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BLUE LETTER

June 2018
No. 3794



Hard at work across the state

We are enduring June, a month when summer and griping about hot weather arrives fully.

This is also a month when Division and Extension colleagues are more than fully engaged in outdoor program efforts. Recent reports from Dr. Gus Lorenz note the amazing progress of bollworm buildup in the Delta, as evidenced by the extremely high moth trap counts coming in from county agents. This indicates a challenging year ahead for major crops with regard to pest management.

Vic Ford reports increased use of the new FieldWatch system, where growers and others can voluntarily register fields on an online GPS map so pesticide applicators can avoid mistakes around sensitive crops or beehives. Our system will be the first to feature special row crops such as herbicide-resistant rice varieties or edible soybeans and the like.

Jarrod Hardke, Amanda McWhirt, Jackie Lee and others stay in the forefront of technology with the recent release of the crop report app, where specialists and others can record a field report onsite, load it to the web and a text is issued to subscribers to listen; the DD50 Rice app; and the "What's Wrong With My Tomatoes?" app. While the last one actually has a different name, that is the gist of it. These mobile device apps take a lot of time to develop, and we appreciate the dedication of our faculty and staff to work on these in order to help our stakeholders. We very much appreciate Steven Hefner and Amy Cole and others in IT for hard work behind the scenes in this technology.

I hope all are aware of the recent arrival of Dr. Deacue Fields, new dean of the Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food and Life Sciences. Dr. Fields grew up on a farm in Louisiana, then lived a diverse career in university teaching, research and extension mainly at Auburn University, with a background in ag economics. He brings to Arkansas an energy and interest in potential

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Hendrix earns group facilitation certificate

Laura Hendrix, assistant professor of family and consumer economics for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, is among the graduates from the Arkansas Public Administration Consortium's first 2018 class for its Certified Group Facilitator Program.

This program teaches participants how to effectively design, manage and lead a group to solve problems and meet desired goals.

Hendrix graduated May 10, at a ceremony at the University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service in Little Rock. James L. "Skip" Rutherford III, dean of the Clinton School of Public Service, gave the keynote address which focused on the importance of serving the public.

"Group facilitation is a critical skill for my work with groups including LeadAR, Extension Homemakers, 4-H and groups of my colleagues," said Hendrix. "I've also enjoyed the opportunity to facilitate strategic planning sessions, organizational analysis, and planning sessions for other business and nonprofit groups."

The Arkansas Public Administration Consortium offers specialized, affordable professional training and training-related services. The trainings focus on those that serve the public including state, county and local government employees, elected officials and nonprofit professionals. APAC is a cooperative program of the University of Arkansas - Little Rock, University of Arkansas - Fayetteville and Arkansas State University. ■



Rachael Price, FCS program technician, with Laura Hendrix at the May 10 graduation ceremony for Arkansas Public Administration Consortium's Certified Group Facilitator Program.

Soil Health Research Tour held in eastern Arkansas

The Soil Health Research Tour was held May 23-24, 2018, on six farms across eastern Arkansas. Participants heard from the farmers, many of whom are members of the Arkansas Soil Health Alliance or Arkansas Discovery Farms, about their experiences in improving soil health on their farms. Twenty faculty, graduate students and Natural Resources Conservation Service field personnel were present for the discussion with farmers who shared their successes and challenges and presented questions for research and Extension faculty to help design research.

Tour participants represented the U of A System Division of Agriculture, Arkansas State University, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Agriculture Research Service, Arkansas Soil Health Alliance and Arkansas Discovery Farms. Besides gathering insight from farmers on soil health, another goal was to adopt uniform research methods and protocol in order to determine those soil properties that best indicate soil health. Several researchers demonstrated collecting data on soil properties, such as bulk density, aggregate stability, infiltration, plant stands, biomass production, N-ST*R sampling and water quality of runoff water. Uniform sampling protocol for soil health will allow the team from multiple entities to build a soil health and conservation practice data base.

