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On March 8, almost 80 employees at Farm Bureau Center in Little Rock put on groovy hairnets, cranked up some awesome music and created 20,800 meals with help from the folks at The Pack Shack in Rogers. The food will be distributed by the **Arkansas Food Bank** to needy families and individuals as part of Arkansas Farm Bureau's community outreach program.

GREGG PATTERSON photo

In Farm Bureau

Summer M*A*S*H camps

Applications are now available to high-school students for summer M*A*S*H camps. These camps will be at 32 medical facilities throughout Arkansas. Two new host facilities have been added this year at Dewitt Hospital and Conway Regional Medical Center. The two-week M*A*S*H camps are designed to expose rising high-school juniors and seniors to healthcare-related vocations.

“The M*A*S*H program gives students an inside look at various medical professions and is designed to spark students’ interest in the medical field,” said Jennifer Victory, director of Rural Health for Arkansas Farm Bureau. “A large number of the camps are held at rural medical centers and attract local students with a rural background. The idea is that future medical students from a rural background are more likely to return to their roots.”

Applications are available through school guidance counselors, by contacting

the M*A*S*H director in your area or by visiting www.arkansashealthcareers.com/summer-camps/.

M*A*S*H camp locations and dates are as follows: Arkadelphia, June 12-23; Batesville, June 5-15; Blytheville, June 12-23; Camden, June 19-30; Clinton, June 5-16; Conway, July 10-14; Crossett, June 5-16; DeWitt, June 12-23; Dumas, June 5-16; El Dorado, July 10-21; Fayetteville, June 19-29; Fordyce, June 6-16; Forrest

City, June 12-23; Ft. Smith, June 5-16; Ft. Smith, June 19-30; Harrison, June 12-23; Heber Springs, June 12-23; Helena, June 12-23; Jonesboro, June 5-16; Lake Village, June 5-16; Magnolia, June 5-16; Mena, June 19-30; Mountain Home, July 10-20; Mountain View, June 12-23; Nashville, June 19-30; Paragould, June 5-16; Pine Bluff, June 12-23; Pocahontas, June 5-15; Rogers, June 12-23; Russellville, June 12-23; Texarkana, June 5-16; and Warren, July 10-21.

Dixie Baker (left) and Gloria Phillips, principals at Rivercrest Elementary School in Wilson, recently accepted a large donation of food from South Mississippi Co. FB. The items will be used as part of the school's backpack program to provide meals for children on weekends so they have access to nutritious foods even when they are not in school.



S. MISS CO. FB photo

County Farm Bureau organizations

and the M*A*S*H Partnership sponsor students so they may attend the camps at no cost. The partnership includes the University of Arkansas for Medical Science's Regional Centers, Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield, Arkansas Farm Bureau and Baptist Health. More information on the M*A*S*H program can be obtained by contacting Amber Marshall with UAMS at 501-686-6188, or Victory of Arkansas Farm Bureau, 501-228-1269.

Raise your hand for 4-H

The National 4-H Council and American Farm Bureau Federation have partnered to help more youths understand how agriculture affects their daily lives and to consider pursuing high-demand agricultural careers. Farm Bureau members who are 4-H alumni are encouraged to raise their hand to educate and empower the next generation of agricultural leaders, visionaries and entrepreneurs. It's easy:

1. "Raise your hand." Go to www.4-H.org/RaiseYourHand to identify as a 4-H alum.
2. Compete for your state. Raising your hand is a vote toward a \$20,000, \$10,000 or \$5,000 award for the states with the most alumni hands raised and brings hands-on learning experiences to local communities.
3. Pay it forward. Share your support



LEE CO. FB photo

Elementary students in Lee County had the opportunity to ride in Farm Bureau's combine simulator during a March 15 Safety Day in Marianna organized by the Lee County Conservation District. The Lee Co. FB Women's Committee provided brochures to help make the students aware of tornado, computer, bicycle and tractor safety.



GREGG PATTERSON photo

On March 24, representatives of **Pulaski Co. FB** presented a \$200 Sam's Club gift card to Dorcas House Director Dorcas VanGilst (center right). Dorcas House is a Little Rock women's shelter that Pulaski Co. FB supports annually. Presenting the donation were board and Women's Committee members Emily and Donna Bemis (left) and Kathy Ratcliffe (far right).

using the hashtag #4HGrown, and tag fellow alumni, asking them to raise their hands at www.4-H.org/RaiseYourHand.

Ready for action in 2017

"If ever there was a time for farmers and ranchers across America to get outside our fencerows, 2017 is it," wrote American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall in his April 2017 Beyond the Fencerows column. "Many of agriculture's major policy issues are in the headlines every day. It's time to engage.

