

2023-2024

INFLUENCE

Alumni Newsletter

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES
MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY



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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
AND LIFE SCIENCES

INFLUENCE

2023-2024

Alumni Newsletter

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Mississippi State University

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ON THE COVER: Lauren Baskin arranges a bouquet of flowers at the University Florist. Baskin is a master's student in horticulture and manager of the student-run retail outlet, which recently moved to the MAFES A. B. McKay Enology Laboratory. (Photo by David Ammon)

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Letter from the Dean

GREETINGS from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at Mississippi State University.

As we closed out our 120-year celebration in 2023, we embraced 2024 with exciting changes to position our college for a dynamic future. Among these changes, we have reorganized key departments to enhance their focus and impact. Entomology and plant pathology have been moved out of the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology, and Plant Pathology to form the new Department of Agricultural Science and Plant Protection. This department now offers the agricultural science undergraduate major as well as several graduate-level degrees. Dr. Fred Musser, a highly respected professor and entomologist, is serving as interim head of this new department.

Additionally, the Department of Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion has been combined with the remaining faculty from Biochemistry and Molecular Biology to create the new Department of Biochemistry, Nutrition, and Health Promotion. This department now offers three undergraduate majors and 16 concentrations, placing it at the forefront of advancing health and science. Dr. Daniel Peterson is serving as interim head of this forward-looking department.

We are also excited to announce the establishment of the Food Science Innovation Hub, made possible by a generous gift from the Reed family. This visionary contribution, initiated by Reed Food Technology, a Mississippi-based company, underscores our standing as a leading institution in food science education and research. Dr. Wes Schilling has been named director of the Hub and has also been awarded the Reed Family Endowed Professorship.

Significant strides have been made in enhancing our facilities. We are now moving into Ballew Hall, a completely redesigned 25,000-square-foot building that serves as a hub for collaboration and discovery within CALs and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES). The Hill Poultry Science Building has been revitalized and renamed the Hill Agricultural Building, and renovations are underway at Dorman Hall, Bedenbaugh, and the MAFES A.B. McKay Enology Laboratory. Improvements are also being made at Herzer, where we are upgrading the MAFES Sales Store and the MAFES Custer Dairy Processing Plant. At the H.H. Leveck Animal Science Center, the Moore family and federal support from Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith is funding the construction of a new livestock judging facility, while a new greenhouse is being built at the R.R. Foil Plant Science Center.

New leadership is also energizing our college. Dr. Sheri Worthy, a former faculty member, has returned to Mississippi State



University as the director of the School of Human Sciences. Anne Spafford now leads the recently renamed Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design. We are currently conducting a search to fill the department head position in Biochemistry, Nutrition, and Health Promotion.

Change can be challenging, but it is essential for growth. I am pleased to share that our student enrollment and degrees awarded have increased slightly over the past year. We are continuously seeking new ways to engage prospective students and introduce them to the incredible opportunities at Mississippi State and within CALs.

The support of our alumni and friends remains vital to our mission. During the last two years, we have averaged \$7.5 million in gifts to CALs and MAFES. This generosity allowed us to award 607 scholarships totaling over \$750,000 during the 2023-2024 academic year. These contributions support student success, faculty development, new construction projects, and so much more.

In this issue of Influence, we are thrilled to feature the remarkable accomplishments of a few of the 18,000 alumni who continue to lead in agriculture, life sciences, and numerous other fields. Our alumni community is a constant source of pride and inspiration.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Your support enables us to advance our mission and achieve excellence in all that we do. I look forward to seeing you soon. *Hail State!*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Willard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Scott Willard
Dean

2023 DISTINGUISHED FELLOWS

IN 2018, THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES developed the Distinguished Fellows award program to recognize outstanding alumni in its nine departments. Distinguished Fellows are alumni who have exhibited significant professional accomplishments and also shown a personal commitment to Mississippi State. Each year, the departments select Distinguished Fellows from their alumni who exemplify the qualities and traits we strive to instill in our current students. These alumni visit with faculty, students, administrators, and colleagues to provide direction for the future of our departments and college. The Distinguished Fellows program is an opportunity to recognize outstanding alumni in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and expose students to the rich tradition of service and dedication found within our alumni base.



Hugh Beckham, Jr.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL & BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

Hugh Beckham, Jr. (Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering Technology and Business 1988) is a key account manager for HGS BioScience, which provides organic soil health products to agricultural retailers and farmers. His 34-year agribusiness career includes sales and management positions at Monsanto; DuPont Pioneer; Horizon Ag, LLC; and Bayer Crop Science. His team won the Master Sales Award at Monsanto three times. Beckham developed a passion for agriculture growing up on his family farm in Swiftdown, Mississippi. At MSU, he gained the academic and people skills to help him excel in several leadership roles. He earned an executive MBA at the University of Memphis in 2000 and is a member of the Mississippi Agricultural Industry Council, the Mississippi Seedsmen's Association, the Southern Seedsmen's Association, and the Memphis Agricultural Club, having previously served as past president for each organization. He serves on the Desoto County Chapter of the MSU Alumni Association Board of Directors and is a past president of the Memphis Chapter of the MSU Alumni Association. He was awarded the 1996 J.E. "Red" Ruffin award as Outstanding Chapter President from the MSU Alumni Association. Beckham and his wife, Elizabeth, reside in Nesbit, Mississippi, and have three daughters, all MSU bulldogs.



Steve Brunson, II

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Steve Brunson (Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics and Bachelor of Business Administration 1983 and Master of Science in Agricultural Economics 1985) grew up on a West Tennessee row crop and cattle farm. He has 37 years of professional farm management, land development, and farm real estate experience. After graduation from MSU, he worked for the National Cotton Council before becoming a professional farm manager with Farmers National Company in 1987. He earned the designation of Accredited Farm Manager (AFM) from the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers. In 2001, Brunson co-founded Baird & Brunson Land Management Group, LLC, with George Baird. In 2021, Baird founded another venture, and the company became Ag Land Management Group, LLC. With Brunson at the helm, Ag Land Management Group has experienced exceptional growth. Since 1996, Brunson has owned his own farm in Sunflower County, Mississippi, which gives him the insight to help his clients manage their farms. He is a licensed real estate broker in Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee. He enjoys traveling to Costa Rica and spending time with his wife, Anita, and their three young granddaughters. In November 2022, Brunson established an endowed annual scholarship to benefit College of Agriculture and Life Sciences students.



Drs. James and Gail Anderson

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL & DAIRY SCIENCES

Drs. James and Gail Anderson (Bachelor of Science in Animal Science 1973) both received Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degrees from Auburn University. The couple, who married upon graduating from MSU, founded and operated Crossgates Veterinary Clinic in the Brandon/Pearl area until they retired in 2016. The practice evolved from a mixed animal practice to a small animal practice and was accredited by the American Animal Hospital Association. Both James and Gail have contributed significantly to veterinary medicine in Mississippi. James partnered with other veterinarians to develop and fund the current MSU Animal Emergency and Referral Center in Flowood, one of his proudest accomplishments. Gail served 15 years on the Mississippi Board of Veterinary Medicine. She has participated on multiple committees for MSU's College of Veterinary Medicine. James has been involved in multiple agricultural related organizations including the Beef Quality Assurance Program. James loved performing surgery and Gail loved interacting with clients and taking care of their pets. They exemplified proper animal care and helped train future veterinarians. The couple retired in 2016 and reside in Carthage, Mississippi, where they run a cow/calf operation at Kenilworth Farms. They have three children, all of whom attended MSU, and three grandchildren, and multiple cows, dogs, and cats.



David S. Short

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY,
MOLECULAR BIOLOGY, ENTOMOLOGY
AND PLANT PATHOLOGY

David S. Short (Bachelor of Science in Entomology 1980) spent much of his career in agricultural sales for Shell Chemical and Dupont, which acquired Shell's agricultural division in 1986. He also worked as a field agronomist for the company. Short accumulated numerous sales, marketing, and leadership awards. He recognized the need to control resistant cotton aphids and positioned a product for their control. He established a seminar for agricultural consultants in the Midsouth and initiated and chaired the DuPont Midsouth Consultant Seminar for many years. Short was instrumental in introducing several novel crop protection products to aid Mississippi growers. He declined promotions, preferring to remain in the field and assist Mississippi growers to solve their pest control issues, until his 2017 retirement. Short was generous with his time, advising MSU students with their career paths. He has held board positions in various organizations, including Certified Crop Advisors and the Mississippi Agricultural and Industry Council. Most recently, MAIC awarded Short a lifetime membership. He is a member of the MSU Department of Agricultural Science and Plant Protection Advisory Board. Short and his wife, Monica, established and funded the Dr. Leon Hepner Endowed Scholarship in 2021. They have three children and three grandchildren and reside in Oktibbeha County.



Eric Lindley Steer

DEPARTMENT OF FOOD SCIENCE, NUTRITION
AND HEALTH PROMOTION

Eric Lindley Steer (Bachelor of Science in Food Science and Technology 2005) is vice president of operations for Chairmans Foods, a global food manufacturer based out of Nashville, Tennessee, which serves major retailers including Costco, Sam's Club, Wal-Mart, Kroger, and Publix. Steer began his career with Dean Foods Company in Rockford, Illinois, as a management trainee, then production supervisor. At Dean Foods, he served as production manager for Barber Milk Company in Birmingham, Alabama; plant manager III at Reiter Dairy in Springfield, Ohio, and plant manager IV at Country Delite Dairy in Nashville before transitioning to Chairman Foods, where he oversees three manufacturing facilities with 400 employees and 250,000 square feet of production space. MSU was where Steer determined his career, met his wife, and made lasting friendships. He worked at the MAFES Custer Dairy Processing Plant and as a research associate in the Food Microbiology Laboratory. He was a student representative on the 2004 Collegiate Dairy Products Judging team that won the National Championship. He received the 2018 Department of Defense Patriot Award for his support of military veterans in the workforce. Steer and his wife, Ashley, reside in Nashville with their children Emily (14), Lauren (11), and Lincoln (9).



