

BL

BLUE LETTER

April 2026

No. 3888



John D. Anderson

From the Director

Hard to believe April is already over. I'm sorry to see it go. Partly because that means I am late with my Blue Letter contribution, but also because April is such a nice time of year in these parts. I generally spend quite a bit of time on the road in April, and there is no better time of year to be out and about in this state. We could have done with a little more rain this year – a drastic change from a year ago, for sure – but otherwise it was a characteristically beautiful April in Arkansas.

April is also support staff conference time for UADA. I had the opportunity to join the last day of the conference at the 4-H Center in Ferndale. Steve Siegelin and his team put together an outstanding professional development opportunity for both CES and AES staff. It is always

nice to see our support staff from all over the state come together in one place. UADA gives the UA System a presence in every part of the state. When we all come together, it is an impressive reminder of that reach and of the important role that UADA and CES play in so many communities.

I heard a lot this month about the importance of CES to Arkansas communities. The state legislature held its biannual fiscal session this past month. Over and over, people relayed to me the favorable comments from legislators about the importance of their local Extension staff. Extension is essential to the well-being of this state. I know it doesn't always feel like it, but people do really notice what we do. More than that, they genuinely appreciate it. ■

INSIDE SCOOP

2. STay BEEFy Tour
3. America 250: Common Threads
4. 4-H SeaPearch Competition

5. Crocheting Comes to Saline County
 6. Tech Corner
 7. Leadership Log
- ...And much more!



STay BEEFy Spring Break Beef Tour

Johnson County 4-H youth had an engaging and educational Spring Break during the Operation STay BEEFy Beef Tour held March 24.. Planned and coordinated by County Extension Agent Jeanie Rowbotham, with support from Chris Heiser of the Arkansas Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers, the day provided a comprehensive look at the beef industry from pasture to plate.

Participants explored a cow/calf operation and feedlot, learned how cattle are raised and managed, and gained insight into the meat processing journey. Rachel Chaney Dillon, Arkansas 4-H Health Program Technician, led a hands-on session focused on food safety and proper steak preparation. Sweet Treats Restaurant in Lamar generously hosted the group, providing space for cooking activities and a dining etiquette lesson led by Rowbotham.

A total of 20 youth participated, with evaluation results showing strong knowledge gains. Ninety-five percent reported understanding where beef comes from, and 100% learned how farmers care for cattle. Youth also built life skills, with over 85% gaining confidence in food safety practices and table manners.

The tour was a success, equipping youth with real-world knowledge, practical skills, and a deeper appreciation for agriculture. ■



Jimmy Duarte of Daily Meats Processing explains the equipment they use at his meat processing business.

AACES Spring Fling Success

The AACES Spring Fling was a vibrant celebration of community, connection, and creativity, that a little sunshine and teamwork can go a long way. The event brought employees together for a day filled with delicious baked goods, beautiful plants, and plenty of shared smiles.

Thanks to the generosity and support of attendees, the fundraiser raised an impressive \$480.00. From homemade treats to carefully nurtured plants, every item sold reflected the dedication and enthusiasm of those involved.

More than just a fundraiser, the Spring Fling created an opportunity for employees to step away from their



(L to R): Vanessa Lewis and Teresa Henson are all smiles at the Spring Fling fundraiser.

daily routines and connect in a fun, relaxed environment. The turnout was strong, with many stopping by to show their support and enjoy the offerings.

The success of the event highlights the power of community engagement and teamwork within AACES. Organizers and participants alike contributed to an event that was not only financially successful but also uplifting and memorable.

With such a positive response, the AACES Spring Fling has certainly planted seeds for future events to grow and flourish. ■

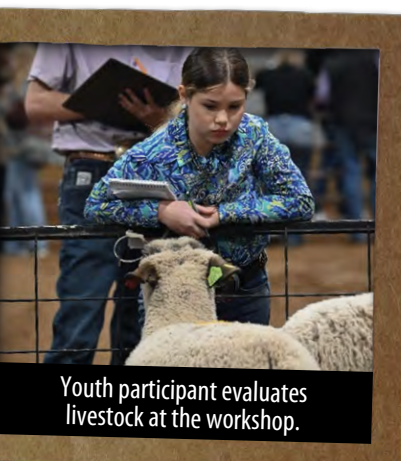
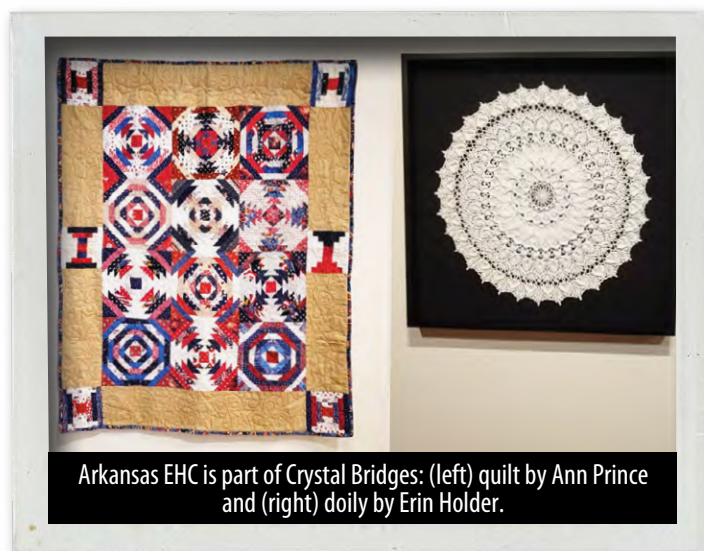
America 250: Common Threads

Arkansas EHC is part of the “America 250: Common Threads” exhibit at the Northwest Arkansas Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas. This special exhibition is from March 14 through July 17, 2026.

