

The County Agent



A publication of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents

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6584 W. Duroc Road • Maroa, IL 61756 • (217) 794-3700

President's Corner

Scholarship/Foundation Key Elements of NACAA's History

Time sure flies when you're having fun—or when deadlines are approaching. My tenure as President has seemed to pass in the blink of an eye. While there is always more to achieve, I am incredibly proud of our accomplishments this year.

I am thrilled to welcome you to the NACAA's 109th Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference, co-hosted by the Texas County Agricultural Agents Association in Dallas, TX. Together, our host Texas along with NACAA have crafted outstanding educational programs and professional development opportunities, complemented by moments of fun and fellowship.

This conference is a perfect opportunity to reconnect with old friends and forge new relationships. We have planned many cherished AM/PIC traditions and hopefully some exciting changes that we hope you will enjoy.

The NACAA Scholarship Auction is one of the most enjoyable events at our Annual Meeting and Professional Improvement Conference (AM/PIC). Even if you don't purchase a single item, the auction is an event you won't want to miss this must-see event. In a few more paragraphs, I'll elaborate on why this event is always a fun filled evening of laughter and surprises.

But first, let's take a journey back in time to understand the origins of the NACAA Scholarship Program and the Educational Foundation.

NACAA Scholarship Program Overview

The NACAA Scholarship Program is funded through the NACAA Educational Foundation Inc., which receives its funding from the live and silent auctions held annually at the AM/PIC.

Established in 1972 during the Annual Meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, the Scholarship Program of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents (NACAA) aimed to provide

financial support for professional development. Initially, the Board of Directors decided to manage the funds separately from the general fund. The National 4-H Council, with its established foundation, agreed to manage the Scholarship Fund for a modest fee and provide regular reports.

This collaboration was highly beneficial, and by the end of 1981, the Scholarship Fund had grown to \$164,146.

As the value of the fund continued to increase, there was a suggestion to establish a separate foundation account for NACAA. In early 1983, the NACAA Educational Foundation was created, with Riggs National Bank in Washington, D.C., appointed as the depository for foundation funds. By late June 1983, the NACAA Educational Foundation had achieved 501(c)(3) status under the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

Over the past decade, the NACAA Educational Foundation has awarded over \$170,000 in scholarships to its members, supporting their professional development endeavors. Initially, the scholarship awards program had only one application period per year. However, due to the growth of the Foundation's assets, there are now two application periods annually, on June 1st and December 1st.

To be eligible for up to \$1,500 in scholarship funding, a member must make a one-time investment of \$100. By investing an additional \$100 (for a total of \$200), members become eligible for an additional \$1,500, bringing the maximum scholarship amount to \$3,000.



*2023-2024 NACAA President
Keith Mickler
From visor to cowboy, only in Texas!*

continued on page 2

Making the small one-time investment to qualify for the NACAA Scholarship Program is straightforward, with several avenues available:

- ❖ **Purchase Raffle Tickets:** Before the auction on Monday evening, you can buy \$20 raffle tickets. Each ticket purchased contributes to your investment in the scholarship program.
- ❖ **Donate an Item for Auction:** Another way to contribute is by donating an item for the auction. You'll receive credit for the amount the item sells for. Look around your home or workspace for items that might be valuable to others but are just taking up space for you. Better yet;
- ❖ **Craft an Item:** If you are skilled in crafts, consider making something for the auction. Handmade items often attract a lot of interest. For example, there's a rumor that the current president-elect's wife, Sharla Jensen is creating a very beautiful quilt for the live auction.
- ❖ **Cold hard cash, Check, Credit Card, Money Order, Etc.**

By participating in these activities, you not only invest in the scholarship program but you are also engage with other members, enhancing your professional network and supporting your colleagues' development.

Get Ready for a Rootin'-Tootin' Good Time

Yeehaw y'all, you ready for a rootin'-tootin' good time at the Fort Worth Stock Show & Rodeo on Monday evening! We're kicking things off by loading up on some ultra-comfy buses starting at approximately 5 pm and heading out to Fort Worth. Once we arrive, it's time to gather with your state for the always entertaining State Picture event—don't forget to smile big!

After that, the Texas Agents are rolling out the red carpet with a hearty Welcome to Texas meal that'll have you saying "howdy" to some delicious Southern hospitality. But hold your horses, because the fun doesn't stop there!

The silent auction will be in full swing, offering a treasure trove of goodies for you to bid on. Then, our world-renowned auction team will take the stage, showcasing some of the finest items this side of Fort Worth to raise money for the NACAA Scholarship Foundation. It's going to be a lively evening full of excitement and, of course, a bit of friendly competition.

Now the elaboration on why this is always a must-see event. Just last year in Iowa, I became the unsuspecting victim of some shenanigans when a fellow member (right after the 2022 AM/PIC in Florida) convinced me to start the opening bid on a picture painted by his pigs. To be fair, I was on pain meds from a knee replacement when I declared, "If your pigs will paint a picture for the live auction, then I will start the bidding at \$100!"

How was I to remember making such a bold statement? Well, the perpetrator had proof—a Facebook comment I had made. And there you have it, folks, a prime example of why you should be very careful about what you post on Facebook.

To my astonishment, someone at the live auction wanted that pig painting way more than I did, and being a generous President-Elect, I let him have it. You'd think I'd have learned my lesson from such tomfoolery, but nope. Now, I have the opening bid of \$125 in Dallas for a painting by chickens from Arizona. Stay tuned for the masterpiece from the artistic Arizonian Fowl—it's bound to be an egg-cellent addition to any collection! Bidding starts at \$125...

If the scholarship auction isn't quite your speed, no worries! Buses will be available to whisk you back to the Hilton Anatole whenever you're ready to hit the hay. Giddy up and get ready for a night of fun, fundraising, and fantastic memories! As time draws near the end of my term a president this is my last column in The County Agent magazine as president. I have chosen to close out this chapter in my life with a literary piece penned approximately 14 years ago by an unsuspecting kind sole.

The story begins when a young Extension Poultry Scientist from the University of Georgia unexpectedly found himself elected and sworn in as the Vice-President of the Georgia Association of County Agricultural Agents (GACAA).

Profoundly moved by his peers' trust in his leadership, he resolved to create a lasting legacy during his presidential tenure.

continued on page 3



The County Agent

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After spending a countless number of hours with some of GACAA's finest members (including myself) at the Sunbelt Ag Expo in Moultrie, Georgia, this ambitious "chicken doctor" authored a literary piece that continues to be read every year

during some part of GACAA's annual meetings. I obtained permission to reprint this work, written by none other than Dr. Casey W. Ritz, Professor and Assistant Department Head for the University of Georgia's Department of Poultry Science.

YOU MIGHT BE A COUNTY AGENT IF...

- Unbiased, research-based information supplements your expert opinion.
- Your spouse has to call the extension office with a gardening question to get your undivided attention.
- You can swear a blue streak one minute and offer thanks on food the next.
- Your new work week starts on Saturday.
- Your farm visits are somehow tied to some of the best hunting property in the county.
- You have to invite your spouse to a livestock meeting to spend a little quality time together.
- You take your spouse out to dinner to the local gas station because there's "a pretty good sandwich in there".
- Your bathroom reading material consists of Hoard's Dairyman, Georgia Cattlemens, and Forage Magazine.
- You spend more time grooming show lambs and show pigs than you do your own kids.
- You have a large knife clipped to your Sunday go-to-meetin' pants.
- You can tell the difference between calf scours and spilled ice cream at the county fair.
- You can put "butt rubbing at the Expo" on your year-end report and not have to sit through harassment training.

