

# BLUE LETTER

The University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Monthly Letter

No. 3752 • December 2014

## Happy Holidays!

### FROM THE DIRECTOR

2014 has been a year of changes for us. We said good-bye to many longtime staff and faculty members; we welcomed new staff, faculty and administrators. We delved into high-profile projects such as launching a new website; helping voters navigate difficult ballot issues and bringing research to the controversy over a Newton County hog farm.

4-Her's from all over the state learned about the political process in a hands-on way. Our fitness initiatives introduced faculty and staff to new ways to improve their health and a fitness rally, featuring "Biggest Loser" winner Becky Comet, who kept our Strong Women and Men members and others inspired. It was also a year that many of our faculty received high honors from peers in their field and from their colleagues at Extension.

Near the end of 2014, we launched a program to help us move into 2015: The Friends campaign. This campaign is enlisting the help of Extension's friends to serve as advocates for our mission. The campaign is being launched in all 75 counties, connecting to our grassroots supporters. We hope that, with a little help from our friends, decision makers and other stakeholders will gain a deeper appreciation for the work we do every day.

I want you to know that your hard work during 2014 is very much appreciated, and I want to extend my best wishes to all the Extension family in 2015.

— Tony Windham

### Water quality forums planned for priority watersheds

County agents in priority watersheds are helping the Public Policy Center put together community forums on water quality as part of an Arkansas Natural Resources Grant focused on outreach and education about nonpoint source pollution of water.

Arkansas has 10 priority watersheds, which are determined by the presence of too much pollution in waterways for their intended use or other factors, such as waterways crossing state lines. The Arkansas Natural Resources Commission encourages communities to create watershed groups or undertake projects to reduce water quality problems.

Residents, business owners, local government officials/employees, recreational groups, existing watershed group members and other stakeholders are invited to attend forums in priority watersheds to discuss water quality concerns and priorities

*(Continued on page 5)*



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE  
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System

University of Arkansas,  
United States Department of  
Agriculture, and County  
Governments Cooperating

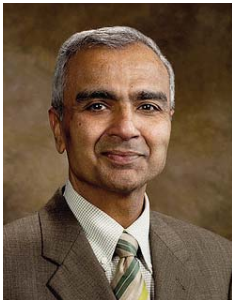
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DR. TONY WINDHAM  
Associate Vice President for  
Agriculture - Extension and  
Director, Cooperative Extension Service

# Verma inducted into Nebraska engineering hall of fame



**Dr. Lalit Verma**

Lalit Verma, head of the Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, has been inducted into the Hall of Fame of the Biological Systems Engineering Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Verma was the first Agricultural Engineering Ph.D. graduate of the Nebraska department, receiving his degree in 1976 for his work on storage of mechanically-formed hay packages developed under the guidance of Ken Von Barga. Hall of Fame members are chosen by emeritus and current faculty in the department. The hall has 35 members.

“We all have people who are agents who enable us to accomplish our goals in life,” Verma said, citing several friends and faculty members with connections to the Nebraska department. “My primary enabler in all matters has been my wife of over 35 years, Aruna, whom I am eternally grateful to.”

“Lalit’s induction into the Hall of Fame is a reflection of the professional and academic respect he has earned from across his field,” said Dr. Mark Cochran, VP-Agriculture and head of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. “We in Arkansas are equally proud of his accomplishments.”

Verma served as president of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers for 2013-2014 and is currently a member of its board of trustees. In 2008-2010, he was interim dean of the UA Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences and the associate vice-president for academic programs for the Division of Agriculture.

Verma was also the program director of the M.S. degree program in biomedical engineering in the UA College of Engineering. Prior to this he was the professor and head of Department of Biological and Agricultural Engineering at Louisiana State University.