Dr. Brenda J. Thames

SCHOOL OF HUMAN SCIENCES

Dr. Brenda J. Thames (Bachelor of Science in Home Economics 1976) has a long and productive career in higher education and health care. After MSU, she earned her master's and doctorate from Clemson University. She spent 31 years in higher education, transitioning to health care in 2007, when she became senior executive leader for the academic enterprise of the largest health system in South Carolina. She built partnerships with numerous academic institutions, which led to the development and launch of medical and nursing schools on the campus of Prisma Health—a private, nonprofit health company in South Carolina. She led strategic academic programs to grow and train a vibrant health care workforce. Under her leadership, the program grew to more than 8,000 learners, 683 graduate medical education positions, and more than \$50 million in research funding. She also founded the Medical Experience (MedEx) Academy focused on introducing young people to health care careers. In 2023, the Brenda J. Thames Prisma Health MedEx Academy Endowment was established. In 2022, she was awarded the Order of the Palmetto—South Carolina's highest civilian honor. Thames retired as Prisma Health Chief Academic Executive Officer in July 2023. She is married to Charles Thames (a 1976 MSU engineering graduate). They reside in Braselton, Georgia, and have two married daughters and four grandchildren.



Brad Garrison

DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Brad Garrison (Bachelor of Landscape Management 2000) is the divisional sports field category sales manager for the Mountain West Division of Ewing Outdoor Supply. Since graduation, the Easley, South Carolina, native has managed high-end residential landscape construction projects, achieved record-breaking results as a professional fundraiser, led on-farm project management and business development efforts for a revolutionary waste management in animal agriculture technology firm, and has accumulated nearly 15 years of combined sales experience in the sports field and golf course maintenance business. Garrison has been active in the Dallas, Nashville, Kansas City, and Phoenix chapters of the MSU Alumni Association and is on the National Board of Directors as an at-large director and executive committee member. He has supported the Bulldog Club and MSU Foundation since graduation. Garrison has traveled to all 50 states, Canada, Mexico, Argentina, South Korea, and South Africa. He's a lifetime member of the Dallas Safari Club, a Kansas City Barbeque Society certified barbeque judge, and enjoys hunting and MSU athletics. He is an Ironman Wisconsin triathlon finisher. Garrison loves his nine-year-old twin nephews, Caden and Walker, who reside in South Carolina and hopes to convert them from Clemson Tiger to MSU Bulldog fans. Garrison and his wife, Julie, reside in Chandler, Arizona.



Tucker Miller, III

DEPARTMENT OF PLANT AND SOIL SCIENCES

Tucker Miller, III (Bachelor of Science in Agronomy 1975 and Master of Science in Pest Management 1977) is president and CEO of Miller Entomological Service, Inc., a company he started in 1968. For more than 50 years, he has served as an independent crop consultant helping Delta farmers execute pest management plans. Throughout his career, Miller has worked with many MSU scientists on various research projects. Miller has served as president of the Mississippi Agricultural Consultants Association twice, was Syngenta Cotton Consultant of the Year in 2004, and was inducted into the Mississippi Agricultural Consultants Hall of Fame in 2015. He has been a member of the Mississippi Association of Plant Pathologists and Nematologists and has served on the Board of Directors of both the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District and North Sunflower Medical Center. He has presented at many conferences over the years. He is a member of the Dean's Advisory Council for the MSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. All of the Tucker Miller family attended MSU and graduated from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The Millers established an endowed scholarship for students in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences. Miller and his wife have two children and currently reside in Drew, Mississippi.



Dr. George Wallace Morgan

DEPARTMENT OF POULTRY SCIENCE

Dr. George Wallace Morgan (Bachelor of Science in Poultry Science 1964, Master of Science in Animal Physiology 1966, and Doctor of Philosophy in Animal Physiology 1970) has a lengthy career in teaching and research. His research and regulatory efforts at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, helped produce the first set of proposed standards for human HLA typing sera, a genetic test used to match patients and donors for bone marrow, cord blood, and organ transplant. Morgan then joined the poultry science department at North Carolina State University before being recruited by MSU in 1980 to update the university's poultry science curriculum and increase undergraduate enrollment. His work at MSU led to exponential enrollment increases, and he received four different teaching and advising awards, becoming department head in 1987. He continued to strengthen the university's poultry science department, developing a close working relationship with the Mississippi poultry industry. He considers the department's most significant contribution to the poultry sector is the students who have since become leaders in the industry. Morgan retired in 2007 and remained in Starkville. An endowed poultry science scholarship was funded in his honor by friends and colleagues.

Preparing for the
FUTURE

CALS departmental
reorganization enhances
capacity for growth and
research

BY VANESSA BEESON

IN 2023, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University celebrated 120 years of agricultural education and innovation. In the spirit of continuing our traditions while remaining on the forefront of agricultural technology and innovation, the college embraces the future with an exciting strategic reorganization of its departments. **Dr. Scott Willard**, dean of CALS and director of MAFES, spearheads this initiative aimed at enhancing our capacity for growth and interdisciplinary research.



Students prepare a meal as part of their Quantity Food production course. (Photo by David Ammon)

STRUCTURAL ENHANCEMENTS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY, NUTRITION, AND HEALTH PROMOTION: Uniting the strengths of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology with Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion, this new department promises to maintain the integrity of our existing programs while opening doors to innovative interdisciplinary collaborations. **Dr. Daniel Peterson** is the interim head of the newly created department.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND PLANT PROTECTION: This newly formed department will integrate

the expertise of the Entomology and Plant Pathology faculty and includes the Agricultural Science B.S. degree program. This new department is poised to explore new interdisciplinary opportunities that may pave the way for further expansion. **Dr. Fred Musser** is the interim head of this department.

FOOD SCIENCE INNOVATION HUB: Funded, in part, by Reed Food Technology, this cutting-edge interdisciplinary hub will catalyze pioneering instruction and outreach across food science and safety research sectors. **Dr. Wes Schilling** is the director of the Food Science Innovation Hub and was recently named the Reed Family Endowed Professor.

BLENDING TRADITION WITH INNOVATION

IN A SYMBOLIC merging of traditions, the historic University Florist, an MSU staple for 90 years, now shares space with the MAFES Sales Store, another iconic part of our university's heritage for 85 years. This new arrangement not only offers grab-and-go floral bouquets and popular MSU merchandise but also features McCarty's Pottery, enhancing

the shopping experience at 925 Stone Blvd. The florist's delivery services continue from their new base at the MAFES A.B. McKay Enology Laboratory on 205 Technology Blvd.

These strategic changes affirm our commitment to advancing the fields of agriculture and life sciences while preserving and celebrating the rich traditions that define Mississippi State University. Join us as we continue to innovate and lead into the future, honoring our past and embracing new possibilities.

Macy Hartsell, florist manager and graduate student Lauren Baskin, and Ciana Thompson, all horticulture majors, pose with flowers at the MAFES A. B. McKay Enology Laboratory, overlooking the MAFES R. R. Foil Plant Science Research Center. (Photo by David Ammon)



Ballew Hall. (Photo by David Ammon)



RESTORATION OF BALLEW HALL APPROACHING COMPLETION

THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND Life Sciences has completed the historic restoration of Ballew Hall, the headquarters for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) administration. This revitalized 25,000 square foot facility will enhance our educational and administrative capabilities significantly.

The renovated Ballew Hall features state-of-the-art student spaces, including versatile teaching areas and conference rooms designed to foster innovation and learning. Additionally, the building hosts the administrative offices for CALs and MAFES, a recruitment suite to welcome potential students, a development suite to

engage with our supporters, and a spacious auditorium for events and presentations.

There has been an outpouring of support for the landmark building that once housed the meat laboratory and animal and dairy sciences classes. In 2023, Susanne Boyd Purvis and her husband, David Purvis, along with her mother, Dr. Catherine Boyd, named the Ballew Hall auditorium after their father, father-in-law, and husband, respectively—Dr. Leroy H. Boyd. Boyd, an Ellis County, Oklahoma, native served as a faculty member in the animal husbandry department, in what is now the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences, for 38 years. He was among the first occupants of the newly constructed building, which opened in 1962. From 1963 until his retirement in 2001, Boyd focused on ruminants and taught classes about sheep, horses, western equitation, and livestock judging, which was his lifelong passion. The Robertson Development Suite, named in memory

of Warren P. Robertson, a former graduate student of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, was gifted by his parents, Chris and Martha Robertson. A gift from the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation is making its mark on the renovated building through the naming of the recruitment suite. Likewise, Southern Ag Credit named the downstairs conference room. Both Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation and Southern Ag Credit are ardent supporters of agriculture, expressing their commitment through the advancement of teaching and research in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Opportunities to contribute to this landmark project through naming are still available. For more information on how you can be a part of this exciting phase in our history, contact Will Staggers, director of Development for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, at wstaggers@foundation.msstate.edu. 🐾

FRESH ON THE FARM

MSU alumna continues dairy farm, reignites family legacy

BY ERIN BUCKLEY

AT ONE TIME, dairy farming was prevalent throughout the South. In 1970, there were 648,000 farms throughout the U.S., but by 2006, the industry had declined to 75,000 farms, an 88% decrease, according to the USDA. A labor-intensive industry, the decline has been driven by cost and demand. Despite the hardships local dairy farmers have faced, **Jessica Junkin Vails**, MSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences alumna, and her family decided to defy the odds and open Circle J Dairy in Gordo, Alabama.

