

BL

BLUE LETTER

January 2020

No. 3813



Blazing into 2020

January is operational, and I have already given up on any resolutions and continue to work on writing 2020 instead of 2019. Welcome to 2020, TWO decades into the 21st Century Division of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension Service. Given the amazing technology available today, it is a great time to be working in our respective professions.

So, I am encouraging all of us to work toward the best and most productive year ever in our history during 2020. We have the tools; we have the talent, so let's do it. I have beat the idea of visibility to death the past three years, but there is an ongoing and coming payoff. Visibility simply strengthens our documented excellence. I believe you are the best at what you do, and I want others to know this too.

In this regard, sincere congratulations to Dr. Gus Lorenz for earning the Award for Excellence in Cotton Integrated Pest Management, announced at this year's Beltwide Cotton Conference in early January. This is one of the big National Awards, and I am extremely proud of Gus and his team for this recognition. Is there a better applied entomology group in the country than ours? Nope.

And, in another regard, Diane Mashburn shared with me that our reported contacts for 2019 totaled 14,713,876, up more than 25 percent from 2018 where they were about 11.7 million. These of course include both direct and indirect contacts, with

indirect using new technology for a huge improvement over the past. It was not too long ago that extension contacts were below 3 million, so we have upped our visibility game in this regard greatly the past three to four years. Congratulations to all – THIS MATTERS. I sincerely appreciate the work Diane does for the Division on annual reporting and helping us document our visibility and impact; it is difficult to say the least.

I hope you enjoy this issue of the Blue Letter and also trust you will continue to work to make this publication one of the best of its kind anywhere. It is an awful lot of work each month but is a great reflection of your excellence and the diversity of our programs. Whether Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, Support Systems, 4-H Positive Youth Development, Community-Professional-Economic Development, or CPED, or Natural Resources, the Blue Letter lets us know what is going on. It always amazes me as to how many different things we are involved in. I greatly appreciate all those who make the Division of Agriculture and the Cooperative Extension Service the positive reality that it is.

Please stay warm and safe. ■



FROM THE DIRECTOR

INSIDE SCOOP

2. Extension Service Honors Excellence, Innovation Among Peers
3. Division of Ag Bestows Highest Honors on Faculty and Staff
5. CES Workshops Teach Growers Best Practices to Safeguard Food Supply
6. 4-H Horse Program
7. Virtual Farm Tour
9. Benefits Corner...And much more!

U of A
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

Extension Service Honors Excellence, Innovation Among Peers

Faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service were recognized during the State Faculty Conference on Dec. 2 at the state office in Little Rock.

Several awards are presented during the conference including Length of Service awards, Distinguished Service, the Russell award, Childs award and finally, the Extension Excellence Awards. This year's winners include the following:

Distinguished Service Awards

Leigh Ann Bullington from Woodruff County, Anna Goff from Washington County, Cindy Ham from Clark County, Brad McGinley from Grant County, Bill Robertson from the Crop, Soil & Environmental Sciences Dept. and Amy Simpson from Clark County.

Lynn R. Russell Endowed Award of Professional Excellence

JoAnn Vann, CEA- Family & Consumer Sciences, Clark County.

Mildred and Liz Childs Professional Development Fund Scholarship

Amy Monk, Montgomery County staff chair.

Extension Excellence Awards

Dr. Cartwright, extension director, commended this year's winners, who were selected by a committee of their peers. "We have to tackle challenges and opportunities in a way that is very vibrant, very visible and very technological in the 21st century," Cartwright said. This year's winners, he said, have done just that.

Early Career Award – Classified Employee:

Sandra Kirk, Hempstead County. Sandra received two nominations for outstanding work with staff. Master Gardener Darla Irby said, "Sandra is the perfect example of service with a smile. She is always willing to go above and beyond on any task she is given. We are so fortunate to have her."

Early Career Award – County Extension Faculty:

Olivia Foster, Carroll County Cooperative Extension staff chair. Foster has made an economic impact in the county

by demonstrating techniques for better animal and forage management. Her Young Cattlemen's Series had enough participants to fill the class for the next two years. In 4-H, more than 130 youth participated in the Junior Livestock Clinic. Foster also secured funding from the Quorum Court for a 4-H program assistant.

