



# Help From Friends

A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association (SAEA). One of the regular features of that meeting that becomes more and more meaningful to me with each passing year is the recognition of Lifetime Achievement Award winners. In the past it always seemed to me that this recognition only went to old folks, but lately the recipients seem to be getting younger and younger.

This year, one of Arkansas' own, Dr. H. L. Goodwin, Jr., was recognized with an SAEA Lifetime Achievement Award. As a faculty member in the Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness department, H. L's appointment included teaching, research, and Extension. His Extension responsibilities were mostly as a poultry economist working with the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science. Although he has been retired for several years now, I still call on H. L. quite often for his advice and opinion. All of us who know him were excited to see him finally recognized with this well-deserved award.

Speaking of friends and mentors, I also had the opportunity recently to catch up with Dr. Bert Greenwalt of Arkansas State University at their annual agribusiness conference. CES was well represented at the conference, with several county agents and specialists in attendance. I had the somewhat unpleasant task of providing an update on the economic situation in the commercial row crop sector (short version: it's really bad).

I am grateful to my ag econ colleagues – Hunter Biram, Ryan Loy, Scott Stiles, Brad Watkins, and Breana Watkins – who graciously allowed me to rip off their work in various ways in my presentation, which was a huge help since I don't routinely put together presentations like that anymore.

One of the other speakers at the conference was a longtime American Farm Bureau friend and colleague, Mary Kay Thatcher. Currently in government relations with Syngenta, Mary Kay knows agricultural policy and Washington politics better than just about anyone in the country. She did an excellent job summarizing what is right now an uncertain and somewhat chaotic transition period in the federal government. That uncertainty has hit pretty close to home in the past two or three weeks as questions have been raised about the stability of funding on some of our federal grants. As of now, it looks like the programs we are funded under are continuing to operate more-or-less as usual; however, there may yet be a few bumps in the road for us to get past during this transition period between administrations. For our part, we'll leave the politics of the present situation to others while we monitor emerging information to anticipate and minimize any disruptions to our program delivery or negative impacts on our personnel. Whatever comes, our focus will remain on strengthening agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Times like these are what a good mission statement is made for — to remind us of why we come to work every day. ■

### **INSIDE SCOOP**

- 2. 4-H Giving Day
- 3. Facilitator Excellence Training
- 4. Communications Station
- 5. Goats Visit LRSO
- 6. Tech Corner
- 7. SW Homesteading Conference ...And much more!



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# Sowing Seeds of Excellence: Welcome U

Extension welcomed new employees aboard at the Sowing Seeds of Excellence: Welcome U event Jan. 15 at the state office.

Steve Siegelin, professional development specialist in Community, Professional and Economic Development

(CPED), welcomed attendees with an icebreaker.



Extension Director Dr. John Anderson shared extension's history and foundation, emphasizing the land grant system and extension's role in

communities and the UA System. New employees then toured departments at the state office, including IT, Communications, CPED, 4-H, Family and Consumer Science and Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Participants enjoyed a fajita lunch, which included the opportunity to visit with more than 20 extension benefits providers and departments at their expo booths.

Peer-to-peer groups led by extension staff were the highlight of the afternoon. Participants said they enjoyed the event and appreciated being able to tour the buildings and see where their colleagues were located. The next

Welcome U event will be May 14. ■





# 4-H Giving Day

The Arkansas 4-H Foundations 5th annual Arkansas 4-H Giving Day is coming up March 17 — St. Patrick's Day.

Starting this year, donors can now direct their donations to specific counties, which hopefully will increase participation and benefit our county programs directly.

Additionally, the Foundation is planning to award the county with the top number of donations (per capita) with a matching donation or lunch for the staff.

For a county to receive credit for a donation, the donor must make a note of that on the <u>online formstack</u> we use to receive foundation donations. The donor would need to choose "other" on where they want their donation to go and type in the county name. The Foundation will be sure to make that clear in the instructions we give out as well.

John Thomas, managing director, will provide social media digital assets for social media for you. Stay tuned for details on this opportunity. ■





## First Ever Facilitator Excellence Training

Extension staff got a chance to improve their facilitation skills during the first-ever Facilitator Excellence Training held Feb. 4-6 at the Vines Center.

