

111th Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference

National Association of
County Agricultural Agents

Achievement Award
Hall of Fame Award
Distinguished Service Award

July 8 - 12, 2026
Denver, Colorado



2026

RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

COMMITTEE

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National Association of County Agricultural Agents 2025 — 2026

OFFICERS

President	JJ Jones	Arkansas
President-Elect	Connie Strunk	South Dakota
Vice-President	Tyrone Fisher	North Carolina
Secretary	Joni Harper	Missouri
Treasurer	Melody Rose	Tennessee
Past President	Scott Jensen	Idaho

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North Central Region	Jennifer Bentley	Iowa
Northeast Region	Andrew Kness	Maryland
Southern Region	Sherri Sanders	Arkansas
Southern Region	Jennifer Pelham	Florida
Western Region	Aaron Esser	Washington

VICE DIRECTORS

North Central Region	Cade Rensink	Kansas
Northeast Region	Tom Butzler	Pennsylvania
Southern Region	Jennifer Pelham	Florida
Southern Region	Lonnie Jenschke	Texas
Western Region	Betsy Greene	Arizona

National Association of County Agricultural Agents Committee Chairs 2025-2026

Association Policy.....	Cynthia Gregg
Life Member.....	Steven Munk
Program Recognition Council.....	Daniel Leonard
Communications.....	Brittany Council-Morton
Search For Excellence.....	Heather Gessner
Research & Education Posters.....	Brian Haller
Recognition & Awards.....	Ed Lentz
Scholarship.....	Jennifer Lutes
Extension Development Council.....	Colt Knight
Agricultural Issues.....	David Marrison
Early Career Development.....	Ashley Wright
Leadership & Administrative Skills	Anna Duncan
Teaching & Educational Technologies.....	David Yates
Professional Improvement Council.....	Brian Beer
4-H & Youth.....	Heather Jennings
Agriculture Economics and Community Development.....	Blake Carter
Agronomy & Pest Management.....	Michael Rethwisch
Animal Science.....	Kyle Sanders
Horticulture & Turfgrass.....	Ginny Rosenkranz
Sustainable Agriculture & Natural Resources.....	Heather Schlessner

2025 - 2026

RECOGNITION AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

Ed Lentz

Ohio

National Chair

NORTHEAST REGION

Alexandria Smith, Vice Chair
West Virginia

State Chairs:

- Laurie Wolinski- Delaware
- Colt Knight- Maine
- Virginia Rosenkranz - Maryland
- Carl Majewski - New Hampshire
- Nicholas Polanin- New Jersey
- Sharon Bachman - New York
- J. Craig Williams - Pennsylvania
- Joshua Peplowski - West Virginia

WESTERN REGION

Vacant

State Chairs:

- Matthew Anderson - Alaska
- Betsy Greene - Arizona
- Amrita Mukherjee - California
- Kali Benson - Colorado
- Ronald Patterson - Idaho
- Marley Voll - Montana
- Carol Bishop- Nevada
- Patrick Kircher/Bonnie Hopkins
- New Mexico
- Brooke Edmunds- Oregon
- Matt Palmer - Utah
- Donald Llewellyn - Washington
- Donna Hoffman - Wyoming

SOUTHERN REGION

Jennifer Caraway, Vice Chair
Arkansas

State Chairs:

- Jimmy Smitherman - Alabama
- Rachel Bearden- Arkansas
- Lawrence Figart - Florida
- Jay Porter - Georgia
- Jessica Hopkins - Kentucky
- Joe Willis - Louisiana
- Heather Jennings - Mississippi
- Nelson Brownlee - North Carolina
- Jennifer Patterson/Cody Linker
- Oklahoma
- Jonathan Croft - South Carolina
- Shana Los - Tennessee
- Zachary Davis - Texas
- Adam Downing- Virginia

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

Cade Rensink, Vice Chair
Kansas

State Chairs:

- Bruce Black - Illinois
- Lais McCartney - Indiana
- Ron Lenth - Iowa
- Rachel Brooke- Kansas
- Phillip Tocco/Cheyenne Sloan
- Michigan
- Dianne Dewitte - Minnesota
- Patrick Davis - Missouri
- Wayne Ohnesorg - Nebraska
- Craig Askim - North Dakota
- Nic Baumer - Ohio
- Kristine Lang - South Dakota
- Kaitlyn Davis - Wisconsin

Saturday, July 11, 2026

NACAA DSA BANQUET PROGRAM

Presiding JJ Jones, President

Invocation.....Jacob Holloway, Arkansas

Introductions:

NACAA Board and Special GuestsJJ Jones, President

Past Officers and Life Members Mark Nelson, Chair,
Policy Committee

Dinner

Recognition Program:

Hall of Fame Award.....Connie Strunk, President-Elect

Distinguished Service AwardEd Lentz, Chair,
Recognition & Awards Committee

Special Recognition..... Mark Nelson, Chair,
Policy Committee

Invitation to St. Paul, Minnesota.....Brad Carlson
2027 AM/PIC Chair

Happy Faces Video

Installation of President and Past PresidentScott Jensen,
Past President

Passing of the Gavel JJ Jones, President

Adjourn Connie Strunk, President-Elect

88th ANNIVERSARY

This is the eighty-eighth year that the Distinguished Service Awards have been presented by the National Association of County Agricultural Agents. The first time was in 1938 at the annual meeting in Chicago when twenty-two members were honored. Tonight, an additional sixty-six distinguished colleagues are being recognized, joining a very distinguished group of 7,840 NACAA members that have been so honored in the past.

CONGRATULATIONS HONOREES

The Recognition and Awards Committee of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents Association takes great pride in presenting the year's Distinguished Service Award Recipients. This Annual Banquet is prepared in their honor.

The honorees who will be recognized tonight are representatives of the top two percent of the membership of NACAA as chosen by their peers and the Directors of Extension of the various states. They represent a careful search by the members of each State Recognition and Awards Committee, each of the State Associations of County Agricultural Agents and the coordination of these efforts by the Regional and National Committee members.

Please share the pride of these committees by noting the accomplishments of each honoree as indicated by his/her citation. These NACAA recipients represent the wonderful work that is being carried out across the nation by the membership of the association. Our humble congratulations to each honoree.

County Agents Receiving the DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

**From The National Association of
County Agricultural Agents
2026**

Winners are listed by regions and states.

WESTERN REGION - ARIZONA

Ashley Wright – 11 Years

Ashley Wright has demonstrated sustained excellence and leadership through her service with Cooperative Extension, delivering impactful, research-based programming across multiple counties and disciplines. Her work supports diverse livestock producers while advancing best management practices, producer education, and industry collaboration. In addition to her programming, she provides meaningful service at the state and national level, mentors colleagues, and consistently strengthens Extension's capacity to serve Arizona's agricultural communities.



WESTERN REGION - COLORADO

Larry Brown – 15 Years



Show up, work hard, believe in Extension's mission, inspire through communication. Focus on service and value. Larry lived these principles—from serving as area livestock specialist in 1986 to becoming a business owner in 1995, volunteer Extension Advisor in 2016, and returning as Area Director/Ag Agent in 2021. His leadership rebuilt San Luis Valley Extension from two staff to twelve, securing funding and building a dedicated team.

WESTERN REGION - IDAHO

Carmen Willmore - 11 Years

University of Idaho Extension Educator Carmen Willmore has spent 11 years developing youth and livestock programs across Idaho. She leads 4-H events, livestock skill-a-thons, and educational camps, helping young producers build skills, confidence, and leadership. Willmore also supports livestock producers with research-based advice on animal health, nutrition, and herd management. Through workshops, field days, and consultations, she strengthens Idaho's agricultural community, inspiring the next generation of leaders while promoting responsible livestock care.



WESTERN REGION - MONTANA

Dave Brink - 19 Years



Dave is the Montana State University Extension 4-H and Ag/Natural Resource Agent in Mineral County. He teaches a variety of topics to youth and adult learners statewide, from livestock quality assurance to forest stewardship, vertebrate pest management to parliamentary procedure, pesticide safety to horticulture, and other duties as assigned.

WESTERN REGION - NEW MEXICO

John Garlisch - 15 Years

John is from Illinois, where he earned degrees in Horticulture and Ag Economics and he studied and worked in Europe. He started work with NMSU Extension in 2010. His programs include urban agriculture & horticulture, beginning farmer training, farm business planning, on-farm food safety, local foods, school gardens, Master Gardeners, and 4-H. Since 2021, he has also served as the county program director. He also plays the organ for church, gardens, and enjoys travelling.



WESTERN REGION - OREGON

Amy Derby - 25 Years



Amy has served as a single county agent in remote Wheeler County, North Central, Oregon for the past 21 years. While her official appointment is 4-H and Agriculture, she answers all questions that come across her desk. She utilizes her wide network of Extension colleagues to provide assistance in areas that are not her primary focus. She enjoys being involved in the Association and does not allow her remote location to be a barrier.

WESTERN REGION - UTAH

Katie Wagner - 15 Years

Katie Wagner has been a horticulture faculty member in Salt Lake County for 15 years. She grew up in Lexington and attended the University of Kentucky, where she earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees. Katie moved to Utah in 2006 and completed a second bachelor's degree at Utah State University before being hired as an Extension Assistant Professor. Her Extension outreach focuses on urban gardening and farming, and water conservation in the Intermountain West.



WESTERN REGION - WASHINGTON



Tipton Hudson - 22 Years

Tip Hudson has worked since 2003 with ranchers and natural resource professionals to help them understand and implement innovative rangeland grazing management to support ecosystem services from wildlands. In 2008, Hudson launched The Art of Range Podcast, a long-form science communication audio show featuring leading lights in rangeland ecology. In 2023, a team Tip led launched StockSmart, a grazing decision support platform using remote-sensed forage production data on big landscapes to calculate dynamic stocking rates.

