

BL

BLUE LETTER

December 2025

No. 3884



John D. Anderson

Merry Christmas!

As I write this, Christmas is fast approaching. I'm not ready for it, but that is nothing new. Seems like there are always a few more gifts to pick up or family arrangements to sort out or holiday travel to plan or Christmas baking to get done. Christmas has been on December 25th since at least the year 336, but it still manages to sneak up on me.

You may have noticed that my to-do list didn't include any work-related items. That is no minor omission. The end of the year is a busy time in Extension, and I know everyone in the system has been working hard to wrap up 2025's many activities. This has been a challenging year in many respects. Programmatically, we had to deal with major natural disasters and significant pest and disease outbreaks, the worst farm financial crisis in a generation, and the elimination of federal funding for SNAP-Ed (our flagship nutrition/health program for 30 years). Along with all that, shifting federal funding

priorities and a contentious budget process (including a record-long government shutdown) created a highly uncertain environment for administrative decision making. Albert Einstein once said that in the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity. He was right about that – evidently, he was a pretty smart guy.

For Extension, the difficult year of 2025 was an opportunity for us to demonstrate that the Cooperative Extension Service is not just relevant but essential. No other organization or agency (state or national) has the capacity, reach, or expertise to respond to immediate stakeholder needs in Arkansas the way Extension did repeatedly in 2025. We fulfilled our mission in a difficult environment. That makes it a great year in my book.

Enjoy a well-earned break, and I look forward to seeing you all next year.

Merry Christmas! ■

INSIDE SCOOP

2. Extension Employee Conference
3. Veterans' Business Summit
4. 4-H Teams Compete in Regional Robotics Tournament

5. Leadership Log
 6. Tech Corner
 7. Sowing Seeds of Excellence
- ...And much more!

Extension Employee Conference

BL
2

The Cooperative Extension Service celebrated the passionate, innovative work of faculty and staff at the annual employee conference Dec. 1 at the state office. This year's extension award winners include:

- **Employee of the Year:** Kelley Cochran
- **State Team Award:** Building Healthier Lives: Excellence in Statewide SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education
- **Innovation Individual Award:** Howard County Staff Chair Samantha Horn
- **Innovation Team Award:** Grow Your Own Groceries
- **Early Career Award for State Extension Faculty:** Hunter Biram
- **Early Career Award for Extension County Agent:** Lauren Cheevers
- **Early Career Award for Program Technician/Associate:** Mishanna Lanes
- **Early Career Award for State Support Staff:** Michael Coven

Read more about individual winners and scholarship recipients.

More photos are available at <https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjCCz3B>. ■



Dr. Anderson presents the Employee of the Year award and 25 Years of Service Certificate to Kelley Cochran.



State Team Award: Building Healthier Lives: Excellence in Statewide SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education. (L to R): Katie Holland, Tristin Bolton, Sarah David, Lindsey Sexton, Amy McClelland, Julia Gauntt, Dr. Anderson. Not pictured: Teresa Henson, and Angie Stewart.



Hunter Biram, winner of the Early Career Award for State Extension Faculty, speaks at the Extension Employee Conference.



4-H Christmas Food Drive

Cross County 4-H collected more than 400 pounds of canned and non-perishable foods as part of their annual food drive.

The food was delivered to the Wynne Church of Christ Food Pantry to benefit community residents.

The food drive is just one of the many community services projects that 4-Hers participate in during the year. ■



Jessica Boone and her son Hayden of Delta Ridge 4-H help with the Cross County Food Drive.

National 4-H Poultry and Egg Conference

Arkansas youth traveled to Louisville, Kentucky in November to participate in the National 4-H Poultry and Egg Conference. They competed in Poultry Judging, Avian Bowl, Egg Chef Challenge, Turkey BBQ, and Chicken BBQ. All of them had to earn their way to nationals by advancing from county contest, district and state contests.

Competitors were:

- Brody C. (Howard County) – Egg Chef Challenge, 8th place
- Evan C. (Hot Spring County) – Chicken BBQ, 8th place
- Abi T. (Lonoke County) – Turkey BBQ, 7th place.
- Avian Bowl: Callie W. (Faulkner County), Hunter N. (Pope County) and Mackenzy M. (Boone County).



