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## BLUE LETTER

December 2024  
No. 3872



FROM THE DIRECTOR

# Merry Christmas!



It's hard for me to believe that we are already halfway through December, and I am trying to figure out what to say in my last article of the year. Based on my recent conversations around the organization, this year is not going down without a fight. It seems like meetings, events, and projects are continuing at a rapid clip right up until the last minute this year. That's great, in that it highlights the strong demand for the work that CES is doing. It can sure make for a hectic season, though.

I do what to take this opportunity to recognize a couple of specific events in December that I particularly appreciate. First of all, our organization – and the Division of Agriculture as a whole – was very well represented at the Arkansas Farm Bureau Annual Convention. UADA and Bumpers College shared a sponsorship this year, and this allowed us to snag one of the biggest exhibit spaces on the trade show floor. Carla Due, Ouachita District Director, spent an inordinate amount of time planning and organizing our presence at the meeting, and I think it was a huge success. All of our CES program areas were well-represented, along with the Experiment Station and Bumpers College. It was a great opportunity for us to highlight the comprehensive land-grant mission of the

University. I appreciate all of the agents, specialists, and staff who took time to participate – and there were many of you. I got a lot of great feedback from stakeholders who were really impressed by our contribution to the event.

The second thing I would like to draw attention to in December is not really a singular event but rather a widespread phenomenon within our organization at this time of year. Our 4-H clubs across the state are going the extra mile to serve their communities this Christmas season. Our 4-H youth (with considerable help from our agents and volunteers, of course) are managing food drives for the needy, gathering gifts for foster families, visiting and serving at local nursing homes, and generally giving of themselves and their talents to meet needs in their communities in a special way at Christmastime. Seeing kids experience the joy of giving, not just receiving, is a beautiful thing.

I hope everyone has an opportunity to take a bit of a break and spend some quality time with loved ones over the holiday. I look forward to seeing everyone in the new year.

Until then, Merry Christmas! ■

## INSIDE SCOOP

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- ...And much more!



# Extension Agents, Specialists, Staff Honored for Excellence

Employees were recognized for excellence and innovation on Dec. 2 during our annual employee conference at the state office in Little Rock. Faculty and staff celebrated a successful year of serving Arkansas families and communities this year.

John D. Anderson, extension director, commended this year's winners for their excellence and innovation and commitment to the Division of Agriculture's mission of strengthening agriculture, communities and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices.

This year's winners, who were nominated and selected by their peers, include the following:

## EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR – Brad McGinley

**“I’m extremely humbled to receive this award for doing a job every day that I love.”** Brad McGinley

Grant County extension agent Brad McGinley was named Extension Employee of the Year. In his 20-year extension career, McGinley has worked as an agriculture agent in six counties, including Grant County for the past decade.

“Brad has spent years building programs in agriculture and 4-H and has done a lot of innovative work,” Anderson said. “The Grant County Steakout fundraiser is a model for how to generate support for 4-H.” The event raised \$40,000 to support 4-H members attend camps, program and events throughout the year.



Earlier this year, McGinley stepped in as coordinator of the SeaPerch program. This year's contest was the largest with 66 teams from across the state. McGinley took four Arkansas 4-H teams to the international competition where they competed against 174 teams. One of the Grant County teams placed second.

## STATE TEAM AWARD — ARKANSAS FUTURE AG LEADERS TOUR



State Team Award winners the Arkansas Future Ag Leaders Tour team. From left to right, Lee Riley, Rachel Bearden, Keith Harris, Mike Daniels, Leigh Ann Bullington, Julie Robinson, Jesse Bocksnick, Lisa Davis. At far right, Extension Director John Anderson.

The Arkansas Future Ag leaders Tour is a five-day professional development opportunity for undergraduate juniors and seniors pursuing agriculture or ag-related majors. The students travel around the state to learn about careers Arkansas' number one industry. They also network with potential employers and learn about issues and policies impacting Arkansas farmers and the agriculture industry.

The program started in 2019. The team includes Rachel Bearden, Hot Spring County extension agent; Jesse Bocksnick, 4-H and Youth Development; Leigh Ann Bullington, Family and Consumer Sciences unit; Mike Daniels and Lee Riley, both with Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences; and Julie Robinson, Lisa Davis and Keith Harris, all with extension's Community, Professional and Economic Development unit.