The participating farmers, Bill and Brett Carwell, Ellis Bell, Michael Taylor, Jr., Adam Chappell, Robbie Bevis and Wes Kirkpatrick, and Stevens Farm Manager Perry Wilson provided excellent input. Tour participants would like to thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to participate. ■



Dr. Kris Brye from University of Arkansas - Fayetteville demonstrates soil sampling techniques during Soil Health Research Tour.

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

Chi Epsilon Sigma names 2018-2019 officers and award winners

The Beta Chapter of Chi Epsilon Sigma, Extension's classified staff professional association, held its annual meeting during the 2018 Support Staff Conference at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center April 26-27.

New Chi Epsilon Sigma officers elected for the 2018-2019 year are:

- President – Johnny Woodley, Little Rock State Office
- President Elect – Kristen Kiefer, Little Rock State Office
- Secretary – Glenda Sutherlin, Union County
- Treasurer/Membership Chair – Cecilia Harberson, Howard County
- Administrative Advisor – Beverly Brown, Dallas County
- Annalist - Diane Cunningham, Monroe County
- Past President – Sandra McGinnis, Lawrence County
- Delta District Director – Burnita Hearne, Crittenden County
- Ouachita District Director – Dana Stringfellow, Sevier County
- LRSO District Director – Abby Hilton, Little Rock State Office
- Ozark District Director – Debra Schneider, Crawford County

Two member awards were given at the meeting, support staff Member of the Year 2018 and Rookie of the Year 2018. (See story below). Scholarship awards were presented to Patricia Johnson, Human Resources Specialist, Little Rock State Office, and Elizabeth Ann Fish, daughter of JoAnn Fish, Purchasing Specialist, Little Rock State Office.

Congratulations to our new officers and award winners. We look forward to the 2019 Support Staff Conference. ■



Left to right: Front row – Abby Hilton, Little Rock State Office District Director; Beverly Brown, Administrative Advisor; and Dana Stringfellow, Ouachita District Director. Back row – Sarah Housley, Ozark District Director; Burnita Hearne, Delta District Director; Diane Cunningham, Annalist; Cecilia Harberson, Treasurer/Membership Chair; Glenda Sutherlin, Secretary; President Elect, Kristen Kiefer; Sandra McGinnis, Past President and Johnny Woodley, President (not pictured).

Burnita Hearne and Nancy Clark receive awards at Chi Epsilon Sigma meeting during Support Staff Conference

Burnita Hearne, administrative specialist for Crittenden County, and Nancy Clark, Administrative Specialist, Health and Wellness, Little Rock State Office, received awards at the annual Support Staff Conference at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center April 26-27.

Hearne received the Chi Epsilon Sigma Delta District and Overall Support Staff Member of the Year award. Each year a deserving employee is chosen for this award.

She was nominated by her Family and Consumer Sciences agent, Meredith Wayman, who said Burnita goes above and beyond her expected duties to assure the staff meets the expectations and responsibilities at both the state and county levels. Burnita has served as administrative specialist in Crittenden County for a total of 35 years and knows Extension better than most. Her warm smile and enthusiastic attitude assist in the overall staff morale which she uses to motivate her co-workers to go above and beyond daily. She is very efficient and holds the office accountable and is always searching for ways to help others.

Nancy Clark received the Rookie of the Year award. This award is presented to a new employee and Chi Epsilon Sigma member who is chosen by her peers to receive this award. She has been employed with Extension for a year and two months.

Clark was nominated by Lisa Washburn, Associate Professor - Health, Little Rock State Office, who said that all the FCS Unit is grateful to work with someone of her skill level. Nancy's work ethic is great and is proactive. She is a very good communicator, a team player, punctual, pleasant, organized and detail orientated. Nancy is a true professional and very deserving of this award. ■



Left to right: Cecilia Harberson and Burnita Hearne, 2018 Overall Support Staff Member of the Year.

Left to right: Nancy Clark, 2018 Rookie of the Year and Cecilia Harberson.



