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February 2017


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DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

No. 2

2017 Galaxy Conference set for March 15-17

The 2017 Galaxy Conference will be held at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center in Ferndale March 15-17. The Retiree Luncheon will be at 12 noon on March 16. Extension Service Retiree Scholarships will be presented to recipients during the luncheon. There will be a retiree reception preceding the luncheon from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

The cost of the lunch for each retiree and one guest will be paid by Dr. Rick Cartwright, Interim Associate Vice President - Agriculture Extension. Retirees will, however, need to register for the luncheon so that the conference committee can get an accurate meal count. Retirees may also register for other sessions and classes at the conference by paying the Galaxy Conference registration fee, which is \$90 and includes all meals.

More information will be forthcoming on the Galaxy Conference and how to register. The conference website is <http://www.uaex.edu/about-extension/professional-organizations/galaxy/>. We hope you will make plans to attend. 



2017 GALAXY CONFERENCE
MARCH 15-17 • C.A. VINES ARKANSAS 4-H CENTER

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Required Minimum Distribution rules may affect your retirement planning

As a retiree, you may have multiple sources of income available in your retirement. If you have not started taking a distribution from all of your retirement savings, know that you cannot keep retirement funds in your account indefinitely. As you get closer to age 70½, you will need to start to plan for withdrawals you typically must begin taking from your tax-deferred retirement plans. These are known as Required Minimum Distributions (RMDs).

Federal tax rules require that you withdraw part of your savings from employer-sponsored retirement plans by April 1 after either (1) the year you turn age

70½ or (2) the year you retire, whichever comes later. For IRAs (except Roth IRAs), you must begin taking withdrawals by April 1 following the year you turn age 70½, whether or not you are still working. After that you'll need to continue withdrawing a portion of your retirement plan and IRA account balance each year.

RMDs are generally taxable as ordinary income during the year received. Withdrawals are reported to the IRS as income. If you don't take distributions according to the federal rules, you could be subject to a 50 percent excise tax on the amount you should have withdrawn but did not.

(See RMDs, page 4)

THE INSIDE STORIES

Keeping your heart healthy

For Heart Month, some tips to help reduce your risk of heart disease and stroke

Updates

New retirees
Dr. James Moore, UA fruit breeder, dies
Stanley Russ, former Arkansas Senator and 4-H supporter, dies

Tax deductions for your volunteer work expenses

You can't deduct for your time from your taxes, but you can deduct certain expenses you incur while volunteering.

Keeping your heart healthy

February is Heart Month, and since heart disease is the No. 1 killer in America, we're going to look at some ways to keep your heart healthy.

The risks of heart disease and stroke are even higher for African-Americans (due to a higher prevalence of high blood pressure, obesity and type 2 diabetes) so taking steps now to reduce your risk is extremely important.

Here are the most **heart-healthy tips** to reduce your risk: move your body, don't sit for long periods of time, work with your doctor to lower your high cholesterol, eat fewer sweets and more fruits and vegetables, get enough sleep and do what it takes to manage your stress.

Genetics also plays a role in determining your risk for heart attack or stroke. "Both the risk of heart disease and risk factors for heart disease are strongly linked to family history," said William Kraus, M.D., a preventive cardiologist and research scientist at Duke University.

Dr. Kraus, who is also a volunteer for the American Heart Association, said you should share your family history with your health care provider as soon as possible. Your family history provides a picture of the environment and genetics in place when these diseases occurred. "You can't counteract your genetics," Dr. Kraus said, and so if you have a history you must do what you can to change your environment.¹

No matter how you've treated your body over the years, you can still make **healthy changes** that will affect your future. Your heart is a muscle that needs to be worked, so exercise is a big component of avoiding heart disease. In conjunction with good eating habits, not smoking, working to keep your anger and stress under control, and being active will go long way in keeping your ticker well.

Many times there are no warning signs before someone has a heart attack or stroke, so it's a good idea to get your heart checked out before a problem arises. Simple tests like vascular screenings and calcium scores can assess your heart health. Some hospitals and clinics are offering lower-cost **screenings** this month, so consider setting up an appointment today.



The American Heart Association notes that while some heart attacks are sudden and intense – the “movie heart attack” – most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort in the arms, neck, chest or other areas, shortness of breath, nausea and signs like breaking out into a cold sweat. Don't wait too long before calling 9-1-1. Getting help sooner will increase your chances for a full recovery.

Women are more likely than men to experience a sudden severe fatigue (or unusual fatigue that might last a few days), indigestion, nausea or vomiting, and back or jaw pain.

The AHA also has an acronym to help you remember the most **common signs and symptoms of stroke**. It's called F.A.S.T. These signs tend to appear suddenly:

Face. Ask the person to smile. Does the face look uneven?

