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**U of A**  
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE  
RESEARCH & EXTENSION  
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## New Arkansas waterfowl research center poised for national impact

A new waterfowl research center that aims to advance waterfowl and wetlands research and transform the industry was announced Oct. 13 during a ceremony at the University of Arkansas at Monticello.

The event, co-hosted with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, marked the creation of the Snowden Waterfowl Center of Excellence and the Dyke-Snowden Endowed Chair of Waterfowl and Wetlands. Government and higher education leaders from across the state were in attendance, including Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, who participated in the announcement of the center and endowed chair, made possible through \$7 million in contributions.

The project received initial funding during the 2022 Arkansas legislative session when the Division of Agriculture received a \$1 million appropriation toward a waterfowl and wetlands endowed chair at UAM. The funds were accompanied by a challenge to raise \$1 million in private contributions to complete the \$2 million endowment.

David Snowden, Arkansas waterfowl conservationist, and Merritt Dyke, chairman of Dyke Industries, led a group of donors, successfully raising \$1 million in private funds for the Dyke-Snowden Endowed Chair of Waterfowl and Wetlands and an additional \$5 million in private funds to create the Snowden Waterfowl Center of Excellence. Last year, Ducks Unlimited also made significant contributions, which were used to create an endowed professorship in wetlands and waterfowl conservation at UAM.

Michael Blazier, professor and dean of the College of Forestry, Agriculture and Natural Resources at UAM, expressed confidence in the waterfowl research center's upcoming impact.

"All these developments have positioned our campus to be a national leader in waterfowl research, education and outreach," he said. "It's a perfect fit for the state known as the

duck hunting capital of the world and the region of that state where a lot of the best of that hunting happens."

The Snowden Waterfowl Center of Excellence is a Division of Agriculture research center that will be housed at UAM as part of the Arkansas Forest Resources Center. Directed by Blazier, the Arkansas Forest Resources Center conducts research and extension activities through the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture's research and outreach arms.

During the announcement, Deacue Fields, vice president for agriculture for the Division of Agriculture, expressed gratitude to key contributors like Snowden and Dyke, noting their "vision, combined with the foundation that Douglas Osborne has laid, will transform the waterfowl industry, locally and nationally."

Read more [here](#).



David Snowden, the center's namesake and Arkansas waterfowl conservationist, spoke during the ceremony, highlighting how the Snowden Waterfowl Center of Excellence will help attract the "best and brightest students."

### THE INSIDE STORIES

**Morrilton school garden**

**EFNEP program expands across Arkansas**

**Updated flu, RSV vaccines available**

**'Boots on the Ground' supports animal wellbeing**

**Message from the director**

**Jerry Williams passes**

## Morrilton school garden provides fresh greens, hydroponic tomatoes for school lunches

Students and teachers at Morrilton Junior High have been enjoying some very fresh produce with their lunches, thanks to a school garden established with the help of the Cooperative Extension Service.

“We began this project three years ago with the Morrilton Junior High School science department,” said Shannon Autrey, Conway County extension agent and a registered and licensed dietitian who specializes in family and consumer sciences.

The project was built out of the now-defunct SNAP-Ed program, which provided nutrition education to those receiving benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The extension service delivered SNAP-Ed until the program ended Sept. 30.



Students work together to run the school garden at Morrilton Junior High School.

Two tabletop hydroponic gardens in the library and four, 6-foot raised beds were relocated from a previous SNAP-Ed project at UA Community College - Morrilton to the junior high school.

“Students received lessons from the SNAP-Ed School Garden Lesson Plans and made decisions about what to plant in each bed,” Autrey said.

It seems that the students selected their crops wisely.

“We have been able to have several taste tests using the produce from the gardens,” Autrey said. “The students, as well as staff that is present during the summer, especially enjoy having fresh leafy greens to supplement their lunches. Cherry tomatoes grown in the library’s hydroponic gardens are also a favorite.”

The students learn about more than just growing and caring for their crops. They learn the nutritional benefits, too.

“We talked about the micronutrients, all the vitamins and minerals, and how they differ among the things we’re harvesting,” Autrey said. The students also learned “all the different parts of the plant that we eat. Some of them, we eat the roots, some of them we eat the fruit, some of them we’re actually eating the flowers and the stems. We get to talk about all of that and then encourage the kids to take what they learned home.” Read more [here](#).

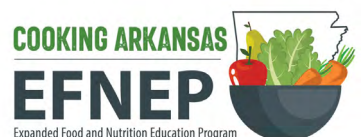
## Extension EFNEP program expanding to provide nutrition education to more Arkansans

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, offered by the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service, will soon be available in more Arkansas counties, empowering families with limited resources to make healthier diet and exercise choices.