By Casey Ritz, Conscientious Observer 2010 as GACAA VP

The phrase "butt rubbing" is in reference to pork butts AKA Boston Butts, approximately 160 over a three-day period.

I look forward to seeing you in Dallas, Texas where the Texas agents promise you a good time!

Keith

Dr. Manjit K. Misra to speak at Wednesday General Session & Administrators Luncheon

Dr. Manjit Misra is the director of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA's extramural funding agency in the Research, Education and Economics Mission Area.

Dr. Misra is a world-renowned scientist who has had a transformational impact on food security through the application of engineering principles to seeds, the most vital and fundamental element of food security. Prior to joining NIFA, he was the director of the Seed Science Center at Iowa State University, a position he held from 1991 to 2023. He also was the Endowed Chair of Seed Science, Technology and Systems.

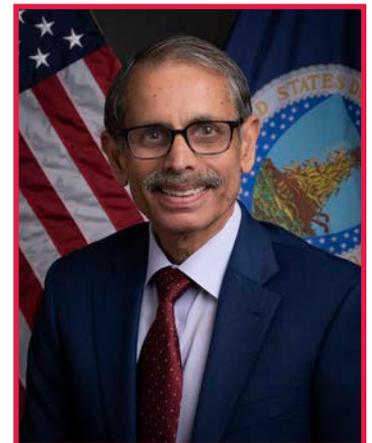
Dr. Misra was the 2018 recipient of the Sukup Global Food Security Award for his distinguished contributions to global food security through research, outreach and teaching in post-harvest seed science, technology and policy.

After earning a Bachelor of Science degree in agricultural engineering from Orissa University of Agriculture and Technology in India, Dr. Misra earned a master's degree and a Ph.D. in agricultural engineering from the University of Missouri. He joined the faculty of Iowa State University

in 1979 as an assistant professor in seed science and technology. In 2005, he was named director of Iowa State's Institute for Food Safety and Security and was the founding director of the Biosafety Institute for Genetically Modified Agricultural Products.

Dr. Misra was sworn in to a six-year appointment as director of the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture on May 8, 2023.

NIFA invests in research, education and Extension at universities, research organizations and other partner organizations to develop innovative solutions for food and agriculture challenges facing the nation and the world.



*Dr. Manjit K. Misra
Director, USDA National
Institute of Food and
Agriculture*

NACAA Scholarship Experiences 2023-2024

Within this edition of *The County Agent*, are reprints of Educational Experience Reports which each previous award winner has submitted to the NACAA Scholarship Committee. These reports are from within the last 12 months and are quite impressive in regards to the educational value each individual/group experienced.

If you would like to make a donation to the NACAA Educational Foundation, you can do so via credit card on the NACAA website (www.nacaa.com - bottom left hand corner - Donate button), or you can send a check made payable to the NACAA Educational Foundation, and mail to NACAA, 6584 W. Duroc Road, Maroa, IL 61756.

Enjoy reading about the exciting opportunities many of our NACAA members had from receiving funding from the NACAA Educational Foundation.

Educational Experience Report at the 2023 American Honey Producers Association

Amy Vu, University of Florida

The 55th American Honey Producers Association (AHPA) annual conference and tradeshow was held on December 4-7, 2023, in sunny San Diego, California. This was my first time attending this meeting, and I am grateful to NACAA for being able to assist financially with this opportunity through the scholarship. The American Honey Producers Association is an organization focused on American beekeepers who make a living from the production of honey, with over 550 members. There were between 100-150 attendees at the event, and while that numbers sounds



Welcome to AHPA 2023

small, it was obvious that the impacts of their organization are large and impactful. Commercial beekeepers from all over the U.S. attended the event to discuss industry needs.

Commercial beekeepers deal with a variety of pests, diseases, and industry threats, such as prices of honey and pollination services. From the pest side, Varroa destructor is an infamous mite that transmits viruses and is named the number one contributor to honey bee colony decline, sitting alongside other stressors, such as nutritional issues, declining queen quality, and other pests and diseases. Unfortunately, honey bee colony management is difficult, and gross colony loss rates are high. This decline may be unsustainable for the beekeeping industry and could greatly devalue many crops and other products that rely on crop pollination services.



Attendees at the Conference Center

The most up to date information shows that honey production in 2022 in the United States was 125 million pounds. Honey prices increased 12% in 2022 to \$2.96 per pound, compared to \$2.65 per pound in 2021 (USDA NASS, 2023), which is great to see, but the threat of falsifying honey, adulteration and competitive prices of international imported honey continue to be a challenge beekeepers face. AHPA focuses not only on honey, but all things honey bee industry related. Beekeepers tend to generate revenue through not only

honey production, but provide pollination services, selling equipment, selling bees, and producing high quality queens. Many important cash crops across the United States, including almonds, apples, avocados, blueberries, cherries, cucumbers, pears, squash, and watermelons, are heavily dependent on honey bee pollination for successful crop yield. Honey bee pollination services are estimated at \$17 billion annually in the U.S.

Back to the conversation related to threats of adulteration and international imports of honey, adulteration has become a hot topic in the commercial beekeeping world. The FDA released data in 2022 on economic adulteration in honey and tested for economically motivated adulteration (EMA). They collected and sampled imported honey from 32 different counties and found that 10% were in violation. “EMA occurs, for example, when someone intentionally leaves out, takes out, or substitutes a valuable ingredient or part of a food or when a substance is added to a food to make it appear better or of greater value” (FDA, 2022). Other topics at the event focused on honey bee management, pests and diseases, international honey trade, and many policy updates. The speakers ranged from policy makers, lobbyists, honey bee researchers, and nonprofit organizations. Not only were honey producers in attendance, but also queen bee producers nationwide. It was a great networking opportunity, where I was able to reconnect with old friends and new friends, specifically the president (Chris Hiatt from North Dakota) and vice president (Steven Coy from Mississippi) of the organization, both who I have collaborated with on projects in the past. There were about 25 vendors, ranging from insurance companies, equipment manufacturers, to technological applications and programs that beekeepers may be interested in adopting.



Vendor Room

As the State Specialized Extension Agent in Apiculture at the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS), I serve over 5,000 beekeepers in the state, who manage over 750,000 colonies, along with the industry stakeholders. Over 500 of these beekeepers are commercial beekeepers, with operation sizes ranging from 101 to 30,000 colonies. Florida is top 5 honey producers in the nation, with many commercial beekeepers from around the country who migrate to Florida to overwinter their colonies. Beekeepers are slowly building trust with Extension agents and the services we provide. The networking opportunity, opportunity to learn about new products, along with increasing knowledge of threats to the beekeeping industry provided me with an excellent opportunity to be up to date on the status of Varroa, queen issues, and general business challenges from the industry. The information I learned will be passed on to county Extension Agents who may not have a sole focus on apiculture, Florida beekeepers of all operations, and information was also shared on the UF/IFAS Honey Bee Research and Extension Laboratory’s multimedia sources (social media, e-mail listservs, etc.) that are distributed to beekeepers and non-beekeepers around the world. I hope to continue attending this conference annually to stay up to date on important beekeeping industry updates and am grateful for NACAA’s support.

