A Message From Our Director

The fast pace we keep during the winter months seemed to transfer right into the spring and summer seasons this year. We have seen record attendance at producer workshops, and our consultations direct with farmers and growers is on the rise.

Seasonal farmers markets have opened, new enterprises are being considered, and many ideas for expanding and diversifying are being discussed. We have been exceptionally focused on our value-added dairy initiative, specialty crop marketing and training sessions with county Extension agents. We also found some time to fine tune our strategic planning priorities, connect with folks at various field days, festivals and conferences and launch our twenty-fifth anniversary celebration plans.

Speaking of our Center’s twenty-fifth anniversary, I hope you are holding September 18 on your calendar. We are planning a celebration reception that afternoon in Columbia (more details to come).

On a personal note, in May I had the opportunity to work with my friend and colleague Dr. David Lockwood in a course he has been teaching in Cortona, Italy, for more than 15 years. What a tremendous opportunity to see Dr. Lockwood in action on the international level and to connect with students and colleagues interested in specialty crops, processing and marketing. My experience in Italy was not only inspiring but helpful and applicable to some exciting new program opportunities we are exploring and cultivating in the Center.

I trust you will enjoy reading more in this newsletter about some of our recent work activities, and I hope our paths will cross soon.
New CPA "Selfie Cards" Debuted at Recent Events

A series of new “selfie cards” recently debuted at a variety of events attended by Center staff. These boards are being used to promote visibility of the Center as well as celebrate our twenty-fifth anniversary.

CPA’s Twenty-Fifth Anniversary Celebration Event

A special event honoring the Center’s twenty-fifth anniversary is planned for September 18, 2023, in Columbia, Tennessee.

Additional details and RSVP information can be found here.

Please make plans to join us as you are able to celebrate this milestone year in person.

For questions about the event, please email Alaina Boyd at acboyd@utk.edu.
Celebrating Ag Day on the Hill

The 2023 Ag Day on the Hill was held in Nashville, TN, on Capitol Hill on April 5.

Extension specialist Rob Holland, along with Extension assistants James Harlan and Alaina Boyd, represented the Center. Our staff were able to connect with a wide variety of individuals at the event.

Governor Bill Lee was in attendance among many other state government officials. This event draws a large crowd each year and features a variety of educational events and displays.

Connecting at Farm Bureau Women's Conference

The 2023 Farm Bureau Women's Leadership State Conference took place in Lebanon, TN, on April 22 bringing together women in agriculture from across the state to connect. The conference provided an opportunity to strengthen professional development skills and reflect on the impacts that women in agriculture contribute to Tennessee each year. The Center took part in the conference as an exhibitor connecting with more than 300 women in attendance for this year's event.
Center Hosts Biosafety Safari at Nashville Zoo

Center staff alongside representatives from the Tennessee Agritourism Association and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture hosted a unique educational event on April 18 at Nashville Zoo with a total of 83 individuals in attendance. The Biosafety Safari served to educate producers offering animal encounters such as cuddling experiences about managing zoonotic disease risk, strategies to reduce the opportunity for diseases to spread, and recommendations on how agritourism operations can reduce risks of contracting and sharing a zoonotic disease with visitors on the farm.

Speakers from the Tennessee Department of Health, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, and the Nashville Zoo gave talks at the event.

Maury Alliance Leadership Class Agriculture Day

Center personnel took part in the recent Maury Alliance Leadership Class held on May 23. The Center was able to share a selection of local Pick TN Products as part of Maury Alliance's Agriculture Day.

Dr. Justin Rhinehart, UT Extension Assistant Dean, and Extension specialist Megan Leffew are 2013 graduates of Leadership Maury.

Dr. Rhinehart offered a discussion on UT Extension before Leffew addressed the group to share about the Center's twenty-fifth anniversary and our mission of helping farmers develop value-added enterprises.
Staff Attends Food Buyer Educational Tour in Kentucky

Extension assistants James Harlan and Alaina Boyd recently participated in a food buyer tour held in Bowling Green, Kentucky, on May 25 as a professional development experience. The MarketReady Buyer Tour was hosted by the University of Kentucky’s MarketReady Producer Training Program, a frequent collaborator with the Center.

