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U of A
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

No. 1

Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council Volunteers Give Gifts of Warmth to Hospital-bound

Santa and his helpers made a stop at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences last month with a gift from the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council for each patient: a soft warm blanket to keep.

Members of AEHC clubs in Prairie, Lonoke, Jefferson and Lincoln counties donated 121 blankets to the UAMS Auxiliary the day before, helping the organization meet more than a quarter of its goal of 450 blankets for this year's delivery.

Shea Wilson, a Family and Consumer Science agent with the Cooperative Extension Service office in Prairie County, said that within a few days of the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council putting out the call, more than 40 blankets had arrived at her office.

"I always say, if you need something done just ask Extension Homemakers," Wilson said. "I'm so proud of the work they do in our local community and across the state. They are a huge asset to our county program and the impacts we are able to make each year."

Most of the donated blankets are 50-inch-by-60-inch fleece throws in an array of colors — from soft pastels to bright festive colors to animal prints to holiday-themed blankets with snowflakes and snowmen.

Blankets are just one of the many service projects AEHC members do throughout the year. AEHC volunteers have been knitting hats many years for Arkansas Children's



Sophie Spann (center), with the U of A System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, delivers blanket to UAMS Auxiliary Volunteer Services.

Hospital's Knitting for Noggins program. Earlier this month, volunteers delivered 300 hats of all colors and sizes for preemies, newborns, children and adults.

"Arkansas Children's Hospital has a wagon they put the hats in, and anyone is free to grab a hat," said Sophie Spann said, who works with the U of A Cooperative Extension Service's Family and Consumer Services division and delivered the hats and blankets.

The AEHC work to improve quality of life through continuing education, leadership development, and community service.. Last year, 4,400 members and 350 Extension Homemaker Clubs volunteered more than 705,000 hours. (e)

THE INSIDE STORIES

New Blackberry from Division of Agriculture Achieves Pinnacle of Flavor
Arkansas Flower and Garden Show
Message from Dr. Cartwright

Scholarship Donations
February Birthdays
New Retirees

2

New Blackberry from Division of Agriculture Achieves Pinnacle of Flavor

Ponca, a new blackberry variety from the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, offers the pinnacle of flavor from one of the world's leading public blackberry breeding programs.

Ponca is the 20th blackberry from the fruit breeding program of the division's Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, said John R. Clark, fruit breeder and Distinguished Professor of horticulture for the Division of Agriculture and the University of Arkansas' Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences.

"This is about as exciting as anything I've ever had my hands on," Clark said. "When I noticed how good Ponca tasted, I thought that if Ponca was someone's first blackberry, it would change their entire perception of what a blackberry is.



Ponca, the 20th blackberry from the Division of Agriculture fruit breeding program, represents the pinnacle of achievement in flavor development.

When the fruit breeding program was established by Dr. James N. Moore in 1964, Clark said, work on blackberries was aimed at taming a wild fruit. Moore wanted blackberries without thorns, and he began that effort by selecting and breeding for large berry size, plant growth traits, consistent berry production, disease resistance and other desirable agronomic traits.

By the time Moore retired and Clark took over the breeding program, Arkansas blackberries had developed from a wild berry that grew in tangled vines on the ground to cultivated crop plant with erect canes, increasingly reliable fruit production with large berries and improved resistance to common Arkansas plant diseases.

Moore's and Clark's collaboration also led to the first erect-caned thornless blackberry plants and the first steps toward something new — primocane-fruiting blackberries that flowered and fruited on first-year canes, extending the fruiting season to as late as frost.

With a solid foundation of domesticated and productive blackberry varieties and breeding lines established, Clark turned his attention toward improving flavor.

Native blackberries tended to be tart because of high acidity, Clark said. It was the flavor most Arkansans were accustomed to and Moore preferred the tart flavor.

