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December 2019

UofA
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

No. 12

Lights, Camera, Action: Arkansas 4-Hers Learn Professional Video Skills

New members of the Arkansas 4-H Video Crew participated in an annual rite of passage recently: the Video Crew boot camp. But instead of push-ups and laps, the six teenagers who arrived at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center on Nov. 19 found themselves running cables and setting up cameras in the quest for the perfect shot.

The Arkansas 4-H Video Crew program, now in its sixth year, teaches teens professional video skills and puts them to work on professional projects for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service. By the time the participants head to college — or into the workforce — they have already gained both work experience and a professional portfolio to show to potential employers.

The program teaches basic technical skills, how to set up camera equipment, how to safely load and unload the video equipment, and how to properly connect multiple cameras to “switchers,” the technology that helps knit multiple video feeds into a single seamless broadcast. Along the way, participants also learn “soft skills” — how to collaborate and work in teams, how to plan and prioritize work and how to lead.

Kerry Rodtnick, media specialist for the Cooperative Extension Service, developed the program in 2015, after having filmed Arkansas 4-H’s largest annual event, State O-Rama, for several years by himself. A three-day conference, State O-Rama brings more than 1,000 4-Hers to the University of Arkansas Fayetteville campus, where they compete in more than 40 events.

With the purchase of a switcher and extra cameras,



The 2019-2020 Arkansas 4-H Video Crew.

he was able to livestream events, but he needed additional people for the broadcasts.

“I thought it would be great if I could train 4-Hers to help,” he said, “and the 4-H staff at the time said, ‘Do it.’”

Angie Blacklaw-Freel, interim department head-for 4-H, said the program fits well within 4-H’s tradition of experiential learning.

“4-H is about hands-on learning experiences through project work,” Blacklaw-Freel said. “When Kerry approached me with this idea, I was new to my position but immediately knew this program had the potential to help youth develop a very marketable set of skills they could parlay into careers in

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4-H Video Crew *(Cont. from page 1)*

TV, and film.

“Additionally, it’s saved our department money that we have been able to reallocate to other services for youth,” she said. “To my knowledge, it’s the only 4-H program of its kind in the country.”

The first Arkansas 4-H Video Crew began in January 2015 with six students. Some of those first team members are now working in the industry.

William Penny III of Washington County, who was part of the first 4-H video team, now works as part of several video crews in Northwest Arkansas. He is a crew member and backup scheduler at the Walton Arts Center and the Walmart Arkansas Music Pavilion, and also operates cameras at Arvest Ballpark for the Northwest Arkansas Naturals games. Additionally, Penny has landed several freelance jobs as a camera operator for regional cable network television shows.

“The Arkansas 4-H Video gave me the ability to learn so many different hugely valuable skills in the entertainment production industry,” Penny said. “For example, the proper way of coiling cable is an easy way to separate the ‘haves’ from the ‘have nots’ when it comes to skills.

“Without the crew, I would have been thrown into the same boat as everyone else. This has paid dividends in my credibility and reputation as a skilled worker in the area,” he said. “At this point I have been offered so much work that I am currently scheduling all the way into March 2020. The video crew has been a huge part of my education and training in how to be a good and productive worker.”

Penny, who is now attending Northwest Arkansas Community College, assisted with this year’s boot camp, where his younger brother, Weston is part of this year’s crew.

The boot camp is just the beginning. The team will get more training in the spring, and by July, they will be ready

to live broadcast the three main assemblies at State O-Rama. The broadcast is shown live at the event itself, and streamed live on the internet for parents and other 4-Hers not present.

The goals of the program extend beyond simple technical and social skills — it also serves to build a confidence in its participants that can carry over into other areas of life.


“The technical and critical thinking skills that I’ve gained from working with Kerry and the crew have grown my confidence in myself and my ability to learn and do tough things,” said Macie Smith, who attends The Delta School in Wilson. “I’m incredibly grateful that I have access to these kinds of equipment and opportunities and access to the kind of mentor that Kerry is.”

Seven teens are part of the 2019-2020 crew. They are Jonathan Cline, Zarah Dean, Brodie Freel, Weston Penny, Macie Smith, and Elsa Timbs.

