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BLUE LETTER

May 2026
No. 3889



John D. Anderson

From the Director

Well, summer is here again. For our friends on campus, that means that students are mostly gone. In Extension, our calendar works a little differently. For us, summer means that the students are here. In May, we welcomed a new crop of summer interns to the Division of Agriculture. Let me tell you, it's a bumper crop. I believe this is the largest group we've had: 13 County Extension Agent interns, 10 Experiential Scholars Program interns, two Extension Animal Science interns, and six 4-H/Youth Development interns (two in the state office and four at the C.A Vines Arkansas 4-H Center).

This year, we have drawn interns from more schools than ever before. We have students from most of the state's four-year universities and several community colleges. We drew interns from schools in Oklahoma, Texas, Tennessee and Ohio. We even have an intern from Constructor University in Germany. The recruiting reach we see in this year's intern class speaks to the quality of our internship programs. These students will get much more than a line on their resume; they will have in-depth,

hands-on learning experiences that will inform their future educational and career decisions. That's what all internship programs promise. Our internship programs in UADA actually deliver it. That is not an accident. It is a result of the thoughtful planning and hard work that our faculty and staff invest in these programs.

It is a real privilege and a lot of fun for me to welcome our interns to Extension and the Division during their orientation. The enthusiasm and energy of a group of young people are infectious, and it is rewarding to have a role in helping them channel that enthusiasm and energy toward a productive career. That is not the best part, though. The best part for me is seeing our intern mentors' involvement. Our specialists, agents and staff who work with the interns are no less enthusiastic and energetic than the interns themselves. Hearing them explain to the interns what they do, and more importantly, why they do it never gets old. At its core, the message to the interns always comes down to service. We help people. Nice work if you can get it. ■

INSIDE SCOOP

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...And much more!



Association of Extension 4-H Agents

Members of the Arkansas Association of Extension 4-H Agents recently gathered for their annual state meeting to collaborate, learn and celebrate their program achievements.

The meeting featured several educational tours, including a visit to Farm Credit of Western Arkansas, where agents toured the new state-of-the-art facility. Participants also visited Arkansas Tech University in Russellville and explored hands-on learning opportunities at the university farm, gaining insight into the new agriculture building, teaching practices and greenhouses.

In addition to the tours, 4-H professionals attended the annual awards banquet, where outstanding

achievements and contributions to 4-H were recognized and celebrated. The group also discussed organizational priorities, shared ideas and planned for the future of the association.

The annual meeting provided valuable professional development while fostering connections among agents and other 4-H professionals dedicated to empowering youth through education and leadership opportunities. ■



Members of the Arkansas Association of Extension 4-H agents stop for a group photo.

Foundation Giving Day

The sixth annual Arkansas 4-H Foundation Giving Day on March 17 raised approximately \$60,000 for scholarships and youth programming, powered by more than 300 donors from across the state.

“That's not just a number. That's opportunity. That's confidence. That's leadership in the making,” said John Thomas, managing director of the Arkansas 4-H Foundation.

Donors from 25 of Arkansas' 75 counties participated in the "direct-to-county" competition, which supports local county 4-H programs.

Calhoun County led the state in participation, recording a donor rate of 4.85 per 1,000 residents — the highest in Arkansas. Clark County finished second, and Lafayette County, third.

To recognize Calhoun County's outstanding community engagement, the Arkansas 4-H Foundation presented a \$2,000 prize to Calhoun County 4-H on April 27. The check was delivered in person, giving local 4-H members, volunteers and supporters a chance to celebrate the achievement together. ■



Calhoun Co. 4-H Presentation: Front Row: Calhoun County Judge - Floyd Nutt, Tesleigh Dunn, Shyann Morris, Swaide Nutt, Arkansas 4-H Foundation Director - John Thomas, Calhoun Co. Sheriff - Vernon Morris. Back Row: Kristen Dunn, Calhoun County Extension Agent - Shaney Hill, Finleigh Dunn, Grady Morris, Calhoun County Admin. Assistant - Kelly Thomason, Calhoun Co. Livestock Show Manager - Shana Morris, Calhoun County Fair Chairman - Tristan Carter

Get Real, Here's the Deal

For Financial Literacy Month in April, more than 97 students from Smackover High School and Strong High School participated in Extension's Get Real, Here's the Deal program in Union County. The hands-on financial literacy simulation gave students a realistic look at the financial decisions adults and families face each month.

During the activity, students practiced essential life skills such as creating and managing a budget, maintaining a checking

account, and making informed financial choices. Each participant was assigned a life scenario and income and then worked through common expenses including housing, transportation, food, clothing, insurance, childcare, and unexpected costs. The experience challenged students to balance needs and wants while staying within a budget.

"The simulation gives students hands-on decision-making skills that can extend now and throughout their adult lives," said Tina Raney, career and technical education teacher at Strong High School. "Students see how quickly decisions can affect purchases and other challenges they may face."

Smackover High School economics teacher Justin Ford added that the simulation helps students understand real-world financial responsibility. "They learn what things cost and how important it is to manage your money," he said. ■



Students participate in the "Get Real, Here's the Deal" program.

