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BLUE LETTER

December 2018

No. 3800



December is Here

A Month of Highs and Lows for Me – and Probably for Many

A high point of December, when most of us are trying to cram a month's work into 15 work days, is the faculty and staff conference – this year on December 3. We gathered in Little Rock to share the accomplishments of the year and beam the meeting statewide to counties and stations and campuses. We believe it important to catch up with each other, at least once, and recognize our colleagues who have gone above and beyond in the Extension Mission.

We invited Dr. Deacue Fields, the new Dean of the Bumbers College, to share his vision. And he did, very well. His is a positive outlook to build the best College in the nation, and to build it with Arkansas students from every county in the state. In this vein, we have pledged our help and support. We want to see deserving students from our communities attend the College and work in the future of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences for our state and nation. I was honored that Carmen Alessi, the Dean's Assistant, also attended as Carmen has been a friend of ours for years.

We recognized bookoos of colleagues for local, state, regional and national awards, and I greatly appreciate Amy Hedges, Mary Hightower, Kerry Rodtnick and others for keeping up with all of these, organizing them,

and coming up with innovative ways to show and tell. Please review these and “high five” our awardees as you can.

While all of these recognitions are deeply meaningful, I will only share in this mis-sive a couple. Nita Cooper earned Employee of the Year. Nita is one of the outstanding professional people of Extension that I have known, and I was honored to present this to her. She also announced her retirement in early January, which makes me sick, but is also a decision that I have come to understand more than in the past.

Amy Cole and Taylor Knox received the Lynn Russell Award for Professional Excellence. I knew Lynn, the consummate professional, and was pleased that our selections exemplify the positive drive for excellence that Lynn Russell was. These awards are important, because all of us need heroes, and role models, and Lynn Russell was both to many of us – we should not forget.

Joy West received the Mildred and Liz Childs Scholarship for Professional Development. When I think of lifelong learners,

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Annie's Project

Ag and FCS Extension county agents completed training to become national facilitators for Annie's Project. Dr. Laura Hendrix and Dr. Jason Johnson, Texas AgriLife extension economist, conducted the training at the Vines 4-H Center on Nov. 7.

Johnson's areas of programming expertise include: farm and ranch management and production, price risk management, range and natural resource management and marketing, and family financial planning. Johnson is a fourth generation rancher and is a registered investment advisor with the Texas State Securities Board. He is a national Annie's Project board member and trainer.

Annie's Project is risk management education for women in farm enterprises. The multi-session programs require 18 hours of training and are usually delivered by both ag and FCS agents in local or multi-county areas. Annie's Project empowers farm and ranch women to be more successful. Annie's Project covers five areas of risk: financial, human resources, legal, marketing, and production. ■

ARKANSAS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE FACILITATOR TRAINING NOVEMBER 2018

PARTICIPANT'S NAME	LOCATION
Matt Fryer	Crawford County
Brad Runsick	Fulton County
Sara Beth Johnson	Lonoke County
Rachael Price	LRSO
Jane Maginot	Washington County
Diane Clement	Cleveland County
Nita Cooper	Boone County
Shaw nee Sorensen	Sebastian County
Mary Ann Kizer	Jefferson County
Jane Newton	Lincoln County
Rachel Bearden	Hot Spring County
Sherry Beaty-Sullivan	Little River County
Debra DeRossitte	Craighead County
Crystal Johnson	Dallas County
Millie Collins	Cross County
Allison Howell	Clay County
Rick Wimberley	Cross County
Leigh Helms-Blythe	Poinsett County
Mike Andrews	Randolph County
Olivia Green	Randolph County
Leigh Ann Bullington	Woodruff County
Cheryl DeVuyst	Oklahoma State University
Jenine Myers	Black River Technical College
Megan Taylor	University of Nebraska



Facebook Hacked

You may have heard that in early December Arkansas Game and Fish's Facebook page was hacked. How? One of the page managers' personal accounts was compromised by a hacker who then logged into the AGFC business page and posted inappropriate content. Luckily the hacker did not delete permissions from other admins so the content was removed and the page was restored.

