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BLUE LETTER

March 2018
No. 3792



March brings progress on many fronts

March is back, the classic month for unpredictable weather and the attendant griping about it.

We hope you all remember Shawn Lancaster and family, whose home was heavily damaged by a tornado in late February. We have set up a fund in the Credit Union to help with uninsured losses.

Dr. J.F. Meullenet has been appointed Interim Associate Vice President – Research and Director of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, succeeding Dr. Clarence Watson. We welcome Dr. Meullenet, who brings many years of experience in research, teaching, service and leadership in the Division.

In the same vein, Dr. Bob Scott has been hired as Director of the Rice Research and Extension Center near Stuttgart, effective April 1. We wish Bob the absolute best in this new role.

This newsletter again illustrates the diversity of programming and impact of the Extension mission. From soil health to wildlife to agritourism to youth leadership to forestry to animal science to nutrition to cover crops to adult leadership to row crops and on into infinity, it seems. My congratulations to all of you mentioned in this newsletter and your program activities – I applaud your excellence!

While not in this newsletter, I heard that Aaron Cato, Joe Black and Layton McCullars won more awards in graduate student competitions in Entomology, great job! However, I confess I have given up trying to keep up with these guys on awards – too many.



FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Division of Agriculture, Arkansas Soil Alliance announce \$1 million grant

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture will receive nearly \$1 million in grant funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to study the efficacy of cover crops and no-tillage techniques and their effect on overall soil health.

Mike Daniels, extension water quality and nutrient management specialist, said he originally applied for the grant after discussions with the Arkansas Soil Health Alliance, a farmer-led coalition of Arkansas growers interested in increasing and maintaining soil health through techniques including cover crops and avoiding tillage during fallow periods.



Cotton planted into a cover crop.

Daniels said the grant will help fund a team of Division of Agriculture researchers, extension specialists and county agents to conduct research into the use of these techniques on Discovery Farms and other sites throughout the state, and provide education related to new and existing findings. Partners in the grant include the Arkansas Association of Conservation Districts, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Arkansas Soil Health Alliance, the members of which will serve as the project's advisory committee.

"We've seen a lot of interest from some farmers in our state in trying to improve their soil health, which could increase their productivity, natural resource protection, and reduce their irrigation needs," Daniels said.

"Farmers who lead the Arkansas Soil Health Alliance believe that the more they mimic nature, by keeping the ground covered and undisturbed, the more they reduce their needs for inputs, thus increasing profitability," he said.

"We were already set up on discovery farms to look at water runoff, but we haven't tried to measure or define what we mean by soil health," he said. Research funded by the new grant will not only study the effects of cover crops and other techniques, but will also help to define standards for what healthy soil should actually look like, from the standpoints of nutrients, compaction and other soil and water benchmarks.

Daniels said providing education on soil health is also a cornerstone of the project. Over the next three years, Cooperative Extension agents will maintain demonstration plots in all 25 counties in the state's Delta District, which essentially covers the eastern third of Arkansas. ■

Braving the elements at WHEP training

Despite floods and impending tornados, almost 70 4-H youth and coaches attended a practice session for the 4-H Wildlife Habitat Education Program (WHEP) on Feb. 24 at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center.

Instructors, including Division of Agriculture faculty Dr. Becky McPeake and Valerie Turner, Susan Hooks from USDA Forest Service and Dr. Tom Nupp from Arkansas Tech University, taught participants about wildlife identification, foods and concepts, interpreting satellite images and application of wildlife management practices. Pictured is Scott Jones, Extension pond management specialist from UAPB, demonstrating ways to assess water turbidity to improve fish habitat.

Bree L., a Drew County 4-H WHEP teen leader now attending UA - Monticello, instructed a class on satellite interpretation. 4-H WHEP teen leaders Lindsay W., Stone County, and Will P., Arkansas County, assisted with the day's events. For more information about 4-H wildlife programs, find us at <https://www.uaex.edu/environment-nature/wildlife/youth-education.aspx>. ■



Extension instructor Scott Jones (right) demonstrates using a secchi disk to participants at the 4-H Wildlife Habitat Education Program's practice session at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center.

Quinta Cruthis Junior Sewing Contest

The Independence County 4-H Sewing Club competed in the Quinta Cruthis Junior Sewing Contest, with awards presented on Feb. 7.

This contest was sponsored by the Independence County Farm Bureau Women. It consisted of two projects to be completed by the contestants.

The first project was a two-handed potholder, and the second was the individual's choice. Awards were given for outstanding potholder and individual project, then overall winners.