One of the stops included Bowling Green High School where Center personnel learned more about school nutrition programs utilizing local produce and commodities in western Kentucky. Additional tour stops included Chaney’s Dairy Barn and Howard’s Harvest Market.

Center Exhibits at Second Annual Homestead Festival

The second annual Homestead Festival was held June 1-2 in Columbia at Hardison Mill. The festival is a large event featuring live music, exhibitors, displays, and educational speakers.

An estimated 5,000 people attended and viewed the exhibits displayed at the two-day event. Extension assistants James Harlan and Alaina Boyd shared educational resources and publications with many individuals over duration of the festival.
"Farm To Table" Discussion for "Salute To Ag" Week

Center Director and Extension specialist Rob Holland served as the keynote speaker for the Lawrence County “Salute to Agriculture” Farmers Breakfast held on June 6 in Lawrenceburg, TN. More than 200 individuals attended the event.

The theme of the event was “Farm to Table” and Holland was able to share with participants the impact of value-added agriculture both in the county and at the state level. Event attendees included local farmers, county government officials, and members of the local Chamber of Commerce.

A tour of local farms including Flowers Creamery was provided after the breakfast offering a real-life look at the “Farm to Table” initiatives that Holland discussed.

Specialty Crop and Farmers Market Agent Training

The Specialty Crop and Farmers Market Agent Training was held June 6-7 across Williamson, Maury, and Davidson counties for Agriculture & Natural Resources Extension agents.

The Center hosted this training in collaboration with the UT Center of Farm Management and Southern SARE. Extension specialist Rachel Painter and AgrAbility program coordinator Troy Dugger coordinated the training with a total of 29 participants in attendance.

The training featured visits to various value-added operations with an educational focus on developing marketing strategies and tactics. Industry partners including the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation were represented with personnel at this training.
June Dairy Month Kickoff Held at Ellington

The 2023 National June Dairy Month kickoff event was held at Ellington Agricultural Center on June 8.

This event is held each year in collaboration with The Dairy Alliance, UT Extension, and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation. The event boasts a strong youth presence thanks to the Tennessee 4-H involvement in June Dairy Month spread across all 95 counties in the Tennessee.

Extension assistant James Harlan addressed the crowd of 115 participants and drew attention to the importance of dairy in the value-added sector. Harlan also shared about the Center’s work with dairy and value-added products across the state.

Tennessee Hops Week: UTIA Hopyard Unveiling

The second annual Tennessee Hops Week was celebrated with special events in both Memphis and Knoxville on June 13 and 15.

Extension specialist Rachel Painter, along with the TN Craft Brewers Guild, hosted educational sessions at both AgriCenter in Memphis and at the East TN AgResearch & Education Center in Knoxville with more than 150 individuals attending. The grand opening of the new UTIA Hopyard took place concurrently at the Knoxville event.
Two New Publications Available Online

Two new publications created as part of an effort by Extension specialist Rachel Painter are now available online.

PB 1918 “A Guide for Developing a Farmers Market in Tennessee” publication was produced in part by funding from a USDA AMS Specialty Crop Block Grant. Access PB 1918 here.

“Commercial Production of Elderberry” was produced via a collaborative effort with the University of Kentucky’s Center for Crop Diversification and West Virginia University Extension Service. It can be accessed here.

Tennessee AgrAbility: Therapeutic Horticulture

TN AgrAbility hosted a workshop on Horticultural Therapy in May as a collaboration with UT Gardens in Knoxville. Dr. Derrick Stowell, UT Gardens Education and Horticultural Therapy Program Administrator, led the workshop. Stowell serves as the immediate past president for the American Horticultural Therapy Association.

The workshop was attended by 14 veterans. Workshop topics included career options for veterans, the TN AgrAbility program, as well as veteran assistance options from Frontline Gardens. Attendees participated in hands-on gardening activities as well as a networking session.

Therapeutic horticulture is a practice that believes in embracing the healing power of nature to promote physical and emotional well-being. It involves using plants and gardens to cultivate a sense of connection with nature that is believed to improve their overall quality of life.
Questions?
Contact Alaina Boyd at acboyd@utk.edu or visit us at tiny.utk.edu/cca!