You can see two items that were selected from AEHC members:

- Patriotic Pineapple Quilt, Ann Prince, Hot Spring County & Garland County Crazy Quilters EHC.
- Crochet Doily, Erin Holder, Benton County

Congratulations to Erin Holder and to the family of Ann Prince. Ann passed away last year, and the selection of her quilt stands to remind us of her passion for EHC. ■



Boots, Brews, & BBQ Fundraiser

A new competition, more competing teams and greater attendance highlighted the second Boots, Brews and BBQ event held this

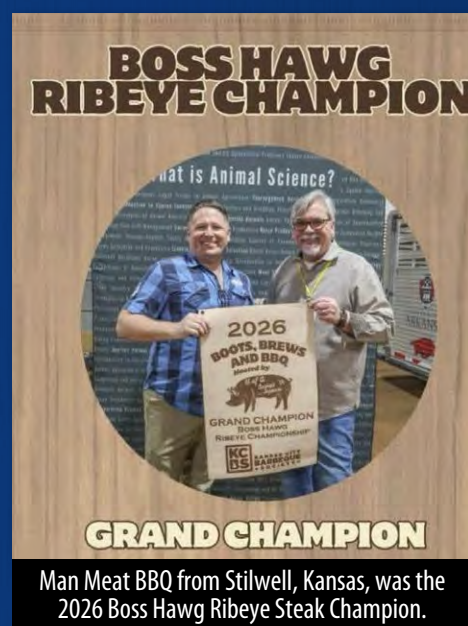
spring. The fundraising event hosted by U of A's Department of Animal Science crowns the Arkansas state barbecue champion and is sanctioned by the Kansas City Barbecue Association. This year, 38 teams from seven states and Canada competed with Munny's Stove from Wichita, Kansas, winning the Arkansas state title.

New this year was a Boss Hawg Ribeye Steak Cooking Contest voted on by a panel of celebrity judges. Man Meat BBQ from Stilwell, Kansas, was the winner.

There was also a Tyson Foods People's Choice Pulled Pork contest with Partners-in-Swine from Springdale coming in first and winning \$150, Mr. BBQ from Cave Springs and winning \$100, and Better Than Tim from Broken Bow, Oklahoma, placing third and earning \$50.

All proceeds from ticket sales go to the Department of Animal Science. Funds support the department's general scholarship fund and student competition teams. The event raised close to \$10,000 for the scholarship fund and student teams, and drew an attendance around 250 – both numbers were increased from the first year.

The Third Annual Boots, Brews and BBQ event is already scheduled for Saturday, March 13, 2027. To read the entire article, click [here](#). ■



4-H SeaPerch Competition



On Friday, April 3, at The River Center in Benton, Arkansas, 191 bright young minds gathered with a splash and a dream to compete at the Arkansas 4-H SeaPerch Challenge. They built their very own underwater robots—crafted from pool noodles, PVC pipes, and lots of determination—and they were ready to compete. Teams dove into action, guiding their creations

through tricky underwater missions—repairing bridges and dams just like ocean engineers. Some teams shined like stars, winning top spots across several divisions.



The Rolling Stokes from Madison County taking their turn on the Mission Course.



First Place - HydroRappers, Grant County:
Jackson K., Priyesh L., Abigail M.

By the end of the day, six teams earned a golden ticket: a chance to travel to College Park, Maryland for the International SeaPerch Challenge. The real treasure wasn't just winning. Along the way, these kids learned how to solve problems, work together, and keep going even when things didn't go as planned. We are so proud of all our participants and cannot wait to see them in 2027! ■

Using AI Productively

Artificial intelligence can save time. It can also produce wrong answers that sound right.

That matters in Extension work. People rely on us for guidance that is accurate, practical, and grounded in real conditions. A careless use of AI can introduce errors, expose private information, or weaken trust that has taken generations to build.

The safest way to use AI is not to treat it as an expert. Treat it as a fast drafting tool. It can help you get started, but you are still responsible for the final product.

1. **Do not put sensitive information into public AI tools**
2. **Do not trust AI on high-stakes topics without expert review**
3. **Treat every output as a first draft**
4. **Check for hidden assumptions and bias**
5. **Use extra caution with images and translation**
6. **Use the right tool for the job**

AI is most useful when the stakes are low and the task is routine. It can help with drafting agendas, summarizing public documents, generating outlines, adjusting reading level, brainstorming program ideas, or writing first drafts of routine communications. Used this way, it can reduce administrative burden without creating unnecessary risk.

That is where it tends to perform best: speed, structure, and first drafts. Not expert judgment. Extension's value is trust—expert judgment and information.

