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Veteran agriculture, 4-H agent named Ozark District director

Longtime CES agent Sherry Beaty-Sullivan stepped into a new role May 1 as the director of the Ozark District, where she will oversee extension staff and programs in 25 counties in the north-central and northwest areas of Arkansas.

Beaty-Sullivan previously was the staff chair for Polk County. She supervised staff and split her time between maintaining agricultural programs in livestock, forages and horticulture, as well as community and economic development and 4-H programming in the community and in schools. She and her husband, Scott, own a 1,600-acre ranch with cattle, forages, timber and aggregate in south Polk County in Grannis, Arkansas.

“I am excited to have Sherry joining the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service administrative team as Ozark District director,” said John Anderson, director of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s Cooperative Extension Service. “Sherry brings years of experience as a county extension agent and staff chair to this position. Over the course of her career, she has worked in all three of the state’s extension districts, developing and delivering agriculture and 4-H programs.”

Beaty-Sullivan fills a position vacated by Kevin Lawson, who returned to Faulkner County to be an extension agent.

“This is a very important role for the organization and a challenging one,” Anderson said. “In the district director role, Sherry will have the opportunity to use her considerable experience to recruit, hire and mentor agents across all CES program areas. I have no doubt that she will be up to the challenge, and I am very much looking forward to working with her as she assumes this new role.”

With more than 25 years of experience as an extension agent, Sullivan said she feels ready for her new role.

“This has been a longtime goal of mine,” Sullivan said. “My father was an extension agent and then a district director,” she said. “I grew up in this organization. This was something I knew I wanted to do. I’m looking forward to getting to know the district and seeing where and how I can help our agents and staff chairs.”

Beaty-Sullivan’s father, Ron Beaty, started his extension career as a livestock agent — first in Craighead County and then in Pulaski County. Beaty-Sullivan grew up showing animals and was involved with Arkansas 4-H. Her mother, Judy, was a 4-H volunteer leader.

“I was more of a play-in-the-dirt kind of girl, so I went the ag route,” she said.



Beaty-Sullivan has a bachelor’s degree in agriculture extension education and a master’s degree in animal science, both from the University of Arkansas College of Agriculture, Food and Life Sciences. She earned a doctorate in agricultural sciences from Mississippi State University in 2022.

Beaty-Sullivan started her extension career working as an intern for the White County extension office. At that time, interns worked alongside agents for up to two years, learning all facets of agriculture, 4-H and Family and Consumer Sciences.

After nine months, Sullivan moved into her first full-time job as an agriculture and 4-H agent in Independence County and then in Howard County. In 2016, she moved into a leadership role as extension staff chair in Little River County extension. She’s been staff chair for Polk County since 2019.

She has been recognized for her accomplishments as an agriculture agent at both the state and national level, and she is one of a relative handful of county agents to achieve the rank of Distinguished Agent.

“I had a lot of mentorship when I was coming up in Extension — not only from my dad, but also from other agents and staff chairs. I’ve worked under some pretty legendary folks and was trained by some of the best.” She counts among her many mentors Judy Riley, former White County staff chair; Brian Haller, White County agriculture agent; and Jean Ince, former Howard County staff chair. ■

THE INSIDE STORIES

Quapaw Quarter tour

Saline County 4-H Robotics Club

Message from the director

June birthdays

Quapaw Quarter Association annual tour highlights home of first African American extension workers, Little Rock Nine member Gloria Ray



The first Black extension workers, Mary and Harvey Ray, lived in this house in the early 20th century. Harvey's daughter, Gloria, would later become one of the Little Rock Nine. 2016 file photo. (Image courtesy Preserve Arkansas)

For years the home at 2111 Cross Street languished, and with it, the memories of a landmark in Little Rock's history.

Its once-proud face was worn. Strips of paint peeled away, laying its wood open to the wounds of wind and water. The weight of decades sat on its darkened porch. The non-profit organization Preserve Arkansas even listed the home as one of the state's [most endangered in 2016](#).

But in 2019, new owners took possession of the home and poured much-needed love into the wood and brick house that was once the

home of Arkansas' first African American agricultural extension workers and the childhood home of the Little Rock Nine's Gloria Ray.

This spring, the Dunbar neighborhood house was featured in the Quapaw Quarter Association's 59th annual tour of homes May 11-12.

"We were looking for some houses in the area and the current owners were happy to open their house to us and to have it on tour," said Callie Williams, a Quapaw Quarter Association volunteer and architectural historian. "They're newer homeowners. They recently purchased the home and have recently done a big renovation and rehabilitation job on the house.

"It was in kind of a sorry state and had fallen into disrepair. They were able to get the house and bring it back," Williams said.

