

BLUE LETTER

The University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Monthly Letter

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FROM THE DIRECTOR

These are tough times for farmers. Commodity prices are down, weed resistance is up and everyone is still trying to figure out the long- and short-term impacts of the 2014 Farm Bill.

Those difficulties and uncertainties make our job all the more important. This is truly when our delivery of science-based information can really help Arkansas farmers. Enterprise budgets, variety selection tools and down-to-earth talks that give farmers the edge in decision making is one way we live out the values described by Dr. Mark Cochran last month: Integrity, collaboration, accountability, relevance and excellence.

Each winter, our faculty spends days on the road, presenting at county meetings throughout the row crop country of the Delta and the Arkansas River Valley, bringing the latest findings to the people who can use them. And our stakeholders respond, filling the seats at these county production meetings, asking questions and taking notes.

We know our producers need this information to help improve their odds for a successful and profitable season regardless of what nature and the markets bring, and are willing to follow our faculty to get it.

A few more words about our new Division mission, vision, values and brand statement: if you'd like a copy of the poster spelling that out, please contact Martha Thorpe in Communications.

– Tony Windham

Agents attend small fruit training

Four county agents were selected to participate in the Southern Region Small Fruit Consortium training on Soils and Soil Fertility held Jan. 7 in Savannah, Georgia. This training was held in co-operation with the 2016 Southeast Regional Fruit and Vegetable Conference. During the training, agents learned about soils and soil fertility, blueberry and caneberry nutrition, lime application and fertilization, strawberry nutrition and interpretation of plant tissue and soil tests.

At the conference, agents were able to select specific tracks to attend in order to learn more about the specific crops grown in their area. Tracks included Vidalia onions, peach production, high tunnels, strawberries, caneberries, roadside markets, food safety, wine and watermelons. Agents were also able to learn about new technologies, thanks to the two-day trade show held in conjunction with the conference. ■



Pictured left to right: Les Walz, Cleveland County; Sherry Sanders, White County; Sherry Beaty-Sullivan, Howard County; and Tyler Caston, Stone County.

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DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System

University of Arkansas,
United States Department of
Agriculture, and County
Governments Cooperating

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DR. TONY WINDHAM
Associate Vice President for
Agriculture - Extension and
Director, Cooperative Extension Service

Office 365 Training Series

Learn about Microsoft Office 365 and a host of helpful applications to increase your productivity and add a new tool to your toolbox! This series will be offered via Zoom Webinar at 1:30 on the dates listed below. Sessions will be recorded and posted for those with a conflict. The first two Zoom classes are for all employees wanting to learn the BASICS of Outlook 2010 and Outlook Web Access.

Additionally, in these two sessions you'll learn how to create your signature, share folders, mailboxes and calendars, add contacts and contact groups.

- Office 365: Introduction to Microsoft Outlook – Desktop, Wednesday, Feb. 25, 2016
- Office 365: Introduction to Microsoft Outlook Web Access (OWA), Thursday, March 24, 2016
- Office 365: Application Overview, Thursday, April 28, 2016
- Office 365: Office Online, Thursday, May 19, 2016
- Office 365: OneDrive, Thursday, June 23, 2016
- Office 365: SharePoint, Thursday, July 28, 2016
- Office 365: Planner, Thursday, Aug. 25, 2016

Registration is through Learn (learn@uaex.edu). ■

BENEFITS CORNER

Your University Retirement Plan is changing!

For most employees, the changes will have no impact on your participation in the plan. The University's Retirement Plan is an important benefit, and we want everyone to understand the **mandatory** changes.

Currently, the University contributes an amount equal to 5% of your salary to your University Retirement with TIAA-CREF and/or Fidelity. When you contribute more than 5%, the University matches that contribution dollar-for-dollar up to 10%. This will not change.

However, in July 2016, the University will begin moving toward a 5% required employee contribution. **Effective July 2016**, benefits-eligible employees not contributing at least 1% will have a **required employee contribution of 1% automatically deducted from their pay**. If you already contribute 1% or more on a pre-tax basis, you will see no changes for July 2016. **Each July the required employee contribution will increase by 1% until it reaches 5% in July 2020.**

Also effective July 1, 2016, the vesting schedule will change from one year to two years for newly benefits-eligible employees and new hires. Vesting (your ownership) applies only to the contributions made by the University. Your contributions are always immediately 100% vested.

Additional questions? Please e-mail Human Resources at yourbenefits@uaex.edu or call 501-671-2219. ■



What's new in publications? Find out at:
<http://www.uaex.edu/publications/new.aspx>

Meet the *new* employees!



Lauren Morris
Obesity Reduction Project
Coordinator
Little Rock State Office

- **What's your background?**

I hold a master's degree in public health from Boston University. My background has a predominant focus on childhood obesity prevention and school-based programs.

