

University of Arkansas,
United States Department
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Retiree Spotlight

*Joe Vestal
Jack Boles*

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**DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION**
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Vestal Always Wanted to be an Extension Agent

When Joe David Vestal came in from spraying weeds on his 280-acre farm on a recent Monday, his wife had a good lunch fixed for him: Mexican cornbread, fried potato patties, sliced tomatoes and cucumbers, purple hull peas, unsweetened iced tea and pineapple cake for dessert.

Most of the lunch ingredients were harvested from their own garden.

Vestal and his wife of 11 years, Judy, enjoy gardening and grow all kinds of vegetables (and even garlic) on their farm in Strong, Arkansas. They freeze most of the extra produce or share with friends. They often invite neighbors over to enjoy their watermelon harvest.

Vestal said he sometimes feels like he's working harder in retirement than he did while a staff chair in Lafayette County. He spent a lot of time out in the field then, but his own field takes up tons of time now that he can devote all his energy to making it successful. He raises a variety of Bermudagrasses and sells hay and purebred Charolais cattle.

Vestal was raised on the Strong farm and his father was a farmer. He figured out early on that he'd like to grow up and work for Extension. Vestal, who was very involved in the FFA program at school, saw how knowledgeable the Extension agent who came out to their farm was and he thought that might make a great career.

"The agent helped my daddy with fire ants, the right fertilizer, what spray to use. He knew what he was talking about, and that impressed me," Vestal said.

After graduating from the University of Arkansas with his bachelor's and master's degrees, Vestal immediately went to work for Extension in January 1977. His first job was assistant county agent in Little River County.



Joe David Vestal

A couple of years later, Vestal was promoted to staff chair and moved to Lewisville, where he remained for 34 years. Vestal said he enjoyed helping people and was in the field often because, as he said, "That's where the people are, where the problems are."

He noted that many farmers weren't comfortable visiting the Extension office but were quite receptive "if you came to them." Vestal said whether it was telling them about the best fertilizer to use on their particular soil or the best crop varieties for their land, the point was to help them create a better yield.

"That [information] really affected their bottom line," he said.

Vestal retired in March 2013. Since then, he's been working the family farm, helping take care of his mother and enjoying his grandkids (he and his wife have three children and five grandchildren).

The Vestals are also busy with church activities and Joe Vestal does a little crop consulting on the side.

To reconnect with Joe David Vestal, contact him at 870-797-2261, 1239 Vestal Loop, Strong, Ark. 71765.

– Shannon Magsam

Jack Boles Wears Many Hats

When Jack Boles was earning his bachelor's and master's degrees in animal science, he often told people he was "pre-vet."

The truth was, he didn't know what he would use his degrees for, but he knew he was interested in studying about livestock. He actually "milked his way" through high school and even college, where he worked for the farms at ASU-Beebe and then on the main ASU campus in Jonesboro.

After graduating, Extension came up on his radar, and he was excited to see that it was another possible use for his degrees.

He ended up landing a job as an agriculture agent in Batesville in 1987. He transferred to DeWitt in 1992. Since all he knew was livestock, he wanted to get his feet wet in the rice paddies and other plant crops.

"I learned through sheer immersion," he said.

In 1994, Boles moved to ag agent in Stuttgart, then later that year was promoted to a new position: environmental management specialist in the state office. He dealt with all things chicken litter and dairy manure.

After four years, he decided he'd like to work directly with farmers again, so he took a post as staff chair in Newton County. He remained there for 14 years.

While there, he and the family and consumer sciences agent worked with Arkansas Children's Hospital and other organizations to create an ATV safety program for the county. Newton County had the highest rate of ATV deaths in Arkansas at the time.

Mike Klumpp developed the state ATV safety program and when he retired, Boles took over as state 4-H ATV safety coordinator in 2011.

Boles said his top advice to ATV drivers would be: wear a helmet. He said many more deaths occur when people don't wear helmets, are too small for a particular ATV or have more than one person riding together on them.

Even though he's retired from that post, his grandkids hear all about ATV safety. Boles has three children and four grandchildren who all live in the Newton County area.

Boles' wife of 26 years, Sherri, passed away in January 2014. Boles lives in Hasty, Arkansas, and serves as the executive director of the 4-H Foundation during the week, so he's still tied to Extension. Long weekends and holidays he travels to his place in Newton County to hang out with the kids and grandkids, hike, canoe and generally enjoy the outdoors. He also has a garden there.

