

# BLUE LETTER

The University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Monthly Letter

No. 3761 • September 2015

## FROM THE DIRECTOR

Next month, we'll embark on a partnership that is unprecedented in our history. Our Family and Consumer Sciences faculty and agents will be taking the first steps in a two-year, \$624,978 grant from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to reduce obesity in four communities where 40 percent or more of the adults are obese. While the communities have yet to be selected, the counties have been: Chicot, Craighead, Monroe and Jefferson.

The initiative has three parts: direct education to enable better food choices and increased physical activity; a policy component to improve access to healthier foods; and a community-wide piece to increase access to places like parks and trails or other public facilities for physical activity.

Anne Sortor said the grant, which is also playing out in seven other states, is really a departure for the CDC. It marks the first time the CDC has looked to the extension service as a lead partner, instead of its more traditional allies, such as public health departments or colleges of public health. Lisa Washburn will serve as the lead on the project, with co-PIs, Serena Fuller, LaVona Traywick and Rosemary Rodibaugh.

I want to congratulate Anne and Lisa on bringing this CDC grant to Arkansas and will look forward to the good work to come.

– Tony Windham

## Cordy Ramer receives overdue medals

Friends and family gathered in Rison on Sept. 2 to witness as U.S. Rep. Bruce Westerman presented Cordy Ramer, Jr., with six medals he earned for his service as a bombardier in World War II.

Ramer served 30 years with the Cooperative Extension Service, starting as assistant county agent in Lonoke County in 1954 and retiring as staff chair in Dallas County in 1983.

During the war, Ramer flew 29 combat missions, logging more than 175 flying hours before being shot down over enemy territory and taken by the Germans as a prisoner of war. He spent nine months in a German prison camp.

According to the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, Ramer's son John worked with Westerman's office to ensure his father received the medals due him but never received because of missing paperwork.

Westerman said, "On behalf of a thankful nation, I presented Lt. Ramer with the commendations he earned, where I was able to personally say, 'Thank you.'" ■



Cordy Ramer, Jr., with U.S. Rep. Bruce Westerman.

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DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE  
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System

University of Arkansas,  
United States Department of  
Agriculture, and County  
Governments Cooperating

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DR. TONY WINDHAM  
Associate Vice President for  
Agriculture - Extension and  
Director, Cooperative Extension Service

# 2016 Arkansas 4-H state officers elected

4-H and Youth Development is pleased to announce the 2016 Arkansas 4-H state officers. Arkansas has seven 4-H state officers including three district officers and four at-large officers.

In order to be a state 4-H officer, youth must have demonstrated a high degree of responsibility and leadership ability in previous 4-H involvement, and each candidate must be dedicated to the total Extension education program.

Officer candidates progress through an election process that takes place during the District and State 4-H O-Ramas. Each candidate makes a campaign speech, and their peers vote using voting machines provided by local election commissions. Additionally, the presidential candidates participate in an interview.

The officer team attended a three-day training in early August to prepare and practice developing effective public speaking skills to project a desirable image of 4-H at all times. They are provided opportunities throughout the year to hone these skills as they network with other stakeholders and agencies with the same mission. Angie Freel serves as their adviser and Leigh Helms serves as their chaperone. ■



The 2016 Arkansas State 4-H Officers are, left to right, Autumn Gregg, Ozark District vice-president (Washington County); Laurel Mayo, officer at large (Benton County); Haley Burden, officer at large (Benton County); Travis Clark, president (Faulkner County); Hope McAlee, Delta District vice-president (White County); Alexandria Hunter, Ouachita District vice-president (Clark County); and Mary Alice Cole, officer at large (Izard County).

## Share your photos and videos with me!

In an effort to gather more relevant and timely content for our Facebook ([www.facebook.com/uaex.edu](http://www.facebook.com/uaex.edu)) and Instagram ([https://instagram.com/uaex\\_edu/](https://instagram.com/uaex_edu/)) accounts, I would like for you to send me photos and SHORT videos of what you're doing in your county or program area that would be of interest to our followers. **Be fun, be personable and, if possible, be IN your own video or photo!**

Successful videos and photos are often shot using iPhones or smartphones. If you are speaking during the video, make sure you can be heard clearly.



