



CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT



April 2024 | Vol. 104

Content from January - March 2024



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Value-Added Producer Grant Insight Workshops

Forty-two producers attended the Insight to Developing a Strong Application for the USDA Value-Added Producer Grant (VAPG) workshop which was held in three locations across Tennessee (Jackson, Columbia and Philadelphia) in January. The workshop provided assistance for value-added producers interested in applying for the Value-Added Producer Grant, administered through USDA Rural Development.



Top: David Hughes and workshop participants shown at one of the trainings in January 2024.

Troy Dugger with the Center for Profitable Agriculture facilitated the meetings with speakers including David Hughes, UT professor of Agricultural and Resource Economics; Chuck Morris and Roe Hughes of USDA-Rural Development; and Tom Womack and Katie Ellis of AgLaunch. During the workshop, two prior recipients of the VAPG shared their experience with the grant: Phil Baggett, TN Grass Fed, and Jonathon Cannon, Southern Ridge Farm. Post-workshop evaluations showed that 71 percent of participants would develop a VAPG proposal in the next one to three years.



NAFDMA Professional Development in Boston

Alaina Boyd and Megan Bruch Leffew from the Center for Profitable Agriculture recently facilitated a professional development opportunity for a group of five value-added dairy producers from Tennessee and North Carolina.

Boyd and Leffew accompanied the group to Boston, MA, to participate in the 2024 NAFDMA Agritourism Convention and Expo in early February. This yearly conference, with a focus on direct farm marketing and agritourism, provides a variety of educational sessions, farm tours, networking opportunities, and a trade show with themes related to marketing, business management, leadership, and industry innovation. Funding was made possible, in part, by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Marketing Service through the Southeast Dairy Business Innovation Initiative.



Top: Extension Specialist Megan Leffew (left) and Extension Assistant Alaina Boyd (right) pictured with the 2024 Professional Development Scholarship recipients.



2024 Pick TN Conference

The 2024 Pick TN Conference was held February 15-17 in Franklin, Tennessee. A total of 784 attendees participated in the event planned by representatives from eight producer organizations, UT Extension and the Tennessee Department of Agriculture.

The Center's Megan Leffew serves on the planning board in addition to Annette Wszelaki and Dave Lockwood from UT Extension.

This year's conference featured 168 educational sessions, fifty-eight trade show vendors, and twenty-seven Pick TN Marketplace exhibitors. Alaina Boyd and Megan Leffew provided technological support for session computers. Alaina, Megan and Troy Dugger moderated sessions. Alaina taught sessions on Influencer Matchmaking. Megan co-taught a session with Extension's Alan Galloway about risk management for Christmas Tree Growers and coordinated a roundtable discussion about insurance. UT Extension provided a Sunshine Level sponsorship for the conference.



Middle: (L - R) Area Extension Specialist Eileen Legault; Assistant Dean Justin Rhinehart; Program Coordinator Troy Dugger; Center Director and Extension Specialist Rob Holland; Extension Specialist Megan Leffew; Extension Assistant Alaina Boyd.



Grain Bin Safety & Rescue Awareness Training

The TN AgrAbility Project, along with Extension Agents in Fayette, Hardeman, Haywood, Madison and McNairy counties and the Tennessee Association of Rescue Squads, coordinated a grain bin safety and rescue awareness training on February 24 at the West Tennessee Research and Education Center in Jackson. Fifty-four rescue squad members and five farmers participated in classroom and hands-on learning activities. The five county Extension Agents in attendance helped plan and carry out the day's training activities. Funding raised resulted in the purchase of ten plastic turtle tubes for the rescue squads and fire departments in these counties. Since the inception of these trainings in March of 2020, eleven workshops have been held across Tennessee with sixty-four counties participating. The participants represent forty-six farmers, 496 rescue personnel, and sixty-four Extension Agents, for a total of 606 participants.



Top Right: Training participants utilizing a turtle tube during a training simulation at the West TN Research and Education Center in Jackson, TN.

Bottom Right: Training participants shown in between two grain trailers observing the training in February.



