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Bobby Hall gets to mark off bucket list items

Bobby Hall, former county agent and LeadAR director, and his wife have traveled the country in their RV marking off items from a unique bucket list: Visiting the locations of their favorite television shows from channels such as the Food Channel and the DIY Network.

“Our first trip was to Waco, Texas, to visit Chip and Joanna Gaines’ place,” Hall said, referencing the stars of the show *Fixer Upper*.

“We didn’t get to see them, but we got to meet other people that have appeared on the show,” Hall said.

Before he started to travel the countryside, Hall worked for Extension for 29 years. His career started in Phillips County.

“When I went there, we had four ag agents in that county,” Hall said. “I became the rice specialist over there because I had worked with rice in Cross County with my father-in-law.”

After four years in Phillips County, Hall became the staff chair in Dallas County. While making the transition, a unique opportunity presented itself.

“The district director at the time, Dorothy Hall, called me and told me that I should drive down to Calhoun County,” Hall said. “I ended up being the first county agent that ever did dual counties.”

He had a different title in Calhoun County, where he worked in ag community development. He worked a lot with timber and cattle production during his time in those counties.

“My degrees were in animal nutrition and ruminant nutrition, so I worked more with the beef producers,” Hall said. “I didn’t have a lot of expertise in timber, but I did learn a lot down there.”

Eventually, the two counties split apart again, and Hall



Bobby stands with his antique tractor, a 1942 Allis-Chalmers.

remained in Dallas County for another 18 years. In 2008 he was transferred to Little Rock, where he became a program associate for leadership. As he neared retirement, Hall was approached about conducting an extensive review of LeadAR, Cooperative Extension’s leadership program.

“They hadn’t done one in about 20 years, so they asked me if I would be willing to put off my retirement for about a year or so,” Hall said.

After wrapping up the LeadAR review, Hall retired in November 2016. He and his wife started traveling soon after, and they have been to multiple places in the last few years. Their second trip was to Laurel, Mississippi, to visit the show *Home Town*.

“Next we went to see the Pioneer Woman’s lodge, and it was really interesting. We had free reign of the whole

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place mostly, and you could go through Ree’s pantry and refrigerator and everything,” Hall said. The Pioneer Woman is a cooking show that appears on the Food Network, starring Ree Drummond.

Hall and his wife also traveled to LeClaire, Iowa, to see the American Pickers headquarters, as well as Nashville to see their shop there. After that they went to White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, to visit the location of Barnwood Builders. They also stopped in Roanoke, Virginia, to catch a sneak peek at Salvage Dogs. This year’s traveling plans looked a little different due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“We mostly tried to stay local and just went to camping sites,” Hall said.

Hall also has another unusual hobby that keeps him busy when he isn’t on the road.


“I have always liked antique tractors, and I bought a 1942 Allis Chalmer,” Hall said. “The reason I chose that tractor is because an Allis Chalmer B was the very first tractor I ever drove as a kid.”

Hall said that this hobby keeps him connected to his childhood, when he first learned to love antique machines.

“I grew up in Cross County, and there were a lot of peach orchards out there at the time,” Hall said. “My neighbor had an Allis Chalmer B, and he let me drive it with him all the time.”

Hall is a member of the antique tractor club in Sheridan and has big plans for the next parade season.

“I am building a cart for my wife’s wheelchair that I can pull behind my tractor,” Hall said. “I have also built my grandkids a five-car barrel train, and I use it to pull them around all the time.”

Hall and his wife currently live near Benton, where they raise goats and enjoy life with their children and grandchildren. The Halls are looking forward to the day that they can get their RV up and running again to go visit the next location on their bucket list, but they have plenty of other activities to fill their time until that day comes. 

Millard inducted into National 4-H Hall of Fame

Dr. Darlene Baker-Millard, former county extension agent and 4-H youth development director, was one of 16 laureates inducted into the National 4-H Hall of Fame during a virtual ceremony on Oct. 11. She was recognized for her career-long contributions to 4-H on the state and national levels.


The National 4-H Hall of Fame recognizes approximately 15 laureates each year who have made a significant impact on the 4-H program at the local, state or national level.

During Darlene’s career, she asserted many times, “we are raising blue ribbon kids, not blue-ribbon projects” during competitions. Both her belief and experience with 4-H can be summarized this way: “4-H offers youth the opportunity to discover their strengths and helps them become their best.”