Facilitators included Steve Siegelin, professional development specialist, and Julie Robinson, leadership specialist, from extension's Community, Professional and Economic Development unit and specialists from Montana State University, University of Georgia, and University of Tennessee extension services.

The 25 extension staff who participated had varying levels of facilitation experience — from none to some. The training covered facilitation strategies, including effective use of icebreakers, brainstorming, bridge building, flip charting and recording techniques, setting ground rules, mind mapping, and tips for organizing the facilitation equipment and materials. Participants received a Facilitator Excellence notebook and tool kit guide to assist in the learning process.

As a capstone project, each participant planned and led a 45-minute group facilitation with their small group on a topic of their choice. The caveat: they had to

use at least two techniques demonstrated. Participants received written and verbal feedback from their group and facilitator. The consensus was both facilitators and participants learned from this shared activity.

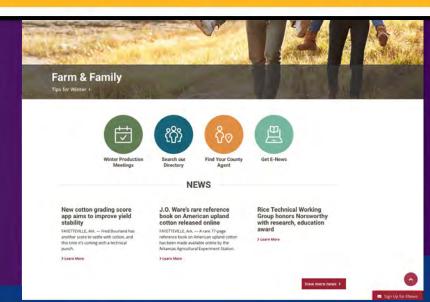
In the program evaluations, participants said they gained confidence through practice, appreciated the variety of techniques demonstrated, and intended to use more variety in future facilitations. Watch for more training next year.



## Front Page News You Can Use

Looking for a news story to use in your local paper? Look no further than the front page of **uada.edu**. And if you click on view all news, you'll see all of our archived news stories back to 2014.

If you want to be on the email list to receive our news stories, email Mary Hightower at mhightower@uada.edu and Communications will add you to the distribution list. ■







## State 4-H Youth **Development Operational** Planning Meeting

Seventy-five extension professionals gathered for the state 4-H Youth Development operational planning meeting Jan. 30-31 at the Arkansas 4-H Center. On the first day, the group learned about the 4-H Thriving Model. The model illustrates the process of positive youth development in 4-H programs by connecting high quality program settings to

the promotion of youth thriving. Darlene Locke from Texas and Shannon Caldwell led the training. Both have served as their state 4-H Thriving Champion. The new Arkansas 4-H Thriving Champions — Breanna Wade and Lane Fritch helped with the training as well. Evening activities included a Quiz Bowl, led by Bethany Gammill and McKenzie Rigdon, hat making by Howard County 4-H Agent Samantha Horn, and 4-H/Valentine's Day ornament painting.

On the second day, agents attended breakout sessions. The dozen sessions ranged from Incubation Programs to Food Challenge to Vet Science to Photography. The training wrapped up with updates about the 4-H Strategic Plan. In another activity, 14 agents "designed their own clover." Winners were Kamella Neely, first; Ashley Flickinger, second; and Dana Fincher, third. ■



## COMMUNICATIONS



## STATION

All departments should take time to review your webpage content to make sure the content is still accurate, up-to-date, free of broken links, and no references to upcoming events that have already passed. If you need help updating your pages, please reach out to Communications through the Website Update Request Form.

**News:** We need story tips! Please share with us! Email Tracy Courage, tcourage@uada.edu. View all our February News online.

#### **New Publications:**

- FSA91 Retail Rodeo: Wrangling Retail Sales Success Estimates for Cities Across Arkansas by Ryan Loy
- FSA90 Structure of the USDA-FSA Farm Loan Program by Evan Ware

- FSA2220 Soil Respiration Across Arkansas Ecosystems and Cropping Systems by Diego Della Lunga
- FSA2219 Climate-smart Agricultural Practices for Cotton Production in Arkansas by Cassie Seuferling
- FSHED81SP Esté Protegido y Abastecido: Preparación de Alimentos ante Desastres by Quadarius Whitson
- FSHED81MH <u>Pād wōt iumin Kōjbarok im ilo am Bojjak:</u> Kepooj Mõñā ñan ien ko ewor Jorrāān by Quadarius Whitson
- FSA2213 Cercospora Diseases in Rice by Camila Nicolli
- FSA3063 (revised) <u>Using Cool-Season Annual Grasses for</u> Hay and Silage by Jonathan Kubesch
- FSFCS07MH Can Tomato by Quadarius Whitson
- FSFCS07SP Tomates en Conserva by Quadarius Whitson

Planning an event? Add it to the UADA Calendar so others will know about it: uada.edu/add-events.