Mary Lee and Harvey Cincinnatus Ray

The story begins with Mary Lee McCrary and the man who would become her husband, Harvey Cincinnatus Ray.

Educated at the Tuskegee Institute and graduating in 1897, Mary Lee McCrary began teaching at private schools in Alabama and South Carolina. She moved into public education in 1900. She served as an instructor at what was then the new

Colored Agricultural and Normal University in the Oklahoma Territory. McCrary was also an entrepreneur and during her time in Oklahoma, she built a successful dressmaking business.

McCrary's life changed when she met Harvey Cincinnatus Ray, a fellow faculty member at Langston. The couple married and moved to Arkansas. They made their home at 2111 Cross Street.

Harvey Ray would be the first Black county agent of the Arkansas Agricultural Extension Service in 1915, and Mary Ray would become the first Black home demonstration agent in 1916. Their jobs involved bringing the latest university discoveries to help people live better, whether it meant growing more crops or being able to better feed a family.

The Rays' work

Harvey Ray's appointment included working with farmers in a large swath of Arkansas: Pulaski, Phillips, Jefferson, Lee, Monroe, Crittenden and Arkansas counties. In 1918, he was named district agent, a title he held until his death in the 1950s.

Mary Ray conducted her outreach efforts in Pulaski, Phillips and St. Francis counties, until July 1918, when she was promoted to district agent for home demonstration work. According to the Encyclopedia of Arkansas, the promotion expanded "her responsibility to as many counties as emergency wartime funding would support — at least 30 based on her 1918 report."

Mary Ray's projects included canning demonstrations, garden clubs and school lunch programs.

She held the post of district agent until her death in 1934.

"We stand on the shoulders of pioneers like Mary Lee McCrary Ray who modeled the way of home demonstrations, strength in adversity and program advocacy," said Nina Roofe, assistant vice president for family and consumer sciences at the Cooperative Extension Service. "Our classrooms and technology are different today, but our focus on bringing education in everyday language to individuals and families in our communities remains the same.

"We bring financial management, health and nutrition, civil engagement, and more to empower Arkansans to make informed decisions to improve their lives," Roofe said.

"And as Mary Ray did, our agents engage with their quorum courts and other stakeholders to ensure sustainable funding of programs for future generations," Roofe said.

Saline County 4-H Robotics Club partners with Easterseals Arkansas to construct assistive technology device

Arkansas 4-H members keep their hands and minds busy with a variety of science projects, part of the youth development program's emphasis on STEM education. One such project found Saline County 4-H SeaCow Robotics Club members putting together a Voice It© assistive technology device at Easterseals in Little Rock.

Clad in their signature black and white checkerboard pants, SeaCow Robotics Club members Kyri Collins, Abby Wald, Issac Wald, Luke Wald and Sarah Wald, 4-H parent Brandon Collins, and coaches Mike Katsen, Stacy Statler and Tamara Wald gathered with Easterseals Arkansas staff to construct the device on April 5.

"Through our partnership with the SeaCow Robotics Club, we hope to shed light on an exciting opportunity for Arkansas school districts to collaborate with their Robotics, East, or STEM programs in order to assemble assistive technology devices," said Katelynn Estes, doctor of occupational therapy and assistive technology specialist for Easterseals Arkansas Outreach Program and Technology Services. "This provides educational benefits for both the students receiving the device and for the students assembling the device."

Estes said the Voice It© device reads RFID, or radio frequency identification, tags. These tags can be placed within everyday objects, tactile symbols, picture cards and more. When the Voice It© scans the tag, it speaks a word or phrase out loud using a prerecorded voice.

"For example, if a user has a tactile symbol representing the word 'more' with an RFID card installed, they can use the Voice It© in combination with the tactile symbol to speak the

word 'more,'" Estes said. "The Voice It© can also help individuals with low vision identify common objects around their home, school or work environment, such as medicine bottles."

Tamara Wald, an occupational therapist and parent volunteer, said she was inspired to get involved after attending a course at Easterseals about helping children with multiple disabilities access assistive technology.

"I thought, 'Why can't our robotics club help them produce this assistive technology to get it in the hands of more children?'" Tamara said. "They told us there's not enough of this technology to go around, especially when it comes to some of the 3-D printed items. We're learning about 3-D printing as a club, so why not try to partner together? What more practical need is there than helping children?"

Read more [here](#). ■



Katie West, Saline County extension 4-H agent, and Tamara Wald, parent volunteer for the SeaCow Robotics Club, look on as Wald's sons Issac and Luke get started with the video instruction portion of the Voice It© assembly.

Quapaw Quarter, cont.