Selection is a competitive. Participants must be a senior 4-Her, between the ages 14-19, show a demonstrated interest in video and film production and be eligible to participate in State O-Rama. The size of the video team is purposely small, ranging from as few as five students to no more than 12 to allow for individual mentoring.


“We want teens who work hard and have proven within their respective counties that they are trustworthy, that they will do what they say, and that they work well in groups,” Rodtnick said. “This is a very collaborative effort. There’s perks, but there’s also expectations.”

Twenty students have participated in 4-H Video Crew under Rodtnick. He’s written letters of recommendations for many of them and helped connect them with other professionals in the industry.

“They’ve formed their own unofficial alumni group,” Rodtnick said. 

New Retirees

The following Extension employees have joined the ranks of the retirees:

Donna Rothberg, Human Resources (LRSO) - Donna began her career with Extension in October of 1997. She served as the Director of Human Resources at the LRSO until her retirement November 27, 2019. Donna had 22 years of service. 

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Division of Agriculture releases Lynx, a High-Yielding Medium-Grain Rice Variety

Lynx, a new medium-grain rice variety from the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, offers high yields and early maturity.

“Lynx consistently showed a yield advantage over both Jupiter and Titan in rice-growing areas north of I-40 and west of Crowley’s Ridge, where the majority of the state’s medium-grain rice is grown,” said Xueyan Sha, professor and rice breeder for the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, the research arm of the Division of Agriculture.

“Lynx reaches 50 percent heading in an average of 86 days, the same as Jupiter,” Sha said, “but it matures three to four days earlier. It appears to have a better seedling vigor than Jupiter and a slightly better milling yield than Titan.

Lynx averaged 207 bushels per acre in 62 statewide and regional replicated trials from 2016 through 2019, Sha said. That’s compared to 202 bushels per acre for Jupiter and 201 bushels per acre for Titan.


Those tests also indicated Lynx has good grain and milling quality, and good lodging and blast resistance compared with Jupiter and Titan, Sha said.



MEDIUM GRAIN — Lynx, a new medium-grain rice variety from the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, offers high yields and early maturity.

Lynx had an average milling yield of 59 percent whole kernel and 68 percent total milled rice in 30 state and regional tests, Sha said.

In tests where the plants were inoculated with disease, Lynx showed moderately susceptible to leaf blast. Also, in inoculated tests and under natural infestation, it appeared susceptible to sheath blight and false smut, similar to Jupiter. It is more susceptible to bacterial panicle blight, false smut. Lynx is more susceptible than Jupiter to bacterial blight, but only because Jupiter is the only rice variety with a moderate level of resistance to the disease, Sha said.

Sha said 4.5 acres of Lynx foundation seed was grown this year and will be available to seed growers in 2020. Seed will be available to rice producers in 2021. 

To Our Extension Retirees

December FINALLY arrived and all of us are worn out but kind of happy at the same time. Another year of work, supporting your legacy, and it was quite a year.

Once again, I greatly appreciate all of our retirees for their unfaltering support and counsel, and for getting together with us at the fall events to fellowship.

On a sad note, Dr. Joe Fulton passed forward recently. While Dr. Fulton was not an Extension employee or retiree, he was a gifted researcher and mind in plant pathology within the Experiment Station and worked with many extension colleagues over a long career. I will miss his rapier wit.

Another sad day was when Donna Rothberg told me she was going to retire at the end of 2019. Donna served with distinction and cared about all of us as Director of Human Resources for many years, not the least being me, even me. What a great person and friend, and we wish her the very best in retirement.


We held our annual faculty and staff conference in early December, recognizing all those receiving awards and accolades from around the country and generally catching up with each other after a hard year of work. It was a great day.

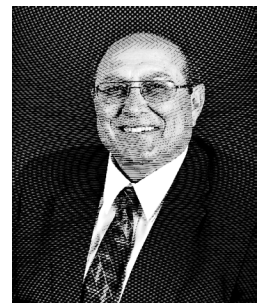
The recipient of the Lynn Russell Award for Professional Excellence was Jo Ann Vann, our County Agent with FCS responsibilities in Clark County. I doubt that we could find a better example of professional excellence and reflection of Lynn’s own outlook and legacy than Jo Ann, she is a phenomenal colleague.

