

BLUE LETTER

The University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Monthly Letter

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

Rice Expo hits its mark

For months, Extension and Research staff and faculty have been planning, creating and otherwise preparing for the 2014 Arkansas Rice Expo – an event that draws more than 1,000 visitors each year and is the biggest field day in the state. There is a lot of hard work, maybe a few sleepless nights and for most exhibitors, a very early start on Rice Expo Day.

Is it worth all the elbow grease? Baker Fullerton, a crop consultant from DeWitt thinks so – and he's been attending for years. The Rice Expo "provides opportunity to see the latest research and come and visualize some things rather than just read about it from a book."

To me, Mr. Fullerton's comment bears out what we all want to accomplish with this event – making people familiar with our expertise and helping our neighbors understand what a vast, yet local, resource we can be.

I want to thank you all for making this event a success from the first local promotional efforts down the last bit of cleanup. You are what makes this event a success. ■

– Tony Windham

Pope County team wins top honors in Hippology

Ten Pope County 4-H Wrangler Club members participated in the Arkansas State 4-H Horse Show Hippology competition. These young ladies have a passion for horses and were willing to dedicate a great deal of their own time to learning about them, meeting once a week for the past year to study for the contest.

Pope County was represented by three teams at the Hippology Contest. Pope County Team 1 defended their state title, coming in first in the Junior Division for two years in a row. The same members also made up the Pope County Horse Bowl team, which placed second at the state contest. These 4-H members are proof that hard work really does pay off! ■



Pope County had the first place Junior team in the 2014 State 4-H Horse Show Hippology Contest. Pictured (from left) are Libby Bailey, Katelyn Danzy, ClaireAnna Harmon and Jenna Meimerstorf.



**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

Rice Expo celebrates food, farming and families



Xueyan Sha describes his rice breeding work to Arkansas Rice Expo visitors.

For the first time, Arkansas' rice production will represent more than half the nation's output of the grain, attendees heard at the fourth Arkansas Rice Expo on August 1 in Stuttgart.

"For the first time, Arkansas is expected to produce more than half the rice in America," Keith Glover, president and chief executive officer of Producers Rice Mill, told a crowd during a panel discussion on the 2014 Farm Bill.

About 1,000 people took part in a half-day of activities including tours of research plots, cooking demonstrations and rice tastings at the fourth annual Arkansas Rice Expo.

Among the attendees was Ethan Vasquez from Sikeston, Missouri. He came to Arkansas just to visit his first-ever Rice Expo.

"It's a great day so far, very informational, the new things coming out of the pipeline as far as the chemistries and the new varieties being brought to the table," he said.

He heard about the Rice Expo from his counterpart in Arkansas and from the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

He especially wanted to learn about new production technology and varieties of rice.

He intended to take back the knowledge he learned at the Rice Expo to his growers in Missouri.

The 2014 Rice Expo, the fourth annual, is an outgrowth of a traditional field day, in which researchers showed crop producers the results of their work in the demonstration fields. ■



Rice Expo visitor samples basmati rice.



Leigh Ann Bullington cooks edamame chicken stir fry at Rice Expo.

Breakthrough Solutions honors Tom Riley, Jr.

On July 2, the Breakthrough Solutions Advisory Council met to honor Tom Riley, Jr., and to plan for activities for the remainder of 2014. Tom has been a vital member of the council and very supportive of Breakthrough Solutions activities and programs over the years.

As a token of appreciation, Ken Hubbell created a portrait of Tom, which was signed, framed and presented to Tom as an expression of all he has done for Breakthrough Solutions and the communities of Arkansas.

The purpose of Breakthrough Solutions is to equip communities and regions to become vibrant, sustainable and resilient in the global, connected economy – places where people feel they belong, engage and contribute, and in return feel respected and valued. The 18 partner organizations involved in supporting Breakthrough Solutions work with communities, with regions and the annual conference.

This meeting included a special guest, Dr. Marta M. Loyd, executive director of the Winthrop Rockefeller Institute, who led a discussion about a proposed project called Breakthrough Communities. The partners are also developing publications on funding and financing community and economic development and workforce preparation. ■



TOM RILEY HONORED – First row, left to right: Marta M. Loyd, Jeff Jones, Sherry McDonnell, Drew Pack, Tom Riley, Jr., Amy Whitehead, Melinda Faubel and Ed Levy. Second row, left to right: James E. Downs, Timothy Lee, Ken Hubbell, Jerry Smith and Mark Peterson.