From (L to R): Competitors Brody C. (Howard County), Abi T. (Lonoke County), Evan C. (Hot Spring County).

- Poultry Judging (Izard County) – Kennedy M., Makaelynn W., Delilah M., and Teagan B. ■

Veterans' Business Summit

The Arkansas APEX Accelerator hosted the 2025 Arkansas Veterans' Business Summit on Nov. 13 at the state office. The annual event highlights organizations and the array of services that support veterans in their civilian and business activities.

In his keynote address, Arkansas Secretary of Agriculture Wes Ward commended brave service members for the betterment of all and celebrated their contributions to



APEX Veterans Business Summit attendees.

their communities stemming from skills they honed during their military assignments.

Marine Sergeant Major John L. Canley, Jr. was honored posthumously as a recipient of the Medal of Honor, for his acts of valor to lead his unit and save the lives of his comrades in Vietnam. Secretary Ward and Dr. John Anderson then presented coins in a ceremony to all the veterans present. ■



Veterans' Business Summit group photo

Saline County 4-H Teams Compete in

Regional Robotics Tournament



BL
4

Saline County 4-H SeaCow Robotics youth recently rose to the challenge at a regional FIRST LEGO League (FLL) robotics tournament. Three regional qualifying tournaments, held Dec. 6, kicked off the 2025–2026 season, drawing over 65 teams eager to advance to the state-level competition. Two Saline County 4-H SeaCow Robotics teams participated in the Searcy tournament, where they exhibited strong creativity, collaboration, and engineering proficiency.

The SeaCow Juniors team conquered the competition, qualifying to compete at the state-level and earning the top awards for Robot Design and Robot Performance. The team earned one of the 32 qualifying spots to compete at the FIRST LEGO League (FLL) Arkansas Championship, scheduled for late January.

The teams designed, built, and controlled a robot based on the challenge and course presented. Teams also had to collaboratively create and present an Innovation Project, that involved researching a problem

archaeologists face and creating a STEM-based solution. During the competition, the teams had to exhibit critical thinking, coding, engineering, presentation, and research and design skills. ■



The Saline County 4-H SeaCow Juniors made a splash and reeled in the top Robot Performance and Robot Design awards at the Searcy regional FLL tournament!



The Saline County 4-H Silly SeaCows made pre-presentation practice look splash-tastically fun – rocking their “silly” costumes like true 4-H stars!

Tri-State Soybean Forum

Experts from Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi will share information about issues facing soybean producers in the South at the 69th annual Tri-State Soybean Forum on Jan. 9, 2026, at the Dumas Community Center.

The annual event rotates among the three major soybean production states, bringing together producers, researchers and other agriculture industry professionals. UADA, Louisiana State University AgCenter and Mississippi State University Extension



Service jointly plan the conference. “Arkansas is proud to host this year,” said Arkansas County extension agent Grant Beckwith, who chairs the event. “We know these are tough times for soybean producers, and this year’s forum will focus on issues affecting them as we head into 2026.”

The event’s new logo, designed by Chris Meux in Communications, will also make its debut. Read more at <https://bit.ly/tristate26>. ■



LeadAR

From poultry production to community gathering spaces, Northwest Arkansas tells a story of innovation rooted in people and place. In November, LeadAR Class 21 spent time engaging with organizations that demonstrate how agriculture, design, service, and communication intersect to strengthen communities. The experience offered both practical insights and meaningful reminders of the role leaders play in connecting systems and serving others.

Read seminar details from these participants.

- [From Rainstorms to Revelations: LeadAR Class 21's First Day in Northwest Arkansas by Nicole Nichols](#), Saline County extension agent/staff chair.
- [LeadAR Class 21 Explores Innovation and Community Strength in Northwest Arkansas](#) by Pam Keith, dyslexia lead teacher, Pulaski County Special School District.

Leadership Lunch and Learn

The November Leadership Lunch & Learn focused on achieving personal and professional satisfaction, with a review of “*Off Balance: Getting Beyond the Work-Life Balance Myth to Personal and Professional Satisfaction*” by Matthew Kelly. Dr. Steve Siegelin, associate professor and staff development specialist, discussed concepts in this book and the practical applications. Read the review [here](#). Watch the recording [here](#).