Early Career Award – State Extension Faculty:

Amanda McWhirt, horticulture.

McWhirt's modern approach to outreach has improved the visibility of Extension. Her Episode 1 video of Blackberry School had received nearly 20,000 views in early October. She has demonstration

projects at several stations including Hope, Kibler and Clarksville. She was recently received the 2019 Young Minds Award for best presentation from the International Society for Horticultural Science in Zurich, Switzerland.

Early Career Award – Program Technician/Associate:

Keiddy Urrea Romero, who works in the Plant Health Clinic, uses her molecular diagnostic skills to make accurate plant health diagnoses for Extension agents and clientele who depend on the speed and accuracy of diagnosis and recommendations. She has translated newsletter articles into Spanish for Spanish-speaking clientele and presented at Plant Health Clinic events, summer classes, field days and Master Gardener events.

Early Career Award – Project/Program Administrator:

Jan Sampson, Office of Chief Operating Officer. Sampson is the point of contact for contract signatures and legal reviews. In a 12-month period, she processed more than 273 contracts. Her coworkers say she is tenacious in tracking down issues and resolving problems.



Amanda McWhirt receives the Early Career Award from Dr. Cartwright.

(Continued Page 3)

(Extension Honors...continued from Page 2)

County Team Award – The Southwest Arkansas Cattlemen’s College Team receives this year’s County Team Award. The Cattlemen’s College gives young and beginning ranchers the tools they need to be successful in their ranching operation. Each agent had a teaching role in this series. Recipients include Sherry Beaty-Sullivan (Polk County), Jennifer Caraway (Miller County), Terrell Davis (Pike County), Rex Herring (Sevier County), Samantha Kroll Howard County), Darren Neal (Nevada County), Amy Simpson (Clark) and Stacey Stone (Hempstead County).

State Team Award – Arkansas Discovery Farms Project Team. This team manages 12 Discovery Farms across the state. Their work comes at a time when farming is under increasing pressure to manage nutrients in an environmentally sustainable manner. Information obtained by the Arkansas Discovery Farm program is of value to national efforts to assess nutrient and sediment load reduction efficiencies of various conservation practices in a scientifically sound manner. Recipients include Mike Daniels, Amanda Free, Michael Freyaldenhoven, Matt Fryer, Amanda McWhirt, Lee Riley, Bill Robertson, Karl Vandevender and Pearl Webb.

Employee of the Year – Addie Wilson, Family and Consumer Science. Since joining the state office as a



program associate in December 2018. Addie has demonstrated leadership in grant management, agent technical assistance and training and program evaluation. She manages seven major programs: Extension Get Fit, Walk Across Arkansas, How to Talk to Your Doctor, Powerful Tools for Caregivers, Yoga for Kids, Chronic Pain Management Grant, and High Obesity.

In the past year, Wilson has contributed to strategic planning, simplified and improved evaluation reports, and improved programs that are not more widely adopted by agents and implemented. She has a passion for reaching underserved audiences, and her efforts have led to positive change in the lives of people served. ■



Dr. Cartwright stands with award winners Amy Simpson, Cindy Ham and JoAnn Vann.

Division of Ag Bestows Highest Honors on Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff from the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture were honored for work that included battling hunger, mentoring some of the Fayetteville campus’s most outstanding students and going above and beyond to support Arkansas’ land grant extension, research and teaching mission.

The event was hosted in Fayetteville in the Don Tyson Center for Agricultural Sciences, the headquarters of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, the Division of Agriculture’s research arm. John W. White awards are named for the U of A System’s first vice president for agriculture when the Division of Agriculture was made a statewide unit of the U of A System in 1959.

“These awards are an important moment for the Division of Agriculture and its faculty and staff,” said Mark Cochran, vice president-agriculture. “These honors are nominated and selected by peers – people who understand what constitutes excellence. That’s exactly what makes these awards so special: we are recognized by our own.”

John W. White Outstanding Research Award - Larry Purcell, distinguished professor and holder of the Alzheimer Chair for Soybean Research in the Department of Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences, works to bridge the gap between crop breeders, plant biochemists, plant physiologists and field-oriented agronomists. He has helped bring \$19.7 million in funding to the Division of Agriculture, including \$5.9 million to his own research.