WESTERN REGION - WYOMING

Abby Perry - 11 Years

Abby has worked for University of Wyoming Extension for 11 years. She started her career as a county educator in Carbon County and currently serves as a Small Acreage State Specialist. The bulk of her work has been on living with urban deer, community beautification and education, and youth programming. She is also the coordinator of the Barnyards & Backyards magazine; a quarterly magazine for small acreage producers in Wyoming.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - INDIANA

Elysia Rodgers - 16 Years



For sixteen years, Elysia Rodgers has demonstrated distinguished service through innovative Extension programming in livestock production, forage management, farm stress, horticulture, and agribusiness. Her leadership, mentorship, and collaborative efforts at the county, state, multi-state, and international levels have expanded educational access, strengthened agricultural resilience, and advanced the mission of Purdue Extension.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - IOWA

Ryan Drollette - 13 Years

Ryan Drollette, Farm Management Field Specialist with Iowa State University Extension and Outreach since 2011, delivers statewide education on farm economics, risk management, and decision-making. He has led impactful programs such as Annie's Project and Farmland Leasing, authored Ag Decision Maker resources, and secured numerous grants addressing market volatility and cybersecurity. With over 350 presentations and national leadership roles, Ryan's work strengthens Iowa agriculture through innovative programming, producer empowerment, and recognized excellence in extension service.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - MICHIGAN

Lyndon Kelley - 38 Years



Lyndon has served Extension in his community for 38 years. He began his career as a local county agent in a heavily irrigated county. Eventually moving to a state-level position in groundwater protection with an agricultural emphasis. The last 15 years have been spent working as an irrigation educator for Purdue and MSU Extension.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - MINNESOTA

Sarah Schieck Boelke - 12.5 Years



Sarah Schieck Boelke is a University of Minnesota Extension Educator focusing on swine. She provides programming for Pork Quality Assurance and Transport Quality Assurance certifications, SowBridge webinar series, biosecurity, foreign animal disease preparedness, including Certified Swine Sample Collector training, and other pork management topics. Sarah delivers programs via workshops, webinars, written content, videos and podcasts to reach a broader audience. Sarah currently serves as President of the Minnesota Association of Extension Agricultural Professionals.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - MISSOURI

Jennifer Schutter - 24 Years



Jennifer Schutter joined University of Missouri Extension as a horticulture specialist in May of 2001. Her areas of focus include Master Gardeners, Master Pollinator Steward, Master Naturalist, Garden n' Grow (youth gardening), Women in Agriculture, Local Food Systems, home gardening, floriculture and commercial horticulture production. She has provided leadership in curricula development, advisory boards, local partnerships, as a 4-H club and project leader, FFA Alumni, and association committee work.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - NEBRASKA

Elizabeth Exstrom - 17 Years

Elizabeth Exstrom is an Extension Educator with 17 years of service strengthening community landscapes, youth engagement, and volunteer development. She leads the Central Nebraska Extension Master Gardener program, generating 38,590 volunteer hours and a \$1.34 million local impact. Her Special Garden Project has engaged over 26,500 youth in every Nebraska county. Reaching more than 3 million clients through education and media outreach, she is a driving force for sustainable landscapes and arboriculture across central Nebraska.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - NORTH DAKOTA

Mary Keena - 13 Years



Mary Kenna is the Livestock Environmental Management Specialist with North Dakota State University Extension. Known for her practical outlook Mary often tells producers, "If it stinks or is decomposing, it's my thing!" Mary's role centers on working directly with producers to help them use manure in an environmentally responsible manner. With 13 years of membership in the State Association, she brings practical expertise and a producer-focused mindset to every interaction.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - OHIO

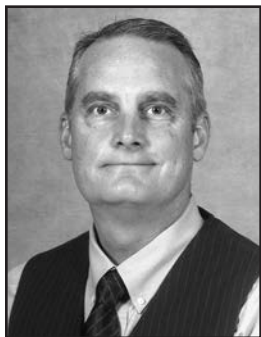
Lee Beers - 10 Years

Lee Beers is the Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Educator in Trumbull County. Lee uses on-farm research to find agronomic solutions relevant to local clientele, aids new and beginning farmers, and works to enhance professional development opportunities for Educators. He has developed curriculum and scholarly products for small farm hay production, chainsaw safety, and balancing work and life for Extension professionals. He has served as the Ohio NACAA president and provided leadership to Area 6.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - OHIO

Timothy McDermott - 10 Years



Dr. Tim McDermott is an Assistant Professor with OSU Extension. He joined Extension ten years ago after 20 years in veterinary practice. He lectures from local to internationally on veterinary medicine, local food systems, and urban agriculture. He has been awarded over 4 million dollars to support his research and Extension outreach efforts in arthropod-vector disease, One Health, youth workforce development in agriculture, urban on-farm research, and controlled environment agriculture.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - WISCONSIN

Peggy Damann - 27 Years

For outstanding leadership and 27 years of dedicated service to UW–Madison Division of Extension, guiding statewide horticulture outreach with strategic vision, strengthening coordination across educators and specialists, and advancing Extension’s mission through innovation, collaboration, and national professional leadership.



NORTHEAST REGION - CONNECTICUT

Rich Meinert – 37 Years



Richard Meinert’s leadership in nutrient management has strengthened Connecticut agriculture over his 37-year career to date. His work supports dairy and livestock producers through research-based guidance, on farm workshops, and best management practices that protect soil and water quality. In addition, he also works with craft breweries on handling their organic waste. His publications and outreach on nutrient planning and environmental stewardship have created lasting improvements in farm management and resource protection across the state.

NORTHEAST REGION - MAINE

Jason Lilley - 10 Years

Jason Lilley is an Assistant Extension Professor of Sustainable Agriculture and Maple Industry Educator with UMaine Cooperative Extension. Over ten years, he has built needs-based, impact-driven programs for farmers and earned recognition for soil health expertise through research and leadership in the Northeast Cover Crop Council. As co-director of the International Maple Grading School, he advanced maple syrup quality and food safety education. He also leads tractor safety efforts and serves in Extension leadership roles.



NORTHEAST REGION - MARYLAND

Neith Little - 10 Years



Neith Little is the Urban Agriculture Extension Educator for Baltimore City. She works with urban farmers to learn what they need to better achieve their goals through one-on-one technical assistance, workshops, field days, written resources, and applied research. Urban farmers often grow their plants inside buildings or on small plots of land and many under high tunnels. Her meetings cover topics like aquaponics, growing edible mushrooms, using biochar, food safety and getting a pesticide license.

NORTHEAST REGION - NEW HAMPSHIRE

Rachel Maccini - 24 Years

Rachel Maccini has served as a University of New Hampshire Extension Field Specialist in Pesticide Safety for more than 24 years. She delivers comprehensive education to agricultural, commercial, and homeowner audiences through in-person, hybrid, and online programs. Her work includes developing 12 online training modules, leading statewide workshops and certification classes, and designing evaluations and surveys that measure program effectiveness and inform continuous improvement that strengthen public health, environmental protection, and applicator competency statewide efforts.



NORTHEAST REGION - NEW JERSEY

Steven Yergeau - 12 Years



As a County Agent in Ocean and Atlantic Counties, Steve works to protect coastal water resources in southeastern New Jersey. He has secured significant funding to create award-winning, innovative programs that encourage action to manage water quality. Steve's programs on stormwater, water conservation, and sustainable landscaping impact over 40,000 people annually through various outreach, print, and social media. He is a valued collaborator among natural resource Extension colleagues in the Earth Day Every Day Program.

NORTHEAST REGION - NEW YORK

Rachel Moody - 10 Years

Rachel has worked for Cornell Cooperative Extension for over 10 years. From 2014 to 2020, Rachel served as the Livestock Educator for CCE Orange County. After spending a year working with Cornell's Quality Milk Production Services, she joined the Capital Area Agriculture and Horticulture Program in May of 2022 as a Commercial Livestock Educator. Rachel engages with local producers by offering classes such as raising pigs on pasture and renovating barns for small ruminants.



NORTHEAST REGION - PENNSYLVANIA

Ginger Fenton - 15 Years



Ginger has been a dairy Educator with Penn State Extension since 2010. Dr. Fenton is a knowledgeable, talented Educator with a wealth of programming provided to Pennsylvania dairy farmers. She is the current PACAA president and has won several state and national awards from both PACAA and NACAA. Her work on milk quality and food safety has saved Pennsylvania dairies hundreds of thousands of dollars over her career, according to grower surveys.

NORTHEAST REGION - WEST VIRGINIA

Daisy Bailey - 16 Years

Daisy F. Bailey is a WVU Extension Agent serving Gilmer and Calhoun Counties for 14 years, where she has developed and sustained thriving Youth Livestock Programs. She plays an active statewide role in Risk Management Education through Annie's Project, Agritourism Initiatives, and FSA Borrowers Financial Management Training. Recently, she has led efforts to expand the use of locally sourced products at Extension-hosted conferences, strengthening support for West Virginia producers and agricultural engagement statewide.



SOUTHERN REGION - ALABAMA

Marcus Garner – 23 Years



With more than 23 years of service to the state of Alabama, he is honored to receive the Distinguished Service Award. His Extension career has spanned 4-H and Youth Development, Community Resource Development, and Natural Resources, and was notably influenced by his participation in the 2015 National Conference made possible through a NACAA scholarship. A native of Aliceville, he now delivers Home Horticulture programs that benefit youth, seniors, and communities across the state.

SOUTHERN REGION - ALABAMA

Janet Johnson – 34 Years

Janet delivers comprehensive food safety and preservation programming across multiple Alabama counties. She provides extensive ServSafe, Alabama Cottage Food, Produce Safety, and food preservation trainings, resulting in numerous certifications and measurable improvements in participant knowledge. Efforts include multi-day preservation camps, development of online educational resources, and ongoing technical assistance. She additionally contributes to youth initiatives, statewide events, and professional committees, demonstrating strong leadership, program effectiveness, and a sustained commitment to advancing food safety across Alabama.



SOUTHERN REGION - ALABAMA

Alice Moore – 10 Years



Alice serves as a Food Safety agent, educating home consumers, entrepreneurs, foodservice professionals, processors, and manufacturers. Through outreach and training, she promotes food safety practices that drive behavior change and improve food safety across multiple counties, statewide, and regionally. In 2024, she served as Food Safety Team Coordinator, demonstrating leadership in program coordination and collaboration. A career highlight has been her leadership in expanding AFDO Seafood HACCP courses, increasing access for statewide and regional clients.

SOUTHERN REGION - ARKANSAS

Grant Beckwith – 20 Years

Grant Beckwith began his career as a County Extension Agent for Agriculture in 2006 and currently serves as Staff Chair for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service in Arkansas County. He provides leadership in developing and delivering research-based agricultural programs, working closely with producers, local leaders, and councils. His focus areas include rice, soybeans, corn, and efficient irrigation practices. Grant and his wife, Jackie, have one son, Hayden.