"We are encouraged by the quick attention Congress and the administration are giving to issues like regulatory reform and federal land management," Duvall continued. "Farmers breathed a collective sigh of relief with President Trump's executive order to withdraw the Waters of the U.S. rule and with congressional action to roll back the Obama administration's Planning 2.0 rule for federal lands. But we know the work is far from over on these and other issues facing America's farmland. Lawmakers need to hear from each of us, the very people impacted every day by the regulations and policies they create."



GARLAND CO. FB photo

Garland Co. FB Women's Committee members (back, left to right) Lacie Whiley, Angee Adcock, Stacy Dodd, Karmen Tigie and (front) Sarah Goodeaux recently made these quilts (personal-sized quilts that can be folded to make decorative pillows), which they donated for chemotherapy patients at Genesis Cancer Center in Hot Springs.



KEN MOORE photo

More than 50 strawberry growers attended a **Strawberry Field Day** March 7 at the Southwest Research and Extension Center near Hope. They learned about herbicide treatments in field production, as well as treatments within high tunnel systems, which are becoming an effective way to extend the growing season and protect berries from harmful weather.

In Arkansas

Specialty crop grants

The Arkansas Agriculture Department (AAD) is now accepting applications for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, made available through funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. These grants help to enhance the specialty crop industry of Arkansas, which includes the growing and selling of fruits, vegetables, flowers and nuts. Applications must be submitted to the AAD by April 19.

Proposals may include research, promotion, marketing, nutrition, food safety, food security, education, increased knowledge, improved distribution system efficiency, conservation, product development, good agricultural practices, good handling practices and

good manufacturing practices. Eligible applicants are nonprofit organizations; local, state and federal government entities; for-profit organizations; and colleges and universities. Eligible projects must solely enhance the competitiveness of a specialty crop and benefit more than one individual or organization.

“The Specialty Crop Block Grant Program gives us the ability to receive input from growers, researchers and nonprofits here in Arkansas and design a package that fits our state,” said Arkansas Agriculture Secretary Wes Ward. “Our goal is to help grow the specialty crop industry in Arkansas and the economic impact that goes with it.”

Applicants must submit project concept proposals using the online form available at www.aad.arkansas.gov/aad-grants. In addition, a two-phase application process will be used. Applicants will submit a project concept proposal, providing an outline of the project’s goals, tasks and budget requirements. After being reviewed by an advisory committee, the AAD will select projects and invite the applicants to submit full applications with further details.

Additional guidelines and instructions on completing and submitting an application are available at www.aad.arkansas.gov. For more information, contact Christian Olson, AAD director of



In April, USDA’s National Agricultural Statistics Service will survey bee and honey producers across the U.S. to collect information for its **Quarterly Colony Loss Report**, which will be released Aug. 1. Forty Arkansas beekeepers will be included, providing an official estimate of the effects of colony collapse disorder in the Natural State.



Craighead Co. FB hosted an appreciation dinner March 23 to thank local media representatives for covering Farm Bureau issues and events during the past year. President Josh Cureton (second from right) presented plaques to (left to right) KAIT-TV’s Diana Davis and Amber Smithee, Jonesboro Radio Group’s Tom and Gina Nankival and Jonesboro Sun publisher David Mosesso.

marketing, at 501-219-6324 or christian.olson@aad.ar.gov.

Fire ants out early

Warmer temperatures coupled with a few heavy rains have made the invasive fire ant population in Arkansas active earlier than normal. Kelly Loftin, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture extension entomologist, said he’s seen many in recent weeks.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, fire ants infest more than 327 million acres in the southern U.S. There is also an active fire ant quarantine in parts of 14 states and Puerto Rico. In Arkansas, 39 counties fall under the federal red imported fire ant quarantine. Under the quarantine, certain materials like potted plants, grass sod or baled hay that have come into contact with soil can’t be shipped to non-quarantine areas.

Fire ants first entered the U.S. through the port in Mobile, Alabama, around the 1930s. Ships from South America entering the port used fire-ant-infested soil as ballast. Fire ants have been in Arkansas since the 1950s, said Loftin.

Elsewhere

U.S. joins seed treaty

Scientists’ efforts to develop new crops

able to resist climate change, droughts and other shocks have been boosted by the United States joining an international seeds treaty, reports CGIAR, a global agricultural research organization.

In mid-March, the U.S. became the single largest party to a United Nations agreement under which countries allow researchers from other member states free access to their crop gene banks — collections of varieties of seeds, plants and roots.

By joining, the United States adds more than 570,000 types of corn, wheat, potatoes and other crops to the 1.5 million varieties available under the treaty’s sharing system managed by the U.N.’s Food and Agriculture Organization.

“The quality and size of gene bank contributions by the United States will further the progress of scientific research,” CGIAR said in a statement.

As farmers worldwide experience more frequent drought and erratic rainfall linked to global warming, scientists are racing to find crops capable of tolerating increasingly high temperatures, water shortages and dry conditions. Access to a large pool of seeds is vital for researchers to choose the best varieties to cross and create new strains resistant to pests, disease and drought, while also improving yields to help feed a growing population.