Extension Homemakers Month in Arkansas

Extension Homemakers in Jefferson County are celebrating the contributions of their organizations to the community during May as Extension Homemakers Month in Arkansas. They join more than 4,000 members of the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council from 329 clubs throughout the state in observance.

There are five Extension Homemakers Clubs in Jefferson County. Club names and locations for meetings include:

- Camden Road, Whiteville Baptist Church, Pine Bluff
- Grace Willing Workers, White Hall Museum
- Heart - N - Hands, Centennial Church, White Hall
- Lunch Bunch, Jefferson County Extension Office, Pine Bluff
- Willing Workers of White Hall, White Hall Library

For 106 years, the Extension Homemakers/Home Demonstration program has been ongoing in Arkansas, providing its members with Education, Leadership Development and Community Service to the communities in which the clubs are located, Children's Hospital, and UAMS.

Left to right, Mary Ann Kizer, CEA-FCS, Connie Herrin, Nancy Rosen, Jo Ann Carr, Delores Kelley, Brenda Robinson, Marnette Reed and Debbie James presenting mock check for \$3,862,400, for value of Jefferson County Extension Homemakers Community Service Hours FY2017, to Jefferson County Judge Booker Clemons.

As part of the observance, County Judge Booker Clemons, a former Jefferson County staff chair, signed the Proclamation on Wednesday, May 17, at 2:30 p.m. in the County Courthouse proclaiming May as Extension Homemakers Month in Jefferson County.

The annual meeting of the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council will be held June 5-7 at the Hot Springs Convention Center. A variety of educational and heirloom craft seminars will be presented, along with awards for outstanding local projects and scholarships. County Council presidents and milestone members of 50 years and more will be recognized. Paula Dailey, Jefferson County member, will be recognized for 50 years membership. A memorial service will be held for deceased members including Carolyn Keedy and Gloria Stoudamire, Heart - N - Hands deceased members.

The Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council is a volunteer organization associated with the Cooperative Extension Service, part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. During 2016-2017, the most recent period for which statistics are available, Extension Homemakers reported giving 667,195.5 hours of volunteer service.

Jefferson County Extension Homemakers donated 160,000 volunteer hours from July 1, 2016, to June 30, 2017, with a value over three million dollars. Jo Ann Carr, immediate past council president; Debbie James, council president; EHC advisor Mary Ann Kizer; Brenda Robinson, Delores Kelley, Nancy Rosen, Connie Herrin and Marnette Reed recently presented Judge Booker Clemons with a mock check for \$3,862,400, the value of 2016-2017 Jefferson County EHC community service. ■

CES exercise class for Little Rock employees kicked off May 23

Did you know on the fourth Wednesday of every month at lunch time there is a low impact exercise class offered free of charge for CES employees? The 30-minute lunchtime class kicked off on Wednesday, May 23, with nine employees.

Pat Doss, our fearless leader, taught students multiple strength training techniques using exercise bands. Little Rock State Office employees Melanie Berman and Kim Wiedower participated in the Employee Diabetes Prevention Program over the last year and, once the course ended, they wanted to continue the group on a path to healthy living.

If you are interested to join the monthly exercise class, please e-mail Kim Wiedower so she may add you to the group e-mail list. Our next class will be Wednesday, June 27, at 12 p.m. Location will depend on availability of space. ■



CES employees expressing their enjoyment after the NEW monthly exercise class, picture taken on May 23 by Melanie Berman.

McGeeney recounts efforts to help promote safe handling of pesticides in Nigeria

On May 12, I flew to the west African country of Nigeria to work with the Samaru College of Agriculture for two weeks, at the request of Winrock International.

Winrock does a lot of philanthropic work in the developing world, especially related to agriculture. In 2017, a pesticide expert conducted a country-wide assessment on behalf of Winrock; among her recommendations was that the college work to create a media campaign to promote the safe handling of pesticides – a practice that appeared to be sorely lacking.

