



Keeping you connected

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DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
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Extension honors retirees at luncheon

The Cooperative Extension Service honored its retirees April 2 at the annual retirees luncheon held at the Benton Events Center.

Nearly 50 retirees and guests attended the event, where they reminisced and reconnected with former colleagues. The program that followed included the presentation of three retiree scholarships, guest speakers, and an update from extension director Dr. John Anderson.

"The support you continue to give our organization is really meaningful and is part of what makes us unique," Anderson told attendees. "Those bonds are strong, and that's a sign of the health and quality of the organization."

Dr. Jon Zawislak, assistant professor of apiculture and urban entomology, presented on honey bees and beekeeping in Arkansas.

4-H Tech Changemakers Josiah Lillard, Callen Shaw and Teegan Henry presented about drones in agriculture and recreational drone licenses.

Three scholarship recipients were also honored. Extension retirees awarded \$825 scholarships to Karen Boone, Matt Davis, and Christina Myrkle.



Extension director Dr. John Anderson delivers Division updates to retirees gathered at the annual retiree luncheon.



Retirees pose for a group photo at the 2024 Retiree Reception & Luncheon

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Extension Retiree Scholarships awarded for 2024

Extension retirees awarded \$825 scholarships to Karen Boone, county extension agent - FCS/SNAP in Pulaski County; Matt Davis, county extension agent - staff chair in Jackson County; and Christina Myrkle, 4-H program assistant in Pike County. Recipients were recognized at the retiree luncheon on April 2 at the Benton Events Center.



Karen Boone has served as a Snap-Ed county agent at the Pulaski County Extension office since 2019. She is pursuing a Master of Science degree in Health Education and Promotion from UA Little Rock to enhance her ability to educate Arkansans on health and nutrition.

In a letter of recommendation, a colleague of Karen's wrote that "While working with Karen, I have experienced an individual who is passionate about her career, academic goals, and community. She continues to make positive changes in the health of the community she serves while continuing to pursue her skills in the health and nutrition field."



Matt Davis has been with Extension since 2016 and is pursuing a Ph.D in Educational Leadership: Higher Education Administration at Arkansas State University. Matt, who is currently a county extension agent - staff chair in Jackson County, aspires to serve as an upper-level administrator and create meaningful change and opportunities for UADA employees.

In one of Matt's letters of support, the writer shared this: "Matthew's accomplishments as an extension agent, including the promotion from Agent 1 to Agent 2, graduating from the iLead internal leadership program, and the successful coordination of opportunities for the Jackson County Extension Center, showcase his commitment to his field, his local community and the Cooperative Extension Service."



Christina Myrkle has been with Extension since 2019 and is a 4-H program assistant in Pike County. She is pursuing an associate degree in general studies at UA Cossatot. She wants to further her education as she works toward the goal of becoming a 4-H county agent.

Christina's colleague shared that "I am extremely impressed by Christina's dedication to Extension. Not only is she fully involved in 4-H, but she takes an interest in everything that Extension has to offer. She has a wealth of knowledge under her hat and with her furthering her education, she will only continue to excel forward."



From left, Barbara Singleton, Candace Carrie, and Robin Bridges visit.

Visit the Retiree Luncheon Photo Album to see more!



Scholarship recipients (from left): Christina Myrkle, Karen Boone, Matthew Davis.



Merle Gross and Tom Leslie catch up.



Retirees watch presentations by the 4-H Tech Changemakers and Dr. Jon Zawislak.



Dr. Jon Zawislak, asst. professor of urban entomology, presents on beekeeping.



4-H Tech Changemakers (from left) Josiah Lillard, Callen Shaw, and Teegan Henry present on drones in agriculture.



Retirees visit before lunch begins.



Jimmie Bowling visits with Stan Chapman.

Message from the director

There doesn't seem to be much down time on the Extension calendar anymore: not that there ever was very much, I guess. We have rolled right from winter meeting season into spring conferences, with little gap in between. In the last few weeks, I have had the opportunity to attend a handful of conference events that I think exemplify several of the things that make CES such a great organization.

During the last week of March, I attended the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED) meeting in Lexington, Kentucky. It is always encouraging to meet with colleagues from other states who face similar issues and challenges to share ideas and learn from one another. Sharing what we have learned – sometimes from hard experience – for the benefit of our neighbors is at the core of the Extension mission. The fact that we can do this at the regional and even national level by networking state-level systems is a somewhat underappreciated aspect of the CES design.

As soon as I got home from ASRED and the macro-level exercise in the kind of idea exchange that Extension does so well, I saw the same thing taking place at a more micro-level at the UA Division of Agriculture's Support Staff Conference. That conference provided an outstanding opportunity for peer-to-peer training to address immediate organizational needs. Dr. Stacey McCullough's team in Community, Professional, and Economic Development did a characteristically outstanding job putting the program together, organizing and executing the event, and facilitating individual workshop session to offer a top-shelf professional development experience for staff from across the Division (not just CES).

I left the staff conference and headed straight to Norfolk, Arkansas, for the Arkansas County Agricultural Agents Association (ACAAA) annual meeting. Our various county agent associations represent an integral mechanism for the professional development of agents and specialists. A highlight of the ACAA meeting for me was seeing the Achievement Award (AA) and Distinguished Service Award (DSA) recognition bestowed on several of our agents. To me, having been involved with the National Association of County Agricultural Agents (NACAA) as an Extension specialist, these recognitions carry a lot of weight. To have met the rigorous standard of excellence established by these organizations – and recognized throughout the CES system across the nation – should be counted as a major career milestone.

Finally, on April 2, I had the honor of attending our annual UA CES retiree luncheon. Close to 50 of our organization's retired members met in Benton to renew longstanding relationships and to award three scholarships to current CES employees who are pursuing further education. The loyal commitment of our retirees – commitment to UA CES, certainly, but also commitment to Extension's educational mission generally – should be an inspiration and an encouragement to us all.



May Birthdays

Eva Johnson - May 1	Debie Head - May 17
Paul Cooper - May 2	Harold Williams - May 18
Richard Klerk - May 3	Deborah Dority - May 18
Shirley West - May 5	William Russell Jr. - May 19
Glenda Sutherlin - May 6	Teresa Booth - May 21
Kim Hughes - May 7	Vicki Brakefield - May 21
Gustav Lorenz III - May 9	Charlotte Freeman - May 22
Earl Wilson - May 10	Kathryn McElderry - May 23
Terrence Kirkpatrick - May 10	Donald Johnson - May 24
Lillie Teel - May 10	Dana Stringfellow - May 25
Donna Swift - May 11	Faye Suitt - May 26
Kristopher Rutherford - May 11	Larry Smith - May 29
Robert Rhodes - May 12	Jane Newton - May 29
Clyde Stuart Jr. - May 17	Donald Slate - May 30
Dianna Cox - May 17	Darlene Zeh Millard - May 31

Dr. Ivory Lyles passes

Ivory Lyles, who became the first African-American to head an extension service when he was appointed director of the Cooperative Extension Service in Arkansas, has died. He was 65. A funeral for Lyles was held April 20 at the Holifield Funeral Home in Forest, Mississippi. A celebration of life service was held April 21 at the Union Grove Missionary Baptist Church, also in Forest.

Claude Kennedy passes

Claude Kennedy, retired cotton station director and former Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service regional director, passed away April 3. He was 82. Kennedy served Extension for 30 years and retired in 2023. A memorial service was held April 19 at the Marianna Civic Center.