Vails graduated from MSU in 2019 with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education, Leadership and Communication. She grew up on a farm raising beef cattle and poultry, but never worked at a dairy like her dad. Her father, Ralph Junkin Jr., was raised on a dairy farm with his father, Ralph Sr., who owned a commercial dairy farm for 40 years, before he sold it in the 1990s because of low milk prices.

The Junkin family discussed the idea of opening a dairy farm soon after Vails graduated from MSU. They did their research and visited several southern dairy farms before deciding to take the plunge. Vails and her family wanted to continue her grandfather's legacy and honoring the Junkin family name by opening Circle J Dairy. They began milking cows in December of 2022 and in January 2023, they were selling bottled milk.

"I went to Mississippi State and wasn't sure what I wanted to do career wise, but I knew I always loved working on our farm.

I wanted something that could maybe one day be my own, while still being able to work with my family. We were brainstorming different ideas and decided to visit a dairy farm in south Alabama. My dad, having a strong background in dairy, felt like we could make a go at it and that's how we got the ball rolling," she said.

Operating Circle J Dairy has become a family affair. Vails runs the social media and helps with milk processing, bottling, weekly milk orders, and various other tasks. Her parents, Robin and Ralph Jr., help with a little bit of everything. Their main responsibilities include milking, milk processing, bottling, handling hay for the cows, and managing the company's finances. Other family members including siblings, cousins, grandparents, and in-laws help run the farm as well. They help with bottling, distributing milk on the delivery route, and operating the dairy store where customers can purchase t-shirts and milk or check out the milk production process through the viewing window. Circle J Dairy sells to grocery stores, coffee shops, and restaurants in the surrounding counties, delivering milk multiple times each week. It is truly a team effort to run the farm.

"We milk the cows twice daily, and sometimes pasteurize twice a day depending on how much time we have. We bottle every day and send it on our milk route throughout the week. So, we start around 4:30 a.m. most days and sometimes don't finish until 6:30 p.m. Then we go home and do it all again the next

day. Working with family helps a lot," Vails said.

Circle J Dairy has 50-75 cows year-round. Most are Jersey cows, but about a dozen are Holstein. Vails said the breeds create an evenly rich and fresh milk. The farm does not homogenize their milk, so the cream rises to the top. Consumers should shake the milk well before serving. Vails said the milk should keep three to four weeks if kept at a cold temperature. Non-homogenized milk differentiates local dairy farms from commercial dairies because most milk produced commercially is homogenized. Vails noted that farm fresh milk is especially appealing because you know exactly where it came from.

Vails said she has learned so much from opening her own dairy farm and she enjoys sharing her knowledge with others. Although she loves her job, she shares that a major challenge they face is work-life balance. The family works most holidays because this is more than just a business to them, it's their livelihood.

Vails shared that she thinks her grandfather would be proud of the family for reviving his livelihood. Her newborn daughter, Lula, will grow up on the farm, learning all about dairy processing and hopefully continuing the legacy of dairy farming in the future.

"Carrying on my grandfather's legacy is what I am most proud of. It's a little bit different now, but he would be so proud that we're continuing this because he loved it," she said. "My dad loved it and still loves it, so I know he would be proud of us." 🐾



Ralph Junkin Jr., Robin Junkin, Jessica Junkin Vails, Lula Vails, and Tayler Vails at their dairy in Gordo, Alabama. (Photo by Erin Buckley)



FEATHERS AND FUR

CALS alumna educates pet parents, cares for exotic animals

BY ERIN BUCKLEY

DR. KAREN EMERSON knows a thing or two about helping people take care of their animals. The poultry science alumna has been educating families and individuals about animal health for nearly 18 years. Her specialty—exotic pets—makes her clinic, Emerson Animal Hospital in West Point, one of the few clinics in the region that cares for extraordinary animals.

Her interest in birds drew her to pursue a degree in poultry science. Upon graduation in 2002, she continued her education at the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine where she earned a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. After graduation, she worked with several veterinarians and a mentor for seven years before opening her own private practice in 2014.

Before even opening her clinic, Emerson reached out to local CBS-affiliated news station WCBI in hopes of hosting an educational feature on the station's morning show. Her goal was to educate families, individuals, and other veterinarians about animal health and ways to take care of their pets. She has been featured on the WCBI morning show twice a week for the last 10 years.

"Our goal is to bring someone in and educate and communicate with them, so that they understand why we're doing what we're doing for their animal. That was one of my big goals and I've achieved that with WCBI. Now, I've also been featured on the CW and Fox News, and we just won Clinic of

the Year for the ninth year in WCBI's Viewer's Choice Awards. Those segments really reach people because I've had people contact me from all over. The *New York Times* flew out here and did a photoshoot of me with a snake a couple years back. That was a really cool experience."

Individuals from across the state visit her hospital for exotic pet care. A few of the unusual pets she has treated include exotic birds (her favorite), guinea pigs, kangaroos, and geckos. Perhaps the most unusual pet she treated was an axolotl. These unique amphibians can regenerate limbs and even parts of their brain when needed. They remain in a larval state for their entire life, meaning they don't undergo metamorphosis like other amphibians. Emerson was prepared to perform surgery on a pet axolotl that ate a plastic plant, but, thankfully, the critter passed it on its own.

"We do a lot of out-of-the-box stuff. I've worked with kangaroos, snakes, and many birds. There are hardly any exotic vets here. I've tried to create a hospital where we can do a lot more than just your standard vaccines. I have people come here from Jackson, Meridian, and as far as Alabama and Tennessee, too."

Emerson's journey to success in her own practice has not been without its challenges. She says being the veterinarian isn't necessarily the hardest part, but rather the many roles that come with owning a business. She shares that while her studies at MSU prepared her

to be a veterinarian, she didn't exactly realize what she was getting into opening a private clinic. With help from her husband and support from a wonderful staff, she found her way and opened Emerson Animal Hospital.

"It was challenging at times because not only did I have to be the veterinarian, but I also had to fulfill the roles of human resource manager, employer and landlord, which can all be a little overwhelming. I always recommend that students work under a mentor before opening their own practice. It helped prepare me for what I'm doing now."

Emerson has a great relationship with MSU's College of Veterinary Medicine. She provides employment opportunities for MSU veterinary medicine students and currently has a student completing an externship at the clinic. In addition to serving as a referral center for individuals seeking exotic pet care, Emerson Animal Hospital also performs extensive surgeries that some other clinics do not, such as soft tissue and knee surgeries.

"I love what I do. I'm really in to bettering our profession and trying to help our profession grow. One thing that I think really stands out is my view of educating the clients better and helping veterinarians gain confidence in their profession. My main goals in opening this practice were to spread better education to clients and offer the best quality of veterinary medicine at a reasonable price, and I think we've accomplished that." 🐾



Dr. Karen Emerson. (Photo by David Ammon)



NEXT GENERATION AGRICULTURE

CALS alumnus recognized as an outstanding ag educator

BY CHLOE MADISON

TEACHING OTHERS about agriculture has turned a childhood passion into a career for **Josh Davenport**. With two decades of agricultural teaching under his belt, the Louisville, Mississippi, native remains dedicated and enthusiastic about his chosen career and the students he is able to impact every day.

“Teaching has always held a special place in my heart. I try to be resourceful for my students and I always want what is best for them. If I know a student is not putting their best effort forward, I will be honest with them and try to help motivate them. I don’t want my students to strive for mediocre because I know they can accomplish more,” Davenport said.

And it appears he is doing well in his chosen profession, receiving numerous honors and awards.

In 2024, he was named the Mississippi Association for Career and Technical Education Teacher of the Year, the Outstanding Teacher for the Mississippi Association of Agricultural Educators, and Mississippi Farm Bureau FFA Advisor of the Year.

Davenport said his love for agriculture began as a child.

“Growing up in a small rural town in Mississippi, my parents always had us gardening, fixing fences, and farming, which instilled my love for being outside and learning how to take care of the plants that give back to us on a daily basis,” he said.

As his passion for agriculture grew, he knew he wanted to study that field when he went to college.

“I have always been an MSU fan growing up only 30 miles away, and I knew I wanted to be an agriculture major. MSU already felt like home to me, and I knew the university’s agriculture education program would set me up for a successful and fruitful career,” Davenport said.

Along with his awards, he has served in multiple roles throughout his teaching career. He served as president of Mississippi Association of Vocational Agriculture Teachers for a few years and has been the regional secretary for the National Association of Agricultural Educators since 2011.

He also shares that he was a part of the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences organization and aims to incorporate diversity and inclusivity into his classroom.

“Being a minority teacher and especially teaching agriculture, sometimes minority students don’t see a lot of people that look like them. I can sympathize with them, but I always teach students that it doesn’t matter what you look like. We are all here for a certain purpose, and we will include everybody,” Davenport said.

Davenport received his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in agriculture and extension education in 2000 and 2003, respectively. In addition to being an instructor at South Panola High School, he also is the FFA advisor, a position he has held for 20 years.

“I love being the FFA advisor because it teaches students an array of skillsets including public speaking, livestock judging, and floriculture. The best moments are when I see students take the skills they learn from FFA and become successful in their field,” Davenport said. 🐾



Josh Davenport instructing students at the Mississippi FFA Convention. (Photo by David Ammon)



LEADERS *from* AGRICULTURE

CALS leaders have global impact, invest in the next generation

BY VANESSA BEESON

EACH YEAR, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, or CALS, honors alumni who are pioneering leaders in their fields, making impacts at the global, national, and local levels. Our leaders from agriculture this year include an entrepreneur, environmental economist, and landscape designer. From shaping companies to informing policy to building communities, this year's CALS leaders from agriculture are making a big difference in all they do. **Bryan Wilson** has spent more than forty years in agriculture and now does his part to help the next generation of agricultural leaders coming out of Mississippi State. **Naomi Taylor** answers pressing research questions to inform policy that improves lives. **Devlon Ward** is designing spaces for diverse communities across the Southeast.

