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Debbie Archer's Lasting Career with Lasting Fulfillment

After 37 years of working as an Extension communications specialist, Debbie Archer describes her career as fulfilling.

"I enjoyed meeting and working with the most wonderful farmers, homemakers, and kids in Arkansas that can be found," Debbie said. "I so enjoyed writing about their amazing stories of trials and successes and documenting them through pictures."

Originally from Michigan City, Indiana, Debbie attended college at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR). She received bachelor's degrees in journalism and criminal justice and a master's in instructional resources-media.

While attending UALR, Debbie became involved in the Cooperative Education Program through the university. In 1982, Debbie began as an Extension communications specialist.

Within that role, she worked with both the 1890 University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Extension Program and the 1862 Extension Service in the state communications office.

She eventually transitioned to the role of Extension communications section leader headquartered at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Debbie was responsible for all the communications of the School of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Human Sciences (SAFHS).

Regarding this work, Debbie stated, "I was blessed by working with the very best co-workers in Arkansas and across the nation."

She retired in 2019. At the age of 64, Debbie and her husband reside in White Hall, Arkansas. Together, they have three sons and two daughters. She describes her six grandchildren as her "greatest blessings."

Debbie and her husband serve on the hospitality team at the Family Church in the Redfield location. They also enjoy attending cooking classes, camping, riding their recumbent bikes, and hiking.

After Debbie and her husband both retired in 2019, they planned a trip to Peru to celebrate their joint retirement.

The trip was sadly canceled due to the pandemic, so Debbie and her husband decided to buy a travel trailer instead. Since then, they have enjoyed traveling to several beautiful state parks in Arkansas and Oklahoma.



Debbie and her husband in Ireland.

In addition to their road trips, they have had the opportunity to enjoy overseas travel to Italy and Ireland. This year, they are looking forward to visiting Alaska.

Debbie has continued working part-time at the School of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Human Sciences at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Her work involves writing articles and editing publications.

"If you like agriculture, human sciences, and kids and have a passion for communications, I don't think you could find a better gig than Extension communications. It was so very fulfilling in so many ways," said Debbie.

Debbie can be found on Facebook as, "Debbie Bolin Archer." ■

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Cooperative Extension Service welcomes new assistant vice president of 4-H and Youth Development



Debbie Nistler, extension's new assistant vice president of 4-H and youth development for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, is a 4-H alumna and proud member of a "4-H family."

Nistler, who brings more

than 25 years of experience in extension work in Oregon, Washington, Florida and Iowa, began her new role on April 28.

"We are very excited to welcome Dr. Nistler to our team," said Bob Scott, senior associate vice president for agriculture and extension for the Division of Agriculture. "She will bring a new perspective and much experience to our 4-H program."

Nistler said she is looking forward to connecting with Arkansas 4-H professionals across the state.

"Our 4-H professionals are the lifeblood of the program," she said. "I cannot wait to share in their enthusiasm. I also look forward to engaging in summer camps and activities and getting excited about the future of Arkansas 4-H."

As a 4-H alumna, Nistler said she has seen firsthand how the program impacts youth and sets them on a path to success. She was a member from fourth grade through her senior year of high school in Yamhill, Oregon, and her two sisters also participated in the program.

"I brought home the school recruitment flyer as a fourth grader, and our family had never heard of 4-H before," Nistler said. "After a few meetings, I was

hooked. I showed sheep and cattle and participated in leadership at the club and county levels. All three of our children grew up in the 4-H program. They showed animals, participated in leadership and camping, and were all camp counselors. My son Beau served as State 4-H Council president in Florida and was camp staff for three years in college. We are a 4-H family!"

Nistler's husband, David Nistler, will also be joining the Cooperative Extension Service as a program associate in the horticulture department.

Nistler earned her master's degree in agricultural education from Oregon State University in 1997. She worked as an extension agent and later as county extension director for the University of Florida from 2003 to 2019, completing her Ph.D. in agricultural and extension education services from the University of Florida during that time. Before joining the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, she worked as state 4-H program leader for Iowa State University Extension and Outreach.

Nistler said 4-H youth development helped "set the course for extension" even before the signing of the Smith-Lever Act, which is the federal law that established a system of cooperative extension services associated with land-grant institutions in 1914.

"Youth provided a laboratory environment and promotional opportunity for early agriculture research in small community schoolhouses across the country," Nistler said. "Youth helped pave the way for new agriculture research to get into communities. Today, youth are our future in every corner of Arkansas. 4-H is still a foundational way for extension to reach and grow communities for the future, developing critical life skills in youth so they can engage and lead in their communities now and into adulthood." ■

Message from the director



May has been a month for groundbreaking ceremonies for the Division of Agriculture. It is not often that we build a new Research and Extension Center, but that is what is happening in Northeast Arkansas as you read through this edition of Cords. The Northeast Rice Research and Extension Center construction is officially underway!

This is a very exciting time, and a truly

historic time. I was also thrilled to attend and be asked to speak at the groundbreaking ceremony for the new Extension office in Greene County. This project is over a decade in the making and has been much needed in the county for some time. It is a great example of the kind of county support that we have throughout the state. Finally, I will mention that we are very nearly finished with the new Jackson County office at the Jackson County Extension Center. A ribbon cutting ceremony is set for early June at that facility. It is great to be involved with so many positive projects going on at once, and I think it shows that our Extension Service is continuing to move forward in its service to the people of the state of Arkansas.