Annual AG Day

Montgomery County third- and fourth-graders gathered at Camp Clearfork on May 7 for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture's annual AG Day, organized by the Montgomery County Extension Service. The event was supported by several community partners and the USDA Forest Service.

Students spent the day rotating through six hands-on educational stations, each offering a 30 minute lesson focused on agriculture, health, science and local history:

- **Re-Think Your Drink** — Water with a Twist (UADA), Karalee Black, Montgomery County Extension staff chair
- **Incredible Egg** — UADA Poultry Science, Gerald Hewitt, Montgomery County ag agent
- **Tobacco Prevention** — Arkansas Department of Health, Leigh Garner

- **Screen Time Awareness** — Morena Hicks, Montgomery County 4-H program assistant
- **Arkansas Game and Fish Commission** — Kristen Robinson
- **History of Camp Clearfork** — Bill Jackson, USDA Forest Service

A major highlight was the KARK Arkansas Storm Team Academy, where meteorologist Pat Walker delivered an energetic 60 minute presentation on meteorology, weather safety, and the science behind Arkansas storms.



Ouachita District Director Carla Due jumps in to lend a helping hand during her visit!

The Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council contributed to the day's healthy-living theme by providing fresh oranges for students and volunteers. After completing all stations, students gathered for a group photo and enjoyed ice cream donated by Hiland Dairy. ■

4-H Horse Judging

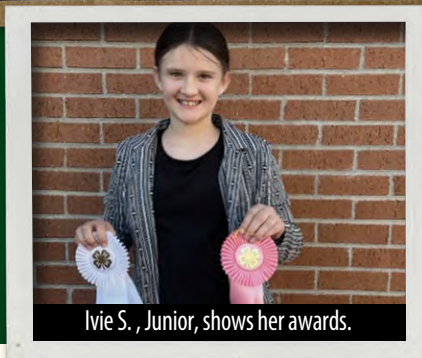
Garland County 4-H attended the State 4-H Horse Judging Contest on April 2, earning first place team overall. This team included Audrey R., Sydney S., Hannah H. and Preslee H. Preslee H. also received fifth overall individually, and first overall in reasons. Audrey R. received second in halter, and third in reasons.

Garland County had one junior participant, who placed fifth in halter and fourth place with her team. Garland County's program is showing strength across the age divisions, and the future is looking bright with the start of a junior team. Garland County Extension Staff Chair Jimmy Driggers coached participants.

"These 4-H'ers worked really hard to get where they are today," Driggers said. "We are really proud of them and can't wait to see how they do on the national level. ■"



(From L to R): Mark Russell (equine specialist), Audrey R., Sydney S., Hannah H., and Preslee H.



Ivie S., Junior, shows her awards.



Sowing Seeds of Excellence

Building Foundations for Success

Six new agents participated in the Sowing Seeds of Excellence: Building Foundations for Success training held April 7-8 at the Vines 4-H Center.

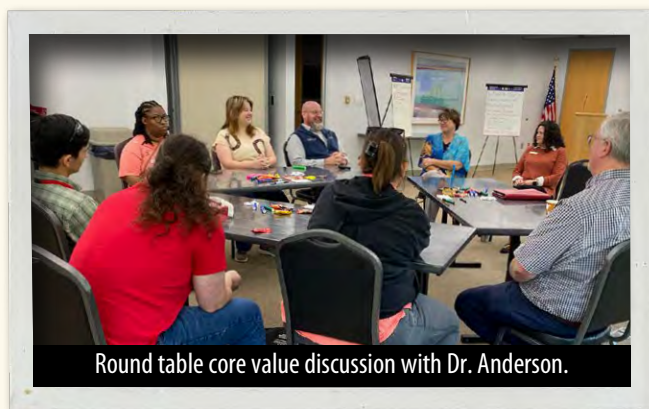
Dr. John Anderson, extension director, opened the training by discussing how the Division of Agriculture's core values — **Relevance, Excellence, Collaboration, Integrity, and Accountability** — play a significant role in Extension's mission.

Ouachita District Director Carla Due joined the agents during the morning activities. Agents worked together

on a marshmallow challenge and other activities involving collaboration, flexibility and leadership styles with Drs. Steve Siegelin and Julie Robinson before lunch. In the afternoon, agents discussed their challenges and successes and then participated in an active listening activity and teaching methodology practice activities.

On the second day, agents participated in the ExCEL program with Taylor Knox and his team, exploring practical

applications of adult learning theory while enjoying the ropes, zip line, and other challenges above and below the trees. ■



Round table core value discussion with Dr. Anderson.

Animal Science Outstanding Alumni

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The UA Department of Animal Science presented its Awards of Distinction for 2026, with Dr. Dean Scarbrough, Ben Williamson and Daniel McFarland receiving alumni honors, and Farm Credit of Western Arkansas receiving the Friend Award.

Awardees were recognized for their contributions to the animal science industry and research, to the Department of Animal Science in the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences, and to the Division of Agriculture.

