

BL

BLUE LETTER

July 2023

No. 3855



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Bright Future Ahead

As I write this month's Blue Letter article, I am coming down off a bit of a high from attending State 4-H O-Rama in Fayetteville. Thank you to all the volunteers who give their time to make this event happen, and thank you to all the 4-H faculty and staff for the long hours and another successful event. I want to congratulate all the scholarship and award winners. I also want to extend a special welcome to Ms. Diamond Jones, our new Arkansas 4-H president and the rest of the state officer team. They are all in for a whirlwind of a year, but it is my hope that it will also be one of the best times of their lives!

The end of State 4-H O-Rama also brings an end to this year's Extension intern program. What a great bunch of young people we had this year. I am very happy with the program and plan to continue it. We already have seen the benefits of this program in the form of new hires and in the identification of potential new hires once some of these young people graduate from college. I am excited about the opportunity to hire them full time. We will have to see how many interns the District Directors try and convince me to hire in Cohort 3 in 2024!

I am pleased with the roll-out of our new salary program. It is long overdue, especially the increase in our beginning or entry-level salaries, but also it is good to reward deserving employees with not only a cost-of-living increase, but also a

one-time merit increase that went into effect this month. I know this program is not perfect in terms of compression, but it is a start and beats the option of doing nothing and growing further and further behind other extension services in the Southern Region. I have a meeting soon with the other directors in the Southern Region, and I will be proud to include this part in my report.

I am very excited to announce that Dr. Nina Roofe has accepted our position as Assistant Vice President - Family and Consumer Sciences. Dr. Roofe comes to us from the University of Central Arkansas where she has served as FCS department head for several years and brings a wealth of leadership ability and ideas for improving our FCS programming. We are very excited for her to join us. Her current start date is set for September 25. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Roofe to the Cooperative Extension Service family.

I sincerely hope that all of you are having a productive summer. It's hard to believe that fall is just around the corner. I need to check the agronomist reports, but it would not surprise me to see rice fields start to be drained soon and reach some cut off points on irrigation in crops like corn very soon. Man, summer can fly by. Don't forget to take time for yourself and family at some point this summer before it's too late and if you have not already. I took a few personal days this month and came back with some charged batteries. Good luck with the rest of your summer meetings, research trials, and programs. ■

INSIDE SCOOP

2. Summer Interns
3. 4-H Teams to Represent Arkansas Nationally
4. Pumpkin Hollow
5. Food Science Student Interns
6. Leadership Log
7. Tech Corner...And much more!

Extension Cord Editorial Board Meet Summer Interns

This year's summer interns swapped stories over lunch with some of Extension's retirees recently while visiting the state office. Fifteen interns met with the Extension Cord editorial board, which meets monthly to discuss content for the Extension Cord newsletter for retirees. This was a chance for retirees to hear about projects the interns are working on in their respective counties. In turn, the retirees shared some of their favorite Extension memories and offered encouragement and advice.



Seated from left: Retirees: Tom Leslie, Diane Jones, Darlene Millard, Ella Giesler, and Stan Chapman Standing; L to R: Rayvin Callaway, Natasha Hightower, Caelan Person, Devyn Britt, Ashlin Usrey, Laura Fincher, Delana Crutti, Zeb Gattis, Haley Callanen, Cade McKee, Amber Morris, Brent Clark, Daniel Lam and Magon James.

Color: No.

Daylight 85B

Counties Converge for 4-H Blanchard Springs Outdoor Day

Nine counties teamed up to host 4-H Blanchard Springs Outdoor Day on June 12 with more than 123 4-H members, adults and agents attending from Stone, Izard, Baxter, Independence, Searcy, Cleburne, Marion, Van Buren and Sharp counties. 4-H member learned safe blade handling/knife skills, campfire cooking and proper tent set up, and created crafts with outdoor materials. After the educational sessions, 4-H members enjoyed lunch and a water balloon fight before exploring the surrounding areas. ■



4-H members enjoy a water balloon fight.