Researchers, Faculty & Staff Discuss Nutrition, Health Issues

UADA hosted Advancing Collaborative Research in Nutrition, Health, and Wellbeing in Arkansas at Mullins Library in Fayetteville. Over the course of two days, Nov. 20-21, researchers, faculty, and staff shared ideas, learned from each other, and explored ways to collaborate on important issues in nutrition and health across the state.

The event featured a mix of presentations and interactive sessions that highlighted the latest research, innovative approaches, and emerging trends in the field. One of the most exciting moments was a presentation from a guest speaker who has served on the Dietary Guidelines Committee, offering

attendees a unique perspective on how national nutrition policy intersects with local research and practice. These insights sparked thoughtful discussions and encouraged participants to think creatively about applying research in real-world settings.

Beyond the formal sessions, the event provided a valuable opportunity for networking and collaboration. It was a chance to celebrate the power of collaboration and to remind everyone that meaningful progress in nutrition, health, and wellbeing happens when people come together to share knowledge, support one another, and work toward common goals. ■



Photo collage of LeadAR Class 21 in northwest Arkansas.

Password & MFA Reset: What You Need to Know

When you need help getting back into your account or re-enrolling in Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), our IT Help Desk is here to help. This guidance applies to all employees of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

Your Verification Options (choose one)

In person at the Help Desk

- Bring a State-issued photo ID (e.g., driver's license).
- If you don't have a State ID, your UADA/UARK issued ID is accepted.

Remote via video call

- Join a scheduled video call with the Help Desk.
- Show your State-issued photo ID on camera (or a UADA/UARK issued ID if you do not have a State ID).

How to Request a Reset

Submit a [password help request](#). We will reach out on which verification method you would like to use (in person or video).

Tech Me Seriously - CIO Update

Hear about important updates from the Division of Information Technology Services team.

[Watch the CIO Update Recording.](#)

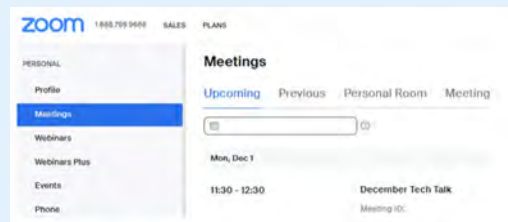


Zoom Pro Tip – Resend Zoom Meeting Confirmation Emails

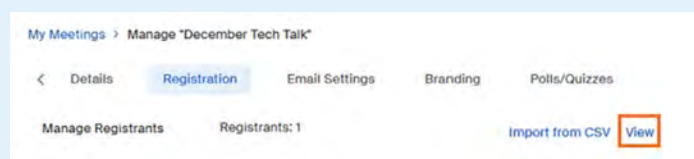
When a Meeting is scheduled in Zoom with the

Registration feature selected, you can resend confirmation emails in bulk to registrants prior to the Meeting.

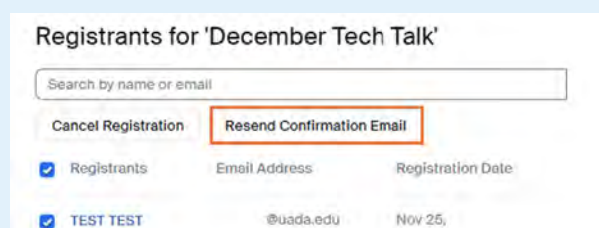
1. From the Zoom Workplace, select Meetings
2. Select the Upcoming meeting



3. Select [Registration](#)
4. On the Manage Registrants line, select View



5. Check box by Registrants to select all (or select individual registrants if applicable)
6. Select Resend Confirmation Email



Hump Day Hacks

Hump Day Hack resources can be found on the [Hump Day Hacks Resource page](#) in Team Dynamix. October's hacks included detecting and reporting Phishing emails, using Quick Steps in Outlook, using the Waiting Room feature in Zoom, and Accessibility Shortcuts for Adobe Acrobat. See you at the next Hump Day Hacks on January 28, 2026! ■



2025 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 December's [The Best of 2025](#)? Check out the recording and resources.

