



Keeping you connected

extension cord

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DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
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Arkansas 4-H Tech Changemakers program expands; more youth interested in STEM

Whether they're helping adults create resumes, safe passwords or avoid phishing scams, Arkansas 4-H Tech Changemakers are using their technology skills to make a difference in their communities.

4-H Tech Changemakers began in Arkansas in 2021 with 20 participants from 11 counties. The program trains youth to teach digital skill-building workshops to adults. Participants have given presentations to Extension Homemakers Council clubs, county meetings for Master Gardeners, nursing homes and community centers, all focusing on basic internet safety.

Over the past four years, Tech Changemakers has grown significantly. Seventy-four Arkansas 4-H members from 16 counties attended the program's Winter Training on Jan. 3. At the training, participants and adult 4-H volunteers learned how to operate recreational drones and test secure passwords. They also learned to use Ozobots, miniature robots that introduce students to coding techniques.

Cindy Phillips, extension Tech Changemakers program technician for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said the program has grown, in part, because of past participants' vocal enthusiasm.

"Our team, and past teams, have been talking to their friends about how great it is to be a Tech Changemaker," Phillips said. "We have also set up a Tech Changemakers table at several 4-H events, so more kids are seeing us and asking questions about what we do. It's a great way to meet fellow 4-H members and gain valuable community service experience."

Community outreach is at the heart of Tech Changemakers. Nationally, 325 Tech Changemakers

participants across 18 states reached more than 37,000 adults in 2021. Phillips said that since then, Arkansas 4-H Tech Changemakers have connected with more than 10,000 adults in the state through workshops and one-on-one tutorials.

"Our goal is to help the adults in our communities cross the digital divide," Phillips said. "As our world becomes more and more driven by technology, Tech Changemakers help adults learn essential digital skills, including basic internet safety, phishing scams and cell phone use."

Michelle McVay, extension STEM instructor for the Division of Agriculture, said that today's teens are the perfect vehicles to deliver this critical information.

"These kids are what we could consider digital natives," McVay said. "Many of them have used computers and the internet from an early age, so these technology skills are very familiar to them. We're asking them to use their knowledge to help people in their communities live safer lives and not feel so left behind by technology. By connecting with these adults, Tech Changemakers help them connect with the world."

Read more [here](#).



Tech Changemakers use Ozobots, miniature robots that introduce students to coding techniques.

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Beekeeping videos all the buzz in 2024

Beekeeping videos occupied seven of 10 slots as the most-viewed videos of 2024 on the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture [YouTube channel](#).



The videos are part of a 19-video series featuring Jon Zawislak, assistant professor of apiculture and urban entomology and extension specialist. They've been viewed by people around the world.

Rounding out the top 10 were videos on primocane blackberries, pruning crapemyrtles and soil testing. The "Pruning Crapemyrtles" video has been the reigning channel champion on views at more than 330,000 since it was posted in 2010.

The Division of Agriculture YouTube channel has nearly 14,000 subscribers and more than 900 videos on a variety of topics.

Here are the channel's most-viewed videos of 2024:

1. [Complete Beekeeping Short Course: Part 1, Intro to Beekeeping](#), 37,986 views.
2. [Complete Beekeeping Short Course: Part 2, the Beehive](#), 28,155 views.
3. [Complete Beekeeping Short Course: Part 4, Honey Bee Biology](#), 24,651 views.
4. [Primer on Primocanes: A breakthrough in Blackberries](#), 17,253 views.
5. [Complete Beekeeping Short Course: Part 7, First Year Bee Colony Management](#), 14,805 views.
6. [Complete Beekeeping Short Course: Part 3, Essential Beekeeping Tools](#), 13,442 views.
7. [Complete Beekeeping Short Course: Part 6, Starting New Bee Colonies](#), 13,271 views.
8. [Complete Beekeeping Short Course: Part 11, Managing Parasitic Mites](#), 12,145 views.
9. [Pruning Crapemyrtles](#), 12,138 views.
10. [Soil testing: How to Collect Soil Samples](#), 12,074 views.

Egg prices: What goes up usually comes down



That omelet is costing more again thanks to highly pathogenic avian influenza, but Jada Thompson says the egg price rollercoaster has a downhill side too.

According to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, since February 2022, HPAI has been detected in more than 1,400 flocks affecting 149.96 million birds. From Jan. 1-30 of this year, more than 19.63 million birds have been affected including 71 commercial flocks and 43 backyard flocks. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, or APHIS, is part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"The same similar thing happened at the end of 2022 and into 2023," said Thompson, associate professor and poultry economist with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

"What you have is very tight supply," she said. "We were down about 3 percent in egg layer supply at the time and we're down about 3 percent in supply right now."

The number of egg crates in the grocery stores is also affected by a tiny bit of "just-in-case" buying by consumers.

"We see the egg prices, and then consumers are responding," Thompson said. "There's a bit of people buying all the eggs because they're concerned about the availability."

"The high demand tends to coincide with periods of the year where egg laying kind of drops off a little, due to it being colder and the amount of light changes. There are hormonal effects to egg laying," she said. "Then in summer, the bird flu starts ebbing and then it picks up in the fall."

When bird flu is detected, the flocks need to be depopulated because the current strain of the disease has such a high mortality rate. Whether it's turkeys, broilers or egg layers, it takes time to replace the birds — "there's also kind of a bit of a biological lag in that price recovery system and for the supply chain."

Thompson expects the supply to recover.

"Our food supply is healthy, our egg supply is healthy," Thompson said. "I can tell you that the eggs are coming back on the market."

Read more [here](#).

Union County teaches healthy eating with LANA

Union County FCS agent Lauren McGarrh’s program is helping to make a lasting impact on the health and nutrition of young students in Union County.