The recipient of the Mildred and Liz Childs Award for Professional Development went to Amy Monk, our Staff Chair in Montgomery County, and Amy is another star in Extension and dedicated lifelong learner. They don’t come any better than Amy.

We had many employees recognized during the conference and all reflect the mission of the Division and Cooperative Extension extremely well.

Dr. Stacey McCullough and colleagues in the Community, Professional and Economic Development Unit (CPED) have started an effort to assist in awareness and education of the upcoming Census 2020, and we hope you will stay tuned to this important work and effort nationwide. While not thought about too much in the current census, these are some of our most important written records over time for the country. If you have worked on genealogy, you will know what I mean. Of course, it is extremely important for many other reasons, too.

I hope all of you have the greatest of holiday seasons, and I hope for you the best of years in 2020. Enjoy each moment, we don’t get many do-overs. 



January Birthdays

Mr. Kelly Gage, Jan 1
 Ms. Betty Harrison, Jan 3
 Mrs. Doris Thomas, Jan 5
 Ms. Earlene Brecheen, Jan 6
 Mr. John Turner Jr., Jan 6
 Mr. Sammy Cline, Jan 7
 Mr. Alva Siler, Jan 8
 Ms. Mona Norris, Jan 8
 Mrs. Fann Woodward, Jan 9
 Mr. Keith Martin, Jan 9
 Mrs. Terrie Treadway, Jan 9
 Mr. Steve Culp, Jan 11
 Mrs. VeEtta Simmons, Jan 12
 Mr. Ricky Thompson, Jan 14
 Dr. C. C. Schaller, Jan 15
 Mr. Bobby Malone, Jan 17

Ms. Shirley Bennett, Jan 17
 Mr. Robert Seay, Jan 17
 Ms. Shirley Cleek, Jan 18
 Mr. Douglas Petty, Jan 19
 Mr. Jerry Williams, Jan 20
 Ms. Cora Nash, Jan 22
 Mrs. Ramona Gordon, Jan 23
 Mrs. Donna Rinke, Jan 23
 Mrs. Barbara Ball, Jan 24
 Mrs. Laura LaRue, Jan 24
 Mrs. Margie Jones, Jan 25
 Ms. Nina Coffee, Jan 25
 Mr. Allen Davis, Jan 26
 Mrs. LaVetta Davis Perkins, Jan 27
 Ms. Shirlye Hopkins, Jan 28
 Mr. Gary Huitink, Jan 29


Scholarship Donations

The following gifts were recently received to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service. These gifts will be used to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service.

Diane Jones

Portia Short

In honor of Margaret Alexander's and Fann Woodward's 101st Birthdays

Honorary or memorial donations should be forwarded to the Development Office, ATTN: Brian Helms, Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 South University Ave., Little Rock, AR 72204. If joint recognition is desired, please indicate. To ensure that proper notification is sent, please also include in whose honor or memory the gift is made and the mailing address of the person to receive the notification. 

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Yes, I want to support the fundraising initiative in support of the Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship.

Enclosed is my gift of \$_____. My gift is in honor / in memory of _____.

Name/Address for notification of honorary and memorial gifts:

Please make check payable to the **UA Foundation** and mail to Brian Helms, Development Office, 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock AR 72204-4940.

Linda "Dianne" Knuteson Passes

Linda "Dianne" Knuteson, age 71, of Bryant passed away on November 28, 2019. Dianne worked for 24 years in Financial Services until her retirement in June of 2009. Outside of work, she enjoyed singing in the church choir, working in the food pantry, reading and cooking. She is survived by her husband, John Knuteson; children Melinda Miller and Matthew Knuteson; 3 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Funeral services were held on Tuesday, December 3, 2019 at Faith Lutheran Church in Little Rock. Memorials may be made to Saint Marks food pantry through Saint Mark's Episcopal Church as 1000 North Mississippi in Little Rock, Arkansas in Dianne's honor. 