To prevent this type of nefarious activity on your own Extension Facebook page, be sure to:

1. Change your Facebook password every six months.
2. Make sure the password is UNIQUE to Facebook and not used on any other websites.

HOW TO RESET YOUR PASSWORD

If you're logged in to Facebook and know your password:

1. Click Account Settings in the top right corner of any Facebook page and select Settings.
2. Click Security and Login.
3. Click Edit next to Change Password.
4. Click Save Changes.

If you're logged in to Facebook and you forgot your password:

1. Click Account Settings in the top right corner of any Facebook page and select Settings.
2. Click Security and Login.
3. Click Edit next to Change Password.
4. Click Forgot your password? and follow the steps to reset it. Keep in mind that you'll need access to the email that you signed up for Facebook with. ■



Create Bridges Adds Two Participants

Two multi-county regions in Arkansas have been selected to participate in CREATE BRIDGES, a new pilot program run through the Community and Economic Development unit.

The Ozark Foothills region includes Sharp, Fulton and Izard counties in Northcentral Arkansas, while the 3Cs region consists of Little River, Sevier and Howard counties in southwest Arkansas.

The CREATE BRIDGES program will help these regions build capacity for strengthening retail, tourism, hospitality and entertainment sectors, which provide jobs and business opportunities that frequently boost rural communities.

"One of the exciting features of this program's design is the

focus on addressing needs of both employers and employees. We're inspired by the number of regions interested in participating because it shows that there is strong need and demand for programs focusing on these industries,"

said Stacey McCullough, Assistant Director of CED. "Working closely with the regional steering committees will ensure that we are building a foundation for success."

The regions' first planning meetings were held in December. The regions will hold civic forums, retail academies and business retention and expansion roundtables throughout 2019.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, the University of Kentucky and Oklahoma State University are developing, refining and piloting the program. ■



Marketing Tools and Resources Workshop

Faculty and staff with the Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness Department developed and hosted an exciting one-day workshop addressing marketing of agricultural products. "As input prices continue to increase and commodity prices remain low, farmers are seeking innovative ways to capture margins and remain profitable. This workshop will highlight some of those strategies as well as marketing resources available across the Division," said Ron Rainey.

The workshop was held on Thursday, Dec. 6 at the Cooperative Extension Office, Little Rock, Arkansas. It was designed to help farmers, ranchers and agricultural industry stakeholders understand tools and resources to assist with marketing agricultural products. Participants gained knowledge on marketing trends, strategic steps and technical assistance to help them enhance their marketing practices.

TOPICS INCLUDED:

- Trends in Agricultural Marketing
- Arkansas Food Cottage Law
- Food Safety Training Update
- Value Added Processing Resources & Technical Assistance
- Specialty Crop & Farm Budgets
- USDA Financial & Technical Assistance

The workshop offered producers a better understanding of the different resources available from University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture and industry stakeholders. The workshop goal was to help farmers move from a commodity focus to a differentiated marketing strategy. In addition, producers were able to take home invaluable contact information and reference material to aid their business decisions with specific resources addressing different marketing options.

Ron Rainey, John McMinn, Celise Williams, Rusty Rumley, Renee Threlfall and Angela Gardner were all program presenters. ■

Rural Life Conference Set

Friday, Feb. 1, 2019

The 63rd Annual Rural Life Conference will be Friday, Feb. 1, at the Pine Bluff Convention Center, One Convention Center Plaza in Pine Bluff. The conference begins with registration at 7:30 a.m.; the opening session is at 8:45 a.m. The conference theme is "Working Together to Strengthen Farmers, Families and Communities."

Sponsored by the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human Sciences, this year's conference features several workshops, a poster session highlighting research projects and exhibits by governmental and community agencies.

Registration is requested of everyone even though the conference is free to producers, homemakers and retirees. Early-bird registration for professionals and agency personnel is \$50; \$75 after Jan. 14. To preregister, if you have special needs or for more information, contact **Casandra Hawkins-Byrd** at **870-575-8123** or **byrdc@uapb.edu**.