Sowing Seeds of Excellence:

Building Foundations for Success



New agents discussing personal values and various manager traits.

Twelve new extension agents participated in the Sowing Seeds of Excellence: Building Foundations for Success training held Nov. 18-19 at the state

office. New agents introduced themselves to Extension Director John Anderson, who opened the training by discussing how UADA's core values play a significant role in Extension's mission. Agents in the Level 1 training worked on collaboration and teambuilding with Drs. Steve Siegelin and Julie Robinson. In the afternoon, agents participated in a True Colors and Leadership session.

On the second day, Siegelin and Robinson led a session on Leading in Communities, emphasizing the importance of agents' roles and responsibilities in community leadership. They also facilitated a Personal and

Professional Values session, which involved activities for agents to determine how their personal values play a significant role in their professionalism at work.

All new agents participated in a Thriving with 4-H session where they learned the structure and scope of 4-H, emphasizing how they can enhance 4-H involvement in their communities.

Both levels also featured program-specific training. Chad Norton and Les Walz led ANR training while Leigh Ann Bullington and Keith Statham-Cleek directed FCS agent Jane Hermerding in preparing Cowboy Caviar Salsa, which was enjoyed by all.

The last session featured an experienced agent panel discussion with Leigh Ann Bullington, Keith Statham-Cleek, Chad Norton, Les Walz, and Danielle Watson. The next Levels 1 and 2 training will be April 7-8, at the 4-H Center. ■



Jane Hermerding preparing and demonstrating a Cowboy Caviar Salsa.

Hay Show and Beef Quality Assurance Training

Local cattle producers gathered for a night of education and competition at the November Cattleman's Association meeting, which featured a hay show and Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) training. The event drew strong participation from the agricultural community and generous support from local businesses.

Nine producers submitted a total of 35 forage samples for the hay show, including two silage entries and 33 samples of cool- and



The first place winners in the Silage competition

warm-season grass hay. The competition showed the quality and diversity of forages grown in the region.

Farmer's Bank stepped up as a corporate sponsor, helping offset the cost of forage testing with a generous donation. In addition, 14 local businesses contributed prizes and cash awards for both hay show competitors and BQA

participants. Garland County Farmers Association sponsored the evening meal. ■

AgConnect: Exploring Careers in Agriculture

BL
8

Independence County Extension recently launched its new AgConnect series with AgConnect: Exploring Careers in Agriculture at the Independence County Extension Office. Local FFA and 4-H members learned about real-world career paths in production agriculture, horticulture, ag business, and ag mechanics as they engaged with professionals who shared their experiences and answered questions about opportunities in today's agriculture industry.



The program brought together professionals from a wide range of fields, including ag business, poultry, row crops, cattle, marketing, veterinary science and extension. A career exploration book was developed for the session featuring those professionals, along with contributions from others across Arkansas and the United States, to provide students with a broad look at agricultural careers and practical guidance for planning and exploration.

The series will continue throughout 2026 with programs highlighting agritourism, ag technology, and the Women in Ag Brunch, along with other sessions that support the overall goals of AgConnect. ■



Educational Administrators' Conference



The Soybean Science Challenge (SSC) recently hosted an exhibitor booth at the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators' Fall Conference in Benton. The conference offered K-12 leadership the opportunity to learn about the program and the free instructional resources available to their schools. Keith Harris, Soybean Science Challenge coordinator, and CPED program manager, Dr. Lynn Wilson, staffed the booth.

Harris and Wilson encouraged school administrators to create space and provide resources to establish a school garden to engage youth in learning about agriculture, healthy eating, and environmental stewardship.

Harris said research indicates that academic enhancement, environmental connection, and enhanced well-being (both physical and emotional) are the main benefits of school gardens.

Approximately 30 exhibitors attended the conference; SSC was one of the few that provided free resources. ■



Farm Bureau Annual Convention

SSC Promotes Resources

The Soybean Science Challenge (SSC) hosted an educational booth at the Arkansas Farm Bureau Annual Convention at the Hot Springs Convention Center Dec. 3- 4. SSC Coordinator Keith Harris handed out soybean promotional items, lesson plans, resource guides, and educational brochures to attendees wanting to learn more about the program and soybeans. Harris encouraged attendees to access the free resources available on Extension's 'soywhatsup' website.

