

BL

BLUE LETTER

September 2025

No. 3881



John D. Anderson

From the Director

As I sit down to write this article, rain is pouring down outside my window here in the Little Rock State Office. While the rain will be a welcome relief in much of the state, it will also force an unwelcome pause in what has been a busy harvest season. This has been a challenging year for our row crop producers. Excessive rainfall that delayed planting this spring across most of the state was followed up with hot, dry weather throughout the latter half of the growing season. Despite the challenges, yields appear to be generally good, though not great relative to recent trends (with soybeans being a notable exception: USDA forecasts a record state average yield for soybeans this year of 56 bushels per acre).

It is remarkable to me — having spent most of my career closely following acreage, yield, and price data on our major crops — how much more resilient to environmental stress our crop production systems have become over the years. This, of course, is a testament to the skill and hard work of our farmers. But those of us in Cooperative Extension, and the Land-Grant University system generally, have played a major role in developing and disseminating the tools and information that have supported that resilience. I am afraid that in coming months, we will need to be focused on what we can do to support the resilience — not of our crop yields — but of our farmers,

their families, and their communities. This year is shaping up to be the fourth consecutive year of very low or negative margins for many producers of our major commodity crops. If you are in the Delta or have spent any time at all there in the last few months, you know that tensions are high in the farming community. After this harvest wraps up, many families will be making very difficult decisions about how, or even if, they can continue farming. You may feel like any help you could give to someone facing that situation might seem inadequate. I can relate to that sentiment, but it is not true. Sometimes, the most important thing you can do for someone is to let them know they matter, to their families and communities, irrespective of their present circumstances. Letting the farmer know that he or she is more important, more valuable than their farm can make a world of difference in how they see their situation. We can all do that.

Over the last couple of weeks, Brittney Schrick in the FCS department has sent out links to a number of resources related to recognizing and appropriately responding to the signs of farmer stress. This is a great resource for all of our agents and specialists who work with farmers day in and day out. You may end up making an impact on someone's life that can't be measured in bushels or pounds. ■

INSIDE SCOOP

2. Sowing Seeds of Excellence: Welcome U
3. Beginning Farmers Learn Conservation Practices
4. Communications Station

5. Leadership Log
6. Tech Corner
7. Workday Services Update
- ...And much more!

Sowing Seeds of Excellence: Welcome U



New extension employees were welcomed aboard at the Sowing Seeds of Excellence: Welcome U event on Sept. 10 at the Little Rock State Office.

CPED professional development specialist Steve Siegelin greeted attendees and introduced new employees. Extension Director Dr. John Anderson shared extension's history and foundation, emphasizing the land grant system and extension's role in communities and the U of A System.

New employees were then divided into four tour groups led by iLEAD alumni Jesse Bocksnick,

Genean Butler, Rebecca Simon and Leigh Ann Bullington. Participants visited Communications, CPED, 4-H, FCS and ANR. After a fajita lunch, participants visited the Expo booths, featuring more than 15 extension benefits providers and departments.

Peer-to-peer groups led by extension staff were the highlight of the afternoon. Participants commented on how much they enjoyed the event and appreciated being able to tour the building and see where various departments were located.

4-H Instructor Allison Harman led an Extension Quiz activity by using her Quiz Bowl game. Fun and laughter abounded as the four tour groups vied to punch the buzzer the fastest. The winners received a goodie bag filled with chocolates.

The next Welcome U event is May 20, 2026. ■

Arkansas County EHC

Delivers Dignity Bibs to Arkansas Veterans Hospital

The Extension Homemaker's mission is to empower individuals and families to improve their lives through continuing education, leadership development, and community service. That's why the Arkansas County Extension Homemakers are always looking for another community service project! This summer's project was Dignity Bibs, a clothing protector upcycled from button-down shirts, designed as a stylish alternative to a standard adult bib. EHC members cut out more than 40 dignity bibs at the first workshop and began sewing. At the second workshop, they finished sewing and pressing the dignity bibs to be delivered to the Arkansas Veterans Hospital. ■



The Arkansas County Extension Homemaker's group that worked on the Dignity Bibs project.