Arms. Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift down or is it unable to move?

Speech. Ask the person to repeat a simple phrase. Does their speech sound strange? Strange speech could be slurred, the wrong words may come out, or the person is unable to speak.

Time to call 9-1-1.

– Shannon Magsam 

¹From Family History and Heart Disease, Stroke, American Heart Association, http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/Conditions/More/MyHeartandStrokeNews/Family-History-and-Heart-Disease-Stroke_UCM_442849_Article.jsp#.WJl7ExCYVZ0 (accessed Feb. 1, 2017).

Dr. James Moore, U of A Distinguished Professor Emeritus and renowned fruit breeder, dies

Dr. James N. Moore, 85, died Jan. 2. Moore was an Air Force veteran and received Bachelor's and Master's degrees from the University of Arkansas and a Ph.D. from Rutgers University.

In 1964, he established the fruit breeding program within the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture that quickly became one of the most influential in the world. Moore developed a very broad breeding program that encompassed blackberries, strawberries, peaches and grapes, and added blueberries later in his career. His achievements in fruit breeding were monumental, with more than 50 varieties released from his efforts. He was internationally known for his contribution as co-editor of a series of reference books on fruit breeding,

His real love, however, was in growing students. Moore taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, averaging six to 10 graduate students each year. He received high ratings from students, to whom he was both approachable and unassuming.

Moore is survived by his wife, Jan Fitzgerald Moore, daughter Pam Millican, son David Moore, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

A funeral service was held Jan. 28, at First Baptist Church in Fayetteville, with interment at Fairview Memorial Gardens.

Memorials may be made to the University of Arkansas Foundation for the James N. Moore Fellowship, c/o Department of Horticulture, 316 Plant Sciences Building, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 72701. (e)

New retirees in January and February

The following individuals retired from Extension during the period Jan. 1 - Feb. 15, 2017. We wish them well in their future pursuits.

Rex Roberg, Program Associate - 4-H, Little Rock State Office, effective Jan. 3, 2017, employed 19 years with Extension

Pam Cannada, Program Assistant - 4-H, Searcy County, effective Jan. 3, 2017, employed 16 years with Extension

Janice Jones, Program Assistant - EFNEP, Pulaski County, effective Jan. 3, 2017, employed 14 years with Extension

Belinda Weaver, Administrative Specialist - Financial Services, Little Rock State Office, effective Jan. 13, 2017, employed 9 years with Extension

Reba Hawkins, Administrative Support Supervisor, Office of County Operations, Little Rock State Office, effective Feb. 15, 2017, employed 40 years with Extension (e)

To our Extension retirees



February is an interesting month, and this time is no exception. Weather these days does not make sense to me, and the last few weeks have been no exception.

I hope that all of our honored retirees read each month's *Blue Letter* so that you can see the evidence of our current faculty and staff and their hard work to continue or even improve on your legacy of extension. We are doing some powerful stuff for the state and its people, and I am intensely proud of our folks and our programs. In the latest issue, you will see some of the recognition for excellence at the Division level that several individuals have earned, and we know there are even more that are deserving.

I met the other day with quite a few of the county judges at their annual meeting. They are all very supportive of our work and our programs and staff, and they honor our partnership with their support and hard-to-find dollars. But, they also had some very straight advice for me as the Director, and I pledged we would work even more closely to better our efforts as well as the counties where we work. If you know a judge or quorum court member, I hope you will thank them for their service as they face some extraordinarily difficult challenges each day, even more so in the more rural counties. I certainly admire their fortitude and professionalism, as well as deeply appreciate their continuing support for Extension.

If you don't know, there are a couple of upcoming events that you might be interested in. First is the Agricultural Hall of Fame Ceremony on March 3 at the Embassy Suites in Little Rock. As far as the Division of Agriculture goes, Dr. Bobby Wells will be inducted. For those of you who worked with Dr. Wells, he was an internationally known rice fertility expert at the Rice Research and Extension Center near Stuttgart and later was the Department Head for "Agronomy" in Fayetteville. He died unexpectedly in 1996 but left many of us very powerful and positive memories. He always hated snake oils in agriculture and worked hard to make sure that farmers and agents and others knew what worked and what did not work in rice production, and he wanted \$2 return for every dollar spent. He was a mentor to me and certainly one of the best people I have ever known.

You are all cordially invited to the annual Extension Retiree Luncheon (it is free) to be held at the C.A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center near Ferndale March 16, 2017, starting at 12 noon. You may want to get there early to visit with other retirees at the Retiree Reception preceding the luncheon, from 10:00 to 11:30 a.m.

