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Arkansas 4-H Center Turns Surplus Into Meals for the Homeless

Spring has typically been one of the busiest times of the year for the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center — until this year. Amid growing concern about the COVID-19 pandemic, groups quickly cancelled conferences, retreats and meetings, leaving the center with an abundance of food ordered to feed guests who never came.

Rather than letting the food spoil, the center donated the surplus to Our House, a Little Rock nonprofit that serves homeless people.

“We didn’t want the food to go to waste,” 4-H Center Director J.J. Pitman said. “We wanted someone to get some good out of it. Our House is one of our clients, and we knew they could use extra food. It was a way for us to give back.”

The surplus included 22 heads of Romaine and iceberg lettuce, seven pounds of spinach and heritage blend greens, six pounds of radishes, five pounds of cherry tomatoes, 17 tomatoes, 24 bell peppers, cucumbers and carrots, nine pounds of cottage cheese, 69 individual yogurts, a case of crackers and rolls.

Our House, which currently shelters more than 100 people, provides residents with three meals a day, every day of the year. Food donations — especially fresh produce — are always welcome, said Beau Cooper, Our House’s executive assistant.

“We try to have a salad or fresh food at every meal, but produce is expensive,” Cooper said. “As a nonprofit, we watch every penny and rely on donations like this one from the 4-H Center to keep our kitchen stocked. Anytime someone donates salad or fresh produce, it gets eaten.”

For more information about Our House, visit www.ourhouseshelter.org. 



Our House resident Gaylone Hale (left) logs a food donation from C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center director J.J. Pitman. The center recently donated more than 75 lbs. of food to Our House, after multiple retreats and meetings at the center were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Free Soybean Seeds Available to School, Community Gardens to Grow-Your-Own Protein

For gardeners looking for an easy-to-grow addition to their gardens, soybeans are a natural powerhouse: they're easy to grow, they nourish the soil, and they provide a complete protein.

Right now, schools and community gardens can get free soybean seeds through the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service's Grow Your Own Protein program as long as they donate their produce to schools, churches, food pantries, or other nonprofits serving food-insecure populations.

Teachers often request the seeds as part of their teaching gardens, and several Master Gardener clubs grow soybeans to donate to their local food banks.

"We want the seeds to go to people who grow them for educational purposes, donations and demonstrations," said Diedre Young, extension's Soybean Science Challenge coordinator. "They're a great addition to any garden, and right now, when a lot of families are struggling with lost income, plant-based protein can help stretch food dollars."

Soybeans offer several health benefits. They are a complete protein, with all of the essential amino acids, meaning they have as much protein as animal products such as eggs, meats, poultry and seafood, according to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The FDA recommends adults ingest 50 grams of protein per day.

Soybeans are picked early when they are most tender and are commonly called edamame. Many grocery stores sell frozen edamame, which can be added to salads, stir-fry and other entrees to add protein.


Now in its fifth year, the Grow Your Own Protein program has seen participation double. The program started in 2016 with 24 gardens. Last year, 56 community gardens in 27 counties in the state grew soybeans. Washington County led the state with nine gardens followed by Jefferson County with six plots. So far this year, Extension has received more than 40 requests for seeds.

The Grow Your Own Protein program grew out of the Soybean Science Challenge, a program funded by the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board that encourages



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Arkansas high school students to study innovative and scientific aspects of soybeans, which contribute to Arkansas' agricultural economy. It's also a way to teach Arkansans about a crop that has a significant impact on the state's economy. In Arkansas, soybean is grown on about 3.3 million acres and generates about \$1.7 billion annually.

Request forms are available online at bit.ly/2wGzfls and should be completed and sent to Diedre Young at dyoung@uaex.edu. Seeds will be mailed later to recipients. Seeds should be planted between late April and early May and should be ready to pick in 80-85 days. 

Food Safety During COVID-19

Katie Frizzell, family and consumer science agent for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's Ashley County Cooperative Extension Office, offers tips on food safety guidelines to reduce the spread of COVID-19.


While grocery shopping:

- Plan meals in advance so you know what food to buy
- Buy in bulk if you can
- Order online or order ahead if you can
- If you are over 65, pregnant, or have health risks, ask about special store hours
- Limit the number of family members who shop.

At the store:

- Wear a mask
- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet
- Shop with your reusable bags. Fabric bags can be washed at home; plastic bags can be wiped down
- Be respectful of store workers and other shoppers
- Use hand sanitizer before getting into your car

When you get home:

- Leave your shoes outside
- Wash produce under cold running tap water to remove dirt and bacteria before eating or preparing
- Do not wash fruits and vegetables with detergent or soap. These products are not approved or labeled by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use on foods
- Put mask in washing machine. Use the "sanitize" setting on your washer or dryer, if available
- Wash your hands with soap and water 

To Our Extension Retirees

April is more than half over and we continue to work remotely in Cooperative Extension and the Division, for the most part, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and our efforts to mute its impact. I confess I have not been through something like this before, at least to this extent, but as is always the case – our employees are up to the task of figuring out how to adapt, how to keep going, how to get it done. We got this!



The Division and Extension have not closed, we are open, ready to help but are simply providing our programs and the facts mostly in a digital way. It is a good thing to live in a time where we can do this much more easily than before, the information age. Of course, it is also the "misinformation" and "disinformation" age, and COVID-19 is not immune to the availability of bad information on the web and so forth. It is a shame that crises bring out the worst in some people, and not just the best as it has in ours.