(Continued Page 4)

To see full summaries of each of the winners, download a PDF of the event program, available [here](#).

Outstanding Teaching Award –

Lisa Wood, clinical associate professor in the department of Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences, teaches an average of four classes per semester – six different classes in all. A member of the college's faculty since 2012, she was selected for the U of A Teaching Academy in 2018 and earned the Gamma Sigma Delta Teaching Award of Excellence in 2017.

John W. White Outstanding Extension State Faculty Award –

Jason Kelley, extension corn, wheat and feed grains agronomist and professor of Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences, has been with the Division of Agriculture since 2003. Currently, he provides timely information on wheat, corn and grain sorghum production to county agents, producers and agriculture industry professionals so that growers can improve overall profitability and sustainability.

Outstanding Extension Faculty Award – Leigh Ann Bullington. Since 2017, Woodruff County Extension Staff Chair Leigh Ann Bullington has worked with county leaders and the City of McCrory to impact health outcomes through work with the Centers for Disease Control and 15 other partners. Bullington still found time to return to the University of Arkansas to receive a master's degree in Agricultural and Extension Education in 2018, the same year she was also named McCrory Citizen of the Year.

Non-Classified Support Personnel Award – Michael Emerson has been a program associate for the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology since July 2005. Today, Emerson continues to conduct research in cotton, soybeans, corn, and peanuts and conduct root-knot nematode trials on soybeans and cotton. Emerson's most significant contributions has been development of new equipment that has allowed the program to be more efficient in the field and provide better data to growers.

Non-Classified Support Personnel Award –

Eric Friend filled a crucial void in the Department of Food Science when he joined the staff as fiscal manager. His supervisory experience in business services provided a smooth transition thanks to his knowledge and expertise. He began immediately to clarify department and university policy expectations for procurement, travel and general accounting to all faculty and support personnel.

Division of Agriculture Classified Support Personnel Award – Katie Hanshaw began with the Experiment Station in 2008, rising to the level of Administrative Specialist III in 2009. Hanshaw has sustained this initial success in her

10-plus-year career with constant attention to detail, a remarkable work ethic, and an infectious positive attitude. Hanshaw's list of duties is extensive. As the only administrative employee at the Fruit Research Station.

Outstanding Honors Faculty Mentor Award

– Jill Rucker, associate professor of agricultural communications in the department of Agricultural Education, Communications and Technology, is in her seventh year as a member of Bumpers College's faculty. Rucker has mentored students who have become Truman Scholars, a Marshall Scholar, U of A Seniors of Significance and earned U of A Senior Honor Citation awards, which recognizes the top male and female graduate of the university.



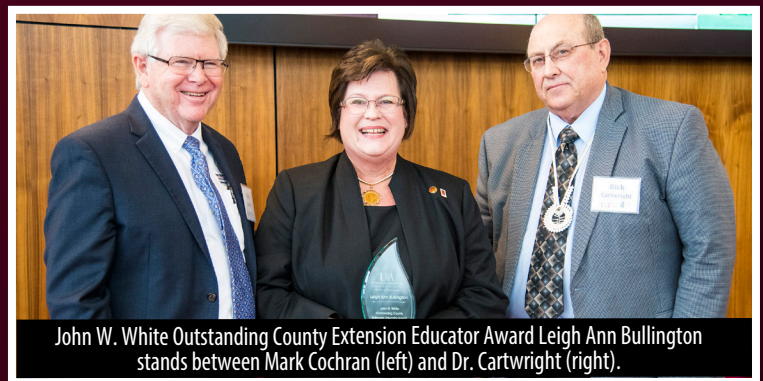
Dr. Jill Rucker receives the Bumpers College Outstanding Honors Faculty Award from Isabel Whitehead and Dean Fields

Bumpers College Alumni Society Outstanding Advising Award –

Nathan Kemper began work for the UA System Division of Agriculture in 2005, conducting research focusing on economic impact analysis, poultry economics and agricultural sustainability. Kemper coordinated a regional program: the Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers program that provided training and business planning to southern farmers and fishermen. As an adviser, he focuses on needs of individual students and their development and encourages them to take ownership of their academic future.