AI can help us work faster. It cannot replace responsibility, expertise, or local knowledge. The safest approach is also the simplest: protect sensitive information, verify anything important, watch for bad assumptions, and do not pass off machine output as professional judgment.

For the full article including the 30 Second Safety Test, click [here](#). ■

Crocheting Comes to Saline County

When the call came, Saline County Extension Homemakers answered. On March 12, from 6–8 p.m., 21 people gathered for an evening of laughter, conversation, and learned the basics of crochet. Volunteers led a beginner-friendly class focused on foundational stitches and simple techniques participants can practice at home. Attendees received a small crochet book, a practice pattern, and information about Extension Homemakers clubs, including meeting dates and times. One participant shared, “This is so much fun, and I can’t wait until the next one!”

Thank you to the Benton Area Chamber for providing the space and helping make the evening possible. We also

appreciate our volunteers, Saline County Extension Homemakers President Patsy Wagner, Treasurer Karen Mitchell, and 2nd Vice President Beverly Garrett, for sharing their time, talent, and encouragement with every crocheter. Their guidance helped turn a first-time class into a welcoming community experience.



Saline County EH President Patsy Wagner and 2nd Vice President Beverly Garrett are welcoming and starting introductions.

More classes for youth and adults are planned in Saline County. A follow-up class was held on April 16. Whether you are brand new to crocheting or want a refresher, you are welcome and bring a friend. Interested in joining a future crochet class? Call 501-303-5672 to connect for details. ■

Bake and Plant Sale

Montgomery County 4-H members celebrated a successful fundraiser on Saturday, April 11, 2026, as their annual bake sale expanded to include a new community plant sale. Held in partnership with the EHC Stitchin’ Friends, the event drew a steady crowd and created a lively, welcoming atmosphere. Tables filled with homemade baked goods and a wide variety of plants encouraged visitors to shop, mingle, and support local youth programs.

Throughout the morning, 4-H volunteers greeted guests and shared information about the organization’s work in Montgomery County. Organizers expressed deep appreciation for the community’s generosity, noting that all donations directly support 4-H youth programming, including hands on learning, leadership development, and educational activities.

A special thanks was extended to True Value and the Montgomery County Master Gardeners for donating plants and clippings. Each 4-H member also had the



Bake goods table at the Montgomery County 4-H Bake and Plant sale.

chance to plant items used in the sale, giving them practical horticulture experience while contributing to their club’s efforts.

The collaboration with the EHC Stitchin’ Friends added creativity and strengthened community ties, with both groups hoping to continue expanding the event in future years. For now, Montgomery County 4-H is celebrating a rewarding day and looking forward to putting the funds raised to work for local youth. ■

Protecting Your Data

Outlook & OneDrive Screenshot Restrictions

To help safeguard sensitive information and reduce the risk of data exposure, Microsoft has disabled screenshot functionality within Outlook and OneDrive on mobile devices. This change is designed to protect private emails, attachments, and files from accidental or intentional sharing outside the organization.

By limiting screenshot access, we strengthen our overall data security posture and ensure compliance with privacy and security regulations. These protections help maintain the confidentiality of organizational data while reducing the risk of information leakage.

Need Screenshot Access for Your Work?

We recognize that some roles may require screenshots for legitimate, work-related tasks such as documentation, training, or troubleshooting.

If you believe screenshot access is necessary for your job:

- Submit a [Screenshot Exclusion Request form](#)
- The Security Team will review your request and determine whether an exception can be granted

This review process helps balance productivity needs with our responsibility to protect sensitive information. If you have questions or need assistance, please contact the IT help desk.

Zoom Pro Tip

Rename Zoom Meeting, Host, and Participants

As the host, you can change your name, your participant's names, and even the meeting name during the meeting.

Follow the following steps:

Your Name or Participant's Name

- Select the Participants icon from the bottom toolbar.
 - If the Participants icon is missing, you can find it by selecting the More icon.
- Hover over the name you want to change & click the ellipsis.
- Select Rename.
- Enter the new name in the box that appears and click Change to save.

Meeting Title

- Click on the meeting title in the upper left corner.
- Edit the meeting title in the meeting details box that appears.
- Click the check mark to save changes.

Understanding OneDrive Sync Status Icons

- OneDrive blue (Cloud) Icon: You have logged in to your Work or School account.
- OneDrive white (Cloud) Icon: You have logged in to your personal account.

Icon	Description	Meaning
	The Blue circle with an "i"	Informational messages. New messages about how best to use OneDrive, or new/unused features.
	Gray OneDrive cloud with a line	You're not signed in, or the OneDrive setup isn't complete.
	A red circle with a white cross in a blue Cloud	The file can't be synced
	OneDrive paused icon	Your files are not currently syncing.
	OneDrive with sync pending arrows	Sync is in progress. It may also show "Processing changes".
	Yellow exclamation mark	Your account needs attention.
	The red circle with a white cross	File or folder cannot be synced.
	People icon	The file or folder has been shared.
	Blue outlined cloud icon	The file is only available online (It won't take up space).
	Green tick icon	Online-only file downloaded, now locally available.
	Solid green circle/white check	File marked as "Always keep on this device". Always available offline.
	Gray X on desktop icons	Corrupted Windows shortcut icon
	Chain icon on a folder	It's a shortcut to another folder that has been shared

Hump Day Hacks

Hump Day Hack resources can be found on the [Hump Day Hacks Resource page](#) in Team Dynamix. March's hacks included Tech Tuesday follow-up on Countdown to Compliance with the ADA Web Accessibility Rule, creating accessible PDFs, document properties and metadata overview, freeze panes in Excel, data inventory, Outlook tips, using the format painter in PowerPoint, and recording Zoom meetings to your computer. See you at the next Hump Day Hacks on the fourth Wednesday of the month! ■

2026 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 April's [\[Excel in Microsoft Excel\]](#) Tech Tuesday? Check out the recording and resources.