BRYAN WILSON: LEADERSHIP AND GENEROSITY IN GLOBAL AGRICULTURE

RAISED IN FULTON, MISSISSIPPI, BRYAN WILSON, this year's MSU National Alumnus of the Year, charted a course similar to his father, a dedicated educator and first-generation college graduate who used the G.I. Bill to achieve his higher education dreams after the Korean War.

Wilson absorbed these lessons of resilience and determination from his dad, who worked as a teacher and principal and spent summers scouting cotton until his crop consultant business turned from a seasonal job to year-round.

"Beginning at age eight I would help my dad in the field by driving the truck while he scouted the crop. At about 14, I started scouting cotton and did

so through college, paying my way through school," Wilson reminisced.

Wilson earned a bachelor's and master's degree in entomology from MSU in 1982 and 1984, respectively. His agricultural career spanned the globe, starting in field sales at BASF and growing into leadership roles in North America and Europe, eventually moving to the company's global headquarters in Germany.

"Living over there, we traveled all over Europe, learned a lot, and experienced diverse cultures. I also traveled extensively throughout Asia and also in South and Central America during my career," he said, reflecting on the broadening of his perspectives.

In 2002, Wilson helped turn around United Agri Products (UAP), guiding it to a successful NASDAQ listing. He later co-founded Tacoma Ag, a company that reached nearly \$125 million in sales, which he led until retiring in 2018 after its acquisition by Atticus LLC.

Wilson continues to shape the future of agriculture through his advisory role at

Inverness Graham and his board positions at FruitScout and Zeakal, companies pioneering in harvest timing and crop genetics, respectively. His commitment extends to community service, having chaired the CREATE Foundation and serving on several MSU boards, actively promoting growth and innovation in both Starkville and the broader agricultural community.

Perhaps most impactful is Wilson's dedication to fostering the next generation of MSU leaders. Alongside his wife, Cindy, a College of Education alumna, they fund scholarships supporting students in both colleges. Hosting dinners for scholarship recipients at their home, they have a special affinity for first-generation college students.

"We usually have about 15 students at the house annually, and it seems that every year we have one or two who are first-generation college students. Given my family's history, that means a lot to me. My father grew up very poor. He was the son of a share cropper raised during the depression. He fought his way through getting a bachelor's and master's from MSU and that helped pull the family out of poverty. Being able to help with that for other families is especially important to Cindy and me," Wilson emphasized.

Wilson also offers sage advice to current students, highlighting the importance of work ethic, mobility, relationships, and ambition.

"I tell students four factors that will contribute greatly to their success. First, you need a solid work ethic. Second, you need to embrace mobility. In today's world, being able to travel and gain experience is crucial. Every place I've visited has taught me something new and introduced me to different people and cultural practices, including in agriculture and food production. Third, constantly build and nurture relationships. The friendships I formed at Mississippi State have been invaluable throughout my career, offering mutual benefits along the way. And lastly, dream big. Set ambitious goals. In college, my roommate and I would dream of earning \$30,000 a year, which seemed like a lofty goal at the time. Whatever the dream is, aim high," he said.



Bryan Wilson. (photo submitted)

NAOMI TAYLOR: ENRICHING LIVES THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMICS

NAOMI TAYLOR'S journey into environmental economics and sustainability was sparked during her senior year at DeSoto High School in Southaven, fueled by her participation in her high school's first Envirothon team competition, where the team secured third place statewide.

"That experience got me excited about environmentalism and sustainability, and I knew I wanted to do something to help mitigate climate change," she said.

Her quest for an impactful career led her to Mississippi State University, where she pursued a degree in environmental economics and management.

"People listen when you talk about money and business, so exploring this side of environmental studies seemed

like an effective way to make an impact," Taylor said.

Her major in the Department of Agricultural Economics provided pivotal experiences that shaped her career trajectory.

One such experience was a summer in Malawi, Africa, with the United Nations, engaging with local communities on the impact of an irrigation project.

"This was my first time out of the country. It was an amazing experience conducting research firsthand, and seeing the impact of the programming of the Food and Agriculture Organization in Malawi made me realize this was what I wanted to contribute to in the future," she said. "Mississippi State helped me to figure out exactly what I wanted to do and gave me the right education and experiences to help me accomplish that."

Taylor was also a Demmer Scholar while at MSU, which opened the door to an internship at the Foreign Agricultural Service of the USDA. This experience was crucial, as it allowed her to apply the theoretical knowledge gained at MSU in a practical, impactful setting.

Taylor transitioned to RTI International

in Raleigh, North Carolina, where she has been making significant contributions as an economist for over six years.

At RTI, Taylor's work in the Center for Applied Economics and Strategy is pivotal in consulting on international projects that focus on climate change, food security, and economic development. Her daily tasks vary from rigorous data analysis and economic modeling to conducting comprehensive literature reviews and preparing detailed reports.

"We work with government and non-profit organizations to answer big research questions that help inform policy," she said.

She said every day is an opportunity to learn something new, and she invested further in her future by earning a master's degree in economics from North Carolina State University this year. She also finds creativity in her role.

"I like communicating what these numbers mean and why they matter for the correct audience—whether it is for policymakers, other economists, or the general public," she said.

Taylor is a mentor and role model, particularly to young women in her field.

"One thing that's super cool about where I work is that we have so many women economists. I'll be in a meeting and notice all of us in the meeting are women. We're also fortunate because you can come right out of college and start at RTI, so we have a lot of young women joining our team," she said.

Taylor's dedication is fueled by a passion for making a tangible impact on the world. The projects she undertakes at RTI often involve forecasting the outcomes of policy changes or land use on environmental issues both in the U.S. and globally. These initiatives are critical in shaping policies that aim to mitigate the impacts of climate change on vulnerable communities around the world.

"RTI's mission is improving the human condition. We're hopefully helping other scientists learn and discover new things while also informing policymakers on ways to improve lives. We're answering research questions that contribute to changes that can impact billions of people on the planet," she said.



Naomi Taylor (photo submitted)

DEVLON WARD: SCULPTING SPACES, SHAPING FUTURES

DEVLON WARD is making his mark in the world of landscape architecture, where design meets functionality and art intersects with ecology.

Ward's journey into landscape architecture was serendipitous but deeply rooted in his early experiences. Growing up in Starkville, Ward was initially drawn to art and construction. His early years were spent on job sites, where he learned the intricacies of building from his father who was taught by his grandfather.

The exposure to construction and a scholarship in art from the University of Southern Mississippi initially set him on his path. However, it was at Mississippi State where Ward's career trajectory took a definitive turn. Transferring to MSU, he soon discovered a passion that bridged his artistic talent and construction knowledge—landscape architecture. MSU's program offered him the tools and knowledge to explore this discipline that uniquely blended his interests.

Ward credits his father—a general contractor who is now semi-retired—with helping inform his career.

“Landscape architecture is a creative and multidisciplinary field that integrates design, ecology, construction, engineering, and human needs, but to turn the landscape vision to reality the landscape architect must be able to collaborate with professionals involved in the construction process, including architects, engineers, and contractors. Working with my father taught me the responsibility of day-to-day oversight of a construction site, which helps me now through my design work to be able to facilitate and manage projects,” he said.

Since graduating in 2013, Devlon has applied his expertise in landscape architecture across a variety of projects that span residential, commercial, and public spaces. As a designer for HNP, a landscape architecture firm in Birmingham,



Devlon Ward. (photo submitted)

Alabama, a role he's held since 2018, his work has included plazas, parks, athletic facilities and fields, and more.

Ward has been involved in projects like the Randall Family Park and Trailhead—a trailhead, recreational path, playground, and pavilion—in Tuscaloosa and the National Pan-Hellenic Council Legacy Plaza at Auburn University, constructed to commemorate 50 years of Black Greek Life at Auburn University.

“I enjoy the process of designing and solving problems creatively. I think I'm able to hone my professional skills to create inspirational outdoor spaces,” he said.

Ward is dedicated to increasing diversity within landscape architecture. His work with BlackLAN, a network aimed at increasing visibility and support for Black professionals in the field, underscores his commitment to shaping a more inclusive future. Through this platform,

he mentors young minority landscape architects, guiding them through the initial stages of their careers and helping them navigate the professional landscape.

“Our mission is to increase the visibility, support interest, and foster the impact of Black landscape architects around the globe,” he said.

He also seeks to elevate the profession as a whole.

“I seek to bring more attention to professional landscape architecture and our expertise and what we can contribute to the design and the construction process as a whole because a lot of times landscape architects are overlooked,” he said.

He encourages aspiring landscape architects to focus on four aspects when looking for the perfect job.

“Find a role that excites and engages you, where you can add value, which helps you grow professionally, and offers opportunity for advancement,” he said. 🐾

FARMING AS A DELTA FAMILY LEGACY

Cultivating hope for the next generation

BY VANESSA BEESON

IN THE HEART OF THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA, the **Bush family** embodies a legacy of farming that spans generations, deeply intertwined with Mississippi State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs). **Wayne Bush**, at 89 years old, has cultivated not only crops but a family deeply embedded in the agricultural traditions of the Mississippi Delta.

Wayne, a '59 agricultural engineering alumnus, pioneered his family's path at MSU as the first in his family to obtain a degree from a four-year university. His journey began with a desire to advance farming technologies, as he faced the bleak agricultural prospects of his early days.

"Back then, after the war, I went into agricultural engineering because agriculture looked bad. We didn't have any labor. We didn't know if we'd be farming long or not but it got better," Wayne explained.

His family had 100 head of Black Angus cattle that they sold to help pay for his tuition. He also worked all four years, two in the engineering department and two in the cafeteria. He was also a part of MSU's livestock judging team, selling a prize bull one year that helped pay his tuition.

