



Keeping you connected

extension cord

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DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
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Former LeadAR director Joe Waldrum named Rural Advocate of the Year

Joe Waldrum is a leader among leaders. For 22 years, he spearheaded the LeadAR program, which has trained hundreds of Arkansans to be effective leaders in communities across the state.

For his work, he was named Rural Advocate of the Year. The award was presented May 21 in Little Rock during the Arkansas Rural Development Conference, hosted by the Arkansas Economic Development Commission Division of Rural Services and the Arkansas Rural Development Commission. The award recognizes individuals who demonstrate exceptional leadership and dedication to improving the lives of people in rural Arkansas communities.



LeadAR director Julie Robinson presents the 2025 Rural Advocate of the Year Award to former LeadAR director Joe Waldrum. The award was presented May 21 during the Arkansas Rural Development Conference in Little Rock.

“I’m not quite speechless, but I am grateful, I’m stunned, I’m overwhelmed,” Waldrum said when accepting the award that was a surprise. “I’ve said this before that LeadAR is the most significant thing that has happened to me. One of the great things about directing a leadership program is watching people grow, watching people learn, watching people get out of their comfort zone and realize what they can do.”

Waldrum began his 39-year career with the Cooperative Extension Service in 1976. He served Arkansas farmers and rural communities through many extension roles — as a soybean specialist, a pesticide assessment specialist, state agriculture leader, assistant director of community and economic development, and director of Leadership Arkansas, better known as LeadAR.

“In each of these roles, Joe worked hand-in-hand with rural residents, helping them address agricultural challenges, grow local economies, and strengthen civic leadership,” said Julie Robinson, professor of leadership development for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and current LeadAR director. “He has dedicated his life to uplifting rural communities through leadership and public service and been a tireless champion for rural voices and sustainable development across the state.”

“We are excited to see Dr. Waldrum honored as Rural Advocate of the Year,” Cooperative Extension Service director John D. Anderson said. “His positive influence is evident in our organization and continues to be felt throughout the state.” Read more [here](#).

THE INSIDE STORIES

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Taste of summer arrives with 1st box of tomatoes delivered to Bradley County extension office

The year's first box of tomatoes was delivered Monday, May 19 to the Bradley County Extension Office, a tradition for about 50 years and a harbinger of the season to come.

The first box — all Cherokee Purple tomatoes — was delivered by Westin Clanton, son of Randy Clanton Jr. and Skye Clanton, owners of Clanton Farms in Hermitage.

The Clanton family — five generations' worth — has been farming since the 1940s and grows some 500 acres of tomatoes and other produce, including cucumbers, yellow squash, zucchini, cabbage and watermelons. The family also grows other tomato varieties, including Bradley, Ramblers, Roadsters and Pony Express.

In 2024, the first box of tomatoes — all Roadster variety — was delivered Memorial Day weekend by Brad Harrod Farms & Hermit Corner Produce.

Despite rain and cool temperatures, “the season is running a little bit earlier than usual,” said John Gavin, Bradley County extension staff chair. “We've really had some good-looking plants and the plants are running about a week ahead of schedule.”

Gavin said Arkansans looking for state-grown tomatoes can expect to see some in the week following Memorial Day.

“Once that first box is out, that's what encourages farmers to get out and really start looking at their tomatoes,” he said.

Gavin said local farmers were growing a mix of large round fresh market, plum, grape and Roma tomatoes, but there are three varieties that are increasingly popular among growers: Roadster, Rambler and the Thunderbird.

Thunderbirds and Ramblers produce flavorful extra-large to jumbo tomatoes, while Roadster plants produce a little smaller extra-large fruit with excellent flavor. Not so common are varieties that produce extremely large fruit.

“Our tomatoes are coming down in size a little bit, mainly because of market demand,” he said. “Consumers don't want them so big that when you take a slice of it, you couldn't see the bread.” Read more [here](#).



Westin Clanton holds the first box of tomatoes — a batch of Cherokee Purples — delivered to the Bradley County Extension Office. Westin is the son of Randy Clanton, Jr., and Skye Clanton, owners of Clanton Farms in Hermitage, Arkansas.

Arkansas 4-H photographer with professional ambitions wins Best in Show



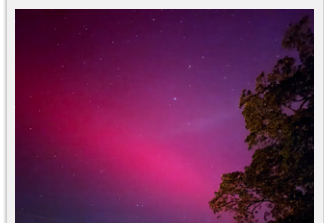
Best In Show - Briley Krug



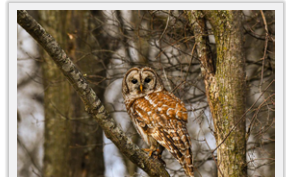
2nd Place Color Non-Living
Aiden White



1st Place BW Non-Living - Briley Krug



3rd Place Color Non-Living
Blakelyn Riggan



1st Place Color Living Noah Stephens

View all the winners [here](#)!

Pulaski County Extension collaborates with Potluck Food Rescue, LRSD for No Cost Market program

The Cooperative Extension Service is working to ensure families in the Little Rock School District not only have enough to eat — but that they also have access to fresh produce they might otherwise skip.



Western Hills Elementary staff help assemble bags of food to distribute to families.

“The last thing anyone needs to worry about is where their next meal is coming from,” said Chris Wyman, executive director of Potluck Food Rescue, a nonprofit organization that works to fight food insecurity by redirecting food from going to waste.

As part of a new partnership, Potluck recently collaborated with Pulaski County Extension and the Little Rock School District to distribute food at no cost to families during after school pick-up at Western Hills Elementary School. Wyman said hosting No Cost Markets at schools is an important way of meeting families’ needs.