Recipients were recognized at the department's annual awards and scholarship banquet April 21 at the Don Tyson Center for Agricultural Sciences. ■



Advanced Graduate of Distinction, Ph.D
Dr. Dean Scarbrough



Advanced Graduate of Distinction, M.S.
Ben Williamson



Graduate of Distinction
Daniel McFarland



Farm Credit of Western Arkansas
Friends of the Department

Animal Science Names Outstanding Alumni & Friends of the Department.

Ballot Issue Voter Guide and Election Materials

June 8 is the first day county offices can submit their orders for the 2026 Arkansas Ballot Issue Voter Guide and other election materials.

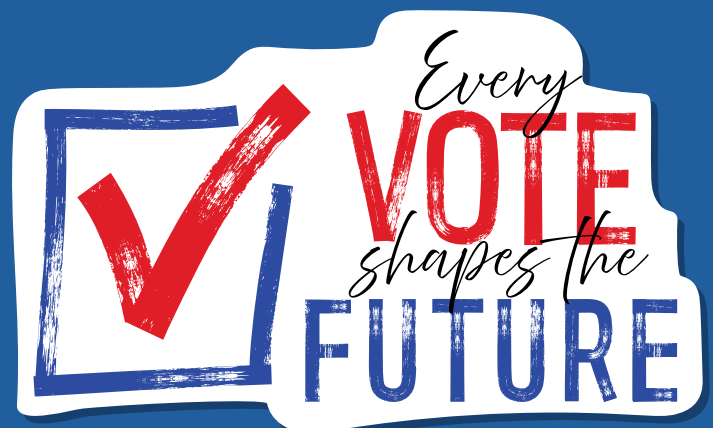
Each election year, the Public Policy Center publishes a neutral voter guide on all the statewide ballot measures. This year's Nov. 3 ballot includes three constitutional amendments referred by the legislature as well as a \$500 million bond issue.

July 3 is the deadline for citizen ballot issue groups to submit their voter petitions to the Secretary of State. We won't know until August 20 whether any citizen initiative qualifies for the November election.

In the June 8 order form, county agents will be asked how many voter guides, yard signs and display boards they want to order for their office. Contact Kristin Higgins at khiggins@uada.edu with any questions.

Higgins will host Zoom webinars about the 2026 ballot measures on Aug. 24, 26, 28 and Sept. 4. for extension staff. Other important election dates include:

- July 29 – Filing starts for elected city office.
- Sept. 18 – Absentee ballots are available.
- Oct. 5 – Voter registration deadline.
- Oct. 19 – Early voting starts.
- Nov. 3 – Election day. ■



Phishing-Resistant MFA

Phishing is one of the most common ways cybercriminals try to break into accounts. Even with regular multi factor authentication (MFA), attackers can sometimes trick people into approving fake sign in requests. Phishing resistant MFA uses modern sign in methods, like Microsoft Passkeys, that can't be reused by attackers, even if someone clicks a bad link. Passkeys use your device's built in security, such as a fingerprint, face recognition, or PIN, to confirm it's really you. Microsoft Passkeys are now available for UADA users. They make signing in faster, reduce password problems, and help prevent account lockouts and recovery delays while keeping accounts highly secure. How to get started: [Set Up Passkey in Microsoft Authenticator](#).

OneDrive Quick Reference Tips & Tricks

Top Tips & Tricks for Using OneDrive Effectively

- Access Files in Teams: Open OneDrive files from the Shared tab or the OneDrive app within Microsoft Teams.
- Version History: Restore previous versions of files (great for accidental overwrites).
- Files On Demand: Save disk space by keeping files online only or marking important files "Always keep on this device."
- Secure Sharing: Set expiration dates and passwords for shared links, especially for sensitive content.
- Share Links Instead of Attachments: Send a OneDrive link to avoid multiple versions of the same file.
- Use the Recycle Bin: Deleted files can be restored for up to 93 days from the recycle bin in OneDrive Online.
- Work Offline: Files marked "Always keep on this device" remain available without internet access.
- Mobile Access: Use the OneDrive mobile app to scan documents, upload photos, and access files on the go.

File Sharing & Collaboration Best Practices

- Check Link Permissions: Use View vs. Edit wisely.
- Avoid "Anyone" Links for Sensitive Data: Prefer People in your organization or Specific people.
- Real-Time Collaboration: Multiple users can edit Word, Excel, and PowerPoint files simultaneously.
- File Locking Awareness: Some file types (e.g., older Excel formats) may lock when opened by another user.

Storage & Organization Tips

- Monitor Storage Quota: Large files and video content can quickly consume space.
- Moving keeps a single file; copying creates duplicates.
- Use Folders Strategically: Organize files logically to make sharing and syncing easier.
- Search Is Powerful: OneDrive search looks inside documents, not just file names.

Zoom Pro Tip

What is Schedule in Zoom Workplace?

The schedule button on your Zoom Workplace home screen is a core feature that lets you set up future meetings and configure meeting details, time, and security settings directly from the desktop app.

Key Features of Schedule

- Meeting Configuration: Set the topic, date, time, and duration of the meeting.
- Recurring Meetings: Create meetings that repeat daily, weekly, or monthly.
- Security Controls: Enable a passcode or a Waiting Room to secure the meeting.

