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Sebastian County father-daughter pair is a presidential legacy in Arkansas 4-H

For Karly Jones, the newly elected state president of Arkansas 4-H, serving in the role will mean following in her father Kevin's footsteps.

"It's very cool to know I'm right behind him, doing what he did and getting to have some of the same experiences," Karly, 18, said. "It was part of the reason I wanted to run for state office. It means a lot for me to be able to follow him and have the same fun stories to tell when I have kids. Maybe they'll do the same thing, and it will just continue as a legacy."

Kevin Jones served as state president for the youth development organization from 1981-82. He was also inducted into the Arkansas 4-H Hall of Fame in 1982. Kevin said he and his wife, Sherry, wanted to enroll Karly and her younger sister, Katy, in 4-H because of the impact the program had on his life.

"We started them in 4-H because I knew what my experiences were, and I knew that it would be good for them," he said. "Many of my best memories involve 4-H and extension. I met people who are still friends to this day, people I can call with a problem and know they're going to be there the next day. You can get those friends in high school and college, but you get a lot of them in 4-H."

Last year, Karly served as vice president for the Ozark District. Kevin said he is proud of his daughter for successfully campaigning for the presidency for the 2026-2027 program year.

"The competition is different than when I went through, and to some extent, I think the competition is stronger," he

said. "One of the things that made me proud when I was president, and makes me proud looking at what Karly has done, is the fact that I was elected by my peers and my friends. That's a special part of this experience."

After more than a decade of membership in Arkansas 4-H, Karly said winning the state presidency was a significant turning point.

"Even though I had already served as a state officer, campaigning for office again was harder than I expected it to be," she said. "It was scary to step back into that place and remember how nerve-wracking it is. But all that build-up and work and worry, and all of my 11 years in 4-H, felt totally worth it when I was elected state president. It was a very huge moment."

Read more [here](#).



4-H LEGACY — Karly Jones, the newly elected state president of Arkansas 4-H, will follow in her father Kevin's footsteps, who served in the role from 1981-1982.

THE INSIDE STORIES

Economic prospects of AI data centers

Health benefits of alkaline and electrolyte water

Crittenden Co. brings gardening to correction center

Remembering Gerald 'Jerry' Musick

Remembering L.B. 'Bernie' Daniels

Recognizing social engineering scams

UADA researcher examines economic prospects of AI data centers in rural areas

Across the country, the explosive growth of massive data centers, many of them meant to power the growth of artificial intelligence, has drawn both criticism and support from communities in both rural and urban areas.

As more land is annexed for future data center development, some have questioned the economic costs and benefits of those decisions. Frank Seo, assistant professor of rural development, recently examined the possible economic ramifications of AI data centers for Arkansas, at both the state and county level.

In [“Data Centers vs. Factories: Do AI Facilities Truly Benefit Rural Economies? Evidence from an Arkansas Simulation,”](#) first published in Southern Ag Today, Seo compared three industry scenarios based on the creation of 100 jobs in an AI data center, auto manufacturing, and food manufacturing. Based on existing data — national average productivity and work hours for each scenario — Seo simulated the total economic impact of each industry in the state of Arkansas and in four rural counties: Calhoun, Dallas, Newton, and Woodruff, each of which has a low population density according to U.S. Census data.

“I became interested in this issue because there are strong opinions on both sides, but relatively little objective evidence at the county level showing how the economic impacts of data centers compare with those of other industries that could potentially locate in rural communities,” Seo said. “I think this is particularly important right now because communities and policymakers

are making decisions about data center development, incentives, infrastructure, and land use.”

In his findings, Seo said that data centers compare favorably with auto and food manufacturing facilities in terms of overall economic output, although the magnitude and composition of their economic impacts vary by region.

“The differences are largely driven by the economic linkages associated with data centers,” Seo said. “At the statewide level, these linkages are spread across a much larger and more diversified economy. Data centers purchase specialized goods and services from businesses across the state, while employee spending generates additional activity across a broader labor market. In rural areas, smaller labor pools, fewer local suppliers and a less diversified economy mean that a greater share of these indirect and induced effects can occur outside the local area.”

Seo said, however, that data centers generally generate fewer employment spillovers than traditional manufacturing across regions. He explained that counties with smaller regional labor pools, particularly for the specialized technical workers required by data centers, may need to recruit workers from outside the region. Read more [here](#).



Frank Seo, assistant professor of rural development for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, co-authored the 2025 Rural Profile of Arkansas.