Members who attended the 4-H Blanchard Springs Outdoor Day take a break from action for lunch.



White County

4-H Teams to Represent Arkansas Nationally

Two White County 4-H teams are headed to national competitions late July. The White County senior Forestry Team will compete at the National 4-H Forestry Invitational July 23-27 in Weston, West Virginia. The team placed first overall at the State 4-H Forestry Contest in May. At nationals, they will test their knowledge of tree identification, tree insects or

disorders, forest evaluation, and the forestry industry.

The White County 4-H Wildlife Habitat Education Program (WHEP) senior team represent Arkansas at the National WHEP Contest in Milford, Iowa, July 30 – August 2. The team won first place at the State WHEP contest in April. At nationals, they will testing their knowledge on the ecoregion of the Great Plains Grasslands.



Left to right: Madison W., Ellie F., (Coach) Jan Yingling, Delaney W. and Jack P.



Top row- Jonathan W., (Coach) Misty Watkins, Bottom row- Caitlin C., Madalyn J., Delylia S.

Both teams have put in a great amount of work and preparation into these contests and will represent Arkansas 4-H in a big way. We wish them the best of luck! ■

Arkansas County Extension Homemakers Donate Comfort Pillows

Members of the Arkansas County Extension Homemakers have made it their mission to help others. Recently, they enjoyed a day of fellowship, fun, food at the Arkansas County Cooperative Extension, where they donated their time and talent cutting material, sewing and delivering 53 comfort pillows to the DeWitt City Hospital and Nursing Home. The pillows are made of machine-washable fabric and stuffed with fiberfill for easy care. It's just a little thing, but it can remind others that someone cares! ■



Arkansas County Extension Homemakers donated 53 comfort pillows to the DeWitt City Hospital and Nursing Home.

Pumpkin Hollow: Showcasing A-Maze-ing Technology

Pumpkin Hollow in Clay County has been creating mazes for 25 years — but this year was very different. With the help of Extension and many community partners, owner Ellen Dalton and her family took a new approach to creating the maze — this time using precision agriculture. The Daltons collaborated with the Extension Service and local equipment distributors to plant their corn-field with a high-tech planter in the spring, saving time and labor later in the season.

“This was such an incredible experience,” Dalton said. “I got to ride in the tractor as the maze was planted and see the planter turn on and off. It saved a lot of work from the way we have designed the maze in the past, which was walking the six-acre field in June, measuring, marking with ribbons and flags, then cutting the design in the field.”

Other community members got involved in the process too, including a seed company representative, local farmers and Piggott High School art teacher Jerri Tate. Once the corn maze



Planting crew from left to right: Spencer Gramling, Kyle Runsick, Allison Howell, Darrell Dalton, Ellen Dalton, Jack Dalton, Chris Leible, Adam Pulliam.

design was complete, the drawing on graph paper was digitized by Jason Davis, extension ap-

plication technologist. Davis mapped the information necessary for John Deere’s system to plant the corn on a much larger scale and replicate the design in the field.

The maze was planted April 25, with seed donated by Dyna-Gro. Clay County Extension Agent Allison Howell and Davis coordinated the work, noting that construction of this high-tech corn maze highlights the capabilities of modern ag technology and showcases the collaborative efforts of the many involved in the process.

“In years past, maze construction was time consuming, requiring a lot of physical labor,” Howell said. “Fast forward to this year, and the alleys of the corn field that are typically cut out were never even planted.”

Videographer Ben Aaron, in the office of Communications, created a [video](#) of the process. ■



Discounted Tickets Available for Dinner at the Vines

Extension employees can purchase discounted tickets to the 3rd annual Dinner at the Vines event on Sept. 26 at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center.

Tickets cost \$125 per person, but employees can purchase them for \$65. The event includes a tour of the Master Gardeners demonstration garden at the center, a locally sourced dinner served lakeside, online and live auctions, and entertainment by the Kordsmeier Family.