Continuing Education Support

Blake Carter, University of Georgia

I want to extend a huge thank you for selecting me as one of this past year’s NACAA Professional Scholarship recipients. I am blessed beyond measure for being able to work the job I love, further my education, and strive to one day be able to give back to UGA Extension and my Extension family beyond the state borders, for all that they have given me. The kindness of the scholarship committee to select me as a recipient again cemented that I truly am on the right path, and God blessed me even further to confirm that.



My college journey is almost over, as I am hopefully in the final year of my PhD program and can finally not worry about homework ever again. This past semester, I have been working on finishing my final required coursework as well as starting the framework for

continued on page 6

my dissertation research. This has required weekly visits to Athens for class throughout the semester (6 roundtrips, 12 one-ways), data analysis software, writing aids, and textbooks. You will see those outlined in the expense voucher. I have receipts for all but the gas, but each trip to Athens was 186 miles, there and back. The scholarship will help reimburse for these expenses, but also ensure the success of the rest of my research journey. The software and writing aids will carry over to next semester, giving me the

tools to finish the program strong. I also have used these tools to write a research study on SE Georgia Farmers' Perceptions of Extension, submit it for publication, and get accepted into the Journal of Agriculture Education to be released in the 2nd Quarterly Publication this year. I have attached the acceptance email below. This is my first time as a lead author on a full-length publication. Again, this could not have been possible without NACAA's support.

I would also like to share a little background on the research I have been and will conduct. My dissertation will be centered

around my love for extension and my passion for ensuring the future of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Service. Different extension services across the United States come with different structures and models for extension. My three-part dissertation will examine the structural breakdown of the Cooperative Extension Services across the nation, sorting the program delivery models into three distinct buckets: the traditional county-based model, the regional model, and a new hybrid model. Once the first study breaks down extension, the second and third papers will dive deeper into understanding the best approach to embracing change, facing realistic challenges that are coming, and cementing the Cooperative Extension Service as the leading source of trusted information as we advance. Though Georgia is my home state and where my heart for extension beats the loudest, this dissertation is aimed to provide insight for all extensions across the country as changes and tough decisions must be made. The scholarship you have given me, will help make this project a reality. NACAA will be acknowledged when my dissertation is completed. Thank you again for your support.

2023 Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) Conference

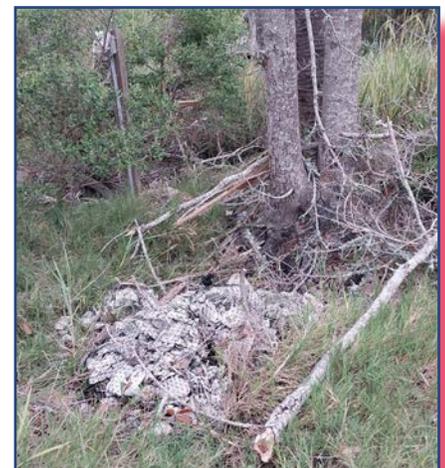
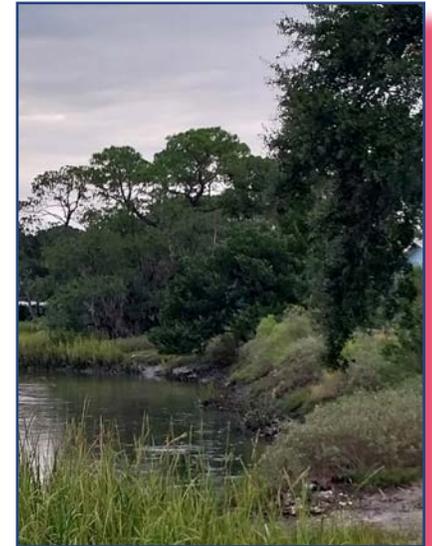
Brenda Lee Jackson, University of Georgia

Day one of the 2023 Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) conference consisted of educational excursions around the Savannah area. We started at the Burton 4-H Center on Tybee Island to learn about their Living Shoreline project (pictures attached). I was particularly interested in how they layered materials with bags of recycled oyster shells and permeable fabrics to stabilize the bank of the coastal estuary behind the 4-H Center. This might be a practice that could be implemented along inland streams to prevent erosion or potentially reclaim river and stream banks. Then we toured Tybee Island with coastal residents, while they told us about their resiliency projects and erosion issues due to the port expansion in Savannah and the need for regular beach replenishment. Apparently deepening the Savannah River for cargo ship access to the port creates a beach erosion issue, with sand consistently washing away and up the river.



Another interesting resiliency project is where residents have been using a FEMA grant to raise their homes 8-12 feet, to get them out of flood reach. We stopped at the Coastal GA Botanical Garden from Tybee Island for lunch and then moved on to our second stop, splitting into two groups. My group went to Skidaway Island, where we were given an overview of the UGA Marine Education Center and Aquarium, going behind the scenes of the Oyster Hatchery to learn how oysters are farmed.

Days 2-3 consisted of presentations in different program areas. The ones I specifically attended



were to support and improve my local educational programs, to provide disaster planning and response programming to my community: Preparedness Education for Vulnerable Populations; Youth and First Responder Educational Materials for Ag Disaster Response and Recovery; Reaching New Audiences: 4-H and Local Public Safety; Southern University's Emergency Preparedness, Education and Mitigation Program; and Advancing Agrosecurity and Community Resilience Through Collaboration, Capacity Building and Extension Program Innovation. I was specifically looking for future resources to help support my local emergency management officials with community education. In one presentation, I received a template of a Farm Emergency Plan that I can bring back to share with my local producers to support their disaster planning efforts. I found it to be a little more detailed than the standard home disaster plan: alternate contacts, farm coordinates, a record of additional farm sites, special considerations for bulk chemical or fertilizer storage, manure storage, feed processing, and notes on any pipelines running through the area. There is also a blank page where they can draw out their farm and include nearby resources like water, tools, spill kits, loading or excavating equipment, and absorbent materials available. In another session, I learned about different resources to find disaster-specific education materials with prepared lessons and even some already recorded on video.

Day 4 was an optional post-conference professional development panel discussion and tabletop exercise related to the outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) with zoonotic potential. We started with a panel of experts, discussing the different roles and responsibilities of state and federal agencies, Extension services, and the poultry industry. The exercise itself consisted of three different modules with different scenarios where we would discuss response roles during an outbreak, whether we were emergency management, government resource, or local county extension. Key issues discussed were ag emergency response specifically related to foreign animal diseases and quarantine zones; the authority of the state Department of Agriculture and USDA, and any limits to that authority; how a hold or stop movement order would impact consumers and producers; and Extension's role in disseminating information and education the community. I was able to take more of a leadership role in this exercise as I had attended a previous training on mass mortality management of poultry, sharing how UGA Extension would support local, state, and federal agencies in an outbreak of HPAI.

NACAA Galapagos Tour

Cyndi Lauderdale, North Carolina State University

I want to thank NACAA for offering me a scholarship and the opportunity to travel with the NACAA Galapagos Tour hosted by Michael Andruczyk, Senior Extension Agent, City of Chesapeake, Virginia Tech, and his Master Gardeners.