The federal program, known as EFNEP, is funded by the Division of Agriculture and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is managed by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

First launched by the USDA in 1969, EFNEP collectively reaches roughly 200,000 low-income adults and 450,000 low-income youth each year through 76 land-grant universities and the national Cooperative Extension System. In 2024,

the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service taught 1,050 EFNEP nutrition education lessons to more than 5,500 youth and adults.



Teresa Henson, assistant professor of EFNEP for the Division of Agriculture, said the main goal of EFNEP is to “provide limited-resource families with different ways to improve their eating habits, physical activity, and stretch their food dollars for a better quality of life.”

In July 2025, federal funding was eliminated for the SNAP-Ed nutrition education program, ending the Division of

## Updated flu, RSV vaccines now available for Arkansans



Cooler fall temperatures bring with them the start of cold and flu season. To stay safe and healthy, flu vaccines are recommended for everyone 6 months of age and older. RSV and pneumococcal vaccines are also recommended for older adults.

“Not only do vaccines help prevent illness, but they also lessen the symptoms of the illness you’re trying to prevent against if you do contract it,” said Heather Wingo, extension immunization educator.

Adults aged 50 and older are recommended for the pneumococcal vaccine, which helps protect against serious illnesses like pneumonia and meningitis. The vaccine is also recommended for people at higher risk of these illnesses, regardless of age.

Adults aged 75 and older are recommended for the RSV vaccine. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends that adults ages 50-74 who are at increased risk of severe RSV disease get the vaccine.

Wingo said the RSV vaccine is not an annual vaccine. Those who have already received a dose of the vaccine, including last year, should not get another RSV vaccine at this time.

The COVID-19 vaccine is recommended for adults 65 years of age and older, and for individuals with underlying health conditions that put them at increased risk of a serious COVID-19 infection.

To find vaccine providers near you, visit [vaccinefinder.org](https://vaccinefinder.org). To learn more about childhood vaccines, visit [letsgetrealaboutvaccines.org](https://letsgetrealaboutvaccines.org).

## EFNEP, cont.

Agriculture’s program after 30 years of service to Arkansans. Since then, the Division of Agriculture has been able to transition former extension SNAP-Ed staff to serve as EFNEP program assistants, who will continue to provide nutrition education across the state.

“EFNEP program assistants serve as peer educators in our Arkansas counties, teaching participants about nutrition, healthy food preparation, food safety and resource management, and physical activity to support good health for all members of their family,” said Nina Roofe, assistant vice president of family and consumer sciences. “The additional EFNEP program assistants will allow us to reach even more

## Center for Food Animal Wellbeing gets ‘Boots on the Ground’ with veterinarians

In the world of food animal production, veterinarians are on the front lines helping producers address both the physical health and wellbeing of the animal.

Although they may not be able to converse with animals like Hollywood’s “Dr. Dolittle,” veterinarians and those who work with animals can read body language and may recognize some audio cues that signify stress. High stress situations in animals can suppress immune response, according to Shawna Weimer, assistant professor of poultry science and director of the Center for Food Animal Wellbeing.



Speakers at the 11th annual Center for Food Animal Wellbeing Symposium included Cole Crumpacker, staff veterinarian for Butterball, left; Laura Tensa, veterinarian for Wilcox Farms; Brooke Kitting, senior veterinarian for Seaboard Foods; Jennifer Walker, chief animal welfare officer for Kinder Ground; and Kate Barger, principle veterinary consultant for KB Welfare Consulting. Shawna Weimer, far right, is director of the center.

As pointed out in the center’s 11th annual symposium at the Don Tyson Center for Agricultural Sciences, the American Veterinary Medical Association’s oath has included a pledge to safeguard animal wellbeing alongside animal health since 2010. The symposium, which was themed “Boots on the Ground: Animal Welfare from the Veterinary Perspective,” was held in-person and online Oct. 2. About 300 people registered for the event.

“I encourage you to think about how you are living out not just the protection of animal health, but also the protection of animal health and welfare,” said Jen Walker, DVM, of Kinder Ground. “What are we doing not just to provide relief to animals but also to prevent harm to those animals?”

Kinder Ground works to improve the living conditions of farm animals through education and outreach programs. While there is a long list of things farmers must do to keep their animals alive and thriving, there are also a few little things that can be done to improve animal wellbeing, including feelings of safety and alleviating boredom, Walker noted. Read more [here](#).

of our target audience of low-income families and youth.”