About three-quarters of the tables have been purchased. For tickets, visit <https://uada.formstack.com/forms/donate4h>. ■



UA Food Science Student Interns with Veggie-to-Value Bootcamp

Extension's Local, Regional & Safe Foods team welcomes Kamreon Riley as our summer 2023 intern for the Veggie-to-Value Food Entrepreneur Bootcamp! Kam is an incoming senior at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville where he majors in food science. He began working with the program in May.

Kam will work with Veggie-to-Value clients through July 27 by conducting client intakes, processing test batches of initial recipes, advising on changes to recipes, assisting clients in the kitchen, maintaining records, and much more. This bootcamp will allow him to gain skills and also provide an opportunity for the three clients to develop, refine and eventually market their food products. Much of the food processing activities take place in the Cleveland



Kamreon Riley

County Share Grounds kitchen in Rison and the fresh produce will be bought from Barnhill Orchards in Lonoke.

In September, the bootcamp will conclude with a client and product showcase during the Cleveland County Fair, Sept. 13-16.

We are excited to offer this opportunity through USDA AMS Specialty Crop Block Grant 2021-SCBGP21SCB-PAR1100-00. ■



Veggie-to-Value group touring Barnhill Orchards. Back row (L to R): Paul Lipe (client), David Hill, Dr. Amanda Perez, Coach A (client), Kam Riley, Loretta Cochran (client), Karen Reynolds (ADA) Front Row: Ekko Barnhill

COMMUNICATIONS STATION

Video – What's New

- Ben Aaron worked with Faulkner County Agent Krista Quinn, a certified arborist, to create a video on Recovering from Tree Damage after a Storm
- Ben Aaron worked with Clay County Agent Allison Howell on a video highlighting how precision ag was used at Pumpkin Hollow. The farm is owned and operated by the Dalton Family in Piggott.

Follow our UADA YouTube Channel to access more videos.

Do You Know how to get Your Web Pages Updated?

Visit uada.edu/web-help.

Publications

Our newest publication is the 2023 Arkansas Agriculture Profile Pocket Facts. This 40-page booklet also makes

a great giveaway to local stakeholders and at ag-related expos. You can order copies through the Publications Ordering System. The costs is about \$2/booklet.

In the News

See what we're writing about and sending to media in July. Got a story idea? Email tcourage@uada.edu.

Social Media

Our Division Social Media Policy was approved July 1, 2023 and is in effect. Get social media help. Social Skills Open Office Hour: Register for our next session on Aug. 17 at 9 a.m.

Print Shop

Need printing? Request a quote from our Print Shop printshop@uada.edu. The UADA Print Shop are the Digital Media Center are sometimes confused. The Digital Media Center is housed in the Office of Communications on the first floor of LRSO. This is where we create signs and posters. The UADA Print Shop at the back of the warehouse. Pick up prints, publications and business cards. ■



LeadAR

LeadAR Class 20 member Daniel Phillips, State Surveyor at the Arkansas Department of Transformation and Shared Services, reflected on the first LeadAR Class 20 virtual seminar. Read details [here](#). ■

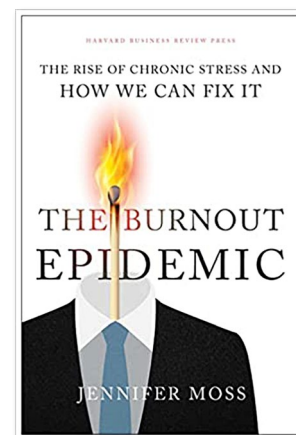


LEADERSHIP LUNCH & LEARN

UofA DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & EXTENSION University of Arkansas System | *feed your mind*

Leadership Lunch and Learn

The June 2023 Leadership Lunch and Learn book review featured *The Burnout Epidemic*, written by Jennifer Moss and reviewed by Dr. Rochelle Sapp, leadership development specialist in the Office of Learning and Organizational Development at the University of Georgia. Read details [here](#). Watch recording [here](#). ■



UA Livestock Judging Camp Helps Youth Learn Skills

Thirty-two students participated in the University of Arkansas Animal Science Youth Livestock Judging Camp held June 26-28 at the University of Arkansas. Dr. Bryan Kutz, instructor and youth specialist with Animal Science, led the camp with help from 4-H youth livestock instructor Allison Harman, Animal Science faculty and staff, and livestock judging team members.