During my two weeks in northern Nigeria, I worked with members of SCA's National Agricultural Extension and Research Liaison Service and students in the Ahmadu Bello University's College of Mass Communications to create messages for a radio campaign designed to reach rural farmers throughout the country. We chose radio (versus television or social media) as our primary platform because it's the most cost-effective way to reach rural farmers in Nigeria, most of whom have radios (the university already owns its own recording studio and FM radio transmitting station, ABU FM 101.1).

Working from a list of about two dozen key messages about safe pesticide handling, members of the university's media teams created a one-minute dramatization, a dialogue between two characters, to illustrate one of the messages. They scripted and recorded two versions – one in Nigerian English, and the other in Hausa, a commonly-spoken language in northern Nigeria.

Going forward, the plan is for members of the media teams to record dramatizations for each of the messages we devised, and to broadcast them throughout the year. I recommended they hold call-in shows once or twice a month, in order to interact with growers directly (employees at the radio station said they always get a lot of feedback on agricultural-related call-in shows).

This was a great experience for me — I enjoyed being able to use the skills I've developed over the last four years working for the Division of Agriculture to help folks in another part of the world improve their situation. ■



Arkansas farm to You Kudos to Farm to You

This school year Farm to You visited 37 schools in 26 counties, serving a total of 12,984 students. Of those students 10,937 were from SNAP schools and 2047 were Non-SNAP schools. A big thank you to Angie Stewart for coordinating the display and the SNAP-Ed team for their behind the scenes work!

Pulaski County office participates in Peace, Love and Goodwill 5K/10K/Half Marathon

On Saturday, May 12, a group of agents, program assistants and administrative assistants from the Pulaski County office participated in the Peace, Love and Goodwill 5K/10K/Half Marathon in Little Rock.

The goal was to compete against each other and themselves after using Walk Across Arkansas as a stepping stone to better exercise habits. Choosing to do this at a race benefiting Goodwill was a natural choice since several of the Pulaski County agents and program assistants conduct programs with them on a weekly basis.

Holli Davis participated in the half-marathon, Blanca Hernandez in the 10K and Randy Forst, Nicole Nichols, Mary-Beth Groce, Laura Anne Warren, Megan Wells, Terrika Edwards and Enny Passmore (who won second in her division) in the 5K.

They had so much fun that they are considering making this an annual tradition in the office. ■



Left to right: Aryani Passmore, Randy Forst, Megan Wells, Nicole Nichols, Terrika Edwards, Mary Beth Groce, Blanca Hernandez: 10k, Adela Hernandez, Laura Anne Warren, and Holli Davis: Half Marathon (not pictured).

Animal Science North Farm expands sheep flock with Dorper ewes

A new project at the North Farm in Fayetteville has begun to take shape over the past few months. A flock of 38 Dorper ewes have made their home next to the calf barn. The addition of these Dorpers is a collaboration between ruminant nutritionist Dr. Ken Coffey, forage agronomist Dr. Dirk Philipp and farm technician Darren Bignar.

Dorpers are currently uncommon in Arkansas but are gaining popularity in Texas and Oklahoma. Their growing popularity is a result of their great parasite resistance, quick maturity, self-sufficiency and impressive fertility. In some cases, Dorpers have replaced entire flocks of meat goats on farms.



“We plan to have several different metabolism trials going on throughout the year once the flock is solid,” said Bignar. “It will only continue to expand and have great, uniform animals for us to use for our trials. Also, we’ll be able to co-graze these ewes with the cattle. Sheep will eat things that the cattle won’t, which is beneficial for both farm maintenance and research. We can also use them for teaching. They’re easy to handle and a safe way for students to learn about ruminants. We can do just about anything that we want with this flock. These are an animal that we can be proud of. I can’t wait to see what we’ll have 5 years from now.” ■

Woodley helps keep battle group rolling

As a warehouse specialist, Johnny Woodley makes sure the people of the Little Rock State Office have what they need to keep running. As Chief Warrant Officer 2 for the Army National Guard, Woodley’s job is to manage not only Humvees and armored vehicles but also the regular Toyotas and Fords that keep the Multinational Battle Group-East in Kosovo rolling.