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Columbia County 4-H T-shirt Contest

Each year the Columbia County 4-H Teen Leaders conduct a Christmas Ornament Workshop for countywide active 4-H members. This year the group spiced things up a bit by offering an “Ugly Christmas T-shirt Contest”. Members were encouraged to create their own ugly Christmas T-shirts and compete by modeling them. Crosby B. with Jennifer of Magnolia acted as judge of this year’s 15 competitors.

Crosby named the following winners: Aiden W., Ugly T-shirt; Alisha G., Uglier T-shirt, and Joseph S., Ugliest T-shirt. Winners received cool champion ribbons indicating their placings and even cooler 4-H duffle bags. Columbia County Teen Leaders led members to make five personalized ornaments for Christmas 2018. Nobody involved now actually remembers when the annual tradition of the Ornament Workshop started, Columbia County Teen Leaders have just always conducted it. There are grandparents in the county who say they have entire trees filled with 4-H ornaments made by all their children and now they are adding their grandkids 4-H ornaments to those. With over 50 participants, involved the 2018 workshop was a great one! ■



Group Photo – Top Right: Participants of the Columbia County 2018 Ugly Christmas T-shirt Contest included: (Front L to R) Emilee H., Heath L., Joseph S., Aiden W., Jace W., Tatum C., Julieann S., Holland S. and Lexi S. (Back L to R) Cole L., Crosby B., Norman S., Charmaine J., Alisha G., Malli N. and Emily B.

Winning T-shirts – Middle: Crosby B. (far left) from Jennifer’s of Magnolia was the judge for this year’s contest. Winners included (L to R): Joseph S., Ugliest T Shirt; Aiden W, Ugly T-shirt and Alisha G. Uglier T-shirt.

Having Fun – Bottom Left: Smiles, cookies and hot chocolate were in order for the 2018 Columbia County 4-H Christmas Ornament Workshop!

Columbia County 4-H Christmas Parade

4-H CANDY STRIPES IT UP AT MAGNOLIA CHRISTMAS PARADE

Columbia County 4-H recently entered a parade float in the Magnolia Christmas Parade. The theme for the parade was “A Candy Striped Christmas.” CC4-H took this theme to heart and literally candy striped and entire 16’ utility trailer. They all even wore candy striped headbands along with their county 4-H T-shirts. The only alteration to the theme was the four-foot-tall wooden 4-H clover adorned with colored racer lights. The float team won the “Sugar Plum” (most appealing to kids) division of the parade which fetched CC4-H a \$250 check from the Magnolia Chamber of Commerce. ■



Group Photo – Top Left (left to right, front): Jennifer H., Michelle B., Aletta S., Joseph S., Colt E., Kristin Comanche R., Emily B., Norman S., Dawson D., Lisa L., Amber D.. (left to right, back): Carter R., Carlee R., Lillian H., Mary Ella H., Merana H., Sophia H., Holland D., Malli D. and Jerri L.

Group Photo – Top Right (left standing on ground): Carlee R. (left to right; front to back): Holland D., Dawson D., Malli D., Carter R., Sophia H., Colt E., Merana H., Kristin Comanche R., Lillian H., Joseph S., Jennifer H., Mary Ella H.

Night Photo – Jennifer H. made the float theme sign which adorned the back of the float.

Back Of Float – Bottom: An entire team of 4-H members and adult volunteers pitched in to help with the parade float. Jennifer H. made the float theme sign which adorned the back of the float.





4-H Teams in Competition

WASHINGTON COUNTY LIVESTOCK SKILLATHON TEAM PLACES 5TH AT NATIONAL CONTEST

The state winning Arkansas 4-H Livestock Skillathon team from Washington County competed at the National 4-H Livestock Skillathon Contest in Louisville, Kentucky, on Nov. 12. In the individual portion of the contest, they had to identify equipment, retail meat cuts and livestock breeds. They also had a hay judging class, wool judging class, individual quality assurance exercise and a 30-question quiz. The team portion of the contest consisted of meat and carcass evaluation, performance and marketing, livestock feeding, animal breeding scenario and a team quality assurance exercise. The team won 5th Overall, 2nd Identification, and 7th Quality Assurance. This year, All American awards were given to the Top 20 individuals in the contest. Sierra B. and Kale S. were both named All Americans. Sierra placed 5th Overall and 2nd in Identification. Kale placed 17th Overall. Fellow team member Jr P. placed 6th in Identification. Team members consisted of Sierra B., Jordan H., Jr P., Kale S. and were coached by Ronnie Horn.

