



Keeping you connected

# extension cord

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DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE  
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## Lonoke County 4-H, Master Gardeners team up to host Green Thumb Camp

When deciding on a theme for Lonoke County Extension's last 4-H day camp of the summer, Kristi Warren turned to the Master Gardeners to share their plant knowledge and passion for horticulture.

"I thought, 'Let's contact our Master Gardeners and see what they can help us with,'" said Warren, Lonoke County 4-H agent. "We had a meeting of the minds, where we all came up with ideas and picked from those."

Lonoke County Master Gardeners and extension staff kicked off Green Thumb Camp with a nature scavenger hunt. The event was held July 30 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at the Lonoke County Extension Office.

Lonoke County Extension also offered two crafting camps and one "Christmas in July" camp earlier this summer. Green Thumb Camp marked the first time Lonoke County 4-H collaborated with the Lonoke County Master Gardeners for one of the organization's day camps.

"This is the first time we've done a summer camp with them, but we always work together on the fair, and they meet in our office, so we see them all the time," Warren said. "We just thought it would be a great idea to combine this and get them involved."

Warren said the summer day camps also provided opportunities for participants to make craft projects that they can enter in the county fair later this fall.

"When we did our craft camps, they left with six crafts that they can enter at the fair, and I gave them a sheet with everything they need to know about how to do that," Warren said. "We're trying to build up the fair entries as well."



Lonoke County Master Gardeners led 4-H members on a nature scavenger hunt through the front garden of the Lonoke County Extension Office.

Master Gardeners Jean Fortenberry, Stacy Harrell and Terry Dunlap, along with extension staff, led 19 young 4-H members through a series of educational activities designed to teach them about plants.

Participants made garden stake "flowers" from buttons and hair barrettes, decorated flowerpots and made bird feeders using ice cream cones, sunflower seed butter and bird seed. They also made leaf rubbing art by tracing crayons over a piece of paper placed on top of a leaf, using leaves brought by Master Gardeners and extension staff from their own homes and gardens.

"We wanted to give these kids a chance to connect with the nature we're surrounded by here in Lonoke County," said Devyn Britt, Lonoke County extension FCS agent. "By showing them that gardening can be hands-on, fun and messy, we're hoping to plant a seed that keeps them engaged with this for the rest of their lives." Read more [here](#).

### THE INSIDE STORIES

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## Eagle Seed Company to honor late Becky McPeake's passion for Arkansas 4-H Food Plot Project

Eagle Seed Company, sponsor of the Arkansas 4-H Food Plot Project, has found a unique way to honor the memory of Becky McPeake, the longtime extension wildlife specialist who coordinated the program.

"We're proud of her work, and we want to continue her legacy," said Joyce Doyle, operations manager for Eagle Seed.

For this year's 4-H Food Plot Project, Eagle Seed has created a special fall seed mix - the McPeake Blend. The blend will contain eight different plant species, including sugar beets, chicory and triticale.

"The McPeake Blend will introduce the kids to new plant species that they don't normally get to see," Doyle said. "Kids are more separated from agriculture than they've ever been, and this is an opportunity for them to expand their knowledge base and get involved. Dr. McPeake taught them about wildlife management, plant biology and making an effort. We want to honor Dr. McPeake this way because she put so much of her time into this program, and we felt like we needed to do something to thank her for all those years of hard work."

Doyle said she and her husband Brad, who is the sales manager for Eagle Seed, met McPeake at a trade show in 2015, where she was representing the Cooperative Extension Service. Soon, the three were in talks to establish the 4-H Food Plot Project, for which Eagle Seed is the sponsor, providing participants' seed and prizes.

"When we meet people from the University of Arkansas, we always say, 'Let us know what we can do to help your program,'" Brad said. "Becky was so receptive to that. When she came to us about this program, there was no hesitation. We knew she had a good idea, and we were happy to work with her on it."

4-H members who compete in the Food Plot Project prepare, establish and maintain a plot that covers one-eighth of an acre to provide food and cover for wildlife. Using concepts from wildlife and plant science, technology, math and more, participants keep detailed records throughout the planting and growing season.

Jaret Rushing, extension forestry instructor, said the program is designed in part to teach youth how to be stewards of valuable information.