How to Use Schedule in Zoom Workplace

- Sign in to the Zoom Workplace app
- Select the Home tab
- Select the schedule button
- Enter the meeting details and security controls
- Select Save

Alternatively, you can access this feature by selecting the plus (+) icon in the top header to the right of the search bar or search icon and selecting Schedule Event from the dropdown menu. For more info, read the Zoom article, "[Scheduling Meetings](#)."

Hump Day Hacks

Hump Day Hack resources can be found on the [Hump Day Hacks Resource page](#) in Team Dynamix. April's hacks included a Tech Tuesday follow-up to Excel in Microsoft Excel: Practical Tools for Data-Centered Tasks, sorting and filtering data in Excel, customizing the quick access toolbar in PowerPoint, and renaming Zoom meetings, hosts and participants. Hump Day Hacks are 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 May's "[How to Design a Digital Newsletter from Start to Finish](#)" Tech Tuesday? Check out the recording and resources.





LeadAR

iLEAD

The fifth iLEAD seminar for Cohort 5 took them to Hope. Two participants share their experiences there.

Hands-On Research and Real-World Leadership

By Brandon Wodka, director of Rosen Center Station - Agricultural Experiment Station

Our first stop was the Southwest Research and Extension Center (SWREC) in Hope, where we were welcomed by the director, Dr. Daniel Rivera. We started the morning learning about the scale of cattle research at SWREC and the role their roughly 200-head beef cattle herd plays in supporting producers across the state. We also got into the differences between stocker cattle and beef cattle, along with some of the real challenges the industry is facing today. Read more details [here](#).



Rachel Chaney Dillon, Rita Watson, and Tyler Caston practice their leadership skills with an almost impossible building exercise.

Leadership, Learning, and a Little Strawberry Jam

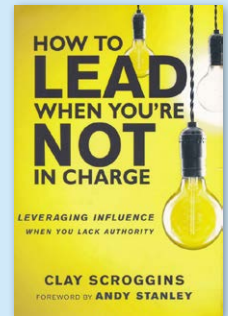
By Samantha Barker, video conferencing manager

The iLead Cohort V began our second day of this session at Hempstead Hall on the University of Arkansas Hope-Texarkana campus. Hempstead Hall is a beautiful, large meeting and event facility with many amenities available to students and the community. There was a Plumbing Inspectors Training School event going on just down the hall from us. The main lobby featured a very large glass chandelier by Arkansas artist James Hayes, titled “Visions of Harmony, Colors of Hope.” Read more details [here](#).

Cultivating Leadership with Extension

Cultivating Leadership with Extension-How to Lead When You Are Not In Charge

A recent episode of the Cultivating Leadership with Extension podcast features Dr. Julie Robinson reviewing Clay Scroggins’ book “*How to Lead When You’re Not in Charge: Leveraging Influence When You Lack Authority*,” with co-host Dr. Steve Siegelin facilitating the conversation. Together they explore how the book speaks directly to extension professionals and others who must lead without formal authority, while still providing a clear summary of Scroggins’ central ideas. Read the highlights [here](#). Watch the recording [here](#). ■



PEARS Update

The Office of Organizational Accountability and Evaluation (OOAE) thanks everyone for completing their PEARS trainings and for continued diligence with monthly PEARS reporting.

There are some issues with the PEARS site function. Sites aren’t always saving once they’re entered into the system. We are diligently working with Canopy to get this corrected. Thank you for your patience as we navigate this setback. ■

EHC Attica Club

Members of the Randolph County Extension Homemakers Council (EHC) Attica Club use their seamstress skills to benefit the Randolph County Sheriff's Office — by mending, hemming, and patching prisoner uniforms used by the department.

Over several work sessions, EHC members spent 87 volunteer hours repairing and reinforcing 72 uniforms. Each garment was handled with attention to detail to ensure durability and extended use.

The value of their community service work is estimated at \$1,656 in cost savings to Randolph County.

This project reflects the Attica Club's ongoing commitment to serving its community through practical skills and teamwork. Members took pride in contributing their time

and talents to support local operations and reduce expenses for the county.

The club plans to continue its partnership with the sheriff's office by assisting with future repair needs, including both prisoner uniforms and officer uniforms as needed. Their efforts highlight the positive impact Extension Homemakers make through service, dedication and community engagement. ■



From L to R: Wendy Ward and Mary Billeau, Connie Trublood and Judy Downs.

Annual Spring Steak Feed Fundraiser



Block and Bridle Club students prepare to serve steaks and potatoes during the Steak Feed!

The Block and Bridle Club and Meats Quiz Bowl team hosted a \$10 steak lunch April 30 in the Agricultural, Food & Life Sciences Building on campus to raise money.

The Steak Feed is a tradition in the Animal Science Department and something students and staff look forward to every year. The Meats Quiz Bowl team also hosted a dessert silent auction. More than 200 steaks and a few porkchops were served, and the dessert auction raised more than \$2,200 for the groups.

Big thanks to faculty, staff and graduate students for their dessert donations and to Dr. Janeal Yancey and Dr. Beth Kegley for coordinating. ■

Credit Union

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Did you know that once you are a member of the Cooperative Extension Service Federal Credit Union (CESFCU), you are always a member, even if you change jobs?

