



Keeping you connected

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U of A
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Gov. Sanders approves \$5M in state funding for Center of Excellence for Food Science and Innovation

Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders announced new state support for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture's Center of Excellence for Food Science and Innovation on June 19, when the Arkansas Legislative Council approved \$5 million from the Restricted Reserve for the building's construction in Fayetteville.

This investment builds on \$30 million in federal funding secured by U.S. Sen. John Boozman and U.S. Rep. Steve Womack. The Center of Excellence for Food Science and Innovation will replace the existing University of Arkansas food science facility with an approximately 62,000-square-foot building that will provide new laboratory, office and classroom space for food science department faculty, staff and students.

"Arkansas is an agricultural powerhouse, and this investment will ensure we remain a leader in food innovation for generations to come," Sanders said. "The new center of excellence will give students access to world-class facilities, strengthen partnerships with Arkansas producers and businesses, and accelerate research that directly impacts one of our state's largest economies. We're investing in the workforce, agriculture and innovation that will keep Arkansas competitive in the future."

Deacue Fields, head of the Division of Agriculture, said the investment will reinforce and expand on more than 50 years of University of Arkansas food science leadership in research, education and industry engagement.

"We are extremely grateful for Gov. Sanders' support for the Center of Excellence for Food Science and Innovation," Fields said. "The mission of the center aligns with the governor's priorities to address food insecurity and health throughout the state. This support will allow us to build a world-class facility to drive the innovation necessary to address these critical issues, and also identify ways to add value in the production agriculture sector."



Architect's rendering of the planned Center of Excellence for Food Science and Innovation.

Jay Silveria, University of Arkansas System president, said the continued investment in the Division of Agriculture's food science program is "monumental" for the state's agricultural infrastructure and efforts to serve Arkansas communities.

"This funding will solidify and accelerate groundbreaking research, support local food entrepreneurs, help us further address food insecurity in Arkansas, and equip our students with the hands-on technical skills required to lead the global food processing industry," Silveria said. "This project perfectly aligns with our system-wide mission to drive economic growth and enhance the quality of life for all Arkansans."

Planned for the corner of Garland Avenue and West Cassatt Street north of the University of Arkansas campus, the new building will encourage collaboration among researchers through shared laboratory spaces, expand educational opportunities, and improve access for industry partners and food entrepreneurs.

Read more [here](#).

THE INSIDE STORIES

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Bears are out and about, but encounters remain uncommon

As Arkansans spend more time outdoors during the summer months, wildlife experts say residents may notice an increase in black bear sightings, but they emphasize that bears are generally wary of people and rarely pose a threat.

Although Arkansas experienced two tragic black bear attacks last fall — the first fatal attacks in more than a century — Don White, wildlife ecologist and bear expert with the Arkansas Forest Resources Center based at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, said such incidents are exceptionally uncommon for our state.

"Most bears are naturally afraid of people and will leave an area when they know a human is nearby," said White, who is also the James White Endowed Professor of Wildlife Ecology at UAM.

"Their sense of smell is incredibly acute, allowing them to detect us long before we know they are nearby. In most cases, bears quietly move away without ever being seen."

White said that the lowest likelihood of encountering a bear occurs during winter when bears are typically denning. Sightings are more likely in the spring and fall simply because more people are recreating outdoors in bear territory.

"When you plot the times of the year when black bear-human encounters take place, spring and fall come out on top," White said. "These are also the times when people are most active in bear

country. Whenever people and black bears occur in the same place at the same time, conflicts can occur, although those conflicts are remarkably rare in our state."

Spring encounters are sometimes associated with female bears protecting young cubs, while fall conflicts are more often tied to food availability.

This time of year, residents may be more likely to spot young male bears moving through new areas. According to Spencer Daniels with the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, yearling males are often dispersing from their mother's territory in search of a home range of their own.

"These young bears stayed the winter with their mother but were kicked out of her territory to start their lives on their own," Daniels said. "They can travel very long distances in search of a new place to call home. This uptick in bear activity makes seeing a bear walking on the side of the road or through a wooded area near a home fairly common in Arkansas." Read more [here](#).



Wildlife experts emphasize that bears are typically more interested in avoiding people than interacting with them. (Photo by Bob Black of Ashdown, AR)

Extension Get Fit program improves Arkansans' health, strengthens social ties



John Peddy, 75, volunteer leader of the Ashley County Extension Get Fit group in Crossett, leads his fellow participants in a strength training exercise.

Extension Get Fit is a community-based strength training program offered by the Cooperative Extension Service. The program is targeted at midlife and older Arkansans. Classes meet for an hour at least twice a week and are hosted at a variety of public spaces.

