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BLUE LETTER

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Recognizing our accomplishments

February continues the meeting extravaganza for Cooperative Extension and Division of Agriculture employees. It is an exhausting time for specialists, agents and staff, but the feedback we receive from stakeholders at these meetings is heartening. They continue to reinforce the need and importance of public research and extension today.

In the information overload times we live in today, it is very encouraging to have our stakeholders recognize that we are one of the few sources of relevant, timely and science-based information that you can really count on. Another told me recently that not only are our faculty and staff experts in their fields, but they tell it like it really is. This is who we are.

Please note in this *Blue Letter* examples of continuing and truly outstanding programs and activities by our many colleagues in the Division and the Cooperative Extension Service. From 4-H to families to health to crops to livestock and poultry to the environment, we work with everyone we can think of to provide science-based solutions, extended to improve the well-being of Arkansas and its citizens. They pay our bills, and we work very hard to provide more back than that investment.

I do want to commend the 4-H members, their parents, volunteers and our county agents who worked so hard to represent Arkansas at the Western National Roundup. This was a big deal, and I am very proud of the effort.

In addition, please note those colleagues honored at the recent Division Awards Ceremony in Rogers. Diane Cunningham, Jarrod Hardke, Ples Spradley, Carla Hadley – simply awesome. I hope that in the future, all of us think about other colleagues deserving of nomination for recognition and that we go ahead and nominate them. We have many. I noticed Janet Carson received another award, and I have stated before that Janet is an extraordinary credit to us and her profession, and this award is another reminder that many others see that quality as well.

Often, we focus on big audience size and program numbers and the bigger the better, but sometimes the impact of extension work can be changing the life of an individual. We are changing many lives every day, but it seems somewhat

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Arkansas 4-H'ers attend Western National Roundup

More than 1,100 youth from more than 33 states including Alberta, Canada, attended the 97th Western National Roundup Jan. 5-8 in Denver.

The Arkansas delegation of 58 4-H'ers, volunteers and staff from eight counties attended. This annual event was held in conjunction with the National Western Stock Show. The year's theme, "Level Up Your Leadership," was aimed at giving conference participants the confidence to take their leadership roles to the next level and create unique experiences to thrive in their self-defined future through 4-H and FFA.

Both 4-H and FFA members competed in 18 contests that ranged from livestock judging to family consumer sciences presentations. The Arkansas delegates participated in 11 contests at the event. In addition to competing, the delegates participated in workshops which focused on teambuilding, leadership and personal development. Workshops were led by Kyle Willfom, "Making the 4-H Brand"; Harriet Turk, "Just Deal With It"; and Kent Julian, who spoke about "The Ultimate Leadership Experience."

For further information about Western National Roundup and full results for each contest, please see the main conference website at <http://www.westernnationalroundup.org/>.

Arkansas 4-H teams compete at Roundup

The state winning Beef Quiz Bowl Team from Benton County competed in the Livestock Quiz Bowl contest at the Western National Roundup. They placed fourth in the contest and won the Sportsmanship Award. There were nine teams who competed in the contest. Johnny Gunsaulis coached the team comprised of Alisun Watson, Kimberly Kay, Joshua Kay and Alex Joyce.

The Faulkner County Livestock Judging team competed in the Western National Round Up Livestock Judging contest. At the contest, they judged five classes of cattle, three classes of hogs, two classes of goats and one class of sheep. They also gave four sets of oral reasons. As a team, they placed fourth in goats, tenth in swine and tenth overall. Trey Kelley was fifth high individual in goats. This year, 29 teams comprised of 118 individuals competed in the contest. Members of the team included Allison Sellers, Trey Kelley, Austin Cook and Hadley Fields.

Living well despite diabetes

Dr. Pamela Pruet, Mississippi County family and consumer sciences agent, recently shared a success story from a satisfied customer. She assisted a local man in affecting significant change in his daily life by providing instruction on the management of his diabetes. With the aid of materials and resources from the Living Well with Diabetes program, the client managed to change his diet and exercise habits, increase his knowledge of what to look for on food labels, where to find hidden sugars in foods and portion control. The changes he made led to significant decreases in his weight, waist circumference, blood glucose levels and dosage of diabetes medication. When commenting upon the initial aid he received from Extension, he "...found it informative, understandable, and the agent was only a phone call away."