First-place individual project winner was Kaitlin J. who made a long dress skirt. First place for the two-handed potholder went to Daniel L. Both winners received a \$30 gift certificate to Marshall's Dry Goods and certificate.



Sewing contest winners, left to right: Kaitlin J., Daniel L., McKenna S., Ainsley S. and Allyson E.

The overall winner with the highest points in both projects was Kaitlin J. who received a \$40 cash prize. Second overall winner was Daniel L. who received a \$30 cash prize. Daniel's individual project was a sleepover John Deere pillowcase.

Third overall winner was McKenna S. who took home a \$20 cash prize. McKenna's individual project was a multicolor Easter bunny.

Fourth overall winner was Ainsley S. who received a \$10 cash prize. Ainsley's individual project was a felt multicolor quilt. Fifth overall winner was Allyson E. who won a \$20 cash prize. Allyson made a pillowcase with a 3D heart on the front. Each contestant received a certificate, pin and Let's Sew 4-H project book.

The 4-H Sewing Club would like to thank the Independence County Farm Bureau Women and Marshall's Dry Goods for sponsoring this contest. ■

BENEFITS CORNER

Important Flexible Spending Account information

You have until **March 31, 2018**, to submit documentation to UMR for eligible expenses incurred through **Dec. 31, 2017**.

CEDAR is a wealth of information

You can review your HR Personnel Records through CEDAR by login with your Active Directory username and password. Log into the CEDAR Link at <http://cedar.uaex.edu>, click on **HR: Your Personnel Records**, click on **Display Matches by Name**.

UAMS SmartCare

UAMS SmartCare offers a way for employees and their family members to have substantial savings in health care. Employees insured by a University of Arkansas Health Plan have the opportunity to take advantage of SmartCare. View <https://www.uaex.edu/extension-policies/employee-benefits/fringe/Smartcare%20Summary%20Page.pdf> to see the savings under SmartCare under the three medical plans, effective Jan. 1, 2018.

One of the best things about SmartCare is that you don't have to sign up for it. If you go to UAMS for your care and are enrolled in our health plan, you will automatically pay less out of pocket for your health care.

You can take advantage of the SmartCare benefits by using UAMS physicians, clinics and facilities. To maximize your UAMS SmartCare benefits, you should select a UAMS primary care physician.

To schedule appointments or for questions call the Concierge at (501)686-8749. ■

Hogskin Forestry Contest continues success



4-H and FFA youth test their forestry knowledge at the Hogskin Forestry Contest.

For the eighth year, Calhoun County 4-H hosted its annual fundraiser, the Hogskin Forestry Contest, and it did not disappoint!

As in previous years, the fundraiser was a forestry contest set up to test the skills and knowledge about forestry and forest management that youth groups possess. Areas of skill testing consisted of tree identification, tree volume determination, forest equipment identification, forest pest and disorder identification and forest products identification. Collectively, 126 youth representing 20 FFA/4-H organizations across Arkansas came to compete in Hampton. When the final scores were released, Hermitage FFA reigned victorious, followed by Harmony Grove FFA (2nd) and Bradley FFA (3rd). High point individuals were Curtis S. (Hermitage), Logan W. (Hermitage) and Colby J. (Taylor FFA).

This annual event has become one of the most prestigious forestry contests across Arkansas and also marks the kick-off to competitive judging season. For more information regarding the competitive event, please contact Jaret Rushing at the Calhoun County Cooperative Extension Office at 870-798-2231. ■

Dedicated workers get 4-H record book judging done

More than 15 agents and program assistants from across the Ouachita District came out to judge more than 190 4-H record books from the Ozark and Delta districts. They worked 2½ days to get the job done. Everyone worked very hard, but there were some 'silly' breaks to break up the monotony. Overall, the agents and program assistants thought the books were very good and the kids and families put in a lot of time and hard work on their projects. Many thanks to all who came out to assist with judging.



And another group of dedicated volunteers persevered despite a power outage at the 4-H Center on the night of Feb. 22 and finished judging record books by flashlight.

The participants also had a lantern-lit dinner. It was the first dinner served without power in the history of the 4-H Center dining hall, thanks to recent upgrades to the kitchen. ■



LeadAR inaugurates Class 18

LeadAR welcomes 28 participants from 16 Arkansas counties as members of Class 18. These participants will spend the next two years developing their leadership skills and gaining a better understanding of critical economic and social issues facing Arkansas.

The first of eight LeadAR seminars took place Feb. 7-10, 2018, in Little Rock. This seminar focused on leader development and legislative issues in Arkansas. In addition to the UA System Division of Agriculture, LeadAR is supported by the Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation, Farm Credit Midsouth, Farm Credit of Western Arkansas, AgHeritage Farm Credit Services, the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas and many LeadAR alumni, individuals and organizations.