Verma is a Fellow of ASABE, the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering and the Institute of Biological Engineering. ■

## Liz McKay honored at retirement

After 29½ years of dedicated service to the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Research and Extension in Union County, Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Liz McKay bids farewell. Friends, co-workers and colleagues gathered in El Dorado to honor Liz at the annual Holiday Foods celebration before a crowd of 285 people. Liz was honored for her years of service by Ouachita District Director Beth Phelps, FCS President Diane Clement, her Union County staff and her good friends of the Union County EHC. Liz’s official retirement date is January 5, 2015. Best Wishes, Liz! ■



**Beth Phelps presents years of service award to retiring county FCS agent Liz McKay.**

## BENEFITS CORNER

### Use It or Lose It? No...Donate!

**Annual leave** must be earned before it is taken with approval from the appropriate supervisor. Annual leave is cumulative; however, no employee may have an accumulation in excess of 240 hours (30 days) on December 31 of each year. During the calendar year, accrued leave may exceed 30 days, but those days in excess of 30 will be lost if not used before December 31 of each year.

**Sick leave** must be earned before it is taken and may be taken for the illness or injury of the employee or an immediate family member; the death or serious illness of the employee’s immediate family member; medical, dental or optical treatment for the employee or an immediate family member. Sick leave is cumulative up to a total maximum of 960 hours (120 days).

#### **What can you do with unused, accrued leave? Donate it!**

Donations can be made to the **Catastrophic Leave Bank** through December 31 in one-hour increments. If the donation of leave would reduce your combined annual and sick leave balance to less than 80 hours you are not allowed to donate. **To donate, send completed form EBEN-103 to Laverna Waddell in Financial Services.**



# English receives 2014 Regional Excellence in Extension Award

Dr. Henry English, director, Small Farm Program at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, received a 2014 Regional Excellence in Extension Award presented at the 127th Annual Meeting of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) in Orlando, Florida, recently.

English, one of five regional award winners, received the award for providing education and technical assistance to socially disadvantaged, small and limited resource producers in 22 counties in eastern and southwestern Arkansas. English won the 1890 Institutions Region Award.

Presented by the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Cooperative Extension, the regional Excellence in Extension Awards are presented to Extension professionals who have exhibited visionary leadership and diversity in educational programming.

Recipients have also exhibited sustained and meritorious programming, have at least five concurrent years of experience in Extension and have made a positive impact on constituents served. English received a plaque and cash award. ■



**Dr. English (second from left) is shown here with (l-r) Dr. Ann Bartuska, USDA deputy undersecretary for research, education and economics; Dr. English; Dr. James Garner, dean/director, UAPB School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human Sciences; Dr. Jacquelyn McCray, UAPB interim vice chancellor for academic affairs; and Dr. Jimmy C. Henning, Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) chair and director of Extension, University of Kentucky.**

## Teen Leaders participate in Citizenship Workshop

On Saturday, Nov. 22, 20 4-H youth from Lonoke, Prairie, Monroe and Sebastian counties gathered at the Lonoke County Extension Office for a Teen Leader Citizenship Workshop.

Their morning began with an ice-breaker that challenged them to design a flag representing their local community. Next, youth split into two teams to compete in a Citizenship 101 Jeopardy game – the winning team earned bragging rights and got to eat lunch first. Then the 4-H Teen Leaders participated in the “Agree to Disagree” activity from the new 4-H Citizenship curriculum. The group had a great discussion on current issue topics including anti-bullying policies, seatbelt law and immigration.

The special guest speaker was Kerry Baldwin from the Arkansas Secretary of State's Office who had an interactive presentation on the history and importance of voting, women's suffrage and voter registration.

After lunch, the youth concluded the workshop with a community service project for Children's Hospital.



Evaluations indicated that after the workshop 100 percent of participants were more aware of community needs, increased skills and leadership abilities, and intend to engage in community service in the future. ■

**What's new in publications? Find out at:**

<http://www.uaex.edu/publications/new.aspx>

# 'I Dig Arkansas' at 2015 Arkansas Flower and Garden Show

Show how much you dig Arkansas Feb. 20-22 at the 2015 Arkansas Flower and Garden Show.

This year's show at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock will feature 140 booths, nearly 100 vendors and large show gardens packed with design ideas. Past shows have drawn more than 12,000 visitors.