Darlene knew at a young age she wanted to become a county 4-H agent because 4-H had given her the platform to shine. She served more than 30 years as a 4-H program assistant, county 4-H agent, state 4-H specialist, and assistant director of 4-H youth development before her retirement in 2009.

4-H took a shy young farm girl from Benton County, Arkansas, and helped her to flourish. She twice won the state 4-H record book competition and attended the

National 4-H Congress in Chicago, as well as the Citizenship Short Course and National 4-H Conference in Washington, D.C. In 1972 she was a International Four-H Youth Exchange Caravan Delegate to the Netherlands — to name just a few of her accomplishments.

In retirement, Darlene continues to stay involved in 4-H by serving on the Arkansas 4-H Foundation Board of Directors, currently serving in the role of vice president. She also serves on the CES Extension Cord Editorial Board, is active in her church, First United Methodist Church of Bryant, and volunteers with the Saline Symphony Orchestra. 



Don't let misconceptions deter you: Get a flu shot

Arkansans shouldn't let the COVID-19 pandemic distract them from a more familiar fall and winter foe: influenza.

Last winter, Arkansas reported about 40,000 cases of flu, according to the Arkansas Department of Health. There were 118 flu-related deaths, three of which were children.

"Getting vaccinated against flu is more important now than ever," Bryan Mader, assistant professor for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and an extension health specialist, said. "The flu vaccine can keep you from getting the flu, make the flu less severe if you do get it, and keep you from spreading flu to your family and friends."

Mader says there are two misconceptions that sometimes prevent people from taking the flu vaccine.

"One common misconception about the flu vaccine is that it can actually give you the flu," he said. "This is not true, and in fact, flu shots are made with inactivated viruses that will not cause illness.

"A second myth is that getting a flu vaccine will increase your risk of getting COVID-19," Mader said. "This is also not true, and

there is no evidence that getting a flu vaccination increases your risk of becoming ill from a coronavirus, like the one that causes COVID-19."

Flu vaccines are available at the local Arkansas Department of Health office (search for your local office <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/local-health-units>).

The state Department of Health also holds mass flu clinics at various locations throughout the state. The Arkansas Department of Health does not charge out-of-pocket costs for a flu shot and does not require insurance for receiving a flu shot, but you are encouraged to bring insurance information if you have it, Mader said.

Arkansans may obtain a flu vaccine through their employer's health insurance program, doctor's office or local pharmacy, which may be located within a grocery or supermarket. Public schools may also offer mass flu clinics (see the schedule <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1X1DhzVQ1jEZ6OEwqOFb-CEZhJBSh1qYkNXeSqAJJo/edit?usp=sharing>).


Find additional information on the flu at <https://www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/health/covid19/COVIDvsFLU.aspx>. 

To our Extension retirees

It is hard to believe that the year is ending. It seems to have gone by both fast and slow at the same time, another COVID-19 side effect I imagine. I cannot say enough about our county agents and staff who have remained at their posts during this difficult time. They are our "front line" workers for Extension, and they are appreciated by the entire Division. In addition, we have some real stars in terms of our online/virtual efforts this year. I will not try and name them all, but the agility and creativity that many of our agents, specialists and others have shown during this time is amazing. I am pleased to report that in many ways our contact numbers for the reporting year are coming back very positive. This helps to show that we continue to be of value and relevant to the lives of many Arkansans.

I am pleased to report that so far, our in-person meeting efforts have been both successful in fulfilling our Extension mission and in preventing the spread of COVID-19. These include many 4-H events, AEHC meetings, Master Gardeners and various other county meetings. We have proven our ability to conduct business in these trying times. As far as COVID management, we remain in Stage II at least until Jan. 15. This date

gives us one less thing to worry about during the holiday season. Since cases remain high in Arkansas, I suspect we will continue to operate in Stage II after that date, but only time will tell.

Finally, I want to thank all of our Extension retirees who have participated in various activities of late and this past summer. Your continued enthusiasm for the Cooperative Extension Service is contagious every time I am around a group of you. Retiree input and participation is very valuable to me. I especially want to thank Judy Riley, John Langston and Darlene Millard for their contributions to an upcoming video celebrating our the 40th anniversary of the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center. I wish everyone a Happy Thanksgiving. 