Membership Eligibility

- All CES employees, current and retired
- Immediate family members of CES employees, current and retired
- Volunteers of CES departments and organizations

CESFCU now has easier ways for members to electronically make withdrawals, deposits and payments through Online Banking and Mobile App.

- Members can complete Bank to Bank transfers to and from CESFCU and external banks.



- CESFCU has added Mobile Deposit as an option for members to complete deposits and to make loan payments.

NOTE: Not all transactions, accounts and loans are eligible for these services.

For more information, visit www.cesfcu.org, email contactcesfcu@uada.edu, or call 501-671-2038. ■

Soybean Science Challenge Awards



The Soybean Science Challenge presented awards to high school students for their soybean-focused research projects at the 72nd Annual Arkansas State Science Fair at the University of Central Arkansas on April 3.

This year, 46 projects by 55 students qualified to compete in the Challenge at their regional science fair. Fifteen projects were invited to compete at the State Science Fair, with 13 presenting. Drs. Jeremy Ross, Mike Daniels and Terry Spurlock from Extension served as state judges.

The Challenge recognized the best three soybean research projects in the state, with the first-place project awarded \$1,000; second place, \$500; and honorable mention, \$250. The winning students' teacher-mentors were awarded \$300, \$200 and \$100, respectively.

The winners were:

- **1st Place** – AgriCast: A Comprehensive Deep Learning Approach Towards In-Season Crop Yield Forecasts Using Multi-Source Environmental Data by Bennet C., Little Rock Central High School. Teacher-Mentor: Lee Conrad
- **2nd Place** – Effects of Various Cooking Methods on Soybean Antioxidant Retention with DPPH Evaluation



by Alisa M., Little Rock Central High School. Teacher-Mentor: Mary “Beth” Maris

- **Honorable Mention** – Using Different Priming Methods on Glycine Max to Yield the Best Results and Create a Drought-Tolerant yet Cost-Effective Solution to Water Depletion in the Delta Region for Arkansas Farmers by Ariana S., Pulaski Academy. Teacher-Mentor: Melissa Hopkins

Program director Dr. Julie Robinson, program associate Keith Harris, and curriculum specialist Diedre Young presented the awards on behalf of the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board and the Cooperative Extension Service. ■

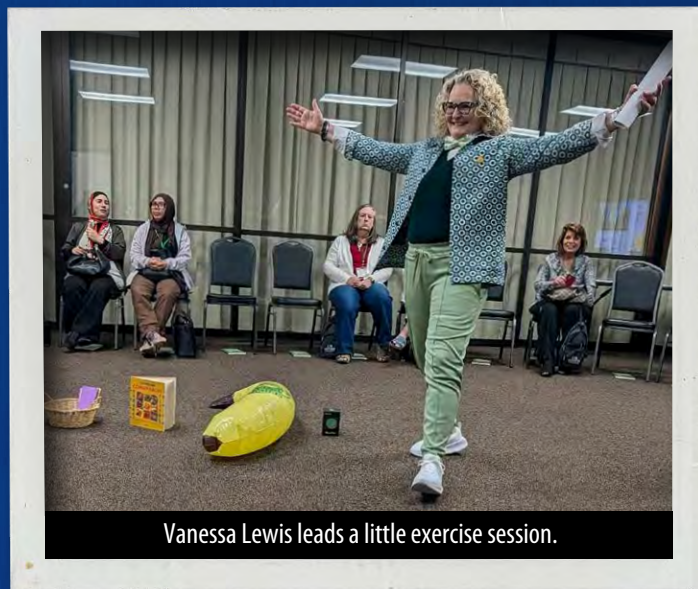
Support Staff Conference

This year's Staff Conference, held April 23-24 at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center, provided 25 sessions for professional and personal development to 175 attendees, the conference's largest in-person attendance.

Top experiences and helpful activities at the conference included great session options and networking. For the first time, the conference featured four symposia sessions of 2.5 hours each instead of the usual hour-long sessions. The symposia covered leadership, communications, personal growth and wellness, and Real Colors. This change seemed well-received by the participants.

The closing session featured a highlight video produced by Ben Aaron, along with a chocolate and lemon cake dessert social and door prize drawings.

The Celebrating Excellence "Be Golden" Support Staff Conference was coordinated and organized by the CPED team, including Steve Siegelin, Doug Whatley, Lynn Wilson, Casey Hill, and Stacey McCullough. Thanks to all those who assisted with the conference – Rita Watson, Keith Harris, Nikki Dawson, Amy Hedges,



Vanessa Lewis leads a little exercise session.

Genean Butler, Brad Runsick, Pia Woods, Buff McCree, Kirby Owens, Keith Jones, Kerry Rodtnick and Ben Aaron.

Departments and individuals created over 20 gift baskets and contributed other items to show their appreciation. Save the date for next year's conference: April 22-23, 2027. ■



Poultry Judging



Contestants grade a class of RTC carcasses.

Youth from across the state traveled to Fayetteville to compete in the State 4-H Poultry Judging contest April 15 at the University of Arkansas poultry processing plant. Competitors showcased judging skills, including judging live production hens, grading Ready To Cook carcasses, and evaluating table eggs for defects and freshness.