SOUTHERN REGION - ARKANSAS

Jennifer Caraway – 11 Years



Jennifer Caraway serves as Miller County Agriculture Agent and has worked with the University of Arkansas Extension Service for 11 years. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture from Arkansas Tech University and a Master of Science from University of Arkansas. Her work emphasizes forage improvement and productivity with significant contributions to feral hog trapping and research, earning state and national recognition. She currently serves as NACAA Southern Region Vice-Chair for Recognition & Awards.

SOUTHERN REGION - ARKANSAS

Jerri Dew – 20 Years

Jerri Dew has served in four different Southwest Arkansas counties in her 20 years with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Extension Service. She currently serves as the Staff Chair for Lafayette County. Jerri considers Extension to be one of the major blessings in her life as she has made numerous friends and had the opportunity to positively impact many. Her main goals are to enhance others' lives and to be a living testimony.



SOUTHERN REGION - FLORIDA

Matthew VanWeelden - 10 Years

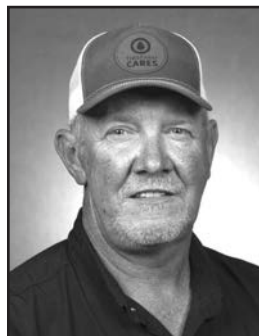


Matthew VanWeelden (University of Florida) is the Palm Beach County agronomic crops agent. Degrees include MS-Purdue and PhD-LSU (Entomology). He develops science-based recommendations for sugarcane/rice production, varieties, pest control, and environmental BMPs. His 10-year national leadership (Rice Technical Working Group) collaborations benefit Florida rice farmers. Matthew has 15 national/state awards (5 with NACAA), 23 peer-reviewed articles, and 35 professional presentations (including 5 international). FACAA contributions include committees (Abstracts, Agronomy/Pest Management) and serving as current Past-President.

SOUTHERN REGION - FLORIDA

Mark Warren - 17 Years

Mark Warren provides administrative leadership for Extension programs in Levy County, Florida. His educational programs target increased adoption of responsible and sustainable practices in agronomic and horticultural crop production. He is highly respected for his large portfolio of innovative on-farm demonstration projects including water and nutrient management, disease diagnosis and management, and advancement of new technologies. His expertise is in high demand by farmers and Extension colleagues throughout the North Florida region.



SOUTHERN REGION - FLORIDA

Timothy Wilson - 25 Years



Tim Wilson leads transformative Extension programs in beef cattle reproduction, forage systems, precision agriculture, and best management practices, advancing agricultural productivity and sustainability. His leadership has earned over 20 state, regional, and national awards, including multiple NACAA and FACAA honors for livestock innovation and communications excellence. Serving in FACAA since 2009, Tim has chaired committees and promoted professional development. His contributions include 4 refereed articles, 342 publications, 94 presentations, and more than 330 creative works.

SOUTHERN REGION - GEORGIA

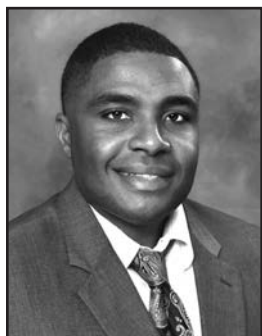
Stanley Culpepper - 26 Years

Dr. Culpepper's impact on agriculture cannot be summarized in 75 words. As a globally recognized weed scientist, Dr. Culpepper is a highly sought after voice in the world of pesticide use and regulation. Using Pesticides Wisely, Dr. Culpepper's flagship program aimed at improving the safety of pesticide applications, has provided training to over 17,000 applicators to date.



SOUTHERN REGION - GEORGIA

Joshua Dawson - 12 Years



As the Fort Valley State University ANR Agent in Lowndes County, Mr. Dawson serves a unique Urban population of South Georgia. Through the use of Master Gardener Extension Volunteers, Josh has established school gardens and agricultural education in school systems that previously had no Agricultural component. He has promoted student interest in STEM, and encouraged career interests in agricultural industries. Josh has collaborated with over 55 community partners to provide support to sustain these programs.

SOUTHERN REGION - GEORGIA

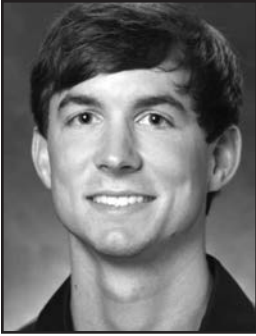
Greg Pittman - 11 Years

As the Jackson Co. ANR Agent, Greg's efforts are to enhance livestock health to ultimately increase profitability for local farmers. In addition to his livestock efforts, which include on-farm research focused on horn fly control, Pittman strives to help others be prepared in the event of emergencies and has travelled to assist other portions of the state following Hurricane Helene. He also provides substantial contributions to youth livestock locally and at the state level.



SOUTHERN REGION - GEORGIA

Ty Torrance - 11 Years



Since 2020, Torrance has served as an area vegetable specialist focusing on research and education in fresh market vegetable production. He has been invited to showcase his work at multiple national conferences, and in 2024 participated in the Philippines Fullbright program, providing vegetable production education to an international audience.

SOUTHERN REGION - KENTUCKY

Jessica Barnes - 11 Years

Jessica Barnes started her Extension career in 2014 as the first Horticulture Agent for Harrison County. Since, she has transferred into the role as Extension Agent for Agriculture & Natural Resources Education where she works diligently to bring research from the UK College of Agriculture, Food & Environment to the producers of Harrison County. Throughout her career she has provided education in the areas of vegetable production, horticulture, tobacco, grain, forage, hemp and livestock production.



SOUTHERN REGION - KENTUCKY

Leann Martin - 11 Years



Over my tenure as the Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent in Logan County, I have had the pleasure of working with some amazing people while creating a diverse portfolio of programs that cover topics of livestock to grain crops to horticulture and everything in between. I have been fortunate to create programs and events that have not only educated but have encouraged growth and success for all that have participated.

SOUTHERN REGION - KENTUCKY

Ray Tackett - 30 Years

Ray Tackett has served Kentucky Extension for 30 years as both an Agriculture & Natural Resources and Horticulture County Agent, providing leadership, innovative programming, and strong community partnerships. He has advanced local food systems, expanded Master Gardener outreach, delivered impactful producer education, and co-founded the globally ranked Hort Culture podcast. His leadership at county, district, and state levels exemplifies his lasting commitment to excellence in Extension.



SOUTHERN REGION - LOUISIANA

William Afton - 12 Years



William Afton serves as Agriculture and Natural Resource Extension Agent with the LSU AgCenter focusing on horticulture in St Tammany Parish and also serves as a Louisiana Master Gardener Volunteer Program Coordinator where he manages a group of 245 active Master Gardener volunteers. Mr Afton completed a B.S. degree in Environmental Horticulture from Louisiana State University in 2011 and a M.S. in Commercial Vegetable Crops from Louisiana State University in 2018.

SOUTHERN REGION - LOUISIANA

Vincent Deshotel - 17 Years

Vincent "Vince" Deshotel began his Extension career more than 17 years ago in 2008 with the LSU AgCenter as a horticulture agent, primarily working with sweet potato production, commercial vegetable production, and home gardens. Vince's Extension role has gravitated in several directions through his career, Regional Beef Cattle Program Coordinator, an Agronomy Agent in a multi parish area, and most recently to serve as ANR Coordinator for ANR Agents in Central Louisiana.



SOUTHERN REGION - MISSISSIPPI

Butch Bailey - 24 Years



Butch has worked as an Extension Forester for Mississippi State University since 2002. In that role, he has worked with landowners and professional foresters, as well as loggers and other affiliated groups, to extend the latest scientific knowledge about timber and forestland management across all 82 counties in MS. Butch has also served as President of the MS Forestry Association in 2023.

SOUTHERN REGION - MISSISSIPPI

Drew Gholson - 15 Years

Dr. Drew Gholson is an Extension Irrigation Specialist with Mississippi State University located at the Delta Research and Extension Center in Stoneville, MS. His research and outreach include conceiving, developing, and promoting the adoption of profitable irrigation management strategies that conserve water, maintain soil resources, and improve water quality. Dr. Gholson is dedicated to producing and disseminating research aimed at conserving water and ensuring the sustainability of water resources for agriculture.



SOUTHERN REGION - MISSISSIPPI

Brandi Karisch - 15 Years



Brandi Karisch has served as the State Beef Cattle Extension Specialist for Mississippi State University since 2011. Dr. Karisch works to provide research and training for beef cattle producers to enable them to be more profitable and sustainable. Improving the health and quality of the cattle in the region is a major focus. She strives to answer practical questions with science-based information delivered in an easy-to-understand manner. She has received multiple awards for her work.

SOUTHERN REGION - NORTH CAROLINA

Erin Eure - 13 Years

Erin is an Area Specialized Agent in Commercial Fruit and Vegetable Production, spanning 35 counties. She partners with County Agents, Extension Specialists, growers associations and industry to achieve local, regional and multi-state impacts. Erin is most proud of the relationships she's built with growers, catalyzing their adoption of production recommendations, and ultimately increasing farm income. Erin and her husband Bryan of 20 years have 2 daughters, Hailey (12), and Hannah (8).



SOUTHERN REGION - NORTH CAROLINA

Stacey Jones - 17 Years



Stacey Jones serves as an Area Specialized Agent in Horticulture, supporting commercial greenhouse and nursery producers across central North Carolina. Through applied research, diagnostics, and educational programming, she helps growers improve efficiency, plant health, and decision-making. Stacey is also deeply committed to mentoring county Extension agents, strengthening regional capacity and confidence. Her work integrates horticultural expertise with farm succession planning and stress support, reinforcing Extension's role as a trusted, science-based resource for agriculture and communities.

SOUTHERN REGION - NORTH CAROLINA

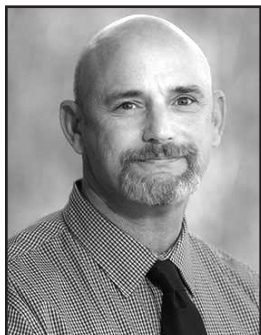
Della King - 22 Years

Della King is recognized for 22 years of outstanding service to North Carolina Cooperative Extension and the Agriculture Agents Association in row crop production, on-farm research, grower education, involvement, and leadership with the association. She delivers impactful programs like regional soybean schools, peanut maturity clinics, mentors new agents and student interns, and helps lead youth agricultural education reaching over 800 students annually. Her leadership and commitment to advancing North Carolina agriculture exemplify excellence in Extension.