The three-day show will feature a series of expert lecturers Friday and Saturday, including horticulturist Janet Carson; artist Linda Palmer; forester Tamara Walkingstick; Pulaski County Master Gardener Jane Gulley; Victor Ford, director of the Southwest Research and Extension Center; Bob Byers, associate executive director of Garvan Woodland Gardens; Tina Marie Wilcox, head gardener and herbalist at Ozark Folk Center State Park; Mary Evans, owner of Garden Makeovers; Megan Thomas, business manager for Antique Brick Outdoors; and Arkansas Master Naturalist Ellen Chagnon.

Visit [www.arflowershow.org](http://www.arflowershow.org) for tickets and other info. ■

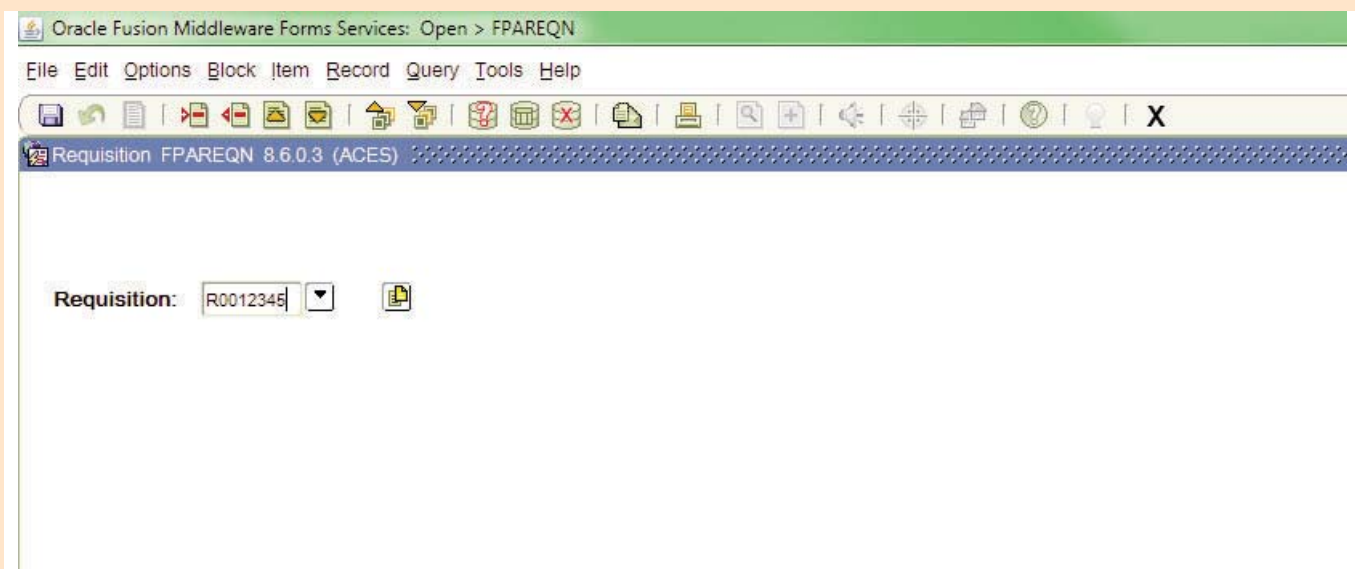


**Tina Marie Wilcox of the Ozark Folk Center talks to the audience about herbs at the 2014 Arkansas Flower and Garden Show.**

## Financial Services Tips

### Helpful hints from the purchasing desks of Jo Ann and Karen

- ✓ When doing a requisition to pay for food, remember to submit your signed FIN-214 with list of attendees to Financial Services with the original invoice. Staple all these documents together with a routing slip. When your requisition has gone through the approval process, everything will be together and ready to process.
- ✓ There is no need to add a line for your invoice concerning tax; Banner will calculate the sales tax for you. Even if the tax on your invoice is different from what your local tax base is, our Accounts Payable department will make the necessary corrections.
- ✓ If you have to get out of your requisition for any reason before completion, always write down the assigned requisition number. When you go back to complete, enter the exact number that Banner assigned. When entering the number, always include the letter R and two zeros. For example, you would type R0012345 instead of 12345. This will make the process run smoothly.