Boles is also working on his Ph.D. at the University of Central Arkansas, so he's busy attending classes and studying during the week as well. He's working toward a degree in interdisciplinary leadership and his dissertation will be on food security in impoverished areas. Boles knows all about that topic because he's traveled extensively with Winrock International as a volunteer, basically doing "extension work" in poor countries.



Jack Boles

He's helped tribes in Borneo with swine production and has taught girls in Cambodia how to raise chickens, which in turn helped feed their families – and ultimately prevented some of them from being sold into slavery.

Boles said the skills they learn taking care of chickens and selling eggs at market makes the girls a family asset and less likely to fall victim to human trafficking. After Boles earns his doctorate, he plans to get into international consulting for these types of projects.

Boles has been traveling to other countries with Winrock since 2007. He said his wife encouraged him to go on the first trip because he was so passionate about helping. The two were planning to embark on the international journey together when they retired, but now it's just him.

To reconnect with Jack Boles, contact him at 870-416-2363, HC32 Box 92, Hasty, Ark. 72640.

– Shannon Magsam

From the Editorial Board

What Extension's Up to This Summer

The 2015 4-H Hall of Fame inductee and 4-H Governors Award finalists were chosen. The Hall of Fame winner was Heather Jackson of Pike County and the Governor's Award finalists were Lauren Cheevers, Washington County; Joshua Lockhart, Benton County; and Stephanie Williams, White County.

The community and staff development office hosted the National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals annual conference in Little Rock in May. Mark Peterson, Nita Cooper, Amanda Perez, Kristin Higgins, Wayne Miller, Zola Moon, Stacey McCullough and Becky McPeake gave presentations at the conference.

Ag agents in southwest and southeast Arkansas have been concerned with the aftermath of heavy rainfall over the July 4th weekend. In Hempstead County flooding closed 21 roads and destroyed hay fields and in Desha County submerged soybean acreage.

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson was the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council in Hot Springs in June. The three-day event featured classes, a craft show, commercial and informational booths, a cultural arts exhibition, a silent auction and a talent show.

Catching Up

We'd like to acknowledge those who retired between Jan. 1 and June 30 of this year and welcome them to the ranks of retirees.

Donna Rinke, web development associate, Little Rock State Office

Brenda Hawkins, administrative support supervisor, Faulkner County

Gail Torok, administrative support supervisor, Randolph County

Elizabeth Childs, development associate - 4-H and youth development, Little Rock State Office

Liz McKay, county Extension agent - family and consumer sciences, Union County

John Turner, county Extension agent - agriculture, Miller County

Debbie Still, county Extension agent - family and consumer sciences, Greene County

Rin Morris, administrative specialist, Jefferson County

Judy Bloesch, county Extension agent - family and consumer sciences, Scott County

Eric Grant, county Extension agent - agriculture, Craighead County

Joyce Bowlin, administrative support supervisor, Poinsett County

Mary Parker, administrative specialist, Poinsett County

Vicki Brakefield, administrative specialist, Montgomery County

Belinda Miller, administrative support supervisor, Hempstead County

Eugene Terhune, county Extension agent - staff chair, Woodruff County

Wanda Snyder, administrative support supervisor, Phillips County

Jan Rogers, administrative specialist, community and economic development, Little Rock State Office

Linda Floyd-Chappell, county Extension agent - family and consumer sciences, Washington County

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August Birthdays

Raymond Duncan, Aug. 1

Billy Moore, Aug. 1

Berline Wright, Aug. 1

Linda Floyd-Chappell, Aug. 3

Betty Poe Holman, Aug. 4

Louise Burns, Aug. 5

Ronald Beaty, Aug. 9

Delbert Taylor, Aug. 11

Eugene Terhune, Aug. 12

Gene Lowrey, Aug. 14

Beverly Fountain, Aug. 15

Marian Snortland, Aug. 15

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Gail Clark, Aug. 19

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Laura Luther, Aug. 19

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James Ragland, Aug. 20

Jan Rogers, Aug. 21

Claudia Corbin, Aug. 21

Lorraine Hupp, Aug. 21

Barbara Simmons, Aug. 21

Steve M. Jones, Aug. 23

Earlton Sanders Jr., Aug. 23

Betty Y. Thomas, Aug. 23

Sharran McCullar, Aug. 24

Charles Whitaker, Aug. 24

Terry Davis, Aug. 25

Martha Albright, Aug. 26

Jo Ann Young, Aug. 26

Frank Plafcan, Aug. 28

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