### Ideas on what to send me:

- Videos of 4-H kids (with their parents' permission)
- How-to videos (how to chop an onion, Mediterranean cooking school videos, how to plant fall veggies).
- Recipe videos are great too
- ID'ing weeds or plant diseases (how to spot a disease on a plant)
- Seasonal/fall videos or your county fair!
- Farming videos – harvesting crops, planting seeds, scouting for bugs, etc.
- Animal or insect photos/videos

Facebook video posts: 1 minute or shorter

Instagram video posts: 15 seconds or shorter

Text them to me at 501-766-3785 along with who you are, your county and a brief 1-3 sentences about what's happening in your photo or video. Thanks for sharing! ■

– Amy Cole

Save the Date

**State Faculty Conference**

December 7, 2015 • Little Rock State Office • 10:00 a.m.

# Ham wins NACAA Distinguished Service Award

Cindy Ham, county extension agent - staff chair, Franklin County, received the 2015 Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents during their Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference held July 12-16 in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

This award is given to agents with 10 years or more of service in Cooperative Extension Service who have exhibited excellence in the field of extension education. It is only presented to 2 percent of the county extension educators each year.

Ham has worked 17 years in two different Arkansas counties. For the past 15 years, she has been in Franklin County. Cindy conducts educational programs in the areas of livestock, forages, horticulture, community development and 4-H. Her 4-H program work focuses on livestock, STEM, leadership and citizenship education. She enjoys spending her leisure time at the family farm where they raise cattle, show goats and show pigs. ■



Cindy Ham receives NACAA Distinguished Service Award.

# Fulton Co. 4-H'ers hone robot-building skills

Fulton County senior 4-Hers recently completed a two-day SeaPerch robotics-building workshop under the direction of Fulton County agent Brad Runsick. SeaPerch is a youth robotics program sponsored by the Association for Unmanned Vehicle Systems International and the Office of Naval Research Science & Technology. The purpose of the workshop is to identify senior-age 4-H'ers (14-19) who have an interest in robotics and to teach basic principles of engineering and construction as they relate to robotics.

After successfully completing the construction of the SeaPerch robot, the team put it through its paces in the local city pool (see video at <http://bit.ly/1UrOeb9>). They enhanced their experience by modifying the robot to retrieve items from the pool, as well as attaching a waterproof underwater camera to document the robot's trip around the pool. The Fulton County team intends to take their robot to compete at regional and national level contests. ■



Fulton County 4-H'ers work together to build the framework that would become their submersible SeaPerch robot. (Left to right: Cameron S., Caleb S. and Caleb H.)

# Take a virtual field trip to the Gardens of the Galaxy

Go behind the scenes and into the world of two UofA scientists working in the biotechnology field. "Gardens of the Galaxy: A Battle of Food for the Future" is the topic of the 2015 Soybean Science Challenge virtual field trip to be broadcast live over Zoom on Tuesday, Sept. 29. Arkansas high school science teachers are registering now to take their classes on this unique journey to a UofA plant pathology lab and greenhouse. Scientists Dr. Ken Korth and Dr. Burt Bluhm are the presenters for this free 40-minute live interactive webinar. Here are five reasons for you to register:

- Find out the science behind all the fuss (GMOs).
- Visit a plant pathology lab and never leave your office.
- See a gene blasted.
- Learn from plant doctors (no blood involved).

A live question and answer session for students with our virtual field trip scientists is part of the webinar.

Over 400 Arkansas students and teachers joined us for the 2014 Soybean Science Challenge virtual field trip.

Have a stellar experience and learn more about plant pathology research and the use of genetically modified organisms.

Register at <https://uaex.zoom.us/webinar/register/50decb0f5c7803c87510d14dfea9e911>. ■

**What's new in publications? Find out at:**

<http://www.uaex.edu/publications/new.aspx>

# UAPB Agriculture Field Day set for Sept. 17

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Agriculture Field Day will be Thursday, Sept. 17, at the UAPB Agriculture Research Station on Oliver Road, off University Drive.