Woodley has been working out of the battle group’s materiel management center at Camp Bondsteel, in the former Yugoslavia. The



battle group is part of KFOR, or Kosovo Force, a NATO-led international peacekeeping force providing security, supporting civilian institutions, reconstruction, medical assistance and preventing weapons smuggling. His group worked with a Mississippi Air Guard Unit, as well as soldiers from Turkish and Kosovo’s own security forces.

In addition to managing maintenance, dispatch and other logistics for the group’s 100 tactical and 160 non-tactical vehicles, Woodley was also involved in train-the-trainer sessions for winter driving training and training on the Army’s version of the enterprise resource system. Over the 2017 winter holidays when the base opened its doors to the surrounding community, Woodley and fellow soldiers lent their voices to a holiday concert featuring a local youth orchestra.

Woodley has completed a 12-month deployment in the Balkans, will receive special training at a center in Virginia and will return to the extension service in October. ■

Ready, Set, Graduate helps prepare Logan County students to make adult decisions



Roy Hester and John Whitman of the Guy Fenter Education Cooperative help a Paris High School senior purchase a car during the Mall of Life simulation.

Logan County CES partnered with Paris High School and community leaders to conduct a Ready, Set, Graduate, RSG, program for the senior class.

On day one and two of RSG, students participated in classes which taught budgeting, banking, credit, taxes, resumé writing and interview skills. Students learned how to write checks, create a budget and write a resumé as well as proper interview etiquette.

On day three, students applied the skills during the “Mall of Life” simulation. Stations were set up in the school gym and manned by area businesses. At each station, students made decisions similar

to those adults make each month, such as buying or renting a home, purchasing a car, insurance, utilities and other common expenses.

Students then participated in mock interviews conducted by community leaders and business owners. During interviews, students were evaluated on their professionalism, dress and resumé, then informed as to whether or not the company would have hired them based on this evaluation.

Here’s what two seniors had to say about RSG: “I believe that every high school senior should have the experience of Ready, Set, Graduate.” “I love the mall of life simulation and getting to see how the ‘real world’ works.” ■

White County wins Arkansas State 4-H Livestock Judging Contest, will represent Arkansas at national contests

Each year the University of Arkansas Animal Science Department hosts the State 4-H Livestock Judging Contest where youth from across our state compete for the opportunity to represent Arkansas at the national competitions.

This was the first year to have the Arkansas 4-H State Livestock Judging Contest in Barton Coliseum at the Arkansas State Fairgrounds in Little Rock and, consequently, we were able to add a junior division to this year’s contest.

There were 72 senior 4-H members from 18 counties and 62 junior 4-H members from 15 counties who competed. Participants evaluated eight classes representing cattle, swine, sheep and goats. They presented reasons on three classes and answered questions on one other class.

White County is our 2018 State Champion Senior 4-H Team this year and will represent Arkansas at the North American International Livestock Exposition in Louisville, Kentucky, the American Royal in Kansas City and the AKSARBEN in Grand Island, Nebraska. Faulkner County finished as the Reserve Champion Team and is eligible to compete at the Western National in Denver, Colorado, and the AKSARBEN. Polk County finished third and is eligible to compete at the AKSARBEN 4-H Livestock Judging Contest.

Noralee T. from White County earned High Individual honors, followed by Jacob P. from Faulkner County and Carson W. from White County in second and third place, respectively.



The Champion Arkansas 4-H Senior Livestock Judging Team hailed from White County. Team members include Slade O., Carson W., Noralee T., Ross W. and coach Amy Heck.



The High Point Individual of the Arkansas 4-H Senior Livestock Judging Contest was Noralee T. of White County.



The Champion Arkansas 4-H Junior Livestock Judging Team hailed from Bradley County. Team members include Kristin B., Erica C., Alan M., Braden H., and coach Joe Don Greenwood.



The High Point Individuals of the Arkansas 4-H Junior Livestock Judging Contest include third, Rendi W. of Polk County; first, Braden H. of Bradley County; and second, Erica C. of Bradley County.

