TEXAS A&M - The Texas A&M College of AgriLife Sciences held the 20th anniversary celebration for its Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center today, hosting national experts to discuss ways to promote healthy diets. Event speakers say the key to spreading health is not just through funding, but education as well.

“The application of that and getting it in the public use and educating the public, all the way from K-12 up into adulthood about the value of healthy eating and the role food plays in disease prevention and cure,” said Executive Associate Dean of AgriLife Sciences Dr. Alan Sams.

Experts also say that healthier diets will reduce the economic burden of healthcare costs.

“When we don’t take care of our children when we don’t have good healthy foods, fresh fruits and vegetables for them in schools or in homes, then I think their future is a little dimmer,” said Comptroller for the State of Texas Susan Combs.

“Frankly, the evidence is absolutely incredible. We absolutely could be adding years to life and life to years if we use lifestyle as medicine, and a big part of that is eating more fruits and vegetables,” said Director of the Yale University Prevention Research Center Griffin Hospital Dr. David Katz, a keynote speaker.

VFIC receives its funding from federal and state funding, which is where Combs comes in. They also receive money from grants and contracts awarded to faculty members in the course of their research projects.

Dr. Katz says eighty percent of chronic diseases, like heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, dementia are preventable when we don’t smoke, get plenty of physical activity, and eat an optimal diet rich in plant foods.

“You see people suffering, and in many cases paying with their lives for stuff that doesn’t need to happen,” Dr. Katz said.
There will be an open house of the Vegetable and Fruit Improvement Center research facility Wednesday from 8:30 to 11. VFIC says this is an opportunity for donors to learn about ongoing research projects from researchers and students.

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