Beginning Farmers Learn Conservation Practices

Dozens of beginning farmers from across the state received training in August on implementing natural resource conservation practices in collaboration with staff from their respective county extension offices and the Community, Professional, and Economic Development unit.

Trainings were offered at the Little Rock State Office, Southwest Research and Extension Center (Hempstead County), the University of Arkansas Community College Batesville (Independence County), and in Washington, Pope and Greene counties.

Crop, Soil & Environmental Science program associates Lee Riley and Eric Simon facilitated the workshops, with each training tailored to the needs and interest of attendees. Horticulture instructor Taunya Ernst led a session on high tunnels and urban agriculture. Dr. Amanda Perez, associate professor of food systems and extension food safety specialist, led a session on produce safety, and Brady Rhodes, Farm Service Agency county executive director for Hempstead, Nevada and Clark counties, discussed farm creation and program eligibility.

John Pennington, extension water quality educator, talked about water resource conservation practices, and



Chandler Arel, soil and water conservation instructor, led a session on soil conservation.

Dr. Mike Daniels, Distinguished Professor in Crop, Soil & Environmental Science, also led a presentation on soil and water conservation practices. Dr. Ryan Loy and Dr. Jason Davis provided introductions to farm economics, and spray drones and remote sensing, respectively. In addition, mentor farmers at each training shared their story and participated in a panel discussion with UADA and Natural Resources Conservation Service personnel.

These trainings ensure both new and experienced farmers have a network of colleagues and experts to call on to help support their agricultural business. ■



SAVE THE DATE

Monday, December 1

Extension Employee Conference

Partner to Create Teaching Garden

Arkansas State University's Child Development and Research Center has a new teaching garden thanks to the cooperative effort between the Craighead County Extension Office, A-State and Home Depot.

Jonesboro Mayor Harold Copenhaver assisted A-State students with the ribbon cutting ceremony. Craighead County Extension staff built the raised beds and provided expertise in planting and maintaining the vegetables and herb gardens. The gardens encompass areas of learning such as math, science, and literacy. Students watched seeds transform into plants and observed flower and fruit formation. The garden also provided fresh ingredients for meals, including lettuce for sandwiches, tomatoes for homemade pizza sauce, and slices of cucumber for finger foods. The garden also gave students a chance to taste foods they may never have tried before

such as basil, chives, arugula, or even a fresh cherry tomato. The students were responsible for caring for the garden by weeding, water, and harvesting. ■



A-State Child Development and Research Center's Garden.

COMMUNICATIONS



STATION

How to Get Stuff Printed

Publications: Our Pubs database contains more than 1,500 fact sheets and other publications.

To search the Database and place publication orders visit pubs.uada.edu.

For printed items: (not Publications): Email printshop@uada.edu to request a quote. Printed items include brochures, flyers, post cards, and anything not in the ordering system. The Comms Design Team provides design work.

Large-format items: These are printed in the Communications Media Production Center (a.k.a. The Sign Shop) in the Communications Suite (first floor of LRSO). If you need any of the following, contact

Chris Meux, cmeux@uada.edu.

- Signs (demonstration, event and office)
- Posters (paper, fabric and foamboard)
- Displays (x-stand, tri-folds and retractable)
- Stickers (round, square and die cut)
- Banners (paper, fabric and vinyl)

Request a quote for signs, displays, and banners here: https://uada.formstack.com/forms/media_cost.

Who to Call:

Design Questions: Chris Meux – cmeux@uada.edu or Julie Thompson – jathompson@uada.edu

Publication Questions: Oliver Williams – owilliams@uada.edu or Emily Davis – edavis@uada.edu. ■



iLEAD IV Graduation

by Ali Ubeyitogullari

Dr. Steve Siegelin warmly welcomed attendees to the graduation ceremony held at the University of Arkansas System Office. The event brought together members of iLEAD Cohorts IV and V, marking a significant milestone in their leadership journey. The ceremony began with presentations from Cohort IV alumni, who showcased their impactful leadership service projects. Read about the projects presented [here](#).

iLEAD Cohort V

Day One by Samantha Barker

Day one of iLEAD Cohort V kicked off with energy and anticipation at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center. We dove into leadership styles and characteristics, guided by insights from our administrators and colleagues. Curiosity buzzed around the results of our KAI Inventory, taken the week prior, and a newfound love of scented markers. Read details [here](#).

