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BLUE LETTER

January 2024

No. 3861



FROM THE DIRECTOR

New Beginnings

Everyone knows the tired old joke that goes, “If you don’t like the weather in [insert place], just hang around a few minutes, and it’ll change.” In January in Arkansas, that’s really not much of a joke. So far this month, we’ve had sub-zero temperatures with ice and snow followed by sunny blue skies and sixty-degree temperatures – with a brief period of flash floods in between. For good measure, we even had a tornado warning in Lonoke County a couple of weeks ago.

January might be a lousy time for weather (with apologies to those of you out there who love snow), but it is an ideal time for new beginnings. Every new year brings new opportunities. For me, this year obviously has brought big changes as I have taken up my duties as Extension Director. I wanted to take the opportunity provided by this month’s Blue Letter to offer my sincere thanks to everyone in CES who has gone out of their way to make me feel welcome in this new role. It has been a real pleasure getting to know and work with the dedicated professionals that constitute CES. I would especially like to thank Bob Scott both for his

prior service in this role as well as for his strong encouragement and support through this transition. It has been much more of a help to me than he probably realizes. Also, I would be remiss if I didn’t take this opportunity, on behalf of the entire organization, to thank Vic Ford for his service on the occasion of his well-deserved retirement. He has been a work-horse for UA-CES for many years. We wish him all the best in his own new beginning as a happy retiree, but he will certainly be missed.

Just like on the farm, Extension’s work doesn’t slow down when the weather gets tough. This is, in fact a busy time of year for us. Much of our most significant and impactful stakeholder engagement is taking place right now. For many of you, that means a lot of time on the road. It means early mornings and late nights, juggling an over-full schedule of meetings and events to serve the people of our state. Thank you for the good work you are doing. I feel privileged to be a part of it, and I look forward to seeing you out there. ■

INSIDE SCOOP

- 2. Voter Education
- 3. Sevier County 4-H
- 4. Produce Safety Consortium
- 5. Leadership Log
- 6. Tech Corner...And much more!
- 7. Communications Station ...And much more!

Time to Incorporate Voter Education

Election years such as 2024 are an easy time to include voter education in new or existing county programs. Though most people's attention may be on November's election, March 5 is actually a major election day in Arkansas.

Voting starts Feb. 20 for the Democratic and Republican primaries, nonpartisan judicial elections, and for local school boards in areas that hold spring elections. People will be choosing who will lead the Arkansas Supreme Court as well as who their next justice of the peace or state representative should be. In counties with one dominant political party, the Primary election may be the deciding election for an elected office.

The Public Policy Center's website (uaex.uada.edu/ballot) has several resources to raise awareness about

voting, including (1) an explanation of the local offices on the ballot, (2) a handout about elections in Arkansas, (3) a blog post on how to register to vote, and (4) links to print off voter registration forms in English and Spanish.

Important 2024 Election Dates

- Feb. 5 – Deadline to register to vote ahead of the March 5 election.
- Feb. 20 – Early voting starts for March 5 election.
- March 5 – Election for judicial offices, school boards, and primaries for Democratic and Republican parties.
- Oct. 7 – Deadline to register to vote ahead of the Nov. 5 election.
- Oct. 21 – Early voting starts for Nov. 5 election
- Nov. 5 – Election Day for local, state and national offices. ■

Santas for Seniors



Clark and Polk county extension offices spread some holiday cheer through the Santas 4 Seniors program, which provides gifts to low-income senior citizens with little or no family support.

The program works similar to Angel Tree. Volunteers collect lists of wants and needs for recipients and write them on a tag that is hung on a tree in the extension office. Area residents stop by the extension offices, select a tag and shopped for that person.



Master Gardener Sadie Merrill and her sons Jackson and Oliver Merrill, who are both 4-H members, deliver packages.

In Clark County, 4-H members delivered gifts to more than 25 people in assisted living.

