

2020-2021

INFLUENCE

Alumni Newsletter

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES
MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY



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INFLUENCE

2020-2021

Alumni Newsletter

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Mississippi State University

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What's Inside

- 03 Letter from the Interim Dean
- 04 For the Love of the Game
- 08 Quarterback of Community
- 10 Leaders from Agriculture
- 16 Keeping It In the Family
- 18 Herd Mentality
- 20 From State to Southern Charm
- 22 Development
- 28 College News
- 30 Department News
- 41 Alumni News
- 45 Reflections

On the cover: Tanner Allen, human development and family science major and outfielder for the Mississippi State National Championship baseball team was drafted by the Marlins in the 2021 draft. Allen received the SEC batting title and Player of the Year Award for his efforts during the 2020-2021 season. (Photo by Mississippi State Athletics)

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Letter from the Interim Dean

GREETINGS from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at Mississippi State University. Fall at Mississippi State is full of hope—the air is crisp and campus is abuzz with learning, research, collaboration, and revelry.

The pandemic has given us a vast appreciation of the regular rhythms of campus life and as one of the university's founding colleges continues to deliver top-notch education for the ag and life sciences leaders of tomorrow, we're reminded we're in this together. While challenges make us stronger, our community pulls us through.

In COVID years, 2020 seems like a lifetime ago. We were thrilled to welcome students back to campus after the spring shutdown. Our faculty again rose to the occasion with a mixture of hybrid and online classes, outdoor classrooms, and virtual meetings. Spring and Summer 2021 were better as we began to engage more fully, albeit with safety precautions. And of course, the crowning of the baseball team as National Champions gave us a victory that was generations in the making. As you may have noticed from the cover, Tanner Allen, SEC player of the year, was a student in our college. We grow champions and leaders in CALS!

As the fall 2021 semester draws to a close, enrollments have held steady throughout the pandemic, but we have room to grow. I am especially proud of our students, particularly the freshmen, who started college during these unprecedented times. They have risen to the occasion and shown their resiliency, adapting to safety precautions and protocols amid a fluctuating landscape. The future is indeed bright for agriculture and life sciences with these outstanding, emerging leaders.

Many of our students were able to intern this summer and obtain professional experience. We are thankful to the alumni who hire our students, to help them build their resume, and apply their classroom learning in the field.

During the past year, we developed new online offerings to assist our alumni around the globe in advancing their education while managing family and careers. New master's programs are available online in agribusiness management and animal and dairy sciences. We also have a new certificate program online in Companion Animal Management and several new certificate programs on campus including Meat Science, Retail, and Trauma-Informed Child Advocacy. We continue to grow our Precision Agriculture certificate program, preparing students for technologies that will help feed, clothe, and fuel the world.

We have developed new partnerships with community colleges to increase enrollment, access, and provide a bridge, which allows students to easily transition from community college

to Mississippi State while earning both an associate's and a bachelor's degree.

Our alumni and friends have risen to the call with gifts to the college increasing 64 percent in fiscal year 2020. We are grateful for your support of student scholarships, faculty development, new construction, and so much more. In this issue of Influence, we highlight a few of those gifts. The Bushong family created a scholarship to honor Dr. Rex Bushong, known nationally and internationally as "the chicken doctor." The Thornton and Magnolia Pinkston Miller family created a scholarship to support African-American students from Yazoo and Humphreys counties. Daughters of J. K. Morgan, Jr. established an endowed scholarship in memory of their father with preference given to veterans and U.S. service member students. These are just a few of the gifts we have received this year. Thank you to all who contribute to the future of agriculture and life sciences through your generous donations.

And we have a great cadre of alumni in our college at over 18,000 strong. I hope you enjoy the features we have put together on a few of your classmates. Our alumni community continues to lead in agriculture, life sciences, and every realm of society. We want to continue to grow our alumni, but we need your help. Nationally, enrollment in universities is declining, but we want to continue to be the exception. We have created a nominate a student form where you can submit names of prospective students for our recruiters to contact (<https://www.cals.msstate.edu/nominate-a-student/index.php>). Please consider a young person that you can nominate to become part of this legacy and community that is MSU Ag.

I hope that you enjoy reading this issue of Influence. We hope to see you at CALS events during the Spring 2022 Super Bulldog Weekend. Thank you for all you do for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. I hope to see you soon.

Hail State!




A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Willard". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Scott Willard
Interim Dean

For the love of the
G A M E

CALS alumni careers keep
them in the game

BY VANESSA BEESON



AS THE DIAMOND DAWGS became crown-
ing national champions for the first time
in history, many a Mississippi State fan
understood the elated feeling of a goal that
felt forever in the making. While a select
few athletes have a personal hand in delivering
such an indelible feat, many more athletes at the
high school and college levels will ultimately find
themselves pursuing other passions and careers.
They may never play in the College World Series,
but they're still driven by a love of the game. CALS
alumni Jordan Treadway and Marshall Jennings
share a passion as head groundskeepers of two
spring training facilities for major league teams
while Chandler Knox found his life's work helping
collegiate student-athletes fuel up nutritionally.

Jordan Treadway.
(Photo submitted)

JORDAN TREADWAY

A LOVE OF BASEBALL led Jordan Treadway to become director of grounds and maintenance of the Roger Dean Chevrolet Stadium in Jupiter, Florida.

The 2006 alumnus graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy with a golf and sports turf management concentration. He swung his first bat at age three.

“Playing in high school was one of the best experiences of my life,” he remembered.

After graduation, he played at Northwest Mississippi Community College in Senatobia. Transferring to MSU two years later, Treadway tried out for the team he grew up loving.

“Playing baseball at MSU had always been my dream,” he said. “Coach Ron Polk had better ideas for both of us. I was there a week and was told it was time to move on, so I traded in my bat and glove for a rake.”

Turfgrass was always Treadway’s backup plan as a way to stay in the game. Growing up, he worked the family farm, where his father is still a fifth-generation farmer. That said, Treadway’s dad encouraged him to try his hand at something other than life on the farm. Treadway felt a career outdoors would suit him best and the answer came while watching a baseball game as a teenager.

“I remember during the College World Series, a player’s name and major flashed on the screen. It said

golf and sports turf management and I thought, ‘What is this?’” Treadway said.

He’d already been taking care of the field at his high school.

“My coaches cared about the field and it carried over to us. We took pride in making sure the field looked great every time we played a game,” he said.

He said the best part of his job is spending every day contributing to America’s favorite pastime.

“It’s a dream come true. Two days are hardly ever the same. We have to adapt and go with what Mother Nature throws at us, so it never gets stagnant,” he said.

His role is no walk in the park—overseeing 90 acres total in the 13-field complex, which includes a stadium

field that holds 7,000 people. All fields are designed to MLB specifications and the complex also includes two half fields, two agility fields at 10,000 square feet each, and six batting cages. The grounds include Celebration Bermudagrass, St. Augustinegrass, and Bahiagrass.

The crew stays busy year-round but it’s all hands-on deck from February through the beginning of April when the St. Louis Cardinals and Miami Marlins are onsite for their spring training. In addition to the MLB spring training, both clubs’ minor league teams are also playing at the park resulting in between 400–600 players using all 13 fields from morning to evening.

“It’s our busiest and most intense time of year when all eyes are on us and everything has to be perfect,” he said.

Summer months are the most strenuous

time at the park, according to Treadway.

“During the rainy season from May to July, we’ll have professional ball or amateur tournaments on every field. It can rain at any time, so our crew is always in position to tarp every field at a moment’s notice,” he said.

When Treadway was an MSU student, he interned at the park he now manages.

“My boss then—Marshall Jennings—was a MSU grad who took me under his wing,” he remembered.

He said the university prepared him in more ways than one.

“MSU’s internship program contributed to my success more than anything by helping me gain the practical experience and confidence needed to enter the workforce. It’s still one of the best I see out there when

I’m talking to perspective interns,” he said. “Agronomically, MSU gave me a great base which I lean on every day.”

Treadway said the crew helps drive the momentum to take care of the park day in and day out.

“I get to work with the best coworkers and aspiring turf managers. Seeing everyone’s passion is a joy that keeps me engaged,” he said.

And now it’s the summer interns that inspire him as well.

“Our interns show up the first of May when we’ve already been through the ringer. Seeing them come in full of questions, passion, and energy fires me up for the rest of the summer. It’s also very rewarding to mentor someone and have them still come ask you for advice ten years down the road,” he said.



MARSHALL JENNINGS

MORE THAN A DECADE AGO, Treadway's mentor, Marshall Jennings, left South Florida with an annual rainfall of 60 inches of rain to come to Scottsdale, Arizona with an annual rainfall of six. While the terrain and turfgrass are different (Tifway 419 Bermudagrass overseeded with perennial ryegrass every fall), the love of the game remains the same.

Jennings is head groundskeeper at Salt River Fields at Talking Stick, the only MLB spring training field on tribal land. The spring training home to the Arizona Diamondbacks and Colorado Rockies has a stadium field that holds more than 12,000 fans. The 140-acre facility includes an additional 12 regulation-size baseball fields, four half fields, two agility fields, three bunting fields, and 12 acres of multipurpose fields for other events.

The Ripley, Tennessee native played baseball all through high school and attended Lambuth University in Jackson, Tennessee on a baseball scholarship.

"Two years later, my playing days were over, but I wanted to stay close to the game," he said.

Jennings transferred to MSU and earned a Bachelor of Science in Agronomy with a golf and sports turf management concentration in 1999. While Jennings grew up surrounded by Ole Miss fans, his two years in Starkville solidified his love of the Diamond Dogs.

"I became an MSU baseball fan even though both my dad and uncle went to Ole Miss and played ball there. MSU wasn't on my radar as a kid because I grew up going to Ole Miss games. Nowadays, I watch Mississippi State instead of Ole Miss," he said.

Growing up in Tennessee, Jennings was an avid fan of both the Atlanta Braves and the St. Louis Cardinals. The first because his first internship, the latter his first big job in the big leagues.

"My goal shifted from wanting to



Marshall Jennings (photo submitted)

work at a MLB stadium to a spring training facility when I interned for the Atlanta Braves at what was then ESPN's Wide World of Sports," he said.

He credits MSU for helping him get his start in the industry.

"MSU's internship program helped get my foot in the door of the Atlanta Braves facility and I think my degree and experience helped me land that first job out of college," he said. "The plant and soil science component plays a critical role in the day-to-day operation in our facility even now. I regularly use what I learned in the classroom."

After two years working turf at Tulane University, Jennings went to Jupiter, Florida, with the St. Louis Cardinals and the Miami Marlins, before heading out West. Now in Arizona, similar to Treadway on the East Coast, Jennings and his crew are full throttle from February through April as the Rockies and Diamondbacks descend on the desert for back-to-back games.

"The spring training schedule can feel a lot like the movie "Groundhog Day" where we lose track of what day of the week it is. It's a fine oiled machine that runs like clockwork where we might have five games at one time for more than 30 days in a row," he said.

After that, it's extended spring training for the minor league club, which transitions to the Arizona Complex League, rookie-level baseball consisting mostly of players 18-21 years old, that runs through mid-September. There is also amateur baseball and soccer on the multipurpose field that might run five to seven nights a week depending on the time of the year. Baseball gears back up in the fall for a six-week schedule of the Arizona Fall League. There are also festivals and events held in the cooler months of the year.

In addition to managing the fields for all of that, Jennings also handles all the booking of sports rentals, which generates additional revenue from May through December.

"I know the downtime the fields need to recover from cultural practices, so I can stagger rentals around that but also hit specific revenue goals as well. At first, I was apprehensive about taking on that role, but I figured out we could schedule accordingly to protect the fields and not overextend the crew while still making revenue goals," he said.

Jennings said that the best part of the job is the location.

"I'm at the ballpark every day. What most people consider entertainment is a regular day for me," he said.

CHANDLER KNOX

FOR CHANDLER KNOX, a love of both sports and nutrition led the way to his current position as sport dietitian for the Georgia Tech Athletic Association.

“I loved sports growing up and always knew as a kid I wanted to be involved in sports in some way,” he said.

The Atlanta resident grew up in Birmingham and his family moved to Atlanta when he was in high school. He played baseball and football as a child and wrestled in high school. When it came time to attend college, a visit to MSU sealed the deal for Knox.

“I fell in love with MSU on a visit—the whole bulldog family atmosphere hit home for me. I also knew I wanted to go to a school that had football Saturdays. MSU checked all the boxes for me,” he said.

He earned a bachelor’s in food science, nutrition and health promotion with a food and nutrition concentration in 2016 and master’s in the same subject with a health promotion concentration in 2019. He volunteered with MSU Sports Nutrition as an undergrad from 2013–2014. In 2016, he matched to the MSU Dietetic Internship with the Department of Nutrition, Food Science and Health Promotion. He then organized a sports nutrition rotation within the dietetic internship, which opened the door for employment at Georgia Tech.

“Everything I focused on, even in

college, was performance-based,” he said. “In addition to my own focus on performance, the food science and nutrition foundation I learned at MSU makes me a more effective practitioner.”

While Knox always loved sports, it was his time as a high school wrestler that really got him thinking about nutrition.

“As a high school wrestler myself, I know these young athletes don’t always have the tools they need to make good decisions,” he said.

The experience informed his dietetic internship research project, which resulted in a published paper in *The Sport Journal*.

“I focused on high school wrestlers and wrestling coaches, their knowledge of and behavior toward nutrition including weight cutting tactics. I learned that we need to rely on dietitians to educate these student-athletes and their coaches,” he said.

A typical day at Georgia Tech has Knox working with the sports team and conducting one-on-one counseling sessions with student-athletes as he helps the players get the fuel they need for the performance they desire.

“With football, for instance, we’re there for performance fueling beforehand, during practice as a resource, and immediately after practice, to make sure they’re recovering properly,” he said. “Counseling sessions run the gamut from student-athletes who know about nutrition and want to prep meals for themselves to student-athletes who’ve never considered nutrition as a factor that affects performance. I try to meet the individual wherever they are in the process and guide them from there.”