Volunteer leaders or county extension agents who have received extension training lead the classes, which incorporate research-based exercise programming designed to improve participants' strength, balance and flexibility.

Contact your [local county extension agent](#) to learn about Extension Get Fit classes in your area or visit the [Extension Get Fit page](#) on the Cooperative Extension Service website for more information.

Celebrating 30 Years at Our Headquarters

This year marks 30 years since the Cooperative Extension Service relocated its headquarters to South University Avenue. Since opening in 1996, the building has remained the home base for Extension's statewide outreach and service.



The Cooperative Extension Service enjoys a new location on South University Ave.

(Front row left to right): Pulaski County 4-Hers Nicholas Lindsey, Jessica Gullede, Ryan Fuller, ClaraBeth Vire; State officers (second row left to right): Angela Reed, song leader, Viloria; Melanie Yancey, vice president; St. Joe; Melissa Johnson, song leader, Scranton; Audrey Dingler, vice president, Malvern; Jennifer Coleman, president, Mountainburg; (back row left to right): Jason Rocho, vice president, Grapevine; Carla Nicolson, reporter, Cherry Valley; Marc Harrison, vice president, Judsonia and Cassandra Crumley, sec., Forest City

1996 Arkansas Democrat-Gazette coverage celebrating the opening of Extension's headquarters on South University Avenue.

Arkansas EHC announces reducing fabric waste as new focus of statewide service project

For the next four years, members of the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council will focus statewide efforts on reducing fabric waste, in part by teaching a new generation how to sew, mend and make their clothing last longer.

EHC members from throughout Arkansas gathered for the organization's annual state meeting, held June 2-4 at the Wyndham Riverfront in North Little Rock. As part of the meeting's opening ceremonies on June 2, EHC state officers announced the new four-year statewide service project, which was chosen by EHC members. The project will start July 1.

"We asked for your input so we could get ideas for what would better serve our group," said Deb Teague, EHC president. "This new service project is not only cutting-edge, but it also goes back to the basics."



Scenes from the 2026 AEHC State Meeting in North Little Rock, Arkansas.

Keith Statham-Cleek, extension family and consumer sciences educator for the Division of Agriculture, led an educational session on "Breaking the Fast Fashion Cycle" following the project's announcement.

"The room was packed, and we spent half the session on questions and answers," Statham-Cleek

said. "We talked about closing the loop on textile waste by recycling, repurposing and repairing items. It's about teaching this younger generation to buy quality over quantity, taking care of their clothing by laundering it properly to make it last, and when it no longer fits or you can no longer repurpose it, finding other alternatives instead of donating."

According to a 2022 report by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, about 15 percent of used clothes and other textiles in the U.S. gets reused or recycled. The other 85 percent goes to a landfill or to be incinerated.

Statham-Cleek said that as part of the "EHC Cares" project, many clubs plan to teach sewing and mending skills to their grandkids, members of the 4-H youth development organization, and fellow EHC club members. Some clubs also plan to collaborate with local volunteer and charitable organizations that offer "career closets," where community members can access professional clothing necessary for job interviews at a low cost or free of charge.

"The economy has affected every household in the country," Statham-Cleek said. "People adjust their budgets for things that aren't necessary, and everyone has a pile somewhere in their house of clothes that need to be repaired — a button sewn on, or a hem adjusted. By teaching these skills, EHC can help families make what they already have stretch further."

Read more [here](#).

Extension experts share tips for preventing heat illness this summer

As summer temperatures begin to climb in Arkansas, it's critical to prevent the risk of heat illness by wearing appropriate clothing, staying hydrated and taking frequent breaks to cool down.

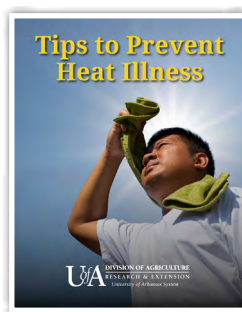
"According to the Mayo Clinic, heatstroke is defined as a condition when the body overheats to a temperature of 104 degrees Fahrenheit, usually due to exposure to high temperatures or physical activity in high temperatures for too long a period of time," said Nina Rooft, extension assistant vice president for family and consumer sciences. "Heatstroke can damage vital organs, including the brain, heart, kidneys and muscles."

People are more susceptible to heatstroke if they are older than 65, have heart or lung disease, are overweight, inactive or have a history of heatstroke. People exerting themselves in hot weather — such as members of the military, athletes or construction workers — or who lack air conditioning are also at greater risk of heatstroke.

Wearing appropriate clothing when outside can help prevent overheating, Rooft said. This includes loose-fitting and lightweight

garments made from cooling fabrics such as linen, silk, cotton or hemp.