Jack G. Justus Award for Teaching Excellence and Spitze Land Grant University Faculty Award for Excellence –

Kris Brye, professor of applied soil physics and pedology in the Department of Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences, currently teaches four undergraduate and two graduate-level courses while administering the environmental, soil and water science portion of the CSES internship course and coaching the undergraduate soil judging team. Brye was elected to the U of A Teaching Academy in 2012, and in 2018 was named Fellow by both the Soil Science Society of America and the American Society of Agronomy. ■



John W. White Outstanding County Extension Educator Award Leigh Ann Bullington stands between Mark Cochran (left) and Dr. Cartwright (right).

CES Workshops Teach Growers Best Practices to Safeguard Food Supply

BL
5

Three produce safety training workshops are planned in the central, northeastern and northwestern areas of the state to help Arkansas producers comply with new federal training requirements designed to safeguard the U.S. food supply.

The training, developed by the Produce Safety Alliance and presented by the Cooperative Extension Service, helps growers understand regulatory requirements of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act Produce Safety Rule. The rule is the first federally regulated standard for growing, harvesting, packing and holding fresh produce.

Training will be offered 8 a.m.-5 p.m. at these sites:

- **Feb. 11** – Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 S. University Ave., Little Rock
- **March 17** – Don Tyson Center for Agricultural Sciences, 1371 W. Altheimer Dr., Fayetteville

- **April 14** – Craighead County Extension Office, 611 E. Washington Ave., Jonesboro

Topics covered will include agricultural water, soil amendments, worker health and hygiene, wildlife management, post-harvest handling, and food safety plans. Participants will receive a certificate of completion, which satisfies the Produce Safety Rule training requirement.

“Many Arkansas growers are affected by this,” said Amanda Perez, assistant professor for agriculture and natural resources for the Division of Agriculture. “Ultimately, the goal is to reduce microbial contamination and food-borne illness outbreaks.”

Participants must register in advance. Registration is \$35 and includes lunch, snacks and beverages. For more information or to register, visit www.uaex.edu/producesafety. ■

Animal Science Hosts Livestock Judging Bootcamp

The University of Arkansas Department of Animal Science teamed up with the Washington County Extension Service to host a livestock judging bootcamp for local 4-H and FFA kids in the Pauline Whitaker Animal Science Center on Friday, Jan. 3.

Over 60 kids from five counties attended, and were able to judge eight classes of sheep, goats and cattle. The group also worked on breeding evaluation, analyzing performance data, market evaluation and oral reasons. ■



4-H Horse Program

The Arkansas 4-H Horse program congratulates 4-H members who recently competed at two separate national contests over the last few months.

Congratulations to Michael F. on his recent success at the 2019 Eastern National 4-H Horse Roundup in Louisville, Kentucky. Michael who finished as the state winner in the Individual Demonstration Contest during the State 4-H Horse Show in July, qualified to compete against other state winners from across the eastern section of the United States. We're excited to report that Michael finished eighth in the competition!

The Arkansas 4-H Horse program was also well represented at the 2019 All American Quarter Horse Congress in Columbus, Ohio. The State Champion Judging Team from Washington County qualified to compete at the Congress as a representative of Arkansas on Oct. 16. In all, the youth judged 12 total classes, including nine performance classes and three halter classes. They were also required to give four sets of reasons. There were 4-H and FFA teams from all over the country representing their schools or their counties.

We are proud to announce that the Arkansas team received Top 25 awards in Team Halter and Team Reasons. ■



From left to right: Katelynn H., Mariah C. and Casey B.



Michael F.



Move With Ease Program

Polk County Extension Agent Bridgett Martin and EH volunteer Linda Ray taught the Move with Ease (MEP) program produced by UACES health specialists during November and December 2019. The MEP program is a spin-off of the original Chronic Pain Self-Management grant piloted in Polk County in spring 2019. Thirteen community members participated in the 12-hour

program that utilized a restorative yoga type routine. Participants noted increased flexibility, increased balance, increased muscle tone, decreased need for pain medication, increased endurance, and lower stress and anxiety levels. MEP is being evaluated on the state and local level to determine the best program utilization going forward. ■



U of A Livestock Judging Team Finishes Second

in Arizona Collegiate Livestock Judging Contest

BL
7

The University of Arkansas livestock judging team finished second overall at the Arizona National Collegiate Livestock Judging Contest held on Dec. 31 in Phoenix, Arizona.