But Clark wanted a sweeter berry and began breeding for reduced acidity, to reduce tartness, and increased sugars to improve sweetness. He also began to seek flavor traits that are a little more ephemeral — aromatics.

"Sweetness or tartness is the first thing you notice when you bite into a blackberry," Clark said. "But, as you chew, other fruity flavors begin to emerge. Those are the aromatic qualities."

Aromatics are a quality of fruit chemistry, Clark said, and they are harder to pin down because they are a product not only of genetics, but also of environment. He has found that Arkansas blackberries grown in other states and other countries often have flavor qualities he doesn't find at home.

Clark's opinion of Ponca's superb flavor is born out by both anecdotal and scientific evidence.

Berry growers, breeders and enthusiasts from across the United States and around the world regularly trek to the Division of Agriculture's Fruit Research Station north of Clarksville to see what Clark is up to. He relishes leading visitors through the rows of blackberry plants standing on

(See Blackberry, page 3)

Blackberry, cont.

the lush, rolling hills of the station, orating on the hereditaries, traits and characters of established blackberry varieties and advanced breeding lines.

Visitors pluck the plump berries and get a mouthful of the results coming out of the Arkansas breeding program, and learn the names if they have them, or the number designations that identify advanced breeding lines that may be headed toward commercial release.

“I’ve had more people remember A-2538T (Ponca’s breeding line designation) than any other to come out of the program,” Clark said. “They remember that flavor.”

Ponca is available to licensed propagators now, Clark said. Non-exclusive licenses are available in the United States. For information, contact Cheryl Nimmo at 479-575-3953, or by email at cnimmo@uark.edu. ©



The 29th annual Arkansas Flower and Garden Show is happening Feb. 28, 29 and March 1 at the Arkansas State Fairgrounds.

This year’s theme is “A Gardening Odyssey,” and will feature at least six fantastic display gardens built on-site inside Barton Coliseum, including one by noted horticulturist P. Allen Smith, and a hanging centerpiece from Tanarah Luxe Floral.

As always, the show will feature more than 100 vendors from across Arkansas and the country, and will feature how-to classes every 30 minutes during all three days of the show. The first 50 children (ages 12 and under) to arrive at the show each day will receive a free plant from Arkansas 4-H.

Parking is free and plentiful, and volunteers will provide free package holding for attendees to pick up at the end of the day.

Tickets are \$10 per day, and can be purchased at the door or online through www.argardenshow.org. ©

To Our Extension Retirees



Welcome to 2020, we are counting on it being the best year in the history of the Division of Agriculture, and of the Cooperative Extension Service. This is a tall order, but it helps to have a goal.

January of 2020, like previous Januarys, reminds me that it takes a while to quit writing 2019 on everything or whatever the previous year was, but I will adapt. And, it reminds me that I can never consistently keep resolutions so I gave up making them a few years back, just like I quit having birthdays. I feel better.

I hope you remember volunteerism this year, speaking of which, please remember one of the largest and most important volunteer groups in the region being the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council. While often overlooked by the general public, this group of 4000+ good citizens do more in one year than almost any other organization for the good of the state and our people. While they have many local projects, AEHC also has taken on daily hunger and access to nutritious foods at the state level by starting work on the Million Meals Project. You will hear more about his over the next two years. Even if it only your good thoughts, please consider supporting this work in the near future. It is a very good thing.

Please remember the Arkansas Flower and Garden Show at the State Fairgrounds in Little Rock coming in February. The Division and CES always has a strong presence at this event, highlighting the robust gardening going on around the state.

We often do not say thanks enough, so I am taking a bit of space to say THANKS to all the retirees who have contributed to the various CES Retiree Scholarship Endowments this past year. Your contributions were up considerably compared to the past three years, and the scholarships awarded to deserving employees trying to continue their education are incredibly important. So many many thanks to each of you who contributed.

I also want to say thanks to Kim Wiedower, longtime Manager of the Credit Union. I cannot count how many times Kim helped me, and many of us, any time any place. We wish her the very best in retirement but will certainly miss her.