Extension experts share science behind electrolyte, alkaline water: what are the health benefits?



Consumers may have noticed more electrolyte water or alkaline water drinks being sold in stores or advertised online, but what benefits do these products actually provide?

Extension health experts say that electrolyte beverages can be helpful following prolonged physical activity, excessive sweating, or illness that causes significant fluid loss. But for most people and most situations, plain water remains the best choice for everyday hydration.

“Electrolytes are important minerals that help the body balance fluids and support the nerves, muscles, heart and blood pressure,” said Bryce Daniels, assistant professor and state health

specialist for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. “Most people get enough electrolytes from regular foods and drinks.”

Alkaline water products are marketed as being less acidic than regular water. Lida Araghi, assistant professor and nutrition and food safety specialist for the Division of Agriculture, said that while electrolyte products can be useful when fluid losses are substantial, the evidence for alkaline water is much less convincing.

“Small studies have examined possible effects, but the available research has not established consistent health or hydration benefits compared with regular water,” Araghi said. “Alkaline water has not been shown to hydrate healthy people better or improve overall health simply because it has a higher pH.

Read the full article [here](#).

Extension program teaches gardening skills, brings fresh produce to East Central Arkansas Community Correction Center

After planting their 0.25-acre garden in early March, participants in the Roots 2 Reentry Program at the East Central Arkansas Community Correction Center recently harvested more than 2,500 pounds of fresh summer produce.

The fruits and vegetables were then given to the facility's kitchen to prepare and serve to residents. The program is a collaboration between ECC, a residential facility for female inmates, and the Crittenden County Extension Office.



In collaboration with the Crittenden County Extension Office, participants in the Roots 2 Reentry program at East Central Arkansas Community Correction Center prepare fresh produce from their garden at the facility.

Katrina Wallace, Crittenden County Extension agriculture agent, said the program began this spring with help from local farmers who volunteered to bring their tractors to the facility and till the soil to prepare for the garden. Individuals, extension employees and facility staff also donated fertilizer, seed and other supplies.

Marcus Burton, corrections lieutenant for ECC, said approximately 25 women have participated in the program since it

began. In weekly lessons, Wallace taught participants agriculture and gardening skills.

"They got to have hands-on experience from start to finish," Wallace said. "We've gone over planting depths, direct sowing versus transplants, fertilizer, and how much water is needed each week to make sure a plant is at its full potential."

"We always have something lined up for them to do, whether it's weeding, spraying insecticides or scouting for damage," she said.

In the summer garden, participants grew squash and zucchini, cucumbers, okra, tomatoes, cantaloupe and a variety of peppers.

"One of the participants made a comment that they'd never eaten a tomato or a cucumber," Wallace said. "She said she had never wanted to before — this was the first chance she got to actually have access to fresh vegetables. Taste buds have been changed."

Burton said the program has positively impacted all residents at the facility.

"It benefits not only the ladies in the class, but it also benefits the whole compound because they're able to eat fresh fruits and vegetables, instead of what comes in a can," Burton said. Read more [here](#).

Gerald 'Jerry' Musick remembered as architect of agricultural research, academic growth



Gerald Joe "Jerry" Musick, who passed away July 4 at age 86, is remembered for his decades of leadership in agricultural education, research and public service. As former dean of the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences and director of the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, his work helped expand academic programs,

strengthen agricultural research and establish several centers within the University of Arkansas. He leaves behind a lasting legacy of service, leadership and commitment to the future of Arkansas agriculture.

Read more about Jerry's life and legacy [here](#).

L.B. 'Bernie' Daniels, retired UADA professor, remembered for teaching, fundraising and more



L.B. "Bernie" Daniels, who passed away July 13 at age 85, is remembered for nearly 40 years of service to the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. A beloved professor, mentor and leader, Daniels taught thousands of students, advanced agricultural research and helped secure support for major university projects. He was known for his warmth, generosity and

genuine care for the people around him. His legacy continues through the students, colleagues and family members he inspired. His influence on the Division of Agriculture will be felt for generations to come.

Read more [here](#).

