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Arkansas 4-H honors teen leaders, announces Hall of Fame inductee

Arkansas 4-H honored some of its best and brightest leaders June 7, inducting its newest member of the Arkansas 4-H Hall of Fame and announcing 54 new Teen Stars who are leaders in their clubs and communities.

The honors were bestowed during the Arkansas 4-H annual Teen Leader Conference that brought together 100 teenagers from across the state to the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center for leadership development.

The three-day conference is open to 4-H members ages 14-19 and is designed to help prepare teens for leadership and service responsibilities in their local clubs and counties. In fact, the entire conference is planned and organized by the Arkansas 4-H state officers and 4-H Ambassadors.

“This conference demonstrates the caliber of young leaders we have here in Arkansas,” Arkansas 4-H director Debbie Nistler said. “I’m excited to see what they do in the future as young adult leaders.”

This year’s theme — “Planet Clover” — focused on creating space for youth to explore ways to develop their leadership skills. The clover is a reference to the 4-H emblem, a four-leaf clover. The youth organized several space-themed activities, including a Flying Saucers cooking challenge, STEM experiments, and a Shooting for the Stars leadership and confidence-building activity.

Ethan Wolcott of Sevier County was inducted into the Arkansas 4-H Hall of Fame, an award reserved for one 4-H member who demonstrates high achievement, commitment and service.

Wolcott has been a 4-H member since 2011 and was a Teen Star, a 4-H Ambassador, a 4-H camp counselor

and a two-time finalist for the 4-H Governor’s Award. He and his father started the Sevier County Community Changers 4-H Club, which focuses on community service, Wolcott’s passion. Wolcott has participated in food, clothing and disaster relief drives and has developed leadership skills through community service. One summer he conducted a Be Cool Stay Cool Fan Drive, raising enough money to donate 94 fans to senior citizens in his community.

“It’s surreal,” Wolcott said, shortly after receiving the Hall of Fame Award. “I want to use this momentum to continue doing what I’ve been doing — helping my community and sharing 4-H with others.”

Wolcott, 19, recently graduated from Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas where he completed an Associate of General Studies. He plans to pursue a bachelor’s degree in K-6 education so he can teach history.

Arkansas 4-H recognizes members for outstanding achievement in their projects and activities, leadership and community service with the Teen Star recognition.

Read more about the Teen Stars [here](#). ■



Ethan Wolcott is the newest member of the Arkansas 4-H Hall of Fame.

THE INSIDE STORIES

New ornamental horticulture specialist

Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Producers Building

August birthdays

Message from the director

Mike Moss passes

New ornamental horticulture specialist followed winding path to arrive at extension

From the time he was a boy spending summers on his grandparents' farm, Anthony Bowden knew he was destined for some aspect of agriculture. But it wasn't until the final semester of his undergraduate studies that he veered from row crop agronomy to horticulture.

"I really thought what I wanted to do was research agronomy," Bowden said. "But my last semester at Auburn as an undergrad, I took a horticulture course with Dr. Daniel Wells and realized that this is what I really want to do."

"My grandmother kept pristine flower and garden beds, and I'd help her with that, but as a 10-year-old boy, I just didn't think it was something I wanted to do as a career," he said. "But that course changed my thinking."

In May, Bowden left his position as a research associate with Mississippi State to join the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. As extension's new ornamental horticulture specialist, Bowden is taking on a role last filled by Jim Robbins, who retired in 2022.

Having worked as a teaching assistant throughout his undergraduate career, Bowden continued teaching as a graduate student at Auburn University in Alabama before pursuing his Ph.D. in plant and soil sciences at Mississippi State University.

"I fell in love with teaching — I was a teaching assistant every semester I was at Auburn," Bowden said. "I wanted to teach at the college level. I had some of the greatest teachers in horticulture, but everything at Auburn led me to Mississippi State. I was more focused on research there with Dr. Tricia Knight, also an outstanding horticulture researcher."

"She really fired the passion that had lay dormant in me to be a horticulture researcher," he said.

In his new role, Bowden works directly with commercial horticulture retailers and wholesalers across Arkansas.

"That's everything from greenhouses that produce plants to the retail garden centers that sell them," he said. "Basically, if they have an issue, I help them figure out what's going on."

Wayne Mackay, head of the Division of Agriculture's horticulture department, said Bowden is a natural fit for his new position.

"Dr. Bowden's experience in ornamentals research and extension was exactly what the department was looking for to support the Arkansas ornamentals industries," Mackay said.

As a research associate in Mississippi, Bowden studied ways to increase labor efficiency for nursery and greenhouse operations. He said he plans to continue research in that area in Arkansas as he works to support horticultural entrepreneurs.

"I've looked at it from the propagation angle — plant propagation places a large demand on labor in nurseries and greenhouses," Bowden said. "If we can address labor efficiency issues at the front end of plant production, we can make the entire business more efficient and profitable."

Read more [here](#). ■



Dr. Anthony Bowden, extension ornamental horticulture specialist.

Jackson County Extension Center celebrates opening of Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Producers Building

Jackson County Extension Center's newest building — the Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Producers Building — is open for business and already being put to use.

Jackson County Extension Center Director Tom Barber thanked the Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Board, which donated \$250,000 for the completion of the new 4,800-square-foot building. The Jackson County Quorum Court provided \$20,000 to support the main building and \$5,000 for the center's 4-H Outdoor Skills area.

"For Jackson County, this is just incredible," said Tommy Young, chairman of the Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Board and a member of the Jackson County Quorum Court. "The Arkansas Grain and Sorghum Board saw a need for this building. A lot of research is done here involving corn and sorghum. Northeast Arkansas has the Rice Research Center in Jonesboro, but nothing was named for corn and sorghum. Now we do."