Roofe said that in addition to EFNEP’s expansion, the Division of Agriculture’s family and consumer sciences department will continue to provide “science-based education on healthy eating and lifestyle choices using the community partners and sites previously part of our SNAP-Ed program.

“We will do this through cooking schools and general nutrition education content such as ReThink Your Drink, MIND Your Diet, Mediterranean Cooking School, food preservation, budgeting, grocery shopping education and much more,” Roofe said. Read more [here](#).



## December Birthdays

Becky Mulhollen - Dec. 1	Shirley Lewis - Dec. 11	Cindy Golden - Dec. 19	Mitch Crow - Dec. 26
Dena Malone - Dec. 2	Jerry Foley - Dec. 11	Maureen Rose - Dec. 21	Liz McKay - Dec. 26
Paul Martin - Dec. 3	Ann Behnke - Dec. 12	Suzanne Hirrel - Dec. 21	Sandra Smith - Dec. 27
Holly Berry - Dec. 4	Millie Henson - Dec. 13	Gayla Taylor - Dec. 22	Judy Bloesch - Dec. 27
Linda Thompson - Dec. 6	Jerry Markham - Dec. 14	Audrey Hairston - Dec. 24	Jeff Welch - Dec. 28
Barbara King - Dec. 8	Dick Kluender - Dec. 14	Avonne Petty - Dec. 24	Denise Roulhac - Dec. 28
Toy Siler - Dec. 8	Donna Graham - Dec. 14	Cheryl Maxwell - Dec. 24	Betty Brannan - Dec. 29
Albert Squires - Dec. 9	Wayne Miller - Dec. 15	Merle Gross - Dec. 24	Tom Leslie - Dec. 29
Richard DeSpain - Dec. 9	Brenda Yusko - Dec. 18	Bobby Coats Jr. - Dec. 24	Judy Robison - Dec. 29
Susan Watkins - Dec. 9	Beverly Sims - Dec. 18	Dennis Gardisser - Dec. 24	Saundria Ash - Dec. 29
Darlene Horne - Dec. 10	Mary Askew - Dec. 19	Blair Griffin - Dec. 24	Anna Landrum - Dec. 31
Joyce Bowlin - Dec. 10	Mark Peterson - Dec. 19	Margaret Goodson - Dec. 26	

## Message from the director



By the time you read this, Thanksgiving will likely be behind us. You might be debating whether to power through a few more days of turkey sandwiches or clear out the fridge and move on. My advice? Don't quit just yet — if you're tired of sandwiches, turn that turkey into soup!

Thanksgiving is a unique holiday. It's not tied to a specific person or event but rather set aside for reflection and gratitude — a practice that research shows is healthy year-round, though I admit I don't do it nearly enough. It's nice to have a day built into the calendar to remind us.

I also think it's fitting that our Division awards ceremony happens in November, close to Thanksgiving. Both occasions invite us to pause and focus on what's gone right. Too often, our time and energy are consumed by problems or potential issues, while successes quietly go unnoticed.

Parents of more than one child might relate to this phenomenon—or maybe that's just me.

I want to congratulate all of our Division award winners for their outstanding work and thank them for setting an example of excellence. I won't list every name here for fear of leaving someone out, but I do want to highlight one award in particular: the John White Team Award, which went to the Feral Hog Team this year. That team included the late Becky McPeake. We were honored to have her husband, Stan, accept Becky's award on her behalf. Becky's career exemplified excellence to the very end, and it was a privilege to recognize her one more time.

During my own Thanksgiving break, I've reflected on something I'm deeply grateful for: all of you. This year has brought its share of challenges, but your hard work, dedication, and commitment to service have been both inspiring and a source of pride. I hope you enjoyed some well-deserved rest and time with loved ones this holiday—you've certainly earned it.

## Williams remembered as 'old school,' highly knowledgeable in cotton

In the days before questions were answered with "Google it," east Arkansas farmers depended on Jerry Williams for answers.

Williams, of Bella Vista, died Nov. 15. He was 80.

Jerry worked as a county extension agent with the Cooperative Extension Service for 35 years. Throughout those years, he walked thousands of miles in the fields of Phillips, Arkansas,

Mississippi and Lincoln counties helping farmers take care of their crops. He twice served as Phillips County extension staff chair. Williams retired from extension in 2004.

He received a Distinguished Service Award from the National Association of County Agricultural Agents and was elected the 58th president of the Arkansas County Agricultural Agents Association.