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Arkansas 4-H team advances to National Wildlife Habitat Education Program contest

For landowners, improving wildlife habitat can be complex. Managing the land to welcome more deer, but attract fewer bobcats, involves closely studying the surrounding environment and species, a skill that one group of Arkansas 4-H'ers will soon put to the test.

The Wildlife Habitat Education Program, or WHEP, State Contest was held April 28 at Five Oaks Duck Lodge in Humphrey, Arkansas. Judges evaluated nine junior teams and three senior teams on their written responses to a realistic scenario about a landowner who has goals to improve wildlife habitat. Becky McPeake, professor and extension wildlife specialist, said the winning senior team from White County 4-H is the first team in the history of the Arkansas program to ever get a near-perfect score on their wildlife plan. Caitlin Cooper, Madalyn Johnson, DeLyliá Sanderlin and Jonathan Watkins advanced to the National Wildlife Habitat Education Program Competition, held at the Iowa Lakeside Laboratory in Milford, Iowa, from July 30-Aug. 2.

The state competition also included educational programming about ecological concepts, such as the use of trapping as a tool for wildlife management, a drone demonstration and a presentation on wildlife careers. Summit Utilities sponsored the event and grilled burgers and hot dogs for attendees.

McPeake said the 4-H WHEP is a nationally recognized curriculum that “introduces youth to the art and science of wildlife management.”

“For the Arkansas program, 4-H members can start when they are 9 to 13 years old learning about wildlife identifica-



The White County WHEP team practices species identification and wildlife habitat with Brian Haller, White County extension staff chair.

tion, basic ecological concepts and wildlife practices to improve habitat,” McPeake said. “Starting at age 14 and up, they apply what they learned to develop a wildlife plan.”

Jan Yingling, White County extension 4-H agent, said WHEP is an “incredible educational opportunity for our youth.”

“They learn valuable lessons and gather knowledge that will not only help them with their future careers but also make them well-rounded, informed adults,” Yingling said. “These kiddos are hard workers and have put in so many hours over the past several years to get to this point in their 4-H careers. We are extremely proud and excited for them, and they will represent Arkansas well.”

Read more [here](#). ■

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First Food Product Rolls Out from Expanding Farmers' Opportunities in Northwest Arkansas Program

Aromatic steam rose off a cooking vat in the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station's Arkansas Food Innovation Center earlier this month while rows of glass jars stood ready to receive a savory, tomato-based sauce. You won't find this product on your supermarket shelves but at the farmers markets in northwest Arkansas.

Farmer's Ratatouille is the first product to roll out of the Expanding Farmers' Opportunities in Northwest Arkansas Program, a program designed to help cut down on food waste and create value-added products for farmers. In the United States, food waste is estimated at between 30–40 percent of the food supply, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Expanding Farmers' Opportunities in Northwest Arkansas is a partnership of the University of Arkansas System's department of food science; Brightwater, A Center for the Study of Food; and The Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas.

Renee Threlfall, an experiment station research scientist, said the program helps participating farmers learn to create shelf-stable, value-added food products from their surplus produce. Students at Brightwater develop recipes for foods that are produced at the experiment station's Arkansas Food Innovation Center, a food manufacturing facility.

Chef Steve Jenkins, department chair at Brightwater and a partner in the Expanding Farmer's Opportunities in Northwest Arkansas Program, said his students not only develop the recipes, but also team up with University of Arkansas food science students to produce the foods.

"They provide the expertise for farmers who want to turn their surplus produce into value-added products, but who are not trained as chefs or food processors," Jenkins said.

The Farmer's Ratatouille is made from tomatoes, squash, zucchini, eggplant and roasted red peppers produced by McGarrah Farms of Pea Ridge. Dennis McGarrah operates the farm at three locations in northwest Arkansas, where his family has been farming since 1824. He's been farming for 60 years and sells his produce at farmers markets in Fayetteville, Bentonville and Rogers. He also sells produce at Rivercrest Farms, operated by his son, Dennis McGarrah Jr., near Fayetteville.

Dennis McGarrah said he had a lot of "seconds" in squash and tomatoes and wanted to come up with a recipe for a shelf-stable product. "Seconds," or "culls," are vegetables that may have blemishes that consumers would reject at a farmers market.

"It's perfectly fine produce that just doesn't look good enough for the farmers markets," McGarrah said. "Now I can turn them into products that can be sold year-round."

Dennis McGarrah said he has worked with the Division of Agriculture on many projects over the years, so he reached out to Threlfall. She connected him with Jenkins, and his Brightwater students developed the recipe.

"I tried it out at home first and thought we had something," Dennis McGarrah said. "This is the first time we're scaling up to production level." ■



Farmer's Ratatouille from McGarrah Farms is the first product from the Expanding Farmers' Opportunities in Northwest Arkansas.

Message from the director



Just a warning, this month's article is going to be an administrative personnel update.

I am very excited to start this month by announcing to you all that Dr. Nina Roofe has accepted our position as Assistant Vice President – Family and Consumer Sciences. Dr. Roofe comes to us

from the University of Central Arkansas, where she has served as FCS Department Head for several years and brings in a wealth of leadership ability and ideas for improving our FCS programming. We are very excited for her to join us. Her start date is set for September 25. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Roofe to the Cooperative Extension Service family.