Congratulations to the Hot Spring County team for winning the Intermediate division and to Benton County for winning the Senior division. The Benton County team will represent Arkansas at the national contest in Louisville, Kentucky, in November. ■

Connecting Youth to the Great Outdoors

Prairie County 4-H had a busy April filled with hands-on learning and community engagement. The annual Conservation Day provided youth with opportunities to explore natural resources, wildlife, and environmental stewardship through interactive activities. Prairie County extension agents Josh Hambrick and Jacob Holloway assisted Prairie County H-G program assistant Amanda Sinkey in leading the day's events.

Throughout the month, Sinkey led Fishing in the



Part of the participants fishing.

Natural State (FINS) lessons at local libraries. The lessons introduced youth to the basics of fishing, water conservation and outdoor skills, while encouraging an appreciation for Arkansas's natural resources.

On April 25, Prairie County 4-H hosted the Muffins and Minnows fishing event. Prairie County Farm Bureau sponsored breakfast, and the Arkansas Forestry Commission shared educational information with participants. With over 200 attendees, the event provided families with a chance to enjoy a morning of fishing, learning, and making memories together. Events like these highlight Prairie County 4-H's commitment to providing meaningful experiences that connect youth to the outdoors and their community. ■



One of the big catches on the day.

Walk Across Arkansas

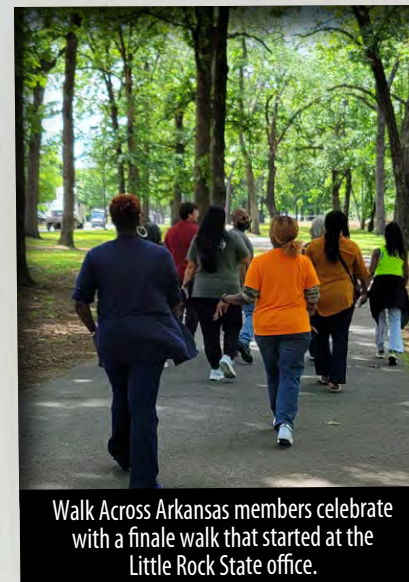
Inspiring Healthier Communities One Step at a Time

The Walk Across Arkansas (WAA) spring season ended May 8 with a celebratory finale walk at the Little Rock State office under beautiful sunny skies. WAA is a free, eight-week, team-based physical activity program that encourages Arkansans to move more, build healthy habits, and support one another through friendly competition. Teams of three to eight participants set physical activity goals and logged their minutes of physical activity. The program encourages all forms of physical activity and the creation of positive memories with teammates.

Walk Across Arkansas teams have demonstrated increases in physical activity levels and quality of life, highlighting the program's success in encouraging Arkansans to adopt healthier, more active lifestyles.

Regular physical activity reduces the risk of serious health conditions such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and certain cancers.

The finale walk was a wonderful way to celebrate the accomplishments, dedication and teamwork of everyone who participated. Details about the Walk Across Arkansas fall season will be shared later. ■



Walk Across Arkansas members celebrate with a finale walk that started at the Little Rock State office.

Pumpkin Jack Lives

In October 2025, the “Pumpkin Jack” program brought hands-on learning to more than 200 elementary students in three school districts across Sebastian County. Inspired by the book *Pumpkin Jack*, the project helped students observe a pumpkin’s life cycle from fall to spring right in their classrooms.

After exploring the inside of a pumpkin and learning about its parts, 4-H agent Megan Adkins and program assistant Allisyn Stratton helped students place it in a clear tub filled with potting soil. Sealed to create a greenhouse-like environment, the container allowed classes to safely observe decomposition over several months.

Teachers integrated the project into creative writing, scientific observation, and data collection. As the pumpkin slowly decayed, students tracked changes and discussed the science behind the transformation. By late February



From L to R: Pumpkin Jack in October 2026; Sprouts emerged in March 2026; Megan Adkins teaching.

2026, green sprouts emerged from the soil as seeds took root in the warm, moist environment — a powerful, real-life example of the life cycle they had studied.

In the spring, county 4-H staff returned to open the tubs with students, examine the thriving plants, and reflect on what they had learned. Through “Pumpkin Jack”, students experienced science in action, building curiosity, patience and a deeper understanding of nature’s life cycles. ■

Workforce Development 101

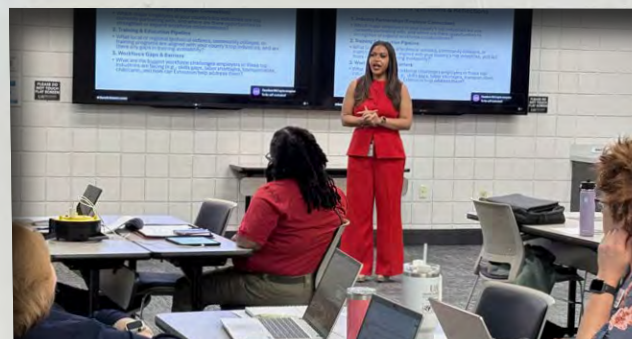
In March and April, 26 extension agents, leaders, faculty and staff joined together for a two-part training focused on community-centered ways to support workforce development on the county, regional, and state level through UADA-Extension. The training aligns with the UADA Strategic Plan for Growing: Stronger, which prioritizes workforce development as essential to strengthening communities. Participants left with practical strategies and tools to support workforce development in their counties, positioning them to serve Arkansas communities better and drive long-term economic and workforce resilience.