Bradley County is the Junior 4-H Champion Team this year. Washington County is this year’s Reserve Champion Team and White County was third-high team.

The junior 4-H competitors judged the same classes but only presented one set of reasons. Braden H. from Bradley County finished with top individual honors, Erica C. from Bradley County was second and Rendi W. from Polk County finished third. ■

Plant workshop helps Cross County 4-H’ers get ready for District O-Rama

On May 31, Master Gardener Ruby Taylor hosted a plant workshop at her home in Wynne for Cross County 4-H club members. Taylor spent the morning showing and teaching 4-H’ers about different varieties of plants, flowers and trees around her home.



Cross County 4-H’ers learn about plants in Ruby Taylor’s garden.

This aim of the workshop was to help youth who participate in Ornamental Horticulture prepare for District O-Rama held in June. ■

Animal Science launches Natural State Preconditioned Calf Emphasis Program

The Natural State Preconditioned Calf Program is Animal Science's newest emphasis program. The program idea started nearly a year ago at a roundtable discussion among county ag agents about helping cattle producers improve the value of their calves. Since those early discussions, a statewide program steering committee came together to create a program that would benefit cattle producers, auction markets and cattle buyers.

The steering committee includes Rachel Bearden, Terrell Davis, Keith Gresham, Mike Andrews, Brian Haller, Keith Perkins, Mike McClintock, Bob Powell, Johnny Gunsaulis, Don Hubbell and Shane Gadberry. The program development team also includes representation from other government and non-government cattle industry affiliates.

The program is branded GoGREEN, emphasizing the unique, green tag worn by qualifying calves. The tag symbolizes a documented adoption of best management practices from calf weaning through marketing.

Agents are already starting to discuss program guidelines with sale barns and cattle producers. The goal is to see tagged calves arrive at markets this fall. Program information is available at www.uaex.edu/gogreen. ■



Share This Series: Property Assessment webinars start in June

Property taxes help fuel Arkansas communities, but for many people it's a mystery how properties are actually assessed. A new webinar series starting this month can help government officials, local leaders and the public better understand the procedures and methods for assessing different types of property, the legal limits of annual assessment increase and how to challenge assessments of your property.

The first of six short webinars airs June 22. Extension's Community and Economic Development Unit collaborated with the Arkansas Assessment Coordination Department (AACD) and the Tax Division of the Arkansas Public Service Commission (PSC) to put together this series for the public.

The webinars will cover 1) Overview of Property Assessments, 2) Agriculture and Forestry, 3) Personal Property, (4) Utility and Carrier, (5) Residential and Commercial Real Estate and (6) Recent Changes in Property Assessment Legislation.

This Zoom series provides a convenient and free option for people to better understand how properties are assessed without having to take time off work or pay for travel.

Spend your hour with us and invite your local leaders to sit in with you. More information can be found at this short url <https://tinyurl.com/assessmentwebinars>.

Questions? Contact Mary Poling, (501) 671-2212, mpoling@uaex.edu; or Wayne Miller, (501) 671-2085, wmiller@uaex.edu. ■



Event Calendar

July 4 – Holiday: Independence Day

July 12 – Peach Field Day at Fruit Research Station, Clarksville,
<https://www.uaex.edu/media-resources/news/june2018/06-15-2018-peach-workshop.aspx>

July 13 – Conversations With Cartwright Webinar

July 25 – 2018 Turfgrass Field Day at Arkansas Research and Extension Center, Fayetteville,
<https://www.uaex.edu/media-resources/news/may2018/05-25-2018-Ark-Turfgrass-Field-Day.aspx>

August 3 – Rice Field Day, Rice Research and Extension Center, Stuttgart

August 8 – 2018 Soybean College, Newport Extension Center, Newport

September 3 – Holiday: Labor Day

September 6 – Muscadine Field Day, Fruit Research Station, Clarksville

September 15-18 – Direct Agricultural Marketing Summit, Arlington, Virginia

December 3 – State Faculty Conference, Little Rock State Office ■

Produce farms soon to have On-Farm Readiness Reviews before inspection

The Produce Safety Team recently attended an On-Farm Readiness Review training in Edinburg, Texas. This training involved rehearsing material learned in the Produce Safety Grower Training Course, applying scenarios on different types of farms and visiting two covered produce farms in the area. These two large-scale farms provided a great opportunity to see how farms are meeting the challenges of complying with the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act's Produce Safety Rule. Affected practices include worker health and hygiene training, wildlife exclusion, water testing, pre and post-harvest water, and soil amendments.