"They have to keep records on soil test dates, applications for fertilizer and lime, special weather concerns — such as a drought or a major cold snap — as well as several other values of interest, such as rainfall and expenditures," Rushing said. "They also have to keep good photo records. They are required to have game cameras set up on their projects to monitor the wildlife that comes through and utilizes the food plot itself."

Rushing, who has taken over coordination of the 4-H Food Plot Project since McPeake's passing in May, said Eagle Seed's decision to name the food plot seed blend in her honor is a very fitting tribute.

"She was a steward of wildlife management and had a great relationship with Eagle Seed Company, and the fact that they would take time out of their schedules and create something that honors Becky's memory shows that they are lifelong partners of not only Becky's work, but extension as a whole," Rushing said. "I couldn't be more proud to be partnered with them."

As Rushing leads the program forward, he said his most important goal is to make McPeake proud.

"I want to continue the legacy and help these kids continue what they've been learning," he said. "I want them to be able to pick the same techniques and knowledge up, and maybe one day be able to say, 'We learned this from Jaret, and he did a great job.'" Read more [here](#).



Duncan Patterson, member of Carroll County 4-H and 2025 state winner of the Food Plot Project, fills a handheld broadcast spreader with Eagle Seed for his food plot. The tool helps evenly distribute seeds across the plot.



## Extension to host 'After the Harvest' conference for Arkansas growers, distributors in September

After the Harvest, a conference hosted by the Cooperative Extension Service, aims to bring together farmers, growers, food distributors and other stakeholders invested in the journey local food takes after it leaves the field.

The event will take place Sept. 5-6 at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center in Little Rock, Arkansas. Spots are limited, and early bird registration is available until Aug. 6 for \$15 for the Friday session and \$30 for the Saturday session. After Aug. 6, the price increases to \$30 for the Friday session and \$60 for the Saturday session. Register at [uada.formstack.com/forms/after\\_harvest](https://uada.formstack.com/forms/after_harvest).



Amanda Philyaw Perez, extension associate professor of food systems and food safety specialist, said the conference is designed to be a “gathering of the people who are doing the real work to increase access to Arkansas-grown and -made foods.”

“This is not a traditional conference,” Perez said. “It’s a space for connection, collaboration and shared learning. Our goal is to support a more resilient local food system, rooted in community and shaped by the folks who grow, make and move food across the state.”

Farmers, growers and value-added producers — commercial or home-based manufacturers of food products that are not fresh, such as jarred or canned products — and farm stand operators are encouraged to attend. Farmers market managers, food retail operators, local food advocates and nonprofit organizations are also ideal audiences for the conference, Perez said.

“So many people in the state of Arkansas are doing incredible work, but they are doing it alone,” said Sarah Bakker, extension food systems and food safety program associate for the Division of Agriculture. “We hear it all the time: everyone is working in silos, and it is difficult to connect. After the Harvest is our answer to this problem. We’re not here to reinvent the wheel, we’re here to connect the wheels that are already turning.”

Sessions will cover a variety of topics, including post-harvest handling and food safety, retail models, business logistics and producer support strategies. On Friday, Sept. 5, the conference will feature a session on the farm stop model, led by Kathryn Barr, a local food systems outreach specialist for The Common Market.

“Our goal is to not only strengthen what’s happening here in Arkansas but also contribute to a growing national dialogue about how communities can build more resilient, equitable and connected food systems,” Perez said.

Read more [here](#).

## Rice milling yields and ‘Make America Healthy Again’ top discussions at 2025 NERREC Field Day

From the broad scope of national agricultural law to the more narrow perspective of Arkansas rice conditions, the Northeast Rice Research and Extension Center Field Day covered all bases for corn, rice and soybean producers in Arkansas.

Almost 300 producers, consultants and agricultural professionals gathered at NERREC July 31 to hear updates from University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture specialists.

The field day ran two concurrent field tours with stops discussing pest management, irrigation, breeding updates and more. Indoors, speakers in the field day’s first Seminar Series covered policy updates, the “Make America Healthy Again” report and the use of Arkansas rice in the brewing industry.

This past February, the Trump administration created the Make America Healthy Again Commission, chaired by U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. In May, the MAHA Commission released its first report outlining its priorities, some of which could directly affect the agriculture sector.