Polk County 4-H conducted its annual Santas 4 Seniors event in conjunction with the Polk County Extension Homemakers Club and Master Gardeners. 4-H members packed donated gifts and food boxes contained essentials and fresh fruit. The Master Gardeners and EHC helped deliver the boxes to 38 people. ■



Sevier County 4-H Members had a Busy December



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Sevier County 4-H members didn't slow down in December. During December, they stayed busy with several community service projects. Each year, Sevier County organizations ask 4-H to assist them with community projects such as Christmas 911, Shop with a BKMC, two angel trees, and more. In all, a total of 458 youth was serviced with more than \$50,000 being donated with 4-H members' assistance.

County clubs also had amazing activities. For example, Happy Face and Community Changers made homemade ornaments. The Goin' Showin' Club won first place in the Christmas parade with their float. Our clubs were also able to take 14 families a full holiday meal and helped

with a Breakfast with Santa. The Community Changers also aided over 80 inmates during "Operation Inmate". All of this and clubs still found time to ring the Salvation Army Bell! ■



County Agent Rex Herring (right) rings the Salvation Army Bell with 4-Hers.

Arkansas Governor's Cup Collegiate Business Plan Competition

Brandon L. Mathews, program associate of economic development in the Community, Professional and Economic Development unit, was selected to be a judge for the Arkansas Governor's Cup Collegiate Business Plan Competition. The Governor's Cup is an entrepreneurial opportunity for college students hosted by Arkansas Capital Corporation through the Education to Develop and Grow Entrepreneurs (EDGE) Initiative. Mathews will judge written business plans and participate in the awards ceremony on April 17 at the Arkansas Statehouse Convention Center.



Brandon L. Mathews

"I'm very thankful to Arkansas Capital for selecting me to be

a judge this year. I'm joining the ranks of many incredible past judges, and it truly is an honor to judge while also elevating the incredible

work extension does to support entrepreneurs and small business around the state," Brandon said.

To learn more about the Arkansas Governor's Cup, go to <https://argovernorscup.org>. ■



Meet me in St. Louis!

Extension's Arkansas Produce Safety team along with partners from the Arkansas Department of Agriculture travelled to St. Louis in November for the 2023 National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) Produce Safety Consortium, an annual gathering of the country's regulators, researchers and educators working in the space of produce safety. For two days, the team learned from colleagues in other states, peer

institutions, and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration about new advances in how to keep our food supply safe. They plan to share this valuable knowledge with Arkansas growers in the coming months.

A highlight of the consortium was the poster session and evening



Rip Weaver, Dr. Amanda Philyaw Perez, David Hill and Sarah Bakker at the poster session + evening social during the 2023 NASDA Produce Safety Consortium in St. Louis.

social at which the team presented on their successful produce safety programming from the 2023 Arkansas Grown Conference & Expo. A number of other states' produce safety teams visited with questions on how they might implement similar workshops and trainings for their produce growers. We look forward to the next consortium later this year! ■



The Gateway Arch near the consortium hotel.

Total Eclipse: Celebrating our Support Staff Stars

March 27-28, 2024 – The Vines Center

We are celebrating you, our awesome support staff, and the rare occurrence of the Solar Eclipse at the 2024 UADA Support Staff Conference. Thanks to all of you who submitted the 83 suggestions.

Because of input from you last fall, the advisory committee, and key stakeholders, we are busy developing the conference agenda. Registration will open in late February. Limited sessions will be offered by Zoom for those who can't attend in person.

Join this **FUN** (Fantastic, Unbelievable, Networking) opportunity!

TOTAL ECLIPSE

CELEBRATING OUR SUPPORT STAFF STARS



LEADERSHIP LOG

ILEAD III Seminar Recap

Our third face-to-face meeting was an information-packed experience, especially on the first day. iLEAD Cohort III commenced their time at the University of Arkansas campus in Monticello, where they gained comprehensive insights into forestry and southeast Arkansas' agricultural operations. The topics covered included educational certification programs, industry efficiency, plant and soil health in our forests, ongoing research efforts, and Arkansas elk restoration initiatives. Members also enjoyed engaging tours of various campus departments, with a highlight being a visit to the 4-H STEM Hub, featuring hands-on demonstrations of several STEM activities. Read the full recap [here](#). ■



