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BLUE LETTER

March 2025

No. 3875



FROM THE DIRECTOR

Extension Propels Forward in March

It's hard to believe that March is already winding down. We started the month on a high note with 4-H Day at the Capitol on March 4. The weather didn't exactly co-operate, with torrential rain and wind all morning long. Despite the adverse conditions (a gross understatement – the weather really was horrible), we had around 600 4-Hers from more than 50 counties converge at the Arkansas Capitol building for a day of meeting with their local legislators. They also heard from distinguished speakers, including Arkansas Lt. Gov. Leslie Rutledge and Attorney General Tim Griffin. Having 600 4-Hers and volunteers crowded around the Capitol Rotunda made for an impressive site. Even more impactful were the county visits with their respective legislators. I am always happy to talk about Extension and the work we do across our program areas, but that doesn't have nearly the impact as people seeing Extension in action. 4-H Day at the Capitol was an opportunity for our state government leaders to see 4-H in action up close. I may be biased, but I think it was an impressive display.

I am grateful to everyone who helped make it possible including our state 4-H staff, county agents, district administration team, and the communications team.

We will also end the month on a high note with the Family and Consumer Sciences Professional Development Conference kicking off March 31. It has been a while since we held a conference like this, and Dr. Nina Roofe and her FCS team have worked very hard to put together an excellent program of professional development information and activities, including bringing in several outstanding outside speakers. This event is not only a great training opportunity for our FCS personnel but also an outstanding chance to network with colleagues and to celebrate one another's successes.

One final note: strong thunderstorms and tornadoes in the northern part of the state caused severe damage in several counties in mid-March. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with those affected by the storms. ■

INSIDE SCOOP

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- ...And much more!

New Data Dashboard Resource for CPED

CPED launched a new resource through its EDA University Center for Rural Resilience and Workforce Development.

The Labor Market Observatory (LMO) is a data visualization tool to help development professionals, community organizations, county agents and individuals access workforce indicators from various state and federal sources in a single place.

How Does it Work?

LMO is an interactive dashboard featuring various workforce indicators such as demographics, housing and income, and employment statistics at the county, development district, and state level. Users can create custom regions, make comparisons and download the data for deeper analysis.

What's Next?

Additional data and functions will roll out in the coming weeks and months. Virtual and in-person training is coming soon.

Do you Need Data?

Ask our team to help you prepare data and find the information you need to make informed decisions to improve community, workforce, and economic development opportunities. Contact Brandon L. Mathews at bmathews@uada.edu or Dr. Hunter P. Goodman at hgoodman@uada.edu.

Sign up for our F.A.C.T.s newsletter to get updates on the LMO and funding opportunities. Try the new LMO: <https://uaex.uada.edu/edauc>. ■

Data right at your fingertips.



Try out the new **Labor Market Observatory**

A man and woman at a conference desk look at workforce data across Arkansas. The Labor Market Observatory is made possible through funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration and partnership with Heartland Forward, a think-and-do tank based in Bentonville, AR.

Mississippi County

Extension Get Fit

Dr. Pamela Pruett started the Extension Get Fit (EGF) program in Mississippi County while she was the Family and Consumer Sciences agent there from January 2012 through September 2024. During her tenure, Pruett partnered with the Arkansas Northeastern Community College Department of Continuing and Community Education to offer EGF classes.

In the past three years, participant numbers have increased, and 50 people are currently enrolled. Participants say they like attending EGF class to get out of the house; exercise

with friends; make new friends; learn routines and tips; have fun; be around positive people; have more energy; and improve strength, flexibility, and endurance. One member stated, "I was able to quit taking arthritis medication."



Recently, class members donated funds and purchased a television and DVD player to replace the old equipment in the

aerobics room. The purchase was presented during a recent class in honor of Dr. Pamela Pruett for her service to the Extension Get Fit program. ■

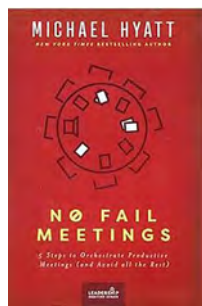


LEADERSHIP LOG

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Leadership Lunch and Learn

In today's fast-paced world, meetings are a vital part of every organization's operation, but they often feel like a waste of time. Michael Hyatt's book, *No Fail Meetings*, provides a comprehensive guide to transforming meetings from time drains to powerful, efficient decision-making tools. The book was reviewed in the Leadership Lunch and Learn Book Review series by Cheryl Newberry, a program and personnel development specialist at Oklahoma State University. Read details [here](#). Watch the recording [here](#).