The Little Rock Nine

After Mary Ray's death, Harvey Ray married another home demonstration agent, Julia Miller. The pair raised three children, including Gloria Ray. At 15, in 1957, Gloria Ray was one of the Little Rock Nine denied entry to Little Rock Central High. President Eisenhower ordered units of the Army's 101st Airborne to the scene and federalized the Arkansas National Guard soldiers that Gov. Orval Faubus sent to the school to prevent integration. The Nine were later escorted into the school by federal troops.

Amy Cofer, an extension program associate for early childhood professional development, will be a tour guide for this house.

"It's an excellent opportunity for us and the Quapaw Quarter Association to highlight the rich history of the Cooperative Extension Service in the state and remind people we're still here, providing the same free education to Arkansans," Cofer said.

Read more [here](#). ■

June Birthdays

Mae Rosby - June 1	Lanny Ashlock - June 8	Samuel Boyster - June 16	Carroll Garner - June 25
Ford Baldwin - June 1	Rex Roberg - June 9	Sharon Dawson - June 17	Linda Outlaw - June 25
Robin Bridges - June 2	Jo Howard - June 10	Berni Kurz - June 18	Romona Thieme - June 25
Linda Hon - June 3	Graffie Eldridge - June 11	Lila Grist - June 20	Allen Bates - June 25
Jesse Clark - June 4	Martha May - June 11	Bonnie Taylor - June 20	Iris Phifer - June 27
Debra Baker - June 5	Tamara Walkingstick - June 13	Rin Robertson - June 20	Pamela Ferrill - June 27
Mike McCarter - June 5	Michael Hamilton - June 14	Dennis Bailey - June 21	Jim Robbins - June 28
Jelyne Coldwell - June 6	Rick Wimberley - June 14	Rick Cartwright - June 21	Dorothy Hall - June 29
Brenda Vick - June 7	Janet Kuykendall - June 16	Sherry Black - June 23	
Vetress Strong - June 8	Sue Oglesby - June 16	Clifford Coker - June 24	

Message from the director



Let all thy joys be as the month of May.
- Thomas Tusser, 16th century English farmer

Thomas Tusser never made it to Arkansas, but if he had come here in May, he would surely have felt right at home. If you can't be happy in May in Arkansas, you probably can't be

happy at all. I will grant that the month has been a bit challenging for those of us trying to knock out planting season, but otherwise what a beautiful time of year to be in the Natural State.

In UA-CES, we have had more to celebrate than just the balmy late spring weather. We started this month with a special celebration for Mr. Johnny Woodley. Mr. Woodley is not only a long-serving employee in the LRSO warehouse, but he is also 34 years into his career as a citizen-soldier with the Arkansas National Guard (ARNG) and a veteran of four overseas deployments. Mr. Woodley is a Chief Warrant Officer 3 (CW3) in the ARNG. If you know anything about military rank, you know that warrant officers (affectionately referred to as Chiefs) play a special role in the military. Warrant officers have technical or tactical skills that are critical for mission success. They are respected not just for their special rank but for their special skill set. What I'm saying is that Mr. Woodley, despite his unfailingly modest demeanor, is kind of a big deal in the ARNG. He was recently presented a Quilt of Valor by the Never Forgotten in Arkansas Quilts of Valor chapter from Saline County. The ceremony was arranged by our own Kris Boulton, Saline County Staff Chair and FCS agent. In fact, appropriate for our organization,

the ceremony was included in an Extension meeting – a Technology and Textiles training that took place in the LRSO education wing. When the whole room – agents, volunteers, and guests – all sang the national anthem and watched as Mr. Woodley was presented his hand-made quilt, it was truly a special occasion — one that I think we all felt honored to have been a part of. I am grateful to Kris Boulton for going the extra mile to pull off this wonderful celebration. She has a pretty remarkable set of skills herself.

I got to meet another remarkable group of people this month when our 4-H state officer candidates came by for a visit. To accommodate schedules, candidates came by in two groups on consecutive Fridays this month. It is always a pleasure interacting with our 4-Hers. It's also usually a humbling experience if I'm honest. These young men and women are unbelievably poised, articulate, intelligent, polite, and confident. They are miles ahead of where I was at their age. I can't imagine a better advertisement for 4-H or for CES generally than these outstanding young people.

I'll end this month's installment with some joyous personnel news. Sherry Beaty-Sullivan has joined our administrative team as Ozark District Director. Sherry is well known to UA-CES, having served as an agent for... I'll leave it to her to tell you how many years. Let's just say she's been around long enough to know what she's doing. It has been a pleasure getting to know Sherry better and seeing her enthusiasm for her new role.

As always, thank you for all you are doing for our organization and for the people of this wonderful state. ■