Youth ages 9-17 from Arkansas and surrounding states learned about current types in market and breeding cattle, sheep, meat goats, and swine. They learned about the priorities in livestock selection, about current industry trends and improved their communication skills through the presentation of oral reasons.

These students worked tirelessly learning all they could about sheep, cattle, hogs, goats and the reasons and terminology that accompany each species. The camp evaluated some great livestock at the Farmington FFA show barn, Bignar

sheep and goat, Willow Springs Cattle Co., and the University of Arkansas teaching farm. On the last day, attendees demonstrate what they had learned in the form of a judging contest that consisted of 7 classes with oral reasons and questions. The camp concluded with an awards presentation.

A big thank you goes out to Dianna and Butch Watson, Allison Harman, Stacey Stone, past and present UA livestock judging team members, parents, chaperones, and all who helped make the camp a success. ■



New CES WIFI Now Available (State Office)

Many of you have probably noticed all the activity around the state office buildings installing new ceiling-mounted hardware. This equipment is our new wireless network system, and it is ready for use.

As previously, we offer both secure (CES-Staff) and unsecured (CES-Guest) wireless internet access through our wireless system. It is recommended that employees use the secure network which will require the one-time installation of Aruba Onboard with a Network Profile setup. Please refer to our website for more information and to obtain instructions for connecting to our wireless networks with your various devices. <https://employees.uada.edu/wifi>

Bluetooth Security

Bluetooth connections to your mobile devices can be used to connect to wireless headsets, transfer files, and enable hands-free calling while you drive, among other things. Most of the time, a user must allow a Bluetooth connection to occur before data is shared - a process called "pairing" - which provides a measure of data security. But just like Wi-Fi connections, Bluetooth can put your personal data at risk if you are not careful. Here are some steps you may wish to take when using Bluetooth:

- Turn Bluetooth off when not in use. Keeping it active enables hackers to discover what other devices you connected to before, spoof one of those devices, and gain access to your device.
- If you connect your mobile phone to a rental car, the phone's

data may get shared with the car. Be sure to unpair your phone from the car and clear any personal data from the car before you return it. Take the same steps when selling a car that has Bluetooth.

- Use Bluetooth in "hidden" mode rather than "discoverable" mode. This prevents other unknown devices from finding your Bluetooth connection.

Provided by the Federal Trade Commission (FCC)

Zoom Pro Tip – Stay Up to Date

If you've logged into your Zoom app recently, you may have seen the notice asking you to update your Zoom client. The Zoom Team is now enforcing a minimum version of the Zoom app. Having the most recent updates for Zoom ensures you can use all the latest features and keeps your Zoom experience running smoothly. Keep your Zoom app up to date by [checking for updates regularly](#). ■

Hacks from Hump Day



- [Compare two or more worksheets at the same time in Excel](#)
- [Quick Start to OneDrive](#)
- [Identify Phishing Scams](#)
- [How to Stay Signed in to your Zoom Desktop App](#)
- [More Zoom Resources](#) ■

2023 TECH TUESDAYS WEBINARS

Have you missed any past Tech Tuesday webinars or want to join future webinars? Check out the recordings and other resources on the Tech Tuesday [Blog page](#). More Tech Tuesday topics coming soon! Did you miss [June's PDF Remediation with Adobe Acrobat Pro and Foxit Tech Tuesday](#)? Check out the recording and resources.



Save the Date! 
Extension Employee Conference
Monday, December 4, 2023
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Little Rock State Office Auditorium

Benefits Corner

The 403(b)/457(b) Retirement Plan

The 403(b)/457(b) Retirement Plan is a defined contribution retirement plan. An employer, its employees—or both—make regularly scheduled contributions to an account set up in each participating employee's name. Each account's value depends on the amounts the employer and employee contributes and investment gains or losses on those contributions.