# 4-H Livestock 🛞 In-Service Trainings

Pauline Whitaker Animal Science Arena

Manager Darren Bignar demonstrates the

proper method of restraining sheep.

BL

Thirty-two county extension staff traveled to Fayetteville in January to attend the two-day 4-H Livestock Contests training. Multiple UADA Animal Science faculty and staff delivered the content of the program.

Day 1 of the training was focused on the Livestock Skill-a-thon contest. County staff gained resources and learned tips for training youth for the various portions of the contest. Sections of the training included quality assurance, sheep handling, evaluating keep/cull scenarios, hay and wool judging,

marketing scenarios, animal nutrition, and reproduction.

Day 2 of the training was focused on the meat portions of the Livestock Skill-a-thon and Meats Evaluation contests. Participants spent the morning at the Red Meat Abattoir judging various classes of pork and lamb and learning tricks for identifying various retail meat cuts. The afternoon sessions covered evaluating and calculating carcass Assistant Professor of Meat Science, Dr. Kelly Vierck, instructs agents on the basics of meat judging.

measurements. The day wrapped up with a trip to a local grocery store to demonstrate how to utilize local resources to help train youth about meat products.

The 4-H Livestock Contests in-service training provided county staff with valuable hands-on experience and resources to better prepare youth for livestock contests. Trainings like this ensure that Arkansas 4-H members receive high-quality education and preparation for future competitions, fostering both skill development and a deeper understanding of the livestock industry.

# Goats Visit the Little Rock State Office

Small ruminant producers from around the state brought goats to the state office last month for a hands-on clinic hosted by Dan Quadros, extension small ruminant specialist, and the Arkansas Goat Producers Association.

During the Linear Appraisal Clinic on Jan. 18, an American Dairy Goat Association instructor demonstrated the main points to evaluate on a live animal. The linear appraisal system evaluates functional conformation that affects productive longevity. With this training, producers



learned a useful selection tool for breeding stock toward genetic improvement. ■

## Tech Corner

### Windows 11 Upgrade

Windows 11 is the biggest major Microsoft operating system update since 2015. With the release of this new operating system, Microsoft will stop supporting Windows 10 in October 2025. What does this mean for us? All UADA computers will need to be upgraded to Windows 11 or replaced with a new Windows 11 computer by October 2025.



#### Volunteer Migration - Phase 2

We are currently in phase 2 of the migration, which is completely voluntary. For those wanting to move forward with the Windows 11 upgrade, fill out the <u>volunteer request form</u> for each computer.

#### Mandatory Migration - Phase 3 (May 2025)

Any computer that is eligible to be upgraded to Windows 11 unless they qualify for an exception. Exceptions will only be approved for the following devices:

• Any device that is used strictly with research\testing\
networking equipment and not connected to the internet.

#### Contact the Help Desk

New ways of serving you! We have technicians ready to answer your calls. You can request help from the IT Help Desk by calling 1-866-779-3375, (501) 340-0265, visiting <u>services.uada.edu</u>, or emailing tickets@uada.edu.

### **Email Etiquette Tips:**

#### Preventing Reply-All by Using BCC

We have all experienced the annoying influx of emails. Someone sends an email to a distribution list (DL) or group email account (group) and someone inadvertently does a Reply-All when asking the sender a question or making a comment.

#### When is it Proper to Reply-All?

Most times the answer is never. This is especially true if you are responding to an email that was sent to a DL or group. You should only Reply-All to an email when you're sure your reply is relevant to everyone in the thread.

## How can you, as the Sender, Prevent the Reply-All Response?

When sending emails to a DL or group, make sure you place it in the BCC field. Since you must include something in the TO field, you can enter your own email address there.