To learn more about LeadAR, visit www.uaex.edu/LeadAR. Follow our adventure on Facebook at www.facebook.com/UACommunityDevelopment. ■

LeadAR Class 18 members are: **Front row, left to right, Noah Washburn**, LeadAR Program director, UA Cooperative Extension Service; **Ethan Dunbar** of Lewisville, Lafayette County, retired U.S. Army; **Elizabeth Solano** of Little Rock, Saline County, Electricity Transmission External Affairs/regional director, MISO; **Gina Radke** of North Little Rock, Pulaski County business owner/CEO, Galley Support Innovations; **Sudha Bande** of Little Rock, Pulaski County, program operation manager, Arkansas Department of Workforce Services; **Jennifer Johnson** of Blytheville, Mississippi County, district treasurer/director of finance, Blytheville School District; **Ana Phakhin** of Springdale, Washington County, community impact director, United Way of Northwest Arkansas; **Chris Wasson** of El Dorado, Union County, customer service representative, Entergy Arkansas; and **Gayla Bradley** of Clinton, Van Buren County, dental assistant, Dr. Mitch King, DDS, of Conway.

Second row, left to right, Marc Harrison of Little Rock, Pulaski County, business development/CEO, Kenwood Strategic; **Jacob Box** of McGehee, Desha County, vice president of lending, First NaturalState Bank of McGehee; **Ryan McGeeney** of Little Rock, Pulaski County, ag writer/content specialist, University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture; **Donette Spann** of Cabot, Lonoke County, promotions director, Arkansas Beef Council; **Lori Burrows** of Little Rock, Pulaski County, attorney, vice president and general counsel, Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation; **Stephanie Malone** of Little Rock, Pulaski County, policy and advocacy director, Community Health Centers of Arkansas; **Rickey McCauley** of Proctor, Crittenden County, manager/CIO, East Arkansas Family Health Center; **Maddison Stewart** of Little Rock, Pulaski County, social media/public relations specialist, Arkansas Farm Bureau Federation; **Dr. Kyle T. Miller** of Helena, Phillips County, museum director, Delta Cultural Center; and **Jason Hayes** of Brinkley, Monroe County, vice president/branch manager, AgHeritage Farm Credit Services.

Back row, left to right, Curtis Moore of Lincoln, Washington County, owner of Moore Farms; **Jonathan Duran** of Benton, Saline County, deputy director, Arkansas Geographic Information Systems Office; **Christian Olson** of Little Rock, Pulaski County, marketing director, Arkansas Agriculture Department; **Mary Wood** of Russellville, Pope County, executive assistant, USDA Forest Service; **Yolanda Wallace** of West Helena, Phillips County, administrator/therapist/ CEO/COO/Counseling and Education Center, The Family Center; **Brad McGinley** of Sheridan, Grant County extension agent/staff chair, UA Cooperative Extension Service; **Tyler McDonald** of Lewisville, Lafayette County, co-owner, T and R Farms; **Arlisa Harris** of Forrest City, St. Frances County, library director, Forrest City Public Library; **Anthony Armstrong** of Little Rock, Pulaski County, project consultant/loan mobilization manager, Arkansas Economic Development Commission; and **Rick Reed** of Batesville, Independence County, general superintendent for Delk Construction Company.



Meullenet named interim head of Agricultural Experiment Station



J.F. Meullenet

Jean-François Meullenet has been named interim director of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. Mark Cochran, vice president - agriculture for the system and head of the Division of Agriculture, announced Meullenet's appointment to succeed Clarence Watson, who retired at year's end. A native of France, Meullenet earned a master of science in Food Engineering from the National Superior School of Agronomy and Food Science in Nancy, and a Ph.D. in Food Science and Technology from the University of Georgia. He joined the Division of Agriculture as an assistant professor of Food Science in 1996. Since 2006, Meullenet has held the Tyson Foods Endowed Distinguished Professorship in Sensory Science and is a 2013 graduate of LEAD21, a national leadership program. His appointment was effective Dec. 11, 2017. ■