Elevate Your Farm Brand Workshops Conducted

Three Elevate Your Farm Brand Workshops were held in early March 2024 in Knoxville, Jackson and Murfreesboro. A total of 70 participants joined in the day-long workshops to learn about branding basics, place branding, tips for brand implementation, color and branding, and customer journey mapping. Participants also heard a case study of the development and implementation of the UT Creamery brand.

The multi-disciplinary teaching team included Heejin (Jeanie) Lim and Michelle Childs from the Department of Retail, Hospitality and Tourism Management; Chris Sneed from the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences; Myra Loveday from the UT Creamery; and Megan Bruch Leffew from the Center for Profitable Agriculture.



Top: Workshop Teaching Team (L to R: Megan Bruch Leffew, Michelle Childs, Jeanie Lim, Myra Loveday and Chris Sneed)



Center Represented at Ag Day on the Hill

The Center was represented again this year at the annual Ag Day on the Hill event hosted by the Tennessee Farm Bureau on Capitol Hill in Nashville, TN.

Program Coordinator Troy Dugger and Extension Assistant Alaina Boyd attended the event and networked with legislators and industry partners. The Center's exhibit was on display among several others in Beth Harwell Plaza on the capitol grounds in Nashville.

Governor Bill Lee and Commissioner of Agriculture Charlie Hatcher were in attendance among other government officials. This event is an opportunity for the Center and its industry partners to network with policymakers and legislative staff in order to raise awareness about the agricultural industry in Tennessee.



Middle: Extension Assistant Alaina Boyd (L) and Program Coordinator Troy Dugger (R) pictured with the CPA exhibit at Ag Day on the Hill.



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Staff Highlighted in “Get to Know CPA” Videos

To celebrate Extension Month in March, the Center created a short series of videos featuring our staff and facilities. The purpose of these “Get to Know CPA” videos was to introduce our staff and raise awareness about the work that the Center does to support farm families across Tennessee.

A total of six videos were released to the Center’s YouTube channel and posted as reels to social media.

To view the full playlist of our “Get to Know CPA” videos on YouTube, visit the following link: <https://tiny.utk.edu/GetToKnowCPA>

Get to Know CPA - 2024 Extension Month

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Tennessee AG INSIDER

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Positions Open at the Center

The Center is currently hiring for three full-time positions:

- Business Manager
- Extension Specialist - Value-Added Agriculture Marketing
- Extension Specialist - Value-Added Financial Analysis

To learn more about these positions and view the job announcements, please visit <https://tiny.utk.edu/JoinCPA>.

JOIN OUR TEAM
CPA is now hiring for the following positions:

- Business Manager**
Center for Profitable Agriculture
- Extension Specialist**
Value-Added Agriculture Marketing
- Extension Specialist**
Value-Added Financial Analysis

CENTER FOR PROFITABLE AGRICULTURE
EXTENSION
INSTITUTE OF AGRICULTURE
A UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE - FARM BUREAU PARTNERSHIP

Farm Bureau

Interested in applying?
VISIT [CPA.TENNESSEE.EDU](https://cpa.tennessee.edu) FOR MORE INFORMATION

Middle: Flyer advertising three open job positions at the Center for Profitable Agriculture.



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Tennessee Extension Month - March 2024

March was Extension Month in Tennessee. The Center staff are proud to be a part of UT Extension, and look forward to providing real life solutions for the producers and value-added entrepreneurs that they serve throughout the entire year.

A variety of social media posts were shared to the Center's social media channels throughout March in honor of Extension Month. To view these posts, visit or subscribe to our Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube channels.



Top: Social media image used by CPA for Extension Month.

Harlan Departs CPA

James Harlan served as an Extension Assistant in Value-Added Agriculture in our center beginning in January of 2023.

Harlan, a former ANR agent in Wayne and Hickman Counties, recently departed a lengthy career with UT Extension to resume his role as a full-time farmer in Maury County, TN.

We wish James all the best in his future endeavors and are very appreciative of all the hard work he put in during his time with the Center.



Bottom: Harlan posing on his farm in Maury County, TN in 2023 for UTIA's [Land, Life & Science](#).



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Questions?

Contact Alaina Boyd at
acboyd@utk.edu or visit
us at tiny.utk.edu/cpa!



Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.