Individuals judged and placed 12 classes, containing four animals per class of cattle, swine, sheep and meat goats. Contestants then verbally explained their placings to officials, who scored competitors as individuals and on a team basis.

Poultry science majors Mesa K. and Carson H., finished third and 13th overall, respectively, with Hopkins also ranking fifth in the Cattle category. Jeffrey M., a student in agricultural education, communications and technology, finished 14th, while animal science majors Alexa W. (17th) and Alex T. (19th), also placed within the

top 20. Additionally, Alexa W. was second in the Reasons category and fifth in Sheep/Goats. As a team, the U of A won the Cattle category. ■



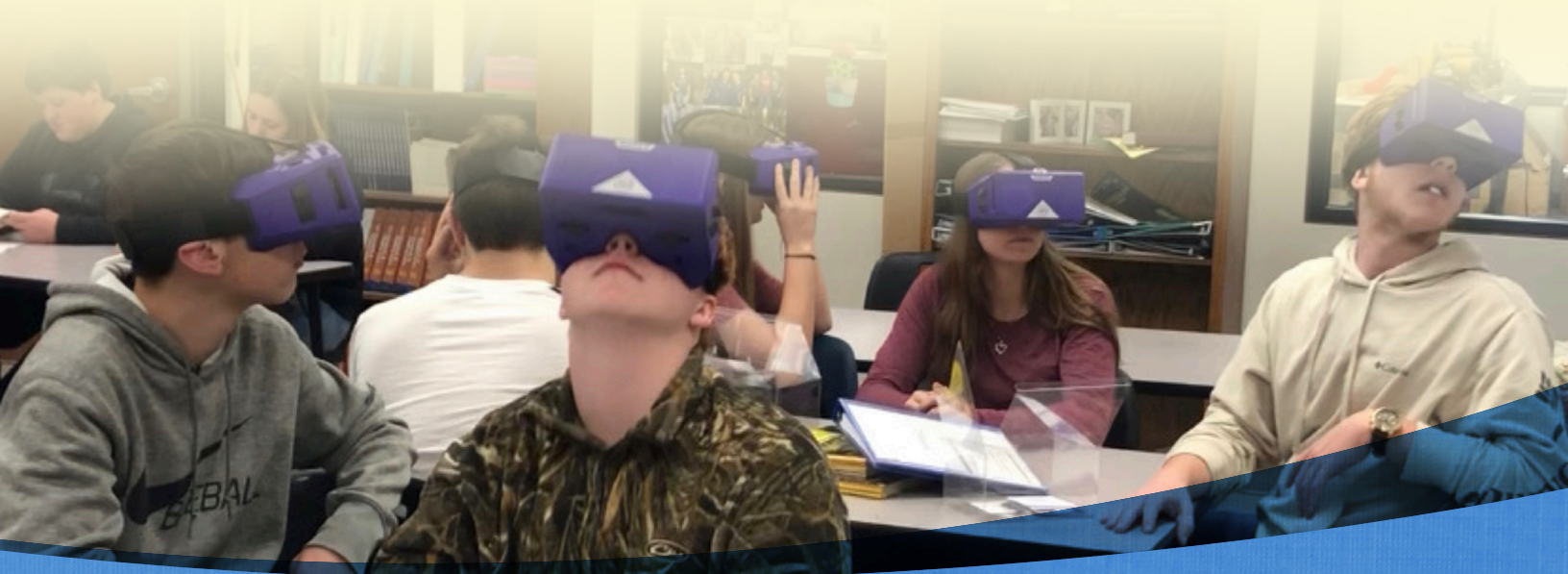
From left to right: Carson H., Alex T., Jacob M., Jessika C., Mesa K., Alexa W., Dixie M. and Jeffrey M.