SOUTHERN REGION - OKLAHOMA

Michael Rose - 28 Years



In agriculture Michael has conducted numerous Master Cattleman and Master Gardener classes and maintains an active Master Gardener group of volunteers. Other ag programming includes the Chreokee Prairie Initiative, Pecan Management, Poultry Waste Management and Pesticide Applicator Trainings. Some grants he has completed include a Greenseeker Nitrogen Ramp Applicator Grant and a Plasticulture Grant. In youth programming, he has conducted the Mayes County Beef Proficiency Contest, Super Cow Contests and Performance Steer Contests.

SOUTHERN REGION - PUERTO RICO

Anibal Ruiz-Lugo - 14 Years

Dr. Aníbal II Ruiz Lugo has demonstrated outstanding leadership and dedication to the Agricultural Extension Service of the University of Puerto Rico. As Assistant Dean and Extension Specialist, he has advanced program planning, evaluation systems, and educational methodologies that strengthen extension programs and improve community impact. His work supporting extension professionals and promoting innovative outreach has enhanced agricultural education and farmer support across Puerto Rico. His service exemplifies the highest standards of Cooperative Extension.



SOUTHERN REGION - SOUTH CAROLINA

Justin Ballew - 11 Years



Justin Ballew is a Fruit and Vegetable Research Associate for the Clemson Extension Service based at the Sandhill Research and Education in Columbia, SC. Justin conducts research on-farm and on-station for fruits and vegetables of economic importance to the midlands of SC. He also conducts in-service trainings for fruit and vegetable program team agents. Justin has served the SCACAA thru all positions of the board and is President Elect for 2025-2026.

SOUTHERN REGION - SOUTH CAROLINA

Matthew Burns - 17 Years

Dr. Mathew Burns is Associate Director for the Clemson Extension Service and resides on a family farm in Upstate South Carolina with his wife, Ashley, and daughter, Eleanor. Dr. Burns provides statewide leadership and oversight for District Extension Directors and Program Team Directors. He previously served as Extension Beef Specialist, Livestock and Forage Agent, and Livestock and Forage Program Team Director. Dr. Burns has held multiple leadership roles within the SCACAA, including president.



SOUTHERN REGION - SOUTH CAROLINA

Charly Greenthaler - 10 Years



Charly Greenthaler is a Regional Water Resources Agent for the Clemson Extension Service, covering ten counties in the Midlands region of SC. Charly is the program coordinator for the Center Pivot Irrigation Test Program (CPIT) that is offered statewide. She also serves clients by providing education on pond management, water quality, and watershed planning. Charly has served the SCACAA in the role of Secretary and Public Relations Committee Chair.

SOUTHERN REGION - TENNESSEE

Jason Evitts - 20 Years

Jason has served as Agriculture Agent and County Director since 2009. Fifteen of those years he served as 4-H Youth Development and Agriculture Agent. His programming focuses on livestock & forages. In the past 5 years, there has been economic impact of approximately \$1.5 million dollars to his county as a result of his programs. He has also delivered livestock and forage programs in 12 different counties to over 1000 producers.



SOUTHERN REGION - TENNESSEE

Lindsay Stephenson - 12 Years



Lindsay Stephenson has served as an Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Agent since 2014 and was appointed County Director in 2022. Her primary focus is row-crop production across more than 200,000 certified acres of cotton, corn, soybeans, and wheat in Haywood County. Through research-based education, producer-focused programming, and on-farm trials, her Extension efforts generate an average annual economic impact exceeding \$18 million and reflect a sustained commitment to producer profitability, innovation, and agricultural excellence.

SOUTHERN REGION - TENNESSEE

Jeffery Via - 27 Years

Jeff Via oversees the adult agriculture program in Fayette County. His responsibilities include row crop and livestock production; forestry, wildlife and fisheries, with row crops and livestock being his major areas of focus. Via is also a regional fisheries first responder covering 15 counties. In the areas of row crops and livestock, the total economic impact of these programs was estimated at just under 9 million in increased revenue and savings.



SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Lisa Brown - 12 Years



Lisa Brown has served Menard County for 12 years. Lisa provides educational leadership in the areas of livestock, wildlife, horticulture and new/small landowners. In addition to 4-H programming, Lisa leads multiple curriculum enrichment programs through Menard ISD, including LIFE 101, which teaches life skills to 8th graders, and Learn, Grow, Eat and Go!

SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

James Crockett - 11 Years

James Crockett has served with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service as County Extension Agent in Edwards County for the past 11 years. His programming has emphasized wildlife and range management, sheep and goat production, and 4-H livestock projects. He currently serves as secretary of the Edwards County Fair Association, a local 501(c)(3) that hosts an annual Fourth of July celebration and PBR bull riding each June, supporting youth, agriculture, and community traditions locally annually.



SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Zach Davis - 19 Years



Zach began his career in 2006 serving Johnson County, initially as 4-H Agent and later as Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent. Since 2015 he has had the privilege of serving Hill County as Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent. He works to build an effective, well-rounded Extension program with a major emphasis on row crops, beef, forages, horticulture and small landowner education. Zach also manages an extensive applied research and result demonstration program in Hill County.

SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Josh Kouns - 10 Years

Josh has spent the last ten years serving as an agriculture agent in Baylor County, Texas. Josh's major programming efforts have been focused on small grains and livestock production. Working closely with Extension Specialists and program area committees, he provides cutting edge educational programs and small grain variety trials each year along with coordinating an award-winning, multi-county sheep and goat educational event. Josh also provides youth programming through the local school system and 4-H Clubs.



SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Ryan Merrel - 18 Years



Ryan is the County Extension Agent for 4-H and Youth Development for 18 years in Angelina County. In that time, he has grown the program to have the largest 4-H membership in Extension District 5. With over 400 youth members, Ryan's program is also one of the few counties that still host a four-day summer camp that continues to grow each year with a total participation of 63 members and 9 adult leaders.

SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Marco Ponce - 27 Years

Marco Ponce, County Extension Agent – Agriculture and Natural Resources, and County Administrator for Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in Cameron County. He has served Cameron County for 28 years, and he is responsible for educational programs in cotton, grain sorghum, beef cattle, forages, and water conservation as it relates to production agriculture. Mr. Ponce has a Bachelor's degree in Animal Science and a Master's Degree in Agriculture Science from Texas A&M University - Kingsville.



SOUTHERN REGION - VIRGINIA

Kevin Spurlin - 19 Years



Kevin Spurlin's diverse Extension programming reflects his client's differing needs. Agriculture is his county's economic driver led by livestock and Christmas trees. He has served as a statewide "go to" for animal nutrition expertise, coordinated regional pesticide safety education, and took a prominent role in disaster response following Hurricane Helene. Kevin teaches community leadership development programs to empower local rural leaders. For Kevin, Extension is about investing in and equipping others.

NACAA Hall of Fame Award

The NACAA Recognition and Awards Committee is proud to present these four recipients with the NACAA Hall of Fame Award. The Hall of Fame Award recognizes one member or life member from each NACAA region. Each state can nominate one individual. Based on a 500 word summary and three letters of support, the state nominees are evaluated on their Extension programming, state and national association activities and humanitarian efforts beyond the normal call of duty.

Our thanks to Pipeline Ag Safety Alliance for sponsorship of the NACAA Hall of Fame Awards



2026
Western Region
Hall of Fame Award
Leigh Ann Marez
New Mexico
35 Years - Retired



Leigh Ann retired in June 2025 as the Eastern District Director for New Mexico State University (NMSU) Cooperative Extension Service, after an impressive 35 years of dedicated service to her community, NMSU Cooperative Extension, and New Mexico. She has been a member of NACAA since 2011 and is now a life member.

During her tenure with Extension, Leigh Ann served in many roles within NMSU Cooperative Extension Service – from 4-H agent, to program specialist, to agricultural/4-H agent, to county director. She concluded her career as the NMSU Cooperative Extension Eastern District Director for eight years. Leigh Ann held several offices in the NMACAA and the NACAA. She received numerous awards, including the Achievement Award in 2012 and the Distinguished Service Award in 2017.

Leigh Ann began her career in Cooperative Extension right out of college. As an entry-level agent and then program specialist, she was known for bringing energy and new ideas to her Extension offices. She was a dedicated, hard-working agent, who took on multiple roles as needed, to ensure that New Mexico constituents' needs were met. Twice Leigh Ann served in concurrent positions within Extension – one year as the sole Extension agent in Guadalupe County and the interim Extension agent in the adjacent De Baca County, covering a total of 5,355 square miles, 63.7% of which was agricultural land; another year, she took on the interim Eastern District Director role while still holding the Guadalupe County Extension Agent position.

Leigh Ann brought innovation and a collaborative spirit to her work. She developed a county Heifer Futurity Project for 4-H agriculture and the Guadalupe County Fair, intending to support the next generation of agricultural producers. She sought sponsorships that allowed 4-H youth to raise and show a heifer during the county fair, then retain it to build a herd. An example of her spirit of collaboration and commitment to agriculture was assisting the Santa Rosa High School in acquiring funding to build a greenhouse and begin a horticulture program. This not only promoted agricultural education in our schools, but also helped to link formal education with the important experiential learning model of 4-H.

As a district director, Leigh Ann provided highly competent, compassionate leadership and support to each of the extension agents and staff in the eleven counties she oversaw. If a county had an agent, Leigh Ann stepped in to ensure that their Cooperative Extension office still served its constituents. She was never too busy to haul a group of kids to a state event, jump in at a County Fair and help clip swine, or help put together a Beef Quality Assurance workshop, if needed.

Leigh Ann always focused on serving her constituents, of course, but her service to Extension was often collaborative and regional or statewide.

DSA Awarded in 2017

**2026
North Central Region
Hall of Fame Award
Chuck Schwartau
Minnesota
38 Years - Retired**



Chuck Schwartau has been an exemplary member of University of Minnesota (UMN) Extension, the Minnesota Association of Extension Ag Professionals (MAEAP), NACAA, and his community. His educational programming efforts and leadership activities have reached far beyond the borders of MN and he continues to positively impact the greater agricultural community.

During his 38 years with UMN Extension, Chuck served various roles. For about 15 years, Chuck was one of the few Extension Educators in the country who focused on dairy labor management. As a result, Chuck has been an invited speaker at several regional, national and international conferences and written articles and recurring columns in over a dozen ag publications in the U.S. and other countries.