“The MAHA report released in May did identify some key priorities that could affect American agriculture if legislation or regulation is put behind it,” said Emily Stone, staff attorney for the National Agricultural Law Center. “Specifically, initiatives focused on maintaining soil health and reassessing the use of pesticides could affect producers where the commission’s concern over certain additives and dyes could more directly affect food manufacturers.”

“As of right now, these are just statements. There’s no law behind them, so we don’t really know what kind of policy may come from this commission,” Stone said. “However, we have seen some legislation from states that could suggest these ideas are a movement, not just a moment.”

Read more [here](#).



## September Birthdays

Alberta James - Sept. 1	Carol Sanders - Sept. 8	Irene Carlock - Sept. 18	Stephen Vann - Sept. 27
Diana Baker - Sept. 4	Venetta Rice - Sept. 9	Steven Simpson - Sept. 18	William Dodgen - Sept. 28
Jim Denton - Sept. 4	Jerry Wooley - Sept. 9	June Williams - Sept. 21	Henry Rice - Sept. 28
Vickie Huddleston - Sept. 4	Catherine Grills - Sept. 12	Bill Jones - Sept. 21	Don Plunkett - Sept. 28
John Jennings - Sept. 4	Lee Hunter - Sept. 12	Gloria Mayhugh - Sept. 21	Karen Ballard - Sept. 28
Johnnie Younger - Sept. 5	Raymond Benz - Sept. 16	Belinda Weaver - Sept. 21	Bettie Wilson - Sept. 30
Bob Blake - Sept. 6	Joe Stuart - Sept. 16	Sherry Ream - Sept. 22	
Angie Freel - Sept. 7	Charles Albritton - Sept. 17	LeVeda Tate - Sept. 22	
Barbara Singleton - Sept. 8	Janet Slate - Sept. 17	Donna Rothberg - Sept. 23	

## Message from the director



Endings are seldom easy. Even in the most positive of circumstances, the end of any season of life can be at least a little bit disorienting as we navigate the nostalgia, sadness, fear, and excitement that go along with closing one chapter and beginning another.

At the end of September, CES will come to the end of an important chapter in our history. The SNAP-

Ed program will be winding down after 30 years of faithful service to the people of Arkansas. Thirty years is a phenomenal run for any program. I don't know how many other programs have come and gone in that span of time, but I'm sure it has been a significant number: only a rare few of our initiatives have that kind of shelf life. I would also add that few programs have had as much impact as SNAP-Ed.

Over the past decade, SNAP-Ed personnel made more than 4 million educational contacts through a multitude of outreach methods in a variety of locations including schools, food pantries, public housing, community centers. In the most recent fiscal year, programming was delivered at 530 individual sites across the state, including 150 K-12 schools and 84 early childhood centers. Our SNAP-Ed personnel worked hard over the years to improve access to healthy

foods and physical activity, equipping people to improve their lives by making healthier choices. The positive impacts of this work were well documented. For example, in FY24 as a result of attending SNAP-Ed programs, 75% of adults who were surveyed reported eating more fruits, 66% were eating more vegetables, 68% improved their cooking skills, and 63% increased physical activity. Youth surveys showed 93% improved food preparation skills, 37% increased knowledge about Arkansas foods, and 35% were eating more vegetables.

The decision to end the SNAP-Ed program was, unfortunately, not ours to make. Federal funding for the program was eliminated in the 2025 reconciliation bill passed by Congress earlier this summer. As the program reaches its close, I wanted to take this opportunity on behalf of CES, and personally as well, to express our appreciation to all those who have contributed so much to this program over so many years.

Our work in nutrition and health will continue in other ways, and we will continue to address the real and pressing stakeholder needs in this area through other means.

This does not diminish that ending SNAP-Ed is a significant loss. It has been a great program, an impactful program. It made a positive difference in people's lives in tangible ways and is something of which we should all be proud.

### Save the Date!

#### Upcoming Fall Regional Retiree Meetings:

**Oct. 7** – Arkadelphia | Youth Building, Clark Co. Fairgrounds

**Oct. 10** – Stuttgart | Rice Research and Extension Center

**Oct. 21** – Fort Smith | University of Arkansas at Fort Smith, Center for Economic Development

**Nov. 5** – Little Rock | Little Rock State Office