Practice sun safety by using sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 and reapplying every two hours. Daniels said it is best to apply sunscreen approximately 30 minutes before sun exposure. This helps the skin absorb the sunscreen and makes it less likely to wash off during perspiration.



It's also important to stay hydrated, Rooft said, although thirst is not a good indicator of hydration. Thirst lags behind hydration status, she said, especially as we age.

"Proactively drinking water — before you necessarily feel acute thirst — will help you sweat, maintain a normal body temperature and prevent heatstroke," Rooft said. "Sugar-free electrolyte drinks can also help you stay hydrated and replace losses of electrolytes from extra sweating. Read more tips [here](#)."

August Birthdays

Raymond Duncan - Aug. 1
Patricia Walters - Aug. 1
Berline Wright - Aug. 1
Linda Buckley-Chappell - Aug. 3
Betty Holman - Aug. 4
Louise Burns - Aug. 5
June Moody - Aug. 5
Caroll Wallace Guffey Jr. - Aug. 8
Paul Ballantyne - Aug. 9
Ronald Beaty - Aug. 9

Burl Scifres - Aug. 9
Laura Goforth - Aug. 10
Delbert Taylor - Aug. 11
Nancy Clark - Aug. 12
Marion Terhune Jr. - Aug. 12
Robert Goodson - Aug. 14
Charles Wilson Jr. - Aug. 14
Beverly Fountain - Aug. 15
Janice Huddleston - Aug. 15
Marian Snortland - Aug. 15

Mark Brawner - Aug. 17
Barbara Holt - Aug. 17
Gail Clark - Aug. 19
Carolyn Grimes - Aug. 19
Laura Luther - Aug. 19
Gloria Pickett - Aug. 19
Wanda O'Neal - Aug. 20
Jim Ragland - Aug. 20
Jan Rogers - Aug. 20
Rickey Wiedower - Aug. 20

Claudia Corbin - Aug. 21
Barbara Simmons - Aug. 21
Steve Jones - Aug. 23
Terry Davis - Aug. 25
Carla Vaught - Aug. 25
Martha Albright - Aug. 26
Frank Plafcan - Aug. 28
Lott Rolfe III - Aug. 29
John Langston - Aug. 30

Message from the director



A couple of weeks ago, I received a letter from an old friend — not a text or an email, an actual letter, in a stamped envelope, delivered through the U.S. Postal Service. I can't remember the last time I got a personal letter in the mail. I'm sure it would have been something from my mother. She was a prolific letter writer, but even she has pretty much given it up for more modern and convenient forms of communication. Of course, there are plenty

of those available. The old stand-by now is email. I was trying to determine recently when I first started using email and how many different emails I have had over the years. I really don't know. The first email account that I put to any real use was the student account I received when I started graduate school at Oklahoma State University in 1995. Not long after that, I opened a personal Hotmail account. For those of you who don't remember Hotmail, it was the MySpace of webmail services. For those of you who don't remember MySpace... Never mind; this is making me feel old.

I'm bringing this up because we are about to see some changes in our emails within the Division of Agriculture. As you have probably heard by now, UADA is migrating its digital tools and device management from our own Microsoft 365 system to the UA-Fayetteville system. As part of this migration, UADA emails will be converted to UARK addresses. Our IT team has been laying the groundwork for this switch for some time, and the project will really get rolling in August. Most of this early work will be behind the scenes, but by the end of the year, the switch should be complete. The Microsoft migration will provide several practical benefits. For one thing, it will allow us to reduce the number of duplicative software licenses we maintain separately between UADA and UARK, resulting

in meaningful cost savings. For another thing, the migration will make it easier for UADA personnel to access UARK resources. For example, our current system requires a county agent who wants access to the UA Library to go through a separate approval process to be issued UARK credentials to allow access. After the migration, this separate process will be unnecessary. Access to UARK resources, like the library, will be seamless for UADA employees.

Now, there's no need to throw out all your business cards just yet. UADA emails won't stop working. They will be converted to aliases that will forward to the new UARK addresses. For stakeholders, the migration project should be basically imperceptible. As for other questions about the migration, IT Services already has a website on the project up and running. The website includes some basic information on the project as well as a list of FAQs that will be updated as needed. We'll provide updates on the project as it progresses. In the meantime, I'll see you on MySpace.



Cyber Protection Tips: Avoiding Financial Scams

- **Wiring money is like giving cash away.**
 - If you wire money, there is no protection for you if you later learn that the recipient is not who they claimed to be.
- **Never give out personal or banking information in response to a phone, email or mail inquiry.**
 - Contact the entity requesting the information directly through a different method to verify that it is a reputable company with which you have an existing relationship.
- **Never send money to someone who you do not know and haven't met in person.**
- **It is ALWAYS a scam if they ask you to wire money or pay with a prepaid credit card or gift card.**