In the Market

As of March 28, 2017

Carbon regulations changes

On March 28, President Donald Trump signed an executive order unwinding many of the policies put in place by the previous administration regarding energy and climate change regulations. The order is reported to do the following:

- Begin the process of overturning the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) carbon emissions standards for existing and newly constructed power plants, known as the Clean Power Plan;
- Withdraw Obama-era interagency calculations of the “social cost of carbon,” a metric regulators use to weigh the damage from increased carbon emissions;
- Direct the Interior Department to end its moratorium on coal leasing on federal lands;
- Direct EPA and Interior to review rules that govern oil and natural gas development, including EPA’s methane emissions rules for new sources and Interior’s rules that govern fracking on federal lands;
- Scuttle a White House directive that required agencies to consider climate change when reviewing energy, infrastructure and other proposed projects under the National Environmental Policy Act;
- Require federal agencies to broadly review existing rules and policies that might thwart energy development. Agencies have 180 days to craft recommendations; and
- Rescind several of Obama’s policy memos and orders on tackling climate policy broadly.

Brazil shuts processing plants

On March 27, Brazil ordered three more food-processing plants to suspend production as the country works to contain fallout regarding corruption in its meat sector. So far, Brazil has temporarily closed six of the 21 food-processing plants under investigation, and 15 of those plants are not allowed to export meat. They are still allowed to produce meat for the domestic market, however. Brazil hopes that other nations will follow China’s lead

in lifting its ban on meat from the country and that the European Union will not follow through with tougher restrictions.

China eases beef restrictions

On March 24, China removed its final restrictions on imports of Australian beef as part of Chinese Premier Li Keqiang’s visit to the country. The nation will now accept chilled beef exports from all licensed exporters, whereas previously it accepted beef from just 11 authorized shippers. China also announced early-stage plans to co-develop a major mine, rail and port project in western Australia.

U.S. beef on menu

The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, U.S. Meat Export Federation and the North American Meat Institute, in a letter sent March 27, asked the White House to try to overcome the ban on U.S. beef that China has maintained since the height of the mad-cow disease scare in 2003. When President Donald Trump dines with Xi Jinping during his visit to Mar-a-Lago early in April, he might try having his staff serve the Chinese president a little U.S. beef. It’s not likely something he gets to try too often, though the industry is hoping to change that.

Aggressive Chinese bean buys

China imported nearly 5.538 MMT of soybeans during February, a 22.85-percent surge from the year prior. The U.S. supplied more than 4.426 MMT of these beans, with Brazil shipping China 687,350 MT. Two months into the 2017 calendar year, China had brought in nearly 13.194 MMT of soybeans, up 29.79 percent from last year at this point.

Dow-DuPont gains EU approval

A merger between Dow Chemical and DuPont, valued at \$130 billion, received approval March 27 from the European Commission, the European Union’s regulatory body. The commission demanded a number of divestitures, and both companies signaled in a dual press release that they would be open to additional sales to accommodate other regulatory agencies as well.

AI in Georgia

Chickens at a commercial poultry-breeding operation in Chattooga County, Georgia, have tested positive for H7, presumptive low pathogenic

avian influenza (LPAI). This is the first confirmation of avian influenza in domestic poultry in Georgia. The announcement follows similar confirmations from Alabama, Kentucky and Tennessee in recent weeks. The Georgia case is considered a presumptive low pathogenic avian influenza because the flock did not show any signs of illness.

Crop planting report

Growers hope to plant another record soybean crop this spring while scaling back corn acres, according to Farm Futures’ latest survey of intentions for 2017. Producers said they expect to plant nearly 89 million acres of soybeans, up 6.6 percent from the all-time high set in 2016. Corn ground would fall 3.9 percent to 90.3 million acres.

Soft red winter wheat plantings are expected to be at 5.5 million acres, down 8.6 percent from 2016. Sorghum plantings should be at 6.2 million acres, down 7.7 percent, and cotton plantings at 12.3 million acres, a 22-percent increase over 2016 plantings.

Cotton AWP moves higher

The Adjusted World Price (AWP) for cotton will be 68.26 cents per pound, effective March 28, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture. That is up from 67.92 cents per pound the prior week and marks the second time in the last two weeks the AWP has been at 68 cents or more.

Japanese reduces tariffs

On April 1, the beginning of Japan’s fiscal year, Japan will further reduce the tariffs Australia has to pay for the beef it exports there. Australia will have its Japanese tariff rates on frozen beef drop from 27.5 percent to 27.2 percent, the U.S. Meat Export Federation confirms. The U.S. and other countries pay 38.5 percent. Despite this, U.S. beef continues to hang tough, owning 40 percent of Japan’s beef import market in 2016, compared to Australia, which had 51 percent.

CONTACT

Matt King 501-228-1297,
matt.king@arfb.com