Knox noted while Georgia Tech has 17 sports, there are only two dietitians so oftentimes he and

his supervisor divide and conquer.

“We work on football together, I cover women’s basketball, she covers men’s basketball, and we tag team the rest,” he explained.

On game days, he’s always on the sidelines whether that’s at home or on the road.

“I’m at every game on the sideline. It’s a lot of observation. You do a lot of the work beforehand, you know through weight charting or camps what to look out for to make sure the players have the fuel they need to perform well on the field or court,” he said.

Knox says his favorite part of his job is the relationship building.

“The relationship building is huge for me. While nutrition may not be the reason we win, seeing someone you’re working with go through actual changes in their behavior and see results because of it—either by getting faster or stronger—is extremely rewarding,” he said. 🐾



Chandler Knox (photo by Georgia Tech Athletics)

QUARTERBACK OF COMMUNITY

CALS alumni husband and wife dedicated to shaping communities

BY TAYLOR VOLLIN

SEE BETTER, KNOW BETTER, DO BETTER.

A simple yet powerful affirmation **Wayne and Qula Madkin** tell themselves each and every day. For the Madkins, their purpose lies beyond their professional positions and is rooted in extending their knowledge into their community to help it flourish.

Wayne, a 2001 agribusiness alumnus and Huntsville, Alabama native, says he dedicates every day to prioritizing the community through his role with Entergy Corporation.

“When I wake up, I think that the work I am doing is actually helping our community get ready for the next generation,” Wayne said. “Part of our mission at Entergy is to make sure we are involved in the community, and we are providing value for the people that we serve. I take pride in donating my time.”

Wayne works with Entergy Corporation, an energy company devoted to electric power production. Madkin works with the key string innovation lab to build infrastructure and electrical vehicle infrastructure in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. He sees a bright future for electrification in the South.

“You’re going to see a lot of changes happening the more we adapt to these new technologies. If we’re able to put our arms around it, it’s going to be a windfall for not only our community but for our social economies,” Wayne stated. “This electrification is coming quickly, and it’s going to create jobs and opportunities for a lot of people.”

Prior to his time with Entergy, Wayne

touched the hearts of Starkville as a quarterback for the Mississippi State University football team from 1998 through 2001. He graduated as the best quarterback in Bulldog history with 25 wins and 6,366 passing yards, a record that wasn’t touched until 2015. Despite his standout SEC career, Madkin is humble about his prior achievements but honest about the lessons the sport taught him.

“Football obviously shaped me, and it goes with me every day, but I don’t usually bring it up a lot,” Wayne said. “As a quarterback, I was using people skills, understanding the importance of teamwork, and knowing the importance of having a strong message when you communicate with people. That’s one of the biggest things I brought with me from sports—being able to communicate. When I communicate with a strong message, I get everyone on the same page to reach the same goal.”

Today, Wayne’s number one team consists of four children and a wife with goals and a drive to match his own. Wayne met his wife Qula while students, on the steps of the Lloyd-Ricks-Watson Building, one of the many buildings that houses departments in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Together, Wayne says they share a passion for impacting the community.

“We talk about it every night before we go to bed. We have meaningful conversations about life, those meetings of the minds to just talk about things,” Wayne said. “We’re very passionate about our community, sharing knowledge, and

seeing the community grow. The biggest thing we realized is that it’s about education. It’s about knowing better, seeing better, and doing better.”

A dream of winning did not end on Scott Field in Davis Wade Stadium. Wayne said he still hopes to accomplish all the goals he sets, while also building a legacy of knowledge for his children and future grandchildren.

“I want to be productive and win,” Wayne said. “I aim to set goals, reach them, and then set more goals. My ultimate goal is to raise my children and pass on the quest to learn and serve others to them, so they can prosper and serve others. That’s the biggest thing I can do in life—pass on a legacy of knowledge to my kids so they can serve their community.”

Qula, too, has her sights set on creating a legacy for their children. The Purvis, Mississippi native said she is driven by her family.

“Everything that I do is driven by my family and what I want for my children and their children,” Qula said. “I am trying to set up a legacy that is viable, strong, and long lasting. I’ve seen it in other families, and I want that in mine.”

The first-generation college graduate received her undergraduate degree in human sciences in 2001 and went on to obtain her master’s degree in nutrition in 2003. Now a registered dietitian, Qula said she stumbled upon the program in her dorm in Sessums Hall her freshman year.

“I’m a registered dietitian, but when I

came to college, I knew nothing about what it was,” Qula laughed. “I originally wanted to become a physical therapist, but when the requirements changed, I went through the course catalog with a pink highlighter to find what program aligned with the courses I had taken. All of my classes counted for food, nutrition, and dietetics, so that is what I pursued.”

Though she came across her career path by divine intervention, as she likes to say, the route was a perfect fit. Qula currently works as a nutrition specialist for the MSU Extension Service. In this role, Qula develops nutritional programming for the state of Mississippi, working on educational materials, publications, social media, and other outreach programs tailored to a wellness perspective. In a sense, Qula said her position is comparable to an umbrella.

“I don’t really work with individuals anymore, I’m more like an umbrella,” Qula said. “I’m not over Extension agents, but I work alongside them to help plan community education programs. I collaborate with the agents, and I believe in that strongly. It’s important to me that what we do is going to matter to the community and the agents.”

Qula’s role may have shifted from working with individuals to larger communities, but it still relies heavily on interpersonal skills. Qula said getting the message across in an impactful manner makes all the difference.

“It boils down to assessing the needs of the person and the community, and leading with care and compassion. I



Wayne and Qula Madkin (photo by Chao Photography)

really want to engage Mississippians in what it means to be nourished,” Qula said. “There is so much good information and programs out there, but the message that is being delivered and believing in that message matters. Communicating that requires a strong approach.”

At the end of the day, laying a simple foundation proves successful for Qula, who said she focuses on little victories for individuals and communities that will make the largest impact on their lives.

“Seeing individuals make changes to better themselves, whether small or large, thrills me,” Qula said. “Like having people get their blood pressure under control by making good decisions. Getting people to understand that poor health does not have to happen to them and that there are things they can do to prevent it. That to me is so valuable. It’s never been about the accolades for

me, it’s about teaching people simple changes that could save their life.”

As it is with Wayne, helping communities understand the importance of knowledge is one of Qula’s largest goals. She said she hopes to make an impact on those around her by helping them understand knowledge is the key to life changes.

“I want the community to not just understand that knowledge is power but that the use of knowledge is wisdom, and that is how we can change lives,” Qula added. “Using knowledge and information positively for individuals and communities—that’s the impact I want to make. I want to impact lives positively, and I believe in each one, teach one. I believe that if we go from person-to-person we can reach families and communities, and we can help people understand and make better choices. I am my community, so I’m totally invested.” 🐾

LEADERS *from* AGRICULTURE

CALS alumni serve
communities, improve lives
and livelihoods

BY VANESSA BEESON



EACH YEAR, we profile CALS alumni who are leaders in their respective fields. Our leaders from ag this year include a United States Senator, university administrator, and bank president. Each works tirelessly to serve their constituents, customers, and community members. **Senator Marsha Blackburn** strives to improve the lives of Tennesseans as the senior U.S. Senator of the Volunteer State; **Dr. Martha Ray Sartor**, as an associate vice president of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture's Cooperative Extension Service, trains tomorrow's leaders in agriculture and family and consumer science; and **Craig Shideler**, CEO of Mississippi Land Bank, is focused on helping farmers gain the financial footing to grow their operations.

FROM 4-H TO THE HALLS OF CONGRESS

IN 2018, U.S. Senator **Marsha Blackburn** (R-Tenn) was elected as the first woman to represent the Volunteer State in the United States Senate. From serving in the U.S. House of Representatives for Tennessee's seventh district in 2003 to being sworn in as a U.S. Senator in 2019, Blackburn has proudly served the people of Tennessee as the fourth woman elected to Congress from the state.

Blackburn parlayed skills developed in 4-H and honed as an entrepreneur into a public service career on the national stage.

"I really appreciate the opportunity to solve problems for individuals and make certain that the federal government is working for them," Blackburn said.

As the senior senator from Tennessee, Blackburn serves on the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee; the Judiciary Committee; Veterans' Affairs Committee; and the Armed Services Committee.

Veterans issues, in particular, are near to Blackburn's heart. In both the Senate and the House, Blackburn has worked to address health care access and caregiver support for the country's veterans, with an emphasis on supporting and recognizing the country's female veterans, which account for 10 percent of those in service.

"We are honored to have the opportunity to work every day on behalf of our veterans to ensure they have access to all of their benefits," she said.

During her tenure as a U.S. Representative, Blackburn was also a champion for musicians, spearheading the Music Modernization Act, passed in 2018, which updated the music licensing landscape to provide protection for musicians and songwriters in the digital age. That

passion stemmed from Blackburn's start in public service as the executive director of the Tennessee Film, Entertainment and Music Commission in the mid-90s.

"When we look at things we've accomplished on the legislative front for our entertainment community in Nashville, I was able to achieve a tax policy change that helped our entertainers. I was able to achieve a legislative policy change that redefined the federal definition of small business to include our entrepreneurs, sole proprietors, independent contractors, and self-employed," said Blackburn, who minored in classical piano performance at Mississippi State.

In both the Senate and House, Blackburn has also focused on leveraging technology to improve the lives of the 60 million people who live in rural America with less access to services like health care. As cosponsor of the Rural America Health Corps Act, Blackburn aims to close service gaps and reduce health disparities across rural America. Additionally, her **SOFTWARE Act**, which passed in 2014 as part of 21st Century Cares, directed the U.S. Food and Drug Administration to modernize its approach to approving health care software to increase accessibility to innovative health care apps and tools for all Americans.

"I was responsible for developing, passing, and getting signed into law much of the legislation that deals with health IT, telemedicine, and the **SOFTWARE Act**, which puts many of these definitions in statutes," said Blackburn, who also noted her investment in increasing access to broadband for rural Americans.

As a U.S. Representative, Blackburn also served on six committees—Budget,

Education and the Workforce, Government Reform, Judiciary, Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, and Energy and Commerce in which she helmed as chair of two subcommittees: Communications and Technology and Select Investigative Panel of the Committee on Energy and Commerce.

Prior to her time in Congress, she served in the Tennessee State Senate beginning in 1998, where she led efforts to defeat a proposed state income tax. Prior to public service, she was the director of retail fashion and special events for the Castner Knott Company and founded Marketing Strategies, a marketing company focused on retail and media. She said her experience knowing how to lead serves her well in public service.

"One of the most important concepts I have always felt you can take from the private sector to the public sector is realizing that you lead people and manage assets," she said.

The Laurel, Mississippi native earned a national 4-H scholarship and chose to attend MSU.

"The program offered me the ability to study merchandising and marketing. When I attended, consumer economics and merchandising was in the Department of Home Economics," said Blackburn, who said many of her marketing courses were in the College of Business, where she is still a member of the advisory board.

Blackburn earned her bachelor's in 1973, working her way through college as one of the first female sales associates of the Southwestern Company, selling books door-to-door during summers.

Later as one of the company's first female sales managers, Blackburn



Senator Marsha Blackburn (photo submitted)

encouraged other women to sell for the company.

“I brought in friends from Mississippi State—women who are still friends to this day—who sold books and had a great time learning how to build their own business,” she said.

Blackburn said she appreciated the support of faculty and staff during her time at MSU.

“The faculty and staff at Mississippi State opened doors of opportunity because

everyone learns differently. By taking the time and personal interest and not being fearful of trying something different or letting someone individualize a study course for themselves, the MSU faculty and staff helps people learn and develop skills that will help them throughout their life,” she said.

She encourages new graduates and alumni to build a reputation of being effective.

“Do a good job of the daily tasks in

front of you. Build a reputation in your chosen career field for having the ability to innovate and bring newness to that field,” she said.

As she looks toward the horizon ahead, she remains focused on serving fellow Americans.

“My focus is on preserving faith, family, freedom, and hope, to open the door of opportunity to every American, so they have the chance to build and achieve their version of the American Dream,” she said.

CALS ALUM FINDS FULFILLMENT IN 4-H AND EXTENSION CAREER

GROWING UP in Ripley, Mississippi, **Dr. Martha Ray Sartor** said 4-H was a big part of her life.

“My life revolved around the First Baptist Church, 4-H, school, and MSU sports—mainly football,” Sartor remembered.

Her clothing project won her a trip to the national 4-H conference in Chicago, Illinois.

“I still remember that first plane trip with forty other 4-H kids from Mississippi,” she said. “After that, I sought contests where I could win trips and I still love to travel.”

She focused on clothing and nutrition, and since her family had a small cattle operation, she also showed cattle.

“Having an understanding of livestock has paid off in my career,” she said.

Nowadays, Sartor’s life continues to revolve around 4-H and MSU sports—most recently baseball. While Sartor



Dr. Martha Ray Sartor (photo submitted)

traveled to Starkville and Jackson for every MSU football game as a kid, she managed to make it to Omaha to watch the Diamond Dawgs win big this past year.

As associate vice president of family and consumer sciences and 4-H youth development for the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture’s Cooperative Extension Service, Sartor oversees the university’s family and consumer sciences, or FCS, program and the Arkansas 4-H program.

The FCS program aims to improve the lives of Arkansans in the realm of home, food, and finances offering health and wellness programs, nutrition and food safety resources, financial training, and more. The 4-H program offers a wealth of experiential learning opportunities for more than 133,000 young people ages five to 19 across the state.

Sartor said she’s proud of a recent endowment she helped spearhead.

“I helped launch the Rick and Lynette Cartwright endowment and in six months, during the pandemic, no less, we raised almost \$60,000 for a 4-H scholarship,” she said.

She has also been hard at work ensuring 4-H and FCS programs remained accessible, despite COVID-19.