I arrived in Quito, Ecuador, and the next day traveled with a guide to Jardin Botanico de Quito, the Botanical Gardens of Quito. Here I explored the wonderful world of plants including native plants, the most outstanding bonsai I have ever seen, and of course the two greenhouses full of orchids (my plant passion). 52% of all plants in Ecuador are in the orchid family. Ecuagenera (a world-renowned orchid and tropical plant grower) was hosting their open house. This was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to see their facilities at maximum orchid blooming power with exquisite orchid displays. Later that evening I met up with the tour group and found out about their weeks' stay in Ecuador and learned about traveling the next morning to the Galapagos.



continued on page 8

The flight from Quito to San Cristobal, Galapagos was uneventful but as we landed, a lot of people started clapping. I'm not sure why they decided to clap, but to be honest, I teared up. I have been wanting to go to the Galapagos since I was a child (my mom says probably before I was 10 years old). I felt so honored to be landing on "sacred ground".

I was a little shocked when we got off the plane. I was expecting a tropical paradise but the landscape was barren and dry. The Galapagos has a wet and dry season. December is the last month of the dry season so it is only logical that the plants would be struggling a bit. The ocean is one of the bluest I have seen. San Cristobal is known for its sea lions and they are everywhere! We went to the Interpretation Center where UNC (yes the wrong NC University) had a research facility. We walked to Cerro Tijeretas to take in breathtaking views and learn about the Opuntia and Candelabra cactus and how the animals and plants evolved. By the way, the Opuntia cactus is like the oak tree of the Galapagos, they get huge with large spineless trunks.



The next day was a boat ride to Leon Dormido to see nesting frigates and blue-footed boobies along with sea turtles, black-tipped sharks, loads of fish and other marine life. While on shore our guide explained about some of the native plants and we saw marine iguanas for the first time.



Our next island was Santa Cruz. In the morning we visited the Charles Darwin Research Center. Here they collect saddleback tortoise eggs from each Island, rear them for several years and return them to their native home. The story of Lonesome George (a male turtle from Santa Cruz, with no mate) or how sailors favorite meat was tortoise reiterated the good work they are doing to keep Saddleback tortoises from extinction. In the afternoon, we had a nice hike (2 miles) to Tortuga Bay. This was a highlight of my trip, kayaking at Mansa Beach. The flora along the bay included several types of mangroves. Four species of mangroves (Black, White, Red and Button) grow in the Galapagos and are thriving which is an important part of the ecology there. Sea turtles feed on the mangroves and birds like pelicans and frigates nest in them.

Day 4 started with a bus ride to the far end of Santa Cruz to get a boat to North Seymour Island. Along the way we saw numerous dome tortoises eating along the roadside in the "highland". Santa Cruz has 7 microclimates including the highland which is the preferred habitat of the dome tortoise. North Seymour is a small flat island north of Balta that has a high population of nesting frigates and blue-footed boobies, land and marine iguanas, and sea lions. We learned about their eradication efforts of rats and other non-native animals that prey on the native animals and flora.

Our last day started with a ride back to the highlands to the El Chato Reserve where dome tortoises find refuge during the dry season. They travel great distances for mating and the whole cycle is unique in that dome tortoises can hold their eggs up to a year if necessary. Here we also walked through a lava tunnel, which was quite interesting, seeing the different rock layers of this geological structure. Our flight out was from Balta. This island was a US Air Force base during WWII. This island is home of land iguanas and Galapagos finches.

This educational experience was a highlight of my life. I am happy I got to share it with others who have the same interests as me. I owe so much to NACAA for all the educational experiences I have had over my 28 year career. If you are a new agent I highly recommend getting involved with NACAA. The more you participate the more you learn. Again, thank you NACAA for the tour and scholarship to experience and learn so much.

International Plant Propagators Society Tour

Danny Lauderdale, North Carolina State University

Thanks to the NACAA Scholarship Program, I was able to participate in the International Plant Propagators Society (IPPS) International Tour from Washington, D.C. to Maryland, through Virginia, to eastern Tennessee, western North Carolina, and ending in Durham, NC from October 18-28, 2023, hosted by the Southern Region. IPPS is an international association of plant production professionals, including those involved in horticultural research and education that formed in 1951. The IPPS motto and vision is “to seek and share plant production knowledge globally”.

After arriving in Washington, D.C. and meeting participants from the US, Australia, New Zealand, England, and South Africa, Day 1 of the tour began at Merrifield Garden Center in Gainesville, Virginia. This traditional garden center does not produce plants, but assembles quality annuals, perennials, shrubs, trees, and indoor plants for retail customers and landscape contractors. They offer landscape design and installation. The second stop was Green Spring Gardens, a 31 acre public garden focused on plants for the Washington metro area. The gardens feature a national witch hazel collection of almost 200 plants. There is focus on edible, water wise, stormwater, rock, townhouse, children’s, bioretention, shrub, vegetable, and perennial gardening. The garden is certainly a refuge in the urban jungle as I saw a coyote entering the gardens. The third stop was to George Washington’s Mount Vernon, which is America’s most popular historic estate. In addition to the mansion tour, we experienced a tour featuring landscape design principles and plant collections that were part of the original 8,000 acre working farm in the 18th century.

Day 2 began at Smithsonian Gardens where our tour led by staff horticulturists featured the curvilinear designed Mary Livingston Ripley Garden, the Freer Gallery of Art Courtyard Garden, the Enid A. Haupt Garden, the Fountain Garden, and the Moongate Garden. For horticulturists, this museum without walls experience, is one I highly recommend featuring the work of 73 staff members, on 180 acres with a \$7 million yearly budget that hosts 30 million visitors a year. We also visited the US Botanic Garden



with its conservatory surrounded gardens featuring natives, roses, pollinator plants, and Bartholdi Gardens featuring a sustainable designed kitchen garden.

Day 3 started at Marshall’s Riverbank Nursery in Salisbury, MD where we saw mechanized potting and forked loaders to move multiple plants and reduce labor. They



also utilize a boom overhead boom sprayer and air powered boom spreader to make pesticide applications efficient on their 90 acres of container production. David’s Nursery was our second stop of the day. They grow 100 acres each of above ground containers, pot in pot, and field grown plants, propagate ½ million cutting each year, and grow plants in 1-45 gallon containers, and plant 50,000 plants in the field each year. They also use a plastic bailer to make easy handling of overwintering house plastic for recycling.

Day 4 began at Bennet’s Creek Nursery in Smithfield, VA that sells to garden centers and landscape contractors. They utilize a boom sprayer/granular spreader, mechanized potting including a digital pot printer instead of plant tags, plant moving forklifts for labor efficiency, and lean techniques to streamline shipping. During the afternoon we visited Lancaster Farms which grows container ornamentals on 250 acres, propagating 1.5 million shrub cuttings, 10,000 trees from seed, and 100,000 perennials from cuttings each year. Growers walked us through stages of production direct-stick propagation to shipping to landscaper and garden centers in nine mid-Atlantic states.

Day 5 started at the Virginia Tech Hampton Roads Agricultural Research and Extension Center. We learned about research and extension programs involving turfgrass, small fruits, entomology, weed science, tree care, sustainable landscapes and native plants and were treated to an aerial drone demonstration. Our horticultural journey continued at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, VA which is 80 acres of themed gardens, a conservatory, children’s garden, and a kitchen garden that grows for local food banks. Highlights for me were the Four Seasons Garden, Woodland Walk, Main Garden Walk, Margaret Streb Conifer Garden and the numerous mixed borders. We closed out the day with a visit to Carter Mountain Orchard to learn about their commercial apple production.

continued on page 10

Day 6 featured a tour of the house and grounds of Thomas Jefferson's Monticello including the Center for Historic Plants where we learned about distribution of native and historic plants, and the vegetable garden. In the afternoon we made our way to Cros-B-Crest farm located in the Shenandoah Valley that grows, corn and soybeans, raises poultry, and grows a variety of ornamental greenhouse crops including the annuals and poinsettias. The final stop of the day featured tropical house plant production at The Plant Company, established in 2019. Their focus is on consistent quality and providing pest free plants to their garden center clients.