Harris spoke with FFA students about cash awards available to students, and their teachers, who conduct independent agriculture-focused scientific research, qualify for the Challenge, and compete in a regional science fair. He was also able to ask students if their plans include a



SSC Coordinator Keith Harris talks with FFA students.

career in agriculture. He informed them of the variety of career fields within the agriculture industry, and the in-state college agriculture-related programs that exist. ■

Jackson County

EHC Shares Health, Wellness Info

Jackson County Extension Homemakers hosted a Nov. 14 event for members in Jackson and surrounding counties. April Ryan of Encompass Health shared muscle movements to strengthen senior adult muscles and fall prevention tips. She also shared information about physical therapy. Danny Worthington of M & P Insurance

discussed Medicare updates and shared tips for navigating the changes to Medicare and Advantage Insurance and answered questions.

The EHC members served a lunch of homemade soups, cornbread, and desserts and led two crafts activities: swirled paint ornaments and dried flower bookmark. To end the afternoon, they hosted bingo games with lots of prizes. It was a great day! ■



Mary and Jennifer, Jackson Co EHC volunteers, help participants make a craft.



Danny Worthington of M & P Insurance speaks to attendees.



Achievement Banquet Draws Record Attendance

Sebastian County 4-H celebrated record-breaking attendance at the 2025 Achievement Banquet, capping a year of major growth for the program. Senior 4-H members planned the event, held at Fellowship Baptist Church in Huntington, and handled everything from decor and catering to entertainment and the slideshow.

More than 125 people attended, including 4-H families,

foundation board members, community supporters and County Judge Steve Hotz. Achievement awards were presented to top performers in each age division, and Cloverbuds were recognized for beginning their 4-H journeys. Every member was invited onstage to introduce themselves and share their main project area, and the Extension team was proud of their confidence.

Graduating seniors were honored with 4-H graduation cords, and a new award for the most growth in membership and volunteers was presented to the Lavaca 4-H Club. This traveling trophy will be awarded annually as clubs continue to grow and develop. The evening was a meaningful celebration of achievement, community, and the bright future of Sebastian County 4-H. ■



From (L to R): Graduating Seniors Karly J., Mary D. & Drake S. with their 4-H cords.

Hot Spring County 4-H Hosts

Gingerbread House Decorating Contest



Hot Spring County 4-H hosted its annual Gingerbread House Decorating Contest on Dec. 2, with 12 teams competing and showcasing their creativity at the HSC Courthouse.

More than 150 community members stopped by to admire the display and cast their votes for the most creative entry. The Gingerbread House Decorating Contest continues to grow each year, and its charming display has become a beloved tradition during the Christmas on the Courthouse Square celebration! ■



First place winners from (L to R): Cashlyn G. & Bailey W.



Livestock Teams Win National Awards

The Arkansas 4-H State Champion Livestock teams competed in the National 4-H Livestock Contests at the North American International Livestock Exhibition in Louisville, Kentucky in November.

Several team members were also recognized for individual performance.

- **The Nevada County Livestock Quiz Bowl team**, coached by county agent Stacey Stone, finished 6th overall of 19 teams.
- **The White County Livestock Skill-a-thon team**, coached by county agent Jan Yingling, placed 13th overall and was placed 6th in Quality Assurance.
- **The Washington County Livestock Judging team**

was coached by county agent Ronnie Horn and 4-H volunteer Kaitlyn Platter. ■



The Arkansas State Champion Livestock Quiz Bowl team from Nevada County 4-H. (L to R): (front) Joel B., Jermeire P., Emmaline W., Tessa S., (back) Coach Stacey Stone, Danny I.



4-H Has Busy November

Gin City 4-H was a busy bunch during November! Members donated and collected items for the Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child Shoe Box Drive.

The group received more than \$500 from donors to shop for box items. They stuffed 80 boxes that will be distributed worldwide to those in need from Samaritan's Purse major distribution hub in Dallas. Last year, Gin City 4-H donated 32 shoe boxes that were distributed to children in Mexico and the Dominican Republic.