The first step for farmers to comply with the Food Safety Modernization Act new regulations is to attend a Grower Training course and afterwards a farm will be able to request a voluntary OFRR with one of the Extension Produce Safety Team Members. The training will help farms prepare prior to a regulatory inspection.

"We are focused on education before regulation" said Gary Weber, who coordinates OFRR Trainings with FDA and the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. The Produce Safety Team is actively seeking farms interested in an OFRR, and farmers should contact Dr. Amanda Perez in Produce Safety to plan a farm OFRR visit. ■

Hard at work, cont.

students from every county in the state, along with recruiting through county extension and 4-H programs. His intent is to get out into Arkansas and learn and share and offer the best college opportunity anywhere for our citizens. I hope you get to meet him soon.

On the other hand, we are saying goodbye this month to Dr. Rick Roeder, associate director for the Agricultural Experiment Station, as he pursues a well-earned retirement following an extensive career in animal science research in Idaho, ag administration at Southern Illinois University, and 16 years here in Arkansas. Dr. Roeder worked hard for the improvement of the Experiment Station and the Division, and was a good friend to all of us in Extension. We wish him the best as he tries to catch up on all of the things that many of us put off during our working career when there is no time. We hope he gets to do all of them.

I recently attended the AEHC annual conference in Hot Springs and briefly visited with one of the most powerful and energetic volunteer groups in the nation. AEHC members are more than 4,000 strong in Arkansas and contribute millions of dollars in volunteer time each year, doing good for the state and our communities. They are mighty, and perhaps best exemplified by Marie Price of Prairie County, who received her 77 year active member award – a remarkable person in a singularly remarkable organization.

I was privileged to once again attend the Tomato Festival and Luncheon in Warren, Arkansas. This long-running event is hosted each year by the county, city and the Tomato Festival committee, but behind the scenes is Extension – the local EHC group, 4-H, Michelle Carter, John Gavin, Robin Hollis and area CES agents and staff as well. I sincerely thank all of our staff involved, and noted that the Division and Extension received many thanks from politicians and others in attendance at this unique, fun and important festival of the strength of rural Arkansas and its people.

I spoke also at the annual Breakthrough Solutions Conference in Little Rock, hosted by our CED group and Dr. Mark Peterson. This gathering of community development professionals featured a workshop, discussions and presentations on "doing" – and not just talking about – things that make communities better. Improvement in community life does not just happen, someone has to actually do the things necessary to ensure safety, vitality and quality of life for all – and this group is a great example of the "someones" we are lucky enough to work with. Kudos.

I was honored to recently attend the annual 4-H Teen Star Banquet where Teen Stars are announced and the selection for the 4-H Hall of Fame is awarded. It was a singular privilege to meet many of these young leaders in person, and to recognize Katie and Sara Gardner of Washington County as new Hall of Fame members. In truth, all of the nominees for the Hall of Fame are amazing young people, with a list of accomplishments that are simply amazing, but example well the nature and teachings of 4-H. I commend all of our 4-H colleagues for this work, and its inspirational outcome on display the other night.

These are examples of the many "goings-on" in and around Extension and the Division of Agriculture. Please enjoy this issue of the Blue Letter as the content includes many other examples of our very fine and diverse efforts. Great job to all!

I hope you have the greatest June of all time.

Dr. Rick Cartwright

BENEFITS CORNER

Catastrophic Leave for Maternity Purposes

Catastrophic Leave for Maternity Purposes means that an eligible employee may receive up to four (4) consecutive weeks of paid leave (160 hours) in a calendar year within the first twelve (12) weeks after the birth of the employee's biological child or placement of an adoptive child in the employee's home. If two employees are the parents of the child, the leave must be shared between the two employees.