December Birthdays

Dick Kluender - 12/1	Darlene Horne - 12/10	Suzanne Smith Hirrel - 12/21	Judy Bloesch - 12/27
Becky Mulhollen - 12/1	Jerry Foley - 12/11	Maureen Rose - 12/21	Sandra Smith - 12/27
Dena Malone - 12/2	Shirley Lewis - 12/11	Gayla Brewer Taylor - 12/22	Denise Roulhac - 12/28
Paul Martin - 12/3	Claude Clement - 12/12	Bobby Coats - 12/24	Jeff Welch - 12/28
Linda Thompson - 12/6	Ann Behnke - 12/12	Dennis Gardisser - 12/24	Saundria Ash - 12/29
Barbara Bennett King - 12/8	Millie Henson - 12/13	Merle Gross - 12/24	Betty Brannan - 12/29
Toy Helen Ginn Siler - 12/8	Donna Graham - 12/14	Audrey Hairston - 12/24	Tom Leslie - 12/29
Richard DeSpain - 12/9	Jerry Markham - 12/14	Cheryl Maxwell - 12/24	Judy Robison - 12/29
Albert Squires - 12/9	Brenda Yusko - 12/18	Avonne Petty - 12/24	Larry Jernigan - 12/30
Susan Watkins - 12/9	Mary Askew - 12/19	Mitch Crow - 12/26	
Margaret Alexander - 12/10	Cindy Golden - 12/19	Margaret Goodson - 12/26	
Joyce Pugh Bowlin - 12/10	Mark Peterson - 12/19	Liz McKay - 12/26	

Holiday Gardening and Decorating

The holidays are upon us, and thoughts of sugar plums are replacing gardening ones. While our focus may be more indoors, it is also the season for giving and receiving. Holiday plants are a welcome gift to give and receive and can add color and interest to your holiday decorations. With a little TLC they can also linger, long after the season has passed.

The red poinsettia still reigns supreme among flowering holiday plants. Yet, poinsettias are more than the traditional red, flat-bracted blooms. Today, poinsettias come in a range of colors, including shades of red, pink, white, yellow and purple. There truly is a poinsettia for every home.

If you want to branch out, there are other plants besides poinsettia that can add cheer to the inner landscape. Other choices include amaryllis, azaleas, Gerber daisies, holiday cactus, orchids and paper white narcissus.

When receiving a holiday plant, you need to know something about plant care, to keep it attractive the longest. Poinsettias need fairly bright light and even moisture. Avoid dark areas with drafts. The new varieties have been bred to hold their color for months and can add color long after the holiday season. While they can rebloom for another season, it is best to start with a new plant each year. Enjoy them while the color lasts, and then add them to the compost pile.

Amaryllis are sold from the dry bulb stage to the bloom stage. For the longest enjoyment, start your own bulb or choose one just beginning to show color. If they are in full bloom when you get them, they may not last too long. The bulb can linger for years and rebloom each season, much easier than with most other blooming seasonal plants.

Anthurium is a rather new addition to our indoor plant repertoire. The Hawaiian flowers have the right colors to choose from—red, white or pink spathes of color, which can last for months. Some people use them as a green house-plant after bloom, since it is difficult to rebloom them. Let them dry out slightly in between watering.

Gerber daisies are a semi-hardy perennial in our outside garden, but they can last several weeks indoors as a potted plant. Coming in a wide range of colors, they prefer to be kept on the cool side with plenty of sunlight.



Holiday cactus are also readily available. While some call them Thanksgiving or Christmas cactus, these blooming cactus can give enjoyment year after year. Once it is in bloom, it will last longest in indirect light with even moisture. Leading up to bloom it needs cool nights and sunny days.

You may not think of orchids during the holidays, but what showier blossom can you think of that will last for six to eight weeks with very little care? They can also live to see another day, if you so choose.

And last but not least, paper white narcissus. These lovely forced clusters of white blossoms often come artfully arranged with greenery and berries. Like the amaryllis, they are available in all stages, from dried bulbs to blooming plants. Enjoy them while they last, and then move on to something else. Reblooming is not advised.

The holidays are upon us, and who wouldn't welcome a blooming plant? While the care of these plants isn't difficult, reblooming may be, and in most cases is not worth the effort. To ensure the flowers last the longest, in general, keep holiday blooming plants in a cool room, with bright, indirect light. Make sure you have an even supply of water but avoid over watering, which is most common. Extremely warm rooms can cause flowers to fade quickly. Try to have at least a slight differential from day to night temperatures. With so many choices to choose from, why not select several? With just minimal care, these seasonal favorites are sure to add a boost to any holiday decor. ☺