4-H Citizenship Leadership Program kicks off

The Cooperative Extension Service launched a citizenship leadership program this summer. Made possible through general improvement funds allocated by the Arkansas General Assembly, the program provides opportunities for youth to develop and practice leadership skills, increase their understanding of government and explore opportunities for becoming engaged citizens.

A camp held June 22-27 at the 4-H Center was attended by 125 youth from 44 counties. In the Amazing Citizenship Race, teams solved clues from the U.S. naturalization test. They learned more about themselves and how to work with others through programs such as ExCEL and True Colors. Delegates participated in a mock legislative process, electing leaders and writing and debating bills. They cleaned Boyle Park and toured the Arkansas Justice Building, State Capitol, Clinton Presidential Center and other places of interest. The camp also included an international night, guest speakers, camp Olympics, talent show and other camp activities. Social media tracked the week at my.yapp.us/ARCitizen4H.

Additional citizenship leadership program elements include the use of real voting machines in election of state 4-H officers at district and state 4-H O-Ramas, county-based programs, state ballot initiative education tailored toward youth and service learning projects to coincide with 4-H promotion month in October.



Camp delegates at the Arkansas State Capitol.

Website update for the months of May - July

In the months May through July, we had 123,339 visitors. They averaged about 3+ pages per session (which is the amount of time spent on the site) and the average session was over four minutes long. This is a very good amount of time. It indicates (most likely) our visitors are reading our site and exploring our information! To give some perspective, in some industries the length of session time is measured in seconds and not minutes.

Our **bounce rate** (the percentage of visitors to our site who navigate away from the site after viewing only one page) is 57 percent for this period. An average bounce rate is 50 percent. In an effort to improve this number, we should use more 'calls to action' to notify visitors what we want them to do and how to engage with us. Sometimes our pages have too much (or in some cases too little) relevant copy, and clarifying our message is key to reducing our bounce rate.

Almost half of our visitors are **new visitors**, meaning they are most likely new to our website. That's great news as we reach out to new audiences.

Of our visitors, 68 percent are from Arkansas, which is good as Arkansans are our target audience. The second most common state visitor to visit our site is Texas at 4 percent.

At right is a list of the **top keyword search terms** people are typing into our website Google Search appliance field (i.e., the most searched-for terms on our site). ■

Top Keyword Search Terms

1. Jobs
2. Logos
3. Blackberries
4. Aquaculture
5. Blue letter
6. Logo
7. Credit union
8. Rice expo
9. Soil testing
10. Canning
11. MP44
12. Resistant cultivars

What's new in publications? Find out at:

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

4-H state horse show draws 902 entries, highest in five years



Competitor No. 253 takes part in ranch cutting class at the Arkansas 4-H state horse show.

More than 100 youths from 26 counties added up to 902 entries, making the 2014 Arkansas 4-H State Horse Show the largest in the last five years.

Ashley, Benton and White counties had the most youths participate in the horse show, with 12 youths from each county. The show was held at the White County Fairgrounds from July 14-17.

“The show went very well and was actually better than expected considering the new classes and new exhibitors,” said Mark Russell, assistant professor of equine extension for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.

This year’s Arkansas 4-H State Horse Show brought 902 contest entries from just the 4-H’ers. “It’s definitely the highest it’s been in the five years that I’ve been here,” Russell said. “Although last year we had 900 entries, 100 were participants in a barrel race fundraiser, so the total for 4-H entries in 2013 was 800,” he added.

The entries included educational contests such as horse judging, hippology, public speaking, individual demonstration, team demonstration and horse bowl.

The other contests included western dressage, which is a combination of classical dressage and a traditional western riding to train horse and rider work as a team, goat-tying contest, barrel racing, pole bending, keyhole race, stake race and other agility performances. ■

Great need for willing leaders: LeadAR taking applicants now

To solve ongoing social and economic problems in Arkansas, willing, globally minded, accountable and good decision-making leaders are needed. The Lead Arkansas, or LeadAR, program is now seeking students for class 17, which will start in the beginning of 2015.