His foresight led him to focus on irrigation and land forming, which he adeptly applied to enhance his family's farming operations upon returning home.

Wayne's father, **Miller**, initially farmed in Carroll County before moving to the Delta, transforming their lives with modern amenities and expanded agricultural opportunities. From humble beginnings with mules and minimal machinery, the Bushes have grown their enterprise, named New Hope Farms, to encompass

12,000 acres, cultivating cotton, corn, and soybeans.

Wayne and his wife, Celeste, have three sons—**John, David, and Chris**—all CALs alumni who continued the legacy. Now their grandson, **Jacob**, an agribusiness alumnus, has embraced their heritage and contributed to the family's farming success. While **Alex**, another grandson, didn't go to work directly for the family farm, the 2013 agricultural science alumnus has remained in the agricultural field.

John, an 1982 agriculture engineering technology and business alumnus, always envisioned a future intertwined with the family farm.

"I always knew I wanted to go to MSU and major in some form of agriculture. Agriculture is in my blood," he said, reflecting on his natural progression from childhood farm work to obtaining his degree and helping manage land deals to sustain and expand the family's operations.

John remembers his time at MSU fondly.

"My freshmen year I joined Sigma Alpha Epsilon (SAE) fraternity with three of my childhood friends, and it was perfect timing for me. I was a young, green 17-year-old, and I got to know some older guys who were leaders, and they had a huge influence on me. I was the youngest, smallest guy in the fraternity, and my big brother was the biggest, oldest guy. We're still friends today," he said.

John began MSU in 1978 as the first computers made their way onto campus and into the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. During a senior survey with **Dr. Bill Fox**, who would go on to become the CALs dean, John recommended a dedicated computer lab for

agricultural students, which was put in place and still exists today. At the time, he had no idea the impact technology would have on farming.

"I think in the last 20 years agriculture has advanced more than in the previous 100 years," he said. "Every improvement technology has made has cost us money, but it has made our job easier."

David and Chris followed in similar footsteps, with their educational pursuits at MSU reinforcing their commitment to agriculture.

David, also an SAE and an '83 agriculture engineering technology and business graduate, emphasized the importance of the connections made at MSU, which have supported his farming career.

"I didn't know there was another job. I was coming back to the farm, period," he said. "We had small classes in the major. All of us started as freshmen together and all graduated together, so we got to be good friends. I'm still in contact with them now," he said.

David loves working outside.

"That's my favorite thing. I'm outside and not stuck in a cubicle in an office," said David, who also enjoys the fabrication side of the business, recently customizing a work truck with a high-capacity sprayer to better address weed control several fields at a time.

Chris also loves working outdoors. Perhaps his favorite aspect of the work is the research. The '94 agronomy major has always been interested in the nuances of crop fertility.

"I love test plots," said Chris, who conducted on-farm trials with **Dr. Jac Varco**, an MSU Professor Emeritus. "We worked

The Bush family (L to R): Jacob, Alex, David, Wayne, John, and Chris.
(Photo by Dominique Belcher)



with Dr. Varco on fertility because I've always wanted to figure out the variable nitrogen rate on cotton. We used a sensor on a tractor that would read 25 feet in each direction to sense cotton growth. After that, Dr. Varco would write a prescription for nitrogen based on what the machine picked up," he said.

Chris said he's always conducting seed variety test plots, and the farm has participated in tests plots for Delta Pine and the MAFES Official Variety Trials in the past. He also grows test plots for NexGen cotton. He looks forward to conducting more research in the future.

"Oftentimes, we get so busy, and we must do things so fast, we don't have the time to conduct research or try out new technology. That's something I want to do more of in the future," he said.

Alex, David's son, worked as a crop insurance claims manager for a few years out of college and is now a crop insurance agent with First South Farm Credit.

"I try to do the best I can to help farmers manage their risk for day-to-day farm

operations. I'm very pro-farmer, so I'll do anything I can to help a farmer in my line of work whether that's helping them save money or educating them on any benefits they may not know about," he said.

Jacob, Chris's son, the youngest farming Bush, graduated summa cum laude in agribusiness in 2024. While he completed an internship with Helena in Tennessee the summer of 2023 to see the corporate side of the ag industry, he chose to embrace farming full-time, a passion nurtured from childhood. His deep appreciation for his family's history and his role in its future underscores the enduring bond between the Bush family and their land.

"Watching my grandfather, dad, and uncles work hard together made me appreciate what's around us and the opportunity we have," Jacob said.

John echoes Jacob's sentiment.

"I feel blessed our grandfather and father had vision. They weren't afraid to buy land. Many people back then thought land was too expensive. Had they been

timid, we wouldn't have what we have now. We have a good spread that keeps us all busy. While we may have different ideas of how we're going to accomplish something, we all want the same result. We work well together and now we have a nephew on board, and he's been training since he was eight years old, so he'll be a big asset," he said.

For Wayne, it's about keeping the family together.

"That's what is so great about working with my children and grandchildren. That was my father's goal. He wanted to keep the family together. I've done my best in that, and I'm proud they all work together well," he said.

The Bush family legacy is about more than agricultural success; it's about how a family can grow together, bound by shared values and a deep love for the land, underpinned by an educational foundation provided by Mississippi State University. As the Bushes plant for the next harvest, it's clear that the Maroon and White roots in this Delta farming family run deep. 🐾

THREE PLUS ONE EQUALS INDUSTRY SUCCESS

MSU poultry student first to pursue MSU/Alcorn Poultry Science Dual-Degree Program

BY CHLOE MADISON

MARYONNA CHAMBERS, a Jackson, Mississippi, native, is the first student to pursue the Mississippi State and Alcorn State University (ASU) dual-degree program in poultry science.

“It’s exciting and a little intimidating to be the first to take advantage of this opportunity because it’s never been done before. In the beginning, I didn’t know what to expect, but progressing through the program, you see and learn new things that can potentially have a significant impact on you as a student,” Chambers said.

Not only is she the first student to take advantage of the program, but she is also the first person in her family to pursue a career in the poultry industry. She said her family is very proud of her, and they can’t wait to see what she accomplishes.

In the dual-degree program, students complete 91 hours toward an ASU Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Sciences with an animal science emphasis and then transfer to MSU to finish the remaining

31 hours for a Bachelor of Science in Poultry Science. In the end, the student leaves with two degrees, one from each institution. Chambers learned about the program during her ASU visit and was intrigued.

Poultry is Mississippi’s largest agricultural commodity, with a value of over \$3 billion in 2024. Mississippi State is one of only six poultry science degree granting programs in the U.S.

Chambers said that she knew poultry science was her calling and that the program would elevate her in her field.

“I wanted to study poultry science because I knew it was a big industry in the U.S. and consumers, like me, eat chicken more than any other protein. I knew I would never be out of a job, which would bring security within my career,” Chambers said. “I believe this program will provide more options and flexibility of where I can go in the industry.”

She considers food safety as a challenge

she would like to tackle in the industry.

“This program motivates me to try and find innovative ways to prevent the spread of foodborne pathogens in the poultry industry,” Chambers said.

She said her main goal is to be the first to graduate from the program and, in return, encourage other students to take advantage of this opportunity. She hopes after she graduates that she will secure a career in the broiler industry.

She encourages students to explore the dual degree poultry science program and jump in if it’s an industry they see themselves in.

“I know it is scary going to a new school, but you must push through to make it to the finish line. Get out of your comfort zone and embrace new experiences because taking a big chance, even if you don’t get everything completely right helps you learn from your mistakes, which, in turn, helps you grow to be a better you,” Chambers said. 🐾





Development

Strengthening an Honored Tradition

Investing in scholarship and state-of-the-art livestock facility enrich students

By Vanessa Beeson

RODNEY MOORE, a distinguished Mississippi State University alumnus and seasoned professional in the animal genetics industry, is again demonstrating his support of Mississippi State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) through significant contributions to both the Rodney Moore Family Annual Scholarship and a new state-of-the-art livestock facility.

Originally from Enterprise, Mississippi, Moore's journey at MSU began with a bachelor's degree in animal science in 1972, followed by a master's in animal nutrition and genetics in 1974. His profound gratitude for the foundational experiences MSU provided has inspired his continued generosity.

"In my life, many people have helped me in many ways to provide excellent leadership, advice, motivation, and support. This has shaped me into the person I am today. My goal each day is to be kind and help others," he said.

After dedicating more than 25 years to prominent roles in the animal genetics

sector and later flourishing as an entrepreneur with Express Employment Professional, Moore is not new to innovation and growth. His entrepreneurial spirit thrived as he expanded his business significantly before its sale in late 2022.

Moore's support continues to grow future agricultural professionals within the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences. Since its inception, this scholarship has supported 14 students specializing in production management and business. By enhancing this fund, Moore continues to invest in the potential of CALs students.

Furthermore, Moore's commitment to developing future agricultural leaders is exemplified by his support for the Rodney Moore and Family Livestock Judging Facility Support Fund. This initiative will finance the construction of a new Livestock Judging Pavilion and Evaluation Laboratory at the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station's H.H. Leveck Animal Research Center. The facility is set to become a hub for the university's collegiate judging team and

a venue for major regional and national events, offering spaces for animal evaluation research, outreach, and instruction.

Reflecting on his formative experiences with 4-H livestock judging, Moore emphasized the value of practical training.

"My first experience in livestock judging was through 4-H. Our Clarke County team traveled extensively across Mississippi for livestock contests. This valuable experience provided training on how to best evaluate the physical characteristics of livestock. Equally important was the training to make judging decisions within 10 minutes and then relate my thought process in oral reasons to a contest official. Thus, it became clear that I would like to see other Mississippi State students experience this excellent training," he said.

