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Extension state educator helps agents become community resources

As part of the Cooperative Extension Service, Family and Consumer Sciences agents help individuals and families develop important life skills to better care for themselves, their homes and their finances. For Leigh Ann Bullington, FCS educator, her role is an opportunity to mentor new FCS agents and help them become resources to their communities.

Bullington began her role as educator in October 2021 after working as an FCS agent in Cross County from 2011 to 2015, and then as extension staff chair of Woodruff County. She said being an FCS agent was her “life calling.”

Bullington graduated in 1982 with a B.S. in Home Economics. After graduation, she married her husband, a former farmer in Jackson County. When their son started kindergarten in 1988, she took a role as what was then called a “home economist” in the Woodruff County Extension office, where she worked until 1995. After a 16-year break when “life took me off in a different direction,” Bullington returned to extension in 2011 as a Family and Consumer Sciences agent in Cross County.

In her role as FCS educator, Bullington uses her many years of experience as an agent to help new agents navigate the challenges and learning curves of the job.

“You cannot come in with some attitude that you think you know better than everybody else,” Bullington said. “It’s about listening to that community and caring about that community. It doesn’t matter how much you think you understand. Until people know that you care, you could talk all you want, but if you’re not present with them and showing them that you care, I don’t think that you’re near as effective in the job.”

As an agent, Bullington concentrated on nutrition programming, and she used her knowledge to lead

meal-planning workshops, grocery store tours and other food education efforts for patrons of The Warehouse, a community facility and food distribution center supported by Woodruff County Extension, ARcare and the City of McCrory.



Bullington speaks to congressional aides from the offices of several members of the Arkansas Congressional delegation during their tour of the Hare Family Farm and the Newport Extension Center on Friday, Oct. 26, 2018

In addition to nutrition education, FCS agents provide programming in health and wellness, family and consumer economics, marriage, parenting and family life, leadership and more.

“What FCS agents do is important,” Bullington said. “You hear people talking all the time about learning to ‘adult.’ Life skills, or ‘life 101.’ That’s who we are. That’s what we do. We teach life skills and try to impact people’s lives.”

Laura Hendrix, extension Family and Consumer Sciences department head, said Bullington’s time as an agent and passion for the profession make her a unique fit for the educator role.

“Leigh Ann has a solid foundation in Family and Consumer Sciences subject matter as well as years of practical experience as a county FCS agent,” Hendrix said. “We have needed someone in this role for years, and Leigh Ann fits the bill perfectly. She is an outstanding mentor and role model for extension professionals.”

Read more about Leigh Ann [here](#). ■

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Regional Retiree meetings to be held around state

Five regional retiree meetings are scheduled throughout October and early November. Extension Administration wanted to hold these around the state allowing retirees an opportunity to meet a little closer to their home. This will be Extension Director Bob Scott's first opportunity to meet many of you. Retirees are welcome to begin gathering at 10 a.m. to visit. The program begins at 11 a.m. This year's program will include a federal health insurance update from Blue Cross Blue Shield, the CES Public Policy Center on ballot issues appearing on the November ballot, and an Extension update from the director with time for questions. Lunch will be provided.

The dates and locations are:

October 11	Jonesboro – Hilton Garden Inn
October 19	Hope – SW Research & Extension Center
October 21	Batesville – Livestock and Forestry Research Station
October 27	Fayetteville - Don Tyson Center for Agricultural Science
November 2	Little Rock – Little Rock State Office

If you did not receive an invitation in the mail, please contact Leslie Middleton at 501-671-2071 to RSVP.

Arkansas 4-H Food Challenge teaches youth to create nutritious, tasty meals in food desert scenarios

For Arkansans who live in communities with limited access to food, creating a nutritious, fresh meal on a budget can be a challenge. Arkansas 4-H youth are practicing this important life skill through the program's Healthy Living Project, and they put their cooking chops to the test at the Arkansas 4-H Food Challenge.

Twenty-two teams from 10 counties competed in the challenge Aug. 4 at the University of Arkansas-Pulaski Technical College's Culinary and Hospitality Management Institute in Little Rock. Teams had 40 minutes to prepare a dish using ingredients available at dollar stores, including peppers and onions, tortillas, canned chicken, rice and heavy cream.

The judging panel included CES family and consumer science agents and specialists. After preparing their dishes, each team had five minutes to present the dish to the judges and explain the nutritional value of the ingredients, provide a cost analysis, and offer recommendations for improving the meal's nutritional value through food substitutions.

Amanda Welch, 4-H youth development specialist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and the competition's coordinator, said the event encourages youth to work together and apply important life skills.

"This is a team competition, so they really have to work together," Welch said. "The spin that we have for our state

competition is we try to use a lot of foods that you can find in a dollar store or at a corner store, where people don't have fresh produce at all times, so they can go in there and find a nutritional meal from their Dollar General."

Welch said the recipes created during the competition will be given to food banks in the state to help clients use ingredients available to them. All food not used during the competition was donated to The Shack, a nonprofit ministry helping people in need.

As the winning senior team, Howard County's Adeline Westfall, Sarah Lamb, Christian Trombley and Kat Chambers will advance to the 4-H National Food Challenge held at the Texas State Fair in September. The team impressed judges with their "Southwest Cheesy Chicken Dip" served with fresh tortilla chips. They competed in the dairy category, and their mystery ingredient was heavy cream.

Read more [here](#). ■



A participant works in a kitchen at the University of Arkansas-Pulaski Technical College's Culinary and Hospitality Management Institute in Little Rock.

Message from the director



Dr. Bob Scott

Interviews, interviews, and more interviews! Hiring new faculty is an exciting and simultaneously exhausting process. I mentioned this last month, but our quest continues to find individuals with that special trait — that “Extension gene” — that makes them want to help others and support our statewide mission.