I am very pleased to add my welcome to Dr. Debbie Nistler as our new Assistant Vice President - 4-H and Youth

Development. Debbie has hit the ground running, and I am excited to have this important position on my team filled. We are currently still searching for an assistant VP for Family & Consumer Sciences. The position is advertised, and we have some good candidates for the committee to begin to consider. One of my goals coming into this position was to have independent leadership for both FCS and 4-H, as they have been combined for many years. In addition to Dr. Nistler, I am also happy to report that her husband David has joined our CES family as a program associate for Dr. Hannah Smith in the Horticulture Department!

As I am sure many of you have heard by now, I have announced that I will be moving back into a faculty role after three years as Extension Director. There is no set date for this to happen, and I plan on continuing to serve until a suitable replacement for me can be found. This decision was made for both professional and personal reasons, and I look forward to resuming my career in some form in my chosen field of weed science. I will return to a faculty position with a newfound understanding of the true depth and breadth of our Extension Service, as well as a new respect for areas outside of agriculture and county offices and staff. Change is stressful, but I hope you will all understand and support my decision. ■

Record number of Poultry Chain participants learning animal husbandry, flock management

The sound of 38,000 peeping chicks filled the air at the Lonoke County Fairgrounds on April 12 as the birds awaited their distribution to more than 2,000 youth across Arkansas.

The event marks the start of preparations for poultry contests at county, district and state fairs in the fall. It's part of the Poultry Chain program organized by the Cooperative Extension Service. The program's goal is to educate Arkansas 4-H youth about poultry management and animal husbandry.

Members of Arkansas 4-H and the National FFA Organization from 69 counties each received flocks of 15-16 two-day-old chicks. 2,260 youth will receive chicks this year—the largest number of participants in the program's more than 40-year history.



Read the full article [here](#). ■

June Birthdays

Mae Rosby - June 1	Lanny Ashlock - June 8	Samuel Boyster - June 16	Carroll Garner - June 25
Ford Baldwin - June 1	Rex Roberg - June 9	Sharon Dawson - June 17	Linda Outlaw - June 25
Robin Bridges - June 2	Jo Howard - June 10	Berni Kurz - June 18	Romona Thieme - June 25
Linda Hon - June 3	Graffie Eldridge - June 11	Lila Grist - June 20	Allen Bates - June 25
Jesse Clark - June 4	Martha May - June 11	Bonnie Taylor - June 20	Iris Phifer - June 27
Debra Baker - June 5	Tamara Walkingstick - June 13	Rin Robertson - June 20	Pamela Ferrill - June 27
Mike McCarter - June 5	Michael Hamilton - June 14	Dennis Bailey - June 21	Jim Robbins - June 28
Jelyne Coldwell - June 6	Rick Wimberley - June 14	Rick Cartwright - June 21	Dorothy Hall - June 29
Brenda Vick - June 7	Janet Kuykendall - June 16	Sherry Black - June 23	
Vetress Strong - June 8	Sue Oglesby - June 16	Clifford Coker - June 24	

Miller County extension agent organizes donation drive for Little Rock tornado victims

For McKenzie Rigdon, the urge to help those affected by the March 31 tornadoes stemmed from personal experience with the harm a tornado can cause.

Rigdon, Miller County extension 4-H agent for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, said she lived in Atkins, Arkansas, when a tornado struck the area in 2008, causing damage to her family's home. In 2011, her grandparents' farm was hit by a tornado near Ozark. When a tornado came through her hometown of Vilonia in 2014, she said she witnessed widespread destruction to her community.

"I lost my job because of the tornado. My best friend was in a house that got hit, so it's a personal thing for me," Rigdon said. "I can't donate my time to help right now, so I felt like I needed to do the next best thing, which was gathering relief items."

Rigdon said she had the idea to start a donation drive and fill up a 4-H trailer with supplies for victims of the tornado, which would then be delivered to Little Rock. She created a flier and posted it at local businesses and at the Four States Fairgrounds in Texarkana. She also shared it on social media. Rigdon said that through word of mouth, local schools and churches heard about the drive and gathered donations for the effort. Rigdon said Sevier County Extension also provided relief items.

"No donation is too small," Rigdon said. "With this kind of thing, people need anything and everything you can think of. So, even if it's a notebook for the kid who lost their backpack or a box of Band-Aids — everything is going to help someone in need."



From left to right: McKenzie Rigdon, MaKenzie Larey, Carlie Keahey, J.D. Martin and Tori Luker, Miller County extension Family and Consumer Sciences agent.

Rigdon cataloged all of the 672 items donated to the drive, including canned food, hygiene and baby products, dozens of cases of bottled water and more. On April 24, Rigdon and other colleagues from Miller County drove from Texarkana to Little Rock with the 4-H trailer in tow. They donated all the items to the City Center, a ministry of Immanuel Baptist Church, to be distributed to tornado victims. Read more [here](#). ■

Donate & Volunteer

Looking for more ways to help? Visit the [Arkansas Storm Recovery Information volunteer page](#) to find donation and volunteer opportunities in your area.