Under the guidance of Alexandra Pittman, a fellow MSU alumna and one of the youngest college livestock judging team leaders in the nation, the Livestock Judging Team continues to excel. Pittman, an instructor in



@CALSDevelopment
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@BulldogForest

Rodney and Yvonne Moore. (Photo submitted)



animal and dairy sciences, highlighted the impact of Moore's contributions.

"This is a huge opportunity for us to better prepare our current students through innovative teaching and to expand our recruitment efforts," she said. "Support for the new pavilion and lab will allow us to maintain top-notch facilities while enhancing the national prominence and competitiveness of our program."

Moore's support is a testament to the

pivotal role alumni play in advancing MSU's educational mission, providing the necessary resources to maintain cutting-edge facilities and empower students.

He encourages other alumni to consider the lasting impact of their contributions.

"Mississippi State University is the home of thousands of successful alumni who love their university," he said. "I encourage alumni to set up a monthly or yearly budget to contribute because,

when it comes to MSU's ability to continue attracting the best students, our gifts will have a positive impact." 🐾

For more information on the livestock judging facility project or to explore ways to support the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences, please contact Lacey Gordon, assistant director of development for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, at 662-325-6312 or lgordon@foundation.msstate.edu.

Investing in Education

Scholarships to support Mississippi's next generation of farmers

By Meg Henderson

FARMING is a long-standing family tradition for '72 alumnus **Abbott Myers**. As a young man, he followed in his father's and grandfather's footsteps, graduating from MSU before entering the business. With his roots planted deeply in Mississippi's fertile Delta soil, Myers has built a life around investing in the things that matter—in his land, career, community, and family.

This year, Myers received an opportunity to help MSU students build a foundation for their own farm-related career paths. The Farm Credit Bank of Texas inducted Myers into an elite cohort of leaders, the FCBT Academy of Honor, which comes with the gift of a scholarship for college students.

Since its establishment in 1968, the academy has honored 65 individuals for their exceptional service and contributions to the farm credit profession. Myers received \$25,000 to establish a scholarship in his name to support a student at a university of his choice. A lifelong Bulldog, Myers naturally chose MSU, and he was given discretion over how the money would be used.

"Instead of giving the entire amount to one student, I decided to split the total between five students so I could help as many as possible," he said. "And I wanted the money to go to majors in agricultural engineering technology and business, which is what I studied."

Myers didn't always want to be a farmer. As an undergraduate, he was initially focused on the stars rather than the soil. He enrolled in the aerospace engineering program but, after a transformative

summer, switched to agricultural engineering technology and business after his sophomore year.

Before the ink could dry on his semester exams, he was called home to help run the family farm after his father's emergency retina surgery. Myers got a taste for the business that summer, and he enjoyed the responsibilities of managing the farm. His newly declared major and career path proved to open big doors throughout the years, as he pursued a career in agricultural business while continuing to work the family farm.

"At the beginning of the summer, I didn't do a very good job, but I could go and talk to my father at night, and I learned a lot from him about the nuances of the business," he said. "By the end of the summer, I knew that I wanted to change my major and pursue farm management."

Being invited into FCBT's Academy of Honor is tremendously meaningful to Myers, who received his first farm credit loan as an undergraduate who purchased a small piece of land to plant a few crops.

"I'm honored to be inducted into the academy among so many business leaders and politicians who have done great things for the industry," he said. "The FCBT board members are some of the finest people I've ever met, and I'm humbled that they chose me."

Today, Myers farms 8,200 acres of rice, corn, and soybeans in southern Tunica County alongside his son. Together, they recently installed the first wind farm in Mississippi on their property.

"My son and I had 700-foot wind

towers installed on our property by a company associated with Amazon," he said. "The 19 turbines will produce 385 megawatts for the power grid, and we'll receive credits for the energy they produce."

During his 27-year tenure on the Mississippi Land Bank board of directors—18 as chair—Myers and his team grew the bank's assets from \$200 million to \$1 billion. His dedication to the land bank system traces back to his youth, when a loan officer took a chance on a budding farmer who had more ambition than cash.

"For over a century, the Federal Farm Loan Act has made it possible for farmers like me to purchase land and expand their farms," he said. "I began borrowing in 1969 and have been borrowing ever since."

One of his greatest responsibilities as chair was mentoring and training new board members to grow and constantly improve the bank's services. Reflecting on the importance of guiding the next generation of leaders in his field, Myers believes that a college education is an essential foundation to success in the farming business.

"I strongly encourage anyone who has the desire to work in farming to earn their college degree," he said. "And I'm honored to be able to award these scholarships that will help some of today's students achieve their educational goals."

For more information on supporting the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, please contact Will Staggers, Director of Development for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, at 662-325-2837 or wstaggers@foundation.msstate.edu.

Abbott Myers. (Photo by David Ammon)



Furthering an Agricultural Legacy

Washington County Farm Bureau pledges \$52,000 to MSU scholarships

By Samuel Hughes

WASHINGTON COUNTY is defined by agriculture with more than 400,000 acres of farmland, or 82 percent of the total land area in the county, which affirm it as a center of the Mississippi Delta's economic identity. To invest in the future of Washington County, the **Washington County Farm Bureau** gifted \$52,000 to Mississippi State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) to establish the Washington County Endowed Scholarship and the Washington County Farm Bureau Annual Scholarship.

Mark Looney, president of the Washington County Farm Bureau and '76 Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering alumnus, has committed his life to farming corn, soybeans, and winter wheat in Washington County. He is grateful the Washington County Farm Bureau will contribute to the agricultural legacy of his home county.

"We would like to see young people go to Mississippi State and major in agricultural-related fields. We just want to help students go to college, and we want to help them go to Mississippi State, it being a land-grant university," Looney said.

Of the total gift, \$50,000 of the gift will establish the Washington County Farm Bureau Endowed Scholarship, while the remaining \$2,000 will fund the Washington County Farm Bureau Annual Scholarship, divided into two \$1,000 scholarships annually. The structure ensures sustained support for students well into the future.

The first scholarships will be awarded to students in the coming academic year. Eligible candidates are full-time undergraduate students within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, maintaining a minimum 3.0 GPA and residing in Washington County. The scholarships will be awarded annually, with recipients encouraged to engage in the wider agricultural community by attending the annual Mississippi Farm Bureau Convention in Jackson, Mississippi.

"As a part of the American Farm Bureau Federation, we want to do things that promote agriculture. We had some money, and we thought the best thing to do was to pass it back to the Washington County community through these scholarships," Looney said.

The American Farm Bureau Federation,

an advocate for farmers, ranchers, and rural communities nationwide, supports agricultural communities partly through revenues from Farm Bureau Insurance. Annually, members from over 2,800 counties across the nation convene to discuss and influence policies impacting their livelihoods.

The Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, the state's largest general farm organization, continuously seeks legislative solutions to enhance farm family life. The Washington County Farm Bureau, with a robust membership of 2,500, chose to support these scholarships primarily through investments in commercial rental property.

Tim Clements, a board member and former president of the Washington County Farm Bureau, highlighted the connection between the support for MSU and the innovative work at the Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, located within the county. MSU experts collaborate there to resolve agricultural challenges and advance industry knowledge.

"We see the benefit of furthering the science of agriculture and believe that

FARM BUREAU

MISSISSIPPI

Left to right in the picture: Tim Clements; Howard New; Jimmy Doolittle; Blake New, board treasurer; Will Staggers; Mark Looney, board president; and Walt King, board vice president. (photo submitted)



the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has done a good job in furthering that vision. We as farmers and producers have all benefited from the education and research conducted by MSU graduates,” Clements said. “We all receive benefits from the work that comes through the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) branch station in Stoneville. We see a very direct correlation between education, scholarship, and practical benefits for agriculture.”

The decision to create these scholarships was unanimous among the Washington County Farm Bureau board members. Clements said the scholarships align with the American Farm Bureau Federation’s goal of promoting agriculture education. He said these new scholarships are examples of the organization’s commitment to its agricultural community, and its trust in MSU to produce new leaders in agriculture. “We’re happy to help students. The American Farm Bureau Federation

sees the benefit of agricultural education and young men and women going into careers in agriculture, whether it’s public or private, where they can help the farmers of the future,” Clements said.

For more information on supporting students through scholarships, please contact Will Staggers, Director of Development for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, at 662-325-2837 or wstaggers@foundation.msstate.edu.

College News

Alabama Feed and Grain Association Scholarships

SEVEN MISSISSIPPI STATE STUDENTS received prestigious Alabama Feed and Grain Association Scholarships, providing \$3,500 each for students majoring in agricultural-related fields who have high grades, are involved in the community, and show an interest in agricultural science. MSU recipients include **William “Ches” Grisham, Jorge Urrutia, Dalton Dennehy, Macie Bishop, Michael Carroll, Emily Myers, and Hannah Grace Childress.** The AFGA, a non-profit trade association, works closely with institutions of higher learning to provide numerous scholarship opportunities for outstanding students.



Generations of Giving

FOR OVER THREE DECADES, the McWilliams family has financially supported the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. The tradition of giving began in 1990 by **Major Leon McWilliams** in memory of his parents. He, his brother **Shorty McWilliams**, and other family members established an endowment to support faculty and student development in the former College of Agriculture and Home Economics, now the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. This endowment is unique in that so many members of the family have participated over the years. All four McWilliams children, **Clay** ('71), **Gordon** ('76), **Cathy** ('76), and **Tom** ('78), graduated from Mississippi State and added small gifts to the endowment over the years. More than three decades later, the initial gift of \$10,000 has grown to an \$84,000 endowment and contributed to scholarships and



research scholars awards for undergraduate students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Leon Clayton McWilliams, for whom the endowment was established, earned a degree in agriculture in 1915 when the university was known as Mississippi A&M. After graduation, he became one of the state's first county Extension agents. Major Leon McWilliams, who started the endowment, graduated from

Mississippi State College in 1949 with a degree in agriculture and worked for the MS Department of Agriculture and later for MS Chemical Corporation. In March 2022, Tom McWilliams passed away. Tom's siblings, Clay, Gordon, and Cathy Kerr, visited MSU in October 2022 to present a gift to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences from their brother's estate—Tom's final gift that will make a lasting impact.

