**Why it matters:**

Barnyard Bliss is more than a fun campus activity — it's an intentional wellness experience designed to support mental, emotional, and social well-being.

**Key Benefits:**

- Reduces stress and anxiety:** Interacting with animals is proven to lower cortisol levels and promote relaxation, making this event especially helpful during busy academic periods.
- Encourages mindful breaks:** Taking time away from screens, coursework, or work responsibilities helps prevent burnout and supports overall mental health.

- Boosts mood and emotional health:** Positive animal interactions can increase feelings of happiness, comfort, and calm.
- Strengthens community connection:** This shared experience creates opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to connect in a low-pressure, welcoming environment.
- Promotes outdoor wellness:** Being outside on the Mesquite Village Lawn supports mental clarity, fresh air intake, and gentle movement.
- Accessible wellness support:** No registration, no pressure — just show up and enjoy a wellness-focused break.

### **2026 Virtual Event Calendar: Educational Wellness Support**

#### **Why it matters:**

These virtual events provide **reliable, inclusive education** on fertility, family planning, and whole-person health — topics that impact physical, emotional, and financial well-being.

#### **Key Benefits:**

- Increases health literacy:** Participants gain clear, evidence-based information to make informed health and family-planning decisions.
- Reduces uncertainty and stigma:** Open discussions help normalize topics that are often overlooked or misunderstood.
- Convenient access:** Virtual format allows participants to attend from anywhere, making wellness education more accessible.
- Proactive wellness planning:** Helps individuals plan for future health needs before challenges arise.
- Empowers long-term well-being:** Knowledge gained supports both immediate and future physical and emotional health.

### **Well onTarget 2026 Personal Challenges**

#### **Why it matters:**

These challenges promote **small, achievable behavior changes** that add up to long-term wellness success.

#### **Key Benefits:**

- **Encourages daily movement:** Challenges are designed to fit into real-life schedules, including desk-friendly options.
- Supports mental and emotional health:** Stress, sleep, mindfulness, and gratitude challenges help improve emotional well-being.
- Builds healthy habits gradually:** Short-term challenges prevent overwhelm and promote consistency.

- Promotes social connection:** Many challenges encourage participation with family, friends, or coworkers.
- Improves work-life balance:** Activities emphasize rest, self-care, and mindful breaks.
- Financial wellness support:** Budgeting and spending challenges help reduce financial stress.
- Flexible participation:** Participants choose challenges that align with their personal wellness goals.



Figure 6. Barnyard Bliss Flyer



## Join our Well onTarget® Monthly Webinars

You'll learn everything you need to know about the portal

Join these free monthly webinars where we'll walk you through a demo exploring everything about the Wellness portal, from taking the Health Assessment to enrolling in a Challenge and more! We'll explore all the tools and resources available to you. You'll learn about building your personal wellness journey and staying motivated by taking a self-management program and syncing your tracking devices. The best part is you'll discover how to earn Blue Points™ for activities and redeem them for a selection of gift cards for yourself, family or friends!

**Just click on the link below or scan the QR code to join the webinar held every second Tuesday of the month from 11 to 11:30 am CT. The link is the same for each webinar.**

|              |              |              |              |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Jan 13, 2026 | Feb 10, 2026 | Mar 10, 2026 | Apr 14, 2026 |
| May 12, 2026 | Jun 9, 2026  | Jul 14, 2026 | Aug 11, 2026 |
| Sep 8, 2026  | Oct 13, 2026 | Nov 10, 2026 | Dec 8, 2026  |



Scan this QR code to join the webinar.

Well onTarget®

Join the meeting now

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas is subject to change without prior notice. See the Program Rules on the Well onTarget Member Wellness Portal at wellontarget.com for further information. The Well onTarget member name and independent website is provided by an independent third party. The on-target is an interactive system provided to members only. Not a substitute for the independent medical judgment of a health care provider. Members are encouraged to consult with their health care provider before beginning their journey toward wellness. Participation in the Well onTarget program, including the completion of a health assessment, is voluntary and you are not required to participate. You will not be charged for completion of health assessments and challenges. Images may have been created or enhanced using artificial intelligence.