LeadAR

LeadAR: It Takes a Village, and Newport Found Theirs

by Vivian Brittenum, director of business services and special projects, Central Arkansas Planning and Development

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit Newport, Arkansas, as part of a LeadAR tour. I'll be honest, when I first heard Newport was on the itinerary, my reaction was immediate and unfiltered. What in the world could possibly be in Newport? Where is Newport? How do I even get there?

Let me just say, we were in for a real treat. Newport is a small city in northeast Arkansas, nestled along the White River about 84 miles northeast of Little Rock and roughly 45 miles southwest of Jonesboro. It serves as the county seat of Jackson County and has quietly established itself as a regional hub for agriculture, industry, and workforce development.

I liken this small city to the old adage about the little engine that could. Well, Newport is the small city that could and absolutely did. In just 20 short years, this community has transformed itself into a major player among cities of comparable size. The training and educational opportunities are abundant, and the workforce opportunities available pay remarkably well for the area. Read more details [here](#).

What Does Your Town Want to Be When It Grows Up? Lessons from Jackson County

by Tabatha Duvall, assistant director, UCA Center for Community and Economic Development

Spending a couple of days in Jackson County was a reminder of just how interconnected community leadership and economic development really are. The agenda centered on economic development resources, but what resonated most was how intentional collaboration,

across regions, industries, and institutions, can shape the trajectory of a community.

Our Friday started with the Arkansas Small Business and Technology Development Center (ASBTDC), which perfectly describes itself as a resource “for when you don’t know what you don’t know” about running a business. Laura Miller, based at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, walked us through how ASBTDC operates across seven regional offices, all housed on higher education campuses. That structure alone reinforces the critical connection between education and entrepreneurship. Read more details [here](#).

Cultivating Leadership with Extension

In a recent episode of the Cultivating Leadership with Extension podcast, Dr. Julie Robinson sat down with Dr. Steve Siegelin to explore Patrick Lencioni’s book, *The Six Types of Working Genius*, and what it means for leaders in extension and beyond. Their conversation highlighted a simple but powerful idea: the work we do every day is

not created equal, and our satisfaction rises when we spend more time in the kinds of work that energize us. Watch recording [here](#).

Lencioni’s model describes six “working geniuses” that show up across any major project: Wonder, Invention, Discernment, Galvanizing, Enablement, and Tenacity. These fall into three phases of work—ideation, activation, and implementation—offering a practical map of how ideas move from “What if?” to “It’s done.”

In the podcast, Siegelin explains that each person typically has two areas of genius, two competencies, and two frustrations, and that much of our burnout comes from spending too much time working out of those frustrations. Read more details [here](#). ■



Nutrition and Physical Activity Class

On March 31, 25 participants in the Randolph and Lawrence County Drug Court program attended a nutrition and physical activity class led by Pamela Ray, Randolph County Extension family and consumer sciences agent. The session introduced the MyPlate model and emphasized how small, realistic changes can improve overall health. Participants learned to include all five food groups in daily meals and explored simple ways to increase physical activity like walking, stretching, and adding movement into daily routines.

A live cooking demonstration showed how to prepare an affordable, nutritious skillet meal, reinforcing that healthy eating can be quick, budget friendly, and



FCS Agent Pamela Ray is stirring ground beef while participant Walker Morgan cuts up the onion to make a healthy skillet meal.

satisfying. The class also covered practical grocery shopping strategies, including planning meals, making a list, comparing prices, and avoiding impulse purchases.

This program is part of the Cooperative Extension Service's ongoing effort to provide research based education that supports long term wellness for individuals and families. By combining hands on learn-

ing with practical tools, the session equipped participants to make healthier choices in their everyday lives. "This program is about helping people take small steps toward better health," Ray said. "Participants are gaining tools they can use every day." ■

Enhancing Community Safety and Accessibility

Carnes Park in Camden, Arkansas recently received several improvements focused on making the space safer, more accessible, and easier for the community to enjoy. By repainting the parking lots, pedestrian crossings, and speed bumps, the area now feels more organized and welcoming for everyone who visits.