## How does this Prevent Someone from Using Reply-All?

It doesn't. However, a Reply-All will only be sent to recipients in the TO and CC fields, not the BCC field. This is how you prevent them from responding to everyone in the distribution list or group account.

### Don't see the BCC Field when Composing your Email?

**Within Outlook online** (OWA) – begin a new message, BCC is located to the far right of the TO field. **Within Outlook desktop** – begin a new message, select the Options menu and click on the BCC icon.

### **Zoom Pro Tip**

#### Zoom Pro Tip – Zoom Al Companion

If you have a licensed Zoom account, you now have access to the Zoom AI Companion. The Zoom AI Companion can assist you across the platform with features such as Meeting Summaries, Team Chat thread summaries, and Team Chat message composing. For more information on any of these new Zoom AI Companion features, check out Zoom's Getting Started with Zoom AI Companion Features support <u>page</u>. You may request a short-term or long-term Zoom <u>license</u>.

### **Hump Day Hacks**

- Flash Fill in Microsoft Excel
- Skillsets for Professional Development Training



Join us on March 26, 2025!

Register Now. ■

#### **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 <u>Tech Tuesday Blog page</u>. More Tech Tuesday topics coming soon! Did you miss January's <u>Getting Started with Microsoft Clipchamp</u> Tech Tuesday? Check out the recording and resources.



### Howard & Pike Counties Host First

# Southwest Arkansas Homesteading Conference

Southwest Arkansas

**HOMESTEADING** 

CONFERENCE

Howard and Pike counties teamed up to offer their first Southwest Arkansas Homesteading Conference, which drew nearly 100 people to UA Cossatot Campus in

Nashville for a day of learning.

Howard County agents
Samantha Horn and Dawson
Bailey, Pike County agents Eva
Langley and Codie McAlister,
and 4-H program assistant
Christina Myrkle planned the
event. Numerous agents and
specialists led more than a
dozen workshops and presentations.

The most popular sessions included dehydrating food, food fermentation, flour milling, sourdough bread making, and canning. Other sessions covered cheesemaking, quilting, soap making, rain barrels, barn quilts, garden

preparation, feral hogs, introduction to backyard flocks, and information about NRCS programs. Attendees also shared plenty topics they would liked to see offered at future homesteading events.

"Because of the great response we had, Howard County 4-H summer programming will be 4-H: Homesteading Style," Horn said. ■



Dana Horn, retired Family and Consumer Science teacher at Henderson State University, helps out with the Southwest Arkansas Homesteading Conference.

# Benton County EHC Spices Up Community Service

Benton County Extension Homemakers created more than 100 Mix-N-Fix kits and donated them to communities throughout the county for their community service project in January. The kits contained shelf-stable foods, seasoning mix, and a recipe card for the meal and seasoning blend. Members also made sewn bags to hold the kit supplies.

Quad Whitson, culinary nutrition and food safety program associate, presented to EHC members on Jan. 25 about making homemade seasonings. Eleven members attended the session and prepared taco and chili seasoning blends.

They portioned out bags of the seasonings to accompany each recipe. Each participant also took home a recipe and seasoning blends. In all, EHC members assembled more than 100 servings of seasoning for Mix-N-Fix kits.

The day also included an educational lesson presented by Anna Goff, family and consumer sciences program associate, on "It's OK to Talk about Mental Health: Tips for Tough Conversations" by Brittney Schrick, associate professor and extension family life specialist. ■







Benton County Extension Homemakers helped their community by creating Mix-N-Fix kits and by discussing Mental Health Tips. BL

### Calhoun County

# Extension Teams Up with Arkansas Foodbank



More than 25,000 pounds of food were distributed in Calhoun County on Dec. 19 in what was one of the largest distributions of supplemental food to low-income families. The giveaway was a collaboration between the Arkansas Foodbank, Calhoun County extension, and the Calhoun County judge.

Arkansas Foodbank chief executive officer Brian Burton and foodbank staff assisted with the distribution. Lots of volunteers — including Extension Homemakers, Hampton High School teacher sponsors and students — assembled boxes, helped with intake and made sure the distribution ran smoothly.