The field day begins at 7:30 a.m. with registration and welcoming remarks at 8:30 a.m. Tractor tours will take participants to educational stops. The first tour leaves at 9 a.m. and the last one at 10:30 a.m. Research scientists and Extension specialists will be at each stop to explain their research, give updates and answer questions.

Demonstration stop topics include sweet potatoes, peppers, cowpeas, woody ornamentals, high tunnels and livestock. Some of the specific topics at the stops will be summer squash in high tunnels, late planted summer pinto bean varieties in southern Arkansas, mixed species stocking and management of cattle and goats, and effects of nitrogen, boron and zinc fertilizers and previous cover crops on sweet potatoes.

Participants will visit the sweet potato foundation seed/biotechnology greenhouse, the value-added products center and the high tunnels.

Lunch will be provided by Tyson Foods, Inc. but only with a ticket included with registration materials.

Registration is free, but pre-registration is requested to aid in planning. To pre-register, contact Margaret Taylor at (870) 575-7144 or [taylorml@uapb.edu](mailto:taylorml@uapb.edu). ■

## BENEFITS CORNER

### Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

Employees shouldn't have to make a choice between their jobs and taking care of family members who are seriously ill. FMLA is a federal law intended to promote a healthy balance between work and family responsibilities. The University provides up to 12 weeks (480 hours) per year of **unpaid, job-protected leave** to eligible employees for certain family and medical reasons.

Employees must use accrued paid sick and/or annual leave concurrently with approved FMLA which counts against the 12 week FMLA calendar year allowance. Employees on maternity leave may elect to use leave without pay without exhausting accumulated sick and annual leave.

Employees who cannot report to work for more than three consecutive working days due to a serious personal or family illness may be eligible for FMLA.

To be eligible for FMLA, you must have been employed by the state (state agency or higher education institution) for at least 12 months and must have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period prior to the FMLA leave.

**When you're absent more than three consecutive working days, your supervisor must contact Human Resources (501-671-2017) to start the FMLA process.**

Visit <http://www.uaex.edu/extension-policies/employee-benefits/leave-holidays/cesp7-18.aspx> for details. ■

**DIVISION AWARDS LUNCHEON**  
January 8, 2016 • Arkansas 4-H Center, Ferndale

# Meet the *new* employees!



**Jackson Alexander**  
Fund Development Associate  
Development Office

## **What's your background?**

I grew up on a small cattle farm in southwest Oklahoma and was involved in 4-H, FFA and FCCLA, where I served at the local, district and state levels. I also served as a 2010 National Beef Ambassador for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association and was Oklahoma's Outstanding Junior Cattleman. After high school, I attended Oklahoma State University and graduated in 2013. I hold a bachelor of science degree in agricultural sciences and natural resources with a major in agricultural communications and a minor in agricultural economics. I served as a graduate research and teaching assistant at the University of Arkansas before taking a full-time position with the Division of Agriculture. This fall, I will complete my master of science in agricultural, food and life sciences with a major in agricultural and extension education.

## **What knowledge, skills and/or experience are you bringing to Extension?**

With a background heavily steeped in both agriculture and leadership development, I plan to use my communications and leadership skills to showcase what 4-H and CES can offer to all Arkansans. This being my first full-time position, I'd like to jump in head first, roll up my sleeves and get to work. I think my undergraduate and graduate degrees have given me the tools necessary to succeed in this position focused on relationship building and promoting our brand. I think this opportunity is truly suited for someone with a background similar to mine because it takes an individual with a passion for leadership development, coupled with a knack for communicating with others.

## **What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

Two things my colleagues should know about me: (1) After my wife, Amie, finishes law school, I plan to start a doctoral program. (2) I have a somewhat ridiculous obsession with the University of Alabama and all that is Crimson Tide related.

## **What would you like to accomplish your first year at Extension?**

During my first year with CES, I want to get out into the counties to make myself known to our agents. I want to show our agents that folks in the state office truly work to support them and their various program areas. Not being a native Arkansan, I hope to become more familiar with all that Arkansas agriculture has to offer.