We have interviewed and hired some outstanding folks for many of our vacant positions. Some notables include Randy Forst as our new consumer horticulture specialist (Master Gardeners) and Dr. Hannah Wright in our pasture and non-row crop weed science position. Christine Sasse is our new nutrition person in Family and Consumer Sciences, and Dr. Dan Quadros is our new small ruminant specialist. There are several others, but these might be of interest to you. I look forward to the energy that new faculty always bring to these positions.

I began my time as extension director during the pandemic. Travel was discouraged for almost a year and a half after I started. This limited my plans to visit

county offices. I am glad that time has passed, and I can play catch up on my efforts to get out and meet county staff in person. Of note, I look forward to attending some county review meetings this month, specifically in the Ozark District.

In addition to county meetings, many like me are catching up on regional and national meetings being held in-person. I enjoyed attending the joint AEA/ASRED/PLN (Program Leadership Network) meeting held in Fort Worth last month. This meeting provided a great opportunity for administrators from around the southern region to collaborate. I look forward to going to Baltimore later this month to attend the joint Experiment Station/Cooperative Extension Service NEDA (National Extension Directors and Administrators Meeting) meeting. For me, these meetings are really my first chance to interact with my peers in person. They are important networking tools for land grant institutions. Although we have learned to incorporate Zoom and other remote meetings quite well, it is hard to replicate in-person networking.

As always, we thank you for your continued support of Extension. ■

Rain, soil moisture sensors can save water, money, while supporting healthy lawn



Healthy looking turf in an area showing delineation of 12-foot by 12-foot research plots in Fayetteville, Arkansas.

Using rain and soil moisture sensors with an automated home irrigation system can save water, money and still support a healthy lawn, according to a three-year study conducted within the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station.

“The current drought in Arkansas is a good reminder that we can’t take water for granted,” said Mike Richardson, professor-turfgrass, for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. “This work demonstrates the cost savings in water and the return on investment of various sensors that can be added to lawn irrigation systems.”

Dan Sandor, now an assistant professor-turfgrass science at Virginia Tech, conducted the research as part of his Ph.D. work at the University of Arkansas.

“The rain sensors tell you whether it’s raining or not,” Sandor said. “The nice thing about the soil moisture sensor is it’s actually measuring how much water is available to the lawn.”

The research, conducted on bermudagrass turf, found that the use of rain sensors and soil moisture sensors reduced water use by 22.1 percent and 66.2 percent, respectively. In terms of dollars, the rain sensors saved \$87 in the first year, while the soil moisture sensor saved \$200 in the first year.

Read the full story [here](#). ■

October Birthdays

Portia Short - Oct. 1	Sheila Whiteley - Oct. 5	Jack Boles - Oct. 13	Hugh Plumlee - Oct. 19
Larry Pryor - Oct. 2	James Lipsey - Oct. 7	James Hood - Oct. 14	Mable Tate - Oct. 19
Bobby Hall - Oct. 2	Suzanne Wiley - Oct. 8	Bruce Knox - Oct. 14	Pam Cannada - Oct. 20
Frank Jones - Oct. 3	Al Rosendale - Oct. 9	Rich Poling - Oct. 14	Renee Myers - Oct. 20
Gerald Klingaman - Oct. 3	Glen Ford - Oct. 10	Carroll Prewett - Oct. 15	James Clower - Oct. 21
Stanley Carter - Oct. 3	Billie Coleman - Oct. 10	Tom Troxel - Oct. 16	Tom Riley - Oct. 22
Paul Beck - Oct. 3	Lorene McGuire - Oct. 10	Carolyn Meeks - Oct. 17	Mark Bryles - Oct. 23
Craig Andersen - Oct. 4	Charlotte Trent - Oct. 10	Gail Torok - Oct. 17	Wanda Snyder - Oct. 23
Jimmie Bowling - Oct. 5	Judith Urich - Oct. 11	Ron Baker - Oct. 17	Janice Gooch - Oct. 27
Judy Riley - Oct. 5	Armenthia Willis - Oct. 12	Mary Parker - Oct. 18	Janella Pugh - Oct. 31
Lazaro English - Oct. 5	Sue Coates - Oct. 13	Cecilia Harberson - Oct. 18	

Scholarship donations

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

Saundria Ash

Karen Ballard

In honor of Joe Waldrum

James Barrentine

In memory of Gene Woodall

Betty Jean Brannan

Robin Bridges

In honor of Martha Ray Sartor

Stan Chapman

*In memory of Howard Young
and Gene Woodall*

Gail Clark

Jelyne Coldwell

Nita Cooper

Allen Davis

In honor of Dr. Rick Cartwright

George Davis

Ramona Gordon

In memory of Pat Cole Hayden

Dorothy Hall

Brenda Hawkins

In honor of Sherry Funderburg

Beverly Hines

Eddie Hubbell

Ruben Johnson

*In memory of Lionel Barton and
Lowell Lankford*

Diane Jones

Darlene Millard

In memory of Dennis Millard

Wayne Miller

Susan Pickle

Don Plunkett

*In memory of Laverne Feaster
In honor of Jim Lee Wallace*

Richard and Mary Poling

In honor of Joe Waldrum

Doyle Potts

Debbie Still

In memory of Lynn Russell

Luther Roberts

Lott Rolfe III

In memory of Willie Booker

Glenda Rushing

In memory of Mary Shavers

Terrie Treadway

In memory of Beverly McNew

Tommy Thompson

Joe and Brenda Waldrum

In memory of Ruel Nester

Honorarium 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. ■

Berni Kurz Retires

Berni began his career with Cooperative Extension in June of 1983. He retired July 2, 2022, as the extension educator – consumer horticulture. Bernie retired with 39 years of service.

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