Diabetes is a potentially life-threatening ailment that affects more than 372,000 Arkansans. A balanced diet and exercise are essential in the prevention and treatment of this disease, along with education to help with day-to-day management of the disease. The continued efforts of Extension agents such as Dr. Pruet and the availability of programs like Living Well with Diabetes play a vital role in combating diabetes in Arkansas. ■



The Arkansas delegation to the Western National Roundup in Denver.



Benton County Beef Quiz Bowl Team, left to right: Alex Joyce, Alisun Watson, Kimberly Kay, Joshua Kay and Johnny Gunsaulis.



Faulkner County Livestock Judging Team, left to right: Hadley Fields, Austin Cook, Trey Kelley and Allison Sellers.

Division of Ag, Ark Soybean Promotion Board re-up agreement, continue partnership

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture has signed a new five-year agreement with the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board, a partnership that will continue the research and extension work performed by division faculty to enhance the state's soybean industry.

"This new agreement will continue the special relationship between the division and the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board that provides industry-critical breeding programs, verification trials and a variety of new best practices to increase the efficiency and yield for Arkansas' soybean growers," said Mark Cochran, vice president-agriculture for the University of Arkansas System and head of the Division of Agriculture.

"The farmer assessments that come through the state checkoff program enable Division of Agriculture scientists to work on specific projects selected and approved by the farmer members of the promotion board," Cochran said. "These projects are coordinated into the overall Division of Agriculture soybean program."

The partnership between the Division of Agriculture and the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board began soon after its establishment in 1971. In the collaboration between the two, the Division of Agriculture provides several dollars in program support for every dollar provided by the promotion board. ■

JOIN US AT GALAXY 2017!

The Arkansas Galaxy Conference is an annual professional development activity for Extension employees. This year's theme is "Blue Jeans and Extension Dreams." Our speakers will present exciting new ideas at the Arkansas 4-H Center. Make plans to join us for a laid back and fun way to learn from your peers!

Registration is only \$90 and includes all meals.

Rooms booked separately – Please plan to stay at the 4-H Center to support 4-H.

Speakers:

Wednesday, March 15 – Dr. Mark Cochran, Vice President for Agriculture

Thursday, March 16 – Dr. Rick Cartwright, Interim Associate Vice President for Agriculture-Extension

Friday, March 17 – Elise Mitchell, author, "Leading Through the Turn." Each attendee will receive a copy of the book!

Organizational Meetings:

March 15, Wed., 9:00 a.m. – 4-H
March 15, Wed., Lunch – Credit Union

March 15, Wed., 3:30 p.m. – ESP
March 16, Thurs, 3:30 p.m. – NEAFCS

Our goal is for all attendees to leave Arkansas Galaxy Conference with an expanded network, new ideas and renewed energy.

To stay updated, go to www.uaex.edu/galaxy for more information.

TOP 3 REASONS TO REGISTER FOR

Galaxy 2017 

#1 Affordable!

#2 FUN (at the 4-H Center)

#3 Wear JEANS!

What's new in publications? Find out at:
<http://www.uaex.edu/publications/new.aspx>

Agriculture awards honor Extension faculty, staff

Four Cooperative Extension Service faculty and staff were among those recognized Jan. 13 at the Agriculture Awards Luncheon for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Rogers.

Diane Cunningham, an administrative support specialist in Monroe County who has served in numerous notable capacities in Clarendon throughout her 39-year career with the Division of Agriculture, received the Division of Agriculture Classified Support Personnel Award.



Dr. Rick Cartwright and Dr. Mark Cochran present the Division of Agriculture Classified Support Personnel Award to Diane Cunningham of Monroe County.

Jarrod Hardke, rice extension agronomist, was a member of the University of Arkansas Variety Testing Program team that won the John W. White Outstanding Team Award.



Jarrod Hardke, a member of the Variety Testing Program team which won the John W. White Outstanding Team Award.

The testing program is dedicated to identifying optimal conditions for success for the state's agricultural producers, through testing available crop varieties in various conditions and locations throughout Arkansas and providing unbiased, research-based recommendations based on their findings. Over the past three decades, the program has evaluated more than 12,000 cultivars, providing growers the best possible chance to succeed in challenging markets. Other team members include Fred Bourland, R. Esten Mason, Don G. Dombek, Donna Frizzell, Randall G. Miller and Richard D. Bond from the Department of Crop, Soil and Environmental Science.