He was instrumental in developing the Farm Beginnings® program to help young farmers get started with practical knowledge of ag production and management (utilized now by at least 14 states).

Use of tools he helped develop to assess a dairy's management, grew into the MN Dairy Initiative. Chuck organized more than 50 dairy farm advisory teams in his region and he helped write and teach an extensive 12-hour dairy labor management curriculum.

Chuck's survey of all Minnesota dairies with over 150 cows was instrumental in developing labor management programs.

Chuck wrote and delivered a farm safety program emphasizing dairy farms and worked with University of Wisconsin-River Falls on a similar program for Wisconsin. The program was delivered to over 200 farm units and morphed into a similar program for pork producers and certified custom manure applicators.

Chuck also wrote parts of a UMN beef correspondence course, reaching four Midwestern States, and conducted extensive research among dairy farm families in a four-county area about stresses on the dairy farm. He also worked with farm mediation, managing initiation of over 200 requests for mediation by creditors and following through with over 100 farms that requested mediation.

Chuck was a NACAA National Search for Excellence presenter four times, and had 3 National finalist, 6 Regional finalist, and 44 state-winning communications entries.

Chuck's service to NACAA is extensive, serving as the National Treasurer, NC-Regional Director, NC Region and National Communications Committee Chair, NACAA representative to the Education Foundation Board of Trustees, NACAA Education Foundation Trustee (currently), NACAA representative and NACAA program chair for JCEP's Galaxy III, and Chair of JCEP's Galaxy IV in Pittsburg, PA (2013). He served as President of MAEAP, consistently attended NACAA AM/PICs, and was a NACAA AA (1989) and DSA (1994) recipient.

Chuck's humanitarian activities are extensive. Of note, Chuck was recently elected as a lifetime member to the MN State Agricultural Society (MN State Fair), a prestigious honor in recognition of his over 50 years of volunteer work with the fair. He has served on numerous community advisory boards and committees, often in leadership positions.

Chuck Schwartau has an exemplary career of education, leadership, and service. The MN chapter of NACAA (MAEAP) is proud to nominate him for the NACAA Hall of Fame Award.

DSA Awarded in 1994

**2026
Northeast Region
Hall of Fame Award
Carol Schurman
Pennsylvania
40 Years - Retired**



Carol Schurman began her 40-year career with Penn State Extension in 1977 as an Indiana County 4-H Educator. She retired in 2017. As a 4-H educator, agriculture was always part of her educational method. The 4-H program has many projects, but Carol was focused on providing agricultural science options when possible. Programs she implemented that continue today are horse bowl, hippology, yearly recognition, day camps, animal science skillathon, embryology, school enrichment, and county/regional communication contests.

Raised on a dairy farm, she felt it was important to teach youth about agriculture, especially since so many people have lost touch with this in their lives. She conducted agricultural science day/regional camps for many years – hundreds of youth learned about where their food comes from. Over 3,700 youth were reached in over ninety settings through camping programs. Over \$84,000 was raised in grants. These programs won national awards in NACAA and NAE4-HYDP. She also has been an ag literacy reader for the PA Farm Bureau, taking the agriculture story to hundreds of elementary school youth annually. She developed hands-on activities to share with youth groups, and promotions for 4-H often included an agricultural science activity.

Her 4-H embryology program reached twenty-five classrooms and five hundred youth each year. The excitement of chick-hatching was a method to teach youth where chicken McNuggets come from! Developing communication skills was a significant emphasis. Carol offered county, regional, and state workshops in presentations, public speaking, interview skills, judging, and making a good impression. She taught over eighty workshops with 1500 participants. County members won many awards because of her special attention.

She was co-director of Southwest 4-H Camp for 35 years, with twenty-five counselors and sixty campers yearly. She coordinated the Southwest PA 4-H Leaders' Symposium annually, involving seventy-five volunteers from ten counties. Carol also implemented the Western PA 4-H Small Animal Show, held for over 30 years. She mentored many new staff and was a 4-H Programs of Distinction reviewer.

Carol believed in encouraging out-of-county opportunities for youth and volunteers. During her career, over 250 members attended national 4-H events, including Congress, Conference, Eastern Horse Roundup, Wildlife, Forestry, NJHA, Engineering, Commodity Marketing, and Quarter Horse Congress. Over 140 volunteers and clubs were recognized for efforts with Extension Spirit Awards, Salute to Excellence, county Human Service Council Awards, state livestock recognition, grants, and national wildlife volunteers.

In 2012, as a state committee member to celebrate the PA 4-H Centennial, she developed a 4-H history program, which was presented to twenty-one groups, reaching 1,741 people. The committee won a national NAE4-HYDP award. Her early Extension work also included work with the local Dairy Herd Improvement Association. She has continued to serve 4-H and Extension in her retirement as a 4-H volunteer. Carol's 4-H members were her children. She dedicated her life to positive youth development through her attention to opportunities, mentoring, sponsorship, and teaching. Carol practiced what she preached and was respectful, kind, and attentive to every youth and adult she worked with.

**2026
Southern Region
Hall of Fame Award
Alan Galloway
Tennessee
39 Years - Active**



With the initials of AG, it seems Alan Galloway was destined to spend his career working in the field of agriculture. Alan received a BS in Agribusiness from Tennessee Technological University in 1979 and an MS in Agricultural Economics from Clemson University in 1981. After 5 years working for Southern State Coop, he became one of the original twelve farm management specialists hired by the University of Tennessee Extension in 1986 with the creation of the MANAGE program.

In the midst of a tough financial time for agriculture, Alan and the other farm management specialists worked one-on-one with farm families, developing farm financial plans and assisting them in making better business decisions.

During his 39-year career, he participated in numerous successful educational programs beyond financial planning. Alan researched and created the annual planning budgets for multiple types of tobacco production and, in recent years, coordinated with the University of Kentucky Extension to develop one set of budgets for both states. Alan was part of the team developing the Tennessee Farmland Legacy program. This program created a 200-plus page manual covering many aspects of how to pass the farm down. Alan's contribution included the estate planning chapter. In 2005, Alan became an instructor for the state-wide income tax schools. These schools provide continuing education to CPAs and other tax preparers. Alan currently serves as the income tax school program coordinator. After obtaining a grant, Alan led the development of the Tennessee Christmas Tree Production Manual and conducted workshops across the state for potential growers.

With the challenges caused by COVID, Alan and the MANAGE team created the Master Farm Manager online program. The program included eight sessions on various farm management topics, with Alan conducting the highly rated session on farm income taxes. The effort expanded into the Farming Fundamentals program, providing beginning farmers with the basics of farm management

Alan became an association member in 1987, and his involvement in the Tennessee association (TAAA&S) evolved from District IV treasurer to secretary for the 1996 NACAA AM/PIC planning committee and TAAA&S president in 2001.

At the national level, he has served as chair of the County Agent Editorial Advisory board, regional vice chair and national chair of the NACAA recognitions and award committee, and southern region vice director and director. In 2012, he was elected NACAA Treasurer, where Alan worked to improve the record-keeping processes and the AM/PIC planning spreadsheet to assist states hosting a future AM/PIC. Alan was elected NACAA Vice President in 2015 and served as NACAA President in 2018.

At the local level, Alan served as a solicitor, auctioneer, and warehouse coordinator for the WCTE public TV station's annual fund-raising auction for over 30 years. For 22 years, he served on the Anne Cameron American Cancer Golf Tournament planning committee. Since 2022, Alan has hired and trained local FFA members to assist on the Christmas Tree farm and donated to the local FFA chapter.

DSA Awarded: 1999



2026
ACHIEVEMENT AWARD HONOREES

It is with great pride that the Recognition and Awards Committee of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents salutes the Achievement Award Honorees for 2026. The recipients of this award have less than ten years of service in the Cooperative Extension Service. They have been selected by their peers and are being recognized for excellence in their field of professionalism. Each state can select up to two percent of their association’s membership for this award. The year’s seventy recipients join 2,689 Achievement Award winners who have been recognized since this program began.

Please share the pride of the Recognition and Awards Committee by noting the accomplishments of each honoree as indicated by her or his citation. NACAA is exceptionally pleased to recognize their achievements.

**ACHIEVEMENT AWARD
BREAKFAST AND PROGRAM SPONSOR**



**P.O. Box 50158
Indianapolis, IN 46250
(317) 849-5545 | (800) 849-4820**

**ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS RECOGNITION
BREAKFAST**

**Friday, July 10, 2026
PROGRAM**

- Welcome Ed Lentz
Chair, NACAA Recognition & Awards Committee
- Thought of the Day..... Cade Rensink
North Central Region Vice Director
- Presentation of AwardsEd Lentz
(Assisted by Vice Chairs; President JJ Jones
and American Income Life Representative Erin Bain

WESTERN REGION - ARIZONA

Anita Thompson - 4 Years

Anita has served Navajo and Apache Counties with exceptional impact over her four years in Extension. She led development of the AgVets program, building meaningful support for veteran producers, while delivering high-quality education to a diverse clientele statewide including cow-calf and small ruminant operations. Her leadership, responsiveness to producer needs, and ability to translate research into practical application exemplify the spirit of the NACAA Achievement Award.



WESTERN REGION - COLORADO

Beth Hayes - 6 Years



Beth Hayes serves as the Agriculture and Natural Resource Specialist for Pueblo County in Colorado and the first Statewide Emergency Management Coordinator for Colorado State University Extension. She has been with Extension for 6 ½ years and has built many responsive programs in the agriculture, natural resource, and emergency management space for Colorado. Her novel programs include real world fire strike teams across the state, development of CO firefly citizen data tours and much more.

WESTERN REGION - IDAHO

Andy West - 8 Years

Andy started his position in Twin Falls County May 2018. Having 20+ years of horticulture experience, he hit the ground running. Andy's horticulture education reaches homeschool, community, and other groups with an average of about 100 presentations annually. Prior to the onset of COVID-19 he was operating a hybrid Master Gardener Program that was not affected by the shutdown. Andy is serving Idaho and the Western Region on the Horticulture and Turfgrass Committee.



WESTERN REGION - MONTANA

Brent Roeder - 9 Years



Brent is currently the Montana State University Extension Sheep and Wool Specialist and Supervisor of the Montana Wool Lab where he works to help overlay new technology onto proven industry practices and help value-added wool producers culminating a million-dollar industry investment for a new wool research lab at Montana State.