We will continue your legacy of providing the facts, and I have had a lot of positive feedback about this effort during the pandemic. Many stakeholders tell me it is a relief to have a source of trusted information where they don't have to guess at the facts, we simply provide them. They also tell me that they appreciate the sense of "normalcy" and "calmness" from our people and programs. In the media world where everybody seems to be running around with their hair on fire, we provide calmness, professionalism, and fact. It certainly has a powerful and positive impact on many, given the alternatives.

So, I wrote all the above to simply say thanks to all those in the Division of Agriculture and the Cooperative Extension Service for exemplifying grown-up behavior and pushing the facts out to the public at a time of great need. It has been unforgettable to witness, and I have never been prouder of our organization than today. It is a clear reminder that our colleagues continue the legacy of our retirees and all those who have come before, that legacy of professionalism, hard work, just the facts for more than 100 years and counting.

Please note the COVID public health information in this issue to help keep you and others safe, along with all the birthdays coming up and our scholarship donors. We greatly appreciate our COVID-19 Response Team led by Dr. Sartor and Dr. Head, along with selected faculty and staff for keeping us up to date.

It is sad to note the passing of Dan McCarter and Gene Lowery, two legendary county agents who did so much to improve Arkansas during and after their careers. We hope you all keep their families in your thoughts.

And, it is very sad to note that Dr. Mark Peterson has retired, sad for us but perhaps not for him, but we will miss Mark terribly. His career in community development built a legacy that will be hard for anybody to match, and his contributions to so many people and places over the years were amazing. We wish Mark the very best in the years to come and know that he will still be helping people as much as humanly possible, that is who he is. Good luck, Mark!

Please have a remarkable April and May. 

May Birthdays

Paul Cooper - May 2
 Richard Klerk - May 3
 Shirley West - May 5
 Kim Hughes - May 7
 Clarice Griffith - May 10
 Earl Wilson - May 10
 Terrence Kirkpatrick - May 10
 Kris Rutherford - May 11
 Robert Rhodes - May 12

Clyde Stuart Jr. - May 17
 Dianna Cox - May 17
 J. B. Williams - May 18
 Deborah Dority - May 18
 William Russell - May 19
 Teresa Booth - May 21
 Vicki Brakefield - May 21
 Charlotte Freeman - May 22
 Kathryn McElderry - May 23

Donald Johnson - May 24
 Faye Suitt - May 26
 James Peachey - May 28
 Larry Smith - May 29
 Donald Adams - May 30
 Donald Slate - May 30
 Darlene Millard - May 31

Scholarship Donations

The following gifts were recently received to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service. These gifts will be used to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service.

CES Retiree Scholarship Fund

Ocsie Barnes

In honor of Chicot County 4-H

Alberta James

In memory of Alphonso Denham

Darlene Millard

In memory of George Morris

Mary Portia Short

In memory of Dan McCarter

Gene Woodall

Honorary or memorial donations should be forwarded to the Development Office, ATTN: Brian Helms, Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 South University Ave., Little Rock, AR 72204. If joint recognition is desired, please indicate. To ensure proper notification is sent, please also include in whose honor or memory the gift is made and the mailing address of the person to receive the notification. (e)

Mark Peterson Retires

Dr. Mark Peterson, professor of economic and community development, retired after 30 years of service. Mark began his career with Cooperative Extension in July 1989. Mark served for the most part in the Community and Economic Development area during his career, except for a stint as interim director of 4-H Youth Development. (e)

Yes, I will subscribe to the *Extension Cord*.

	Cost	Amount Enclosed
Extension Cord	\$18.00	_____

Please make check payable to **UA CES** and mail to Martha Thorpe, Communications Department, 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72204-4940.

NOTE: Please do not combine payment for an Extension Cord subscription and a scholarship donation in one check. Payment for the **Extension Cord** should be made to **UA CES**. Payment for **scholarship donations** should be made to the **UA FOUNDATION**. If you include payment for an Extension Cord subscription in a check made payable to the UA Foundation, the entire amount will go to the UA Foundation.

Yes, I want to support the fundraising initiative in support of the Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship.

Enclosed is my gift of \$_____. My gift is in honor / in memory of _____.

Name/Address for notification of honorary and memorial gifts:

Please make check payable to the **UA Foundation** and mail to Brian Helms, Development Office, 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock AR 72204-4940.

Dan McCarter Passes

Dan McCarter, 85, of Norman, Arkansas, passed away on March 16, 2020. Dan served for over 30 years as the Montgomery County extension agent. Dan was very active in his church and community. In his retirement years, he especially enjoyed spending time with his grandchildren. After a private family time in the Davis-Smith Funeral Home Chapel, burial was in the Mount Gilead Cemetery. A public Celebration of Life will be held at a later date. (e)

Gene Lowrey Passes

Gene Lowrey, 86, of Russellville, Arkansas, passed away April 9, 2020. Gene served as a county extension agent in Clay and Mississippi counties before moving to Yell County where he served for 25 years. In retirement, he raised cattle and volunteered for multiple organizations. Gene also enjoyed hunting, bass fishing (especially with his brother) and gardening. There was a private service with a public memorial service to be held later. (e)