Day Two by Tyler Caston

Thursday, August 14, 2025, was Day Two of the iLEAD V seminar. This would be a day of learning about one another, discovering how to work together, and overcoming challenges. But first, we started with a tour of the 4-H Center. Read details [here](#).

Day Three by Rachel Chaney

On day three of our first in-person iLead seminar, we began at the state office of the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, continuing our exploration of self-awareness and



iLEAD Cohort V members gather for their first seminar of the year. Pictured left to right: Samantha Barker, Brandon Wodka, Spring Sneed, Tyler Caston, Rachel Chaney, Adam Willis, Lacie Rothrock, Rita Watson, Marla Lane, and Betty Wingfield.

different perspectives. Dr. Carrie Stark led our group through the True Colors Personality Assessment. We participated in a paper folding activity and a "Would You Rather" game to break the ice and explore how everyone has a unique perspective. The game sparked engaging discussions about choices like flying versus breathing underwater, dressing up versus being casual, and surviving a vampire, werewolf, or zombie apocalypse scenario. Read details [here](#).

Leadership Lunch & Learn (LLL)

by Kayla Machen

In a recent Leadership Lunch and Learn session, Dr. Lauren Ledbetter Griffith, University of Georgia, shared key insights from James Clear's book "Atomic Habits," showing just how much tiny, consistent changes lead to remarkable results in both our personal and professional lives. Read the details [here](#). Watch the recording [here](#).

Register for the next LLL, "When Everyone Leads: How the Toughest Challenges Get Seen and Solved" by Ed O'Malley and Julia Fabris McBride, reviewed by Karl Bradley, Extension Foundation. Register [here](#).

Ag-tech Career Exploration (ACE)

Applications for the Ag-tech Career Exploration (ACE) program are open. ACE introduces high school students (ages 16-19) to advanced technologies in agriculture. The program includes:

- Introduction to cutting-edge technology
- Four in-state study tours
- International study tour
- Hands-on project
- Most expenses paid

It is designed for students interested in pursuing careers that utilize agricultural technology such as drones, sensors, food genetics, and robotics. Through tours in Arkansas and abroad participants learn about the benefits of agricultural technology. Applications close on October 30, 2025, at noon. Read details [here](#).

Note: There are opportunities for County Extension Agents to participate in the study tours as well. Applications due December 13, 2025. For more information contact Kayla Machen, kmachen@uada.edu. Apply [here](#).

Windows 11 Upgrade Project

Phase 3 of the Windows 11 upgrade deployment is now complete. All eligible devices should have received the Windows 11 update. If your device has not been upgraded to Windows 11, please contact the Help Desk for assistance at <https://services.uada.edu>.

Microsoft Support for Windows 10 Ends in October

After Oct. 14, 2025, Microsoft will no longer provide software updates, security patching, or technical assistance for Windows 10. If the computer is not capable of the upgrade, it will need to be replaced. If you need to order a new computer, fill out the [Computer Purchasing Request form](#).

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month: Stay Safe Online

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month, and we're joining the global effort to help everyone "Stay Safe Online." This year, we're highlighting the Core 4 simple steps everyone can take to protect themselves: use strong passwords, turn on multifactor authentication, update your software, and recognize and report scams. Cybersecurity doesn't have to be intimidating. Small actions make a big impact.

Throughout October, Division Information Technology Services will be sharing cybersecurity tips and hosting virtual events to help you stay informed and secure.