iLEAD Cohort III | December 2023

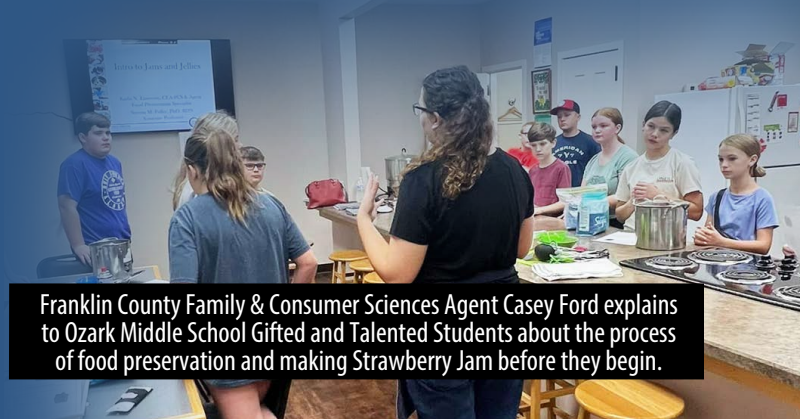
Food Preservation Education

More than 30 students from the Ozark School District learned about food preservation and made strawberry jam at the Franklin County Extension Office in November and December.

The two student groups — Ozark Middle School Gifted and Talented Students and the Junior High and High School Special Education Students — learned about measuring ingredients. The middle school students also learned about PH value and conditions for bacteria growth. Each student took home a jar of strawberry jam home that they filled in the class.

Franklin County Family and Consumer Sciences Agent Casey Ford worked with the teachers to provide the program during

school hours, and the school district provided transportation for them. ■



Franklin County Family & Consumer Sciences Agent Casey Ford explains to Ozark Middle School Gifted and Talented Students about the process of food preservation and making Strawberry Jam before they begin.

Extension Trivia Question:

Why is the Extension newsletter named the Blue Letter?

Find the answer toward the bottom of the last page of the Blue Letter!



Happy New Year from the Information Technology department. As we start this new year, we wanted to provide some reminders for everyone.

Meeting & Training Events – Tech and Zoom Support:

If you anticipate needing technical support for a planned meeting or training event, make sure you fill out the request form in advance. This will ensure that someone will be available if you need support.

[Video Conferencing Support Request Form](#)

[Event Audio/Video Support Request Form](#)

Meeting & Training Events – Computers and Equipment:

Have an event that requires extra computers, projectors, screens, etc.? Don't forget to request the loaners from our mobile training lab well in advance. It is first come, first serve.

[Mobile Training Lab Request Form](#)

New Computer Orders:

The IT department keeps a supply of standard configuration computers in stock for quick turnaround. However, if you request a custom configuration computer, the lead time could be from 1-4 months. Don't wait until the last minute to place custom orders. A few things to keep in mind:

- Check the end-of-life (EOL) on your computer. If it is within six months of EOL, place the order for your new one.
- Don't wait until a new employee is on board and needs a computer; place the order well in advance.
- Don't wait until the end of the FY before ordering new computers, especially if you want the expense coming out of the current FY budget.

[Computer Order Request Form](#)

[Computer Purchasing/Replacement Process](#)

Employee ID Badges:

All employees are entitled to an ID badge. Employees at the state office must have an ID badge for building access. ID badges will not be printed without a photo. You can visit our webpage for further information about requesting an ID and the photo requirements. [UADA ID Badge Information](#)

Software Requests:

IT must evaluate and approve all software/services to ensure that it meets all legal procurement and security criteria.

[Software and Cloud Services Purchase/Acquisition: Policy](#)

All software purchases must be made by IT unless a prior exemption was obtained. Visit our list of pre-approved software when considering new software. If it is on the list of approved, follow the directions for obtaining it.

[CES Approved Software and Cloud Services](#)

Online Forms:

Need an online form built? Need help building your own online form? Visit the link below for more information.

[Online Forms Resources](#)

Need Technical Support?

Contact our help desk.