“We transitioned our programs online at the pandemic’s onset and still had record attendance,” she said. “In 4-H, in particular, we held campfires, officer elections, and state and district contests all online, including the most touching 4-H awards ceremony. We have a great communications department who helped us pull this off.”

Prior to her time at the University of Arkansas, Sartor enjoyed a lengthy career at her alma mater with the MSU Cooperative Extension Service. She was with the MSU Extension for 26 years, retiring in 2006. She joined the organization right after she graduated with a bachelor’s in home economics in 1980.

“My extension career was a gold mine for helping others. As a servant of the people, you get to develop programs that change lives. The people I met along the way gave me more riches than money could ever buy,” she said.

Her first job was in Marks, Mississippi—a town of about 1,500 people.

“I’d never lived in a place that small, not that Ripley was big, but the citizens of Quitman County were dear to me and they made sure I was a success in that extension office,” she said.

Sartor served at the county, district, and state level as 4-H youth agent, home economist, area agent, area family financial specialist, state 4-H specialist, and district director. She commuted to the University of Mississippi earning her master’s and doctoral degrees in secondary education and educational administration, respectively.

While serving in Bolivar County, she helped establish the National Rice Month lunch, a rice tasting lunch that showcases more than 300 rice-based dishes, which draws upwards of 1,500 attendees and recently celebrated its 30th anniversary.

Sartor’s best memories of MSU are the people—noting that MSU combined with her 4-H experience—set her on the path to success.

“I can’t overemphasize the value a 4-H program has on a child’s life—the public speaking, judging, and critical thinking skills developed in the program are invaluable. The networking I did at MSU paid off in dividends, as well. Never underestimate the value of people you meet—they could be the connection to your future,” she added.

She reminds current students and recent alumni that they’re laying the foundation for the rest of their careers.

“The people you meet today may be the ones who open doors later. You’re making a footprint and you need to be cognizant of what your footprint reflects,” she said.

She also encourages young people to apply for jobs that are off the beaten path.

“I’ll have jobs in rural areas and not many people will apply. Everyone applies for the jobs in larger cities but often the gems are found in the small places where the applicant pools are smaller,” she said. “Just because you start somewhere doesn’t mean you have to end there. It’s like the Bulldogs. It doesn’t matter what happened earlier in the season—it’s where you end up.”

LENDING A HAND TO MISSISSIPPI FARMERS

CRAIG SHIDELER, CEO of Mississippi Land Bank, might be a numbers guy but it's the people that have driven him to grow the farm credit union to a billion-dollar enterprise with 50 employees.

The Sardis native said he grew up in "the shadow of Ole Miss," and while his four sisters attended the University of Mississippi, he knew MSU was the place for him.

His father and brother, also MSU grads, were both veterinarians and while Shideler was a pre-vet major his freshman year, he quickly switched to agricultural economics and found his calling.

He grew up on a farm—a cattle and horse operation in addition to his father's vet clinic—and developed an understanding of how farms operate and the business decisions farmers face.

"MSU really prepared me for my career," he said. "I could not have been better prepared to become a lender and, ultimately, an administrator of Mississippi Land Bank. Every class I took from economics to marketing and statistics to farm management prepared me to become a high performing lender."

Armed with his training from MSU after earning his bachelor's in 1977, Shideler hit the ground running and was hired by the Federal Land Bank Association of Tupelo right out of college. Soon after, he was offered a promotion at the Federal Intermediate Credit Bank's headquarters in New Orleans, Louisiana but opted to stay in the place he called home.

At the age of 26, he was tapped to become president of the Federal Land Bank Association of Senatobia. His tenure was not without challenge and the farm recession of the mid-1980s impacted the association significantly, with the Federal Land Bank Jackson District, of which Shideler's bank was a part, going into receivership in 1988.

"That was a very hard time in my career, but I learned so much," he remembered.

The association reorganized in 1990 and six new associations were created across Mississippi, Alabama, and Louisiana, including Mississippi Land Bank.

Shideler became chief credit officer over the branches and was promoted to president in 2012.

Mississippi Land Bank serves the northern 32 counties of Mississippi, providing financing for agricultural, recreational, and residential land and properties. As part of the nationwide Farm Credit System, the bank is actually a financial cooperative owned by member-borrowers.

"Anyone who is a loan holder with us is also a stockholder, so if we do well they receive dividends as long as they have a loan with us," Shideler explained.

Shideler said one of his favorite aspects of his position is investing in his team.

"I love growing team members and giving them responsibility and opportunities to make decisions. This leads to an awesome work force, which has been a key to our growth and success," he said.

He also helps drive a corporate culture that understands the importance of investing in those still in school.

"Mississippi Land Bank wants to help others where we can, including through scholarships, which we provide for all the universities and community colleges in the counties we serve, including MSU," he said.

Shideler knows firsthand how important those funds can be to college students.

"I was number five out of six children. I remember how tough it was at times and I never forgot that. God has been good to Mississippi Land Bank and if we can help someone a little along the way financially, we will do that," he said.

They also support research in the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) and have an internship program to give students hands-on experience.

"I love the MAFES research award. We have wonderful professors and grad students and want to keep them in Mississippi. We're happy to help recognize their great work and encourage them," he said.

As for the internship, he says the team tries to give interns the opportunity to experience the breadth of the company.

"We immerse our interns in all aspects



Craig Shideler (photo submitted)

of our operations. It helps them understand and apply principles from their coursework in a real-world setting. Some continue on to become employees," he said.

He advises current students to approach their classes and studies as a job that must be done first while still saving time to be service-minded.

"When hiring, I look for people with enthusiasm, a strong knowledge base, and a solid work ethic who have been involved in something outside of themselves. I like to see that they've been officers in student organizations, which shows me they have leadership skills," he said. "Also, be 'all in' and positive at any job you do. My father taught us to always 'ride for the brand,' in other words, be supportive of your employer and give them your best effort. Throughout my career I've kept that in mind."

Shideler met his wife, Calvert, while at MSU. The freshman from Yazoo City majoring in accounting would ultimately earn her CPA. Their three children, Nathan, Lauren, and Josh are all MSU grads.

For his part, Shideler said his time at MSU was an anchor in both work and life.

"MSU was and still is a major influence for good in my life. My best friends came from relationships developed at this school. Also, I will be forever grateful for the ag econ professors who took an interest in me all those years ago," he said. 🐾

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

A passion for entomology spans generations

BY MEG HENDERSON

IN THE CATCHOT FAMILY, there is a shared love of learning—specifically, learning about insects.

Dr. Angus Catchot, Jr. and his wife, **Beverly**, both earned degrees in entomology at Mississippi State and are working for MSU in that field. Their two sons are now following in their parents' footsteps: **Angus III** working on his Ph.D. while also working for MSU Extension, and **Ty** pursuing his undergraduate degree and working for a crop consultant.

Angus is an extension professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology, specializing in row-crop pests. One might say that he inspired the rest of his immediate family to pursue entomology after working in the field for nearly three decades. But he was, in turn, influenced by family, years before he decided to take his first entomology class.

He recalls from childhood a visit from his uncle, who had graduated from MSU with a master's in Entomology, as he reflected, "I knew nothing about it at the time other than that, but I remember him telling me, this agriculture thing can be pretty rewarding, and you need to get an upper-level degree."

After working as an electrician for a number of years, Beverly asked him to consider moving to Starkville. "She had finished her degree at Southern Mississippi and encouraged me to get my degree as well," he said.

They made the move, and Angus enrolled in the engineering program. However, on the first day, he recalled, "I walked into orientation in engineering and realized it wasn't what I wanted to do, and

I remembered my uncle's words. Later, I went to agricultural pest management and was surrounded by people who came from farms, and I immediately felt at home."

A general entomology course, taught by Dr. Larry Corpus, hooked him during his first semester.

"That class did it for me, and a lot of it had to do with the guy teaching it," Angus said.

He went on to earn his master's from MSU and had plans to pursue his Ph.D. at Kansas State University. But, at a friend's suggestion, he instead took a job with Monsanto, whose tuition reimbursement program led him back to MSU for a doctoral degree, allowing him to work full time while taking classes and conducting research. After graduation, he continued to work for Monsanto until he got a call from MSU about an open position in the entomology department. He took the job and has been at home in the department for the last 17 years.

Just as the words of encouragement from his uncle and wife sparked a long and fruitful career in the study of insects, Angus, in turn, had an impact on Beverly's mid-career move to entomology. When Angus was working on his master's degree, in the late 1990s, Beverly had found work in the insect rearing lab.

"I was in social work, and I was just looking for something to do until he finished up," she said.

In the following years, she left the lab to teach elementary school. But when her children got older and the pace of family life started to ease, she thought about the next step in her career.

"Back then, I had a job where my schedule was fairly consistent with my children,"

she said. "When my oldest son, Angus, graduated high school in 2012, I was ready to transition."

Beverly discovered an opportunity in the same insect rearing lab where she had worked more than 15 years before, under her former supervisors, Dr. Fred Musser and Kathy Knighten. She began the position in 2014 and in 2016, with encouragement from Dr. Musser, enrolled in the master's program in entomology while continuing her work in the insect rearing lab. She graduated in May 2020.

Where Angus specializes in preventing insect damage to row crops, Beverly's work focuses on producing insects.

"Our main purpose is to provide healthy insects for research year-round," she said. "We have to go out in the field and collect insects. Then we bring them back to the lab, and we try to set up our facilities to be as close to their natural habitats and diets as possible."

The couple's eldest son, Angus III, studied entomology at MSU and is now working for the university as an extension associate while pursuing his Ph.D. He manages roughly 100 bee colonies for the university as well as 25 colonies of his own at home.

"I am currently studying entomology just as my father did as well as my mom, but that is where the similarities end," Angus III said. "A few years back, I was introduced into the world of honeybees, and I fell in love with working with bees."

The younger Angus caught the entomology "bug" in seventh grade, when he had the opportunity to work for a crop consultant over the summer.

"I worked for Tucker Miller from Drew,

The Catchot family (left to right): Angus III, Beverly, Angus Jr., Ty. (Photo submitted)



Mississippi,” he said. “That summer we checked cotton, corn, and soybeans, monitoring for weeds and insects. I didn’t know it at the time, but that summer would lay down the path for my career in entomology.”

Angus did not intend to set his sons on a particular career path, but he did want them to gain work ethic and life skills.

“I didn’t necessarily want them to be in agriculture, but I did want my sons to learn how to work at an early age, and they seemed to enjoy it,” he said.

Although the Catchots all decided to pursue careers in entomology, their areas of study are quite diverse. That diversity is something that all four believe makes entomology such an accessible field. Angus III encourages young people to consider entomology as a career.

“Insects play such a vital role in the world, and not just in agriculture,” he said. “There is a wide range of entomologist jobs, such as medical and veterinary entomologists, just to name a couple.”

Beverly commented that, although women are a minority in the field, there are many opportunities for them to find their niche.

“In Mississippi, poultry, forestry, and agriculture are our largest industries, and they are all affected by insects,” she said. “There are so many aspects of entomology: there are medical veterinary entomologists, we have artists, outreach in schools, and there is so much diversity.”

Angus added, “There are so many specialties, from identifying and naming insects, or studying a specific insect. If you have the desire, and you find insects fascinating, entomology is a broad

enough field that you can find your niche.”

For the Catchots, studying insects does not end when they leave the office; curiosity about insects is present in their daily lives. On a recent trip to the river, the family saw some insect casings and saw a dragonfly emerge.

“We try to share with family and teach them and encourage them to be interested in insects,” Beverly said. “We share videos and pictures with each other, and we’re always looking for insects in different places we go.”

Their enthusiasm for studying insects is evident, as is their pride in being Mississippi State alumni.

“There’s a lot of pride when you graduate; you get involved in life in a college town,” Angus stated. “I was very

proud of being an alum of MSU. I love school and always had a desire to learn.”

That love of learning was clearly passed down to the next generation.

“I wouldn’t say it was a given that I would attend Mississippi State University, but the path was pretty clear at a young age,” Angus III said. “After working summer jobs through high school in agriculture, I knew entomology was going to be my career path and that I would attend MSU.”

Looking back, the move from Wiggins to Starkville so many years ago, and the continuous decision to make MSU home, has come full circle. As their sons branch out to find their own paths in entomology, the Catchots continue to keep it in the family at Mississippi State. 🐾

HERD MENTALITY

MAFES Beef Unit herdsman put cattle first

BY VANESSA BEESON

EVERY DAY, Mississippi State staff and students inspect 600 acres of MSU’s South Farm and tend its cattle herds before most have brewed the day’s first cup of coffee.

These “campus cowboys” are responsible for the health and safety of approximately 500 head of cattle that make up the Starkville campus herd, which is part of the MSU Beef Unit. This research group provides meaningful advances for an industry that brought \$261 million to Mississippi in 2020.

Bryan Carter and **Sarah Montgomery** are assistant herders for the MSU Beef Unit. They work with William White,

facilities coordinator of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station’s (MAFES) Foundation Herds.

The herds allow MSU scientists to study everything from using precision technology—remote sensing and GPS—to aid in heifer development to determining best practices for raising locally sourced farm-to-consumer beef to antibiotic resistance in calves and much more.

The herdsmen hail from as far away as Oregon and Ohio and, in addition to their role as staff, they are both pursuing advanced degrees in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences. Carter is working on a master’s studying

cattle reproduction while Montgomery is getting a doctoral degree evaluating how precision technology can be used to aid heifer development.

While every day is different, they’re responsible for feeding and caring for the animals, which includes cattle and sheep and occasionally pigs and goats.

“Generally we start at 7 a.m., feeding and checking the animals in the pasture to make sure everyone is okay. After that, we have a list of things we have to get done, whether that’s putting out mineral, cleaning the barn, or mending a break in the fence,” Montgomery said. “Every day is different, and we really enjoy it. Just being able to learn in this type of environment makes it really fun. There’s never a dull moment.”

She said her favorite aspect of the job is the research.

“We get to experience the research projects firsthand and learn and build on that,” she said.