The deadline to apply is August 22.

“There’s still a real need for leaders,” said Joe Waldrum, LeadAR director and professor of leadership development for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service. Rural communities continue to need more motivated individuals to step up into leadership roles, he added.

“Good leaders don’t necessarily need advanced degrees, they just should be willing to take the responsibility to tackle community problems and to find accurate information to make decisions,” he said.

LeadAR consists of 11 three-day seminars held across the state focusing on skills in communications, networking, policy formation, economics, culture and government over a two-year period.

“LeadAR is a life-changing experience,” Waldrum said. He reminds spouses at the interview that the participants will change. “If you don’t want them to change, pull them out right now,” he said.

Tuition for the program is \$3,000. Interested individuals can contact Dr. Joe Waldrum at (501) 671-2076 or visit www.uaex.edu/leadar to learn more about the LeadAR Program. Applications are due by August 22. ■

BENEFITS CORNER

Mark your calendar!

The **Onlife Health Program** is a free wellness program available to UMR Medical Plan participants and their covered spouses. To be eligible for a \$50 gift card, employees and their spouses insured by the plan must complete all the Health Risk Assessment requirements and a biometric health screening during the time period of August 1 through October 17, 2014. A biometric health screening will be held at the Little Rock State Office on August 28 from 8:30 a.m. through 3:30 p.m.

The **UMR Disease Management Program** is available to UMR Medical Plan participants and is designed to help you avoid or manage chronic health conditions and to obtain quality care. In addition to the education and coaching benefits of the programs, you have the very valuable benefit of zero out-of-pocket cost for insulin and generic medications for hypertension and diabetes. **Contact UMR at 866-575-2540** to receive additional information. ■

Breaking new ground: virtual field tour broadcast from a soybean field

“You can play in the dirt without getting dirty,” said Blake Bennett in his opening introduction to Extension’s first virtual field tour (VFT).

On August 7 the VFT was broadcast live over Zoom from a soybean field at the UA Division of Agriculture Newport Extension Center.

The hour-long VFT was hosted by the Extension Soybean Science Challenge Program (SSC) with funding support from the Arkansas Soybean Promotion Board.

Angie Freel, Arkansas 4-H science and curriculum coordinator, along with county agents, recruited high school 4-H volunteers to test pilot the VFT. Twenty-eight participants accessed the tour from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device.

The topic was Soybean Bugnados! Insects and Agriculture presented by UofA graduate student Ben Thrash. Gus Lorenz, associate department head and Extension entomologist, joined Ben in the field for the 25-minute question and answer session which followed. Students submitted over 50 questions through the Zoom chat room.

The broadcast used a blend of technology. Opening intro and outro videos were produced off site by Blake Bennett, SSC videographer. Live from the field, Ben presented a 30-minute program with PowerPoint slides, which featured unusual bug specimens, generating active participant discussion and questions in the chat room. Student feedback at the session’s end indicated that the virtual tour was a notable first test of Zoom’s capabilities.

PSD staff participating were Mary Poling, Karen Ballard, Julie Robinson, Haley Jernigan and Lynn Wilson. From Communications, Kerry Rodtnick was on camera; in IT Sam Boyster and staff provided technical expertise. Dr. Rick Cartwright coordinated the VFT session with in-service training already scheduled at the Newport Extension Center.

Everyone had a great time; no one got dirty. ■



Mary Poling, Julie Robinson and Kerry Rodtnick "Zooming" in the dirt.



Karen Ballard, Ben Thrash and Kerry Rodtnick prepare for VFT.

Meet the *new* employees!



Jason Davis
Application Technologist
Crop, Soil and Environmental
Sciences, Newport Extension Center

• **What’s your background?**

I grew up on my family’s farm in Greene County. I graduated from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville with a bachelor’s degree in

Agriculture Education in 2009 and finished my master’s in Agricultural Systems Technology Management in 2011.

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

As a research assistant in graduate school, I worked with emerging agriculture innovations and shared findings through educational programs statewide. I have spent the last three years teaching Agricultural Power, Structural and Technical Systems courses at Greenbrier High School.