Day 7 began at Edible Landscaping, a nursery that ships low maintenance fruit trees and shrubs to retail customers. The rest of the day was spent at Saunders Brothers in Tye Brook and Harewood, VA. They focus on field and container boxwoods, 125 acres of tree fruit production, and 100 acres of container annuals, perennials, shrubs, and trees with 400 greenhouses/overwintering structures. Most nursery irrigation is controlled by evapotranspiration technology.



about the breeding efforts of NC State University on woody ornamentals and tomatoes, hops and apple production.

Day 10 was spent traveling from Western NC to Durham NC with a stop at Hart Square for the 38th Annual Living History Festival. The site is home to largest collection of historical log structures in the US that were originally built between 1760 and 1893. The tour ended with a banquet to celebrate all we learned and the relationships that were developed during the week and a half journey.

The morning of Day 8 was spent at the D-Day Memorial touring the 50 acres of manicured grounds and learned about the community that experienced this county's highest known per capita loss on this historic day. We traveled to Blacksburg Virginia for a personal tour of the Mountain View Garden of Elissa Steeves, the author of the first edition of the Virginia Master Gardener Handbook. The garden consists of 28 separate spaces on two urban lots combines rare and exotic plants with art and design to create a garden oasis.

I do not have enough space for a full description of what I learned about plants, their production, and the people that make it happen. I thank NACAA for the Scholarship Program that allowed me to participate in this tour. Just like NACAA events, the tour increased my knowledge and made connections that will last for years.

Day 9 of the tour was focused on the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville and the Mountain Horticultural Crops Research and Extension Center (MHCRC) in Mills River, NC. The arboretum features a Bonsai Garden Exhibit, a formal Quilt Garden, 14 other gardens and a trail system that makes up the natural portion of the site. At the MHCRC we learned

2024 Entomological Society of America's Southeastern Branch Meeting

Ethan Carter, University of Florida

Through my NACAA Education Foundation Scholarship, I was able to attend the 2024 Entomological Society of America's Southeastern Branch Meeting in Augusta, Georgia. Without my scholarship, there is no way that I would have otherwise had the funding to attend this conference. This opportunity allowed me to experience many different talks during the scientific sessions across the 3-day conference. Being a regional branch meeting, the research being discussed was directly relevant to my immediate area (Florida Panhandle, bordering both Georgia & Alabama) and job scope since a fair bit of lecture content related to row crops.

Examples of lecture content include vector transmission of diseases, documented insect resistance to chemistries, effectiveness of new BT varieties, and much more. Another attribute conference attribute that I am grateful for was some much needed in-person time to network and become familiar with research and Extension specialists across the ESA's southeastern region (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee). Since slowing exiting the 'Covid era', many conferences have either been canceled or moved online over the past four years. Although online conferences can be convenient and cost effective, they tend to lose that extra connectivity and familiarity allowed from in-person events which allow you to genuinely meet and learn about new people. The time and experiences provide a foundation which allows research and Extension programs to grow through increased collaboration and network size.

Direct scholarship outcomes are my knowledge gains from the different entomological sessions/talks, but also my new ties to Extension researchers and specialists in other states who I can now contact for collaborative work and questions. The NACAA Education Foundation Scholarship does a great job opening doors and providing opportunities for agriculture agents that may otherwise not be available to them.



ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA
SOUTHEASTERN BRANCH

NACAA Agriculture & Amazon Tour of Ecuador January 10-20, 2024

Kathryn Holmes, North Carolina State University

The NACAA Agriculture & Amazon Tour was a wonderful educational trip with a wide variety of experiences and agricultural stops. Ecuador happened to be having some political and gang "unrest" while we toured, resulting in a few changes to the planned agenda for safety reasons. One being the cancellation of the pineapple and plantain farm visit, but we still enjoyed fresh pineapple and plantain chips!

We began our tour on Wednesday, January 10th with our English-speaking guide taking us to a cabin type resort for the evening due to a country curfew. The local food and juices were delicious.



On Thursday, January 11th we traveled thru beautiful sites to the Cayambe Valley where the world's largest producers of roses are located. We learned about rose production in the greenhouses including manually covering each red rose to keep the strong light from causing it to blacken. We learned about the rose business labor issues, packaging and shipping. Next stop was a sundial equator monument and agave garden. The afternoon to overnight was spent in San Clemente indigenous village learning about their heritage.



On Friday, January 12th we visited an avocado farm that also grew peaches, apples, and tangerines. Due to the two seasons in Ecuador - dry and wet they are able to get two harvests annually. Some avocado trees produce 600 avocados annually. The fruit was delicious. This was followed by an afternoon at an amazing commercial vegetable greenhouse operation.

continued on page 12



On Saturday, January 13th we walked to the Otavalo market to see the produce and handicrafts. The fresh produce was so good. Next, we drove to a commercial Cuye or Guinea pig farm and learned about breeding, diseases, and markets for sales. The evening was spent at the craft brewery Fortaleza.



On Sunday January 14th we traveled to thermal baths. Some were very hot and some very cold and many are moderate temperatures. After the thermal baths we downsized our luggage to take canoes to the Amazon.



On Monday, January 15th we woke up early to take a canoe ride to try and see parrots. The parrots arrived to the tree tops but did not come down lower because it started to rain. Ecuador has many colorful birds. After breakfast we took a canoe ride to see howling monkeys and then hiked into the amazon to see tropical plants, insects, and fungi up close.



On Tuesday, January 16th We toured Quito at 10,000ft elevation this is the second highest capital in the world. We saw two churches, the capital buildings and square, the Virgin

Mary Statue and enjoyed local empanadas in a local café with music.



On Wednesday, January 17th we visited the Quito botanical gardens and saw the stunning orchid collection.



On Thursday, January 18th we visited the tourist town of Mindo where groups participated in birdwatching, ziplining or hiking in the morning and in the afternoon, we learned how to make chocolate and made some to taste and some to use for face moisturizer.



The final day of the Ecuador Tour was spent visiting a beautiful coffee farm and learning how to growing coffee, coffee diseases, harvesting, and the steps to dry coffee.



We went to the original resort to shower before our flights home. Ecuador is a beautiful country and with the temperate climate and moisture a great place to produce a variety of agricultural commodity for sale locally and for exports.

Ohio Sheep Producers Tour New Zealand

Mark Badertscher, Ohio State University

In October, two Hardin County people joined an Ohio Sheep Improvement Association and Ohio Farm Bureau Sheep and Agriculture Tour of New Zealand. Local sheep producer Nancy Wilcox and OSU Extension Agriculture and Natural Resources Educator Mark Badertscher joined a group of about 30 sheep producers, sheep industry personnel, and both current and retired OSU Extension Educators on a fourteen-day trip to New Zealand

to study sheep production methods and marketing techniques. The group participated in tours of a sheep-milking enterprise and a pasture-based sheep and bull-beef farm near Rotorua; a visit to the Agrodome, which highlights the key breeds in New Zealand's sheep industry; a large-scale sheep farm and a sheep and beef property with an emphasis on genetics near Masterton; a large fine-wool merino sheep station on the way to Christchurch; a leading manufacturer of sheep handling equipment in Temuka; an intensive sheep farm near Gore; along with a diversified farm with commercial ewe flock of 5,500 head, 275-hectare dairy, 70 beef cattle, forestry, and farm-stay operation. The trip left the Columbus airport on October 17 and returned on October 30.