Calhoun County FCS Agent LaTaaka Harvey shared information with participants on "How to Deal with Loneliness." The Arkansas Foodbank food distribution is tentatively the third Thursday in Calhoun County at the Fair Barn. ■

# American Forage and Grassland Conference

Six county agents, four state extension specialists, four students and two faculty from UA-Monticello, plus two National Research Conservation Service grazing land specialists attended the annual American Forage & Grassland Conference Jan. 12-15 in Kissimmee, Florida. The group presented 10 posters and two oral presentations highlighting demonstration/research work conducted across the state on various forage production topics. The four UAM students participated in the Forage Quiz Bowl.

The group also toured two ranches and a dairy farm in southern Florida. The first stop was Buck Island Ranch where scientists and ranchers work to understand the impact of ranching and improve its sustainability. For lunch, the group enjoyed a hamburger cookout at the Seminole Tribe of Florida. The Seminole Tribe Cattle operation is the fourth largest in Florida and the 12th largest in the nation. The final stop was at Milking R Dairy, a fifth-generation grass-based dairy farm that milks around 1,600 cows. Sutton Milk is the only local family farm offering single-source

milk in South Florida. The milk is available on the farm and at the local grocery stores. Also available at the farm are more than 40 flavors of handcrafted, homemade ice cream!

The conference and tour gave attendees the opportunity to network with forage experts and industry representatives from across the United States. ■



## Grow Your Own Protein

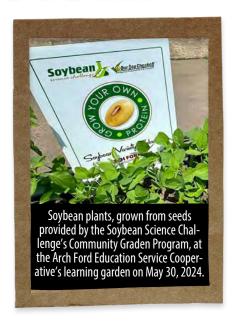




The Soybean Science Challenge's (SSC) Grow Your Own Protein program is starting its eleventh year of providing free soybean seeds to school and community gardens in Arkansas and across the country. The program started in 2016 with 12 gardens in Arkansas. Last year, 134 gardens in 10 states and Washington, D.C. requested seeds, including 110 Arkansas gardens in 28 counties. Soybeans are easy to grow, a complete protein and are a welcome addition to any food dish.

The community garden program's seed application process started in January and ends in late May. So far, 15 requests been received.

The soybean seeds are donated by B&B Legacy Farms and mailed from the state office throughout March, April and



May. To receive soybean seeds, the garden needs to be educational/school-related, 4-H-based, or serve food banks or other hunger-related projects in the area where they are planted.

New this year is the online soybean seed request/garden registration form, which can be found on the SSC's School and Community Graden Project webpage.

The SSC is a partnership between the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board and the Cooperative Extension Service. For questions or additional information, contact Dr. Julie

Robinson at jrobinson@uada.edu or Keith Harris at krharris@uada.edu. ■

## Arkansas Soybean Association Meeting

The Soybean Science Challenge hosted an educational booth at the Arkansas Soybean Association Meeting at the NE Rice Research and Extension Center in Harrisburg. Keith Harris, the Soybean Science Challenge coordinator, and Diedre Young, curriculum specialist, handed out soybean promotional items, lesson plans, resource guides and educational brochures to more than 100 participants. Attendees were encouraged to tell teachers to use soybeans in classroom instruction and independent student research by accessing the free resources available on Cooperative Extension Service's 'soywhatsup' website.

The Soybean Science Challenge is a farmer-funded, state-wide, high school education program that seeks to increase student knowledge about the value of Arkansas soybeans to the Arkansas economy, to the labor force, and ultimately to feed and fuel the world.

Harris and Young also thanked the soybean farmers in attendance for contributing to the Soybean Checkoff which funds the Soybean Science Challenge. ■



## **Benefits Corner**

Are you contributing enough to your University Retirement Plan?

Take time to consider increasing your contributions to your University Retirement Plan. All participants can increase or decrease voluntary contributions (within limits) and change vendors or investment fund selections at any time. This means that increasing your voluntary contribution percentage does not lock you in at that rate for the entire year.

Even if you participate in APERS or ARTRS or otherwise are not eligible for the university matching contributions, you can take advantage of the university retirement plan's investment fund lineup and convenient payroll deductions by making unmatched voluntary employee contributions.