STATE WINNING LIVESTOCK JUDGING TEAM COMPETES AT NATIONAL 4-H LIVESTOCK JUDGING CONTEST

The state winning Arkansas 4-H Livestock Judging team from White County competed at the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest in Louisville, Kentucky on Nov. 13. At the contest, they judged four classes of cattle, three classes of hogs, three classes of sheep, and one class of goats. They also had four reasons classes and three questions classes. As a team they placed 6th in Swine. The top 20 individuals in the contest were named All Americans. Ross W. earned this honor by winning 19th overall. Team members were Slade O., Noralee T., Carson W., and Ross W. coached by Amy Heck. ■



Judging All American (Left): Ross W. was named a 2018 All American at the National 4-H Livestock Judging Contest.

Judging Team (Right): The White County Livestock Judging team consisted of Carson W., Noralee T., Slade O., and Ross W.

Skillathon Team (Left): The Washington County Livestock Skillathon team consisted of Jr P., Sierra B., Kale S., and Coach Ronnie Horn. Not pictured is team member Jordan H.

Skillathon All Americans (Right): Kale S. and Sierra B. were named 2018 All Americans at the National 4-H Livestock Skillathon Contest.

Arkansas State Fair Skillathon Winners

Skillathons were held during the Arkansas State Fair to test exhibitors' knowledge. In the Sheep, Beef, Goat, and Swine Skillathons, participants were divided into junior or senior age divisions. In each division, participants were required to complete a quiz, identify breeds, identify feeds, junior identified animal body parts, seniors completed a quality assurance activity, identify retail or wholesale meat cuts, and identify equipment. The top three winners received a ribbon and prize money and the winners received belt buckles. ■

SHEEP SKILLATHON WINNERS:

Juniors:

- 1ST – Kiersten P., Howard County 4-H
- 2ND – Vallie Y., Madison County 4-H
- 3RD – Hannah B., Baxter County 4-H

Seniors:

- 1ST – Nick P., Washington County 4-H
- 2ND – Dustin K., Boone County 4-H
- 3RD – Regan B., Clinton FFA

BEEF SKILLATHON WINNERS:

Juniors:

- 1ST – Kiersten P., Howard County 4-H
- 2ND – Gatlin P., Howard County 4-H
- 3RD – Anna S., Hempstead County 4-H

Seniors:

- 1ST – Kaitlyn W., Carroll County 4-H
- 2ND – Hayden H., Miller County 4-H
- 3RD – Kalli S., Cossatot River FFA

GOAT SKILLATHON WINNERS:

Juniors:

- 1ST – Vallie Y., Madison County 4-H
- 2ND – Brayden M., Van Buren County 4-H
- 3RD – Addison K., Stone County 4-H

Seniors:

- 1ST – Eva B., Hot Spring County 4-H
- 2ND – Morganne S., Boone County 4-H
- 3RD – Nick P., Washington County 4-H



Swine Junior Winner
Kiersten P.



Goat Senior Winner
Eva B.



Beef Senior Winner
Kaitlyn W.

SWINE SKILLATHON WINNERS:

Juniors:

- 1ST – Kiersten P., Howard County 4-H
- 2ND – Reese M., Columbia County 4-H
- 3RD – Addison K., Stone County 4-H

Seniors:

- 1ST – Dustin K., Bergman FFA
- 2ND – Kaylie S., Clark County 4-H
- 3RD – Malli D., Columbia County 4-H



Swine Senior Winner
Dustin K.



Goat Junior
Winners
(Left to Right)
Vallie Y.,
Addison K.



Beef Junior Winners
(Left to Right) Kiersten P., Gatlin P. & Anna S.



Sheep Senior
Winner
Nick P.



Sheep Junior
Winners
(Left to Right)
Kiersten P.,
Vallie Y.



Kalin K. of Union County 4-H with her Grand Champion Market Hog.