## **What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

I began to consider a career with Extension after interning in the Fund Development Office during the summer of 2014. Coming from two land-grant universities, OSU and UofA, I knew what land-grants did but didn't truly have an appreciation for the scope of our work until I was a part of the organization. Today, I am a true advocate for all things land-grant related, and I love working to support the mission of CES. I believe CES plays a pivotal role across the nation, especially in all 75 counties here in The Natural State. What we do each day has an impact on the social and economic well-being of people from Texarkana to Jonesboro and everywhere in between, and I'm excited to say I'm a part of that.

## **What are your interests or hobbies outside work?**

If watching SEC football is a hobby, it's probably my biggest one. My wife and I love to spend time with friends and family and attend Razorback football games whenever we can. We are becoming more active in our church and want to get involved in the Cabot community, where we live. ■



**Shaura Ivy**  
Administrative Assistant  
Drew County

## **What's your background?**

I was raised in rural Monticello in Coleman, Arkansas. I had my first experience with Cooperative Extension through 4-H. Our project was raising a strawberry garden, and I participated in an oratory competition at UAM and won third place.

In junior high, my family moved to Little Rock. I graduated from Parkview Fine Arts/Science Magnet. I attended the University of Central Arkansas as a

prepharmacy and psychology major. I graduated from the University of Arkansas at Monticello in 2001 with a BBA with a concentration in management/marketing. I was previously employed as a project coordinator with the Arkansas Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Association, a nonprofit organization, with Alltel Communication/Verizon Wireless as an order processing specialist and in private health care. Most of my background is in customer service and office administration. I am a very loving and caring person and I'm extremely family oriented. I enjoy serving at my church, The Word Church Ministries in Monticello. I also enjoy reading, cooking, outdoor activities associated with water and traveling. I am a very social being who spends most of my time alone.

**What knowledge, skills and/or experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I have worked in customer service in telecommunications and an administrative assistant for a small non-profit organization. My interpersonal and organizational skills are a plus when working with small-town Arkansans.

**What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

I'm hard-working, I love people and I'm a very curious person who loves to be exposed to learning new things.

**What would you like to accomplish your first year at Extension?**

I hope to learn as much as I can about the services that Extension offers and make the citizens of Drew County more aware of the services that Extension offers in this area. I want to ensure that the Drew County Extension office is running effectively and is able to properly service our constituents.

**What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

I was impressed with the variety of services that Extension offers. I grew up in a rural town and was exposed to Extension at a young age. I'm excited to be able to assist the people in my county, both young and old.

**What are your interests or hobbies outside work?**

Outside of work, I love socializing with my family and friends. I enjoy reading, listening to music and singing, traveling and cooking. I also like swimming, fishing and boat riding. ■



**Linda McCargo**  
Administrative Specialist  
Animal Science

**• What's your background?**

As a kid in New York and later in Pennsylvania, I knew I wanted a job that took me outdoors. With an A.A.S. in animal husbandry and B.A. in anthropology, I've managed to do that most of my working life.

**• What knowledge, skills and experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I am a careful worker, paying attention to details and doing complete work.

**• What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

Someday I'd like to live on a houseboat for a year, plying the waterways of foreign countries.

**• What would you like to accomplish your first year at Extension?**

I hope to learn more about what the different extension departments do so I can help the public get more out of their interactions with us.

**• -What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

Cooperative extension is a great way to get the scientific research out of the lab and into the field, where it can do some good. I'm glad to be able to help that happen so everyone can benefit.

**• What are your interests or hobbies outside of work?**

I enjoy cross-country skiing, reading classic fiction, history and gardening. Having just moved to Arkansas a year ago, my family is still exploring this area, too. ■



**Elia Reyes**  
EFNEP Program Assistant  
Benton County

**What's your background?**

I moved to northwest Arkansas from New Mexico. I was a Spanish teacher for four years and worked in Woman Ministries as a director for many years. In 2006 I began working for the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension

Service as an EFNEP program assistant in Washington County. Celia Boon, FCS agent, was my EFNEP supervisor. Along with the EFNEP program assistant in Benton County, the three of us developed the first Hispanic EFNEP nutrition program in the state for Washington and Benton County families. It has grown and become very successful in the past nine years. I had to resign when I moved back to New Mexico. Fortunately, this year I moved back and there was an opening for a program assistant in Benton County. I applied, interviewed for the position and began work June 16.