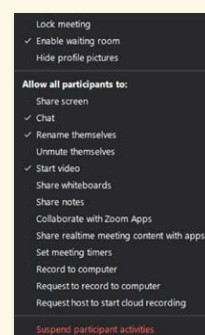
About Cybersecurity Awareness Month

Even amidst large-scale data breaches and cyberattacks,

Cybersecurity Awareness Month reminds everyone that there are simple, effective ways to keep yourself safe online, protect your personal data, and ultimately help secure our world.

Zoom Pro Tip – Secure Your Zoom Meetings

During Cybersecurity Awareness Month—and every month—it's important to keep your Zoom meetings secure by following a few simple recommendations for your account and meeting settings. Using features like meeting registration and the waiting room can significantly enhance your meeting security.



For more details, visit our knowledge base article: "[Securing Zoom Meetings Settings](#)." Explore essential Zoom security features, review pre-meeting and in-meeting controls, and discover best practices for mitigating risks from potential disruptions.

For additional training, log into the Zoom Learning Center and complete the course "[Zoom Security Basics](#)." You'll earn a Zoom Security Champion badge upon completion.

Hump Day Hacks

[Hump Day Hack resources](#) can be found on the Hump Day Hacks Resource page in Team Dynamix. August's hacks included Microsoft Forms, data validation to create a drop-down list in Excel, using tab groups in Microsoft Edge, removing backgrounds from photos in PowerPoint, and changing your view order in Zoom meetings and webinars. The next Hump Day Hacks is Oct. 22. [Register Now](#). ■



2025 TECH TUESDAYS WEBINARS

Have you missed any past Tech Tuesday webinars or want to join future webinars? Check out the recordings and other resources on the [Tech Tuesday Blog page](#). More Tech Tuesday topics coming soon! Did you miss September's [Email Marketing Made Easy – Getting Started with Constant Contact Tech Tuesday](#)? Check out the recording and resources.

Workday Support Services Update

Workday Support Services has launched a streamlined absence request experience that makes it easier for employees to request time off or leave — whether on desktop or mobile.

You will continue using the Absence app to view balances and submit requests. When selecting Request Absence, you will now see a simplified calendar where you can choose one or more days and click Continue to initiate your request. After selecting the Type of Absence, additional fields will appear to complete the request. Submissions will follow the existing approval process for each campus.

For those with permission to enter time off or leave on

behalf of others, a Request on Behalf Of link will be available at the top of the calendar.

The Correct My Absence option will be replaced with Manage Absence.

On another note: When entering Annual Time Off you are not required to pick a REASON from the drop down. If one of the reasons from the drop down does NOT apply to your time off, leave this blank. You can enter a comment for your supervisor if you need to.

DO NOT select ADA-Annual unless you have been previously approved for this type of leave through the Office of Program and Employment Compliance. ■

Food Processing Sanitation & Listeria Prevention Workshop

Food industry leaders from 10 states attended a Food Processing Sanitation and Listeria Prevention Workshop hosted by UADA Poultry Extension Aug. 12-14 at the state office.

Participants came from Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois, Kansas, Kentucky, Minnesota, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Virginia to learn about preventing listeria, which can cause foodborne illnesses and death. Preventing listeria in processed foods is one of the top priorities of the USDA and FDA. The food industries represented included chicken, turkey, beef, rice, produce, packaged meals, sanitation interventions, and lab technologies.



Participants take a group photo at the Sanitation & Listeria Workshop.

Bill Potter, extension specialist for poultry food safety and processing, coordinated the training team, which included staff from UADA, ChemStation, Fortrex, Vincit Group, and HCG Consulting. The team conducted interactive role-play exercises to help participants understand listeria prevention strategies. ■



Create Mini Library, Donations Pouring In

Lots of work in July and August paid off for Gin City 4-Hers who dedicated the Reading Patch Mini Library in Gin City at a Sept. 16 reception. Attendees were treated to a book signing by local children's author Shelby Thompson, who gave copies of *"Freddie Finds His Glow"* to attendees.

Gin City 4-H received a grant from the Arkansas 4-H Alumni Association to establish the mini library at Gin City Parts & Café, in the unincorporated farming community of Gin City west of Bradley in Lafayette County.