Arkansas State Fair Livestock Sale of Champions

GRAND CHAMPION STEER

Sydney S. of Clinton FFA – \$17,000
Arkansas Farm Bureau plus \$2,500 from Beef Brigade and \$500 from Arkansas Cattlemen’s Association for a total of \$20,000

RESERVE GRAND CHAMPION STEER

Whitney W. of Prairie Grove FFA – \$13,000
Arkansas Cattlemen’s Association and Beef Brigade

GRAND CHAMPION MARKET HOG

Kalin K. of Union County 4-H – \$8,000
Steve Cobb and Family, Final Drive Genetics, and others

RESERVE GRAND CHAMPION MARKET HOG

Ava M. of Polk County 4-H – \$7,500
Farm Bureau Insurance

GRAND CHAMPION MARKET LAMB

Madison M. of Ashdown FFA - \$5,000
Arkansas Electric Cooperatives

RESERVE GRAND CHAMPION MARKET LAMB

Addison H. of Prairie Grove FFA – \$3,500
Arkansas Farm Bureau

GRAND CHAMPION MARKET GOAT

Kaylie S. of Clark County 4-H – \$6,500
Arkansas Farm Bureau Insurance

RESERVE GRAND CHAMPION MARKET GOAT

Maggie M. of Magnolia FFA – \$3,000
Southern Title Company and Francis Dorough



Madison M. of Ashdown FFA with her Grand Champion Market Lamb



Sydney S. of Clinton FFA with her Grand Champion Market Steer.



Maggie M. of Magnolia FFA with her Reserve Grand Champion Market Goat.



Ava M. of Polk County 4-H with her Reserve Grand Champion Market Hog.



Addison H. of Prairie Grove FFA with her Reserve Grand Champion Market Lamb.



Whitney W. of Prairie Grove FFA with her Reserve Grand Champion Market Steer.



Kaylie S. of Clark County 4-H with her Grand Champion Market Goat.



Lonoke County 4-H'er Attends National 4-H Dairy Conference

The National 4-H Dairy Conference was held in Madison, Wisconsin, on Sept. 30-Oct. 3. Abby K. of Lonoke County was selected to represent Arkansas at the conference and provided an expense-paid trip through the Department of Animal Science. Abby was able to partake in a variety of tours including ABS Global, Hoard's Dairyman Publishing firm and dairy farm, Nasco, World Dairy Expo, and to various dairy producer farms. Furthermore, she participated in hands-on seminars with topics including artificial insemination. Abby served on the Sponsor Appreciation Committee. Next year's National 4-H Dairy Conference will be held Sept. 29-Oct. 2 in Madison, Wisconsin. ■



Abby K. represented Arkansas at the National 4-H Dairy Conference in Madison, Wisconsin.

Washington County 4-H Soccer for Success Launches

From Oct. 8 to Nov. 15, approximately two-dozen youth—with no prior history of 4-H involvement—participated in the inaugural Washington County 4-H Soccer for Success program. The program addresses our goals for Washington County to have healthier communities, to

strengthen the positive sense of self and psychological well-being of our youth, to increase academic achievement of youth from all backgrounds and decrease the rate of youth obesity and youth delinquency, and provide opportunities for all youth to have free access to positive adult role models.

The 4-H Soccer for Success program met two times a week for six weeks and involved trained coach-mentors instructing youth in the fundamentals of soccer while teaching participants to recognize the values of hard work, teamwork, respecting others, communication, and persistence in achieving personal goals. Healthy lifestyle choices were discussed, particularly in relation to the principals of nutrition as they relate to health and physical fitness. Spanish-English bilingual instruction was provided to support the diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds of the participants. The six-weeks culminated in an indoor gathering where families participated in 4-H leadership initiative games and learned about other opportunities available in 4-H. The program is expected to continue in the spring. ■



Extension Excellence Awards

The Cooperative Extension Service, recognized the efforts and excellence of employees at both the state and county levels during the state faculty and staff conference on Dec. 3.

The conference was attended by Division faculty and staff. Rick Cartwright, extension director, provided an update on accomplishments during 2018.

The Extension Excellence Awards were established to foster teamwork, professional development and overall excellence.