The Youngstown, Ohio native graduated with a bachelor’s in ag science production from University of Tennessee at Martin and came to MSU for her master’s, which she earned in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences in 2016, comparing the effects of diploid and tetraploid annual ryegrass varieties on herbage mass, nutritive value, and cattle performance. She’s now evaluating precision technology data obtained from heifers to observe grazing movement as forage changes throughout the grazing season. She is under the direction of **Drs. Brandi Karisch** and **Jane Parish**



RIGHT: Assistant herder Sarah Montgomery; **OPPOSITE:** Assistant herder Bryan Carter. (Photos by Megan Bean)



with an anticipated graduation date of 2023. Toward the end of her master's and at the start of her Ph.D., she worked as a research technician at the MAFES Prairie Research Unit. She appreciates having the perspective of both that experience and working at the Beef Unit at the MAFES H.H. Leveck Animal Research Center, also known as South Farm.

"Overall, we're focused on herd health. We work cattle in a low stress manner and are attentive to the needs of the herd," she said. "I'm grateful for the experience and would love to run an experiment station one day."

Montgomery and Carter train student workers and interns who work the farm. "The student workers who want to be campus cowboys need to have experience and part of the interview is taking them out in the field and evaluating how they handle the cows and how they work as part of the team," Montgomery said. "Once hired, they work alongside us until we're confident they can manage cattle properly on their own."

Montgomery noted that the unit also offers internships for those with less experience who want to get a feel for life on the farm.

"Our interns are just getting their foot in the door. They can work here, the MAFES Horse Unit, or the MAFES Bearden Dairy Research Center," she said.

Carter said training the students is something he enjoys.

"We show them how to handle cattle, how to sort the animals, and read what an animal's needs might be," Carter said.

"We teach them how to care for the animals without stressing those animals out."

The Townsend, Oregon native has always had an affinity for cattle.

"I like raising good cattle and I love to see them raised right," he said.

He remembers spending summers on his grandparents' wheat farm and when it came time for college, he chose Oregon State University in Corvallis because it had one of the region's strongest agricultural programs. After earning his undergraduate degree in agriculture in 2015, he rodeoed as a bull rider before moving to Alabama to work at a Black Angus seed stock ranch.

When his wife decided to finish her undergraduate degree at MSU, he worked at the Brooksville stockyard, running sale barn stockers before taking a job in Missouri performing embryo work in cattle across the Southeast.

"I wanted to spend more time with my wife, who is now in her fourth year of vet school at MSU, so I came down here and took this job," he said.

Carter is pursuing a master's degree under the direction of **Dr. Jamie Larson**,

simulating recipients in embryo transfer and studying if an increase in progesterone leads to increased pregnancy rates.

He appreciates the interaction with the vet school that the Beef Unit affords.

"One of the cool things is having the vet school right here. On a production ranch, vets will administer care; here we get to learn what they are doing and why," he said.

Carter said different seasons present different challenges.

"In the spring and fall, when the cows are ready to calve we try to check them five or six times a day to make sure that calves are delivered safely. During the heat of the summer, you can only move, work, and feed cattle in early morning or late evening so it's a challenge to get it all done," he said.

Still the herdsman are dedicated to their work, always on call working with White, the facilities manager, and others to ensure the animals always come first.

"We try to rotate since someone has to be here every day. Rain or shine, seven days a week, we're here tending the herd and making sure the cows have what they need," Carter said. 🐾

FROM STATE TO SOUTHERN CHARM

CALS alumnus blooms as a celebrity and B&B owner

BY MEG HENDERSON

LIKE THE FLOWERING VINES, bulbs, and annuals that adorn the gardens of his recently renovated St. Francisville Inn, southern hospitality is deeply rooted in every venture that **Brandon Branch** has undertaken in his life.

The 2000 horticulture grad grew up on a Mississippi dairy farm but was encouraged by his family to attend college and find his own path. Originally a landscape architecture major, Branch credits Dr. Lester Estes for helping him discover that his passion for flowers, instilled early in life by his grandmother, could become a viable career.

“I loved plants more than drawing, and I loved being outside,” he stated. “And Dr. [James] DelPrince was instrumental in introducing me to people in the industry.”

After graduation, Branch interned in Aspen, Colorado, serving an elite clientele. He was preparing to move to Los Angeles when, one night, he was watching the movie “Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil,” set in Savannah, Georgia. The movie immediately sparked a fascination with the historic architecture and gardens of the city and a longing to return to the South. Branch packed his bags and made the move—not to LA, but to Savannah.

The move led to an opportunity to serve as creative director and personal assistant for Paula Deen, where Branch remained for 14 years. When he took the job, Deen was not yet a household name. But after being introduced by her niece, Branch immediately felt that this was a good fit.

“I knew she was going places, and I knew there was something there,” he said.

It was during these years that the seed of Branch’s dream to open a bed and breakfast was planted.

“[Paula and I] grew and developed together, and it really prepared me for the hospitality industry,” he reflected. “We traveled all of the time, and we were in some of the nicest hotels in the world, and that opened my eyes to the hospitality industry and what I wanted to create in St. Francisville.”

Branch took a small detour from his B&B dream when he received a knock on the door of his Savannah home. He was asked to appear on an episode of Bravo’s *Southern Charm: Savannah* and remained for the rest of Season 2, which aired in 2018. Branch credits Savannah with being the true star of the show, which is peppered with picturesque shots of the city.

“The show showcased her beauty and hospitality, how gorgeous and

magical the city is,” Brandon remarked.

In October 2018, Branch and his husband, Jim Johnston, purchased the St. Francisville Inn, a Victorian landmark just minutes north of Baton Rouge, Louisiana and close to family. Branch and Johnston, a realtor, had remodeled a number of historic homes in Savannah, so they came to this project with plenty of knowledge and experience.

“One of the greatest challenges of the project was living through all the renovations,” Branch recalled. “We lived at the property during the renovations.”

The completely redesigned inn, reopened in April 2019, offers a modern take on classic Southern style, both inside and out. The property appears to be a culmination of Branch’s life’s work. Savannah-inspired charm is evident in the interior design. And his passion for horticulture, started in his youth and cultivated in his undergraduate studies, is arguably the property’s crown jewel. According to Branch, the South is defined by hospitality.

“To be a guest in your home—that is very Southern,” he said. “It’s a huge compliment when someone says, ‘I feel like I’ve been a guest in your home.’ And there’s nothing like sipping a cocktail on the veranda.” 🐾



Brandon Branch (photo submitted)



Development

Honoring a poultry legend

*Scholarship honors
Bushong's legacy at MSU*

By Georgia Sisson

AMANDA BUSHONG'S never-ending love for her late father and pride in his legacy at Mississippi State and beyond prompted her to establish a scholarship in his honor.

The **Dr. Rex D. Bushong** Memorial Endowed Scholarship will assist students enrolled in the Department of Poultry Science who demonstrate academic achievement and financial need. The scholarship bearing his name has also been instated to provide immediate support until the endowment reaches maturity. Through the awards, Bushong hopes to give others a chance to succeed at MSU, like her father did many years ago.

"We are very excited to be able to start this scholarship," said Bushong, who is joined by her brother Ashley in establishing the award. "Our hope is that the recipient will carry on my dad's legacy of dedication by being the best they can be in their fields, while continuing to give back to the industries they serve and the people in their communities."

A Union City, Tennessee native, Bushong had a passion for learning, being challenged, and thinking outside the box. He attended the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee before joining the Bulldog family.

Upon relocating to Starkville to enroll as a student at MSU, Bushong met his wife, Vickie. The couple initially met off campus, but Vickie later began working in the MSU poultry

department, where Bushong was studying, and the two quickly fell in love.

Amanda Bushong credits her mother's influence on Bushong's commitment to his education and accomplishment of his doctoral degree.

"She whipped him into shape to finish his PhD. Otherwise, he might still be fishing or duck hunting to this day," she said.

At MSU, Bushong earned a bachelor's degree in animal science in 1964 and a master's degree in poultry science with a concentration in poultry nutrition in 1966.

Furthering his studies in poultry physiology and organic biochemistry, he completed his PhD in 1971.

Bushong went on to become one of the top and most recognized poultry nutritionists of his time, known nationally and internationally as "the chicken doctor." Throughout his career, he worked with many institutions and companies including the Alabama Cooperative Extension at Auburn University, Dawe's Laboratories, HyLine Indian River International, and Hudson Foods, Inc.

In 1998, after settling in his wife's native Texas, Bushong founded Texan Six Consulting. Through the San Angelo, Texas-based business, he served as an avian nutritional consultant for poultry and allied industry leaders including AZOMITE, Pfizer, and Elanco Animal Health, among others, in his pursuit of ensuring the

best poultry products on the market. "MSU and the foundation it laid for my dad, in many ways, is why he was able to achieve such a high level of success throughout his career," Bushong said.

Aside from his professional work, he was a generous man who spent much of his time giving back to those who were less fortunate. Bushong served on the Fort Concho Foundation board, was a member of the Texas Heart Institute's Cooley Circle, and was a loyal supporter of the Robert Lee Brothers, Jr. Memorial Library in Gonzales, Texas, MD Anderson Cancer Center, and St. Joseph's Indian School.

"His passion for helping others was a major part of his life," Bushong said, who resides in Kansas City, Missouri.

Bushong says although her father was well-known for his work ethic, he was no stranger to fun. He was notorious for playing pranks on colleagues and humorous, captivating story telling.

Most of all, Bushong remembers her father for the kindhearted man at the core of his identity.

"He never wanted praise, but only the ability to give someone a better place than before or an opportunity they might not have," she said.

With the establishment of the Dr. Rex D. Bushong Memorial Endowed Scholarship, his legacy of mentorship, passion for learning, and heart of gold will live forever at the place that started it all—MSU.



@CALSDvelopment
@MSU Properties
@BulldogForest

Dr. Rex D. Bushong, seated center, surrounded by his family. (Photo submitted)



Scholarship supports diversity in agriculture

Family honors relatives' farming legacy with gift for agricultural students

By Ashleigh Lee

A GIFT FROM THE FAMILY of longtime Bayland farmers **Thornton Miller** and **Magnolia Pinkston Miller** will benefit Black students in the Mississippi State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The \$25,000 commitment remembers the legacy of the late couple through the establishment of an endowed scholarship bearing their name.

The Thornton and Magnolia Pinkston Miller Endowed Scholarship will be awarded to full-time CALS students who have demonstrated academic achievement and financial need. Preference will be given to Black students who are residents of Yazoo or Humphreys counties and majoring in agriculture or a related field. If no candidates meet the preferred criteria, the scholarship can be awarded to any eligible student.

“Our family has had various connections

to Mississippi State throughout the years and its agricultural program is one of the best in the nation. We wanted Thornton and Magnolia’s legacy associated with that,” said the couple’s niece, Ann Pinkston Smith of Kennesaw, Georgia. “This scholarship will continue their legacy of being good stewards of the land and feeding the bodies and souls of humanity.”

In addition to farming, the Millers also ran a local grocery store and contributed to their Yazoo County community in many ways. They were philanthropists and entrepreneurs, known for helping their neighbors and fostering a spirit of hard work and humanitarianism. The couple also shared their love of learning and faith with others and worked to ensure their family members would have the opportunity to advance their own education.

Smith, who grew up on the family farm,

directly benefited from the Millers’ generosity and passion for education. She and her daughter Donna Michelle Smith, grandniece to Thornton and Magnolia, hope this scholarship award will help other future farmers in the same spirit.

“I think my great aunt and uncle would be humbled and delighted to know we made this gift in their memory,” said Donna Michelle Smith, also of Kennesaw, Georgia. “Education is important in our family as it means upward mobility and opens up possibilities. We’re paying it back for the future of Black farmers and landowners.”

For more information on creating endowed scholarships in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, contact Will Staggers, director of development for the college, at 662-325-2837 or wstaggers@foundation.msstate.edu.

Donna Michelle Smith, center, with her parents, Don and Ann Smith. (Photo submitted)



Sisters establish scholarship in memory of their father

Sisters establish scholarship in memory of their father

By Reagan Poston

SISTERS and Mississippi State alumnae **Betty Morgan Benton** and **Jane Morgan Read** have endowed a scholarship in memory of their father, **J. K. Morgan, Jr.** The sisters' love for their father, his love for and service to MSU, and his allegiance and service to our country inspired them to establish the J. Kirk Morgan Endowed Scholarship in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

A native of Marietta, Mississippi, Morgan was a 1937 graduate of

then-Mississippi State College, receiving a degree in business and agricultural economics. Following graduation, Morgan worked in the agricultural industry. In 1941, he enlisted in the United States Naval Reserve and served in the Pacific during World War II, participating in amphibious troop landings at Guadalcanal, adjacent Solomon Islands, Iwo Jima and Okinawa. He received a Purple Heart for wounds he sustained in 1943.

After the War, Morgan settled in

Jackson, Mississippi, and put his MSU degree to work in the agricultural industry. He also served as president of the Mississippi Seedsmen's Association and the Southern Seedsmen's Association.

In addition to his career, Morgan continued his commitment to service. He was a commanding officer of the Naval Reserve Surface Division in Jackson. In 1962, he was appointed a Captain in the United States Naval Reserve. He was Commander of the local Veterans of



Betty Morgan Benton (left) and Jane Morgan Read. (Photo submitted)



Foreign Wars Post and State Director of Selective Service for Mississippi.

At his alma mater, Morgan played an integral role in raising funds for the construction of the Chapel of Memories on campus and assisted in the initiation of the university's faculty awards banquet. He served as the National President of the MSU Alumni Association in 1964.

Morgan passed away in 2000 after a lifetime of service and leadership.

He and his wife, Annie Haughey Carter Morgan, had three daughters and three grandsons. Daughters Benton, a 1973 College of Arts and Sciences graduate, and Read, a 1979 College of Education graduate, as well as the Morgans' three grandsons and sons-in-law graduated from Mississippi State.