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Figure 7. Well onTarget Flyer

### 2026 Personal Challenges

SLEEP / STRESS / MINDFULNESS / SOCIAL / FINANCIAL

#### Sweet Dreams

For the next two weeks, get at least seven hours of sleep each night.  
14 days

#### Power Down for Better Sleep

To improve sleep, complete steps 1-4 every night for the next week.  
7 days

#### Exercise to Better Sleep

Exercise during the day to improve sleep at night.  
14 days

#### 60 Seconds to Less Stress

Lower stress in only 60 seconds. Complete this practice whenever possible. Try it at a desk, on the couch, or before sleep.  
14 days

#### Mastering Mindfulness

For the next two weeks, block off 10 minutes a day to be "mindful."  
14 days

#### An Act of Kindness

Stay socially healthy. During the next seven days, make a special effort to tell someone how great they are every day.  
7 days

#### Pinching Pennies

Only buy the essentials needed for a full week and track the savings.  
7 days

#### Brain Tease

Improve memory each day. Every day during the next two weeks, complete a crossword, Sudoku, or other challenging puzzle.  
14 days

#### Nature Nurture

Nature exposure can improve behavioral health. Spend at least 20 minutes outdoors each day.  
14 days

#### Be Budget-Wise

Get together a budget for the next two weeks and review spending every day to see where spending habits can be changed.  
14 days

#### Kick the Habit

Building a quit kit can help avoid cravings and occupy hands and mind. For the next 7 days, add something new to your quit kit each day.  
7 days

#### Savvy Spending

For the next two weeks, set aside time each day to track and be mindful of spending.  
14 days

#### Be Grateful

During the next two weeks, create a permanent attitude of gratitude by taking a couple of minutes every day to reflect on gratefulness.  
14 days

#### Social Media Time Out

Promote emotional well-being by disconnecting from social media for a week.  
7 days

#### Self Care Savvy

Strengthen emotional well-being by setting aside time each day to complete activities like taking a walk, taking a relaxing bath, or making a home-cooked meal.  
14 days

#### Break for Energy (for Caregivers)

By promoting daily relaxation activities, this challenge encourages caregivers to prioritize their emotional well-being.  
14 days

#### Screen-free Slumber

Eliminate screen time before bedtime.  
14 days

Figure 8. 2026 Personal Challenges Flyer

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**Screen-free Slumber**

Eliminate screen time before bedtime. 14 days



*Figure 9. Employment Support*

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To streamline our recruiting efforts, we have divided responsibilities of colleges and departments between our two recruiting partners: **Sydney Halbrooks** and **Mia Jaramillo**.

Please refer to the list below to identify your primary contact:

**Sydney Halbrooks**

-Administration

-Athletics

-Institutional Advancement

-Marketing and Communications

-Performance Excellence

-College of Business

-College of Education

-College of Engineering

-President's Office

**Mia Jaramillo**

-Academic Affairs

-Enrollment Management

-Finance

-Research and Innovation

-Student Affairs

-College of Arts and Sciences

-College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

**Important Notice:**

Although responsibilities are split, **please include [employment@tamuk.edu](mailto:employment@tamuk.edu) on all recruiting-related communications** to ensure smooth coordination and to mitigate bottlenecks.

**Thank you for your partnership in supporting our recruiting initiatives!**

**OFFICE OF EMPLOYEE SERVICES**

**Recruiting Contacts by College and Department**

Please see the list below to identify your primary contact.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Sydney Halbrooks</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Administration</li><li>• Athletics</li><li>• College of Business</li><li>• College of Education</li><li>• College of Engineering</li><li>• Institutional Advancement</li><li>• Marketing and Communications</li><li>• Performance Excellence</li><li>• President's Office</li></ul> | <b>Mia Jaramillo</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Academic Affairs</li><li>• College of Agriculture and Natural Resources</li><li>• College of Arts and Sciences</li><li>• Enrollment Management</li><li>• Finance</li><li>• Research and Innovation</li><li>• Student Affairs</li></ul> |
|---|---|

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 [Employment@tamuk.edu](mailto:Employment@tamuk.edu)





*Figure 10. January Tip of the Month*

The new year is a fresh start and a great opportunity to reset and refocus. Consider setting a realistic New Year's resolution—something that supports your personal or professional growth without adding pressure. As you work toward your goals this semester, remember to give yourself grace. Progress doesn't have to be perfect, and small, consistent steps matter. Be patient with yourself as you navigate new routines, responsibilities, and challenges, and celebrate the effort you put in along the way.



*Figure 11. Javelina Fact Attack!*

Did you know that Texas A&M University–Kingsville has been supporting the Texas citrus industry for more than 76 years? Established in 1948, the Citrus Center was created through a partnership between

local citrus growers and what was then the Texas College of Arts & Industries. Since then, the Center has grown into a hub for both basic and applied research, helping citrus growers adapt to industry challenges through innovation, collaboration, and science-based solutions.

Over the decades, the Citrus Center has expanded its research farms, facilities, and partnerships with state and federal agencies, industry leaders, and academic institutions. Today, it continues to play a vital role in strengthening Texas citrus by combining cutting-edge research with hands-on training for undergraduate and graduate students—cultivating knowledge, talent, and sustainability for generations to come.



*Figure 12. Citrus Center Arial View*



*Figure 13. Citrus Center Pathology lab*



*Figure 14. Citrus Center Main Building*



*Figure 15. Citrus Center Crew Bagging Lemons*



*Figure 16. Citrus Center Crew Harvesting Lemons*