Many sheep breeds found in New Zealand were on display during the Agrodome show.



One of the industry visits on the New Zealand Sheep and Agriculture Tour was a high-tech animal equipment manufacturing plant.

Sightseeing included a tour of Auckland, "The City of Sails," Hawke's Bay for a winery tour and tasting; a tour of the capital city of Wellington before an Interislander Cruise to the

South Island; a city tour of Christchurch, the largest city on the South Island; a walk on the beach to see the unique Moeraki Boulders; viewed Lake Te Anau in the scenic Fjordland National Park region; a cruise on the Milford Sound; a visit to Queenstown with sightseeing, an optional bungee jumping opportunity, a winery cave tour, and a ride on the Skyline Gondola.



Lowland pastures often had dairy cattle grazing for the production of dried milk for export to China.



One of the farms visited by the Ohio Sheep Improvement/Ohio Farm Bureau tour group was a sheep dairy which produced milk for infant formula.

The major objectives of this New Zealand Sheep and Agriculture Study Tour were to learn production methods, marketing ideas, and production types that will enhance local sheep producers' work in Ohio. Sheep producers are looking for opportunities to improve the profitability of their operations by expanding vertically or coming up with new markets to sell their lambs and wool. Other countries' production methods and marketing means can provide ideas for enhancing producers' operations in Ohio. By attending this tour, our group learned about these different



One of the sites visited on the New Zealand Sheep and Agriculture Tour was a Merino fine wool station.

continued on page 14

production methods and marketing techniques to make their operations more profitable and sustainable. In addition to the sheep farms and educational and industry sites that were visited, our group also toured other types of agricultural operations to gain insight on the procedures of agricultural enterprises to find out what is successful in New Zealand and how these types of businesses could be successful in Ohio.



Many of the sheep in New Zealand were long wool type, used in manufacturing yarn for carpets as was evident on this industry visit.

Professional study tours such as the New Zealand Sheep and Agriculture Study Tour are important to Extension because they allow Extension Educators to experience agriculture first-hand in a practical setting. This study tour allowed the Extension Educator to travel and learn along with a local producer who is a client of The Ohio State University. By traveling with local clientele, sheep industry personnel, and retired OSU Extension Educators, the local Extension Educator gained knowledge and experiences that can be used later to provide educational offerings in the county and around the state. As educators, we must always be lifelong learners looking for opportunities to expand our understanding and grow our expertise.



Much of New Zealand's landscape was covered by thousands of sheep grazing on pasture, with the most common breed being Romney.

Upon returning to Ohio, this Educator presented for county lamb banquets, Grange, Ag Council, and other groups. He believes study tours such as these provide technical knowledge and experiences for teaching, build relationships with livestock producers, and instill agricultural credibility as an Extension Educator. Other related educational trips this Educator has participated in include Sheep and Agriculture Study Tours of the United Kingdom and Ireland, California, Argentina, and Montana.

Each year, this Educator leads sheep production and marketing tours for local county producers and those in adjacent counties to see sheep operations throughout Ohio. This past year, he was chair of the Ohio Sheep Improvement Association Sheep Industry Tour Committee, which was to plan a statewide sheep tour to Michigan for Ohio producers. His local Hardin County Sheep Improvement Association has been participating in similar educational tours since the early 1990s each fall.

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2024 Extension Leadership Conference (ELC)

Mark J. Platten, Colorado State University

I want to thank NACAA for providing the \$1,500 scholarship to attend the 2024 Extension Leadership Conference (ELC) in Tampa, Florida February 14-15, 2024. Without this support, I wouldn't have been able to attend.

The keynote speaker had us working individually and at our tables to identify what were key characteristics of leadership, what positive and negative examples of leadership had we experienced in Extension, and finally what tools/training have we found most valuable and why. Some of this wasn't new, but it was valuable to hear what others had to say about the tools/resources/training they felt had served them as a leader. I will incorporate some of those in my work in Colorado Extension and seek out some of the training resources that were mentioned.

The concurrent sessions and poster sessions provided insights into how other leaders are approaching the same issues I've encountered. The one that stood out the most for me was "Strategies for Leaders to Grow County Extension Faculty Engagement and Increase Recognition," because Colorado has had a lot of turnover in the past several years. I'm always looking for resources and training to help me retain staff and volunteers. As I shared with my HR director almost a decade ago, "If we don't do a better job of onboarding and mentoring our millennial hires, we're going to start seeing a lot of turnover." Unfortunately, that has come to pass and we don't have a good plan in place to reduce that trend. I had a lengthy discussion with the author and found several of the techniques to be valuable, including annual office retreats, peer recognition (different than the "employee of the month" thing that rotates from person to person), compliment sharing from participants of their programs so everyone can celebrate the difference they made to the public, and office fun contests that create camaraderie and a positive attitude in the office.

One of the benefits of the Extension Leadership Conference is that all the associations are present so we're able to glean information and training from multiple disciplines. This is especially valuable to someone like me who belongs to four associations.

I attended the ANREP association meeting and had a conversation with the Extension Foundation COO who informed me of a natural resources grant that they were creating with an RFP opening in April, 2024. The grant is between 10K – 100K depending on scope and reach. I am part of a natural resources team that is looking for funding to complete our multi-state program and this appears to fit

within the specs of the Extension Foundation Grant. I brought the information back to my team and we are planning to submit once it opens.

On the last day, a team from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) presented different components of what they were funding and who could apply. One of the presentations was in regard to emergency management following a natural disaster. There was a special grant available for that, Rapid Response to Extreme Weather Events Across Food and Agricultural Systems (A1712). Unlike most grants that have a grant cycle with open and close dates, this is a rolling grant that can be applied for any time and there is a very quick return response (within 45 days). The grant is up to 300K, and the program is designed to rapidly deploy strategies and fill knowledge and information gaps to protect the nation's food and agricultural supply chains, from production through consumption, during and after extreme weather and disasters. <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/grants/programs/agriculture-food-research-initiative-afri/rapid-response-extreme-weather-events-across-food-agriculture-systems-a1712>

Colorado has had a dozen large wildfires and subsequent flash floods in the past decade, so we know it's only a matter of time before the next emergency. I asked the director of that program if we could fill out the grant with the general needs and responses to wildfires and just fill in the specifics once it happens. He said that would be a great way of preparing for the event and would create a faster response because most of the grant would be written. I then researched the 22 projects that have been funded under this grant since its inception in 2022, and six were related to wildfires with three of them from similar environments: New Mexico, Idaho, and Montana. <https://portal.nifa.usda.gov/enterprise-search/ss/1374>

Overall, the ELC was extremely beneficial, and I wouldn't have been able to attend without the generous support from the NACAA Education Foundation Scholarship. I feel like I will use the information and connections I made to better the programs across the state as well as my personal leadership skills.



Oklahoma Association of Extension Agriculture Agents Educational Trip to Colorado

On December 10th, 2023 twelve members of the Oklahoma Association of Extension Agriculture Agents disembarked on a week long trek of learning and fun in Colorado. On the way from Stillwater, OK to Loveland, CO we made an unplanned stop at the Remember the Ten Crash Site Memorial right outside of Byers, CO to honor the ten lives of OSU basketball players and coaches that perished in a plane crash in 2001.