The J. Kirk Morgan Endowed Scholarship is awarded to full-time students in the College of

Agriculture and Life Sciences who have demonstrated academic achievement, leadership qualities, and financial need, with preference given to veterans and U.S. service members.

For more information on the scholarship and supporting the MSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, contact Will Staggers, director of development for the college, at 662.325.2837 or wstaggers@foundation.mssstate.edu.

College News



Phi Kappa Phi honors MSU's Willard with Love of Learning award

DR. SCOTT WILLARD, interim dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, was recently recognized with a Love of Learning award from Phi Kappa Phi, the nation's oldest and most selective collegiate honor society. The award honors those with extraordinary academic contributions and achievements. Prior to serving as interim dean, Willard was associate dean for seven years after serving as head of the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology from 2007-2013. Before that, he was a faculty member in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences. Willard has been the committee chair for the CALS and Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station's Diversity Council since 2014 and faculty advisor for the university's chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences. He also was named a 2016-2017 SEC Academic Leadership Development Program Fellow and has authored or co-authored more than 100 scientific publications and a textbook in his discipline.



Student studies online. (Photo by Megan Bean)

MSU launches online ag, human science degrees

MASTER'S DEGREES from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences are now available online in agribusiness management, agriculture with an animal and dairy sciences concentration, and early intervention. The Master of Agribusiness Management is a 30-hour interdisciplinary degree in CALS and the College of Business, administered through MSU's Department of Agricultural Economics. The 31-hour Master of Agriculture degree in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences prepares students to advance in animal feeding, breeding, and production. The Master

of Science in Early Intervention, also 30 hours and offered through CALS School of Human Sciences, is an innovative and comprehensive program designed to address the shortage of trained professionals with expertise in working with infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with special needs and their families. These recent offerings are in addition to two existing CALS online degrees—a master's in food science, nutrition and health promotion with a health promotion concentration, and a bachelor's in human development and family science with a child development concentration.

Mississippi State abuzz as a Bee Campus USA

THE CURRENT BUZZ around Mississippi State's campus is its new affiliation as a Bee Campus USA, a designation of the Xerces Society.

The university joins 122 campus affiliates across 44 states recognized for benefiting pollinators. The MSU Bee Campus committee, consisting of faculty and staff in the College of Forest Resources and College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, led the effort. **Dr. Wes Burger**, interim dean of the College of Forest Resources, spoke to the importance of protecting pollinators.

"We are proud to receive this designation. It is the result of dedication by our faculty, staff, and students to protect and enhance pollinators and habitat across our campus and research farms," Burger said. "Pollinators are vital to our environment, benefiting 35 percent of global food production or one in every three bites of food we consume, and pollinating approximately 90 percent of flowering plants."

Despite their importance, pollinator species face population declines. Bees, butterflies, moths, beetles, flies, hummingbirds, and other species are dwindling, primarily due to loss of native plants and habitat, among other factors.

To combat this decline, the campus committee established pollinator habitat over the last several years. Native plantings have been installed at the Clay-Lyle Entomology building, the R. R. Foil Plant Science Research Center, and the Wildlife and Fisheries Research and Educational Center, among other sites on campus.

Future plans for the MSU Bee Campus include development of an integrated pest management plan for future pollinator plantings, educational events, and student service-learning projects.

"We are excited about the opportunity to inform and engage our community in understanding the role pollinators play in



A bee sits atop a flower at one of the pollinator gardens on campus. (Photo by David Ammon)

food production," Burger said. "The formation of this committee and the designation of Bee Campus USA consolidates all of our pollinator activities to educate the public about their importance."

Bee City USA and Bee Campus USA are initiatives of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, a non-profit organization based in Portland, Oregon, with offices across the country. Bee City USA's mission is to galvanize communities and campuses to sustain pollinators by providing them

with healthy habitat, rich in a variety of native plants and free of pesticides.

"The program aspires to make people more pollinator conscious," said Scott Hoffman Black, Xerces' executive director. "If lots of individuals and communities begin planting native, pesticide-free flowering trees, shrubs and perennials, it will help to sustain many, many species of pollinators."

For more information about Bee Campus USA, visit <https://www.beecityusa.org>.

Department News

AGRICULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

Paz earns alumni award from University of the Philippines Los Baños

JOEL PAZ, a professor in Mississippi State's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, has been recognized as a top alumnus of the University of the Philippines Los Baños (UPLB).

Paz has been named as the 2020 College of Engineering and Agro-Industrial Technology Distinguished Alumnus by the UPLB Alumni Association.

"I am deeply honored to receive this

award. To be recognized by my alma mater for my work in teaching, research, and extension is very special," Paz said.

He attended UPLB from 1985 to 1989, where he received both his bachelor's and master's degrees in agricultural engineering. He received his Ph.D. in agricultural engineering and water resources from Iowa State University in 2000.

Paz was selected for this award because of extensive research, teaching awards, published journal articles, and involvement in the MSU Extension Service.

His research focuses on water quality and nutrient reduction, water resources, artificial intelligence, big data analysis, crop growth modeling, impacts of climate

change, along with climate variability, and water-energy-food nexus. His research initiatives have received over \$5.8 million in contracts and grants from the USDA, USDOE, NASA, NSF, NOAA, RMA, and more.

In his work with the MSU Extension Service, he has published 27 extension service articles/newsletters and 17 technical reports. Paz also conducts training workshops, in-service training, extension seminars, and presents at state and regional extension programs.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY



DR. DANIEL CHESSE, assistant professor, earned the CALS Excellence in Teaching Award, lower division level.



DR. ANNA LINHOSS, assistant professor, received the faculty research award for University Center and Institutes from the MSU Office of Research and Economic Development and the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine.



DR. JOHN LINHOSS, assistant extension professor,

received the MSU Community Engagement award in the Community-Engaged Teaching and Learning category for "Hammers and Homework." Linhoss began teaching ABE 4383 Building Construction in 2015 and has collaborated with Starkville's Habitat for Humanity. Students continue volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, but now are developing content for a "How Your House Works" booklet for new homeowners and

introducing them to tips on maintenance and more. Students also created a calendar with monthly home maintenance reminders.



DR. LAUREN PRIDDY, assistant professor, earned the Donald Zacharias Early Career Undergraduate Teaching Excellence Award.



DR. LASHAN SIMPSON, associate professor, earned the Shackouls Honors College Honors Council Teaching Award. Simpson also

received the Diversity Lecture Award from the Biomedical Engineering Society.

STUDENTS

MEREDITH BROCK, Engineering technology graduate student, placed in the student poster competition of the American Water Resources Association's 2020 Virtual Geospatial Water Technology Conference and her fellowship with the Mississippi Space Grant Consortium was renewed for 2020-2021.

Ph.D. student **HUSSEIN GHARAKHANI** won first place in the Engineering-Systems

student paper competition at the 2021 Belt-wide Cotton Conference.

CRISTINA GRIFFITH, a double major in agricultural economics and agricultural engineering technology and business, received first place in the MSU Undergraduate Research Symposium, in the Biological Sciences and Engineering division, for her poster on precision agriculture technologies for small farmer adoption. Griffith's honor is in the Community Engagement Research Track.

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Keith Coble to lead MSU Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine

KEITH COBLE, William L. Giles Distinguished Professor and head of the Department of Agricultural Economics, has been named vice president for the university's Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine (DAFVM).

An MSU faculty member for more than 20 years, Coble has also served since last July as a special assistant to the vice president for DAFVM.

"Dr. Keith Coble brings such a wealth of relevant experience to the leadership of DAFVM and he has the confidence of the



state and nation's agricultural community," said MSU President Mark E. Keenum. "His reputation as a very talented agricultural economist, his direct experience on Capitol Hill in advising the leadership there on the formulation of the national Farm Bill, and his extensive administrative experience at MSU will enable him to immediately exercise impactful leadership."

Provost and Executive Vice President David Shaw chaired the search committee for the position.

"The Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine is vital to our university's land-grant mission and strong leadership for the division is paramount to its success. Dr. Coble is a leading expert in his field and

his professional experiences throughout his career make him a terrific fit to lead this division forward, furthering our impact on Mississippi's largest industries and enhancing our reputation as a national and international leader in agriculture."

DAFVM units include the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the College of Forest Resources, the College of Veterinary Medicine, the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, the Forest and Wildlife Research Center, and the MSU Extension Service. These six units function on the university's main campus and through four research and extension centers, 16 branch stations and locations, in addition to MSU Extension offices in all 82 counties of Mississippi.

Among many professional accolades, Coble has received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Southern Agricultural Economics Association and is the past-president of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association. Coble spent nine years on the Starkville Oktibbeha School District Board of Trustees from 2008-2017.

"I am extremely excited about the opportunity to lead this vital MSU division forward, building on the great successes of our past and focusing on our shared future," Coble said. "I am grateful for the confidence shown in me by Mississippi State's leadership to lead my colleagues forward."

Coble completed his doctoral work at Texas A&M University in agricultural economics and earned a bachelor's and master's degree in agricultural education from the University of Missouri.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY



DR. ALAN BAREFIELD, extension professor,

received honorable mention in the MSU Community Engagement awards, Community-Engaged Research category for Economic Planning and Analysis for Mississippi Communities. The project allowed undergraduate students to provide analyses of individual issues for stakeholders in Mississippi. With assistance from the Mississippi Development Authority, elected officials and other community leaders, the project aimed to provide unbiased, research-based analyses using appropriate methodologies to communities; presented MSU as an unbiased, research-based source to assist communities in addressing current

issues; and provided undergraduate students with exposure to research and outreach methodologies and issues, while also giving students the experience to interact with community leaders.



DR. ELIZABETH CANALES, assistant professor, was

recognized as an Emerging Scholar by the Southern Agricultural Economics Association.



DR. JOSH MAPLES, assistant professor, received the

Southern Agricultural Economics Association Outstanding Extension Program Award. Maples also received the Dr. Mark Keenum Outstanding Extension Faculty Award.

STUDENTS

MCKENZIE L. CARVALHO, master's student, placed second in the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium for oral presentation in the social and behavioral sciences master's student track.

CRISTINA GRIFFITH, a double major in agricultural economics and agricultural engineering technology and business, received first place in the MSU Undergraduate Research Symposium, in the Biological Sciences and Engineering track for her poster presentation.

ANIMAL AND DAIRY SCIENCES

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY



DR. THU DINH, associate professor,

is recipient of the 2021 American Meat Science Association Achievement Award. The award recognizes young AMSA members who have made a significant contribution to the organization and the animal products industry.



DR. BRANDI KARISCH, Milton Sundbeck

Endowed Associate Extension/Research Professor, was named the 2020 Farm Woman of the Year by the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation.



DR. REUBEN MOORE, associate MAFES

director and former professor in Animal and Dairy Sciences retired after 39 years. Over the last two years, Moore has served as interim vice president for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine and interim

director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station.



DR. AMANDA STONE, assistant

professor, earned the MAFES Outstanding Publication Award for her article "Predicting dairy cattle heat stress using machine learning techniques," published in the Journal of Dairy Science.

STUDENTS

SETH ARMBRESTER, undergraduate student, placed third in dairy production at the Southern American Dairy Science Association virtual meeting.

KEVIN BRAMAN, master's student, placed second in original research, at the Southern American Dairy Science Association virtual meeting.

ZULLY E. CONTRERAS-CORREA, doctoral student, placed second in oral presentation at the 2021 MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, Life and

Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Doctoral Students category. She was also chosen to represent CALS in the MSU Graduate Student Hall of Fame.

MADISON L. HARDCASTLE, master's student, was named Graduate Service Assistant of the Year by the MSU Graduate School.

RILEY MESSMAN, doctoral student, placed third in oral presentation at the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, in the Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Doctoral Students category.

DANA REID, doctoral student, won first place in the poster competition at the MSU Graduate Research Symposium, in the Life and Biomedical Sciences Doctoral Students category.

DEMI STRILIGAS, undergraduate student, placed first in dairy foods at the Southern American Dairy Science Association virtual meeting.



MSU's Devost-Burnett joins leadership of national organization expanding diversity in ag, natural resources

DR. DERRIS DEVOST-BURNETT, associate professor, has been elected national secretary for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences, or MANRRS, a society that focuses on promoting academic and professional advancement by empowering minorities in the field.

Devost-Burnett has been a member of MANRRS for 20 years, and alongside this new role, he has devoted the last three years to serving as co-chair of the national MANRRS Alumni Committee.

At home, Devost-Burnett also has been a pivotal leader in Mississippi State's own chapter, serving as co-advisor since 2015 and helping the program develop into a widely recognized group.

Devost-Burnett is also a researcher in the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, has published 22 manuscripts, taught seven individual courses and garnered nearly \$1.5 million in research funds. He recently was awarded the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning award for Excellence in Diversity and Inclusion.

BIOCHEMISTRY, MOLECULAR BIOLOGY, ENTOMOLOGY AND PLANT PATHOLOGY

Path to Medical School Runs Through Biochemistry

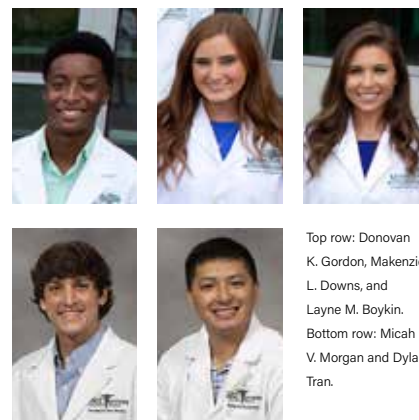
STUDENTS CONSIDERING MEDICAL school know that the path is more easily accomplished with a degree in biochemistry. In fact, the major boasts a 63 percent admissions rate, compared to the 41 percent national average.

Five biochemistry majors recently proved this fact by earning scholarships to attend medical school. **Donovan K. Gordon, Makenzie L. Downs,** and **Layne M. Boykin** received \$30,000

per year to attend medical school as part of the prestigious Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program.