WESTERN REGION - NEW MEXICO

Emily Bruton - 6 Years

Emily Bruton has served as the 4-H/Agricultural Extension Agent and County Program Director for the NMSU Socorro County Cooperative Extension Service for the past six years. She is deeply committed to serving the residents of Socorro County through comprehensive agricultural, youth development, and community-focused programming. Her agricultural education efforts include pesticide applicator trainings, livestock producer workshops, and horticultural and home gardening programs that support both commercial producers and local residents.



WESTERN REGION - OREGON

Jacob Powell - 6 Years



Jacob Powell is a General Agriculture Extension Agent (Associate Professor of Practice) for Oregon State University Extension in North Central Oregon serving Wasco and Sherman Counties. Jacob has been employed with OSU Extension for the last six years assisting wheat farmers, cattle ranchers, and small acreage landowners. His diverse educational programming has focused on wildfire preparedness, using drones in wheat production, succession planning, farm safety and first aid.

WESTERN REGION - OREGON

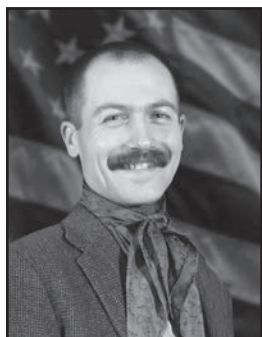
Cody Zesiger- 6 Years

Cody Zesiger is an Extension Associate Professor at Utah State University, specializing in agriculture and landscape horticulture. His career is defined by advancing sustainable agricultural practices, particularly in water conservation, soil health, and pest management. Zesiger has authored numerous fact sheets and peer-reviewed articles on topics ranging from native bee conservation to precision irrigation. In Davis County, he provides leadership for the Master Gardener program, bridging the gap between university research and community application.



WESTERN REGION - WYOMING

Jedidiah Hewlett - 2 Years



Jedidiah joined UW Extension as the Converse County Ag & Natural Resources Educator in 2024. He seeks to use his skills for the service of all, regardless of the project scale or subject area. His programming efforts have included hands-on butchery classes for processing livestock at home and the practical application of economics concepts for farm and ranch management. He also serves as the Treasurer of the Wyoming Association.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - ILLINOIS

Christina Lueking - 8.9 Years

Christina Lueking, currently the Vice President of IEAA, has also served as the Southern region Junior Chair in 2024 and Senior Chair in 2025. During her time with the Illinois Extension, Lueking has become an Extension Educator, recently promoted to a Level 2 Educator. She has used local needs assessments to put on programming in her unit. She is known in Illinois Extension with a specialty in cut flower gardening and floral arranging.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - INDIANA

Shalee Bradley - 2 Years



Shalee Bradley has served as the Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Educator in Johnson County since February 2024. In under two years, she has led 127 educational sessions reaching over 6,000 learners, secured grant funding, and developed high-impact programs focused on farm management, field crops, and horticulture. Through statewide leadership roles and innovative programming, Shalee has made measurable contributions to Extension education, farm profitability, and agricultural communities across Indiana.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - IOWA

Patrick Hatting - 7 Years

Patrick Hatting, Farm Business Management Specialist, joined Iowa State University Extension and Outreach in 2018. He works closely with 17 county extension offices located in Central and NW Iowa. He educates Iowans on farm financial and risk management, instructs on government programs such as the farm bill and crop insurance. He is a Certified Farm Succession Coordinator, helping families work through the complexities of their farm succession and transition plans for the best possible outcome.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - KANSAS

Craig Dinkel - 6 Years



My programming focuses on working with area farmers to conduct on-farm research, including wheat, sorghum, cover crop, and weed control trials. I serve as a leader on the crop PFT, lead regional programs such as the K-State Crop Pest Management Schools, and helped develop the Sorghum Connection series in Kansas. I also serve as a horticulture agent, offering native plant gardening programs and establishing a native plant demonstration garden at a local park.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - MICHIGAN

Florencia Colella - 8 Years

Florencia Colella (hispanic, multiracial, migrant, she/they) holds a BS in agronomy and a MS in ag, food and resource economics and has been with Michigan State University Extension 6.5 years. As a Farm Business Management Educator, she strives to empower a wide variety of Michigan agribusinesses to make decisions through an improved understanding of their own financial wellbeing and its interconnectedness with the community and the environment they are embedded in.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - MINNESOTA

Taylor Herbert - 5 Years



Taylor joined the University of Minnesota Extension as an Extension Educator for Agricultural Water Quality. She provided education on nitrogen BMPs to farmers across central and southern Minnesota. In 2023, she transitioned to a local educator role serving Wright, McLeod and Meeker counties. Her programming covers agronomic crop production including weed and nutrient management, soil health, and pest and disease control. Taylor currently serves as Director at Large of the Minnesota Association of Extension Ag Professionals.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - MISSOURI

Katie Neuner - 9 Years

Katie Neuner has been with the University of Missouri Extension for 9 years working as an Ag Business Specialist. She works with new and established farmers to increase profitability in their agriculture businesses. Katie addresses the five areas of risk management: production risk, financial risk, market risk, institutional risk and human risk in her programming.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - NEBRASKA

Ruby Collins - 3 Years



Since joining Extension, Collins has expanded the local On-Farm Research network by establishing sorghum management studies in previously unserved regions. She strengthens agroecosystem stewardship through integrated pest management education and by delivering relevant scouting information to growers. Collins advances regional priorities by collaborating with partners to enhance programming on weed control and woody encroachment. She also increases awareness and develops opportunities for producers interested in soil health, supporting more informed and resilient cropping system decisions.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - NORTH DAKOTA

Travis Hoffman - 9 Years

Dr. Travis Hoffman is employed at North Dakota State University and University of Minnesota as Associate Professor/Extension Sheep Specialist, based in Fargo, ND. He is married to his wife Meagan, who is also employed at NDSU Extension. He serves as NDSU Extension Livestock Co-Leader. His producer outreach and research focuses on increasing young shepherd numbers; breeding selection, genetic progress, lamb quality/value and consumer satisfaction.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - OHIO

Dean Kreager - 9 Years



Dean Kreager has worked for Ohio State University Extension since 2016 as the Licking County ANR Educator. He specializes in livestock and forage production. Teaching at artificial insemination schools and providing education on livestock reproductive topics are key focus areas. He has also provided leadership as lead author on a group of forage fact sheets. Dean feels service to the community is important and is very involved with his local commodity groups and service organizations.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - OHIO

Ann Chanon - 8 Years

Ann Chanon has worked for Ohio State University Extension since 2017, starting in Lorain County and then transitioning to Lake County as the County ANR Educator. She specializes in ornamental horticulture serving her commercial clientele by coordinating biweekly nursery-based IPM meetings and workshops on emerging production issues. She supports consumer horticulture efforts through local and statewide MGVI training and diagnostic workshops and serves in a leadership position for the OSU Environmental Horticulture team.



NORTH CENTRAL REGION - SOUTH DAKOTA

Robin Buterbaugh - 3 Years



Robin Buterbaugh works as an SDSU Extension Horticulture Field Specialist to provide resources to individuals and organizations related to ecological design, permaculture, native plants, pollinator gardens, and community and school gardens. She has expanded SDSU's collaborations with municipalities, community gardens, and tribal communities. Robin has created many high-impact fact sheets and gardening guides for youth and adults. Her passion for local foods and native plants shines through all her programming across the state.

NORTH CENTRAL REGION - WISCONSIN

Jackie McCarville - 9 Years

Jackie works for the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension as the Regional Dairy Educator for Grant, Green, Iowa, and Lafayette Counties. Her programming focuses on dairy nutrition and animal health and well-being. She also supports youth in her counties by teaching Youth for Quality Care of Animals to them.



NORTHEAST REGION - CONNECTICUT

Srikanth Kodati - 3 Years



Srikanth Kodati is recognized for outstanding contributions to the Pesticide Safety Education Program through the development and delivery of targeted pesticide safety workshops for Connecticut tobacco growers, custom ground pest control professionals, and other commercial and private pesticide applicators; enhancement of Ornamental and Turf supervisory training modules; and the introduction of a comprehensive tick management module. His efforts strengthen science-based integrated pest management, promote responsible pesticide use, and protect environmental and human health across Connecticut.

NORTHEAST REGION - MAINE

Peyton Ginakes - 5 Years

Peyton is a Fruit and Vegetable Research Associate at Highmoor Farm, supporting Maine producers through applied research and outreach since 2020. She strengthens Extension by improving access to trial data and delivering grower-driven education statewide. Her work includes diverse crops, IPM innovation, and regional collaboration, including leadership with the New England Vegetable Management Guide and New England Fruit & Vegetable Conference. She also serves as Maine's SARE state coordinator.



NORTHEAST REGION - MARYLAND

Maegan Perdue - 8 Years

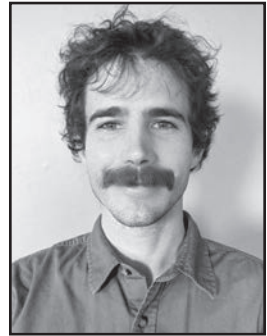


Maegan Perdue is a Senior Agent Associate – Agriculture with the University of Maryland Extension in Worcester County, Maryland. Her work focuses on livestock, poultry, and pasture management. She has developed educational programs including Goat 911 and the Backyard Farming webinar series. Maegan educates new and small-scale farmers at local and international levels and is a FAMACHA® certified instructor with a passion for small ruminant parasite management research and education.

NORTHEAST REGION - NEW HAMPSHIRE

William Hastings - 3 Years

William serves as an Agricultural Field Specialist with UNH Cooperative Extension in Coös County. His work advances beginning farmer education in New Hampshire through the redesign and delivery of the New Farmer School and other comprehensive training programs, strategic needs assessments, and individualized technical assistance. Through these efforts, he helps new producers build knowledge, confidence, and resilience, improves access to Extension resources, and strengthens statewide capacity to support the next generation of farmers.



NORTHEAST REGION - NEW JERSEY

Jean Epiphan - 3 Years



Jean Epiphan's expertise is in sustainable landscapes, plant identification, and ecological forestry. She is the co-creator of Forest Tree and Plant ID and Advanced Forest Stewardship Programs. Within three years, Jean taught 91 lectures to 4862 attendees and provided 575 consultations. She advises and collaborates with professionals and stakeholders to improve land-care practices and plant natives to promote biodiversity and climate resilience. Her projects study beech leaf disease, demonstrate reforestation techniques and native garden design.