The 18-month program includes monthly seminars, a week in Washington, D.C., international study, and community leadership project.

Operated by the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, LeadAR offers participants an in-depth and global view of issues facing their communities, state and country. It includes bi-monthly seminars, a week in Washington, D.C., to gain insight into the policy-making process and how it impacts Arkansas, and an international trip to compare communities and economies and find cultural sharing opportunities.

LeadAR Announces Class 21

LeadAR, the state's premier leadership program, announced its next class of leaders. Of the 24 Arkansans selected to participate, three are from the Division of Agriculture: Creenna Bocksnick, Arkansas 4-H camping coordinator; Nicole Nichols, Saline County Extension agent/staff chair, and Emily Stone, staff attorney, National Agricultural Law Center.

"We have selected people who want to make a difference and position themselves to have impact in their communities and state," said Dr. Julie Robinson, LeadAR director. "Many of our alumni say LeadAR has been a life-changing program for them." Read details [here](#). ■

High Tunnel Workshop

High Tunnel and Urban Agriculture Educator Taunya Ernst hosted a high tunnel workshop March 10 at the Fruit Research Station. The workshop featured presentations on methods of growing your own transplants, pest management strategies, and high tunnel strawberry production. Participants enjoyed wonderful weather as they got a first-hand look at pest-scouting techniques, how to set up a fertilizer injector, and a fully functioning high tunnel. ■



Program Technician, Keilah Barney, (left) and Taunya Ernst (right) demonstrating how to set up a fertilizer injector.



Program Associate, Ryan Keiffer, (third from left) demonstrating a backpack sprayer for pest control.

Awards Presented at Regional Science Fairs

The Soybean Science Challenge (SSC) recently presented awards at five regional science fairs.



The student awards were presented for the senior (high school) and the junior (middle school) divisions at each regional science fair if the fair had qualified students in both divisions. Student awards included a certificate, an award bag with SSC prizes, and a \$400 cash prize in the senior division and a \$200 student award in the junior division. The winners' teachers received a certificate, an award tote with SSC items, and a \$200 cash prize in the senior division and a \$100 cash prize in the junior division.

The winners were: West Central Regional Science Fair at the Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences, and the Arts (ASMSA) on Feb. 27-28:

• Senior Division Student: Bianca Navarro and Nora Medlock /Teacher: Dr. Lindsey Waddell

Ouachita Mountains Regional Science and Engineering Fair, hosted by the Mid America Science Museum on Feb. 28:

- Senior Division: Thomas Gilliland
Teacher: Greg Wertenberger

- Junior Division: Bentley Dawson
Teacher: Rita Watson

Central Arkansas Regional Science and Engineering Fair, hosted by UA Little Rock on Feb. 28:

- Senior Division: Bennet Chen
Teacher: Lee Conrad
- Junior Division: Richard Hu
Teacher: Kristi Ward

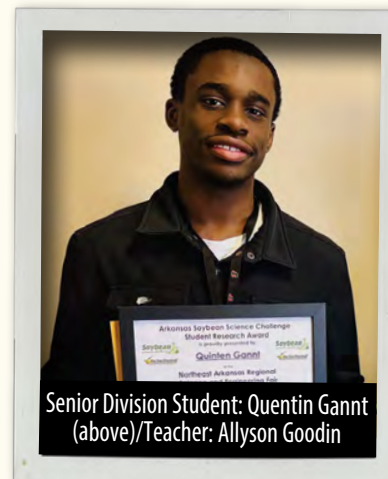
Northeast Arkansas Regional Science and Engineering Fair, hosted by Arkansas State University on March 7:

- Senior Division Student: Quentin Gannt
Teacher: Allyson Goodin

Northwest Arkansas Regional Science and Engineering Fair, hosted by University of Arkansas on March 7:

- Senior Division: Alexander Pagliani
Teacher: Alicia Deavens
- Junior Division: Sophie O'Donohoe & Keira Passantino
Teacher: Sean Grom

The Soybean Science Challenge is co-sponsored by the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board and the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service. For additional information, please contact Dr. Julie Robinson at jrobinson@uada.edu or Keith Harris at krharris@uada.edu. ■



Save the Date!