**What knowledge, skills and/or experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I have an associate degree in theology that has allowed me to teach at all age levels. I am a proven leader with over 20 years of experience in teaching. My experience in having worked in EFNEP before will be an easy transition for my work in the Hispanic community.

**What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

I am a wife, mother and grandmother and love spending time with my family. It is very special to be working with my many old and new Extension friends.

**What would you like to accomplish your first year at Extension?**

I want to continue training and learning the latest nutrition and healthy guidelines in order to educate the EFNEP adults and children in Benton County.

**What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

I have enjoyed working for Extension in the past and believe in its mission. I love that we can educate the general public in a practical and usable way that will help them be healthy and active.

**What are your interests or hobbies outside work?**

When I am not working or spending time with my family, I love reading a great book. ■

**Grants and contracts**  
for the month ended August 31, 2015

Project Title	Award Amount	Principal Investigator	Granting Agency
4-H Science: Building a 4-H Career Pathway (Cohort 2)	5,000	Angie Blacklaw-Freel	National 4-H Council
UACES Early Care & Education Projects (Best Care, Best Care Connected, Guiding Children Successfully)	237,500	Anne Sortor	Arkansas Department of Education
PTA for Business Firms (Arkansas Procurement Assistance Center)	422,198	Ray Blevins	Department of Defense
South Shore Marion County Youth Leadership	3,000	Renee Myers	South Shore Foundation
Adaptive Management Strategies Education for Woman Woodland Owners	30,000	Tamara Walkingstick	USDA Forest Service
Protocol #NA15P2E003 DHT Efficacy/HTMS Soybeans/Enlist Programs with Sonic	10,000	Tom Barber	Dow AgroSciences LLC
Developing a Comprehensive Management Program for Foliar Diseases of Soybean	5,000	Travis Faske	Southern Illinois University
<b>Total New Awards for August 2015</b>	<b>\$712,698</b>		

# Personnel changes

## Please welcome the following:

### **Jackson Alexander**

Fund Development Associate,  
Development Office, effective July 16,  
2015.

### **Shaura Ivy**

Administrative Specialist, Drew County,  
effective August 3, 2015.

### **Linda McCargo**

Administrative Specialist, Animal Science,  
effective August 10, 2015.

## Extension says goodbye to:

### **Eric Eckert**

Institutional Printer, Print Shop, effective  
August 5, 2015.

### **Melanie Fuhrman**

Program Associate - Soybeans, Crop,  
Soil and Environmental Sciences, effective  
August 10, 2015.

### **Ben Hancock**

Application Developer, Bio and  
Agricultural Engineering, effective  
August 14, 2015.

### **Dana Kelly**

County Extension Agent - Family and  
Consumer Sciences, Randolph County,  
effective August 28, 2015.

### **Rob Kennedy**

Apprentice Tradesman, C.A. Vines Arkansas  
4-H Center, effective August 21, 2015.

### **Rick Korte**

Physical Plant Manager, C.A. Vines  
Arkansas 4-H Center, effective August 18,  
2015.

### **Chanta Pulliam**

4-H Program Assistant, Jefferson County,  
effective August 7, 2015.

### **Dharmendra Saraswat**

Associate Professor/Extension Engineer -  
GeoSpatial, Bio and Agricultural  
Engineering, effective August 14, 2015.

### **Aly Signorelli**

Administrative Specialist, Community  
and Economic Development, effective  
August 11, 2015.

### **VeEtta Simmons**

County Extension Agent - Staff Chair,  
Crittenden County, effective August 3,  
2015.

### **Linda Thompson**

County Extension Agent - Staff Chair,  
Calhoun County, effective August 31,  
2015.