Union County ranks 61st among counties in health outcomes. It has high food insecurity and has a youth obesity rate of 40 percent. To address these issues, McGarrh presented the UADA SNAP-Ed program called Learning About Nutrition through Activities (LANA) to 54 preschoolers at Retta Brown Preschool in FY24. The program focused on nutrition education and healthy eating behaviors.

Parent survey results showed positive impacts.

Parent Survey Results:

- 65% reported making recipes sent home.
- 60% reported making positive dietary changes.
- 60% reported eating more fruits and vegetables.
- 75% reported their child was more willing to try new foods.
- 70% reported their child asked for more fruits and vegetables.

Teachers reported that 75% of students were more willing to try healthy foods, ate more fruits and vegetables; and said the program motivated students to eat healthier and be more physically active. One teacher shared, “My students eat cherry tomatoes now after being introduced to them during the program.”

Gadberry joins CES as AVP for ag and natural resources



Shane Gadberry returns to the Cooperative Extension Service as assistant vice president for agriculture and natural resources.

Gadberry is no stranger to extension, having served as a livestock specialist for 25 years before being appointed resident director of the Livestock and Forestry Research Station near Batesville.

Gadberry earned bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees in animal science at the University of Arkansas.

In 2014, he earned a John W. White Award for Extension Faculty and also earned Extension Excellence Awards for his work on drought recommendations and videos.

2025 Winter Row Crop Production Meetings

Date	County	Crop	City	Location	Time
Feb. 28	Phillips / Lee counties	rice and soybeans	Marianna	Lon Mann Cotton Research Station, 3121 Hwy South	8:30 A.M.
Mar. 4	Craighead / Poinsett / Greene / Mississippi	peanuts	Jonesboro	Food Bank of Northeast AR, 3414 One Pl.	9:00 A.M.
Mar. 4	Arkansas River Valley	rice, with ag econ. with Ryan Loy	Russellville	Brown's Catfish Restaurant	9:00 A.M.
Mar. 5	Greene County	Technology (<i>Originally scheduled for Jan. 16</i>)	Paragould	Greene Co. Extension Office, 4410 Fairview Rd	7:50 A.M.
Mar. 6	St. Francis / Monroe counties	soybeans and rice, ag econ. with Ryan Loy	Brinkley	Brinkley First Baptist Church, 215 W. Elm St.	8:30 A.M.

Save the Date
2025 Spring Retiree Meeting
 Monday, March 31, 2025 • 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
 C. A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center, Little Rock, Arkansas

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March Birthdays

Ralph Tyler Jr. - March 1
Lynn Whitlock - March 1
Janet Hill - March 3
Glenda Rushing - March 5
Sandra Schlinker - March 5
Barbara Tompkins - March 9
Bobbie Floyd - March 10
Alene Bates - March 10
Bonita Mueller - March 10
Mark Cochran - March 11
Dorothy Rodgers - March 12
Danny Allen - March 14

Sue Seevers - March 14
Katie Reddick - March 14
Judy Drewrey - March 14
Dorene Wills - March 16
Lydia Guffey - March 16
Doris Markle - March 17
Chris Russell - March 18
Nina Boston - March 19
Juanita Sherman - March 19
Danny Walker - March 21
Steven Seideman - March 22
Charlie Parsons - March 23

Mary Barrentine - March 23
John Robinson - March 24
Ronnie Bateman - March 24
Kathy Rawlingson - March 25
Ocsie Barnes - March 26
Thomas Moody - March 27
Debbie Henry - March 28
Celia Boon Shireman - March 29
Eddie Hubbell - March 29
Patsy Hall - March 29
Shelly Johnson - March 30
Karen Fite - March 31

Message from the director



A couple of weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend the annual meeting of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association (SAEA). One of the regular features of that meeting that becomes more and more meaningful to me with each passing year is the recognition of Lifetime Achievement Award

winners. In the past it always seemed to me that this recognition only went to old folks, but lately the recipients seem to be getting younger and younger.

This year, one of Arkansas' own, Dr. H. L. Goodwin, Jr., was recognized with an SAEA Lifetime Achievement Award. As a faculty member in the Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness department, H. L.'s appointment included teaching, research, and Extension. His Extension responsibilities were mostly as a poultry economist working with the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science. Although he has been retired for several years now, I still call on H. L. quite often for his advice and opinion. All of us who know him were excited to see him finally recognized with this well-deserved award.

Speaking of friends and mentors, I also had the opportunity recently to catch up with Dr. Bert Greenwalt of Arkansas State University at their annual agribusiness conference. CES was well represented at the conference, with several county agents and specialists in attendance. I had the somewhat unpleasant task of providing an update

on the economic situation in the commercial row crop sector (short version: it's really bad). I am grateful to my ag econ colleagues – Hunter Biram, Ryan Loy, Scott Stiles, Brad Watkins, and Breana Watkins – who graciously allowed me to rip off their work in various ways in my presentation, which was a huge help since I don't routinely put together presentations like that anymore.

One of the other speakers at the conference was a longtime American Farm Bureau friend and colleague, Mary Kay Thatcher. Currently in government relations with Syngenta, Mary Kay knows agricultural policy and Washington politics better than just about anyone in the country. She did an excellent job summarizing what is right now an uncertain and somewhat chaotic transition period in the federal government. That uncertainty has hit pretty close to home in the past two or three weeks as questions have been raised about the stability of funding on some of our federal grants. As of now, it looks like the programs we are funded under are continuing to operate more-or-less as usual; however, there may yet be a few bumps in the road for us to get past during this transition period between administrations. For our part, we'll leave the politics of the present situation to others while we monitor emerging information to anticipate and minimize any disruptions to our program delivery or negative impacts on our personnel. Whatever comes, our focus will remain on strengthening agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Times like these are what a good mission statement is made for.