“The Cooperative Extension Service has many excellent employees, those who exemplify work ethic, professionalism, and a positive ‘can do’ attitude – every day,” Cartwright said. “Once a year, we acknowledge the ‘best of the best’ as determined by a committee of peers from submitted nominations.

“It is my singular honor as director to recognize these truly outstanding colleagues - a credit to the Division of Agriculture and their profession,” he said.

THIS YEAR’S WINNERS ARE:

County Team Award: The Culinary Arts School project earned this year’s team award, covering activities in Hempstead, Howard, Miller, Pike and Sevier counties. Recipients include Janet Cantrell, Carla Due, Jean Ince, Terrie James and Eva Langley.

State Team Award: The 2018 winner was Tech Tuesdays, an ongoing online effort from the Cooperative Extension Service to spread knowledge about how make the

most out of the technology available to the people of Arkansas. Recipients include Amy Cole, Terrell Davis, Mary Hightower, Chelsey Kimbrough, Kevin Lawson, Mary Poling, Julie Robinson, Kerry Rodtnick and Kim Rowe.



State Team Award (From L to R): Julie Robinson, Mary Hightower, Chelsey Kimbrough, Amy Cole, Mary Poling, Kerry Rodtnick, Kevin Lawson, Kim Rowe, Terrell Davis. Presented by Dr. Cartwright on left.

Classified Employee Early Career Award: Sandra Harms, Mississippi County EFNEP program assistant. Mississippi County Food and Consumer Science Agent Pamela Pruitt, who nominated Harms, credited her with building the county’s EFNEP program “from the ground up.”

County Extension Faculty Early Career Award: Rachel Bearden, Hot Springs County Cooperative Extension staff chair. Lonoke County 4-H Agent Sara Beth Johnson, who nominated Bearden, said Bearden is “an agent that makes every effort to promote Extension work everywhere she goes, and to develop successful programs and clientele.” Bearden is credited with forging relationships that helped secure the funding for a full-time 4-H agent for Hot Spring County, among many other accomplishments.



Classified Employee Early Career Award: Sandra Harms.

(Continued Page 12)



State Extension Faculty Early Career Award: Chelsey Kimbrough.

State Extension Faculty Early Career Award: Chelsey Kimbrough, animal science livestock/youth specialist. Associate Professor of Equine Animal Science Mark Russell, who nominated Kimbrough, credited her with completely revamping the state's youth livestock

program "into one of the premier programs in the southern part of the United States."

Project/Program Administrator Early Career Award: Gretchen Skinner, in-service training and web applications specialist for the Office of Information Technology. Digital Media Program Director Amy Cole, who nominated Skinner, credited her with enriching programs that serve both the public and Extension employees through online courses and resources.



Project/Program Administrator Early Career Award: Gretchen Skinner.

Project/Program Associate Early Career Award: Taylor Knox, 4-H Center program technician. 4-H Center Program Director Shannon Caldwell, who nominated Knox, said Taylor has "a real understanding of Extension's goal of improving the lives of others." ■



State Extension Faculty Early Career Award: Taylor Knox.



County Extension Faculty Early Career Award: Rachel Bearden.



County Team Award (From L to R): Jean Ince, Carla Due, Terrie James, Eva Langley, Janet Cantrell and Beth Phelps.

Employee of the Year

Nita Cooper, Boone County Cooperative Extension staff chair was recognized as Employee of the Year. Johnson County 4-H Agent Jeanie Rowbotham, who nominated Cooper for the award, said that Cooper, during her 31-year career, exemplified what Arkansans expect from a Cooperative Extension Service agent.

“Nita is what you think of when you think of a county extension agent,” Rowbotham said in her nominating document. “She has a long career in Extension, yet still maintains her enthusiasm for bettering the lives of Arkansans.”

Cooper is credited with providing crucial support to programs ranging from Annie’s Project for Women in Agriculture to 4-H, and is deeply involved in area organizations including the Farm Bureau, Kiwanis and the Chamber of Commerce.

“The highest award in Extension excellence is one where we try to pick the person who best exemplifies the gold standard for the Cooperative Extension Service,” Cartwright said. “Selfless dedication, hard work, professionalism, impact, high performance. All those things we think make a great employee, great colleague.”