Group working on shoe boxes at Gin City Parts & Café. (L to R): Lucas S. and Sunnie D. (back L to R): Lena D., Billy D. and Adryanna B.

On Nov. 25, Gin City 4-H led a Countywide Youth Ornament Workshop under the direction of county agent Jerri Dew. Twenty-seven

Lafayette County youth created five keepsake Christmas ornaments. Several participants followed the Extension Facebook page that day and stated they wanted to participate in more 4-H activities. Sixteen dozen cookies and lots of hot chocolate were also consumed. It was a great treat for Lafayette County youth on Thanksgiving break! ■



Participants were led in five different ornament projects. Here Lena and Sunnie Downs are leading the ribbon tree and snow sled.



Back of SUV packed up with food donations.

Stuff the Truck Food Drive

The UADA-CES Arkansas Association of Cooperative Extension Specialists (AACES) and Chi Epsilon Sigma joined forces to support the Arkansas Foodbank through the Stuff the Truck Food Drive.

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our team and supporters, they successfully filled the back of a UADA SUV with food donations and collected an additional \$814. All donations were delivered on Nov. 24 to the foodbank, where staff expressed heartfelt appreciation. Together, we made a meaningful impact in the fight against hunger. Thanks to everyone who contributed! ■

4-H Tech Changemakers

Drew County 4-H Tech Changemakers participated in the Home for the Holidays celebration and tree-lighting on the Monticello town square. The 4-Hers distributed hands-on STEM kits and helped families build 50 mini catapults for a festive “snowball fight” with cotton balls, creating a fun learning experience.

They also shared binary code bracelets and pixel art activities, sparking curiosity and enthusiasm for

STEM among youth and adults alike.

This event was a wonderful way to celebrate the season, promote 4-H, and showcase exciting STEM opportunities to the community. ■



Jesi H. helping youth at the table with kits.



Tech Changemakers Teams Build Their Skills



Corbin S.r. and Andrew H. from Madison County building the tallest tower as part of a LEGO STEM challenge at the Ozark District Training.

Tech Changemakers teams in Madison, Prairie and Hempstead counties conducted district training that helped teams gain experience in planning and facilitating technology trainings in their home counties, delivering interactive STEM lessons in local schools (including Ozobot coding activities) and constructing electric circuit cards with copper tape. The training also featured team-building exercises led by youth participants, reinforcing leadership and collaboration skills.

All instructional sessions were led by team members themselves as part of their ongoing development within the program.

The State Tech Changemaker Training will be held on Jan. 2 at the Arkansas Electric Cooperative Headquarters in Little Rock. Registration is open in ZSuite, and space is limited.

For additional information, contact Cindy Phillips at cdphillips@uada.edu. ■

Lonoke County Extension Hosts “Thankful” Camp

Lonoke County 4-H Agent Kristi Warren and FCS Agent Devyn Britt hosted a Thankful Camp for children during their Thanksgiving Break from school.



Mrs. Kristi listening as Eli H. displays his good manners.

Eighteen children, aged 6-12, learned how to set the table and learned basic table manners they practiced with a Show and Tell Game.

Next, they made turkey table decorations using mini pumpkins and leaves to decorate their holiday tables at home.

The yummy part came when they made no-bake energy bites and beautiful charcuterie boxes, complete with salami roses, fruit skewers, fruit and cheese cut-outs and decorated Oreo turkeys. ■



Honoring Veterans with Handmade Quilts

The Izard County Extension Homemakers created and presented handmade lap quilts to honor eight local veterans in area nursing homes.

Several members helped sew the patriotic quilts, using red, white and blue fabrics to reflect pride and gratitude for those who served. Each quilt was unique in design and size, symbolizing that just as every veteran's story is different, so is each quilt's creation.

The group presented the quilts and certificates of appreciation on Nov. 1 to veterans at Pioneer Nursing Home and White River Health Care. ■



This project was our way of showing appreciation and admiration for their dedication and service. From (L to R): Kelley Russell, Debbie Moody, Jean Harvell, Mary Qualls, Elizabeth Daigle.