Contact us anytime: Jo Ann Fish, 501-671-2296, [jfish@uaex.edu](mailto:jfish@uaex.edu); Karen Clark 501-671-2060, [kclark@uaex.edu](mailto:kclark@uaex.edu)

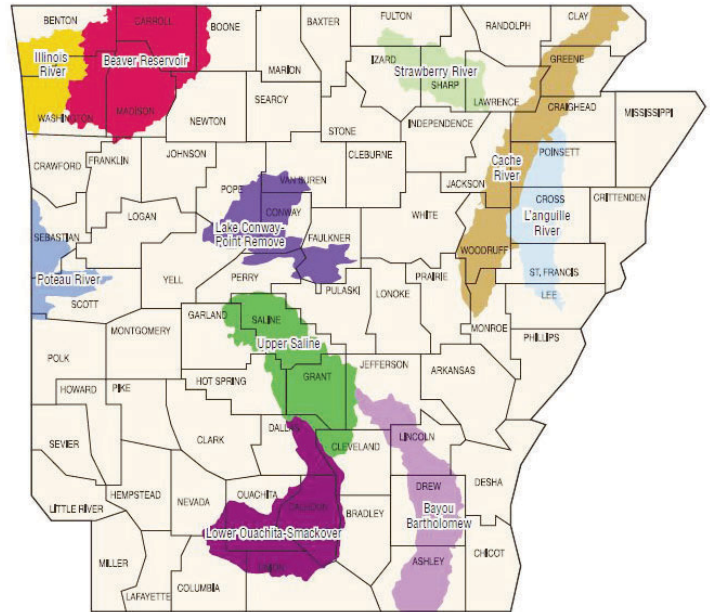
## Water quality forums (cont. from page 1)

for addressing pollutants. Water quality forums have already taken place in Poteau and Cache watersheds. Participants identified flooding as a community priority.

Upcoming water quality forums:

- Dec. 11 – Strawberry Watershed – 9 a.m.-12 p.m., Ozarka College, Ash Flat
- Jan. 21 – Upper Saline Watershed – 5-8 p.m., Grant County Extension Office, Sheridan

Meeting information is shared with local media, active watershed groups, Conservation Districts, Extension mailing lists and on social media. If you live or work in a priority watershed, consider attending your local forum and invite other stakeholders to attend. ■



Arkansas' priority watersheds 8-digit HUC

## Meet the *new* employees!



**Mark Brown**  
County Extension Agent -  
Agriculture - Water Efficiency  
Pulaski County

- **What's your background?**

My background consists of turfgrass management in the area of golf course management, sports fields and lawn care management. I

also have previous experience as a county extension agent.

- **What knowledge, skills and experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I bring to Extension a B.S. in turfgrass science, and I am currently pursuing an M.S. in plant science. My past experiences in turfgrass management and irrigation systems have given me the ability to continue the success of the Outdoor Water Efficiency Program that was started about four years ago with Central Arkansas Water.

- **What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

I would be glad to help out any Extension employees around the state if they have any questions

about outdoor water efficiency problems they may be experiencing in their area.

- **What would you like to accomplish your first year with Extension?**

I helped start the outdoor water efficiency program, so in the coming years, I hope to expand it and continue the success of the program.

- **What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

I looked to get back to the central Arkansas area, and when the opportunity came along to come back to Extension, I was excited to do so. I enjoy the satisfaction of helping the residents of the central Arkansas area with sprinkler system and turf problems that they have.

- **What are your interests or hobbies outside of work?**

Since I was in the golf course business, I really enjoy getting out and playing golf. I have two small girls, so I love spending time with them. ■





**Ruth Cook**  
EFNEP Program Assistant  
Hempstead County

• **What's your background?**

I have been a resident of Hope for 19 years. I attended U of A in Hope for almost two years, majoring in business administration. I plan to return

and graduate from the program. I am married with two sons ages 20 and 17. For the last five years, I was employed at the Hempstead County Courthouse as the head custodian.

• **What knowledge, skills and experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I have a knowledge of the EFNEP program by living life and watching people. This program has actually opened my mind up to unlimited ideas. It is a wonderful resource. I have a very energetic, creative spirit. I have the skills to speak to a crowd, big or small. My experience would be life and raising my children in a healthy eating environment.