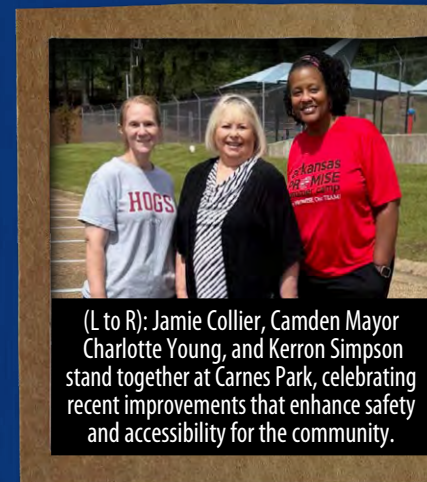
While these updates may seem simple, they make a big difference. Clearly marked parking spaces help improve traffic flow, while fresh pedestrian crossings provide safer paths for families, children, and anyone walking through the park. Brightly visible speed bumps also encourage drivers to slow down, helping create a safer shared space for both vehicles and pedestrians.

These upgrades connect directly to the goals of the

Arkansas High Obesity Program (ArHOP) initiative, which focuses on building healthier, more connected communities. When spaces are safer and easier to navigate, people are more likely to get outside, stay active, and spend time together.

Carnes Park is a great example of how small, strategic improvements can have a lasting impact.

It's a step forward in creating a community where safety, accessibility, and connection truly matter. ■



(L to R): Jamie Collier, Camden Mayor Charlotte Young, and Kerron Simpson stand together at Carnes Park, celebrating recent improvements that enhance safety and accessibility for the community.

Estate Planning Workshop

Due to the interest and demand, the Cross County Extension Office of Wynne and St. Francis County Extension of Forrest City hosted an Estate Planning Workshop at Woodruff Electric in Forrest City on March 31.

Dr. Laura Hendrix with the University of Arkansas and Mr. Kevin Watts with Watts Law Office of Wynne both presented valuable information pertaining to wills, trust and several topics in between regarding retirement and nursing care. Agents Jenna Martin (Cross County Ag Agent/Staff Chair), Mattie Ricker (Cross County Family and Consumer Science Agent), and Sarah Stone (St. Francis County Ag Agent) all gave an Extension overview and update regarding their respective program areas.

Participants were able to enjoy a meal catered by Ho-galooza of Wynne, thanks to the meal sponsor, First

National Bank of Eastern Arkansas. The St. Francis County Master Gardeners also supplied the delicious desserts. ■



Kevin Watts, attorney at Watts Law Office speaks to attendees.

Extension Get Fit

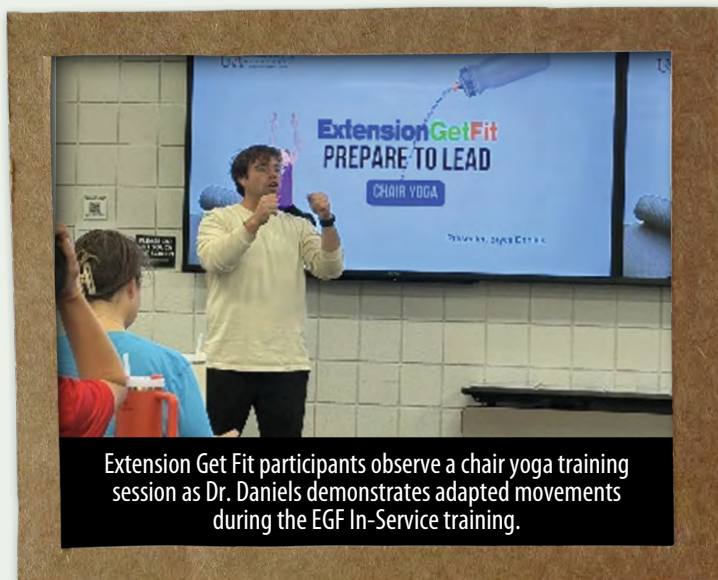
From sweat to stretching and plenty of laughs in between, the Extension Get Fit In Service, hosted by Dr. Bryce Daniels, Vanessa Lewis, M.Ed., Jessica Vincent, Ed.D., and Heather Wingo, Ed.D., offered Family and Consumer Sciences agents a high energy mix of learning, movement, and practical application. The

in service was held at the Little Rock State Office on April 1 and 2.

Day 1 featured Extension Get Fit Fundamentals and Circuit Training. The session emphasized exercise selection, safety, cueing, and effective class structure, laying a strong foundation for program delivery.

Day 2 focused on Chair Yoga, with primary emphasis on practical application and modifications to ensure accessibility across participant abilities. A full chair yoga routine led by Dr. Vincent prior to lunch was repeatedly identified by agents as a highlight and a valuable model for teaching flow, pacing, and clear instruction.

Agents consistently cited the hands on format, welcoming environment, and strong instructional modeling as key strengths, leaving participants feeling energized, confident, and ready to teach. Overall, the in service served as a valuable tool in helping agents feel prepared to continue implementing evidence based exercise programming in Arkansas communities. ■



Extension Get Fit participants observe a chair yoga training session as Dr. Daniels demonstrates adapted movements during the EGF In-Service training.

Spring Retiree Luncheon

The 2026 Spring Retiree Luncheon was held on March 31, 2026, at the C. A. Vines Arkansas 4 H Center in Ferrdale. The day started with Connections and Coffee – an informal networking time for retirees to reconnect with colleagues and friends, and of course, have some coffee and cinnamon rolls.