(L to R): Lafayette County 4-H members: Billy D., Lena D., Sunnie D. and Adryanna B. officially cut the ribbon on The Reading Patch.

After cleaning the sight, the group painted a mural on the building. Multiple coats of paint were applied over several nights. After the library itself was built, the 4-Hers transplanted plant donations to the existing flower bed.

Book donations have poured in! The group plans to rotate different books in and out of the library every few weeks. A plan is being developed to have community events

featuring the library, and Thompson promises to visit again once his four books in process have been published. ■

Benefits Corner



Wellness Program Reminders and Important Dates for 2024-2025 Plan Year!

For employees who are enrolled in the UMR medical plans and opted in to UMR's 2024-2025 annual Live Well Reward\$ wellness program, all unused accrued points will be forfeited at the end of the plan year (Sept. 30, 2025), and no points will roll forward into the 2025-2026 plan year.

You can redeem your existing points for your choice of digital or physical gift cards, popular merchandise, travel vouchers and more through Online Rewards. Visit umr.com to review details on the wellness activities and incentives.

If you have questions pertaining to the wellness program or your rewards, contact UMR at 800-826-9781 or visit umr.com. Your Benefits Team does not have access to your wellness point balance.

Open Enrollment is Coming Soon!

Additional Information will be provided over the next few weeks. Please make sure your address is correct in Workday!

To check your address in Workday:

1. In workday view your profile page
2. Click on Contact on the left of the page in blue
3. Check your home address

To correct your address in Workday:

1. Click on the Edit button and Change My Home Contact Information
2. Under Address click on the pencil on the right to change
3. Change address and submit

For questions regarding your overall benefits, email yourbenefits@uada.edu. ■

Grants & Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
Evaluation of Safeners to Enable New Herbicide or Uses in Wheat	7,500.00	Bob Scott	Wheat Promotion Board
Evaluation of Nitrogen Management of Winter Wheat Grown for Dual Purpose in Arkansas	10,000.00	Bronc Finch	Wheat Promotion Board
Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)	79,814.00	Dan Quadros	University of Georgia Research Foundation, Inc.
Pest Management using recommended Wheat Varieties	5,716.00	Jason Kelley	Wheat Promotion Board
Arkansas Wheat Verification	14,500.00	Jason Kelley	Wheat Promotion Board
Lead to Change Foster Care Project	2,000.00	Jessica Street	National 4-H Council
Arkansas High Obesity Project (ArHOP) YR 3	780,000.00	Jessica Vincent	Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)
NWARPC Urban Stormwater Program - Siloam Springs Addition	5,039.00	Katie Teague	Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission
Cultivating A Greener Tomorrow Through Smart & Substantial Agriculture	40,900.29	Mike Daniels	University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB)
Hypobaric Experiments Using Chicks	12,500.00	Sara Orłowski-Workman	Cobb-Vantress Inc.
Pest Management using recommended Wheat Varieties	10,984.00	Terry Spurlock	Wheat Promotion Board
Arkansas Cotton Disease Predictive Tool Development	56,100.00	Terry Spurlock	USDA Agricultural Research Service
TOTAL AWARDS FOR AUGUST 2025: \$1,025,053			

Personnel Changes



Welcome Aboard:

Luke Pullo – Program Associate, Community, Professional, & Economic Development, LRSO

Leah Johnson – Administrative Specialist III, Lonoke County

David Johnson – 4-H Accountant, 4-H & Youth Development, LRSO

Farewell to:

Brandon Mathews – Community, Professional, & Economic Development – Economic Development, Fulton County

Kierra Mendez-Ward – Ozark District Administrative Assistant, LRSO

Hannah Wright Smith – Weed Specialist – Turfgrass, Vegetation Management, and Specialty Crops, LRSO

Stan Baker – County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Lee County

Pursuant to 7 CFR § 15.3, the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services (including employment) without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, sexual preference, pregnancy or any other legally protected status, and is an equal opportunity institution.