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UofA  
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE  
RESEARCH & EXTENSION  
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## Eric Grant: A unique start

Eric Grant's start with the Cooperative Extension Service is a unique one. He was working for the experiment station in Newport, Arkansas, when he heard about the open county extension agent position in Jackson County.

"The district director at the time interviewed me in the Dairy Queen there in town," Grant said. "Dr. Perry interviewed me and decided to hire me."

His knowledge of agricultural practices is what helped land him the job.

"Part of my interview questions involved things like till and no till planting. I had done that for many years, so I answered the questions the best I knew how," Grant said.

It was a unique interview. Grant wore his everyday clothes as directed.

"Dr. Perry told me to come dressed like I did to the experiment station at the time," Grant said. "I just went up there with my old farm clothes on."

Grant's responsibilities were varied. He assisted with row crop and livestock, and it was not always run-of-the-mill work. That is what kept it exciting for Grant.

"We always worked with the cattlemen's crew, and we even had a group of milk goat producers that met in the office from time to time," Grant said. "It was always different and interesting."

He transitioned to Craighead County, which was a special decision for him.

"I had worked on a farm west of Jonesboro for 13 years before working for the experiment station," Grant said. "It was kind of like moving home for me."

In Craighead County he did a lot of research with soybeans.

"We dealt with Asian soybean rust, and we had an interest in a lot of different soybean varieties," Grant said.

"We did a lot of variety trials with different producers in the county."

They researched different growing methods, and some of the methods were successful. He also helped with cattle vaccinations, which made a difference to producers in the area. One thing that stood out to Grant during his



Eric with his grandson, Aiden.

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### The 2022 Extension Retiree Luncheon is April 28!

Join us for the largest gathering of CES retirees of the year! The 2022 Extension Retiree Luncheon will be held **April 28, 2022 at the Benton Event Center (17322 I-30, Benton)**. We look forward to seeing you!

**10 a.m.** - Registration with coffee & pastries    **11 a.m.** - Program with lunch following

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time in Craighead County was showing foreign students a little bit of Arkansas.

“We took a group of Japanese students who wanted to experience Arkansas on a trip through northern Arkansas,” Grant said. “We went through Harrison and stopped at

McDonalds, and they knew what the golden arches were.”

After Grant retired in 2015, he started working with the local Lion’s Club to collect glasses for people in need. He has also spent time volunteering at his church’s food pantry. Grant has other activities that keep him occupied.

“I have a small herd of cattle that I take care of, and I also help take care of my wife’s family,” Grant said. “I also spent time on the White River catching trout. I plan on doing that again soon.”

While his career didn't start with Extension, Grant certainly loved his time there. 

## Hands-on waterfowl education held at Wonders of Waterfowl Workshop



4-H students use nets to skim a flooded field for invertebrates, plants, and other duck foods.

Duck hunting is a passionate pastime for many Arkansans and their families. The Natural State falls within the Mississippi Flyway, the route followed by ducks migrating from their breeding grounds in North America to their wintering grounds in the South.

Arkansas 4-H, in partnership with the University of

Arkansas at Monticello and the Five Oaks Agriculture, Research and Education Center, is working to make sure future generations continue to appreciate this great resource.

Arkansas junior and senior 4-H members had the opportunity to study ducks and their habitat on Feb. 12 at the Wonders of Waterfowl Workshop at Five Oaks Duck

Lodge. The workshop welcomed over 40 youth and a few parents for a day of hands-on learning.

4-H students from Arkansas, Clark, Drew, Greene, Hot Spring, Logan, Newton, Perry, Sebastian and White counties rotated among several stations, including waterfowl habitat and food, species and wing identification, migration technology, hidden hazards and the banding and release of live ducks.

George Dunklin Jr., owner and manager of Five Oaks Duck Lodge, told participants he was glad to host the first workshop of its kind at the facility.

“Y’all are the first participants of the Wonders of Waterfowl Workshop,” Dunklin said. “So, we’re extremely excited about having y’all here today and having all these wonderful folks that came. You kids are going to be in great hands today, you’re going to learn a lot and the main thing is that you’re going to have fun.”

Members of the inaugural class of the Wetland and Waterfowl Habitat Management Graduate Certificate program led each learning station, with assistance from undergraduate students pursuing natural resources degrees at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. The unique graduate certificate program prepares students

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## Message from the director



Spring has sprung in the Cooperative Extension Service. It is probably the ag guy in me, but I always feel like I should be planting something or at least getting protocols and equipment ready for the new season. I probably always will have this feeling like I forgot or need to get to something. Having said that, we are very busy across the Division of Agriculture this time of year and with COVID

issues behind us, at least for now, we are “wide open” for the first time since I became director. I think I am getting a taste of what that is like and in a word —it’s busy! Busy but also great at the same time.