“Over the years, I’ve worked with Nita,” he said. “And nobody has been a better example to me of professionalism and hard work.”

“I am truly blessed to serve as an extension agent, and 30-plus years have flown by,” Cooper said. “Please know that it may be me in the photo with Dr. Cartwright, but I didn’t get this honor by myself. Credit goes to my coworkers, both in the county and outside the county, awesome volunteers, 4-H members and parents, and my family.” ■



Directors Column Continued

and Extension models for professionalism and achievement, I can think very easily of Mildred and Liz Childs, as well as Joy West. An outstanding awardee.

The conference also had its sad moments, as Janet Carson also has decided to retire. We honored Janet Carson and her many years of service to Extension and the Division at the conference and later that week in our Conversations program. There is only, and will ever be, one Janet Carson – and we are indeed lucky to have had her for this time. What a time it was, and how she will be missed.

Other legends that have decided to retire include Carla Vaught in Polk County and Mark Keaton in Baxter County. I am not sure I have met the equal of Carla when it comes to energy, building programs, and impact.

Extension will not be the same without Carla Vaught. And I could say similar about Mark - steady, clear, solid, leader – a professional in every way. Mark is a rock. I will greatly miss them both.

There may be others that have decided to retire that we can share in 2019 and we try to recognize everyone in the Blue Letter, but I confess I find it difficult to talk about colleagues leaving. But I also understand these decisions and we simply wish everyone that is able to move on and tackle the plans made and put on hold for the past 30 or 40 years the absolute best in retirement. We hope all have a great life and please know that we will always be here for you.

Have a great Christmas, New Years and Holiday Season! ■



Washington County 4-H Food Drive

The Garden Explorer Junior Master Gardener 4-H Club is conducting a food drive Dec. 1 – 15 for donations to local food banks. The Garden Explorers are pictured here on the first day of the drive. All 4-H clubs are encouraged to add their donations to the boxes by the part of the plant most commonly eaten. ■

Yell County Hay Show

Bob Powell, Yell County Ag Agent, utilized local high school students to assist area farmers at their annual hay show. Laptops from the LRSO were utilized to help farmers plug their hay analysis into the Cowculator program in order to develop a winter feeding program. Local students from the Danville FFA were taught the program ahead of time, so they were able to assist farmers when needed. This was a win, win situation for both the students and the farmers. ■

Horticulture Award

The web series, “Arkansas Blackberry School,” by Amanda McWhirt and Jackie Lee has been selected to receive a Blue Ribbon Extension Publication Award at the annual meeting of the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science in Birmingham next January.

The award was initiated in 1987 to recognize outstanding contribution to the understanding of horticultural subjects reported in written, video, audio and electronic form, including internet-based formats. The award serves to give those authors of extension publications recognition among their peers and administrators.

Among the comments made by the reviewers were: “Very well organized and easily applicable for blackberry growers, experienced or novice.”

Congratulations, Amanda and Jackie! ■



Your **BENEFITS****FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNT (FSA)**

Expenses for your 2018 FSA must be incurred from 1/1/2018 through 12/31/2018. Up to \$500 of unused FSA funds as of 12/31/2018 will transfer to your 2019 available balance. Any unused amount over \$500 or under \$50 will be forfeited. If you enrolled in the Health Savings Account starting 1/1/2019, all FSA funds must be used by 12/31/2018. You have until 3/31/2019 to file for reimbursement for FSA expenses incurred through 12/31/2018.

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH UNUSED, ACCRUED LEAVE? DONATE IT!

Annual leave is cumulative; however, no employee may have an accumulation in excess of 240 hours

(30 days) on Dec. 31 of each year. During the calendar year, accrued leave may exceed 30 days, but those days in excess of 30 will be lost if not used before Dec. 31 of each year.

Sick leave is cumulative up to a total maximum of 960 hours (120 days).

Donations can be made to the Catastrophic Leave Bank through Dec. 31 in one-hour increments. You must maintain 80 hours of combined annual and sick leave to donate.