Virtual Farm Tour



Lonoke County 4-H Agent Sara Beth Johnson took students in her Carlisle Agriculture 4-H In School Club on a virtual farm tour during their January 4-H meeting. Sara Beth collaborated with her local Farm Bureau to purchase the virtual reality headsets and

iPods to utilize in the county. These 4-H'ers used the headsets and the Google Expeditions app to tour a strawberry farm in California, a dairy farm in Ontario, Canada, and the Extension Research farms in Hawaii. ■



Grants and Contracts

PROJECT TITLE	AWARD AMOUNT	PI	GRANTING AGENCY
2019 4-H Healthy Habits	1,500.00	Angie Blacklaw-Freel	National 4-H Council
Arkansas State Master Gardener Conference (Craighead Co. Master Gardeners)	10,000.00	Berni Kurz	Jonesboro Advertising & Promotion Commission
Multi-County 4H Shooting Sports +One Movement Challenge Grant	6,000.00	Jesse Bocksnick	National Shooting Sports Foundation, Inc.
Pesticide Safety Education Funds Management Program (PSEFMP)	18,600.00	Ples Spradley	Extension Foundation
Pulaski County Master Gardener Park Hill Project	1,000.00	Randy Forst	City of North Little Rock
Education Producers and Industry on Implementation of the FSMA Produce Safety Rule	310,276.86	Vic Ford	Arkansas Agriculture Department
TOTAL AWARDS FOR NOVEMBER 2019: \$347,376.86			



New Publications:

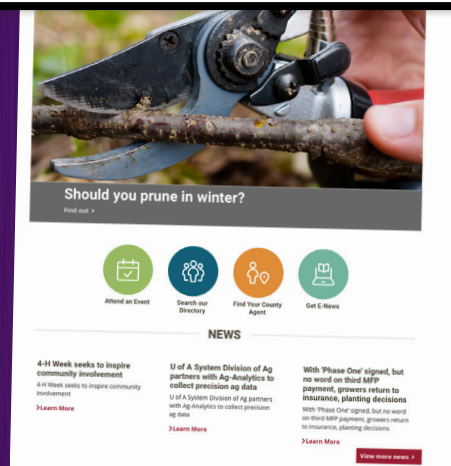
(You know you want to look.)
uaex.edu/publications/new.aspx



Front Page News You Can Use

Looking for a news story to use in your local paper? Look no further than the front page of uaex.edu. And if you click on view all news, you'll see all of our archived news stories back to 2014.

If you want to be on the email list to receive our news stories, email Mary Hightower at mhightower@uaex.edu and Communications will add you to the distribution list. ■



Benefits Corner

Welcome to 2020!

Please review your 2020 benefits, deductions and taxes on your Jan.15 pay stub. Log into the Banner 9 Link: <http://uaex.edu/links> and click on Banner 9 Login. Use your Banner User ID and password to login. Click Applications, then Employee Dashboard, then next to latest paystub select 01/15/2020. For questions regarding your benefit enrollments, contact yourbenefits@uaex.edu. For deductions questions, please contact Payroll at payroll@uaex.edu. We strive to ensure your selections are captured accurately, but it is your responsibility to confirm your benefit elections and deductions are correct.

Employees enrolled in the University Medical Plan through UMR should have received new cards in the mail the first week of January. ID numbers remained the same, which allows members to continue using their old cards until the new ones arrive. New enrollees' cards might be a little later arriving. If you have not received your card by 01/31/2020,

please contact UMR at the number below. Cards are also available through the UMR portal.

UMR Medical Customer Service: 1-888-438-6105
or www.umar.com.

MedImpact Prescription Drugs: 1-800-788-2949.

Flexible Spending Account (FSA): UMR Benny Card / 1-866-868-0145.

Superior Vision: 1-800-507-3800 or www.superiorvision.com.

Arkansas BCBS: 1-844-662-2281 or www.uasdental.blueadvantagearkansas.com.

Update your address in Banner. ■



Personnel Changes

Welcome aboard:

Ellie Wheeler - Program Associate, Economic Development –
Community, Professional & Economy Development, Little Rock
Jesse Kelly - Program Tech – Plant Pathology, Lonoke County, Lonoke
Lynn Lanthrip - CES Program Assistant, Drew County, Monticello
Vivian Okanume - Program Tech – Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program & Food Safety –
Family & Consumer Science, Little Rock
Tammy Christian - Credit Union Manager – Credit Union, Little Rock

Farewell to:

Rita Fleming - Division CFO – Office of VP for Agriculture, Little Rock
Jasmine Walton - Administrative Specialist, Arkansas County, DeWitt
Cherrhonda Shelby-McMiller - 4-H Program Assistant, Jefferson County, Pine Bluff