Fidelity and TIAA representatives are available by phone to assist you with retirement-related questions.

TOTAL AWARDS FOR JANUARY 2025: 2,485,928

- Fidelity 800-343-0860
- TIAA 800-842-2776

You can change your voluntary contributions through Workday.



If you make a change to your voluntary retirement contribution, your change will take effect the first of the following month after you make the change.

Workday: Employee Profile, Benefits and Pay, Change Retirement Savings, Continue, Manage.

It's also important that you log into your retirement vendor website(s) to review and/or make changes to your retirement beneficiaries.

- TIAA <u>www.tiaa.org/public/tcm/uasys</u>
- Fidelity <a href="mailto:nb/uark/home">nb.fidelity.com/public/nb/uark/home</a>
- APERS apers.org / 501-682-7800
- ARTRS <u>artrs.gov</u> / 501-682-1517

If you have any questions, please reach out to yourbenefits@uada.edu. ■

## **Grants & Contracts**

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
Sprouting Soybeans: Management Strategies That Reduce Late-Season Yield Loss and Protect Seed Quality	18,000.00	Jeremy Ross	Ohio State University
Personal Finance Education at Emerald Village	500.00	Laura Hendrix	Emerald Village at Jonesboro
Developing a Technical Assistance Network to Help Producers Access FSA Farm Loan and USDA Farm Programs with an Emphasis on Underserved Communities: A Pilot Project (INCREASE FROM 3 TO 7 SUBAWARDS)	2,400,000.00	Ron L. Rainey	Washington State University
Clay County 4-H Youth Leadership Program	1,000.00	Stewart K Runsick	Entergy Corporation
United Way for Hempstead County 4-H - 2024	6,500.00	Terrie James	United Way Hempstead County
Determining Field Residue Colonization and Protection by Xylaria Necrophora	9,928.00	Terry N Spurlock	Cotton Incorporated
Multi-state Coordinated Trials: Management of Emerging Cotton Diseases	20,000.00	Terry N Spurlock	Cotton Incorporated
Jefferson County Master Gardeners Arkansas Food Desert Elimination	10,000.00	Timothy Wallace	Arkansas Department of Health
Multi-state Coordinated Trials: Management of Emerging Cotton Diseases	20,000.00	Travis Faske	Cotton Incorporated

# Updated Travel Policy & Templates

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An updated travel policy (UADA 380.1) is now available on the <u>Division of Agriculture Policies page</u>. This policy replaces existing Division of Agriculture policies PMGS 12-01 and PMGS 12-04. While there are not significant policy changes within the new document, everyone is encouraged to familiarize themselves with the policy since there have been revisions to make policy statements clearer and address common travel issues.

This updated policy allows employees to use the new <u>Travel Authorization Form template</u> in place of a Workday Spend Authorization (SA) when traveling out of state domestically or as a planning tool for an SA. International travel and travel advances continue to require completion of a SA in Workday. Additionally, the updated

policy requires use of the new <u>Travel Method Comparison Worksheet</u> when evaluating driving versus flying for business purposes.

Both templates are designed to assist in making the travel process easier for employees and avoid common reasons travel documents may be returned for update. Before using either of the new templates, please review the sections of policy that relate to each template for additional information and instructions.

Please begin using the new templates for any travel where the planning and approval process has not already started. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Travel Team at travel@uada.edu. ■

## Personnel Changes



**Connie Barrett** – County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Baxter County

Angie Freel - County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Science, Howard County

Katie Mann – Grants Support Specialist - Office of Sponsored Programs, LRSO

Madison Martin - Administrative Specialist III, Stone County

**Taylor Klass** – Instructor - Plant Health Clinic - Entomology and Plant Pathology, Washington County

**Alisa Hale** – Administrative Specialist III, Baxter County

Kim Burgess – Administrative Assistant, Delta District, LRSO

Dustin Perry - Fiscal Support Analyst - 4-H & Youth Development, LRSO

#### Farewell to:

Matthew Joseph Davis – County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Jackson County

A'ndrea Griffin – Instructional Design Manager, LRSO