Former associate dean honored for 40 years of service

DR. LYNN REINSCHMIEDT, former associate dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, received the 2023 CALS Dean's Award. Reinschmiedt was associate dean for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University from 2001 until his retirement in July 2010. Prior to his role as associate dean, he moved up through the professorial ranks in the Department of Agricultural Economics. The Oklahoma native earned bachelor's and master's degrees from Oklahoma State University and a doctoral degree from Texas A&M University, all in agricultural economics. Prior to joining MSU in 1978, Reinschmiedt was on the faculty at the University of Delaware for a year and a half. After his retirement from MSU in 2010, he held roles as interim associate vice president for administrative services, faculty credentials consultant, interim registrar, and interim executive director of the Center for Distance Education before fully retiring in 2016.

Lynn Reinschmiedt. (Photo by David Ammon)



College News

Extension director has roots in entomology

DR. ANGUS CATCHOT, JR., was named director of the MSU Extension Service in October 2023. In his previous position, Catchot served as the associate director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station and a professor in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.



A triple MSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences alumnus, Catchot earned his bachelor's degree in ag pest management and both his master's and doctoral degrees in entomology. He worked for Monsanto Company for six years before returning to his alma mater as an Extension faculty member specializing in row crop entomology.

MSU School of Human Sciences welcomes new director

A DYNAMIC EDUCATOR who has spent her career as a Bulldog trades red and black for a return to maroon and white.

Dr. Sheri Worthy is the new director of the Mississippi State School of Human Sciences. Worthy returned to MSU after serving nearly 12 years at the University of Georgia, most recently as associate dean for academic programs. Prior to her work at UGA, she was a professor in the MSU School of Human Sciences for 15 years. Worthy said she looks forward to re-engaging with the school, which is tasked with solving distinct challenges across a broad spectrum. Worthy received her doctoral degree in consumer economics from Texas Tech University, her Master of Business Administration from the University of Minnesota, and her bachelor's degree in advertising from the University of North Dakota.



Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design announces new head

EXPERIENCED LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT and educator **Anne Spafford** was named head of the Department of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Design.

The department name was recently changed to align with its mission. Spafford, who most recently was professor and associate department head of the Department of Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University, has 25 years' experience in higher education teaching and research. Spafford earned her Bachelor of Science in Ornamental Horticulture and her Master of Landscape Architecture from the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. She currently is a Doctor of Design candidate in the College of Design at North Carolina State University.



Bratcher leads Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences

AN EXPERIENCED animal and meat science expert is the head of the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences. **Dr. Christy Bratcher** joined the university after serving as associate dean of research and graduate students at Texas Tech University's College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources.

Prior to Texas Tech, Bratcher served as director of Auburn University's Food Systems Institute.

Bratcher earned her Ph.D. in animal science from the University of Missouri and her master's and bachelor's degrees in animal science from the University of Florida.



Experienced leadership at Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center

DR. CURT LACY is the new head of the Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center in Raymond.

Lacy's history at MSU goes back more than three decades, beginning with his bachelor's degree in agricultural and extension education and—years later—his master's and doctoral degrees in agricultural economics.

Prior to his 2015 return to MSU to serve as regional coordinator for the Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, he served as an area specialist for the University of Tennessee's Agricultural Extension Service.



Alumni News

HANNAH BECKER (B.S. animal and dairy science, '10) was selected for the Armed Forces Communication and Electronics Association Cyber Committee, which coordinates outreach and facilitates learning and networking opportunities for people in the industry while also providing support and researching new ideas that affect the field. Becker is vice president of Becker Digital, a Virginia-based communications and marketing agency.

KENNY CRENSHAW (B.S. agricultural engineering technology and business, '84) delivered the Dedication of Work Speech during the opening ceremonies of the National Association of Landscape Professionals Renewal and Remembrance 26th annual volunteer beautification event at Arlington National Cemetery. The annual event coordinates the volunteer efforts of

landscape professionals from across the country to enhance the grounds of the cemetery. Crenshaw, who is president of Memphis, Tennessee-area lawn-care company Herbi-Systems, is in his 18th year of leadership with the group.

KENTORRI GARMON (B.S. agricultural economics, '00; M.S. geosciences, '04) is now deputy commissioner for the Department of Public Works in Atlanta, Georgia. He previously served as the director of performance and innovation delivery within the organization. Prior to joining the public works department, he spent 17 years in the private sector with AT&T where he held numerous positions and was instrumental in management operations forces for the restoration and rebuilding of telecom infrastructure in the wake of natural disasters on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and in the Pine Belt region.

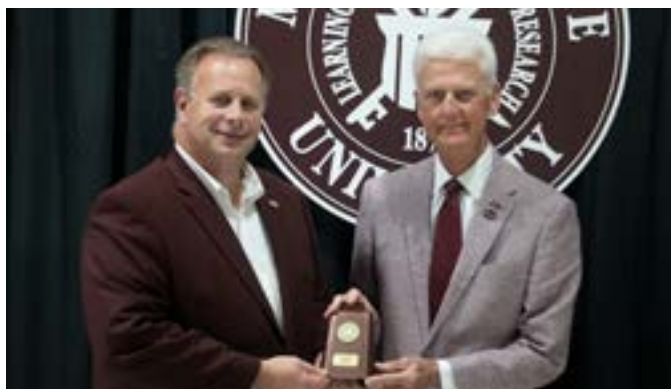
SAM KENNEMER (B.L.A. landscape architecture, '19) is now a Professional Landscape Architect having passed the four-part national exam. The Alabama native works with HRC Engineers in Atlanta, Georgia, a company he interned with as an undergraduate and began working with full-time following his graduation.

JEANETTA TANKSON (B.S. microbiology, '92, Ph.D. animal physiology, '01) was featured on the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service website. A staff officer with the Laboratory Quality Assurance, Response, and Coordination unit, she is based out of the Richard B. Russell Agricultural Research Center in Athens, Georgia, where, in addition to laboratory audits, policy development and methods evaluation, she is a subject matter expert in various laboratory projects.

SUPER BULLDOG WEEKEND BREAKFAST 2024



DRS. STEVE AND JENNY TURNER were recognized for their support of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Steve Turner formerly served as head of the Department of Agricultural Economics and director of the Southern Rural Development Center. Jenny Turner supported the college's degree programs from her time in the registrar's office.



DR. PETER RYAN, Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences professor and Executive Vice Provost was honored with the MSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Dean's Award.



2023 ALUMNI FELLOW

Dennis Reginelli

Dennis Reginelli of Starkville, Mississippi, is the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences 2023 Alumni Fellow. Reginelli grew up on his family farm in Shaw, where he learned about crops from his father and horticulture from his mother. His parents played a crucial role in his decision to pursue a degree in agriculture at Mississippi State.

Reginelli is a three-time MSU alumnus, earning a 1982 bachelor's and 1989 master's degree, both in agronomy. He went on to earn a 1993 Ph.D. in seed technology.

During his career with MSU Extension, Reginelli held various roles, including area extension agent for agronomic crops, in which he contributed to program development for several counties. He also served as a regional

Extension specialist, showcasing his skills in agronomic program execution and leadership. From 2007-2012, he was the county director/area Extension agent, providing exceptional leadership in county Extension education.

Reginelli's experiences include serving as a county agricultural agent in Noxubee County, where he specialized in crops such as cotton, wheat, soybean, and corn, and as a research assistant in agronomy at various MSU research stations.

After his 2019 retirement from MSU, Reginelli began serving as executive director of the Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board.

In 2020, Reginelli and his wife established the Dennis and Deborah Reginelli Endowed Scholarship in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.



2023 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Jeff Tarsi

Jeff Tarsi of Collierville, Tennessee, is the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences 2023 Alumnus of the Year. The executive vice president and president of global retail for Nutrien Ag Solutions earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics in 1984. As a farm kid growing up in the Mississippi Delta, Tarsi's dream was to work his family's land near Cleveland. He followed his father's footsteps to MSU, where he was involved with the National Agri-marketing Association and Ag Econ Club. He also is a graduate of the Harvard Agribusiness Program and Purdue Strategic Marketing Course. Although his farming dream didn't work out,

he established a successful career in the ag industry that has spanned more than 30 years and multiple leadership roles. He first joined a Nutrien legacy company in 1997 and served in a number of key leadership positions over the years, including vice president of retail international and strategy, where he was responsible for the retail businesses in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil and Australia. More recently, he served as senior vice president of North American operations for Nutrien's retail business. Tarsi's current role began last year, leading a network of 2,000 retail farm centers and more than 20,000 employees across three continents.



2024 ALUMNI FELLOW

Lea Ann Macknally

Lea Ann Macknally has dedicated over 20 years to creating socially and environmentally conscious public spaces. As the president of Macknally Land Design since 2007, she leads the firm in project development and management, stakeholder engagement and environmental restoration. Her leadership has resulted in a portfolio of award-winning projects, including the nationally recognized Railroad Park and the recently opened Protective Stadium in Birmingham, where she and her husband reside.

Growing up in Kosciusko, Mississippi, Macknally developed a love for the outdoors through her family's gardening and travel experiences.

This early passion led her to MSU, where she eventually graduated in 2000 with a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture degree.