To be eligible, an individual must have been employed by the UofA Cooperative Extension Service or a state agency/institution in a full-time (100% appointed), benefits-eligible position for a minimum of one (1) year.

Reference the following link to see what documentation must be provided when applying for Catastrophic Leave for Maternity Purposes: <https://www.uaex.edu/extension-policies/employee-benefits/leave-holidays/cesp7-8.aspx>

Required University Retirement Plan Contribution Increases

The employee required University Retirement Plan contribution will increase to 3% with the first full payroll in July. The 2018 increase is the third of a total of five annual required increases of 1% which will continue through July 2020 when the employee required contribution will be 5%. For this July, if you currently contribute at 3% or greater, your retirement plan is APERS or you are a federally benefitted employee, this change will not impact you. ■

Grants and Contracts for Month Ending May 31, 2018

Project Title	Award Amount	Principal Investigator	Granting Agency
Field Trial Agreement - HPI8USAXP6	\$ 18,000	Bob Scott	Bayer CropScience LP
Polk County 4-H Program	3,000	Carla Vaught	Vanguard Charitable
2018 Lygus Threshold Study (SO 95)	14,286	Gus Lorenz	Monsanto Company
Field Trial Contract No. 18-01	5,000	Jarrold Hardke	Valent U.S.A. LLC
Effects of the Introduction of Feed Grains Into Mid-South Soybean Production Systems	41,600	Jeremy Ross	Mississippi State University
2018 NRA Foundation Multi-County 4-H Shooting Sports Cash Awards	620	Jesse Bocksnick	NRA Foundation
FY 17 Arkansas IFA Grass Sod Treatments	5,830	Kelly Loftin	USDA, APHIS, PPQ
Woodlawn Restoration, Fuel Load Management and Gamebird Habitat Demonstration	67,990	Kyle Cunningham	Alotian Club, LLC
Cover Crop Effect on Nematode Activity in the Soil	15,000	Matthew Davis	University of Georgia
Academic Engagement with NemaStrike Technology in Corn	2,920	Travis Faske	Monsanto Company
Total Awards for May 2018	\$174,246		

Personnel changes

Please welcome the following:

- Christine Cooley**, County Extension Agent - Urban Stormwater, Jefferson County, effective May 1, 2018
- Alison Crane**, County Extension Agent - Family and Consumer Sciences, Garland County, effective April 16, 2018
- Caramie Edwards**, County Extension Agent - 4-H/Family and Consumer Sciences, Madison County, effective April 16, 2018
- Angela Gardner**, Food Systems and Safety Associate, Associate Director - Agriculture and Natural Resources, effective April 16, 2018
- Araceli Oswald**, Program Assistant - 4-H, Sebastian County, effective April 16, 2018
- John Pennington**, County Extension Agent - Urban Stormwater, Jefferson County, effective April 16, 2018
- Tyler Richmond**, Program Technician, Crop, Soil and Environmental Science, effective May 7, 2018
- Anthony Rouse**, Program Associate - Cotton, Crop, Soil and Environmental Science, effective May 7, 2018
- Stacey Stone**, County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Hempstead County, effective May 1, 2018
- Jan Yingling**, County Extension Agent - Agriculture, White County, April 23, 2018

- Barry Boney**, Program Tech, Plant Pathology, effective May 29, 2018
- Porscha Brents**, CES Program Assistant, Pope County, effective May 17, 2018
- Janie Bryant**, Administrative Specialist, Program and Staff Development, effective May 25, 2018
- Amanda Galloway**, 4-H Program Assistant, White County, effective May 31, 2018
- Sarah Hamm**, Administrative Specialist, Washington County, effective May 1, 2018
- Trina Jackson**, Administrative Specialist, Family and Consumer Sciences, effective May 24, 2018
- Scarlett Vasquez**, Administrative Specialist, Plant Pathology, effective May 18, 2018