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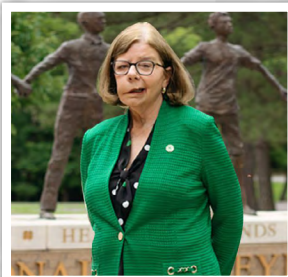
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A Life in Full Clover

By Judy Riley | Adapted from 501 LIFE Magazine



Darlene Zeh Millard was a shy child, one of three daughters born and raised on a farm north of Rogers in Benton County. That little girl would ultimately lead the largest youth organization in the state, the Arkansas 4-H program.

The impetus that brought her to this career was her own involvement in 4-H Club work, the youth outreach of the University of Arkansas Division of

Agriculture (UADA). Since 1914, when land grant institutions were founded, Arkansas has always had a strong 4-H program. Four-H clubs were created to provide training for youth to educate their parents on better farming and rural living practices.

This youth organization has at its core a group of adult volunteers who provide opportunities for youth through projects and activities ranging from cows to STEM focus, aerospace, cooking, leadership and healthy living. For 4-H members, it's all about in-depth study of a particular subject, then applying their skills by competing among peers with talks, demonstrations, recording books, speeches or being part of a judging team.

Millard took advantage of every opportunity 4-H gave her. She met new people, competed in numerous activities and participated in trips out of state, all of which broadened her horizons. She gives credit to her County Extension agents and volunteer leaders for encouraging her. As she overcame her shyness, a career working with youth seemed logical. For Millard, it was a calling, and she is still at it 65 years later as a volunteer.

She began work with the Pulaski County Extension Service with UADA as a 4-H agent, her dream job. Life was good until it wasn't. At age 26, Millard was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. The treatment involved surgery to remove a tumor that engulfed her right facial nerve. That nerve was severed, leaving partial facial paralysis.

"Because of training and experiences in 4-H, I knew that appearance does not change abilities. I have no doubt in my mind that without my 4-H background, I would not have survived the cancer journey. The self-confidence gained through 4-H was a lifeline," she said.



Darlene Millard (center) was one of six 4-H members to serve on the Report to the Nation Team in Washington, D.C.



Millard showed a steer in 1967 as part of 4-H.

Undaunted, Millard moved up in her career to become a youth education specialist, serving agents and youth statewide. She would, while continuing her work, get her Master of Science from the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville and her Ph.D. in family and consumer sciences from Texas Woman's University in Denton.

In 2002, Millard became the Extension Service's assistant director of 4-H youth development, overseeing a staff of 15 that created and delivered programs for more than 15,000 young people. Her high standards and deep commitment to youth inspired strong support from her team, many of whom still speak of her with admiration.

Millard has received numerous awards throughout her career. The most prestigious was being named to the National 4-H Hall of Fame in 2020.

Even though she officially retired in 2009, her service to 4-H continues as a volunteer. Millard currently serves as vice president and finance chair of the Arkansas 4-H Foundation, the nonprofit that owns the Vines Center and provides financial backing for the 4-H program. "Four-H has been a part of my life for 65 years. I believe there is no other youth organization that makes a positive impact on youth as does 4-H."

Millard's impact is best summed up by her former colleague and fellow foundation Board Member Mike Klumpp. "Throughout her life and career, Darlene has been a true servant leader," he said. "She focuses on empowering others, always lifting them up to reach their full potential. She has made a significant difference in the lives of hundreds of youth and adults throughout Arkansas and beyond."

What a life of service, indeed! Read the full article [here](#).

THE INSIDE STORIES

'Get Real' financial simulation

Tips for indoor and outdoor herb gardens

Bradley Co. EHC supports summer reading program

Volunteer canvasser guide earns national recognition

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Message from the director

Extension, City of Little Rock host 'Get Real' financial simulation for nearly 500 youth

Little Rock resident Takora Russell gained hands-on budgeting skills through the extension "Get Real" financial simulation as a participant in the city's Summer Youth Employment Opportunity program.

Russell, 19, was one of more than 480 participants of the City of Little Rock's Summer Youth Employment Opportunity program who attended the "Get Real" event on July 9 at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

"Get Real" is a program of the Cooperative Extension Service, part of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. It includes 12 interactive stations that teach financial decision making. In 2025, extension family and consumer sciences agents facilitated 46 "Get Real" programs throughout the state.

At the start of the simulation, participants were randomly assigned an occupation, salary, number of family members and tax deductions. They then had to choose a food plan, pick out a car, sign up for insurance and decide whether to rent or buy a home, with the goal of balancing their checkbook after navigating all the stations.

This is the second year that Russell has participated in the Little Rock's summer program, which collaborated with extension to host the "Get Real" simulation for the first time in 2025.

"Last time I had a totally different job and a different budget, which was harder than the career I got assigned this year," Russell said. "I like the idea of it, having to budget things out and to know,

'I need these things first, and then I need to worry about these other things.'