Grants & Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
Miller County Pollinator Garden - MG Water Feature Project	2,450	Jennifer Caraway	Patterson-Troike Foundation
Continuing Arkansas Watershed Stewardship Program: Gulf Hypoxia Program	211,673	John Pennington	Arkansas Agriculture Department
Jefferson County Storm Water Management Education and Outreach Program - 2026-2028	8,121	Kevin Harris	Jefferson County
Cross County - Hands-On Nutrition Program	1,500	Mattie Ricker	Arkansas Community Foundation
TOTAL AWARDS FOR NOVEMBER 2025: \$233,744			

Handy Homemakers EHC Club Turns One!

BL
14

The Hot Spring County Handy Homemakers Club is celebrating its first anniversary. The club is made up of busy working professionals. Many club members can't attend daytime events, so the club meets in the evenings at the HSC-Malvern Library. The club brings together community members who want to learn new skills and help others along the way. Jessica Rodriguez is the advisor of the council, and the program is getting a modern,

upbeat marketing make-over to reach even more people.

Over the past year, the group has enjoyed hands-on, innovative programs that have sparked creativity and inspired personal growth. Some members have even discovered entrepreneurial opportunities through the skills they've learned. One participant realized she had a real talent for crafting — and that her creations could become a source of income. The club's first year has been filled with learning, creativity, and community, and its members are excited for what comes next. ■



Toni Dyer displays her skill for crafting by creating decorative Christmas trees.



From (L-R): Amber Treadway, Glorie Thornton, Katie Cloud, Kristian Miller, Amy Clements, Staci Allen, Jessica Rodriguez (agent), Mary LaVergne, Toni Dyer, and Patty Griggs.

Saline County Extension Homemakers

Give Blankets to Cancer Patients

While many communities focus their generosity on Giving Tuesday, the Saline County Extension Homemakers continue proving that the spirit of giving lasts far beyond a single day. On Dec. 5, members of the Dabblers EHC Club and Saline County FCS Agent LaTaaka Harvey delivered more than 100 blankets to support local cancer patients undergoing treatment at the Winthrop Rockefeller Cancer Institute. The colorful, cozy blankets will be distributed to help patients stay warm during treatment.

For the Dabblers, it is more than just a project; it is a mission rooted in community, compassion, and connection. Club members say they hope each blanket serves as a reminder that the community is standing behind every patient in their fight. "We want them to know

they are not alone," members shared. "A small gesture can bring warmth in more ways than one." ■



Members of the Saline County Dabblers' Extension Homemakers Club delivering blankets to Volunteer Services at the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute Cancer Center.

Benefits Corner

Benefit Updates

- For those who are enrolled in the university's Medical Plan, UMR, you will receive new ID cards for the 2026 plan year. The cards will be mailed to your home address directly from UMR.
- Review and update your personal information, including emergency contact, and mailing address in Workday.
- Review your beneficiary designations for your life insurance and retirement plans.

SmartCare

If you are enrolled in a university medical plan, you can save on health care costs by visiting a SmartCare provider at a University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) facility, the University of Arkansas Fayetteville Pat Walker Health Center or the University of Arkansas Little Rock Health Center. What you save depends on the



medical plan you select, but it ranges from lower coinsurance, deductibles and out-of-pocket maximums to reduced copays.

No need to sign up for SmartCare — your savings are automatic when you use a SmartCare provider. When you need a service, just visit the SmartCare Program page under Health at uasys.edu/benefits. You'll find a link to a provider search tool to search by clinic, institution, department, specialty and more. Also visit the SmartCare Program page for details on what you'll save, how the program works and how to make an appointment.

If you have any questions regarding your benefits, please contact yourbenefits@uada.edu. ■

Personnel Changes

Welcome Aboard:

Mark Morgan – Network Support Specialist - IT Information Technology, Washington County
Zepei Tang – Program Associate - Bio and Agricultural Engineering, Washington County

Farewell to:

Pam Pugh – Administrative Specialist III, Poinsett County
Mary Hightower – Communications - Chief Communications Officer, LRSO
Ashley Griffith – Family & Consumer Science - EFNEP Program Assistant, Phillips County
David Hill – Horticulture - Program Associate - Food Systems & Food Safety, C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center
John Collins Gavin – County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Bradley County
Camila Primieri Nicoli – Assistant Professor - Extension Plant Pathologist, Rice Research Extension Center