The University contributes to your 403(b), and you are required to make basic contributions. You can elect to make additional voluntary contributions on a pre-tax or after-tax (Roth) basis. This contribution design is intended to support meaningful retirement savings for all participants.

In 2023, you can contribute up to the IRS annual limit of \$22,500 to your 403(b). If you will be 50 or older in 2023, you can contribute an additional \$7,500 in catch-up

contributions in 2023. If you reach the 2023 403(b) contribution limits, you can contribute up to \$22,500 (or up to \$30,000, if you're 50 years old or older) to the 457(b) in 2023.

Changes to Your 403(b)

Login to Workday to:

- Start, stop, increase, or decrease your voluntary 403(b) contribution.
- Choose between pre-tax and/or after-tax (Roth) contributions.
- Switch between TIAA and Fidelity. Note: Only one retirement plan vendor can be selected each pay period. You can switch vendors as often as you choose. ■



Tools for the Trade:

Journal of Extension & Extension Foundation

Extension supports two organizations to provide professional development opportunities for employees.

The Journal of Extension (JOE) provides a venue for professionals and students to publish original and applied research findings, share successful educational applications, scholarly opinions, educational resources, and challenges on issues of critical importance to Extension educators. JOE is free for everyone to access

and does not have publishing fees for articles thanks to financial support of Extension systems across the U.S.

The Extension Foundation helps “Cooperative Extension professionals find innovative ways to generate greater local impact.” The foundation offers professional development, leadership and team development, and a video resource library. You can access these at <https://connect.extension.org/>. ■

Grants & Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
Produce Safety Program FY24	193,966	Amanda Philyaw Perez	Arkansas Agriculture Department
EXCITE 3 Implementation Phase	94,758	Bryan Mader	Extension Foundation
2023 Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies Counselor and Access to Maximize Participation (CAMP III) Access	43,800	Creenna Bocksnick	National 4-H Council
AR Future AG Leaders Tour	5,000	Julie C Robinson	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
APEX Accelerator FY24	509,925	Melanie Berman	US Department of Defense (DOD)
Developing Climate-Smart Grain Markets in the Mid-South	1,149,359	Mike Daniels	Mississippi State University
Best Care FY24	225,625	Rebecca M. Simon	Arkansas Department of Education
Establishing the Infrastructure to Develop Prediction Tools for Diseases & Affecting Cotton to Better Inform Management Decisions (UAR) - Amend #3	157,000	Terry Spurlock	USDA - Agricultural Research Service
Work Order #4 - Corn/Weed Control - HN23USAJBB	7,350	Tom Barber	Bayer CropScience LP
Work Order #5 - Soybean/Weed Control - HN23USAJBF	10,290	Tom Barber	Bayer CropScience LP
TOTAL AWARDS FOR JUNE 2023: 2,397,073			

Personnel Changes

Welcome Aboard:

Kathryn Mariette Spidel – Administrative Specialist I, Washington County

David Stephens – Navigator Project Specialist - Ag Economics and Ag Business, Little Rock

Shannon Baker – Administrative Specialist II - Family & Consumer Sciences, Little Rock

Jane Hubsch – Administrative Specialist I, Arkansas County

Gabriel Pace – County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Desha County



Farewell to:

Millie J Collins – County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Sciences, Cross County

Melody Ann Curtis – Administrative Specialist II - Family & Consumer Sciences, Little Rock

Charla Hammonds – County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Sciences, Logan County

Tamye Lynnette Allen – County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Sciences, Boone County

Linda Latus – 4-H Program Assistant, Independence County

Norman J Duquette – Technical Support Specialist, Information Technology, Little Rock

Kyle Cunningham – Associate Professor - Forestry, Forest Resources, Little Rock

Mike Darrell McClintock – County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Boone County

Brenda Cox – County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Sciences, Poinsett County

Luke Duffle – County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Garland County

Stephanie Prince – County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Science, Lonoke County

Holly Berry – Administrative Specialist III, Stone County