"Last year, I was getting all the stuff that I thought I needed, and it made my budget go down faster," Russell said. "This year, I'm more focused. My career

assignment is to be a single psychologist, so I'm going to get a one-bedroom apartment so I don't overspend. With food, I went moderate. With clothing, I don't need the nicest package, but I still need to look professional, so I also chose the moderate level. It gave me a new perspective."

The Summer Youth Employment Opportunity is a six-week paid work experience program for Little Rock youth ages 16-21 from June to July. About two-thirds of the worksites are in city departments, state and county offices, colleges and nonprofits, while more than 30 percent of the worksites are with private-sector partners, such as law offices and dental practices.

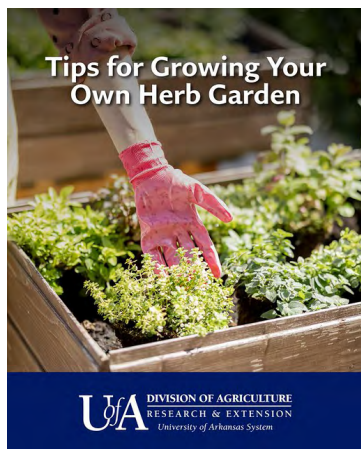
Read more [here](#).



Hailey Squires, specialist for the Be Mighty program for the Central Arkansas Library System, and Jessica Emerson, coordinator of the Be Mighty program, show available meal plans to City of Little Rock summer interns participating in the extension "Get Real" financial simulation on July 9.

Extension experts share tips for growing indoor, outdoor herb gardens

Whether planning to grow them on a windowsill or in the backyard, herbs can make a great gardening project for seasoned green thumbs and beginners alike.



"I think herbs are some of the best plants for beginner gardeners to try growing," said Krista Quinn, Faulkner County Extension horticulture agent for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. "You're only trying to grow leaves and not a fruit or vegetable, which makes it a little easier, and they don't usually need a lot of fussy care."

"You can often buy a small herb plant in the spring for about the same cost as some cut herbs at the grocery store," Quinn said. "The herb plant will provide you with fresh herbs all season long, while the cut herbs from the grocery store only last about a week."

Quinn said herbs can be planted in containers or directly in the ground. If planting in containers, it's best to use a relatively large container so the plants have plenty of room to grow. Quinn said a pot with a diameter of at least 12 inches would be best.

For growing herbs outdoors, annual herbs — those that live for only one season, such as basil — do best when planted in spring, Quinn said.

Read more [here](#).

Bradley County EHC clubs support Warren Public Library summer reading program

More than 60 lucky children from Bradley County are the proud new owners of handmade book bags, pillows, lap quilts and more — their reward for participating in the Warren Public Library summer reading program.

“Everyone is excited,” said Julie Hamilton, branch manager of the Warren Public Library. “Boys and girls, from the oldest to the youngest and their parents, love these items. Children love things that are their own to start with, and these were made just for them, with them in mind.”

At the start of this year, 15 members of three Bradley County Extension Homemakers Council clubs got to work hand-sewing and quilting more than 100 items to be given as rewards to Warren Public Library summer reading program participants. The clubs included the Bradley Block Builders, the Block of the Month Club and the Twisted Stitchers.

Hamilton and library staff distributed book bags, pillows, lap quilts, pillowcases and bookmarks to 67 participants on July 16.

Arkansas Extension Homemakers Council is a program of the Cooperative Extension Service, the outreach and education arm of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. The volunteer organization, which has more than 3,000 members statewide, focuses on lifelong learning, leadership development and community service.

Alayne Zimmerly, a member of all three participating EHC clubs, said the idea to support the summer reading program came after the library displayed EHC’s Christmas quilt, which

members make and sell in a fundraising raffle each year.

“Last year, we thought, ‘Oh, the library has really helped us out, so let’s do something for them,’” Zimmerly said. “My original goal was 20 of each item, but our members surpassed all my expectations.

Once we got started, we just had a ball. It felt so good to make something fun that serves a purpose.”

“They made so many things that every child that comes will be able to leave with one of these beautiful handmade pieces,” Hamilton said. “I just couldn’t believe how much stuff these women brought in — it was amazing.” Read more [here](#).



Three Bradley County Extension Homemakers Council clubs hand-sewed and quilted more than 100 pillows, lap quilts, book bags and more as rewards for participants of the Warren Public Library summer reading program.

Guide for volunteer canvassers earns national recognition

Every petition signature can determine whether an item makes it to the statewide ballot, and a guide from the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Public Policy Center that helps canvassers safeguard the success of their efforts has earned national recognition.