NORTHEAST REGION - NEW YORK

Cristian Acosta - 5 Years

Cristian has been serving as the Agriculture Educator and Master Gardener Coordinator in Allegany County New York for five years. He offers regular horticulture classes to residents of his county covering ornamental gardens, food gardening and emerging invasive species. In 2022, he participated in a regional grant working helping municipalities to educate residence to assist with the care and management of community trees. Cristian also created a You Tube Channel to share horticulture information.



NORTHEAST REGION - PENNSYLVANIA

Justin Brackenrich- 8 Years



Justin has been an agronomy Educator with Penn State Extension since November 2017. Justin provides a wealth of programming, in English and Spanish, to Pennsylvania farmers. His work on forage crop management has helped save Pennsylvania agronomic producers hundreds of thousands of dollars. In addition to his role as NE Regional Vice Chair in Agronomy and Pest Management, he has won several state and national awards, including the Dan Kluchinski scholarship from NACAA in 2025.

NORTHEAST REGION - WEST VIRGINIA

Jennifer Friend - 5 Years

Jennifer Friend is the Agriculture & Natural Resources Agent for Harrison County. Her major programming focus includes forage livestock systems, horticulture, financial literacy, and youth agriculture. She has been a NACAA national finalist for the Search for Excellence in Young, Beginning, or Small Farmers/Ranchers as well as a communications award finalist for her promotion package developed for the Harrison County 4-H/FFA Livestock Show and Sale.



SOUTHERN REGION - ALABAMA

Ali Gotcher - 3 Years



Serves as an Extension Agent with Alabama Cooperative Extension System in the northwest region. Her primary focus is serving livestock producers through educational programs that will enhance their operations. She is the co-coordinator of the state Beef Quality Assurance Training program and the lead for the Women In Ag program. She strives to bridge the gap between university research and real-world management by providing hands-on education and on-farm support related to stewardship of natural resources.

SOUTHERN REGION - ALABAMA

Robin Paul - 6 Years

Robin is widely respected for her exceptional leadership, meaningful involvement in AACAAAS, and dedicated service to ACES. Her work strengthens community partnerships, supports youth development, and advances agriculture and human sciences education across Clarke County. Through stewardship of Pig Squeal, Master Gardener training, farmers' markets, and producer initiatives, she demonstrates commitment, resilience, and professionalism. She exemplifies integrity, elevates ACES visibility and public trust, and ensures Extension remains a credible, accessible resource for all residents.



SOUTHERN REGION - ALABAMA

D. Matthew Webb - 4 Years



He serves as the Jackson County Extension Director with a background in agriculture and 4-H. He has started programs that benefit farmers and producers in areas of row crops, beef cattle, small ruminants, forages, weed control, pesticide use and home grounds. He leads the Leadership Jackson County Program that benefits 20 adults and 44 high school juniors each year. Under his guidance, the 4-H program has tripled to an annual enrollment of 1200 4-H members.

SOUTHERN REGION - ARKANSAS

Blake Erbach - 4 Years

After four years on a custom feedlot in Colorado, he returned home to begin his Extension career. His education and hands-on experience make Perry County a natural fit. He works with row-crop, livestock, and sod producers, along with community leaders, to strengthen local agriculture. He is committed to providing meaningful, high-quality educational opportunities for producers, families, and youth across the county.



SOUTHERN REGION - ARKANSAS

Jenna Martin - 4 Years



With an Agribusiness degree from Arkansas State University, Jenna has incorporated her row crop farming experience by working with clientele in Cross County in corn, rice and soybeans, which is her primary focus in Cross County. She enjoys helping her producers work through issues, helping homeowners with problems such as invasive kudzu, is active in her community, works closely with county officials, and is hands-on in 4-H activities and programs.

SOUTHERN REGION - ARKANSAS

Krista Quinn - 8 Years

Krista Quinn, Faulkner County Extension Agent, provides horticultural education to commercial growers, municipal staff, and home gardeners. Krista started the innovative and highly successful virtual series, Grow Your Own Groceries, which teaches gardeners how to grow food at home and provides tips for cooking and preserving the harvest. As a board member of the Arkansas Urban Forestry Council and certified arborist, Krista also provides statewide urban forestry training for arborists and tree workers.



SOUTHERN REGION - FLORIDA

Cassidy Dossin - 5 Years



In the past 5 years, Cassidy has taught 165 extension teaching events and developed 228 creative works, earning her 18 awards for educational materials and program excellence. She has represented FACA through 18 presentations at state and national conferences. Cassidy heavily supports FACA by serving as district director and by supporting many of the organization's committees over the years, demonstrating her leadership and commitment to extension excellence.

SOUTHERN REGION - FLORIDA

Cynthia Nazario-Leary - 8 Years

Cynthia has advanced impactful Environmental Horticulture programs in Hawaii and Florida, engaging residents through Master Gardener Volunteer training, Florida-Friendly Landscaping™, and youth education. She earned FACAA/NACAA awards for Best Personal Column and Best Audio Recording. Cynthia served as FACAA Northeast District Director and contributed to the Teaching & Educational Technologies and Horticulture & Turfgrass Committees. She supported NACAA through presentations and the 2022 AMPIC Decorations Committee, demonstrating strong leadership and professional engagement.



SOUTHERN REGION - FLORIDA

Elizabeth (Lizzie) Catherine Whitehead - 5 Years



Lizzie Whitehead, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, works in livestock production, beef cattle reproduction, pasture management, pesticide safety, small ruminant parasite management, and best management practices for producers. Her work has been recognized with national, regional, and state awards. Her service to her profession includes serving on two national committees and several state committees and presenting 6 oral and 2 poster presentations at NACAA and FACAA conferences.

SOUTHERN REGION - GEORGIA

Justin Hand - 9 Years

Justin Hand serves as the Tift Co. ANR Agent, implementing a comprehensive approach to Extension by merging applied research, farmer training, leadership in agricultural organizations, and international collaboration. He has coordinated more than 25 replicated on-farm research trials focused on disease management, fertility, nematode control, plant growth regulators, and seed treatment technologies. Additionally, he serves as Vice Chair of the Tift County Livestock Association and is an active member of the UGA HERD program.



SOUTHERN REGION - GEORGIA

Sydni Ingram - 8 Years



As the Thomas County ANR Agent, Sydni Ingram provides research and education for the use of soil moisture sensors in cotton and corn, leafminer control in organic citrus, and invasive terrestrial snails in peanut production. She has also collaborated with Family and Consumer Science agents to develop the “Pollinate your Plate” curriculum, which has received national recognition and been shared with multiple school and youth organizations.

SOUTHERN REGION - GEORGIA

Brooklyne Wassel - 7 Years

As the ANR Agent in Pike County, Brooklyne has collaborated with county municipalities, several state specialists, Georgia Adopt-A-Stream, Georgia Onsite Wastewater Association, Georgia Environmental Protection Division, and others to plan educational programming, apply for grant funding, and ensure safe drinking water for Pike County. Brooklyne's efforts have been recognized by Georgia Adopt-a-Stream, and her work has been shared at multiple state and national conferences.



SOUTHERN REGION - GEORGIA

Jacob Williams - 7 Years



Serving as the County Coordinator and ANR Agent in Union and Towns counties, Jacob Williams has spearheaded on-farm research into sweet sorghum production for syrup. As the only Extension Professional in the nation currently undertaking this research, He is nationally recognized and often sought out by growers and Extension Professionals in other states. In addition to production practices, Jacob has also collaborated with Extension Specialists to produce Sorghum budgets and herbicide recommendations.

SOUTHERN REGION - KENTUCKY

David Coffey - 9 Years

Since 2016, David Coffey has advanced Jackson County agriculture through innovative programming, applied research, and dedicated service. David has delivered hands-on education to hundreds of producers, improving overall efficiency and profitability across farm operations throughout the county. His initiatives have garnered both state and national attention, reflecting their lasting impact. From disaster relief efforts to research collaborations, David exemplifies Extension's tripartite mission of education, research, and service.



SOUTHERN REGION - KENTUCKY

Macy Fawns - 9 Years



I have worked with agents throughout my district and with various community groups, which has allowed me to provide more outreach. When clients call, I ensure they are served, whether by providing publications or a visit to look at an issue. I have expanded communication to include visits, workshops, social media, newspaper articles, TV advertisements, and radio shows. Volunteerism is at the heart, with incredible Master Gardeners who assist and teach to further outreach.

SOUTHERN REGION - KENTUCKY

Reed Graham - 8 Years

Reed Graham has served clients in Breathitt County for over seven years. His diverse list of programming efforts includes sustainable living, home gardening, natural resource exploration, and expanding farmer's market opportunities. Reed partners with the FCS and 4-H agents in his county to address community needs, as well as ANR agents from the region to provide education tailored toward farmers in the area. Reed also serves on multiple boards and councils within the community.



SOUTHERN REGION - LOUISIANA

Paul Bongarzone - 4 Years



Paul Bongarzone serves as an Assistant Extension Agent with the LSU AgCenter. Paul provides extension programming primarily focused on sugarcane production in the Bayou Teche corridor, with additional such responsibilities in soybean production. Along with sugarcane field days, presentations given to sugar mills, and French bilingual youth development outreach, Paul developed Bayou Teche Sugarcane, an extension digital media program. Paul earned a B.A. from Rutgers University and a M.A. from the University of Miami.

SOUTHERN REGION - LOUISIANA

Joshua Salley - 6 Years

Joshua Salley serves as the LSU AgCenter Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent for DeSoto Parish. He earned degrees in Animal Science from McNeese State University (B.S.) and Louisiana State University (M.S.). Salley provides educational programs for beef cattle and forage producers in DeSoto and Red River Parishes and coordinates key events, including the DeSoto Parish Cattlemen's Field Day, NW District Livestock Show, NW Region Beef and Forage Field Day, and LSU AgCenter Hay Day.



SOUTHERN REGION - MISSISSIPPI

Lindsey Pansano - 6 Years



Lindsey Pansano has served Lamar County as the 4-H Extension Agent for Mississippi State University Extension since June 2019. She teaches a diverse set of programs related to equine, poultry, livestock, rabbits, STEAM, robotics, shooting sports, kayaking, wildlife, and forestry. Ms. Pansano enjoys engaging with the community and developing strong relationships with her 4-H families.

