



Keeping you connected

xtension cord

UofA

DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System

March 2025

No. 3

4-H Day at the Capitol brings civics to life for more than 500 Arkansas youth

Looking out over a sea of green framed by the white marble of the Capitol Rotunda, Attorney General Tim Griffin called the more than 500 4-H members before him “the single largest group ever assembled in the Arkansas Capitol.”

Despite stormy weather, youth from 54 of Arkansas’ 75 counties traveled to Little Rock on Tuesday for 4-H Day at the Capitol. The event is held every other year when the Arkansas Legislature is in session. It gives 4-H members a chance to meet their legislators, learn about the legislative process, and share how they are making a difference in their communities through 4-H. They also got a sneak peek inside the State Treasurer’s vault.

Members of the House and Senate read resolutions proclaiming March 4 as 4-H Day.

“It’s encouraging to see this many young people turn out on a day like today concerned about their own personal development and the development of their community and state,” said John Anderson, director of the Cooperative Extension Service, which oversees 4-H. “Our programs are grounded in the belief that young people learn best by doing. Today is an example of that engagement.”

Madison County 4-H member Vallie Yancey, 16, was attending her second 4-H Day at the Capitol event. With 11 years of 4-H experience, Yancey has a sheep production project and is a member of a 4-H leadership team that plans and coordinates all 4-H activities in Madison County — from 4-H camps for younger Cloverbud 4-H members to the county’s annual 4-H banquet.

“I love how we get to talk to our legislators and meet people who run our state,” she said.



Arkansas 4-H members get a quick group photo before hearing from constitutional officers during 4-H Day at the Capitol.

More than 120,000 Arkansas youth are involved in 4-H, which fosters civic engagement, leadership skills, community service and life skills gained through project-based work.

Deacue Fields, vice president for agriculture with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said 4-H is one of the best career and workforce development programs.

“Legislators, if you want a strong return on investment in Arkansas’ future workforce, invest in 4-H,” Fields said. “4-H has a strong track record of using results-driven educational experience to help youth reach their full potential. I have no doubt that in this group today, we have future entrepreneurs, future community leaders, future state legislators, U.S. Congressmen and leaders of the Division of Agriculture.”

Read more [here](#) and view the photo album [here](#).

THE INSIDE STORIES

Wonders of Waterfowl

Klass to lead Arkansas Plant Health Clinic

Master Gardener Plant Sales

Best Care provides professional development training

Message from the director

April birthdays

2

Learning in the Wild: 4-H members gain hands-on experience with Arkansas waterfowl

Learning is better in the wild, and for Arkansas 4-H members the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge provided the perfect outdoor classroom.

Under the guidance of the state's leading waterfowl and extension experts, participants in the Wonders of Waterfowl workshop engaged in an immersive learning experience focused on the ecology and management of Arkansas' diverse duck populations.

A favorite among the attendees was wading through a moist-soil unit to collect and examine aquatic invertebrates – a key food source for waterfowl.

With the help of University of Arkansas at Monticello waterfowl students and professors, participants analyzed their findings under microscopes, gaining firsthand insight into waterfowl feeding habits.

Other workshop highlights included discussions led by UAM waterfowl graduate students that covered waterfowl identification, habitat characteristics, and migratory hazards and patterns. These stops served as a perfect opportunity for Lily Barber, Grant County 4-H member, who attended because she wanted to learn how to identify waterfowl. At the close of the event, Barber shared her excitement in learning how to identify common ducks in Arkansas by their wings.

“We learned about ducks, what they eat, what their wing spans look like and all the different types of ducks,” said Jayden Rushing, Calhoun County 4-H member.

As part of the Mississippi Flyway, Arkansas is a vital wintering ground for waterfowl, making it a hotspot for waterfowl research. Among the leading studies is the satellite tracking research led by Douglas Osborne, PhD, a renowned waterfowl

professor and researcher at UAM. Participants had the unique opportunity to learn about the banding and tracking practices used by the lab's researchers and view live tracking data from ducks fitted with transmitter technology.

Drew County 4-H member, Jack Wagner, was amazed to learn the impressive distances and speeds at which ducks travel during their migration to Arkansas. In the workshop, he learned ducks can reach flight speeds of more than 80 mph and sometimes cover more than 1,700 miles during their migrations.

The event concluded with researchers from the Osborne Lab and personnel from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gathering ducks that had been trapped on the Cache River. They then demonstrated to youth how to tell the birds' ages and band the birds. Participants were then each able to hold a duck and release it back on the refuge.

Read more [here](#) and view more photos [here](#).



Master Gardener Plant Sales

Delta Blooms and Bees Home & Garden Show and Plant Sale
Saturday, April 5, 2025, 9am – 3pm | White Hall, AR

Franklin County Master Gardener Plant Sale
Saturday, April 12, 2025, 8am – 2pm | Franklin Co. Ext. Office

Marion County Master Gardeners Annual Plant & Bake Sale
Friday, April 18, 2025, 7:30 – 9:30am | Yellville, AR

Full list of events [here](#)



Klass to lead Arkansas Plant Health Clinic

Some people spend years trying to find a career that's a perfect fit. For Taylor Klass, the new head plant pathologist and diagnostician at the Arkansas Plant Health Clinic, the pieces came together relatively early in her academic journey.

"I studied agronomy and animal sciences in the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences at The Ohio State University in undergrad," Klass said. "For my agronomy major, I had to take an introduction to plant pathology course, and I loved it. It was like solving a puzzle, but for plants. I decided that in graduate school, I wanted to pursue a future career in plant pathology."