• **What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

I am a creative cook and I love all people.

• **What would you like to accomplish your first year with Extension?**

With in my first year with Extension, I would like to learn everything I need to know to be successful in EFNEP. I also would like to come in contact with all personnel, resources and supporters.

• **What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

I wanted something new in my life, and I knew I could do the job. I also wanted to be able to do something that would help others.

• **What are your interests or hobbies outside of work?**

My family is my interest outside of work. I love to care for them. I am a caregiver to my mom and my sister, so I look forward to seeing them each day. My favorite hobby is reading, but I also love to look for new things growing in the woods that I can use to make centerpieces or arrangements. I also like to make jewelry and create original pieces you couldn't purchase in a store. ■



**Ryan McGeeney**  
Content and Project Specialist  
Communication Services  
Little Rock

• **What's your background?**

After two enlistments in the U.S. Marine Corps, I completed an undergraduate degree in political science at the University of South

Florida and a master's degree in journalism and mass communications at the University of Kansas while working as a freelance journalist. From 2009 to 2014, I worked as a reporter, photographer and videographer for a series of daily newspapers in Northwest Arkansas before moving to Little Rock in September.

• **What knowledge, skills and experience are you bringing to Extension?**

Much of my writing during the last two years has focused on agriculture and environmental issues, especially water quality concerns.

• **What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

I'm an avid outdoorsman who tries to get out of the city as often as possible.

• **What would you like to accomplish your first year with Extension?**

I'd really like to bring the stories of farmers, horticulturists, researchers and extension agents to light so that Arkansans can gain a greater appreciation of the importance of the work they're doing.

• **What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

I came to Extension for the opportunity to write about things that are actually important to me and for the incredible educational opportunities. Extension is just an incredible repository of knowledge.

• **What are your interests or hobbies outside of work?**

I'm a long-distance runner, a little bit of a bluegrass picker and seem to be becoming a pretty stubborn auto mechanic, against my better judgment. ■



**Temesgen Mulaw**  
 Program Technician -  
 Plant Pathology  
 Rice Research and Extension  
 Center, Stuttgart

• **What's your background?**

I was born and raised in Ethiopia. I have a bachelor's degree in plant sciences and a master's

degree in plant pathology from Ethiopia. I also got my Ph.D. in molecular plant pathology/environmental microbiology from the University of Vienna, Austria. After the completion of my Ph.D., I worked as a research associate for University of Maryland, Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology (IMET).

• **What knowledge, skills and experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I have been working as a plant pathologist and got international experience through collaborative research, training, workshops and meetings organized in different countries. Implementing these experiences and skills, I want to be part of a research group that can impact the agricultural production system of Arkansas. It is my belief that extension work will be successful only if based on solid scientific basis and applied research results. Therefore, I will work hard in collaboration with all stakeholders and researchers to bridge research and extension to alleviate production problems in Arkansas.

• **What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

I am always motivated to learn new ideas and techniques from any possible opportunities. I like collaborative research with different disciplines for solving problems. I am the kind of person who listens more than talks, but I am easy to talk to and share with.

• **What would you like to accomplish your first year with Extension?**

I would like to learn more about major bottleneck crop disease problems in Arkansas and learn more to improve my extension skills too. I also would like to be part of the research team to generate research-based information that can be used as a tool for extension work.

• **What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

I was mainly interested in Extension because it will help us design research ideas to be a practical problem-solving tool. I brought research experience and skill that

can help Extension to be based on information generated by scientific research outcomes.

• **What are your interests or hobbies outside of work?**

I do physical exercises, walk and hike in a natural environment, read the Bible and pray. Whenever I have time, I watch the Discovery, Travel and National Geographic TV channels. ■



**Jason Paul Ring**  
 County Extension Agent -  
 Family and Consumer Sciences  
 St. Francis County

• **What's your background?**

I have a B.S. in education. I started out after high school in culinary school.

• **What knowledge, skills and experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I have some background in the culinary arts, grew up canning, sewing, crocheting and raising various livestock with my grandparents.