Dr. Hunter P. Goodman and Danielle Watson hosted a two-part Workforce Development 101 In-Service training to strengthen Extension professionals’ capacity to support workforce readiness and economic vitality across Arkansas.

The first session introduced participants to the FORWARD (Future Opportunities for Rural Workforce and Rural Development) curriculum, developed by Purdue Extension. Implemented by agents Terrie James (Hempstead County), Hazelene McCray (Drew County), and program associate Danielle Watson, this resource provides practical

tools to help address rural workforce challenges and build stronger community workforce systems.

The second session focused on application, as participants analyzed county-level data, identified key workforce stakeholders, and explored Extension’s role as a connector and convener. Interactive activities encouraged participants to map partnerships and identify opportunities for collaboration. Guest speakers highlighted workforce-focused Extension programs and shared insights from organizations working to strengthen the state’s workforce. ■



Danielle Watson helped host a Workforce Development 101 In-service training in March and April.

Cross County Extension Hosts Youth Ag Day

The Cross County Extension Office teamed up with the Cross County Farm Bureau and Cross County Farm Bureau Women's Committee to offer a Youth Ag Day at Cross County Elementary, Wynne Intermediate and Wynne Primary Schools.

Over the course of three days, some 1,400 students visited 10 stations to learn



Kids at the Youth Ag Day gain some valuable insight.

about equipment, local crops, rice milling, animals, beef and grain byproducts and their use.

At the "Arkansas Ag Match-Up Relay" station, students had a blast racing to match everyday products made from four crops grown in Cross County. We had a great time and can't wait to do it again! ■

Hot Spring County 4-H

The Hot Spring County 4-H program received the inaugural Community Organization of the Year award April 30 from the Malvern/Hot Spring County Chamber of Commerce, recognizing the organization's integral role in youth development.

"The first winner of this award has a legacy as one of Hot Spring County's most historic and impactful youth programs," said Lance Howell, executive director of

the Malvern/Hot Spring County Chamber of Commerce. "Each year, young participants are involved in a variety of service projects that benefit all areas of the county."

Rachel Bearden, Hot Spring County staff chair, said the county 4-H program has eight clubs, more than 100 active youth members and 20 adult leaders. In 2025, Hot Spring County 4-H members contributed more than 3,700 volunteer hours in community service.

"This is an incredible honor for the Hot Spring County Extension program," Bearden said. "The 4-H program has been leading the county in youth service projects for the last several years.

4-H volunteers can be seen at most major community events, not only in Malvern, but across the county as well." Read [more](#). ■



The Hot Spring County 4-Hers are presented the Community Organization of the Year Award.