OAEAA visiting the Remember the Ten Crash Site Memorial

Loveland, CO served as our base location for the rest of the week. On Monday December 11th, we were able to visit and tour Leachman Cattle Company of Colorado with Craig Hays. Mr. Hays gave us a presentation about Leachman's genetics, bull sales, and data collection. He then gave us a tour of the ranch and facilities where he explained what they look for in their bulls, how they test for Pulmonary arterial pressure



OAEAA at Leachman Cattle Company of Colorado

(PAP) to try to eliminate elevation disease in cattle, how they manage leases, how they manage grass through rotation, and things that threaten their livelihood, which was land being sold to small acreage homes. We then got to visit the feedlot where they collect data on growth and feed intake. We also go to exam a "Greenfeed" system that collects and measures gas emissions given off by cattle's breath.

Monday concluded with a tour of New Belgium Brewing Company in Fort Collins, CO. Our tour guide, Amanda, gave our group a great tour of plant where she told of the history of the company, the process of producing Belgium beer, and explained how the company is focused on being carbon neutral.



OAEAA at New Belgium Brewing Company

Tuesday December 12th, we had a tour set up with the Rocky Mountain National Park Rangers. Ranger Abby started by showing us a video about the park and told the group about how her position and others are focused on education. We were limited by snow to a short loop in the park, but we had



Rocky Mountain National Park Rangers speaking to OAEAA members

several stops where we discussed management efforts in the park to support plant and wildlife diversity. We discussed tree identification as well as wildfire's effect in the area. Above all we seen beautiful wildlife and scenery and learned how human's impact on natural resources and wildlife in a positive and negative way.

We made another unplanned stop for a short visit of the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park. The Stanley Hotel was the inspiration for the book "The Shining" and a filming location for the movie "Dumb and Dumber." We then headed back north to the Colorado State University campus to meet up with Dr. Richard Knight. Dr. Knight gave a presentation titled "Ranchers: A Keystone Species in a West That Works." He presented research that examined the negative effects that small acre "ranchettes" have on wildlife diversity, plant diversity, and even county spending. His presentation explained the threat that Leachman's told us about on Monday. He further explained how the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust uses conservation easement to compensate landowners to ensure that Colorado's rangeland will stay in agriculture production and not be sold off to developments. Above all, Dr. Knight's enthusiasm and passion for his work and for agriculture was infectious to us all.

Wednesday, December 13th started the Range Beef Cow Symposium in Loveland, CO. This two-day conference had over four hundred participants registered from at least fifteen states and Canada. It was full of amazing speakers and was kicked off by none other than Dr. Derrell Peel from Oklahoma State University. Dr. Peel presented results of the data that was collected at sale barns from seven states and twenty-one different auctions on how to market feeder

panel breakout sessions were also extremely interesting. The majority of us attended the "Business of Direct Beef Marketing" panel and the "Wolf Reintroduction" panel. Both sessions were extremely interesting and educational. Thursday, day two of the Range Beef Cow Symposium talked about cattle imports and exports, the beef quality audit, herd health planning, vaccine effects on reproduction, and reproduction efficiency. The afternoon had three different demonstrations we attended. The first was "Managing for Rangeland Health" where they showed how plant cover and soil compaction affects rain distribution. The second demonstration was CSU researchers demonstrating their portable "Greenfeed" to collect emissions off of cattle grazing pastures. The third demonstration was Dr. Tim Holt demonstrating how to perform a PAP test on cattle.



OAEAA is a fun-loving group, but very competitive bowlers.

The week was packed full of great learning opportunities and fun, but we did have to drive home on Friday December 15th. Our group was very surprised on how the different educational stops complimented one another. The topics we discussed at Leachman's were also talked about with Dr. Knight and at the Symposium. Things that were discussed at the Rocky Mountain National Park were discussed during the Wolf Reintroduction panel. We are a fun-loving group and had an amazing time with one another learning and laughing. "When you're working with good people it brings good things out in you." – Martha Plimpton



OAEAA at the Range Beef Cow Symposium

calves for increased value. Throughout the day we learned about sustainability, using ionophores in cows, benchmarking herd performance, and cattle market outlook. The afternoon

Horticulture Tour of Holland

Danny Lauderdale, North Carolina State University

I was able to arrive a day prior to the tour start in order to catch the Dutch Flower Parade. The flower parade starts at Nordwijk and ends 26 miles away in Haarlem and lasts from 9 am to at least 9:30 pm. Hyacinths, daffodils, and tulip bulbs, flowers, and other cut flowers are used to decorate floats and vehicles of all shapes and sizes. The NACAA Horticulture Tour of Holland began with a visit to the Hortus Botanicus started in the 1600s featuring a private tour of a wide variety of plants from around the world displayed in greenhouses and outdoor gardens. The garden visit was followed by a canal tour of the City of Amsterdam featuring historic and innovative architectural and engineering features.

Day 2 of the tour started with a visit to Royal FloraHolland, the world's largest flower auction that covers an area of 250 football fields. An average of 44 million flowers per day go through the auction that is a cooperative of flower and plant growers. It is an opportunity to watch the choreography combination of employees and automated carts moving plants in synchronous fashion to put together orders for buyers. The remainder of the day featured a guided tour and free time to explore Keukenhof, "the most beautiful spring garden in the world", that is only open in 2024 from March 21 to May 12. This year the garden featured an orchid show in addition to the traditional displays of tulips, hyacinths, and daffodils.

The third tour day started at Delphy BV, a research facility for greenhouse vegetable and flower production. There we learned about some of the latest research into production of greenhouse tomatoes



and peppers before having a quick tour of Royal Delft earthenware. The remainder of the day was spent at Koppert Cress where they let the needs of their chef clientele guide their production of fresh sprouted seedlings that provide flavor, scent, and beautiful presentation to their dishes. There we also learned from PATS Indoor Drone Solutions about the latest tiny drones used as electronic bats to control moth pests in greenhouses which are guided by a camera system used to detect insects up to 5 weeks sooner than human scouting.



The morning of day 4 featured Rijnbeek Perennials and Kolster BV, growers of perennials and flowering shrubs respectively. Rijnbeek featured a diverse herbaceous perennial plant selection that ships 500 varieties worldwide. Kolster produces cut flowers, potted shrubs, perennials, and has a focus on delphinium, eryngium, gypsophila, helleborus, hydrangea, hypericum, hollies, peonies, phlox, roses, scabiosa, sedum, golden rod, Symphoricarpos, and veronica.



The afternoon was spent at Kinderdijk windmills, a UNESCO World Heritage site learning about the water management techniques using the mills, canals, and pumping stations.



The fifth day started at BM Roses which can only be described as a plant factory. Other than when cuttings are prepared and stuck and when flowering roses are dropped into cellophane sleeves and put on carts at the end of production, the plants are not touched by human hands. Every part of the production process after sticking the cuttings is mechanized and computer controlled. After lunch we visited the Keringhuis water management system to learn how the Dutch prevent flooding even during tidal waves up to 5 meters above sea level. In the afternoon we visited Labeau Breeders/Scion Orchids who also have a highly mechanized facility producing the latest varieties of potted orchids.