2025 Support Staff Conference

Thursday/Friday, May 1-2

Vines Center

Morrilton Junior High School Garden

A Growing Success in Education, Community, and Sustainable Change

Morrilton Junior High School (MJHS), which serves 320 students in Conway County, has seen its school garden grow into a key educational and community resource. With 71% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, the garden initiative has been made possible through the efforts of Conway County FCS agent Shannon Autrey, who has worked closely with the school to promote healthy living.



Shannon Autrey

Originally a partnership between science teachers, the garden now includes an indoor garden in the library, where students take the lead in maintaining plants. Students actively engage in harvesting and learning about the nutritional benefits of various plants. The School Garden Lesson

Plans curriculum, delivered as part of the SNAP-Ed program, provides hands-on education that emphasizes sustainable gardening and healthy eating habits.

In addition to direct education, the garden helps students connect with food production and promotes healthier choices. Several students have shared how they used their garden knowledge at home, helping families grow their own plants. One MJHS student reported "I can't believe the teeny tiny seeds we spilled into the dirt turned into all this lettuce!" ■



Students learn about harvesting and the nutritional benefits of various plants working in the garden.

SNAP-Ed Training



In February, 48 FCS agents, state staff, and SNAP-Ed educators participated in an in-depth training on two curricula designed to promote health and nutrition among SNAP-Ed participants.

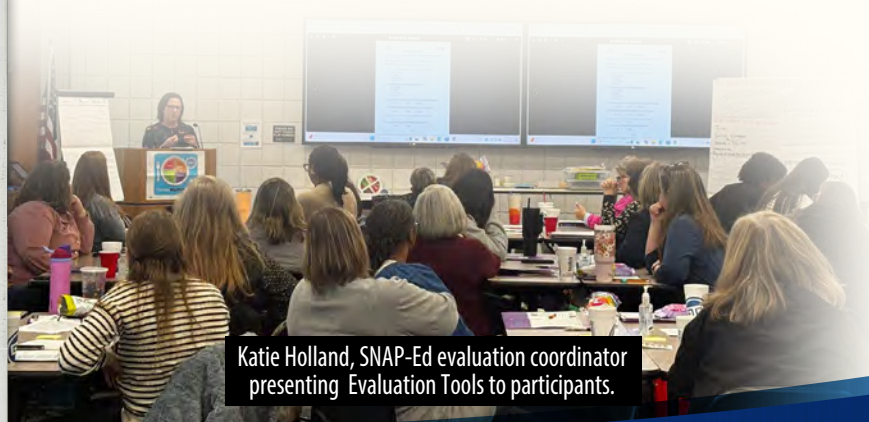
Fresh Conversations is a newsletter-based education program tailored for seniors aged 60 and older. The training equipped participants with tools and strategies to engage seniors in meaningful discussions on nutrition, food preparation, and healthy living.

Food, Fun, and Reading is a hands-on curriculum for preschool through 2nd grade youth. FCS agents and staff learned how to implement interactive lessons that teach youth essential concepts about healthy eating, physical activity, and literacy in a fun and engaging way.

This training ensures educators are well-prepared to deliver these valuable programs, fostering healthier communities through education and engagement. ■



Participants playing the MyPlate Relay in Newport.



Katie Holland, SNAP-Ed evaluation coordinator presenting Evaluation Tools to participants.

Windows 11 Upgrade

Volunteer Migration - Phase 2

Windows 11 is the biggest major Microsoft operating system update since 2015. With the release of this new operating system, Microsoft will stop supporting Windows 10 in October 2025.

What does this mean for us? All UADA computers will need to be upgraded to Windows 11 or replaced with a new Windows 11 computer by October 2025. We are currently in Phase 2 - Volunteer migration.