Grants & Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
Establishing a Long-Term Rotational Study	3,068	Ana Morales-Ona Smith	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Rice Discovery Program	10,000	Ashlyn Ussery	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Pope County Sea Perch Team Program	3,089	Ashton Lancaster	Ensono
Managing Insects in Arkansas Rice	26,053	Ben Thrash	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Drone Applications in Integrated Pest Management: Fertility, Weed Control, Insect Control, and Disease Management	12,840	Bob Scott	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
A Team Approach to Improved Weed Management in Rice	81,562	Bob Scott	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Diflufenican Tank Mixes for Weed Efficacy in Soybean (Work Order No. 27)	7,315	Bob Scott	Bayer CropScience LP
Rice Enterprise Budgets	7,500	Breana Watkins	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Economic Impact Analysis of the Rintoul Industries, Inc. Manufacturing Expansion in Clarksville, Arkansas	5,996	Frank Seo	City of Clarksville
Naturally Ready: A Collective Disaster Readiness Plan for Arkansas	83,843	Hunter Goodman	University of Arkansas at Little Rock
Impact of Specific Agronomic and Post-Harvest Practices on Rice Quality and Milling Yields	2,820	Jarrold Hardke	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Managing Insects in Arkansas Rice	21,692	Jarrold Hardke	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Arkansas Rice Performance Trials	83,700	Jarrold Hardke	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Arkansas Rice Variety Advancement Trials	86,400	Jarrold Hardke	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Agronomic Production Practices for Rice	93,600	Jarrold Hardke	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
DD50 Thermal Unit Thresholds and Seeding Date Effects for New Rice Cultivars	60,300	Jarrold Hardke	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Nitrogen Recommendations for New Rice Cultivars	58,500	Jarrold Hardke	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Rice Research Verification Program	109,850	Jarrold Hardke	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Validation of In-Season Tissue Sampling for Rice Nutrient Management	15,311	Jarrold Hardke	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Drone Applications in Integrated Pest Management: Fertility, Weed Control, Insect Control, and Disease Management	16,429	Jason Davis	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Quantifying Nitrogen Credits from Soybean (Year 3)	20,000	Jeremy Ross	Mississippi State University
Increased Invasive Plant Removal Capacity	25,000	John Pennington	Arkansas Agriculture Department
Future Ag Leaders	5,000	Julie Robinson	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Expanding Potential Market Demand for and Access to Whole Soy Foods through Nutrition Education (Year 2)	30,000	Leigh Ann Bullington	Mid-South Soybean Board
Sebastian County Shooting Sports 2026	110	Megan Adkins	National Rifle Association Foundation
Edge of Field Water Quality	40,480	Mike Daniels	Long Lake Plantation
Optimizing Rice Irrigation Efficiency Using Advanced Field Measurement Technologies	24,016	Mike Hamilton	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Managing Insects in Arkansas Rice	107,211	Nick Bateman	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Drone Applications in Integrated Pest Management: Fertility, Weed Control, Insect Control, and Disease Management	9,109	Nick Bateman	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Kinrayza Solo and Isoclast Premix in Rice Targeting Rice Delphacid; Efficacy of Kinrayza as a Foliar Application on Rice Targeting Rice Delphacid	13,500	Nick Bateman	Corteva Agriscience LLC
Drone Applications in Integrated Pest Management: Fertility, Weed Control, Insect Control, and Disease Management	10,488	Terry Spurlock	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Determining the Value of the Least Expensive Seed Treatment and In-Furrow Fungicide Combinations to Manage Seedling Disease in Cotton	40,000	Terry Spurlock	Cotton Inc.
A Team Approach to Improved Weed Management in Rice	76,482	Tom Barber	Arkansas Rice Research and Promotion Board
Evaluating Residual Herbicide Options and Timing in Single- and Twin-Row Peanut Production Systems	14,740	Tom Barber	Arkansas Peanut Growers Association
Bayer Work Order No. 25, Protocol HDUSA26KAU	7,980	Tom Barber	Bayer CropScience LP
Diflufenican Tank Mixes for Weed Efficacy in Soybean (Work Order No. 26)	7,315	Tom Barber	Bayer CropScience LP
Efficacy and Agronomy trial targeting various species of Corn Nematodes	12,000	Travis Faske	Corteva Agriscience LLC
Evaluating Late-Season Foliar and In-Furrow Fungicides to Manage Peanut Diseases in Arkansas	12,000	Travis Faske	Arkansas Peanut Growers Association
Develop Disease Management Strategies for Peanut Production in Arkansas	60,096	Travis Faske	Arkansas Peanut Growers Association
Efficacy & Crop Safety of Salibro (ID TRAC 2026-0404)	35,100	Travis Faske	BASF Corporation
Efficacy & Crop Safety of Salibro	22,500	Travis Faske	Corteva Agriscience LLC
BCS-735 / ISY Corn Foliar Targets - Efficacy and Yield (Work Order No. 20)	18,620	Travis Faske	Bayer CropScience LP
BCS-735 / ISY / PTZ Alternatives in Soybeans - Foliar Diseases, Efficacy, and Yield (Work Order No. 21)	18,620	Travis Faske	Bayer CropScience LP
USF0115, ISY, Bixafen / Foliar Fungicides in Peanuts - Efficacy and Yield (Work Order No. 22)	9,310	Travis Faske	Bayer CropScience LP
Velum Complete N-7975 in Peanuts / Nematode - Efficacy and Yield (Work Order No. 23)	6,650	Travis Faske	Bayer CropScience LP
Prohexadione Calcium Growth Regulator Rate Effects on Arkansas Peanut	14,000	Zachary Treadway	Arkansas Peanut Growers Association

TOTAL AWARDS FOR APRIL 2026: \$1,430,194

EHC Members Attend World Conference

The Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council (AEHC) was well represented at the 31st Triennial World Conference of the Associated Country Women of the World held in Ottawa, Canada.

ACWW is an international affiliate organization of Extension Homemakers and the National Volunteer Outreach Network.

Dr. Laura Hendrix, extension personal finance specialist and AEHC state advisor, attended along with AEHC state officers Dot Dunn Hart, president-elect, and Karen Bell Fox, secretary. Hart and Fox were among the delegates from 50 countries who voted on global initiatives regarding economic stability, childcare deserts, vaccinations, women's health and more.

ACWW was founded in 1929 to bring together rural women from all over the world, and in so doing,



From L to R: Karen Bell Fox, Dot Dunn Hart, and Laura Hendrix.

address the challenges they face. ACWW's membership spans 82 countries. They have addressed more than 180 policy resolutions to improve the quality of life for rural women. ■

Personnel Changes



Welcome Aboard:

Kalli Smith – County Extension Agent - 4-H/Family & Consumer Science, Calhoun County

Kylie Harris – County Extension Agent - 4-H/Family & Consumer Science, Searcy County

Zackery Holloway – County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Jackson County

Luis Rangel – EFNEP Program Assistant - Family & Consumer Science, Benton County

Farewell to:

Anna Grace McCarty – County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Pulaski County

Michael Matson – Accounting & Compliance Specialist, LRSO

Graham Darden Peterson – Director of Facilities Management, LRSO

Savannah Lindsey – Administrative Specialist II, LRSO

Shanna Loyd – 4-H Program - Assistant, Searcy County