Likewise, two biochemistry majors received a four-year, \$140,000 Mississippi Rural Dentists Scholarship to the University of Mississippi Medical Center's School of Dentistry.

Micah V. Morgan and **Dylan Tran** each received \$35,000 per year to attend dental school.



Top row: Donovan K. Gordon, Makenzie L. Downs, and Layne M. Boykin.
Bottom row: Micah V. Morgan and Dylan Tran.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY



BEVERLY CATCHOT, research associate,

received the MAFES Outstanding Research Staff Award and the MSU Office of Research and Economic Development-Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine CALS/MAFES Research Support Award.



DR. SHIEN LU, professor,

received the CALS Excellence in Teaching Award, Graduate Level.



DR. REBECCA MELANSON, assistant extension

professor, received the 2021 Southern Region IPM Center

Friends of IPM – Future Leader Award.



DR. FRED MUSSER, professor,

received the CALS/MAFES Outstanding Faculty Service Award.



DR. SEAD SABANADZOVIC, professor,

received the Gamma Sigma Delta research award.



DR. DARRELL SPARKS, associate professor,

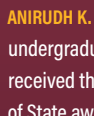
received the Regions Bank-MSU Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine Superior Faculty Award for Service. He also received the CALS Excellence in Teaching Award, Upper Division Level, and CALS Teacher of the Year Award.



SHARON VAUGHAN, business coordinator,

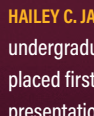
received the CALS/MAFES Outstanding Support Staff Award.

STUDENTS



ANIRUDH K. ADITYA, undergraduate student,

received the MSU Spirit of State award.
ERIC T. HUMPHRIES, undergraduate student, is a member of the award winning MSU Speech and Debate Council, which placed third in the nation in the International Public Debate Association National Tournament.



HAILEY C. JAMISON, undergraduate student,



placed first for her poster presentation in the MSU

Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium, in the Physical Sciences and Engineering track.

TAYLOR LADNER, undergraduate student, placed second in the Undergraduate Research Presentation contest at the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences conference.

KRISTY M. MCANDREW, master's student, won first place in the MSU Image of Research Competition.

RYAN MANN, master's student, placed first for his oral presentation at the master's level at the Beltwide Cotton conference.

JAYLA MONDA, undergraduate student, served as a MSU senior homecoming maid.

ANNE-MARIE L. ROSS, undergraduate student, placed third for her poster presentation in the MSU Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium, in the Biological Sciences and Engineering track.

MARIANA SANTOS-RIVERA, doctoral student, was named MSU Graduate Research Assistant of the Year.

HANNAH L. SCHEAFFER, undergraduate student, placed second for her poster presentation in the MSU Spring Undergraduate Research Symposium, in the Biological Sciences and Engineering track.

JACOB SMITH, master's student, placed second for his oral presentation at the master's level at the Beltwide Cotton conference.

FOOD SCIENCE, NUTRITION AND HEALTH PROMOTION

Chang Honored for Excellence in Research

DR. SAM CHANG, professor in the Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion and stationed at the Coastal Research and Extension Center, received the Mississippi Land Bank-sponsored MAFES Excellence in Research Faculty Award.

Since 2017, Chang has been awarded three national competitive research grants from USDA-NIFA-AFRI totaling approximately \$1 million and has published 42 refereed journal articles. Chang is director of the Mississippi Center for Food Safety and Post-Harvest Technology and the MAFES Experimental Seafood Processing Laboratory. He also serves as scientific editor for the *Journal of Food Science*.



Sam Chang receives the MAFES Excellence in Research Faculty Award from Craig Shideler, Mississippi Land Bank President. (Photo by Dominique Belcher)

Reinventing pizza: MSU students 'pocket' national culinology competition win

DIANNA WILSON, a food science master's student from Norfolk, Virginia, and Lauryn Heidelberg, a senior microbiology major from Laurel, placed third in the Research Chefs Association 2021 National Student Culinology Competition with their plant-based pizza pocket.

Wilson said the challenge provided a valuable experiential learning opportunity she can apply as she enters the workforce.

"This competition brought food science and product development full circle for me because it allowed me to apply concepts I learned in the classroom," said Wilson.

The team was tasked with creating a product that easily could be integrated into a school dining hall. The students had to use at least one ingredient from competition sponsors while also reducing sodium content by 10 percent. Given those guidelines, the

team conceptualized and created a plant-based spicy Italian sausage pizza pocket.

"We studied market trends, so we decided our product needed to be a plant-based convenient comfort food," Wilson said. "Our target market included vegetarians, young adults, health enthusiasts, and pizza lovers."

Heidelberg said the pizza pocket's unlikely ingredients blended in an unexpected and surprising way.

"We were able to incorporate the ingredients set forth by the judges, and they made our product better. We had to reduce our salt level by 10 percent through an effective use of MSG. We also used fermented beet concentrate, yeast extract, and vegetarian pork and bacon flavoring," she said. "The beet concentrate provided earthy tones, and the flavoring bouquet gave the dish a meatier flavor. It was interesting to figure out the right amount of each ingredient and pull everything together."

Dr. Shecoya White, assistant professor in food science, nutrition

and health promotion advised the team throughout the competition.

"Both Dianna and Lauryn are open to new challenges. With this particular competition, not knowing the ingredients you'll be given can make this a complicated and involved endeavor," White said. "It isn't as simple as making a recipe. Throughout this process, both women demonstrated that they are true innovators who understand the science behind food."



Dianna Wilson, Dr. Shecoya White, and Lauryn Heidelberg. (Photo by Dominique Belcher)

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY



DR. DAVID BUYS, associate professor, earned the CALS/MAFES

Faculty Diversity Award.



DR. SYLVIA BYRD, professor, received the MSU Extension

Grantsmanship Award.



DR. MARY NELSON ROBERTSON, extension associate, received the

MSU Gamma Sigma Delta teaching award.



ANN SANSING, extension instructor, received the MSU

Leopold Excellence in Extension Programming Award.



DR. SHECOYA WHITE, assistant professor, received the

CALS Excellence in Teaching, New Faculty Award.



THE MUSCLE FOODS AND SENSORY LAB received the CALS/MAFES Team Diversity Award. Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion team members include **DR.**

WES SCHILLING, professor, **DR. YAN CAMPBELL**, research associate III; **DR. XUE ZHANG**, postdoctoral associate; and graduate students **SHALYNDRIA DORTCH**, **JASMINE HENDRIX**, **HUNTER HESSLER**, **HANNAH HOLLEY**, **SADIE WHITE**, **WENJIE SHAO** and **KEZIA VIRELLIA TO**. **DR. THU DINH**, associate professor in Animal and Dairy Sciences, also is on the team.



DR. DAVID BUYS, associate professor, **MASEY SMITH**, project manager, among other team members won the MSU Community Engagement award in the Community-Engaged Research category for "AIM for CHangE," or Advancing, Inspiring, Motivating for Community Health through Extension. The team partnered with local medical facilities and food networks, to promote healthy nutrition standards, physical activity, food service guidelines, and active living. The project led to the development of a food pantry in the state's most food-insecure area, Holmes County, where more than 269,800 pounds of food have been distributed to 13,490 households since May 2020. In addition to Buys and Smith, team members include Dr. Angela Robertson, Social Science Research Center; Dr. Connie Baird-Thomas, Social Science Research Center; Dr. Elizabeth Canales, Agricultural Economics; Dr. Megan Holmes, Kinesiology; Dr. Curtis Lacy, Delta Research and Extension Center;

Dr. Joshua Mann, University of Mississippi Medical Center; Peter Summerlin, Landscape Architecture; Leah Kemp, Carl Small Town Center; Alexis Hamilton, MSU Extension Service; and Marvin Cantave, MSU Extension Service.

STUDENTS

MARY ELAINE BRIDGES, undergraduate student, received the Charles E. Lindley Leadership in Agriculture Award from MSU's Association of Retired Faculty.

RAVALI BUDAVARTHI, master's student, placed second in the IFT Muscle Foods Division Graduate Research Poster competition.

YING-CHEN "VICKY" HUANG, doctoral student, was the Grand Champion of the 2020 MSU Three Minute Thesis Challenge.

AMY PHAM, undergraduate student, placed second for her poster presentation in the MSU Undergraduate Research Symposium in the Public Health Research Competition track.

ALLISON G. "ALLIGRACE" STORY, master's student, placed second for her poster presentation at the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, Social and Behavioral Sciences Master's Student track.

KRISTIN F. WILLIFORD, undergraduate student, placed first for her poster presentation in the MSU Undergraduate Research

Symposium in the Community Engagement Research Track, Social Sciences category.

DIANNA WILSON, master's student, placed first for her poster presentation in the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, Life and Biomedical Sciences Master's Students track. She also is winner of the business pitch contest at the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences annual meeting.

TYUS WILSON, undergraduate student, was accepted into the prestigious Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program.

HUMAN SCIENCES

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY



DR. TOMMY PHILLIPS, associate professor, received the Outstanding Paper award from the National Council on Family Relations.

STUDENTS

SHANNON K. ALLEN, an agricultural and extension education master's student, placed first for her oral presentation in the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, in the Social and Behavioral Sciences Master's Student track.

JAZZMIN BUTLER, fashion design and merchandising major, received third place in the Brick and Mortar category of the MSU Center for Entrepreneurship and Outreach Annual Startup Summit.

ALEX JACKSON, fashion design and merchandising major, served as the 2020 Mr. MSU. He also received the Spirit of State award.

ABIGAIL NICHOLAS, fashion design and merchandising major, placed third in the New Product Division 1 competition

of the MSU Center for Entrepreneurship and Outreach Annual Startup Summit.

ALEXIS K. TURNIPSEED AND LEAH GANN, agricultural and extension education master's students, placed third for their oral presentation in the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, in the Social and Behavioral Sciences Master's Student track.

STONE VINCENT, fashion design and merchandising major, tied for grand prize, received the People's Choice award, and placed first in the New Product II division of the MSU Center for Entrepreneurship and Outreach Annual Startup Summit.

SARAH BAILEY ZIMMERMAN, a human development and family science major, served as 2020 MSU freshman homecoming maid.



Mary Graham, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College president, and MSU president Mark E. Keenum. (Photo by Megan Bean.)

MSU, MGCCC partner on agricultural science pathway

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY and Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College are creating new academic opportunities for students in agricultural science.

MSU President **Mark E. Keenum** and MGCCC President Mary Graham signed a memorandum of understanding to establish a pathway for students to earn an associate's and a bachelor's degree in the field of agricultural science.

"We are proud to once again partner with MGCCC to offer new degree pathways for students," Keenum said. "This pathway prepares students for a wide range of careers in agriculture, the leading economic sector in our state. It will also benefit our state as a whole as we work together to shape the next generation of the agricultural workforce and its leaders."

The four-year pathway begins with two years of classes at MGCCC's George County Center in Lucedale and continues with two years

at MSU. After completing 30 credit hours at MGCCC, students can be dually admitted at both institutions. An MSU advisor will make routine visits to MGCCC to guide students in their academic progress toward the Bachelor's of Agricultural Science degree. MGCCC will facilitate a trip to MSU every semester for students in the pathway program to see the MSU campus and learn more about the educational opportunities offered in the field.

Once enrolled at MSU, students can choose from several focus areas for their studies through the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. These include agribusiness; agricultural education, leadership and communications; agricultural pest management; animal production; floral management; floriculture and ornamental horticulture; food sciences; integrated crop management; precision agriculture; and soil and environmental sciences.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE



MSU's Department of Landscape Architecture designed the concept for a canoe launch at Lewis Landing. (Photo submitted)

MSU landscape architects earn award for Africatown investment

MISSISSIPPI STATE'S ongoing commitment to the Africatown, Alabama community continues to bring honors for the Department of Landscape Architecture. The Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals is honoring the Africatown Connections Blueway planning team with a Project Excellence Award, with part of the project being a proposed MSU-designed kayak launch site in Africatown.

The accolade is presented annually to collaborating agencies and organizations across the nation for exemplary outdoor recreation development. The kayak launch site—located in the Africatown Connections Blueway, a water and walking trail network in Mobile County, Alabama—is one of five the MSU team designed at the request of the National Park Service in 2018.



The MSU Student Chapter of the National Association of Landscape Professionals are pictured with their faculty advisors. (Photo by Dominique Belcher)

MSU team, individuals win big in national landscape competition

MISSISSIPPI STATE LANDSCAPE contracting and management students claimed first place overall at the National Collegiate Landscape Competition. Several MSU students also received individual accolades. Landscape contracting and management majors, **Brandon Collins**, **Robert Cox**, and **Zachary Harmon** swept

the board in Hardscape Installation, earning first, second, and third respectively. **Anna Guynes**, a landscape architecture and landscape contracting and management double major earned second place in Maintenance Cost Estimating, while **Matt Stowers**, a landscape and contracting major, earned third place.

MSU faculty excellence in architectural education recognized with ACSA's Collaborative Practice Award

A COLLABORATIVE GARDEN PROJECT led by faculty in Mississippi State's College of Architecture, Art and Design, and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, has received national recognition from the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA). Designed and built by MSU architecture, landscape architecture, building construction science, and graphic design students over the course of three academic years, "Cultivating the Future: Enabling, Designing, Constructing and Managing a Didactic Garden," has been honored with the ACSA's Collaborative Practice Award. The award recognizes architectural educators for exemplary work in inspiring and challenging students, contributing to the profession's knowledge base, and extending their work beyond the borders of academy into practice and the public sector.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

A CROSS-COLLEGE CONSORTIUM of MSU students conceptualized a suite of garden designs aimed at helping schools build learning gardens based on their educational needs. The Living Room: A Freeware Learning Garden Focused on Health, Food and Nutrition Education received an Honor Award for Student Collaboration at the American Society of Landscape Architects, or ASLA. The team, which included 10 landscape architecture students, 10 architecture students and one graphic design student, was recognized at the society's recent virtual conference. The Living Room Learning Garden was also named a winner in the Community-Engaged Service award in the MSU Community Engagement Awards.