SOUTHERN REGION - MISSISSIPPI

Leyla Rios de Alvarez - 5 Years

Dr. Rios has served as a Small Ruminant Specialist at MSSTATE for 5 years. Before this, for more than 20 years, she was a Professor, engaging in extension in her home country, Venezuela. The primary focus of Dr. Rios is on small ruminant farmers in MS and the Southeast of the US, training them in sustainable parasite control and overall animal management. She has also conducted a buck performance test for 4 years in MS.



SOUTHERN REGION - MISSISSIPPI

Dillon Russell - 4 Years



Beginning his Extension career in 2022, Dillon currently serves as an Extension Specialist at Mississippi State University's Delta Research and Extension Center and the National Center for Alluvial Aquifer Research. He provides leadership in irrigation education and groundwater-focused outreach, working closely with county agents through on-farm trials and in-service training. Through innovative programming and strong partnerships, Dillon has strengthened county agent engagement with producers and improved irrigation efficiency across the Mississippi Delta.

SOUTHERN REGION - NORTH CAROLINA

Grace Atkins - 7 Years

Grace Atkins began her career in Extension 7 years ago in her hometown of Elizabeth City, North Carolina. She is the Horticulture Extension Agent in Pasquotank County covering commercial and consumer horticulture. She also covers consumer horticulture for Camden county. Grace regularly partners with other agents in the area to achieve impacts, not only on a county level, but regional and state levels as well. She is most passionate about connecting the community to plants.



SOUTHERN REGION - NORTH CAROLINA

Cody Craddock - 4 Years



Cody Craddock earned this recognition through exceptional leadership and impact as Horticulture Extension Agent in Randolph County, North Carolina. Since 2022, he has built a trusted, innovative horticulture program serving home gardeners and commercial producers. Known for approachability and responsiveness, he is respected by clients and coworkers. Cody ensures relevant programming through advisory committees, values evaluation and improvement, leads within NCACAA and NACAA, mentors new agents, pursues a master's in Soil Science, and impacts thousands.

SOUTHERN REGION - NORTH CAROLINA

Emilee Morrison - 9 Years

Since she began her career with Extension in 2016, Emilee Morrison has provided impactful and innovative programming to the residents of Onslow County. Emilee covers Consumer Horticulture, which includes facilitating the Extension Master Gardener volunteer program, providing technical assistance to landscapers in the county, and offering educational assistance and outreach to residents of the county related to horticulture. Her passion for helping others is evident in the range and scope of programming she has accomplished.



SOUTHERN REGION - NORTH CAROLINA

Rachel Owens - 6 Years



Rachel Owens established her livestock program in Union County in 2019. From providing support to new farmers through workshops, consultations, and equipment rental options, to engaging with over 4,000 youth annually with experiences like embryology and agriculture field days, she seeks to help others grow their skills and knowledge. She has seen increased adoption of best management practices, increased appreciation for agriculture, and strong relationships built as a result of her programming efforts.

SOUTHERN REGION - NORTH CAROLINA

Matthew Strickland - 6 Years

Matt Strickland has been serving the citizens of North Carolina and Bladen County for the last 6 years. Matt provides row crops, blueberries, wildlife and forestry education and opportunities to youth and adults. In this role he has been working to improve the lives of farmers and youth through research based information and resources. Colleagues and clients have found him to be hard working, dependable, and dedicated.



SOUTHERN REGION - OKLAHOMA

Lauren Minyard - 4 Years



Lauren serves her county through innovative Extension programming in horticulture, livestock, beginning farmer education, and youth development. She leads multi-county and cross-state collaborations, coordinates the Oklahoma Women in Agriculture Conference, and delivers impactful 4-H and producer workshops with community partners. Following an EF4 tornado, Lauren coordinated volunteers and donations to support recovery efforts. She serves as OAEAA Secretary-Elect and actively pursues statewide leadership development.

SOUTHERN REGION - PUERTO RICO

Jose Arocho - 4 Years

José D. Arocho Jiménez began his Extension career in Yabucoa, Puerto Rico, in 2021. He delivers science-based educational programs in agriculture and natural resources, working with farmers and agencies to promote conservation and resilient management practices. He co-authored the integrated weed management section of the Corn Production Manual and leads externally funded research and outreach on sustainable pasture and weed management. He is recognized for building strong partnerships that advance agricultural sustainability across Puerto Rico.



SOUTHERN REGION - SOUTH CAROLINA

Chad Carter - 7 Years



Chad Carter is a Food Systems and Safety Associate with Clemson Cooperative Extension, based in Charleston, SC, serving statewide. He supports farmers, food manufacturers, and retail food establishments with training, regulatory compliance, product development, and facility planning. Chad is the statewide coordinator and lead trainer for South Carolina's FSMA Produce Safety Rule. He also works as a chef with the 4-H Healthy Living Program, empowering youth through workshops, cooking camps, and a culinary summit.

SOUTHERN REGION - SOUTH CAROLINA

Mark Cathcart - 7 Years

Mark Cathcart is a 4-H agent with Clemson Cooperative Extension, serving Union County, SC. Mark constantly strives to keep 4-H innovative and interesting. One such program that is innovative and unique to SC 4-H is one he developed "Forged In 4-H". No other program like this exists in SC 4-H and very few nationwide. Mark is also heavily involved in livestock shows at the Union County Fair and SC State Fair.



SOUTHERN REGION - SOUTH CAROLINA

Susan Lunt - 6 Years



Susan Lunt serves as the Carolina Clear Coordinator for the Clemson Cooperative Extension Service. Susan serves and supports Extension agents statewide by facilitating internal and external professional development, assisting with coordinating six stormwater education consortia, overseeing annual reports and strategic planning. Susan currently serves as the SCACAA District 1 Director (2023–2026).

SOUTHERN REGION - TENNESSEE

Anna Duncan - 8 Years

Anna Duncan began her Extension career as a county agent serving both youth and adult audiences. Duncan now serves as a state specialist with the title of Digital Certification and Training Program Coordinator. In this role, Duncan serves as the instructional designer, videographer, curriculum designer, marketer, and facilitator of several online Extension programs. She also leads agent professional development efforts and collaborates on several grant projects.



SOUTHERN REGION - TENNESSEE

Emily Richards - 3 Years



Emily serves as the horticulture agent for Sumner County. Emily's passion for volunteer empowerment and leadership education has led to increased volunteer engagement locally and a statewide Master Gardener leadership/outreach program that trained 130 volunteers in its flagship year. Emily received a 3-year IRA grant for \$168,466 in 2024 for urban forestry projects benefiting disadvantaged communities in Sumner County. Grant projects include free youth camps, tree board formation, human health improvement programs, and tree planting.

SOUTHERN REGION - TENNESSEE

Joe Seago - 2 Years

Joseph serves as an ANR Agent in Shelby County, focusing on commercial horticulture and turfgrass management. He develops and delivers educational programs like the Commercial Horticulture Expo and Turfgrass Field Day, reaching over 250 professionals with best practices for productivity and sustainability. Joseph partners with the Memphis and Shelby County Community Redevelopment Agency for landscaping educational demonstrations and contributes to the TN Smart Yard program through the Sustainable Landscape Workgroup.



SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Steven Baringer - 5 Years



Steven Baringer has served as the Denton County Extension Agent for 4-H Youth Development since 2021. He leads countywide 4-H programming with a focus on youth leadership, volunteer management, and agricultural literacy. Baringer oversees the County Ambassador program and supports members at the county, district, and state levels. He is an active TCAAA member and served as Co-Chair of the Youth Tours Committee for the 2024 NACAA AM/PIC.

SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Mark Carroll - 7 Years

Mark Carroll has been an Ag/Natural Resources Agent for Floyd County since August of 2019. His primary focus has been beef cattle and livestock programs. Including hands-on cattle care demonstrations and a monthly livestock radio/podcast program. He also has a strong legacy of 4-H success in the county. He has helped build the 4-H program to one of the largest in the district. He is looking forward to continued growth in Floyd County ag programs.



SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Janelle Duffey - 6 Years



Janelle Duffey has worked for Texas AgriLife Extension in Parmer County since 2019 as the County Agent serving in the areas of Agriculture, 4-H, and Community and Economic Development. As a second generation Extension Agent, Janelle is extremely engaged with her dairy producers and 4-H program while striving to improve the lives of county clientele with impactful Extension work. Janelle is highly driven and serves as a “go-to” professional by her Extension peers.

SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Brandi Keller - 4 Years

Brandi Keller began her Extension career in 2021 as a Residential Horticulture County Extension Agent while managing the Harris County Master Gardeners. In a large urban county, she delivered programs including Houston Chronicle garden columns, online classes, library series and insect identification. She now serves as Galveston County Coastal & Marine Resources Agent, advising Master Naturalists, educating on fisheries and coastal resilience, and coordinating the Texas competition of the National Ocean Science Bowl.



SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Matthew Pfeifer - 6 Years



Matthew Pfeifer began his career with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension as a Disaster Assessment and Recovery Agent. He then spent one and a half years on deployment in response to COVID-19. In 2021, he transitioned to the Brazos County 4-H and Youth Development Agent where he led over 700 4-H members. In early 2025, he became the Grimes County Ag. and Natural Resources Agent and developed programs for landowners while overseeing the county's 4-H program.

SOUTHERN REGION - TEXAS

Savanna Williams - 7 Years

Savanna has served as the agriculture agent in Young County, Texas, for seven years. Savanna's major programming efforts have been focused on small grains and livestock production. Working closely with Extension Specialists and program area committees, she provides educational programs and small grain variety trials each year, as well as coordinating an award-winning, multi-county beef production educational series. Savanna also provides youth programming through the local school system and 4-H clubs.



SOUTHERN REGION - VIRGINIA

Afton (Livvy) Preisser - 9 Years



Livvy Preisser is the ANR Agent in Isle of Wight County. Since 2016, Livvy has assisted Virginia Agritourism Producers with diversification and farm safety. Working with colleagues and specialists, Livvy is active with SE peanut and cotton producers and coordinates production meetings across southeast Virginia. She also facilitates BQA and YQCA training for livestock producers and youth. Livvy's dedication to her stakeholder's and youth's success is evident in her programming.

SOUTHERN REGION - VIRGINIA

Rebecca Roberts - 7 Years

Pittsylvania County's robust Agriculture base needs quality extension educational programming. Becky Roberts strives to meet the needs of producers, and youth who have an agriculture interest. She is a strong leader in the VCE Women in Agriculture, women teaching women, program. Her Pesticide, Production, BQA and YQCA programs are well attended and high quality. She is a team player locally and throughout the district and state on educational programs.



Notes