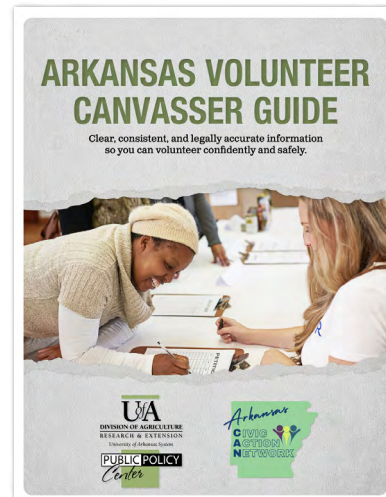
The National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals, or NACDEP, recognized Kristin Netterstrom Higgins and the [Arkansas Volunteer Canvassing Guide](#) as its 2026 National Winner for Educational Materials at an awards ceremony in Wichita, Kansas.

Netterstrom Higgins said the guide was inspired by new laws regulating what Arkansans had to say and do when collecting signatures on petitions for statewide ballot measures. She teamed up with Gail Choate, founder of the [Arkansas Civic Action Network](#), to create the Arkansas Volunteer Canvasser Guide and a series of training sessions.

“Our shared goal is to give volunteers clear, consistent and legally accurate information so they can work confidently and safely,” Netterstrom Higgins said. “The guide offers a broad overview that applies to all volunteers to support consistent statewide practices.

The honor is the latest in a [series](#) of [award-winning](#) voter education tools developed by the Public Policy Center.

Read more [here](#).



September Birthdays

Alberta James - Sept. 1	Carol Sanders - Sept. 8	Irene Carlock - Sept. 18	Stephen Vann - Sept. 27
Diana Baker - Sept. 4	Venetta Rice - Sept. 9	Steven Simpson - Sept. 18	William Dodgen - Sept. 28
Jim Denton - Sept. 4	Jerry Wooley - Sept. 9	June Williams - Sept. 21	Henry Rice - Sept. 28
Vickie Huddleston - Sept. 4	Catherine Grills - Sept. 12	Bill Jones - Sept. 21	Don Plunkett - Sept. 28
John Jennings - Sept. 4	Lee Hunter - Sept. 12	Gloria Mayhugh - Sept. 21	Karen Ballard - Sept. 28
Johnnie Younger - Sept. 5	Raymond Benz - Sept. 16	Belinda Weaver - Sept. 21	Bettie Wilson - Sept. 30
Bob Blake - Sept. 6	Joe Stuart - Sept. 16	Sherry Ream - Sept. 22	
Angie Freel - Sept. 7	Charles Albritton - Sept. 17	LeVeda Tate - Sept. 22	
Barbara Singleton - Sept. 8	Janet Slate - Sept. 17	Donna Rothberg - Sept. 23	

Message from the director



In August, I met with my counterparts from around the southern region at the annual Southern Program Leaders Network conference in New Orleans. While we were there, we had the rare opportunity to spend quite a bit of time with Dr. Jaye Hamby, the Director of USDA-NIFA.

As the agency responsible for administering not only our Smith-Lever capacity grant funding but also a variety of competitive grant funds, NIFA is an important strategic partner in the land-grant mission generally and for Cooperative Extension specifically. Dr. Hamby was well-acquainted with Extension before assuming his current role in USDA, and he is a strong supporter of our mission.

One of the main themes of Dr. Hamby's remarks to our group was the importance of documenting and reporting program impact. This is not necessarily something new; during my career in the land-grant system, I can't recall a time when we weren't working on better ways to document and effectively communicate the impact of our programs. I think it is fair to say, though, that we are in a season of heightened pressure on the federal budget. As is typical in such times, all spending receives more scrutiny – including spending on the capacity and competitive funds that are vital to our

operations. That's not a bad thing at all. Accountability is one of the core values of UADA. We expect it of ourselves even more than we expect it from our funding partners.

A big part of the reason that we adopted the PEARS reporting system was to improve our ability to document and communicate impacts. I am grateful to all our staff, agents, and specialists who have been doing their part to make PEARS an effective tool for that purpose. I know that nobody really loves reporting, and I know that any new system brings some initial headaches and challenges. But PEARS should give us better and more accessible information than we have ever had before for telling our Extension story. Also, given that so many states in the region are now using PEARS for program reporting, we may have the opportunity in the future to coordinate across the region to develop some common metrics and reporting practices that will allow us to track regional and even national impact. We have some way to go to accomplish that, obviously; but the convergence of technology and software is definitely creating an opportunity for us to tell our story on a regional and even national level. The land-grant system that we are a part of is a national system, and having a better way to demonstrate and communicate the benefits of that national scale and capacity would be a great thing.

Cyber Protection Tips: Making Secure Payments Online

- When purchasing items or services online, make sure you research the seller and know their physical location.
- If you are giving to charity, especially in the wake of a natural disaster, give to an organization that has a strong history in providing relief. Instead of paying in cash, make a check or money order payable to the charitable organization, not an individual.
- Most importantly, if the offer sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Investigate the offer before accepting or paying any money.