PLANT AND SOIL SCIENCES

Reddy earns multiple international accolades

DR. RAJA REDDY, a world-renowned crop expert, has been recognized with the premier, international award for cotton science. Named Researcher of the Year by the International Cotton Advisory Committee, Reddy's award spotlights his important work in improvements to the quality of crops that feed, clothe,

and fuel the world. This year, Reddy also became a fellow of the world's largest multidisciplinary scientific society, The Council of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. This places Reddy in a prestigious class of only 21 fellows across the nation being honored in the organization's section on agriculture, food, and renewable resources. Reddy has also received the Contribution to Science Award by the Mississippi Academy of Sciences alongside other noteworthy awards, including MSU's Ralph E. Powe Research Excellence Award, the Southeastern

Conference Faculty Achievement Award, and the National Cotton Council's Outstanding Research Award in Cotton Physiology. He is a fellow of the American Society of Agronomy and the Crop Science Society of America and serves as current president of the Mississippi Academy of Sciences. He is among the top 2 percent of most-cited scientists in the world.



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS (STUDENTS)

JOSIANE C. ARGENTA, agronomy doctoral student, placed first for her oral presentation at the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Doctoral Students track.

ANTHONY BOWDEN, horticulture doctoral student, placed third in the Southern Nursery Association Bryson L. James student research competition, Ph.D. track.

TAYDEN BURRELL, agronomy major, is the recipient of the 2020 Southern Business Unit Intern of the Year Award by Helena Agri-Enterprises.

MARY GRACEN A. FULLER, agronomy master's student, placed second for her oral presentation, at the

MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Master's Students track. Fuller also placed first for her oral presentation at the Southern Branch of the American Society of Agronomy, master's division. She also was a finalist in the 2020 MSU Three Minute Thesis challenge.

KIRA K. HOWELL, weed science master's student, placed first for her oral presentation at the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Master's Students track.

JACOB MCNEAL, agronomy doctoral student, placed first for his oral presentation in the Ph.D. student

competition at the Weed Science Society of America.

CAMDEN O. OGLESBY, agronomy master's student, placed second for his poster presentation at the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, Life and Biomedical Sciences Master's Students track.

DAVE SPENCER, agronomy doctoral student, received the International Graduate Student scholarship from Gamma Sigma Delta, the leading agricultural honor society.

JENNY BIBB RYALS, horticulture doctoral student, placed second in the American Society for Horticultural Science Scholars Ignite Competition 2020. Ryals also placed third in the Southern Fruit

Workers 3 Minute Thesis Competition of the American Society for Horticultural Science Southern Region.

VARSHA SINGH, weed science doctoral student, placed third for her oral presentation at the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium, Life and Biomedical Sciences and Engineering Doctoral Students track.

GAVIN SPARKS, agronomy major, received the 2020 Homegrown by Heroes Scholarship through the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, sponsored by the Farm Credit Associations of Arkansas.

SHANDREA STALLWORTH, weed science doctoral student, placed first for her oral presentation at

the Southern Branch of the American Society of Agronomy, Ph.D. division. Stallworth also placed third for her oral presentation in the Ph.D. student competition of the Weed Science Society of America.

RONALD STEPHENSON, horticulture doctoral student, received the Krezdorn Doctoral Writing award from the American Society for Horticultural Science Southern Region.

CHARLES "HUNT" WALNE, agronomy doctoral student, received the MSU Office of Research and Economic Development/Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine research award for CALS/MAFES. Walne also received the MAFES Graduate Research Award.

Reynolds named leader of MSU's international programs



DANIEL B. REYNOLDS, an accomplished Mississippi State weed science professor, has been named associate vice president for international programs and executive director of the university's International Institute.

The longtime MSU faculty member has led MSU's international initiatives on an interim basis since last April 2020. Reynolds previously has held the Edgar E. and Winifred B. Hartwig Endowed Chair in Soybean Agronomy in MSU's Department of Plant and Soil Sciences.

Reynolds now leads International Institute units that include the English Language Institute, International Services, and the Study Abroad and International Student Exchange programs, as well as promoting international collaborations in research and outreach. The International Institute reports to MSU's provost and executive vice president, vice president for research and economic development, and vice president for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine.

As a National Science Foundation Top 100 and Carnegie Foundation R1 "Very High Research Activity" university, MSU leads impactful global research efforts reaching all seven continents. The university's prominent research activities enable fruitful international partnerships that bring people together from around the world to develop solutions to universal problems. For more on MSU's global initiatives, visit www.international.msstate.edu.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS (FACULTY)



DR. BRIAN BALDWIN, professor, earned the MAFES Grantmanship Award.



Baldwin, and **DR. BRETT RUSHING**, associate extension and research professor, received a Plant Variety Protection Certificate for Espresso Switchgrass.



DR. GARY BACHMAN, extension/research professor, received the Covington Extension Award and the Extension Communications Blue Ribbon Award from the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science. Bachman also received the Best Column award from the American Society of Horticulture Science.



DR. CASEY BARICKMAN, associate research professor, received the 2020 Best Paper award from the international peer-reviewed journal, *Horticulturae*.



DR. SHAUN BRODERICK, assistant extension/research professor, received the Covington Extension Award and the Extension Communications Blue Ribbon Award from the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science.



DR. CHRISTINE COKER, associate extension/research professor, received the Extension Communications Blue Ribbon Award from the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science.



DR. JIM DELPRINCE, associate extension professor, received the Extension Communications Blue Ribbon Award from the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science.



DR. WAYNE EBELHAR, research professor, received the 2021 Outstanding Research Award in Cotton Agronomy.



DR. RICHARD HARKESS, professor, was named a John Grisham Master Teacher.



LYNETTE MCDUGALD, instructor, received the teaching award from MSU Gamma Sigma Delta.



DR. RAJU B. RANGAPPA, assistant research professor, received the Early Career Agricultural Scientist Award from the Association of Agricultural Scientists of Indian Origin.



DR. RAJA REDDY, research professor, earned the MAFES Most Impactful Publication Award. He was also named a William L. Giles Distinguished Professor.



DR. MARK SHANKLE, research professor, received the 2020 Farm Bureau Federation Award for Agricultural Research from Mississippi Farm Bureau. Shankle also received the Regions Bank-Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine Superior Faculty Research Award.



DR. ERIC STAFNE, extension/research professor, was named the Miller Distinguished Researcher from the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science.



DR. JEFF WILSON, assistant professor, received the Extension Communications Blue Ribbon Award from the Southern Region of the American Society for Horticultural Science.

POULTRY SCIENCE

MSU faculty, administrators celebrate completion of Poultry Science Building

THE UNIVERSITY'S new Poultry Science Building opened its doors with an official ribbon cutting in November 2020. The 27,300-square-foot building and its 4,700-square-foot connector building adjoins the 34,500-square-foot Animal and Dairy Sciences Building, which opened in 2019. The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences three-building complex at the corner of Blackjack Road and Hail State Boulevard also includes the 15,000-square-foot Meat Science and Muscle Biology Laboratory completed in fall 2018. The facility is vital in the advancement of one of Mississippi's most important industries, which has a total impact of \$20 billion on Mississippi's economy and employs approximately 28,500 growers and workers in the Magnolia State alone, according to National Chicken Council and U.S. Poultry and



Administrators and partners commemorated the opening of Mississippi State's Poultry Science Building with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Pictured, left to right, are Dr. Gary Jackson, director of the MSU Extension Service; Dr. Scott Willard, interim dean of MSU's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; MSU President Dr. Mark E. Keenum; Dr. Mary Beck, poultry science department head; Dr. Reuben Moore, interim vice president of the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine and interim director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station; Justin Harrington, architect at McCarty Architects; and David Howell, MAFES engineer. (Photo by Megan Bean)

Egg Association. The facility includes 10 state-of-the-art research and teaching laboratories including the Dr. Elbert and Anne Day Teaching Laboratory, which is a dedicated space for any class with a hands-on lab component, including avian anatomy and physiology, avian reproduction, diseases of poultry, broiler production, processing and more. The building includes two labs dedicated to physiology, a five-room nutrition suite, a three-room microbiology/cell culture suite, a molecular lab and another lab, which will be dedicated to poultry products.

MSU poultry science department adds biosecurity level 2 lab

THE POULTRY SCIENCE DEPARTMENT is now equipped with a new laboratory for conducting biosecurity level 2 research. This lab is a distinctive setting for investigating and conducting research on pathogenic bacteria that affects the poultry industry. Researchers are trained on health and safety protocols and procedural safeguards that have been implemented to protect people and animals alike. The facility includes six individual rooms for housing battery cage and floor pen trials, a research lab to culture and study pathogens, separate screening rooms complete



Postdoctoral Associate Claudia Castaneda and former Professor Aaron Kiess, both with Mississippi State's Department of Poultry Science, prepare cultures of *Clostridium perfringens* under a biological safety cabinet. (Photo by David Ammon)

with sinks and sanitation stations, and an autoclave. Every room is fitted with a separate HEPA-filtered air handling system. Digital controls allow for the reliable control and maintenance of appropriate temperatures, lighting, and humidity.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY



DR. TOM TABLER,
extension professor,

received the Phibro Extension Award from the Poultry Science Association.



DONNA MORGAN,
research associate

I, received the Tyson Foods Inc. Support Personnel Award from the Poultry Science Association.

STUDENTS

LAUREN LINDSEY, master's student, received the Outstanding Teaching Assistant Award from the MSU College of Arts and Sciences for a cross-listed genetics course.

JONATHAN MOON, master's student, received excellence for his oral presentation at the International Poultry Scientific Forum.

HUDSON THAMES, master's student, received excellence for his oral presentation at the International Poultry Scientific Forum.

VICTORIA WILLIAMS, master's student, received excellence for her oral presentation at the International Poultry Scientific Forum.

Alumni News

JOHN W. SONES JR. (B.S., M.S. agricultural education, '55, '58) taught agriculture at East Central Junior College for three years. He then worked for Shell Oil Co. for a decade and was included in its international magazine as an exceptional employee. He then began a 30-year career with the USDA where he was recommended for a superior service award three times. He retired in 1989 and has since enjoyed traveling, hunting and fishing, for which he grew his own bait and published a book on growing catalpa worms.

GLENN LARUE SMITH (B.L.A., landscape architecture, '74) was elected a Fellow of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

JOE SAWYER (B.L.A. landscape architecture, '86) has been named vice president at Barge Design Solutions, a full-service design firm with offices in five states. He will continue his work as Barge's manager of Landscape Architecture and is a licensed professional landscape architect in the states of Tennessee, Georgia, Alabama, and Ohio. He is a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Sports Turf Managers Association.

MARTHA SCOTT POINDEXTER (B.S. home economics, '89) will be returning to the Senate Agriculture Committee as staff director for GOP Sen. John Boozman, Arkansas. Poindexter previously led the committee staff from 2005 to 2010 under Georgia Sen. Saxby Chambliss. She moved on to the Senate Intelligence Committee for four years and most recently was vice president for government and industry affairs for Bunge.

ARETHA GREEN-RUPERT (M.S. horticulture, '95) was named program director for the Carlson Family Foundation, a Minnesota-based philanthropic foundation for uplifting youth through leadership. In her new role, Green-Rupert will direct strategic grantmaking. She previously spent 11 years with Otto Bremer Trust, most recently as regional director overseeing grantmaking, evaluation, and philanthropic investments. In addition to her MSU degree, she holds a bachelor's in biology from Tougaloo College.

CAMILLE SCALES YOUNG (B.A. communication, '94; M.S. agricultural and extension education, '96) was named to the Cal-Maine Foods Inc. board of directors as

an independent director and part of the audit, compensation, nomination, and long-term incentive plan committees. She is principal and director of Cornerstone Government Affairs, a bipartisan consulting firm, and serves as the organization's co-chair of the diversity and inclusion working group. She previously worked as a government affairs representative with Watkins Ludlam Winter and Stennis, P.A., and for the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation.

LT. COL. ANTHONY Q. SANDERS (B.S. poultry science, '97) graduated from the U.S. Army War College with a master's degree in strategic studies, earning the Distinguished Graduate Recognition, an achievement bestowed only upon the top 10% of the class. A native of Carthage, his next assignment is deputy director of military support for the Arkansas Army National Guard in North Little Rock.

GIRISH PANICKER (Ph.D. horticulture, '99) earned the 2020 Organic Achievement Award from the American Society of Agronomy. The award recognizes leadership and accomplishments in education and

research that advance and contribute to the organic agricultural community. A professor and director of Conservation Research at Alcorn State University, Panicker has more than 45 years of professional experience that spans three continents.

BRIAN K. BURNES (B.S., M.S. agronomy, '03, '06) was appointed as the Eighth Circuit Court Judge. He was the assistant district attorney in the Eighth Circuit Court District, which covers Leake, Neshoba, Scott, and Newton counties.

ERICA BOUGARD (B.S., Human Sciences, '16) competed in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics women's heptathlon. The competition includes 100m hurdles, high jump, shot put, 200m, 800m, long jump, and javelin throw.