- **What knowledge, skills and experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I started out interning at a local health department in the community health division and had the opportunity to work on a wide range of projects and initiatives. I very quickly found a passion in my work as it related to health disparity and obesity-prevention. I ended up taking a position with Save the Children's domestic programs working with rural school-based nutrition, physical activity and literacy programs across the Mid-South and Gulf regions. I moved to Little Rock in 2012 to accept a role as state leader for their programs in Arkansas, Kansas and Nebraska. As part of my work with Save the Children, I also helped with domestic emergency response working with children and recovery of local childcare establishments and schools. I spent a short time with the City of Little Rock working in local, urban elementary schools with an obesity-prevention program before finding Extension.

- **What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

I have a sweet tooth. Hide your desserts and candy!

- **What would you like to accomplish your first year with Extension?**

In my first year, I hope to work with the wide range of expertise that Extension offers to guide whole communities to live healthier.

- **What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

The FCS department recently won an obesity reduction cooperative grant through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to work with some particularly high-risk counties. When I saw that there was an opening, I knew that it would be a perfect project for me to get involved with. So far, I've been really

impressed with the opportunities available to staff and the level of professionalism, hard work and expertise that Extension offers, which are all important values.

- **What are your interests or hobbies outside of work?**

I enjoy running after work and on the weekends and spend a lot of time training for races. I also really enjoy camping/canoeing. ■



Lindsey Rucker
SNAP-Ed Program Assistant
Garland County

- **What knowledge, skills and experience are you bringing to Extension?**

I already knew what I was going to be doing with this job since I had already worked it for two years, and that was very helpful with this being my first "big girl job." I currently have a B.S in agriculture business with an emphasis in animal sciences and am working on my M.S. in agriculture extension and education at the University of Arkansas.

- **What are one or two things you would like your colleagues to know about you?**

My dream is to be an agri teacher. I love kids and I love teaching them about agriculture and farm life. I hope to have children of my own one day and teach them the ways of the agriculture world!

- **What brought you to Extension? What was it about Extension that you value?**

I was first asked if I would like to be a SNAP-Ed WOWN temp employee in 2013. I have worked summers and breaks during school up until January of this year when I became a full-time program assistant. I love working here, and the people I work with make it a joy to come to work every day.

- **What are your interests or hobbies outside of work?**

I love to hunt, fish, go to church and work on my family beef cattle farm. I grew up always being outside and love to do anything that is outdoor recreation: riding four-wheelers, riding horses, breaking calves to lead, hunting deer and turkey, fishing, camping and much more! ■

Grants and contracts

for Month Ending January 31, 2016

Project Title	Award Amount	Principal Investigator	Granting Agency
Arkansas Cotton Research Verification/Sustainability Program	\$ 50,000	Bill Robertson	Cotton Incorporated
An Evaluation of Zinc Doses on Performance Responses in Male Broiler Chickens Reared in a Commercial-Like Setting	33,325	Karen Christensen	Kemin Industries, Inc.
Water Conservation Education	47,120	Randy Forst	Central Arkansas Water
Response of Growing Cattle Grazing Toxic and Nontoxic Fescue to Cumulative Management Strategies in the Fall and Spring	40,000	Shane Gadberry	ELANCO US Inc.
Southern Plan Diagnostic Network	25,000	Sherrie Smith	University of Florida
Total New Awards for January 2016	\$195,445		

Personnel changes

Please welcome the following:

Lauren Morris

Obesity Reduction Project Coordinator, Family and Consumer Sciences, effective December 16, 2015.

Lindsey Rucker

Program Assistant - SNAP-Ed, Garland County, effective January 4, 2016.

Extension says goodbye to:

Melissa Beck

County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Nevada County, effective January 15, 2016.

Debbie Dority

Administrative Specialist, Office of Director of Physical Plant, effective January 29, 2016.

Nickie Harding

County Extension Agent - Interim Staff Chair, Crawford County, effective January 15, 2016.

Wes Kirkpatrick

County Extension Agent - Agriculture, Desha County, effective January 22, 2016.

Sharon Lillard

Administrative Specialist, Independence County, effective January 29, 2016.

Denise Roulhac

Administrative Support Supervisor, Family and Consumer Sciences, effective January 4, 2016.

Joe Paul Stuart

County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Little River County, effective January 4, 2016.

Cecilia Taylor

Administrative Specialist, Fulton County, effective January 8, 2016.

Doris Thomas

Administrative Specialist, Yell County, effective January 4, 2016.

Tom Troxel

Professor and Associate Department Head, Animal Science, effective January 4, 2016.

Jeff Welch

County Extension Agent - Staff Chair, Lonoke County, effective January 31, 2016.