# Awards Continued

## INNOVATION TEAM AWARD — CRITTENDEN COUNTY FARMERS MARKET

Before this past summer, Crittenden County residents had to drive to Memphis to get to the closest farmers market because the county lacked one of its own. Crittenden County extension agent Morgan Chrestman and Mishanna Lanes, a health program associate, changed that by establishing a Crittenden's County Farmers Market that operated for four months this year and gave residents access to healthy foods. Their work was part of the Arkansas High Obesity Program (ARHOP) that works to lessen obesity in 11 rural counties, including Crittenden.



State Innovation Team Award winners, Mishanna Lanes, program associate-health, left and Morgan Chrestman, Crittenden County extension agent, right, pose with Extension Director John Anderson.

## EARLY CAREER AWARD FOR STATE EXTENSION FACULTY— JAMES MITCHELL

James Mitchell, assistant professor for agricultural economics and agribusiness joined extension during the COVID-19 pandemic and developed critical programs when the beef supply chain was experiencing significant economic disruptions. His integrated extension and research program “Marketing, Risk Management and Policy strategies for Southeastern Agricultural Producers” has delivered impactful outcomes to stakeholders.



James Mitchell

“One of Dr. Mitchell’s most impactful contributions has been his work on fed cattle market policy, which has directly influenced policy positions at both the state and national levels” Anderson said.

## EARLY CAREER AWARD FOR PROGRAM TECHNICIAN/ASSOCIATE — BRANDON L. MATHEWS

In his role as program associate for economic development, Brandon Mathews serves as the program manager for the Division of Agriculture’s University Center for Rural Resilience and Workforce Development. Mathews leads the day-to-day operations and coordinates training and technical assistance, collaborates with research partners, and tells the story of Arkansas’ eight economic development districts. Mathews also has consulted with entrepreneurs and small businesses in Central Arkansas through the Arkansas Community Navigator Program. Last year, he helped establish an emergency assistance center for small businesses in Cross County that were affected by the spring tornadoes in Wynne. This year, he co-leads the Capacity Building through Grant Writing Training program.



Brandon L. Mathews

## EARLY CAREER AWARD FOR PROJECT / PROGRAM ADMINISTRATOR — REBEKAH HALL

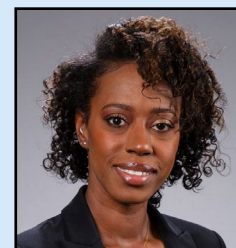
Rebekah Hall, a content writer in the communications department, works with faculty and staff throughout Extension to produce stories that show the impact of extension outreach through agriculture, 4-H, Family & Consumer Sciences, and Community, Professional and Economic Development programs.



Rebekah Hall

## EARLY CAREER AWARD FOR STATE SUPPORT STAFF— KHALIAH COLEMAN

Khaliah Coleman has worked for Extension since 2022 – first in the horticulture department, then in the development office, and currently as executive assistant for 4-H and Youth Development. In all three areas, she helped streamline administrative processes to improve efficiency.



Khaliah Coleman

# Awards Continued



## SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Four extension employees received scholarships to further their education and professional skills. Kristin Higgins, a program associate in the Public Policy Center, and Rebecca Simon, Family and Consumer Sciences instructor, received the Lynn R. Russell Endowed Award of Professional Excellence.

The Mildred and Liz Childs Professional Development Fund Scholarship was awarded to two individuals working in Family and Consumer Sciences: White County agent Katie Cullum and Heather Wingo, health program associate.

For more information about scholarships available for employees, visit [Endowments and Scholarships for the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service](#). ■

## 2024 SERVICE AWARDS

Total Years of Service – 1,365

5 Years	
Michelle Barnes	Arkansas County - Dewitt
Angela Berryhill	Business Office
Tristin Bolton	Family & Consumer Science
Karen Boone	Pulaski County
Aaron Cato	Horticulture
Tammy Christian	Credit Union
Elizabeth Daigle	Izard County
Karen DiCicco	Information Technology
Ashley Edgmon	Boone County
Rollins Elam	Crop, Soil & Environmental Science
Julia Gauntt	Family & Consumer Science
Anna Harlan	Stone County
Timothy Hicks	Community, Professional, & Economic Development
Ronnie Horn	Washington County
Lynn Lanthrip	Drew County
Pamela Luker	Pope County
Shauna McPherson	Print Shop
Kristena Merritt	Communications
Christina Myrkle	Pike County

5 Years (cont.)	
Vivian Okanume	Family & Consumer Science
Katie Reid	Family & Consumer Science
Kelley Rogers	Union County
Cody Salmon	Boone County
Jennifer Sansom	Little River County
Tim Stolzer	Vines 4-H Center
Sarah Stone	St. Francis County
Katie West	Saline County
Heather Wingo	Family & Consumer Science