OBITUARIES

MADALYN BALLS (B.S. human development and family studies, '20) 21, Plantersville—She was a six-year member of the Girl Scouts of America, receiving the President's Honor for Volunteer Service and the Girl Scout Merit Award. She was the youngest member in the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary and participated in numerous charities including the St. Jude Bike-A-Thon. A graduate of Shannon High School, she was active in Beta Club and the Shannon High School band. A member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, she was passionate about working with children and worked at Mississippi State's Child Development and Family Studies Center. She completed her degree from MSU in the fall of 2020 and had enrolled in graduate school at Tulane University with plans to become a doctor. —Jan. 2, 2021

HERSHEL FULTON JOHNSON (B.S. dairy production, '58) 84, Canton—A native of Noxapater and 4-H Club leader, Johnson was part of the MSU Dairy Club and Intercollegiate Dairy Cattle Judging Team. He began his career with the Farmers' Home Administration in Noxubee County. He went on to serve in the Attala, Hancock, and Itawamba offices where he helped individual farmers, low-income families and seniors in rural areas get financial assistance. He was later promoted to the district level and ultimately the state office in Jackson where he led both the Rural Business and Utility Service Program divisions. He also completed dairy and agronomy research at the MAFES

Black Belt Experiment Station in Brooksville. While there he received the Master Dairyman Award. A military veteran, he was also active in the Lions Club and served as a Meals on Wheels volunteer. —Jan. 27, 2021

THOMAS BOSWELL KENNARD (attended) 101, Starkville—A native of the Oktoc Community southeast of Starkville, he attended Mississippi State as an agricultural engineering major, leaving a semester before his graduation to take over duties at the family dairy farm. He was a member and past president of the Oktoc Community Club, a member of the board of directors of the Cooperative Creamery of Starkville, and a member of the national board of directors of Dairywomen Incorporated. His dairy farm, Oktoc Jerseys, became one of the leading exhibitors and sources of registered Jersey cows in the country.—March 30, 2020

GORDON BLACKMON KIMBELL JR. (B.S. agriculture and animal husbandry, '51) 93, Tyler, Texas—He served in the U.S. Navy from 1943-47, achieving the rank of 2nd class quartermaster. His service included being part of the commissioning crew of the USS Lizardfish and deployment within the Pacific region. His honors from the military include the American Area Campaign Medal, Asiatic Pacific Campaign Medal, Philippine Liberation Medal, Submarine Combat Pin, Good Conduct and World War II Victory Medal. A certified professional mechanical engineer, he worked with Kraft Foods Inc.

for 36 years, earning the position of plant engineering manager. He was an active member of the Marvin United Methodist Church, the World War II Submarine Veteran's Association and the Boy Scouts of America. He volunteered in his community with the Salvation Army Food Bank and Community Bible Study Fellowship. —Jan. 21, 2020

THOMAS H. "TOM" LOFTIN (B.S. agriculture, '53; M.S., Ph.D. agricultural extension, '75) 88, Starkville—He completed an associates degree at Hinds Community College before transferring to Mississippi State to complete his education. He began a teaching career at Myric High School in Jones County before joining the MSU Extension Service first as assistant county agent in Poplarville. He worked with the 4-H program before transitioning into working with farmers. He later joined Extension's Community Rural Development department at MSU and retired as state leader for the Department of Community Development in 1986. He was secretary of the state Agriculture Economics Association, state vice president and later state president of the National Association of Retired Federal Employees, and director and life member of the board of the District 5 Mississippi Retired Public Employees organization. Loftin served his community as a Boy Scout leader, president of the Chamber of Commerce and Poplarville Rotary Club, a volunteer fireman, Worthy Patron of the Eastern Star, Master of the Masonic Lodge,

and a Shriner. —March 11, 2021.

BOBBY P. MARTIN (B.S. agronomy, '56) 87, Ripley—Martin served as CEO and president of The Peoples Bank in Ripley from 1970-2012 and concluded his career as chairman of the board. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Business Administration by MSU in 2002. He was also an alumnus of the Graduate School of Banking at Louisiana State University.

In all, Martin enjoyed over 59 years of public service. He believed in giving back to the industry that had given him so much as evidenced by his service as chairman of the Mississippi Bankers Association and the Mississippi Board of Banking Review.

He and his wife were longtime supporters of scholarships and faculty awards at Mississippi State. They were among the inaugural donors for the four-year endowed scholarships that are the most prestigious at Mississippi State. The Martins also supported the Bobby P. and Barbara M. Martin Endowed Faculty Fellowship, with endowment earnings ensuring development opportunities for dedicated faculty members. Along with academics, Martin also was an enthusiastic supporter of Bulldog athletics and was a former president of the Bulldog Club.

For some 35 years, Martin served the MSU Foundation board of directors, including leading the board as chairman from 1996-1998 and through invaluable involvement in various capital campaigns. A lifelong advocate for education, he was chairman of the Blue Mountain College board of trustees and was on the

board of trustees for Northeast Mississippi Community College. He was also chairman of the CREATE Foundation, the North Mississippi Medical Center, and the Yocona Area Council of the Boy Scouts of America.

For a time, he was a national board member for the MSU Alumni Association. Martin also was an officer for the Tippah County Alumni Chapter and was instrumental in the success of the chapter's scholarship program. In 1992, Martin was awarded the Distinguished Service Award by the MSU Alumni Association, followed by College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Alumnus of the Year in 1998 and MSU National Alumnus of the Year in 1999.—November 4, 2020

EMORY GENE MORRISON

(B.S. animal science, '49; retired staff) 92, Jackson—He attended Hinds Community College before being drafted into the U.S. Army. He was honorably discharged after serving 15 months. Following his graduation from MSU, he earned a master's from the University of Tennessee. In 1952, he began a 40-year career with Mississippi State's Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. In 1956, he was appointed superintendent of the Brown Loam Branch Experiment Station near Learned where he remained until his retirement in 1992. Following his retirement, he served three years as head of the Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center headquartered in Raymond. His work in beef cattle production and grazing research was well-respected by

cattlemen across the Southeast. He was inducted into the Mississippi Cattlemen's Association Hall of Fame and was recognized by Mississippi State in 2015 with the research station he served for so many years renamed in his honor.—July 2, 2020

WILLIAM HARRISON PHILLIPS

(B.S. animal science, '60; former Extension agent) 83, Starkville—Following his graduation, he joined the Mississippi State Extension Service where he continued his childhood passion for the 4-H Club as an agent in Quitman, Tallahatchie, and Tunica counties. An eight year Army veteran, he later worked for Mississippi Farm Bureau, serving 42 years as agency manager of Grenada County.—Oct. 16, 2020

R. L. QUALLS (B.S., M.S., Ph.D.)

agricultural economics, '54, '58, '62) 91, Little Rock, Arkansas—In addition to his Mississippi State University education, Qualls earned a doctoral degree in economics from Louisiana State University and completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Chicago and Vanderbilt University. Recognized as Mississippi State's 2018 Alumnus of the Year, Qualls served in numerous leadership positions throughout his career. He was president and chairman of the board for the University of the Ozarks; director of the Department of Finance and Administration and cabinet secretary in former Gov. Bill Clinton's administration; executive vice president for Worthen Banking Corporation; president and CEO of Baldor Electric Company; lead

independent director for Bank of the Ozarks; and co-chairman of the Taylor Companies, an investment banking and mergers acquisitions firm headquartered in Washington, D. C. He also directed Executive in Residence programs at University of the Ozarks, St. Gregory's University and the University of North Alabama.

Qualls served his community as president of both the Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club in Clarksville, Arkansas; chairman of the Arkansas Association of Independent Colleges and Universities; and trustee at Oklahoma City University, University of the Ozarks, and University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences board. He was also a 32nd degree Mason of Burnsville.

A member of Sigma Phi Epsilon and lifelong Bulldog, Qualls was dedicated to Mississippi State. He served as chairman of the development committee of the Foundation board of directors and was part of the Executive Advisory Board of the College of Business where he helped establish the Center for Entrepreneurship and Outreach.—February 15, 2021

ELWOOD FRANKLIN RATLIFF

(B.S. agricultural engineering, '53) 89, Clinton—A member of the Pi Kappa Alpha fraternity, he completed Air Force ROTC while at Mississippi State. After serving two years on active duty, including being stationed in Japan, he served as a reservist and returned to MSU to work in agricultural engineering. He later returned to his family farm, earning Young Farmer of the Year honors in the 1960s. In the 1980s,

he worked at the Flora Gin as the bookkeeper until his retirement in the late 1990s. In retirement, he volunteered at Mississippi Methodist Rehabilitation Center and served on the Hinds County Water Board.—Aug. 19, 2020

ALLAN HOLDER TUCKER

JR. (B.S. dairy science, '59) 86, Starkville—A native of Starkville, he was active in 4-H and owned his own dairy cows in high school and college. He studied dairy science at MSU and later worked for the MSU Extension Service. He was a member of the Mississippi National Guard. He spent 42 years in farm mortgage, farm management, and real estate divisions of Prudential Insurance Company, working in Arkansas, Tennessee, and Indiana. He was a member of the Kiwanis Club and director of Crowley Ridge Girl Scout Council. After returning to Starkville, he volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and served on the organization's board. He was also a member of the Starkville Rotary Club and the Quarterback Club.—Oct. 16, 2020



2020 ALUMNI FELLOW

John Lundy

GROWING UP ON A FARM IN THE Mississippi Delta, John Lundy never imagined a future career in politics. The Tribbett native earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 1983 and worked on the MAFES R. R. Foil Plant Science Research Center (North Farm) as a student. He continued working for the university after graduation at the Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, and later served as a loan officer at First South Production Credit Association in Greenville.

In 1987, Lundy was tapped to serve as a legislative assistant for former Congressman Mike Espy working on agricultural

issues. He also worked for former Congressman Larry Combest of Texas before moving to the Senate, where he served as Chief of Staff to U.S. Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott for seven years.

In 1997, Lundy returned to Mississippi and soon after became a partner at Capitol Resources, LLC in Jackson, MS. Lundy says his entire career has been rooted in his MSU degree—from his first job out of college to the opportunity to work on Capitol Hill—and he is proud to have been able to use his education and Bulldog network to benefit Mississippians. He also is a proud supporter of his alma mater, currently serving on the MSU Foundation's board of directors.

REFLECTIONS

DR. ERNIE FLINT

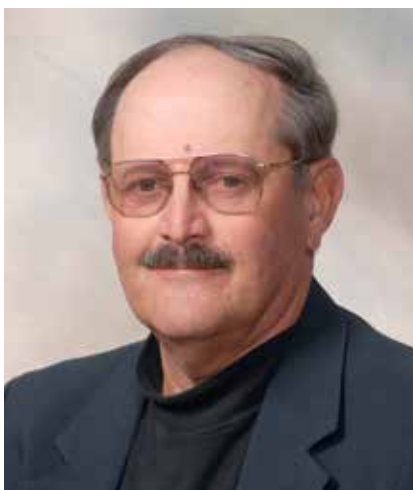
CALs celebrates the life of influential alumni

BY CAROLINE FLINT

WITH A CAREER spanning five decades, **Dr. Ernie Flint** not only left a lasting impact on Mississippi agriculture but also on his son, Greg. Growing up, Greg shadowed his father, often traveling out to fields and visiting with farmers in the Mississippi Delta. As Greg watched his father work, Ernie's love for agriculture was instilled in his son by the age of four, when Greg knew agriculture would always be a part of his life, and his father would be beside him through it all.

Born in 1947 in small-town Ethel, Mississippi, to a World War II veteran and a farm girl, Ernie Flint grew up on a small farm in Attala County. During his youth, he worked on his family's farm, planting seeds, feeding and milking cows, and collecting eggs. While working on the farm, Ernie's love for agriculture began to blossom and continued to grow. In high school, he participated in 4-H and FFA where he won many corn and dairy competitions. After high school, Ernie attended Mississippi State University where he earned his bachelor's, master's, and later a doctoral degree, in 1969, 1972, and 1999, respectively, all in agriculture. While attending the university, Ernie was able to further conduct research and developed a new cotton seed cleaning process.

During college, Ernie joined the Army National Guard in 1969 and served for 29 years. While serving in the National Guard and being a student at MSU, Ernie worked for various seed companies throughout Mississippi, owned and operated a private agricultural consulting service, and was employed by the MSU Extension Service as an area agricultural agent serving counties in central Mississippi. Throughout his career, Ernie established various crop newsletters for farmers, which grew his reputation as an



agricultural influencer and cemented his legacy in Mississippi agriculture.

While balancing both work and school, Ernie met the love of his life, Doris Maxey. The couple soon married and had five children, but only one, Greg, would develop his father's passion for agriculture. Greg likes to say he was "born in a cotton field" since his earliest memories were in one. He can remember as a teenager checking cotton, rice, soybean, and corn fields for plant pests and was filled with pride that his father let him do so alone.

"I can always remember Dad dropping me off in the field without any direction, just saying, 'Go do it and make sure you do it right. You can only learn from doing.'"

As Greg watched his father interact with farmers, he realized the importance of building relationships with producers.

"Personal contact with people is the key to successful extension programs," was another of Ernie's mottos which contributed to the success of his career.

Greg, like his father, attended MSU and received both his bachelor's and master's degrees in agriculture, in 1998 and 2002, respectively. Like his father, he has built a career in the field. Having worked for the

MSU Extension Service, the USDA, and currently as the executive secretary for the Mississippi Crop Improvement Association, Greg has always held to the lessons his father taught him throughout his life.

"Always verify the problem before telling farmers the wrong thing... Think before you speak... Build relationships with farmers," are just a few of the adages Ernie imparted over the years.

The lessons Greg learned from his father have not only been beneficial in his agricultural work but also in daily life. Greg may not remember every lesson his father taught him, but his father's influence on him is clear to those around him.

As Ernie's first grandchild, I grew up walking in crop fields, driving tractors, and working in gardens, with a deep appreciation for agriculture, just like those who came before me. Although I have passions in areas other than agriculture, I understand the importance of it in our lives. The lessons I have learned from my dad, Greg, and grandfather, Ernie, have helped me along the way and will continue to help me in the future, and I hope that one day I can relay the same lessons to my children and grandchildren as well.

Dr. Ernie Flint passed in 2018, however, his legacy remains and continues to live on in his family, MSU agriculture, and those he has impacted throughout his career.

About the author: Caroline Flint, is a senior at Starkville Academy and interned with MSU Agriculture and Natural Resources Marketing team during Summer 2021.

Editor's note: Reflections is a CALS Influence new feature that details a personal account of an MSU CALS alumnus or alumna written by a friend, family member, or colleague. To submit a story, contact Karen Brasher at karen.brasher@msstate.edu.



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