Volunteer Migration - Phase 2

We are currently in phase 2 of the migration, which is completely voluntary. For those wanting to move forward with the Windows 11 upgrade, fill out the [volunteer request form](#) for each computer.

Mandatory Migration - Phase 3 (May 2025)

Any computer that is eligible to be upgraded to Windows 11 unless they qualify for an exception. Exceptions will only be approved for the following devices:

- Any device that is used strictly with research\testing\ networking equipment & not connected to the internet.

Contact the Help Desk

New ways of serving you! We have technicians ready to answer your calls. You can request help from the IT Help Desk by calling 1-866-779-3375, (501) 340-0265, visiting services.uada.edu, or emailing tickets@uada.edu.

Restricting Email Forwarding

(excluding approved domains)

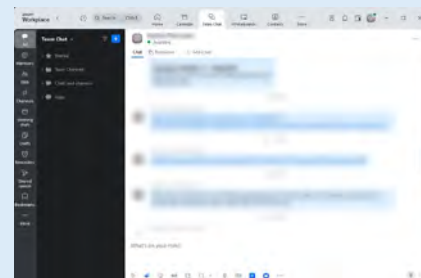
Many employees have two email addresses – uada and

uark. These employees have been forwarding their email from one inbox to the other inbox so they can login to one account only. As part of our ongoing commitment to protect our organization, UADA will be disabling the email forwarding feature. This decision is driven by the increasing threats posed by cybercriminals who exploit this functionality. The implementation begins July 1, 2025. For more information on why we are making this change and implementation details, visit: [Email Forwarding](#).

Zoom Pro Tip

Zoom Pro Tip – A Whole New Look

The Zoom Workplace app Team Chat has a whole new look! A new left sidebar has been added allowing you to customize tabs to



find what you need in Zoom Team Chat quickly. Add and arrange the tabs in the order you want. Use the **More** option to add tabs or hide tabs from the sidebar. For more information on using the Zoom Workplace app Team Chat function, visit [Zoom Support Getting Started with Zoom Team Chat](#).

Hump Day Hacks

Hump Day Hack resources can be found on the Hump Day Hacks Resource page in Team Dynamix. February's hacks included Windows 11 upgrades, Windows Hello, Using My Templates in Outlook, using accessible phone number formatting, and Zoom Team Dynamix Knowledge Base resources. Join us each Hump Day Hacks! [Register Now](#). ■



2025 TECH TUESDAYS WEBINARS

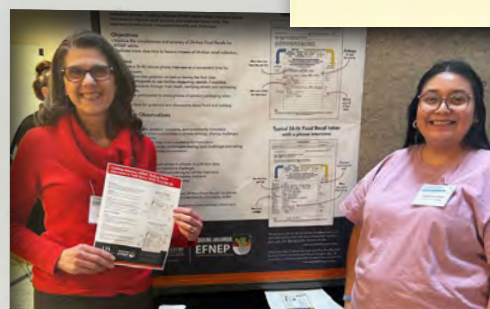
Have you missed any past Tech Tuesday webinars or want to join future webinars? Check out the recordings and other resources on the [Tech Tuesday Blog](#) page. More Tech Tuesday topics coming soon! Did you miss February's [Tech Toolbox – Exploring UADA Software Tech Tuesday](#)? Check out the recording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



EFNEP Coordinators' Conference

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Members of Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) team attended the 2025 National EFNEP Coordinators' Conference in Washington, DC. During the conference, they presented a poster session titled *Cooking Arkansas EFNEP: Testing Phone Interviews to Yield Better 24-Hour Food Recalls*. Presenters included Cathy Love, EFNEP/FCS agent, and Jacqueline Silva, EFNEP program assistant. ■



Left to right: Cathy Love and Jacqueline Silva presented at the 2025 National EFNEP Coordinators' Conference.