10 Years	
Creenna Bocksnick	4-H & Youth Development
Lisa Brown	Horticulture
Janet Cantrell	Sevier County
Leah Collie	Crop, Soil & Environmental Science
Chelsea Conway	Sharp County
Jason Davis	Crop, Soil & Environmental Science
Kayla Gill	Vines 4-H Center
Mary Beth Groce	Faulkner County
Zachary Hill	Crop, Soil & Environmental Science
Oakley Johnson	Print Shop
Amanda Lingo	Business Office
Ryan McGeeney	Communications
Phalon Montgomery	Sponsored Programs
Robyn Ratliff	Sharp County
Kelly Rogers	Johnson County
Torrie Smith	Carroll County
Angie Stewart	Family & Consumer Science

15 Years	
Genean Butler	Agriculture & Natural Resources
Michelle Carter	Family & Consumer Science
Karen Clark	Crop, Soil & Environmental Science
Rose Dearin	Baxter County
Randy Forst	Horticulture



# Awards Continued

## 15 Years (cont.)

Ashley Foster	Family & Consumer Science
Katie Holland	Family & Consumer Science
Jane Maginot	Washington County
Ann Massey	Grant County
Andrew Plummer	Entomology & Plant Pathology
Brian See	Marion County
Mandy Tolbert	Entomology & Plant Pathology
Jessica Vincent	Family & Consumer Science
Jill Williams	Human Resources
Sandra Williams	Sponsored Programs

## 20 Years

Craig Allen	Poinsett County
Tony Baker	Vines 4-H Center
Leigh Ann Bullington	Family & Consumer Science
Brenda Duggins	Sponsored Programs
Chris Grimes	Craighead County
Stacey McCullough	Community, Professional, & Economic Development
Brad McGinley	Grant County
Kirby Owens	Facilities Management
Keith Statham-Cleek	Family & Consumer Science
Jessica Street	Benton County

## 25 Years

Kris Boulton	Saline County
Tamieka Daniels	Communications
Cynthia Martin	Family & Consumer Science
Chris Meux	Communications
Nathan Pearrow	Crop, Soil & Environmental Science
J J Pitman	Vines 4-H Center
Andy Plunkett	Information Technology
Taylor Smith	Print Shop

## 30 Years

Beverly Brown	Dallas County
Dustan Clark	Poultry Science
Brian Haller	White County
Louvenia Harris	Lee County
Chad Norton	Agriculture & Natural Resources

## 35 Years

Donna Crumpler	Ouachita County
Sandy Puckett	Crop, Soil & Environmental Science
Glenn Studebaker	Entomology & Plant Pathology

## 40 Years

Alta Lockley	Arkansas County - Dewitt
Ples Spradley	Entomology & Plant Pathology

## 45 Years

Laura Rooney	Lonoke County
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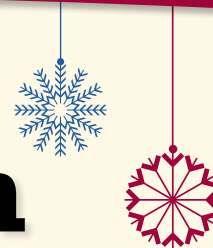
## 50 Years

Martha Thorpe	Communications
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Dr. Anderson presents Martha Thorpe with her 50 year service award.

# Horticulture Demonstration



Thirty-seven agents investigated four different pumpkin varieties from two different species of cucurbits: two well-known stacking varieties in *Cucurbita maxima* ('Cinderella' and 'Jarrahdale') and two new jack-o-lantern varieties in *Cucurbita pepo* ('Gumdrop' and 'Carbonado Gold'). Agents assessed potential varietal resistance to melonworms and powdery mildew as part of the state-wide horticulture demonstration orchestrated by specialists Aaron Cato and Amanda McWhirt.

Many specialty crop growers in the state are planting pumpkins to capitalize on the fall agritourism market and this demonstration aimed to give both growers and agents insight on new varieties to enhance grower profitability. Yield, the number of pumpkins per plant, and percentage of pumpkins they thought they could sell were recorded. In terms of pests and diseases, the agents scouted for melonworm and powdery mildew. Differences were observed in powdery mildew abundance as it was especially bad this year with warm rains in August and September, with this disease being most prevalent on 'Cinderella' and 'Jarrahdale'. It was also a bad year



Sheridan Elementary students are shown here with a wheelbarrow full of demonstration pumpkins.

for melonworm as the pest showed up in early August from tropical storms and damage was observed statewide. Overall, agents harvested 1017 pumpkins for a weight of 7123 lbs.! We were thrilled to see agents working with their growers and enriching their communities. More details about the demonstration can be read on the [Arkansas Fruit, Vegetable, and Nut Update blog](#). ■



# 4-H Shooting Sports Certifications



Five newly certified Level II shooting instructors recently joined the Arkansas 4-H Shooting Sports instructor crew. The new instructors trained and certified during the recent National Shooting Sports Level II workshop held Oct. 28-31, in North Carolina. During the training, participants gained certification in archery, rifle and shotgun disciplines.