Before joining the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, Klass completed her Ph.D. in plant pathology last May. Growing up in the suburbs of Columbus, Ohio, Klass said she wasn't exposed to much farming culture as a child, until an unusual summer camp in her early teens introduced her to a different way of life.

"I wasn't in 4-H or FFA, but I grew up with a love for animals and the outdoors," Klass said. "My parents sent me to this 1800s farm camp in Ohio's Amish Country when I was in middle school — that was my first introduction to agriculture. For the whole week, you did farm chores and everything. I really fell in love with it — but I didn't know you could study agriculture in college until the end of high school. When I figured that out, I knew that's what I wanted to do."

Klass applied for the position with the Arkansas Plant Health Clinic last summer. Sherrie Smith, who ran the clinic for 18 years, retired in 2023. Jason Pavel, plant diagnostician and extension program associate for the Division of Agriculture, kept the clinic running in the interim and continues in those roles.

Klass said she wants to build on the clinic's established reputation, holding public outreach and training sessions for extension agents, Master Gardeners and the general public.

Ken Korth, entomology and plant pathology department chair for the Division of Agriculture, said Klass' background and disposition made her the right choice for the Arkansas Plant Health Clinic.

"Taylor joins us with a wealth of knowledge of plant diseases and a drive to use her skills in serving others," Korth said. "Her background and education are excellent fits for a diagnostic lab. She has a good mix of practical field experience, along with expertise in emerging technologies for pathogen identification."



Taylor Klass is the new head of the Arkansas Plant Health Clinic.

Best Care program awarded thousands of professional development hours to Arkansas childcare providers in 2024

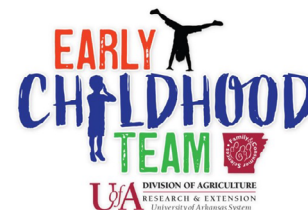
The Cooperative Extension Service partners with the Arkansas Department of Education Office of Early Childhood to provide 58 hours of professional development training for childcare providers throughout the state.

- **Best Care:** Ten hours of in-person training for childcare professionals across the state, taught in 26 multi-county clusters. In 2024, this program reached 2,373 participants through 32 trainings.
- **Best Care Connected:** An online program that offers five hours of professional development for early childhood childcare educators in Arkansas. In 2024, this program reached 2,234 participants, and 11,170 hours of professional development were awarded.
- **Guiding Children Successfully:** An online or self-paced correspondence program that offers up to 38 hours of continuing education for

parents, foster parents and childcare educators. This program reached 998 participants and awarded 10,374 training hours in 2024.

- **Best Care Out of School Time:** A program designed to better meet the needs of childcare providers who work with school-aged children in after-school, summer and camp settings. This program offers five hours of professional development, and in 2024, 557 training hours were awarded to 2,785 participants.

Read the full article [here](#).



April Birthdays

Yvonne Mizell - April 1

Linda King - April 1

Annette Coor - April 1

Saundra Blocker - April 1

Kenneth Williams - April 2

Nancy Winterbauer 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

Rich Maples - April 12

Diane Clement - April 16

Mary Ruth Miner Fallin - April 17

Rebecca Reynolds - April 19

Janet Carson - April 19

Tommie Wyatt - April 22

Phil Tacker Jr. - April 22

Claude Bonner - April 25

Mary Poling - April 26

Diane Jones - April 29

Janis Reginelli - April 29

Message from the director



It's hard to believe that March is already winding down. We started the month on a high note with 4-H Day at the Capitol on March 4. The weather didn't exactly cooperate, with torrential rain and wind all morning long. Despite the adverse conditions (a gross understatement – the weather really was horrible),

we had around 600 4-Hers from more than 50 counties converge at the Arkansas Capitol building for a day of meeting with their local legislators. They also heard from distinguished speakers, including Arkansas Lt. Gov. Leslie Rutledge and Attorney General Tim Griffin. Having 600 4-Hers and volunteers crowded around the Capitol Rotunda made for an impressive site. Even more impactful were the county visits with their respective legislators. I am always happy to talk about Extension and the work we do across our program areas, but that doesn't have nearly the impact as people seeing Extension in action. 4-H Day at the Capitol was an opportunity for our state government

leaders to see 4-H in action up close. I may be biased, but I think it was an impressive display. I am grateful to everyone who helped make it possible including our state 4-H staff, county agents, district administration team, and the communications team.

We will also end the month on a high note with the Family and Consumer Sciences Professional Development Conference kicking off March 31. It has been a while since we held a conference like this, and Dr. Nina Roofe and her FCS team have worked very hard to put together an excellent program of professional development information and activities, including bringing in several outstanding outside speakers. This event is not only a great training opportunity for our FCS personnel but also an outstanding chance to network with colleagues and to celebrate one another's successes.

One final note: strong thunderstorms and tornadoes in the northern part of the state caused severe damage in several counties in mid-March. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with those affected by the storms.

April Garden Chores

- ✓ **Have cold-snap frost protection handy for your plants**
- ✓ **Assess plants for winter damage and begin cleaning any damage**
- ✓ **Plant your cool-season vegetables like lettuce, broccoli, greens, and onions, but get these in the ground by mid-April**

- ✓ **Plan out your warm-season garden**
- ✓ **Stake perennials and vines that risk falling over from their own weight later in the spring or summer**
- ✓ **Prep annual beds with additives like well-rotted manure, processed manure, peat moss, or compost**