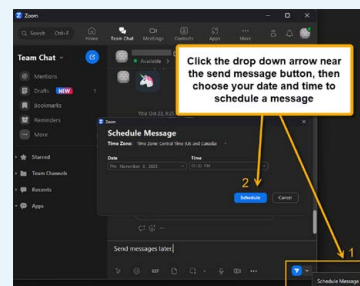
Support webpage - <https://support.uada.edu>

Support request form – [Helpdesk Support Request Form](#)

Phone - Local (501) 671-2255, Toll-Free (866) 779-3375

Zoom Pro Tip Scheduled Messages

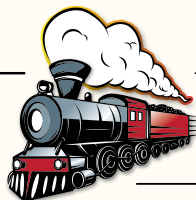
New in Zoom Team Chat, users now have the ability to schedule messages to send at a later time. Write a message to a single person or a team channel, use the drop-down arrow next to the send button on your message, and schedule a day and time for your message to be sent. You can even edit or cancel your scheduled message from the Drafts tab. ■



2023 TECH TUESDAYS WEBINARS

Have you missed any past Tech Tuesday webinars or want to join future webinars? Check out the recordings and other resources on the [Tech Tuesday Blog page](#). More Tech Tuesday topics coming soon! Did you miss December's [Best of 2023 Tech Tuesday](#)? Check out the recording and resources.





In the News — See what we're writing about and sending to media: [January News](#). Got a story idea? Email tcourage@uada.edu.

Website — We will be implementing a new search function from Modern Campus, maker of the OU Campus content management system, on the extension and Division of Agriculture sites effective Feb. 1. The new search is being installed in two phases: a basic phase, followed by a more refined, customized version. The Phase 1 search will not be able to see behind the password-protected employee site. The AES site will not be affected. Need [webhelp](#)?

Events — Got an event? It needs to be on our Calendar. Need help or an edit? Email calendarsupport@uada.edu. You can easily find Extension's calendar by clicking on the Quick Links drop-down menu at the top of our website. Or bookmark this page: <https://calendar.uada.edu/>.

Publications — Extension has more than 1,600 publications available to the public. Find it by clicking on the QUICK LINKS drop down menu at the top of our website and select Publications. Or bookmark uaex.uada.edu/publications.

Social Media — [Register](#) for the next Social Skills Training on Feb. 15 at 9 a.m. Topic: "Crafting Your Personal Brand" with Melissa Johnson at 9 a.m. Feb. 15 via Zoom. Stay connect with Extension through social media. Arkansas Extension on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [The Arkansas Garden on Instagram](#).

Print Shop — Need printing? Request a quote from our Print Shop (printshop@uada.edu).

Video — Follow our UADA [YouTube Channel](#) to access more videos.

Find more Communications Resources: uada.edu/comm. ■

Crittenden County Open House

The Crittenden County Extension Office held its annual Open House on Dec. 21 and welcomed more than 75 community members, including farmers, school counselors, mayors, county judges, quorum court members, master gardeners, and others. Tacker's Shake Shack in Marion catered, and Master Gardeners and staff provided desserts.

Crittenden County staff has hosted the event for several years as way for staff to connect with those who can benefit from our extension services. The staff consists of Katrina Owens, staff chair and agriculture agent; Burnita Hearne, administrative specialist; Tommica Perry, EFNEP program assistant; Morgan Chrestman, FCS agent; and Alexandria Salisbury, 4-H agent. ■



From left to right: Morgan Chrestman-FCS Agent, Woody Wheelless-Crittenden County Judge, Katrina Owens-Staff Chair & Ag Agent

Open House at Crittenden County Extension office.

Benefits Corner

How to Change Beneficiaries in Workday:

Go to your Workday profile page and select Benefits

1. To add beneficiary information: At the top select My Beneficiaries. Click add for each person. Add beneficiary information: Name, date of birth, address, relationship, phone number, email and gender.
2. To assign beneficiaries for your life insurance elections: On the main Workday page select Benefits and Pay application. At the top select Change Benefits. In the drop-down box select Beneficiary Change Only and current date and Submit. A box will appear and Select Open. Click on Let's Get Started. This page shows all your life insurance elections. Click on the manage button at the bottom of each life insurance coverage. Click on Confirm and Continue button. Click on the + next to Beneficiary and a blank box will appear. Click on the three dashes on the right to select Existing Beneficiary Persons. Select your beneficiary and add the percentage for each beneficiary to the right. You cannot exceed 100%. If you have more than one

beneficiary, you will need to click the + to continue to add beneficiaries.