Featured presentations include a session on minimizing food waste by Brianna Austin, County Extension Agent for Family and Consumer Sciences in Perry County, followed by a presentation highlighting the 4 H Videography Team led by Kerry Rodtnick, Extension Videographer with the Communications Department.

Dr. Anderson provided an administrative update and presented three CES Retiree Scholarships. We followed up with door prize drawings, a group photo to

commemorate the event, and a tasty lunch. Event photos are available at [Spring Luncheon Photos](#).

It was a great day to see everyone, and we appreciate all who were able to come. We look forward to hosting our regional meetings in the fall. ■



Retiree Scholarship Recipients Announced

The CES Retiree Editorial Board was pleased to award three \$1,000 scholarships to employees pursuing graduate degrees, including two master's students and one doctoral candidate. The recipients were recognized at the 2026 Spring Retiree Luncheon, held March 31 at the Arkansas 4-H Center.

Hannah Boyte is the Agriculture Agent and Staff Chair for Columbia County and is pursuing a Master of Science in agricultural education and extension education at the University of Arkansas. With a strong focus on agricultural programming and 4 H youth development, Hannah will apply graduate coursework in leadership, evaluation, and community engagement directly to her Extension work.



Hannah Boyte

Tori Luker serves as the Family and Consumer Sciences Agent in Miller County and is pursuing a master's degree in food safety at the University of Arkansas. Her academic background and professional experience in food safety, combined with Extension programming, position her to strengthen public health education across Arkansas.



Tori Luker



Danielle Watson

Danielle Watson is a Program Associate for Community, Workforce, and Economic Development and a doctoral student in Change Leadership at the University of Central Arkansas. Her work demonstrates strong leadership, applied research, and significant contributions to Extension's community and economic development mission. ■

Sebastian County Hosted

Travelling Photo Exhibit



Sebastian County 4-H streamlined its County O' Rama events this year by hosting the Visual and Performing Arts Showcase. This

event combined Performing Arts and Fashion Revue, while also featuring Ross Photography Contest entries in a gallery-style display.

Photography participation surged this year, with more than 50 photo submissions compared to just eight last year. 4-H staff wanted to celebrate this level of growth and worked to display the photos for everyone to enjoy during the Showcase event. The students were excited

to see their work on display. One young 4-Her said he couldn't believe his photo was in a "real life art gallery."

Building on that enthusiasm, 4-H staff launched a "Traveling Photo Exhibit" highlighting the four winning entries. With newly matted and framed photos and support from community partners, the exhibit will rotate through local businesses, banks, and libraries, each hosting it for several weeks. Additional locations are scheduled in the coming months.

All the photo submissions will be displayed at the Sebastian County Extension Office through the summer months. Program Assistant Allisyn Stratton said the traveling exhibit aims to raise awareness of 4-H and inspire youth—especially those outside traditional agricultural backgrounds—to get involved. ■

Salute to Excellence Awarded

Two volunteers in Arkansas have been Salute to Excellence Awardees for Arkansas 4-H. Volunteer of the Year recipient Dr. Crystal Rouillier is a Johnson County 4-H alum turned volunteer, specializing in projects ranging from meat sciences to geology. As an assistant professor of animal science at Arkansas Tech University, she uses her professional skills and resources to educate and engage youth, expanding the program by providing intentionally designed opportunities that support positive youth development and workforce readiness. 4-H Agent Jeanie Rowbotham states, "Her leadership has increased participation, diversified project involvement, and strengthened our overall livestock and animal science programming"



Dr. Crystal Rouillier

Outstanding Lifetime Volunteer recipient Paula Norman has been a Greene County 4-H volunteer for over 40 years. Her dedication, passion, and love for 4-H are evident in the programs she provides, including livestock judging, beef quiz bowl, food bowl, consumer judging, swine, serving on the foundation board, and so much more. Paula is described as a leader who supports youth through mentoring; she sees their potential and helps them discover their own path through character development and confidence.



Paula Norman

Both nominees have been nominated for the Southern Region Awards. Congratulations! ■

HaylageDay

Rex Herring, Sevier County ag agent, recently hosted the Haylage Advantage Field Day, a hands-on event focused on improving forage quality for area producers and fellow Extension agents.

Herring has worked alongside Will and Bobby Bailey for more than 10 years. That partnership began when the Baileys reached out for help making their farm more drought resistant, and it has continued to grow ever since.

The event brought in a strong crowd, with attendees traveling from surrounding counties and Extension agents from across the state. Presentations were given by Rex Herring, Will and Bobby Bailey, and Dr. Daniel Rivera, director of the Southwest Research and Extension Center, covering haylage production, storage, and feeding strategies. The morning featured discussions

on the benefits of haylage, followed by field demonstrations in the afternoon.

Those who attended were able to see firsthand how the Baileys have put these practices into action on their operation, helping improve efficiency and better prepare for dry conditions.

When asked, Herring stated, “Events like this highlight the value of producers, Extension agents, and industry leaders coming together to share ideas and learn from one another—lessons that can make a real impact locally and across the state.” ■



Attendees discuss the benefits of haylage at the Haylage Advantage Field Day.