Arkansas is ranked No. 17 in the nation in corn for grain production. Corn generates about \$516 million in cash receipts each year in Arkansas, according to

the U.S. Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service.

The Jackson County Extension Center site has about 350 acres of tillable land that extension researchers and agents use for variety trials and demonstrations in soybean, corn, peanuts and wheat — all the row crops in Arkansas except cotton. Research is being done in the areas of fertility, weed science, breeding, entomology and agronomy.

The Jackson County Extension Center houses extension staff and agents who work in agriculture, 4-H and family and consumer sciences, as well as staff and farm technicians.

The Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Producers Building includes a 60-by-40-foot multiuse room that can accommodate 60 people for classroom instruction or as many as 100 for dining. It's also outfitted with audio and visual equipment and Zoom capabilities so that meetings can include both in-person and virtual options. The area will provide a place for producers, 4-H members and the general public to meet.

Jackson County Extension County staff chair Matthew Davis said the new outdoor skills area will provide extensive opportunities for youth development, agent training and adult education. Several fire pits have already been installed and future plans include adding an archery range and a nature trail where visitors can learn about native trees and plants.

With the upgrades, the center can also serve as a regional meeting site for 4-H members throughout northeast Arkansas.

"Instead of traveling to the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center in Little Rock, we will be able to host some trainings here, making it more convenient for 4-H kids in this area," Davis said. ■



Extension personnel and guests cut a ribbon to celebrate the opening of the Arkansas Corn and Grain Sorghum Producers Building at the Jackson County Extension Center in Newport on June 9, 2023.

August Birthdays

Mr. Raymond L. Duncan - Aug. 1
Mrs. Patricia Walters - Aug. 1
Ms. Berline Wright - Aug. 1
Mrs. Linda Faye Buckley-Chappell - Aug. 3
Mrs. Betty Poe Holman - Aug. 4
Mrs. Louise Burns - Aug. 5
Ms. June Moody - Aug. 5
Mr. Carroll Wallace Guffey Jr. - Aug. 8
Mr. Paul Stewart Ballantyne - Aug. 9
Mr. Ronald W. Beaty - Aug. 9
Mr. Burl Scifres - Aug. 9
Ms. Laura Goforth - Aug. 10
Mr. Delbert Taylor - Aug. 11
Mrs. Nancy Clark - Aug. 12
Mr. Marion Eugene Terhune Jr. - Aug. 12
Mr. Robert Goodson - Aug. 14
Dr. Charles E. Wilson Jr. - Aug. 14
Ms. Beverly A. Fountain - Aug. 15
Ms. Janice Louise Huddleston - Aug. 15
Mrs. Marian Snortland - Aug. 15

Mr. Mark Everette Brawner - Aug. 17
Dr. Barbara A. Holt - Aug. 17
Mrs. Gail W. Clark - Aug. 19
Mrs. Carolyn L. Grimes - Aug. 19
Ms. Laura Luther - Aug. 19
Mrs. Gloria J. Pickett - Aug. 19
Mrs. Wanda Y. O'Neal - Aug. 20
Dr. Jim Ragland - Aug. 20
Ms. Jan Rogers - Aug. 20
Mr. Rickey Wiedower - Aug. 20
Mrs. Claudia K. Corbin - Aug. 21
Mrs. Barbara Simmons - Aug. 21
Mr. Steve M. Jones - Aug. 23
Mr. Terry Davis - Aug. 25
Ms. Carla Jean Vaught - Aug. 25
Mrs. Martha Elaine Albright - Aug. 26
Dr. Frank T. Plafcan - Aug. 28
Mr. Lott Rolfe III - Aug. 29
Dr. John M. Langston - Aug. 30

James Michael "Mike" Moss passes

James Michael "Mike" Moss, age 77, of Cabot, AR passed away on June 15, 2023. James served in Extension for several years. He served as the extension Livestock Specialist in Little Rock, as well as a 4-H Livestock Specialist at the LRSO. He was a longtime member of the Arkansas Cattleman's Association and First Baptist Church of Cabot. Arrangements were entrusted to A Natural State Funeral Service of Jacksonville, AR. His celebration of life was held at First Baptist Church of Cabot in the Fellowship Hall on July 8, 2023. A private burial followed.

Message from the director



It is hard to believe that July has come to end. This also means that we have said goodbye to our 2023 class of summer Extension interns. I continue to be very proud of this program and the way that we are running it. We have gotten

near perfect positive feedback on this program, and I expect it to keep growing and yielding more young people coming out of college who want to be extension agents! Once again, I want to thank the Extension Cord Board and those other retirees who took part in a meet-and-greet with this outstanding group of young people. I hope we get the chance to hire every one of them.

The end of July also brings an end to O-Rama season. I want to thank all the volunteers who donated their time and talents to both the district and state events. Our extension 4-H staff has once again pulled these events off without a hitch, and I am so impressed and proud to be a part of Arkansas 4-H. I want to thank our exiting group of state officers and thank them for their tireless efforts at

promoting Arkansas 4-H this past year. I also want to welcome the incoming class of officers for 2024 and pledge my support of their efforts.

As most of you know, we have not replaced Mr. Brian Helms as head of our Development Office since his retirement. I want to acknowledge the efforts of Khaliah Coleman, Amy Hedges, Tracy Courage and the District Directors for filling in the gaps while we have re-evaluated what this position will look like going forward. Dr. Deacue Fields, vice president for agriculture for the Division, has decided to create one cohesive development group for the Division of Agriculture, and this position will now be a part of that group. This will hopefully focus more of our efforts on development in a team environment and connect Extension better within the Division and with campus efforts. I hope that this new arrangement is beneficial to all going forward. At least one position is currently advertised.

As always, I want to thank all our retirees for their continued support of Extension efforts. ■