October Birthdays

Portia Short - Oct. 1	Judy Riley - Oct. 5	Debbie DeRossitte - Oct. 10	Carolyn Meeks - Oct. 17	Renee Myers - Oct. 20
Larry Pryor - Oct. 2	Lazaro English - Oct. 5	Judith Urich - Oct. 11	Gail Torok - Oct. 17	James Clower - Oct. 21
Bobby Hall - Oct. 2	Sheila Whiteley - Oct. 5	Armenthia Willis - Oct. 12	Ron Baker - Oct. 17	Tom Riley Jr. - Oct. 22
Frank Jones - Oct. 3	Suzanne Wiley - Oct. 8	Elinor Coates - Oct. 13	Victor Ford - Oct. 18	Mark Bryles - Oct. 23
Gerald Klingaman - Oct. 3	Al Rosendale - Oct. 9	Jack Boles Jr. - Oct. 13	Mary Parker - Oct. 18	Wanda Snyder - Oct. 23
Stanley D. Carter - Oct. 3	Glen Ford - Oct. 10	Bruce Knox - Oct. 14	Cecilia Harberson - Oct. 18	Janice Gooch - Oct. 27
Paul Beck - Oct. 3	Billie Coleman - Oct. 10	Richard Poling - Oct. 14	Hugh Plumlee - Oct. 19	Janella Pugh - Oct. 31
Craig Andersen - Oct. 4	Lorene McGuire - Oct. 10	Carroll Prewett - Oct. 15	Mable Tate - Oct. 19	
Jimmie Bowling - Oct. 5	Charlotte Trent - Oct. 10	Tom Troxel - Oct. 16	Pam Cannada - Oct. 20	

Message from the director



A couple of weeks ago, USDA Economic Research Service (ERS) released a report that I think would interest a lot of people reading this column. The report, *Cooperative Extension in Transition: Trends through 2024*, documents trends in funding and staffing levels in Cooperative Extension since its founding with the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, with most of the document's focus on the

last three or four decades. The short summary is basically that funding peaked in the 1970s, declined slightly to around 2012 and has been pretty much flat since then. The federal share of CES funding is currently about 20% of the total CES budget nationally – down from about 40% in the 1970s. This is not news to anyone who works in Extension, and my purpose here is not to complain about funding. I do that enough plenty of other places. At any rate, you can read the report for yourself if you are interested – which I would encourage; it's a good and useful piece of research.

I do have one quibble with the ERS report, and it relates to the characterization of the CES mission. On the first page of the report, you'll find this quote:

Improving farming and agricultural practices was the primary rationale behind the creation of the agricultural Extension system but the program's mission has expanded to include the broader goal of enhancing rural and non-rural living conditions.

I run into this framing of the CES mission fairly often, and I don't care for it, to be honest. This makes it sound like CES had a mission and strayed from it or, at the very least, allowed

mission creep to dilute it. If we accept this framing as accurate, serious questions can – and should – be raised: questions about our stewardship of public resources and about the legitimacy of many of our programs. But I don't object to this characterization of our mission because I want to avoid those questions. I object to it because I think it gets the story backwards.

Extension was created for the purpose of enhancing living conditions by linking the people of each state to the resources of their Land-Grant university. In an era when one-third of the population lived on farms and about half were directly employed in production agriculture, improving farming practices was the best – likely the only feasible – way to meaningfully impact living standards. Even then, Extension programs in home economics and youth development worked hand-in-glove with agriculture programs to effect significant and broad-based improvement in living standards.

It is fair to say that our programming has changed a lot in the last 100 years, both in terms of content and delivery. Why shouldn't it? The economic, social, and cultural landscape is much different today than it was 100 years ago. This is not at all the same thing as saying that our mission has changed. We are pursuing the same mission we were given in 1914 – to improve the lives of people in our state. But we are doing so with the tools and techniques that make sense today. That's not a sign of mission creep but quite the opposite; it is a sign of our firm commitment to accomplishing the same mission we've always had.

¹Borisova, T., Fuglie, K.O., Garber, B., & Wang, S.L. (2026). *Cooperative Extension in Transition: Trends through 2024* (Report No. EIB-297). U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.

Don't Get Hooked: Recognizing Social Engineering Scams



Scams targeting older adults continue to cause significant financial losses. In 2024, the FBI received more than 201,000 complaints from people age 60 and older, representing nearly \$7.75 billion in reported losses. One of the most common tactics is **social engineering**—manipulating people into sharing sensitive information, giving access to their devices or accounts, or making costly mistakes. Scammers may pose as tech support, send seemingly innocent text messages or call from unfamiliar numbers. **If you didn't initiate the contact, don't assume the person on the other end is trustworthy.** When in doubt, stop, verify the request through a trusted source and never provide sensitive information or access.