National Walking Day

Morgan Chrestman, Crittenden County Extension family and consumer sciences agent, said the inspiration for the National Walking Day event came from her involvement in Walk Across Arkansas and the Arkansas State Walking College, an educational fellowship program of the Division of Agriculture and America Walks.

“Through programs like Walk Across Arkansas, we’ve seen how small steps can lead to big changes in overall health,” Chrestman said. “National Walking Day felt like the perfect opportunity to bring people together, encourage healthier habits and highlight the importance of physical activity in a way that is both approachable and community-driven.”

“Many people complain that there is nothing to do in rural areas,” Lanes said. “Events like National Walking Day can build morale in our rural communities, and this supports

our goal of community activism with ArHOP.” Though the spring session of Walk Across Arkansas is currently underway, registration for program’s fall session will open on the program’s website in August or September.

Chrestman said she encourages Arkansans to take advantage of the program because it “meets people where they are and encourages healthier lifestyles in a realistic, sustainable way.”

“It is about progress, not perfection,” she said. “The benefits truly go beyond physical health. It also improves mental well-being, builds connections and creates a sense of

community around something as simple as walking.

“Programs like this show that improving health doesn’t have to be overly complicated,” Chrestman said. “It just takes consistency, accountability and support.” ■



Members of the Crittenden County community in West Memphis, Arkansas, gather for a lunchtime community walk to celebrate National Walking Day on April 1.

National 4-H Hall of Fame Inductee

BL
13

Judith H. Riley (Judy) exemplifies the definition of a servant leader. Judy served as an Extension educator for 38 years and, since retiring in 2008, has volunteered with 4-H at the local, county, and state levels for 18 years. Her dedication to the 4-H program is unparalleled.

She embodies the all-important 4-H values, striving to make the best decisions by researching and comparing all options. Demonstrating both strategic thinking and initiative, she not only generates ideas but implements them, motivating colleagues and youth to contribute actively.



Judy Riley

Her communication ability and knack for forming genuine relationships have enabled her to unite individuals —

guiding professional groups, participating on community boards, and mentoring young people and volunteers.

Judy's integrity, generosity, and problem-solving abilities make her a trusted leader. Her influence extends well beyond the local 4-H community. She has a deep-rooted connection to 4-H.

Whether through leadership, mentorship, or personal involvement, she has demonstrated an enduring commitment to ensuring that 4-H continues to thrive for future generations in Arkansas and across the country.

It's a great pleasure to announce that Judy Riley is a 2026 National 4-H Hall of Fame Laureate and will be inducted into the National 4-H Hall of Fame on October 26 in Kansas City, Missouri. Read more [here](#). ■

Sevier County Senior 4-H'ers Step Up Big



Sevier County senior 4-H'ers are stepping up in a big way, taking what they've learned and using it to teach and inspire others in the program.

Each year, members of the Teen Leader group take on a special project connected to one of their 4-H interests. These projects not only help them grow their own skills but also give them the chance to turn around and share that knowledge with younger members.

Katie Williamson is leading a series called Plate to Purpose, where she's teaching others about the science behind the foods we eat. Through fun, hands-on activities, participants are learning how nutrition connects to everyday life.

Raegan Frachiseur is working on a summer program, Back to the Barnyard, designed to introduce youth to

the basics of livestock care and agriculture. Her program will give participants the opportunity to learn by doing, an important part of the 4-H experience.

Programs like these show what 4-H is all about, youth helping youth, learning by doing, and building skills that last a lifetime. Sevier County 4-H is proud of these Teen Leaders for the example they are setting and the impact they are making in their community. ■



Katie Williamson teaches 4-H'ers about the science behind the food they eat.