Associate professor and extension pesticide safety education specialist **J. Ples Spradley** received the John W. White Outstanding Extension State Faculty Award for his work with the Arkansas Pesticide Safety



Ples Spradley, John W. White Outstanding Extension State Faculty Award recipient, with his family.

Education Program, which he coordinates. The program is credited with instructing more than 25,000 people in adopting improved protective measures for themselves, their coworkers, the general public and the environment while using pesticides effectively and economically for controlling pests.

Carla Hadley, a family and consumer sciences county agent in Miller County, received the John W. White Outstanding County Extension Educator Award. Hadley is widely known as an agent who works tirelessly to provide an extremely well-balanced education program for her county and who works well with other agencies to provide the best available resources for residents there.



Drs. Cochran and Cartwright present the John W. White Outstanding County Extension Educator Award to Carla Hadley of Miller County.

John W. White Awards for outstanding teaching, research and extension service are named for the U of A System's first vice president for agriculture when the Division of Agriculture was made a statewide unit of the U of A System in 1959. ■

Janet Carson receives Sturdy Oak Award

Janet Carson was awarded the Arkansas Green Industry Association's highest honor, the Sturdy Oak Award, at the Arkansas PLANTS Professional and Nursery Trade Show at the Hot Springs Convention Center.



Janet Carson.

The Sturdy Oak Award was established in 1981 to recognize individuals who have greatly contributed to the improvement and growth of the Arkansas Green Industry. Over the past 37 years, Janet has been selfless with her time and knowledge in advancing all aspects of horticulture in Arkansas. ■



Severe weather notifications

If you would like to receive notifications about severe weather forecasts by the National Weather Service, please contact Mary Hightower, mhightower@uaex.edu, to be added to the distribution list.

Garden Thyme a success

Columbia County Master Gardeners conducted their annual Garden Thyme educational seminar Jan. 28 in Magnolia.

Regional garden enthusiasts were treated to a full morning of presentations, great food, shopping and fellowship. Garland County Master Gardeners Lin Johnson and Yvonne Becker gave an informative presentation on greenhouses. After intermission, the crowd was thoroughly entertained by Lelia Scott Kelly, consumer horticulture specialist with Mississippi State University, who gave a presentation on annuals and perennials. One Master Gardener commented that Kelly could have a career in standup comedy if her day job doesn't work out.

Columbia County Garden Thyme is held annually on the last Saturday in January. ■



Columbia County Master Gardener president, Joyce Dailey, addressing the Garden Thyme audience.

2017 Arkansas Outdoor School Summer Day Camp dates set

Like us on Facebook @ AOS Summer Day Camp

Arkansas Outdoor School
AOS
Summer Day Camp

Archery • Rock Climbing • A

For Campers 7-15 Years Old • June 12-August 4
Creativity Camp • Teen Camp • Makers Camp
Natural State of Science • Sports of all Sorts • Pioneer Camp
Outdoor Adventures • Wilderness Skills • Greatest Hits

U of A DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & EXTENSION University of Arkansas System
For more info contact Mike Simmons: (501) 671-6004 or daycamp@uaex.edu or go to www.uaex.edu/daycamp

This year's Summer Day Camp will be June 12 through August 4. Remember that Cooperative Extension employees receive a 25% discount on Day Camp registration.

BENEFITS CORNER

February is Heart Health Month

Heart disease is a broad term used for a variety of diseases of the heart and blood vessels such as coronary artery disease, heart rhythm disorders called arrhythmias and defects of the heart present at birth, also called congenital heart defects. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women in the United States. It is an equal opportunity killer which claims approximately one million lives annually. It is also one of the most preventable. Making heart-healthy choices, knowing your family health history and the risk factors for heart disease, having regular checkups and working with your physician to manage your health are all integral aspects of saving lives from this often silent killer.

<http://www.theheartfoundation.org/heart-disease-facts/heart-awareness-month/>

The U of A Healthy Heart Program is available at no charge to eligible U of A members ages 18 and older. Members enrolled in the U of A Healthy Heart Program will receive periodic calls from a UMR Disease Management health coach to discuss ways to stay healthy. Call 866-575-2540 to enroll.

The Arkansas Heart Hospital facility is treated as In Network for the University of Arkansas System health plan effective January 1, 2017.



February 24-26, 2017

LITTLE ROCK, STATE HOUSE
CONVENTION CENTER

Arkansas Flower and Garden Show springs to life Feb. 24-26

Mark your calendar for Feb. 24-26 for the 2017 Arkansas Flower and Garden Show. This year's show pits some of the state's best landscapers and floral designers against each other – and the clock – during two live competitions beginning Friday morning.

