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Retiree Spotlight

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Don Plunkett*

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**DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
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Wishes Come True for Dianna Cox

When Dianna Cox retired from the Stone

County Extension Office nearly seven years ago, she had a few things she wanted to do – tend a big garden, do some traveling and enjoy just being at home and doing what she wished.

But she couldn't completely let go of Extension, so she gets the best of both worlds: retirement plus the opportunity to work at her old job as administrative office supervisor on an as-needed basis.

"I couldn't stay away," she joked.

Cox started at Extension in 1973, after being a stay-at-home mom to three daughters. She had attended Draughon's Business College before having children,

and when her last baby was born, she decided to get back into the workforce.

She went to work as a secretary at the Mountain View Extension office and remained in that post for all 35 years of her career. She retired in June 2007.

Cox and her husband have more than 50 Angus cows and a large garden. They can and freeze produce for the whole family, which includes three daughters and one son – who live nearby – and five grandsons.

In addition to the cattle, Cox has some chickens. She likes being able to walk out to the chicken coop to gather eggs when she's making meringue for her pies.

Cox continues to do lots of volunteer work,



Dianna Cox

including working with 4-H members on their floats for Mountain View's annual festival, BeanFest. She and her husband have served on the county fair board since the 1970s. She is also does church work. When she has some downtime, she enjoys her farm and her grandkids.

To reconnect with Dianna Cox, contact her at (870) 591-6629, 758 Pitcher Hill Road, Mountain View, Ark. 72560.

– Shannon Magsam

Plunkett Catching Up on Projects

When Don Plunkett retired in May 2011, he began working on the 120 acres he and his wife of 45½ years, Lorena, own in Grant County.

He set out to re-do the sidewalks, untangle trails in the surrounding forest and get his two ponds back into good shape. Plunkett also did some fishing and repaired deer stands so he could do some deer hunting.

A self-described workaholic, Plunkett had left lots of personal projects undone during his long employment at Extension. He was quite busy from the time he started working as an agriculture agent in Jefferson County in 1981 until his retirement 30 years later.

He came to Extension after working for 11 years as a vocational agriculture teacher in three different school districts.

After Plunkett's first post, he moved to Altheimer in 1984 to become a county Extension specialist - agronomy. The job was through special funding, and he was working at Lake Dick Farm.

In 1988, Plunkett was promoted to staff chairman in Lincoln County, and in 1993, he became staff chair for Drew County. He worked with the Cotton Research Verification Program, stationed at UAM in Monticello, beginning in 1995, and in 1998 he moved to the State Office.

In 2003, Plunkett returned to Jefferson County, where he first served as an agriculture agent, as the staff chair. He remained there until retirement.

While Plunkett was working at Extension, he also served as a pastor of a small church in west Cleveland County. Health problems caused him to resign his pastorate in August 2013. He's now "in between churches" and is back at his home church in Sheridan.

He misses his Extension colleagues and the people he worked with in the field, but they do keep in touch, especially when certain crops come due.

"I always get a call or text when the sweet corn is ready," he said. "I stay in steady supply."



Don Plunkett

In his spare time, Plunkett likes to fish and garden, and he and Lorena like to travel, especially to Branson. In April, they'll be there for a Weekend to Remember conference.

The Plunketts have a son, Andy, who works in the IT department at the Extension State Office. Their daughter, Lydia, lives in Sarasota, Florida.

To reconnect with Don Plunkett, contact him at (870) 942-9092, 711 Highway 190 East, Grapevine, Ark. 72057-8986, on Facebook or via email at Impdep@windstream.net.

– Shannon Magsam

Extension Launches New Web Site



On March 19, Extension launched its new web site with an ad campaign to run during the next few weeks in the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* and on KATV, in addition to local radio spots.

The redesigned web site has been improved in three key ways. The content has been regrouped according to client preferences, it has an improved search using Google technology and it is adaptable to use on a smart phone or tablet in addition to desktops and laptops.

You can check out the new web site at the same old location: www.uaex.edu.

From the Editorial Board

By the time you read this, the 2014 Galaxy Conference will be complete. Stan Chapman and members of the retiree editorial board presented the 2014 winners of the retiree scholarship at the conference.

The two winners of a \$500 scholarship each are Sherry Beaty-Sullivan, county Extension agent – agriculture, Howard County, and Ashley Carroll, county Extension agent – family and consumer sciences, Pulaski County. Beaty-Sullivan is pursuing a doctorate in Agriculture at Mississippi State University, and Carroll is enrolled in the Registered Dietitian program at the University of Central Arkansas as a post-baccalaureate student. The April issue of the Extension Cord will include photos from the conference and the presentation of the scholarships.

Because of generous donations by retirees to the retiree scholarship fund, we have now awarded nine scholarships to Extension employees for a total of \$4,500. The scholarships support professional development opportunities for Extension faculty and staff.

If you have not given or if you wish to donate again this year, please send any amount you wish to give and you'll be listed and recognized as a 2014 donor during next year's Galaxy Conference.

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