Grants & Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
Baxter County Shooting Sports 2026	1,500	Amanda Rychtarik	National Rifle Association Foundation
Establishing a Long-Term Rotational Study	2,000	Ana Morales-Ona Smith	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Developing Effective Insect Pest Management Strategies for Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum	13,093	Ben Thrash	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Economics of Automatic Application Technology	40,460	Ben Thrash	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Educating Growers and Consultants	3,000	Ben Thrash	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Refining Insect Thresholds	43,528	Ben Thrash	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Investigating Emerging Production Issues	47,336	Ben Thrash	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Team Approach to Weed Management	69,722	Bob Scott	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Corn and Grain Sorghum Enterprise Budgets and Production Economic Analysis	10,000	Breana Watkins	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Soybean Enterprise Budgets	10,000	Breana Watkins	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Corn and Grain Sorghum Research Verification Program	6,000	Brian Deaton	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Soybean Research Verification	7,500	Brian Deaton	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Poinsett County Ag Day	8,070	Christie Wagley	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Developing Effective Insect Pest Management Strategies for Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum	13,703	Glenn Studebaker	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Economics of Automatic Application Technology	1,150	Glenn Studebaker	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Refining Insect Thresholds	8,670	Glenn Studebaker	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
State and Regional Farm Financial Analysis	39,719	Hunter Biram	Board of Curators of the University of Missouri
Development and Verification of a Stand Counting Application Using Drone Imagery	19,674	Jason Davis	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Development of Turn-Row Soybean Vegetative Health Analysis	19,605	Jason Davis	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Determining the Value of Fungicide Application	17,282	Jason Davis	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Comparison of Low, Medium, and High Intensity Corn Management Production Systems	26,536	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Refining Recommendations for Corn Hybrid Maturity and Planting Dates in Arkansas	7,471	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Corn and Grain Sorghum Research Verification Program	132,500	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Research Studies Series	4,800	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Determining Disease Resistance and Susceptibility of Corn and Grain Sorghum Hybrids	11,000	Jason Kelley	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Development of Data-Driven Recommendations	47,051	Jeremy Ross	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Monitoring the Extent of Potassium Deficiency	8,000	Jeremy Ross	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Improving Technology Transfer	75,527	Jeremy Ross	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Investigating Emerging Production Issues	184,800	Jeremy Ross	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Science for Success	137,615	Jeremy Ross	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Soybean Research Verification	203,172	Jeremy Ross	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Central Arkansas Tree Planting Project	1,599,977	John Pennington	Metroplan
Arkansas Future Ag Leaders Tour	5,000	Julie Robinson	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Arkansas Future Ag Leaders Tour	5,000	Julie Robinson	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Soybean Science Challenge	87,018	Julie Robinson	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Arkansas Discovery Farm Program	33,526	Mike Daniels	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Effects of Biochar-Modified Poultry Litter on Water Quality	274,411	Mike Daniels	University of Arkansas, Fayetteville
Arkansas Discovery Farms	28,561	Mike Daniels	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Climate-Smart Grasslands: The Root of Agricultural Carbon Markets	288,365	Mike Daniels	The University of Tennessee
Increasing Adoption of Elevation Data for Irrigation Scheduling	28,520	Mike Hamilton	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Developing Effective Insect Pest Management Strategies for Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum	13,193	Nick Bateman	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Determining Factors Associated with Poor Grain Quality	24,894	Nick Bateman	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Economics of Automatic Application Technology	2,000	Nick Bateman	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Refining Insect Thresholds	15,258	Nick Bateman	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
The Southern Plant Diagnostic Network	30,000	Taylor Klass	National Institute of Food & Agriculture
Comparison of Low, Medium, and High Intensity Corn Management Production Systems	6,204	Terry Spurlock	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Determining Disease Resistance and Susceptibility of Corn and Grain Sorghum Hybrids	14,000	Terry Spurlock	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Comprehensive Disease Screening	43,204	Terry Spurlock	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Monitoring and Management of Fungicide-Resistant Pathogens	22,864	Terry Spurlock	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Determining Factors Associated with Poor Grain Quality	30,106	Terry Spurlock	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Determining the Value of Fungicide Application	44,718	Terry Spurlock	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Understanding Taproot Decline	40,154	Terry Spurlock	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Weed Control Evaluation and Herbicide Program Comparison with Short-Stature Corn Hybrids	39,700	Tom Barber	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Team Approach to Weed Management	65,069	Tom Barber	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Evaluating Management Options for Corn Nematodes in Arkansas	41,892	Travis Faske	Corn & Grain Promotion Board
Comprehensive Disease Screening	65,614	Travis Faske	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Monitoring and Management of Fungicide-Resistant Pathogens	36,474	Travis Faske	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Fast-Tracking MG4 Cultivars with Southern Root-Knot Resistance	25,114	Travis Faske	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board
Integrated Management of Soybean Nematodes	51,476	Travis Faske	Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board

TOTAL AWARDS FOR MARCH 2026: \$4,182,796

Benefits Corner

Annual Leave Exchange Program:

If you have student loans in your name, you can cash in unused annual leave to reimburse your loan payments. The payments you receive after converting your annual leave are taxable and will be added to your paycheck.

Eligibility for participation in the leave exchange program requires current employment in a position accruing annual leave. The employee must have an annual leave balance of at least 80 hours after an exchange. Employees with disciplinary warnings or actions related to leave within the previous 12 months may not participate in the leave exchange program.

The maximum amount of annual leave an employee can exchange is \$7,500 in value per calendar year. Proof of Student Loan payment is required. The



employee's hourly rate earned is multiplied by the number of hours the employee wishes to exchange. That amount is then reduced by 14%, as the IRS does not allow a dollar-for-dollar exchange of annual leave. The final payment amount of the employee's exchanged leave will be added to the employee's paycheck as "additional earnings" and taxed as such. The number of hours exchanged will then be deducted from the employee's annual leave balance.

To learn more about this program, login to Workday, select Benefits and Pay, select PTO Exchange or reach out to yourbenefits@uada.edu. ■

Personnel Changes



Welcome Aboard:

Jeffrey Cardinale – Technical Support Specialist - Field Operations, LRSO

Erika Henderson – Program Associate Animal Science, LRSO

Mollie Pratt – Director of Research Communications - Communications, Washington County

Wesley Newman – County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Sharp County

Casey Danner White – Program Technician - Community, Professional, & Economic Development, LRSO

Rosalind Davis – Administrative Specialist III - Community, Professional, & Economic Development, LRSO

Magan McClain – Program Technician - Civic Engagement & Leadership, 4-H, LRSO

Farewell to:

Michael Coven – Accountant I, Business Office, Finance, LRSO

Sarah Dickerson – County Extension Agent - 4-H/Agriculture, Jackson County