“We’ve been doing No Cost Markets for the last five years, and we want to do them at schools that we know have a need for it,” Wyman said.

Laura Anne Warren, Pulaski County Extension family and consumer sciences agent, has taught extension nutrition programming at Western Hills Elementary for the last 13 years. She said this new collaboration with Potluck Food Rescue and the Little Rock School District reflects the Cooperative Extension Service’s mission to strengthen Arkansas communities and families.

“Western Hills is a 92 percent free- or reduced-lunch population school,” Warren said. “With increased economic pressures, parents are struggling to provide healthy food options for their families. Hosting a No Cost Market provides an additional avenue for low-income families to access fresh, healthy foods. This meets families where they are as they pick their students up from school.” Read more [here](#).

COUNTY FAIRS

Hot Spring Co. Fair Star Spangled Showdown at Malvern
Hot Springs Co. | July 5

Fulton Co. Fair at Salem
Fulton | July 11-19

Baxter Co. Fair at Mountain Home
Baxter County | August 19-23

Logan Co. Fair at Paris
Logan | August 19-23

Johnson Co. Fair at Clarksville
Johnson County | August 27-30

Polk Co. Fair at Mena
Polk County | August 27-30

Sevier Co. Fair and Rodeo at DeQueen
Sevier County | August 30-September 7

Searcy Co. Fair at Marshall
Searcy County | September 1-6

Tri Co. Fair at Marvell
Phillips County | September 2-7

Garland Co. Fair and Livestock Show at Hot Springs
Garland County | September 9-13

Clay Co. Fair at Piggott
Clay County | September 6-14

White Co. Fair at Searcy
White County | September 8-13

Find more [here!](#)

July Birthdays

Jim Wallace - July 1	Debbie Still - July 6	Wally Goddard - July 15	Dianna Bowen - July 23
Michael Hedges - July 1	Millie Collins - July 7	Candace Carrie - July 15	Relda Washburn - July 24
Wanda Pemberton - July 3	Andy Vangilder - July 7	Patsy Stephens - July 16	Virginia Cottrell - July 24
John Gunter - July 3	Betty Archer - July 8	Nora Terry - July 16	Roxana Jones - July 25
Sheryll Gregory - July 3	Carolyn Lewis - July 8	Bobby Johnson - July 16	Earl Vories - July 25
Monte Milligan - July 3	Quinton Hornsby - July 8	James Aikman - July 17	Tony Windham - July 26
Randy Chlapecka - July 3	Jim Bemis - July 10	Susan Pickle - July 17	Debra Schneider - July 27
Shirley Hesselschwerdt - July 4	Liz Childs - July 10	Debbie Archer - July 17	Mark Keaton - July 27
Veda Thompson - July 4	Linda Tanner - July 10	Ora Lee Yates - July 19	Ruben Johnson - July 28
Mike Klumpp - July 4	Thomas Vaughns - July 12	Linda Whittington - July 19	Wanda Shelby - July 28
Louise Williams - July 4	Carolyn Burns - July 12	Leon Ferguson - July 20	Tommy Thompson - July 29
Jane Mowry - July 5	Yeshi Wamishe - July 12	LeAnna Hicks - July 20	Madlyn Mason - July 30
Jimmy Moore - July 5	Sung Lim - July 13	John Boyd - July 21	Edwin Colburn - July 31
Shirley Walker - July 5	Dolores McBride - July 14	Helen Glass - July 22	Henry Chaney - July 31
Mike Vowell - July 5	Gloria Taylor - July 15	Gail Kizer - July 22	

Message from the director



Mark Twain once said something to the effect that, while we don't know exactly what forbidden fruit Adam and Eve ate in the Garden, we know that it must not have been a tomato because they repented of it. I'm not sure I love tomatoes enough to risk an eternity in Perdition, but I am – like many of you, I'm sure – awfully fond

of them. Unfortunately, personal obligations kept me from being able to attend this year's Pink Tomato Festival in Bradley County, but Shane Gadberry was more than happy to be on hand in my place, though I don't think Shane is nearly as fond of tomatoes as I am.

In addition to the festivities in Warren, CES had a lot going on in June. In the first week of the month, we had the Extension Homemakers state meeting, the 4-H Teen Stars and Hall of Fame ceremony, and the state Master Gardeners Conference. The following week, the UA System Division of Agriculture hosted the Southern Region mini-land-grant conference for the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. This event brings together 1862 and 1890 land-grant administrators and other personnel to discuss and make plans related to the issues and challenges that we are facing. Dr. Fields provided outstanding leadership for this year's event in northwest Arkansas. Christina Breckenridge worked

overtime to plan the agenda, arrange facilities, and manage the complicated logistics of a major event — with a lot of help from her UADA colleagues, of course. The event was a great opportunity for us to showcase our state and some of the great things going on in UADA and the whole UA System.

At the same time mini-land-grant was going on, many of our CES personnel were helping out with the annual Anheuser-Busch (AB) grower appreciation day in Jonesboro. AB has been a great partner with UADA on a variety of projects, both Extension and research, that have benefitted Arkansas agriculture and rural communities. Their field day has become a can't-miss event in northeast Arkansas. Unfortunately, many of us did miss it this year due to mini-land-grant, but we were, as always, well represented, nonetheless. I would like to make special mention of a project that our FCS instructors, Leigh Ann Bullington and Keith Statham-Cleek have been working on all year. They have collaborated with AES/CES colleagues in Food Science to develop an instant pot rice pudding recipe using the UADA-developed ARoma-22 rice variety. They served samples of their product at the AB field day, and from what I understand it was a big hit. This is a great example of collaboration across disciplines, across program areas, and across land-grant functions to help elevate a vital Arkansas commodity.