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

I am married to my beautiful and talented wife Amanda.

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

I plan to develop an educational program that provides producers the tools to make informed decisions regarding application equipment and technology.

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

I have always been around the Extension Service through both 4-H and my dad who is a county Extension agent in Greene County. This position was an exciting opportunity to officially join a community that has always been a part of my life.

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

I enjoy spending time with my wife and family. I like being outdoors and working on the farm. I also enjoy woodworking and a little beekeeping. ■



Nick Seiter
Assistant Professor,
Extension Entomologist
Entomology, Southeast Research
and Extension Center

- **What's your background?**

I am originally from southeastern Indiana. I have bachelor's and master's degrees in entomology from Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana, and a Ph.D. in entomology from Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina.

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

I have experience developing integrated pest management practices for insects in row crops, primarily soybean, cotton and corn. My projects have included threshold and sampling plan development, evaluations of insecticide efficacy, determining the effects of cultural practices on insect populations and quantifying the impacts of insect feeding on crop yields.

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

I'm eager to meet and work with my colleagues in Extension. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can help with anything.

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

I'm looking forward to learning as much as I can about the insect problems that are critical in Arkansas row crops and establishing a research and extension program that addresses these problems.

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

I was drawn to Extension by the opportunity to help solve real-world problems in agricultural systems.

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

I enjoy hiking, fishing and following professional and college sports. ■

Grants and contracts

For Month Ended July 31, 2014

Project Title	Award Amount	Principal Investigator	Granting Agency
High School 4-H Clubs Representing the State of Arkansas at National Conferences and Events	\$20,000.00	Tom Troxel	Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission
Personal Improvement Programs in Lonoke County	10,000.00	Dianna Bowen	Central Arkansas Planning & Development District
Arkansas 4-H ATV Safety Community Education	3,945.00	Noah Washburn	Oklahoma 4-H Foundation
4-H Youth Voice: Youth Choice Healthy Living Project 2014	64,865.00	Lisa Washburn	National 4-H Council
Total New Awards for July 2014	\$98,810.00		

Personnel changes

Please welcome the following:

Jason Davis

Application Technologist, Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences, effective July 1, 2014.

Extension says goodbye to:

Craig R. Andersen

Extension Horticulture Specialist - Vegetables, Horticulture, effective July 8, 2014.

Regina L. Chaney

County Extension Agent - Family and Consumer Sciences, Van Buren County, effective July 1, 2014.

Nicholas R. Dudley

Grant and Contract Analyst, Office of Sponsored Programs, effective July 31, 2014.

Gloria G. Eubanks

Administrative Support Supervisor, Craighead County, effective July 31, 2014.

Denise A. Frame

Administrative Specialist, Sharp County, effective July 7, 2014.

Michael D. Freyaldenhoven

Program Tech - Arkansas Farm to You Driver, Family and Consumer Sciences, effective July 16, 2014.

H. Wallace Goddard

Professor - Family Life Specialist, Family and Consumer Sciences, effective July 31, 2014.

Polly A. Greenbaum

Administrative Support Supervisor, Animal Science, effective July 1, 2014.

Kimberly A. Harrington

Program Assistant - Youth, SNAP Program Assistant, Grant County, effective July 15, 2014.

Kristen G. Hensley

Administrative Specialist, Animal Science, effective July 16, 2014.

Shirlye G. Hopkins

County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Ouachita District, effective July 1, 2014.

Steven M. Jones

Associate Professor - Livestock, Animal Science, effective July 1, 2014.

James P. Marshall

Associate Professor - Family Life Specialist, Family and Consumer Sciences, effective July 31, 2014.

Shannon M. Mashburn

Administrative Specialist, 4-H and Youth Development, effective July 28, 2014.

Tommy L. Riley

Associate Professor - Interim Assistant Director, Community and Economic Development, Public Issues Education, effective July 3, 2014.

Katherine J. Stidman

Program Assistant - EFNEP, Craighead County, effective July 16, 2014.

Jessica B. Vest

County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Ozark District, effective July 1, 2014.

Joyce L. Whittington

County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Ozark District, effective July 31, 2014.