The Landscape Challenge features a head-to-head contest between brothers Chris and Buddy Olsen, owners of two of Central Arkansas' best-known landscape firms, while floral designers will face off in creating towering tabletop designs.

This year's show, with the theme "Local Roots," will be held at Little Rock's Statehouse Convention Center. Single-day tickets are \$10, three-day passes are \$15. Children under 12 are admitted at no charge.

There will be beautiful gardens built on site, more than 100 vendors and dozens of speakers from across the nation. Friday evening will feature music from Wildflower Revue at our "Rock in the Garden" event, with delicious food available from local food truck vendors. Be sure to drop by to see your colleagues in the Division of Agriculture section.

The Arkansas Flower and Garden Show is a nonprofit organization, with the mission of promoting gardening and beautification in Arkansas, promoting local horticultural

Recognizing our accomplishments, cont.

uncommon for a person to step forward and speak eloquently about the efforts of one of our colleagues and one of our programs. But that happened recently for Pam Pruett in Mississippi County. I was privileged to read his written testimonial, and it was a powerful reminder of the great work of the Division of Agriculture and the Cooperative Extension Service, exemplified by Pam Pruett in this case.

Have a great February and let's all keep our minds on why we do this work. It is vitally important.

One last note. We have another tool to use in our campaign to not be the best kept secret. Communications has created an 80-second video, "Hometown Pride 2017 - U of A System Div of Agriculture," showing our agents working with stakeholders in a very positive way (<https://youtu.be/RNWPbRtKeLE>). Starting on **Monday, Feb. 27**, please share this video on Facebook, Twitter and email. We'll also make the video downloadable from the FTP and will post it to be shared from Facebook, starting on Feb. 27.

– Rick Cartwright

businesses and educating the public about gardening, landscaping and floral design.

Proceeds support college scholarships in horticulture-related fields in Arkansas and fund "The Greening of Arkansas" program, which provides community beautification grants to communities throughout Arkansas. Since 2006, the AFGS has given \$70,000 in scholarships and more than \$75,000 in grants.

Tickets and a full schedule of events can be found at <http://www.arkgardenshow.org/>. ■

Make a difference: Make a donation to Arkansas 4-H Foundation during Arkansas Gives on April 6

For a 12-hour period on April 6, a few minutes of your time can make a lifetime of difference through the Arkansas 4-H Foundation.

The Arkansas 4-H Foundation will be part of Arkansas Gives, a 12-hour giving event – from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Thursday, April 6 – for registered Arkansas nonprofit organizations.

"The April 6 event is a terrific opportunity for us to show our support for Arkansas' 4-H Youth Development, which has changed the lives of thousands of young people in more than a century," said Ewell Welch, executive director of the Arkansas 4-H Foundation.

"Our goal for this 12-hour period is \$1,500. It may seem small to some, but even modest amounts can make an enormous difference," he said. "And this year will be the final Arkansas Gives event. We hope our supporters will enable Arkansas Gives to go out with a bang while helping the 4-H Foundation."

The minimum donation during Arkansas Gives is \$25 and may be made online with Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express.

Last year, 600 nonprofits took part in Arkansas Gives with \$1.98 million raised.

The Arkansas 4-H Foundation owns and operates the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center, a multiple award winning conference center for Arkansas youth and businesses.

For more information about Arkansas Gives, visit www.arkansasgives.org. To learn more about the Arkansas 4-H Foundation, visit www.arkansas4hfoundation.com. ■

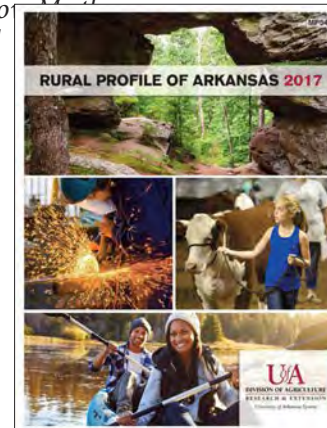
New publications explore community trends and funding opportunities

Community and Economic Development recently released two new important publications – *Rural Profile of Arkansas 2017* (MP541) and *Show Me the Money: A Guide to Funding and Financing Community and Economic Development in Your Community or Region* (MP539).