U of A Animal Science Department hosts 2018 Arkansas State Beef Quiz Bowl

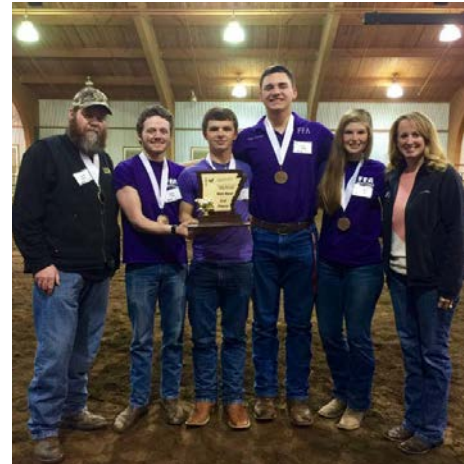
The University of Arkansas Department of Animal Science hosted the annual statewide Beef Quiz Bowl this year in Fayetteville at the Pauline Whitaker Animal Science Center on Feb. 23, 2018. This program is funded by the Arkansas Beef Council through revenue collected from the Beef Check-Off. This Cooperative Extension Service activity provides students in Arkansas an incentive to learn more about management, food safety, forage nutrition, quality assurance and end beef product. Educational material was provided for county extension agents and vocational agriculture instructors to further the learning process beyond that of their beef 4-H and FFA projects. Students were tested on many levels of question difficulty. The questions were compiled by our Animal Science faculty and covered all aspects of beef production. Four students made up a team, and these teams competed in a double elimination tournament.



Champion Team: Greene County 4-H: Left to right, Paula N., Debbie C., Taylor C., Baylee M., Terry K., Layne K. and Donette Spann with the Arkansas Beef Council.



Reserve Champion Team: Washington County 4-H: Left to right, Donette Spann with the Arkansas Beef Council, Kale S., Junior P., Sierra B., Jordan H. and Ronnie H.



Third Overall Team: Fayetteville FFA: Left to right, Jimmy F., Justin C., Matthew M., Dotson S., Megan S. and Donette Spann with the Arkansas Beef Council.

Thirty teams, 120 students plus 4-H agents, ag instructors and parents attended this event. Preparation for this contest allowed students to sharpen their knowledge about beef cattle production. Additionally, students improved communication, goal setting, critical thinking, team building skills and ultimately enhanced their interest in beef cattle. This program has a great impact on educating students and encouraging a broadened perspective about their role in beef production, food safety and consumer acceptance. These efforts will be continued through the University of Arkansas Animal Science, Cooperative Extension Service, Arkansas Beef Council and agriculture teachers across the state. ■

Davis wins SARE grant to study the use of mustard cover crop as a natural nematicide



Matthew Davis, county Extension agent - agriculture in Jackson County, has been awarded an On the Farm Research Grant, which he applied for through Southern Agriculture Research and Education (SARE). The \$15,000 grant will go through the 2018-2020 growing seasons and will cover research looking at how a mustard cover crop can be used as a natural nematicide. The trial will be on a farm in Jackson County and will be replicated to ensure data is collected from multiple areas of the field. He hopes to gain a better understanding of how a cover crop such as mustard can be used as a biofumigant to control southern root knot nematodes. For more information on how you or a producer could apply for a similar grant, see <https://www.southernsare.org/About-Us/History-of-SSARE>. ■

SNAP-Ed hard at work!



A student at Christopher Homes in Little Rock, Mrs. Barbara, keeps every nutrition sheet, recipe and exercise handout from each class and has two separate folders to keep them all organized.

Pulaski County is unique in that there are so many within the community who qualify for SNAP Education. While many other counties have residents far apart, Pulaski County has a high number of SNAP-eligible residents all throughout its county lines. To serve this clientele, we not only have two SNAP-Ed agents but also two SNAP-Ed program assistants and a SNAP-Ed temp.

Because of such a large population, we have been hard at work trying to spread the word about SNAP Education and how we can offer and provide free services to our community. We do this through many different programs, but recently we have spread the word through gardening (both in our office's backyard and at our schools), teaching nutrition classes and teaching nutrition at parent nights in the surrounding schools.

We would like to thank all those who support our work and allow us to do more and more for our community. Without the help of those at the state office and advice given from other county agents, we would not be able to do all of these programs. It is such a blessing to work with others who are so supportive and encouraging, and we would like to thank you all. ■



The garden at Western Hills Elementary contains 30 garden beds that must be weeded before the children can plant.



Parents at the Parents' Night at Boone Park Elementary learn to create their own pasta with the help of SNAP-Ed agent Laura Anne Warren.



Blanca Hernandez, SNAP-Ed agent, and Patti Spradley, SNAP-Ed program assistant, planting onions, cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower and cabbage in the garden behind the Pulaski County Extension Office.

Drew County 4-H youth make care bags for the homeless

Drew County 4-Hers made 25 care bags for the homeless. The goal was to help the youth better understand why many people are homeless in our communities.



Drew County 4-H youth assembled and distributed personal care bags for the homeless.