The search continues for a Division level replacement for Brian Helms' former position in our development office. This position will retain many of the responsibilities of Brian's old job, but with an eye on some larger Division level opportunities to work with the Agricultural Experiment Station side, Campus and 4-H Foundation for some big picture fundraising opportunities. I hope that retirees will continue to

support this office and assist with new opportunities for funding as they arise or are identified.

Many of you know Dr. Vic Ford, Associate Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources. Vic has announced his retirement early next year. This will leave some big shoes to fill. Dr. Ford has been with the Division for many years serving as Director of the Research Center at Hope and in his current administrative role. He is an award-winning forester by trade, and he has continued to contribute using that expertise as a forestry specialist in several capacities for the Division. I wish Dr. Ford all the best over the next few months as he prepares for life after Extension.

As some of you know, I will soon be stepping back into a faculty role. I have enjoyed my time in administration but feel that it's time for me to go back to killing weeds and being out in the field. I will miss many aspects of being Director. The interview process for my replacement has begun, and I know that the committee as well as Dr. Fields will find someone dedicated to Extension and its mission.

As always, we thank you all for your continued interest, support, and efforts with the Extension Service! ■

What the Federal Reserve's federal funds target rate hike means for consumers

The recent Federal Reserve federal funds target rate hike will affect interest rates for consumers, making it an expensive time to borrow or make large purchases.

Laura Hendrix, interim associate department head of FCS said that regardless of the current interest rate, it's important to shop around for a loan.

- Look for the best terms and rates. "Consumers who have higher credit scores qualify for better interest rates," Hendrix said. "Look for ways to improve your credit score and clean up your credit report."
- Consider the type of loan. Hendrix said fixed-rate loans for shorter periods of time usually have the lowest interest rates. "Consumers may see a slight increase in interest earned on savings accounts and Certificates of Deposit, so now may be a good time to take advantage of those," she said.
- Pay additional funds to the principal of a loan. This is another way to save money on interest. Hendrix said keeping credit card balances low in comparison to spending limits also helps to avoid additional interest and helps to increase one's credit score.



September Birthdays

Alberta J. James - Sep. 1
Diana L. Baker - Sep. 4
Jim Denton - Sep. 4
Vickie Leigh Huddleston - Sep. 4
John Jennings - Sep. 4
Johnnie L. Younger - Sep. 5
Bob Blake - Sep. 6
Angie Freel - Sep. 7
Barbara Singleton - Sep. 8
Carol J. Sanders - Sep. 8
Venetta Rice - Sep. 9

Jerry L. Wooley - Sep. 9
Catherine Grills - Sep. 12
Lee Hunter - Sep. 12
Raymond C. Benz - Sep. 16
Joe P. Stuart - Sep. 16
Charles William Albritton - Sep. 17
Janet Ann Slate - Sep. 17
Irene Carlock - Sep. 18
Steven Simpson - Sep. 18
June Williams - Sep. 21
Bill Frank Jones - Sep. 21

Gloria Jean Mayhugh - Sep. 21
Belinda Sue Weaver - Sep. 21
Sherry Johanna Ream - Sep. 22
LeVeda Jeanette Tate - Sep. 22
Donna Rothberg - Sep. 23
Stephen Vann - Sep. 27
William H. Dodgen - Sep. 28
Henry Rice - Sep. 28
Don Plunkett - Sep. 28
Karen Ballard - Sep. 28
Bettie Wilson - Sep. 30

Extension Cord editorial board meet summer interns

This year's summer interns swapped stories over lunch with some of Extension's retirees recently while visiting the state office. Fifteen interns met with the Extension Cord editorial board, which meets monthly to discuss content for the Extension Cord newsletter for retirees. This was a chance for retirees to hear about projects the interns are working on in their respective counties. In turn, the retirees shared some of their favorite Extension memories and offered encouragement and advice. ■



Seated from left: Retirees: Tom Leslie, Diane Jones, Darlene Millard, Ella Giesler, and Stan Chapman Standing: L to R: Rayvin Callaway, Natasha Hightower, Caelan Person, Devyn Britt, Ashlin Usrey, Laura Fincher, Delana Crutti, Zeb Gattis, Haley Callanen, Cade McKee, Amber Morris, Brent Clark, Daniel Lam and Magon James.



Plan fall fun with the UADA calender

Visit the [UADA interactive calender](#) to view upcoming Extension events! Filter by topic, location, and type of event. You may also subscribe to calendar events and save events that interest you.

Bobby J. Malone passes

Bobby J. Malone, age 90, of Harrison, AR passed away on Aug. 5. Bobby retired from Extension in 1989 after over 30 years of service. He served as the extension Staff Chairman in Boone County. The funeral was held Aug. 12 at Northside Church of Christ.

Melvin Daniel passes

Melvin Daniel, age 78, of Hot Springs, AR passed away on Aug. 23. Melvin served as a County Extension Agent in Garland County. He was an Ag Teacher for over 33 years. His celebration of life was held Aug. 23 in the Lake Hamilton School District Sports Arena.

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