Rural Profile provides an overview of social and economic trends affecting Arkansas, including population, education, the economy, local government and health. The information can assist leaders to understand the economic and social environment in which they develop programs to maintain and enhance the well-being of Arkansans. Ten copies were sent to each county. Staff chairs are asked to coordinate with other agents and their district directors to ensure local leaders and state legislators receive the latest copy as soon as possible.

Show Me the Money presents 12 major funding strategies and over 50 real-world examples that have been successfully employed by communities and regions to finance community and economic development efforts. The guide describes a 12-step process for funding community development projects and a Fundability Checklist and Meter to help assess the likelihood that your approach is going to be successful. It will be useful for private, public, and nonprofit organizations. Each county received one copy.

Both publications are available online at <http://www.uaex.edu/publications/>. ■



Cuban farmers learn about Arkansas agriculture

During their first official agricultural tour of the United States in a half-century, farmers from Cuba discovered what American farmers have known for more than a century: help from the Cooperative Extension Service.



Dr. Mike Daniels visits with Winrock International staff, five Cuban farmers and two translators at the Cooperative Extension Service State Office.

Winrock International hosted five Cuban farmers in October, which included a visit to the John Maus farm in Conway County, part of the Arkansas Discovery Farms program. There, Mike Daniels, co-director of the Discovery Farms program; Brittany Singleton, extension associate; Conway County Staff Chair Alicia Huguen and Ag agent Kevin Van Pelt explained the work being done there. Angel Luis Michell Pellicier,

who heads up the Cuban Association of Farmers and Forestry Technicians in Santiago de Cuba Province, told Winrock officials that he was particularly impressed with how the Cooperative Extension Service

works directly with farmers to solve problems and boost production and efficiency. There were even some surprises. "What I was not expecting was the discipline within the agricultural system," says Pellicier. "Everything here is done at the time when it should be done, and I think that is also something we need to implement from this experience."

The Cubans admired the equipment they saw during their tour of Arkansas farms, noting that the only John Deere equipment in Cuba is what has been there since the 1950s. ■



Cuban farmers, interpreters and Extension faculty listen as Brittany Singleton, center, explains how water samples are collected and filtered at Discovery Farms.

Grants and Contracts for Month Ending January 31, 2017

Project Title	Award Amount	Principal Investigator	Granting Agency
Polk County 4-H GIF	\$ 10,560	Carla Vaught	Western Arkansas Planning and Development District, Inc.
4-H Youth Voice: Youth Choice Healthy Living Project	6,000	Lisa Washburn	National 4-H Council
Southern Plant Diagnostic Network	30,000	Sherrie Smith	University of Florida
Enhanced Pest Control System for Mid-South Soybean Production	18,340	Terry Spurlock	Louisiana State University
Enhanced Pest Control Systems for Mid-South Soybean	18,748	Travis Faske	Louisiana State University
Educating Producers and Industry on Implementation of the FSMA	180,000	Vic Ford	Arkansas Agriculture Department
Managing Crop Residues to Reduce Particulate Matter Emissions	279,206	Yi Liang	Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality
Total Awards for January 2017	\$542,854		

Personnel changes

Please welcome the following:

Debra Head

Associate Professor - Nutrition/EFNEP, Family and Consumer Sciences, effective January 3, 2016.

Extension says goodbye to:

Van Banks, County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Monroe County, effective January 10, 2017.

Pam Cannada, Program Assistant - 4-H, Searcy County, effective January 3, 2017.

Lisa Collins, Program Assistant - EFNEP, Jefferson County, effective January 31, 2017.

Tara Gentry, 4-H Program Assistant, Lawrence County, effective January 13, 2017.

Noel Goodwin, Program Associate - Cotton, Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences, effective January 5, 2017.

Andy Hendricks, Accounts Receivable and Funds Manager, Financial Services, effective January 20, 2017.

Janice Jones, Program Assistant - EFNEP, Pulaski County, effective January 3, 2017.

Neal Mays, County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Benton County, effective January 27, 2017.

Rex Roberg, Program Associate - 4-H, 4-H and Youth Development, effective January 3, 2017.

Jane Shofner, County Extension Agent - Family and Consumer Sciences, Franklin County - Ozark, effective January 31, 2017.

Belinda Weaver, Administrative Specialist, Financial Services, January 13, 2017.

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

Pursuant to 7 CFR § 15.3, the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services (including employment) without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, sexual preference, pregnancy or any other legally protected status, and is an equal opportunity institution.