At the luncheon, we will have a brief program featuring John Philpot who will tell a few stories, and we will have a powerpoint projector that shows employee photos from some of our Cooperative Extension directories in the 1980s or before. We will have a good time, so I hope you can come.

Have a great February!

— Rick Cartwright

Tax deductions for your volunteer work expenses

The time you spend volunteering may allow you to meet new people, learn something new and help others. It benefits both you and the charity you serve. Your contribution of time is valuable, but it is **not** tax deductible.

You may, however, deduct certain out-of-pocket expenses you incur in carrying out your volunteer duties for a qualified charitable organization. The expenses must be unreimbursed, directly connected with the services you performed for the charity, expenses you had only because of the services you gave, and not personal, living or family expenses.


These expenses include such things as:

- the cost of hosting a party or fundraiser for the organization or entertaining others on behalf of a charity
- advertising that you buy on behalf of the organization
- supplies, such as stamps and stationery, that you purchase to be used in volunteer work
- the cost of a required uniform and the cost of cleaning for the uniform
- telephone expenses
- car and transportation expenses

Volunteers can deduct car and transportation expenses incurred to get back and forth from home to the office, or to meetings or other sites, or for activities such as delivering meals or driving youth to meetings or activities. Deductions can be fares for public transportation or parking fees, tolls and the cost of gas and oil for the miles you travel if you use your own vehicle. You may **not** deduct the cost of insurance, maintenance, registration fees or depreciation on your car.

If you don't want to keep track of what you spend for gas and oil, you may keep a record of the miles you travel for volunteer work and deduct the IRS standard rate per mile for charities, which is currently 14 cents per mile.

If a qualified organization selects you to attend a convention as its representative, you can deduct your unreimbursed expenses for travel, including reasonable amounts for meals and lodging, while away from home overnight for the convention. You may not deduct expenses for sightseeing or entertainment, or travel, meal and lodging expenses for your spouse or children.


This information is not meant as tax or legal advice. For more information, consult IRS Publication 526, Charitable Contributions, <https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p526.pdf>. 

Stanley Russ, former Arkansas State Senator and friend of 4-H, dies

Stanley R. Russ, 86, of Conway died Jan. 5. He is survived by one sister, Joann Austin of St. Louis, Missouri; one daughter, Debbie Merritt of Conway; a son, Stan Russ of Little Rock; five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Russ graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1952 with a B.S.E. degree in agriculture. He was a veteran of the U.S. Army and the Arkansas National Guard.


He served from 1975-2000 in the Arkansas Senate where much of his effort was in support of public, private and higher education. He was an advocate for agriculture and the 4-H Program. Senator Russ, along with Senators Joe Ray and Gene Rainwater, worked to obtain over \$4 million to fund the Arkansas 4-H Center in Ferndale. Senator Russ and Senator Rainwater were recognized for their efforts and commitment to Arkansas 4-H with a lodging hall named in their honor at the 4-H Center, Russ-Rainwater Hall. Russ also worked to secure funding for 4-H building improvements and 4-H programs during his Senate tenure.

A funeral service was held Jan. 9 at Central Baptist Church in Conway. 

RMDs, cont.

At this point in your life, you may need this income stream to cover your day to day expenses. However, if you do not need your RMD for day to day expenses, you have several options to consider.

1) Reinvesting the RMD for additional growth. 2) Give the gift of education by contributing to a 529 college savings plan. 3) Use the RMD proceeds to purchase a life insurance policy that will be gifted to your favorite charity or cause. The value of the policy and the annual premiums may be considered a tax deductible gift.

For additional information about your specific situation, you should always check with your retirement plan provider. If you are interested in making a gift to support the Cooperative Extension Service or any of its programs, please contact Brian Helms in the Office of Stakeholder Relations for giving opportunities. 

Yes, I will subscribe to the *Extension Cord*.

	Cost	Amount Enclosed
<i>Extension Cord</i>	\$18.00	_____

Please make check payable to **UA CES** and mail to Martha Thorpe, Communications Department, 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72204-4940.

NOTE: Please do not combine payment for an Extension Cord subscription and a scholarship donation in one check. Payment for the **Extension Cord** should be made to **UA CES**. Payment for **scholarship donations** should be made to the **UA FOUNDATION**. If you include payment for an Extension Cord subscription in a check made payable to the UA Foundation, the entire amount will go to the UA Foundation.

Yes, I want to support the fundraising initiative in support of the Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship.

Enclosed is my gift of \$_____. My gift is in honor / in memory of _____.

Name/Address for notification of honorary and memorial gifts: _____

Please make check payable to the **UA Foundation** and mail to Martha Thorpe, Communications Dept., 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72204-4940.