The students were given an opportunity to share how they feel when they see a homeless person. They were given examples of how people can become homeless, some of which are: 1) inability to work due to illness; 2) loss of job; 3) domestic violence; 4) runaway teens; and 5) drug abuse. They learned that becoming homeless can happen to anybody. They were also instructed on the need to always be courteous and respectful and to treat others as they want to be treated.



Drew County 4-H'ers get ready to distribute personal care bags for the homeless.

A H.U.G. S. (hats, underwear, gloves and socks) banquet is held at the end of each year. The proceeds are usually donated to the local Head Start programs and Adult Housing Authority, but this year the items were used for homeless bags. In addition to the H.U.G.S. items, toothpaste, toothbrushes, water, soap, shampoo, conditioner, lotion and deodorant were included in the bags. Each student also added a nonperishable food item to the bags before dispersing them. ■

2018 Arkansas Outdoor School Summer Day Camp dates set

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For more info contact Mike Simmons: (501) 821-6884 or daycamp@uaex.edu or go to www.uaex.edu/daycamp

This year's Summer Day Camp will be June 11 through Aug. 3. Remember that Cooperative Extension employees receive a 25 percent discount on Day Camp registration. ■

Cartwright, cont.

Special kudos to Mike Daniels on the soil health grant, Matt Davis on the SARE grant and Jaret Rushing on the forestry contest – excellent work!

Please note that LeadAR Class 18 is now in session, and this group of young professionals is impressive. I look forward to the many great things this class, and the individual members, will do now and in the future to improve this world. After meeting them, I believe they will do exactly that.

Until next time, I hope that all of you enjoy good health and spirits, and that all your deeply held wishes are granted.

– Rick Cartwright ■

New statewide agritourism association formed

Community and Economic Development's Stacey McCullough, in collaboration with the Arkansas Agriculture Department and Department of Parks and Tourism, is providing technical assistance to a group of agritourism operators seeking to form a statewide association. On Feb. 26, 40 people attended the official formation meeting, adopted bylaws and elected officers and regional representatives to officially create the Arkansas Agritourism Association. Ruth Pepler of Dogwood Hills Guest Farm in Searcy County was elected president.

Association objectives are:

- Work collaboratively to address issues and challenges facing the agritourism industry.
- Provide education for agritourism operators and new individuals and entities coming into the industry.
- Facilitate networking opportunities among agritourism operators, resource providers and potential markets.
- Identify market opportunities and support market research.
- Encourage public policy to support agritourism enterprises.
- Support marketing efforts and promote the growth of agritourism throughout the state of Arkansas.

The association has created a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/Arkansas-Agritourism-Association-750327768403353/>. Additional information about agritourism in Arkansas is available on Extension's website at www.uaex.edu/agritourism. ■



Attendees at Arkansas Agritourism Association first official meeting.

Grants and Contracts for Month Ending February 28, 2018

Project Title	Award Amount	Principal Investigator	Granting Agency
Project/Testing Protocol Attachment A-1	\$ 8,925	Bob Scott	BASF Corporation
Pesticide Safety Education Funds Management Program (PSEFMP)	24,300	Ples Spradley	Extension Foundation
Agricultural Marketing Resource Center (AgMRC)2017-2019	100,000	Ron Rainey	Iowa State University
Total Awards for February 2018	\$133,225		

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

Personnel changes

Please welcome the following:

Carlena Adams, EFNEP Program Assistant, Craighead County, effective January 16, 2018.

Julie Berry, 4-H Program Assistant, Pike County, effective February 1, 2018.

Amy Kuykendall, Program Assistant - EFNEP, Woodruff County, effective February 1, 2018.

Valerie Seefeld, County Extension Agent, Washington County, effective February 1, 2018.

Patti Spradley, Program Assistant - SNAP, Pulaski County, effective January 16, 2018.

Rashauna Trigg, Fiscal Support Analyst, Financial Services, effective January 16, 2018.

Brandon Vines, Maintenance Specialist, Vines 4-H Center, effective February 1, 2018.

Extension says goodbye to:

Nakya Griffin, EFNEP Program Assistant, Hempstead County, effective February 13, 2018.

Lance Kirkpatrick, County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Ozark District, effective February 28, 2018.

Garrett Lee, Program Associate - Rice Agronomy, Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences, effective February 14, 2018.

Joe Moore, County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Ozark District, effective February 28, 2018.

Katecia Nuniss, Administrative Specialist, Southern Regional Risk Management Education Center, effective February 23, 2018.

Brittany Riley, 4-H Program Assistant, Union County, effective February 28, 2018.

Rosemary Rodibaugh, Associate Department Head, Family and Consumer Sciences, effective February 28, 2018.

Andrew Sayger, County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Monroe County, effective February 15, 2018.