• **What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

I am in a seminary program with the Episcopal Church in Arkansas, and I take pottery classes through East Arkansas Community College.

• **What would you like to accomplish your first year with Extension?**

I would like to start another EHC group, work closely with the 4-H program assistant to develop a Teen Leadership Club and start a Facebook group to promote Extension in the county.

• **What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

The chance to do something bigger to help my community, by providing them resources and materials to help those in my community live happier and healthier lives. I value Extension because my grandparents were a part of Extension (4-H) growing up, and I wanted to be a part of it and give back what Extension gave to them.

• **What are your interests or hobbies outside of work?**

I raise dairy goats, keep bees and I am working on developing a Community Supported Agriculture co-op garden. ■



**Scott Rutstein**  
 Assistant Director of Facilities  
 Management  
 Little Rock State Office

• **What’s your background?**

I have 22 years of active duty in the Air Force, now retired; six years as an aircraft mechanic/technical trainer and

16 years as a flyer (C-5s and C-130s). After retiring from the Air Force, I worked three years as a DoD contractor and then federal civilian employee.

• **What knowledge, skills and experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I have over 40 years of mechanical experience including facility maintenance/construction, over 30 years of experience in management, process improvement, problem solving, safety management and accident investigation and a fresh master’s degree in operations management from the University of Arkansas.

• **What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

I am thankful to be part of a large family here at LRSO. I have a huge heart and try as hard as possible

to pay it forward at every chance I get. My princess is my 17.5-pound pug named Harley. She has her daddy wrapped around her little paws.

• **What would you like to accomplish your first year with Extension?**

I’d like to learn as much as I can about my job as well as everyone else’s!

• **What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

I thought Extension was all about crops, cows, chickens, soil, etc., but I now realize Extension does so much more. We are truly a huge part of our state’s surroundings and the things that make it better for all Arkansans!

• **What are your interests or hobbies outside of work?**

I just built a new house in Austin last year, and I am trying to finish decorating it, but it is a slow process doing it by myself. I love riding my Harley (when it’s not soooo cold) on long trips along the back roads to experience all of the hole-in-the-wall towns and restaurants where you find the best food and the best people. ■

## Grants and contracts for Month Ending November 30, 2014

Project Title	Award Amount	Principal Investigator	Granting Agency
Southern Plant Diagnostic Network	\$ 25,000.00	Sherrie Smith	University of Florida
Small Poultry Flock Education and Disease Surveillance	50,000.00	Dustan Clark	USDA, APHIS, VS
SARE Model State Program 2014-2015 Program Assistant	22,222.00	Elena Garcia	University of Georgia
Arkansas Arts Council FY15 Collaborative Project Support Grant - Upstream Art	8,402.00	Jane Maginot	National Endowment for the Arts
Monroe County 4-H Shooting Sports Program	3,000.00	Valerie Turner	Monroe County Conservation District
TOTAL NOVEMBER 2014 AWARDS	<b>\$108,624.00</b>		



# Personnel changes

## Please welcome the following:

### **Mark Brown**

County Extension Agent - Water Conservation, Pulaski County, effective November 10, 2014.

### **Dorian Cox-Still**

Program Assistant - EFNEP, Miller County, effective November 3, 2014.

### **Ryan McGeeney**

Content Specialist, Office of Communications, effective November 14, 2014.

### **Rhonda Partney Wakelyn**

Instructor - In-Service Training, Program and Staff Development, effective October 20, 2014.

### **Jason Paul Ring**

County Extension Agent - Family and Consumer Sciences, St. Francis County, effective November 3, 2014.

### **Scott Rutstein**

Assistant Director of Facilities Management, Office of Director of Physical Plant, effective November 3, 2014.

### **Sabrina Thomas**

Administrative Specialist, 4-H and Youth Development, effective November 10, 2014.

## Extension says goodbye to:

### **Christina Mayo**

Program Assistant - EFNEP, Washington County, effective November 7, 2014.

### **America Morrison**

Program Assistant - EFNEP, Benton County, effective November 5, 2014.