One of our new programs that I am most proud of right now is the expansion of our instructor educator positions that focus on training new agents. This effort started under Dr. Rick Cartwright as a program for ag agents. This program is successful, and we have expanded it to include Family & Consumer Sciences. This past year, we hired Leigh Ann Bullington to serve as FCS educator, and so far, she is having an impact. I have seen this program working firsthand on my “On the Job with Bob” webinar and at a Peer-to-Peer training at the 4-H Center just this past month. I love the excitement this group has for doing their jobs and trying new things. We also added an extension educator position for livestock and pasture counties and

are considering one for 4-H when funding becomes available.

Sticking with the new agent theme, we are very excited about our summer intern program. The district directors have been working hard to put together our first class of interns. We will have 11 interns in all, and they will be positioned in various counties throughout the Natural State. They will be exposed to and learn about all aspects of extension. We hope this experience will inspire some to consider a career as a county agent. This program is open to all applicants no matter where they attend college. It has led to some unexpected benefits in collaboration with some of our non-system universities in the state, which we look forward to further development where there is mutual benefit.

The last thing I will mention is that the search committee has selected two finalists for the vice president of agriculture position to lead the Division. The two are Dr. Jean-François Meullenet (senior vice president and director of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station) and Dr. Deacue Fields (dean of the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences). I work with both candidates. They are both uniquely qualified and capable individuals, and I look forward to working with whomever is selected.

As always, I wish you all the best and thank you for your continued support and interest in the Cooperative Extension Service. I hope to see many of you at the annual retiree luncheon on April 28 in Benton. ☺

## Waterfowl, cont.

for careers in wetland and waterfowl management, and it is offered through a partnership among the Five Oaks Agriculture, Research and Education Center, the University of Arkansas at Monticello, and the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

At the habitat and food station, 4-H members studied plant and invertebrate samples before donning waders and using nets to gather seeds, small invertebrates and other duck food.

Brandon Bennett, a graduate certificate student, told 4-H members about the parameters biologists take into consideration when studying what ducks eat.

“If nothing else, I just want y’all to realize how complex

everything is,” Bennett said. “In one dip of the net, you get three different food types from one place.”

Bennett told students that the biologists at Five Oaks work to understand exactly what ducks eat and how to supply those foods on the landscape.

“Because if we don’t have it on the landscape, we’re not going to have ducks anymore,” Bennett said.

In the final portion of the workshop, graduate certificate students and University of Arkansas at Monticello undergraduate students showed 4-H members how to band live ducks that were caught earlier that day. 4-H students then released the banded ducks back into the flooded fields beyond the Five Oaks Duck Lodge. ☺



# Welcome new retirees!

## Karen Ballard

Karen Ballard began working for Cooperative Extension in September of 2000 and retired on Feb. 1, 2022. Karen was a professor-program & staff development in the Community Professional and Economic Development Department. Karen retired with 21 years of service to Extension.

## Robert Goodson

Robert Goodson began working for Cooperative Extension September of 2005 and retired on Feb. 1, 2022. Robert was County Extension Agent – Agriculture in Phillips County at retirement. Robert retired with 16 years of service to Extension.

## Eva Johnson

Eva Johnson began working for Cooperative Extension in March of 1988 and retired on Feb. 1, 2022. Eva was the associate for administration for the associate vice president for Agriculture & Natural Resources office. Eva retired with 33 years of service.

## Wayne Miller

Wayne Miller began working for Cooperative Extension in March of 1989 and retired on Feb. 1, 2022. Wayne was a professor in economics in the Community Professional and Economic Development Department. Wayne retired with 32 years of service.

## Phillip Sims

Phil Sims began working for Cooperative Extension in July of 1993 and retired on Feb. 1, 2022. Phil was the county extension agent – staff chair in Pope County. Phil retired with 28 years of service.

## April Birthdays

Yvonne Mizell - April 1

Linda King - April 1

Annette Coor - April 1

Saundra Blocker - April 1

Kenneth Williams - April 2

Nancy Olofson - April 3

Susan Sanders - April 4

Janice Wadkins - April 5

Easter Tucker - April 5

Ione Daniel - April 6

Ann Gray - April 8

Stan Chapman - April 9

Louise Walker - April 10

John Payne - April 11

Melvin Daniel - April 12

Rich Maples - April 12

Mary Ruth Fallin - April 17

Rebecca Reynolds - April 19

Janet Carson - April 19

Tommie Wyatt - April 22

Phil Tacker - April 22

Claude Bonner - April 25

Eleanor Walls - April 27

Diane Jones - April 29

Janis Reginelli - April 29

## Scholarship donations

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

### CES Retiree Scholarship

Bobby Hall

*In memory of Billy Moore*

*In memory of Claude Clement*

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.

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