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**Division of Agriculture staffers earn honors in national communications contest**

By the U of A System Division of Agriculture

**Fast Facts**

* Three Division of Agriculture staffers earn NFPW awards
* More than 2,000 entries submitted in 2021 contest nationwide

(514 words)

PURCELLVILLE, Va. — University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture employees earned honors from the National Federation of Press Women national communication contest, including first place for news or feature release.

Fred Miller’s story: “Regulations keep take-out food safe from COVID-19, but precautions still important during purchase; hand-washing essential even for those in isolation at home” won first place for news or feature release. He also earned honorable mentions in specialty articles-physical health with “Research aims to prove childhood health benefits of blueberry extracts,” as well as specialty articles-agriculture with “Fitbits and AI — technology may help improve quality in chicken meat.” Miller is science editor for the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, the Division of Agriculture’s research arm.

Kristin Netterstrom Higgins, Public Policy Center program associate, earned second place for her blog in the nonprofit, government or educational category for “DYK: Arkansas One Of Several States With More Ballot Issue Options.” The Public Policy Center is part of the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture’s outreach arm.

Mary Hightower, chief communications officer for the Division of Agriculture, earned second place for a public service campaign on COVID-19 outreach and education with co-entrants; Co-entrants:

* Amy Cole, digital media program manager; provided web and social media expertise
* Tracy Courage, extension communications director provided copy and content
* Emily Davis, extension publications specialist provided graphic design work.
* Nick Kordsmeier, interim director-communications for the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station; provided editing, content and logistics.
* Chris Meux, design specialist provided graphic design work.
* Kim Rowe, Hempstead County extension agent provided Facebook posts.
* Julie Thompson, design specialist, provided graphic design work.
* Oliver Williams, publications specialist, provided graphic design work.

Hightower also earned third place for feature story about 4-H summer camp: “Masks can’t hide the laughter, enthusiasm during COVID time summer camp,” as well as honorable mentions for an internal employee newsletter called ONE Division, and website managed by entrant-nonprofit, government or educational, for [COVID-19 information](https://www.uaex.edu/life-skills-wellness/health/covid19/default.aspx), with co-entrants:

* Co-entrants: Blanca Hernandez, Pulaski County extension agent; Keiddy Urrea-Morawicki, diagnostician for the Plant Health Clinic at the Division of Agriculture, provided translation work; Bryan Mader, assistant professor-health, for the Division of Agriculture; provided research-based content.

“We’re proud of the national recognition for our communications efforts, not only in bringing our expertise and discoveries to the public, but also for the tremendous COVID-19 outreach made during the pandemic in 2020,” said Mark Cochran, vice president-agriculture, University of Arkansas System.

The awards were presented June 10 during the NFPW annual conference, hosted by Arkansas Press Women. Netterstrom Higgins is president of APW.

Nearly 2,000 entries were submitted in this year’s contest including entries from Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa. Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Washington, D.C.

NFPW is a nationwide organization of women and men pursuing careers across the communications spectrum, including print and electronic journalism, freelancing, new media, books, public relations, marketing, graphic design, photography, advertising, radio and television.

To learn about extension programs in Arkansas, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service agent or visit [www.uaex.uada.edu](http://www.uaex.uada.edu/). To learn more about Division of Agriculture research, visit the Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station website: <https://aaes.uark.edu>. To learn more about the Division of Agriculture, visit <https://uada.edu/>

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**About the Division of Agriculture**

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation’s historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

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