The instructors included both Division of Agriculture staff and 4-H volunteers. The recent 4-H Level II instructors are:

- Dawson Bailey, Howard County agriculture agent - rifle
- Jesse Bocksnick, 4-H outdoor skills coordinator - rifle
- Lane Fritch, 4-H program technician - archery
- AJ Russell, Sebastian County 4-H volunteer - shotgun
- Katie West, Saline County 4-H agent - rifle



Dawson Bailey and Katie West train for their rifle shooting sport certifications.



Arkansas 4-H Level II Shooting Sports Instructors certified during National Shooting Sports Level II Instructor Workshop.

Level II instructors are crucial to 4-H Shooting Sports programs. This level of instructor is responsible for training shooting sports coaches (level 1 instructors) in a train-the-trainer format that carry on the county-based youth 4-H shooting sports programming. The entire training focuses on positive youth development and first shot fundamentals. ■





# Livestock Teams Compete at Nationals

The Arkansas 4-H state champion livestock teams competed at the North American International Livestock Exhibition in Louisville, Kentucky, last month. Arkansas was one of eight states with teams competing in all three of the national 4-H livestock contests.

The Stone County Livestock Skill-a-thon team, coached by Anna Harlan and Tyler Caston, placed 14th overall and 4th place in Identification. One member ranked 3rd High Individual in Evaluation, and another was the 9th High Individual in Identification.

The Polk County Livestock Judging team placed 19th overall and was the 6th place swine team. Jeremy Huff coached the team with support of county agents Claire Williamson and Bryan Maye. One team member was also recognized as the 3rd High Individual in Swine. The Madison County Livestock Quiz Bowl team, coached by



The Arkansas State Champion Livestock Judging team from Polk County 4-H. Left to right: Coach Jeremy Huff, Bella H., Ruby H., Ryan W., Claire W.

Caramie Edwards, made it to the Top 12 of the double-elimination bracket. One member placed 13th High Individual and another placed 18th High Individual in the contest.

The dedication and hard work of the participants and coaches are truly commendable. They have certainly made Arkansas proud! ■



The Arkansas State Champion Livestock Skill-a-thon team from Stone County 4-H. Left to right: Coach Anna Harlan, Tucker C., Ava K., Addison K., Blake M., Coach Tyler Caston.



The Arkansas State Champion Livestock Quiz Bowl team from Madison County 4-H. Left to right: Cache S., Ashlyn D., Vallie Y., Jade E.

## Front Page News You Can Use

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[Read our latest news stories](#)

#### Did you know?

- Arkansas has more than 41,000 farms.
- 57 percent of the state's land is forested
- Agriculture accounts for more than \$20 billion in value added to the state's economy

POCKET FACTS 2023

Arkansas  
Agriculture  
Profile



# Grants & Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
TVE29/Clomazone Positioning for Weed Control and Crop Safety in Conventional Rice in Heavy Soils.	2,000.00	Tom Barber	FMC Corporation
Identifying Herbicide-resistant Italian Ryegrass and Developing Best Management Practices for Control.	23,785.00	Tom Barber	Cotton Incorporated
Comparing Cumulative Plant Response from Herbicide Programs and Thrips Feeding on TryvOn™.	43,350.00	Tom Barber	Cotton Incorporated
Monitoring Nitrous Oxide Production and Emissions in Tailwater Recovery Systems.	89,894.00	Mike Daniels	University of Arkansas Fayetteville/USDA
TVE29/Clomazone Positioning for Weed Control and Crop Safety in Conventional Rice in Medium Soils.	4,000.00	Bob Scott	FMC Corporation
Determining an Economic Threshold for Tarnished Plant Bug on Thryvon Cotton.	35,000.00	Ben Thrash	Cotton Incorporated
Evaluation of Plant Population on the Growth, Yield, Quality, and Economics of Arkansas Cotton.	40,000.00	Zachary Treadway	Cotton Incorporated
Arkansas Cotton Verification Program.	60,000.00	Zachary Treadway	Cotton Incorporated
<b>TOTAL AWARDS FOR NOVEMBER 2024: \$298,029</b>			

# Personnel Changes

Farewell to:

Tanya Washington – Finance/Business Office - Cash Manager, Little Rock