You will need to add beneficiaries for each life insurance election. It is recommended that a primary and contingent beneficiary be named. If you name a minor, consider listing a custodian in your will or set up a trust fund to manage the inheritance. The minor child will not have access to funds until the age of 18 or 21, depending on your state.

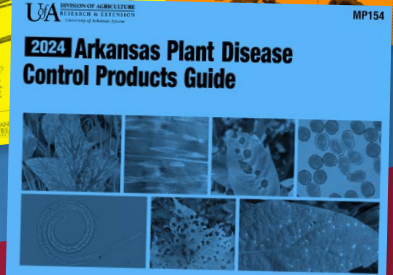
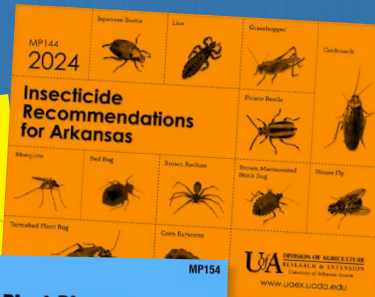
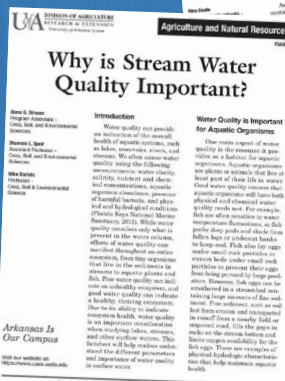
How to change beneficiaries with TIAA and/or Fidelity:

- You will need to login to your retirement vendor website to make changes to your retirement beneficiaries. Have any questions? Human Resources can be reached at yourbenefits@uada.edu. ■



New Publications:

Many recently created publications are now available, including MP44, MP144 and MP154. (You know you want to look.) uaex.edu/publications/new.aspx



Grants & Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
Path C The FDA's Cooperative Agreement Program for States and Territories to Implement a National Produce Food Safety Program	193,166.00	Amanda Philyaw Perez	USDA FDA
South Shore Marion County Youth Leadership 4-H	5,000.00	Billie Collins	South Shore Foundation
State and Regional Farm Financial Analysis	50,750.00	Hunter Biram	USDA
Multi-State Coordinated Trials: Management of Emerging Cotton Diseases	20,000.00	Terry N Spurlock	Cotton Inc.
Determining Field Residue Colonization and Protection by Zylaria Necrophora	9,928.00	Terry N Spurlock	Cotton Inc.
Multi-State Coordinated Trials: Management of Emerging Cotton Diseases	20,000.00	Travis Faske	Cotton Inc.
TOTAL AWARDS FOR DECEMBER 2023: 298,844			

Personnel Changes



Welcome Aboard:

Penny Vance – County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Sciences, Bradley County
 Brittany Gabriel – Project/Program Coordinator, Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, Little Rock
 Rebecca Blake – Administrative Specialist III, Union County
 Carlie Bothum – County Extension Agent - Agriculture, St. Francis County
 Devyn Britt – County Extension Agent - Family & Consumer Sciences, Lonoke County

Farewell to:

Chiquita King – Administrative Specialist II, Jefferson County
 David Turner – County Ext. Agent - Agriculture, Sebastian County
 JoAnn Fish – Buyer, Little Rock
 Karl VanDevender – Professor - Extension Engineer, Little Rock
 Koffi Badou Kouame – Post Doctoral Fellow, Lonoke Agricultural Center
 Morgan Taylor – County Extension Agent - 4-H, Hot Spring County
 Shaunta Hudson – Accounts Receivable Manager, Little Rock
 Vic Ford – Associate Vice President - Agriculture and Natural Resources, Little Rock

Trivia Question Answer:

Because it was printed on blue paper to make it stand out when people received it in the mail.