To donate, send a completed form EBEN-103 to Payroll / Financial Services. Please remember to keep your home address updated in Banner Self Service. ■

Personnel Changes



Welcome aboard:

Stephannie Baldwin - Program Assistant-EFNEP, Pulaski County, Little Rock

Emily Davis - Multimedia Content Specialist, Office of Communications, Little Rock

Nancy Evans - 4-H Program Assistant, White County, Searcy

Clyde Fenton - Program Associate - Food Systems & Safety, Little Rock

Olivia Green - County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Science, Randolph County, Pocahontas

Amanda Gonia - Administrative Specialist II, Facilities Management, Little Rock

Lizzy Herrera - Program Technician - Fruit & Veg. Production, Horticulture, Little Rock

Oliver Williams - Publications Specialist, Office of Communications, Little Rock

Julie Workman - Program Assistant 4-H, Pope County, Russellville

Farewell to:

Jackson Alexander - Program Associate, 4H & Youth Development, Little Rock

Kourtney Chadick - 4-H Program Assistant, Grant County, Sheridan

Lisa Washburn - Associate Professor - Health, Family & Consumer Science, Little Rock

University of Arkansas, United States Department of Agriculture, and County Governments Cooperating. The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

Grants and Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
Southern Regional Center for Food Safety Training, Outreach and Technical Assistance Continuation, and Lead Regional Coordination Center	\$12,000	Amanda Philyaw Perez	University of Florida
4-H Healthy Habits 2018	\$61,000	Angie Blacklaw-Freel	National 4-H Council
4-H Military Partnership Grant	\$27,182	Angie Blacklaw-Freel	Kansas State University
Perform Efficacy Evaluation for Indigo Products Candidates on Rice in the United States	\$33,000	Jarrod Hardke	Indigo Ag, Inc.
Wheat Research Verification Program	\$18,000	Jason Kelley	Wheat Promotion Board
Mocking Bird Library Butterfly Garden	\$3,000	Matthew Davis	Walmart Foundation
Hot Spring County Master Gardeners	\$1,000	Rachel Bearden	Walmart Foundation
2019 National Value Added Agriculture Conference	\$27,500	Ron Rainey	Agricultural Marketing Service - USDA
Southern Risk Management Center at the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service	\$1,082,736	Ron Rainey	National Institute of Food and Agriculture
Enhanced Pest Control System for Mid-South Soybean	\$35,160	Terry Spurlock	Louisiana State University
Expanding the SCN Coalition	\$17,000	Travis Faske	North Dakota State University
TOTAL AWARDS FOR OCTOBER 2018:	\$2,012,463		

Upcoming Events

JANUARY

- Jan. 11 - Little Rock - Agriculture Awards Luncheon
- Jan. 14 - Weiner - Craighead and Poinsett County rice, soybean
- Jan. 15 - Prairie County - Lonoke, Prairie and Pulaski rice and soybean
- Jan. 17 - Conway County - River Valley rice, soybeans, corn
- Jan. 18 - Trumann - Craighead and Poinsett County cotton, corn
- Jan. 25 - Patterson - Woodruff County rice and soybean
- Jan. 28 - Kensett - White County rice and soybean
- Jan. 29 - Rector - Clay and Green County cotton and corn
- Jan. 29 - Dumas - Desha, Drew and Lincoln County rice and soybean
- Jan. 30 - Jonesboro - Arkansas Soil & Water Education Conference and Expo

FEBRUARY

- Feb. 5 (morning) - Stanford - Greene County rice and soybean
- Feb. 5 (afternoon) - Corning - Clay County rice and soybean
- Feb. 6 - Portland - Ashley and Chicot County rice and soybean
- Feb. 7 - Marianna - Phillips, Lee, St. Francis and Monroe County cotton and corn
- Feb. 8 - Wynne - Cross County rice and soybean
- Feb. 11 - West Memphis - Crittenden and Mississippi County rice and soybean
- Feb. 12 (morning) - Stuttgart - Arkansas County rice and soybean
- Feb. 12 (afternoon) - Pine Bluff - Jefferson County rice and soybean
- Feb. 13 - Keiser - Crittenden and Mississippi County cotton and corn
- Feb. 13 - Russellville - River Valley Beef Cattle Conference