Macknally is an active leader in the landscape architecture community, serving as 2024 president of the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards and contributing to numerous non-profit initiatives. Her expertise in sustainable design and inclusive engagement has shaped projects such as the Benjamin Russell Hospital for Children and One Pratt Park in Birmingham, Alabama, earning her several accolades from the American Society of Landscape Architects and other industry organizations.



2024 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Michael "Mike" Bogan

Michael "Mike" Bogan of Del Mar, California, is the CEO of LandCare USA. The Memphis, Tennessee, native earned his bachelor's degree in landscape architecture in 1987 and started his career in Washington, D.C. Bogan joined The Brickman Group in 1989 and helped pioneer a branch model that spurred the company's national expansion. He subsequently took on roles with Brickman in West Palm Beach, Florida, and San Diego, California, where he grew the company to become an industry leader. In 2014, he joined the commercial landscape services business LandCare USA, where he rebranded, expanded and led a 2019 management buyout of the company. Today, the \$325 million company employs 4,000 team members

with offices in more than 25 states. Bogan is most proud of the purpose-driven culture he is building at LandCare, which has created fulfilling careers for many landscape professionals. He serves on the boards of directors for the National Association of Landscape Professionals and Nature Sacred, as well as the advisory council for MSU's Department of Landscape Architecture. Honored as a 2020 Distinguished Alumni Fellow of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Bogan credits his time at MSU for preparing him for a broad and varied career in the landscape industry. He and his wife, Rebecca, a fellow 1987 landscape architecture graduate, are loyal supporters of MSU and its landscape architecture program.

OBITUARIES

DAVID ARANT SR. (B.S. agricultural economics, '78) 66, Ruleville — He was a member of the Bulldog football team while at State before being sidelined by a knee injury. Following his graduation, he settled in Ruleville where he farmed the family land, ultimately helping found Delta Blues Rice with his son and brother. — August 22, 2023

FRED A. BAKER (B.S. College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, '70; retired staff) 74, Hattiesburg — An Eagle Scout and decorated 4-Her, he worked with the MSU Extension Service as a 4-H youth agent, assistant county agent, and county agent in Jeff Davis, Forrest, and Covington counties during his 30-year career. — April 29, 2022

HABIB BAZYARI (M.S. agricultural economics, '65; Ph.D. quantitative analysis, economics, '74; retired faculty) 86, Meridian — Born in Iran, he came to the U.S. in the early 1960s. He was the first business professor at MSU-Meridian, joining the faculty when the division opened in 1972. He later became chair of the Business Division and grew the program from 80 to 350 students. He was named a Professor Emeritus following his 36-year career. He later served as the dean of the College of Business at the University of West Alabama. — July 21, 2022

HARDY THOMSON BRUMFIELD (B.S. agricultural economics, '89) 55, Atlanta, GA — He was a Sigma Alpha Epsilon at Mississippi State, serving as both Rush chairman and president. Following his graduation, he moved to Chicago, IL, where he began a more than 30-year career

at the Chicago Board of Trade. For eight years he was the largest volume trader in the 10-year treasury notes futures. He also became involved in various technological, agricultural, environmental, and healthcare initiatives. In 2014, he founded Rolling B Ranch, a registered Angus and commercial cattle operation, becoming a third-generation cattleman. — April 8, 2023

HARLEN ORAL ELLIOTT (B.S. dairy science, '55) 88, Tonganoxie, Kansas — A native of Purvis, he was active in the dairy industry throughout high school and college. After completing Army ROTC, he served 20 years at a variety of posts in Europe, Korea, Vietnam, and the U.S. One focus of his career was military education. He taught ROTC, coached collegiate and Army rifle teams, and was a faculty member and curriculum developer at Command and General Staff College in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Elliott owned several businesses after retiring from active duty, including Midwest Marine and Wholesale Distributorship in Leavenworth. — May 20, 2022 Elvin Graham (B.S. ag and extension education, '52; M.Ed. school administration, '55) 94, Tupelo — A WWII veteran who was stationed in Italy, he began his teaching career at Fairview Junior High and later became principal—a role he held until his retirement in 1986. He was a member of the East Fulton Baptist Church where he was a deacon and Sunday school teacher. — Jan. 8, 2022

KENNETH HOOD (B.S. general agriculture, '62) 81, Gun-nison — At Mississippi State, he was a member of Sigma Phi

Epsilon. He served the Mississippi Air National Guard for six years. He was partner in a family farm operation and was known as an innovator and entrepreneur in the development and improvement of precision agriculture. Among his many awards and honors are: Cotton Farming's Cotton Farmer of the Year, Delta Council's Achievement Award for Outstanding Contributions to Cotton Ginning, New York Cotton Exchange Cotton Marketer of the Year, Southern Cotton Ginner Association Ginner of the Year, Cotton Grower's Magazine Cotton Achievement Award, and Delta Business Journal Ag Profile Leadership Award. He was chairman of the National Cotton Council, president of Delta Council, president and chairman of the board of the National Cotton Ginners Association, president and chairman of the board of the Southern Cotton Ginners Association, chairman of the Mississippi Cotton Advisory Committee for Mississippi Farm Bureau, and a board member for Stapl-cotn. — December 1, 2022

ISIDRO "CHILO" MATAMOROS (M.S. Animal Science, '86; Ph.D. Animal Physiology, '90) 59, Honduras — A faculty member at Zamorano University, he was remembered by the American Brahman Breeders Association as a friend and supporter of the breed who instilled his passion in students by bringing them to the International Brahman Show each year. — May 10, 2023

HOWARD L. MISKELLY (B.S. agricultural and extension education, '50) 96, Okolona — He served in WWII, earning the

rank of staff sergeant in the Army and being awarded two Bronze Stars. He then attended Union University on a basketball scholarship before transferring to MSU where he was president of Alpha Tau Omega and cadet colonel of the MSU ROTC. With his wife of 74 years, he owned and operated Howard's Department Store for 40 years. This store was the inspiration for Miskelly Furniture, which was founded by his children and is now one of the largest independent furniture retailers in the country. He was a member of the Lions Club, founding member of the Okolona Country Club, served on the board for the Mississippi School for the Deaf and Blind, was appointed to the Veterans Administration board, and served as president of the Mississippi Retail Association. — July 16, 2022

EDNA RUTH MORGAN (B.S. education, '65; M.S. agricultural and extension education, '81; former staff) 90, Starkville — She worked as a student secretary at Mississippi State University while in high school and returned as a student to earn a bachelor's degree in 1965. She began her teaching career in Sayre, Alabama, before coming back to MSU as an office administrator in the Extension entomology department—becoming the first female professional hired by the office. She eventually earned a master's in the field and was the first woman to serve on the executive board of the Mississippi Entomological Association. She retired from MSU after 42 years, turning her attention to studying the history of Starkville and Oktibeha County. — June 14, 2023

JOHN WATSON OGLESBY SR.

(B.S. agricultural engineering technology and business, '62) 82, Chatham – A Delta farmer, he raised cattle and grew cotton, corn, soybeans, and wheat through his family farming operation for 60 years. He served on many local, state, and national boards for civic leadership and public service throughout his life. He was named Outstanding Young Farmer of Washington County in 1974 and served as a commissioner of the Washington County Soil and Water Conservation District for 24 years, where he had also served as chairman. He was a past president of the Mississippi Association of Conservation Districts and served on the national Association of Conservation Districts executive board. He was named to the NACD Southeast Region Conservation Hall of Fame. He was a past president of the Lake Jackson Water Association, was on the board of the Highland Land Corporation, was a past vice president of Berkeley Gin, and a past chairman of the Northwest Mississippi R C & D Council, in addition to leadership within numerous other cultural and political groups. — June 25, 2022

JOHN STEPHENS "STEVE"

WORLEY (B.S. agricultural science, '39) 84, Madison – A native of Sumner, he was a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity, an ROTC cadet and later Army officer. Upon retirement, he and his wife moved to Orange Beach, Alabama, and then Madison. He was a charter member of the Bulldog Club, served in numerous church and community leadership roles, and was an avid outdoorsman throughout his life. — Feb. 10, 2022



Imogene and Glover Triplett (photo by Russ Houston)

GLOVER B. TRIPLETT (B.S. agriculture, '51; agronomy, '55; emeritus faculty) 93, Starkville – Glover attended Mississippi State College with a major in agriculture and participated in advanced ROTC. He served in the Korean war as an Infantry Officer in the Second Division. Following his military service, he returned to Mississippi State and received a master's in agronomy. He then attended Michigan State University and received a Ph.D. in farm crops in 1959. He was employed by the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center, Wooster, Ohio, where he was a pioneer in the development of no-tillage crop production. He and a colleague, David Van Doren, established a tillage X rotation study on different soil types. This study is endowed and continues today. Glover retired from Ohio in 1982 and returned to Mississippi

where he was employed by the plant and soil sciences department at MSU. There he conducted research adapting the no-tillage practice for crops in the southern region. Glover was a member of the First United Methodist Church in Starkville, a life member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a member of Lions service club and a member of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society, and Soil Science Society. He was named a Fellow of the Agronomy Society and was named as Agronomist of the Year in 2007 by the Mississippi Chapter of the American Society of Agronomy. Glover and wife, Imogene, contributed to Mississippi State. He established an endowed chair in plant and soil sciences and both contributed to funding of scholarships in agronomy, horticulture, and forestry. — March 30, 2024

CREATING A *Legacy*

Glover and Imogene Triplett were staunch supporters of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, creating a lasting legacy through numerous gifts including:

**Endowed Chair in
Agronomy**

**Triplett-Mississippi
Corn Promotion
Board Professorship**

**Student
Scholarships**

**Imogene Triplett
Gardens Fund**

**Triplett Endowed
Excellence Fund in
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If you are interested in creating a lasting legacy, contact Will Staggers, director of development, at 662.325.2837 or wstaggers@foundation.msstate.edu.



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