Grants & Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
Long-Term Study of the Impacts of Crop Rotation on Southeastern Plasticsulture Strawberry Production	5,000	Amanda L McWhirt	Southern Region Small Fruit Consortium
Developing Effective Insect Pest Management Strategies for Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum	13,388	Ben Thrash	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Corn and Grain Sorghum Enterprise Budgets and Production Economic Analysis	10,000	Breanna Watkins	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Economic Analysis of Corn and Grain Sorghum Production and Marketing Practices	6,000	Brian Deaton	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Determining Disease Resistance and Susceptibility of Corn and Grain Sorghum Hybrids	14,508	Camila Nicolli	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Biocontrol of Magnaporthe Oryzae on Rice in Potted Plants in the Greenhouse	2,972	Camila Nicolli	Aphea.Bio
2023 Margaret A. Cargill Philanthropies Counselor and Access to Maximize Participation (CAMP) Access	6,000	Creenna Bocksnick	National 4-H Council
Developing Effective Insect Pest Management Strategies for Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum	13,288	Glenn Studebaker	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
IR-4 Performance Funding	2,222	Hannah Wright Smith	University of Florida
Development and Verification of a Stand Counting Application Using Drone Imagery for Research and Production Decision Support	16,360	Jason Davis	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Refining Recommendations for Corn Hybrid Relative Maturity and Planting Dates in Arkansas	7,406	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Corn and Grain Sorghum Research Verification Program	130,000	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Arkansas Corn & Grain Sorghum Research Studies Series: An Annual Report and Archival System for All Board-Funded Research	4,800	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Optimizing Plant Population and Nitrogen Rate in Corn	19,138	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Determining Disease Resistance and Susceptibility of Corn and Grain Sorghum Hybrids	11,026	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Arkansas Future Ag Leaders Tour	5,000	Julie Robinson	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Personal Finance Education at Emerald Village	1,000	Laura Hendrix	Emerald Village at Jonesboro
Arkansas APEX Accelerator	673,915	Melanie Berman	U.S. Department of Defense
Evaluating Management Options for Corn Nematodes in Arkansas	19,079	Michael Emerson	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Developing Effective Insect Pest Management Strategies for Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum	13,288	Nick Bateman	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Determining Disease Resistance and Susceptibility of Corn and Grain Sorghum Hybrids	14,466	Terry Spurlock	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Evaluation of New Herbicides, Premixes, Programs, and Application Methods for Improved Control of Problematic Weeds in Corn	34,538	Tom Barber	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Evaluating Management Options for Corn Nematodes in Arkansas	39,304	Travis Faske	Corn & Grain Sorghum Board
Multi-state Coordinated Trials: Management of Emerging Cotton Diseases	20,000.00	Travis Faske	Cotton Incorporated
TOTAL AWARDS FOR FEBRUARY 2025: 1,062,698			

Benefits Corner



LegalShield

Everyone has a time in their life when they need legal advice or assistance. With employee-pay-all LegalShield coverage, just pay a small monthly fee and you'll have access to legal consultations from an experienced attorney.

Premiums are paid through convenient payroll deductions if you enroll through Workday. Log in with your university credentials when prompted and select the Workday app.

For more information, review Legal Shield or contact LegalShield at 800-770-9820. Note: If you enroll through the LegalShield website, your premiums will be paid through a bank draft.

ID Watchdog

Understanding the complex world of identity theft and identity fraud can be overwhelming. It's more complicated than the use of a stolen credit card or fraudulent withdrawals from your bank account. It can impact everything from your tax refunds to your medical insurance.

The good news is you don't have to face identity theft alone. With ID Watchdog®, you have an easy and affordable way to help better protect and monitor the identities of you and your family.

Receive alerts on potentially suspicious activity and enjoy the peace of mind that comes from fully managed resolution services. Enroll in this award-winning identity protection benefit today.

For information download the ID Watchdog Benefit Summary and visit: UA System ID Watchdog. For benefits questions, contact yourbenefits@uada.edu. ■

Personnel Changes



Welcome Aboard:

Malli Dooly – 4-H Program Assistant - 4-H & Youth Development, Vines Center

Tammie Olson – Administrative Specialist I, Arkansas County

Michael Chaney – County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Jackson County

Md Sahidur Rahman – Program Associate - Animal Science, LRSO

Angela Crawford – Administrative Specialist I, Washington County

Jessica Daves – Administrative Assistant - Horticulture, LRSO

Zeb Gattis – County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Sebastian County

Farewell to:

Diane Cunningham – Administrative Specialist III - Monroe County **Christina**

Myrtle – 4-H Program Assistant - Pike County