Finally, like most, I get pretty weary of attending funerals and saying goodbye to friends and relatives these days, it seems about every week now. But I do want to mention three people who surpassed the century mark before moving on recently, being Irma Boyer, Dr. Joe Fulton and Ruby Warren. Irma (109 yrs. old) was a teacher and great friend of many in the Division for decades, while Dr. Fulton (102 yrs.) was a renowned plant virologist with many original discoveries that helped agriculture worldwide. And Mrs. Warren (100 yrs. and 1 day), wife of the late Dr. Lloyd Warren – former Director of the Experiment Station System and longtime Entomologist – was laid to rest last Saturday in Fayetteville. I knew all personally, but confess I have known few as remarkable as these three.

I hope all of you have the greatest 2020, and that you take the time to visit those close to you often and well.... time is rather elusive and ephemeral. ©

December Birthdays

Mr. Bobby Huey, Feb. 2	Mrs. Beverly Hines, Feb. 7	Dr. George Davis Jr., Feb. 22
The Honorable Booker Clemons Jr., Feb. 2	Ms. Wanda House, Feb. 8	Ms. Denise Murdoch, Feb. 22
Mrs. Charlotte Chitwood, Feb. 2	Mrs. Gertrude Henderson, Feb. 9	Mr. Larry Holeman, Feb. 22
Mrs. Brenda Lee Waldrum, Feb. 2	Ms. Catherine Koch, Feb. 9	Mr. Gerald Van Brunt, Feb. 23
Mr. Gene Woodall, Feb. 3	Mr. Allan Beuerman, Feb. 9	Mrs. Rebecca Thomas, Feb. 23
Mr. Bob Reynolds, Feb. 3	Mrs. Ella Geisler, Feb. 10	Mr. Doyne Potts, Feb. 24
Mr. Lamar James, Feb. 3	Mr. Jimmie Gooch, Feb. 10	Dr. Robert Felsman, Feb. 24
Mr. Larry Sandage, Feb. 3	Mrs. Joy Buffalo, Feb. 10	Mrs. Jeri Vangilder, Feb. 24
Mrs. Carol Patterson, Feb. 4	Mr. Steve Rodery, Feb. 11	Mr. Charles Johnston, Feb. 26
Mrs. Beverly Henderson-Vincent, Feb. 4	Ms. Yvonne McCool, Feb. 11	Ms. Clara Garrett, Feb. 26
Mr. Edward Rhodes Jr., Feb. 4	Ms. Ann Ward, Feb. 12	Mrs. Mary Warren, Feb. 27
Ms. Fran Tomerlin, Feb. 5	Dr. Keith Lusby, Feb. 13	Mr. James Geisler, Feb. 27
Mr. Mark Phillips, Feb. 5	Ms. Sharon Lillard, Feb. 15	Mr. Larry Keaton, Feb. 27
Mrs. Sheila Brandt, Feb. 5	Mrs. Cheryl Williams, Feb. 18	Mrs. Carole Scaramuzza, Feb. 28
Mrs. Belinda Miller, Feb. 6	Mrs. Lynda Lee, Feb. 20	
Miss Dora Dinnan, Feb. 7	Mrs. Delores Sowerbrower, Feb. 21	

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.

CES Retiree Scholarship Fund

Jimmie Bowling

In memory of Howard Young

In honor of Rick Cartwright and David Foster

Liz Childs

*In honor of Margaret Alexander
and Fann Woodward*

Ramona Gordon

Mildred & Liz Childs Professional Development Fund

Liz Childs

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 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. ☺

Yes, I will subscribe to the *Extension Cord*.

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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.

New Retirees

Kim Wiedower, Credit Union (LRSO) – Kim began her career with Extension in August of 1994. She served as the Credit Union Manager at the LRSO until her retirement December 20, 2019. Kim had 25 years of service. ☺