The final tour day included visits to a cheese factory and clog workshop in the morning. In the afternoon we visited the Sow to Grow Museum for a tour and breeding discussion with a representative from Syngenta. This tour to the Netherlands revealed new and innovative technology to me that I will share with nursery & greenhouse growers in eastern North Carolina. With labor being one of the greatest challenges in agriculture, the computer assistance, mechanization, and technology that I learned about will help growers see how they can run a more efficient operation which should allow for less stress on employees and better employee retention. Putting this technology to use will also inspire new types of employees to the green industry.

2024 Association of International Agricultural and Extension Educators

Robyn Stewart, M.S., University of Georgia

As a recipient of a 2023 NACAA Educational Experience Scholarship, I was able to attend the 2024 Association of International Agricultural and Extension Educators (AIAEE) annual conference in Lake Vista Springs, Florida from April 22-24th. For those who may not know, AIAEE is a “professional organization for agricultural and extension educators who share a common goal of strengthening agricultural and extension education programs and institutions worldwide” and this year was it’s 40th annual conference. The majority of work presented at AIAEE is focused on agricultural education



and communication across the globe. The conference brought 260 participants, half of which were students, from as far away as Africa, Europe, and South America.

The AIAEE conference schedule includes a variety of activities including poster presentations, professional development, abstract presentations, and ideas at work. My primary reason for attending was to present research I conducted in 2023 as part of my doctoral program. My research, titled: Evaluating Public Perceptions and Behaviors Regarding UGA Extension Horse Resources using Diffusion of Innovations Theory: A Preliminary Study, aimed to describe the demographics of individuals who use UGA Extension horse resources as well as their perspectives of UGA horse resource credibility and accessibility. The presentation was attended by approximately 25 people, and several individuals spoke with me after regarding my future plans for the topic. I am hoping to focus

continued on page 20



my dissertation work on this area, so having positive reception from this audience was encouraging.

In addition to my abstract presentation, I was able to attend the poster session, professional development sessions, and other presentations. One highlight from the poster session were poster number 12 “Communicating with Impact Using Art or Science: Examining Student Reactions to Media Portrayals of Animal Agriculture” by Masambuka-Kanechewa and colleagues. I was interested in this work because agricultural communication, particularly around controversial practices in animal science, has long been an interest of mine. This study was a qualitative assessment of perceptions of animal agriculture based on public articles and posts – the author asked undergraduate students if they thought the information communicated in an article about animal agriculture was based in science or more artistic and based in emotion. Ultimately, the author found very split perceptions, where students found the writing both scientific and artistic. The article and I were able to discuss some ways of repeating or expanding the study such as re-writing the prompt or asking demographic questions relating to student attitudes towards animal agriculture prior to reading the article.

While the poster session highlighted great work in agricultural education and communication across the globe, the real star of the conference was the abstract presentations and professional development sessions. One Professional Development session by Carmen Benson and Jen Peterson, titled “Participatory Methods for Social and Behavioral Change in Agricultural Extension Programs” focused on the mechanisms by which behaviors change. They discussed social-behavioral theory and how there are social, psychological, and structural barriers and norms that influence what behaviors are enacted in specific situations. As Extension professionals, if our goal is behavioral change of our clients, we need to be able to recognize and overcome these barriers and norms. They used a really interesting example of

education in India, where they thought the biggest barrier to women participating in post-secondary education were their husbands and fathers. What they found however, was that for younger women, the biggest barrier was actually the local government and their mothers, and for older women, it was their mother-in-law. This example really highlighted how we have to make sure we are asking the right people the right questions to best understand the circumstances affecting behaviors. I plan on using some of the concepts in this talk as I work on my dissertation research focusing on the relationship between horse owners and Extension.

In addition to posters and professional development, I was able to see a number of interesting abstract presentations. Some of the most prominent included Extension agent acceptance of online learning methods, accessibility of Extension programming, re-hiring old employees and their onboarding experiences, and developing excellence in Extension mentors. All of these topics are immediately applicable to my role as County Extension Coordinator and Agricultural and Natural Resources.

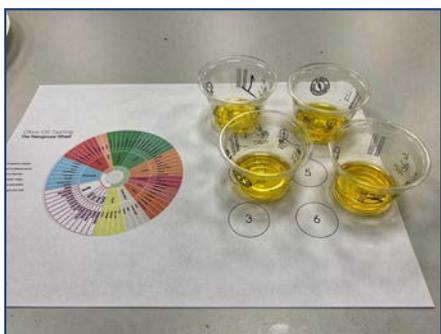
Attending the 2024 AIAEE Conference was a great opportunity to network with agricultural Extension educators from across the globe, particularly other students who will (hopefully) become educators and Extension agents in the future. I was able to bring home new ideas for programming, new teaching and learning theories for my dissertation research, and new acquaintances to grow my network with. I would not have been able to attend this conference and the NACAA AM/PIC in the same year without support, so I am very appreciative of the NACAA Educational Experience Scholarship that enabled me to do so!



2023 NACAA International Professional Development Agriculture Study Tour

Patrick Byers, University of Missouri

It was pleased to participate the 2023 NACAA International Professional Development Agriculture Study Tour to Greece. The study tour broadened my understanding of over 3,000 years of Mediterranean agriculture and helped me gain deep knowledge of several specialty crops, including kiwifruit, grape, persimmon, pomegranate, and citrus. In particular, I was excited to see all aspects of olive production, including orchard management, harvest, processing of fruit for oil and whole fruit, and quality assessment through sensory evaluation.



The tour also focused on agronomic crops, including cotton and wheat, and I gained an understanding of how processing (flour production, cotton ginning) added value to these commodity crops. I enjoyed learning how Greek agriculture and processing are intertwined with the agriculture of other neighboring countries such as Turkey and Bulgaria. I learned about issues facing Greek farmers and Greek agriculture – the impact of international issues such as the wars in Ukraine and Gaza on farming supplies and export markets, issues related to the export of specialty crops

(phytosanitary issues, food safety issues), and issues related to farm ownership and scale (we visited farms that ranged from less than an acre to hundreds of acres).

I also learned from the Greek farmers and processors that participated in the tour. I gained perspectives on issues that I will bring to my clientele and stakeholders in Missouri. In addition to personal professional development, the study tour was an excellent opportunity to develop collaborative relationships with peers across the country. Any time that talented, knowledgeable people are gathered together for an experience such as the study tour, interesting ideas are discussed and future collaborations are planned. Extension specialists new to their positions benefit from the wisdom and experience of specialists or retirees with lengthy tenure.

Specialists from one part of the US benefit from the discussions with specialists from other parts of the country. For example, I learned about fruit issues in Maryland, Colorado, New Mexico, and Kentucky. I broke bread and had discussions with specialists from across the country. I sat with retirees and learned from their collective knowledge. I learned about outreach techniques that will enhance my efforts, and I have a list of colleagues that I can call on for programming opportunities and professional assistance.

Of course, the tour also offered an immersion into Greek life, as well as an opportunity to view sites of immense historic and scenic interest. I learned about everyday life in ancient Greece, religious practices through the ages, and the recent painful history of Greece in the 19th and 20th centuries. I have a keen interest in the natural world, and the tour offered opportunities to view and study birds, native plants, soils, geology, and other aspects of natural history. Finally, I would mention the value of international experiences to gain a better perspective on the importance of extension efforts and the American extension model.



NACAA Ecuador Expedition

Lacey Taylor, Colorado State University

In 2024, the NACAA Ecuador expedition involved 17 Extension and agricultural community members journeying to Quito to experience the rich agricultural and cultural tapestry of the region. Representatives from Colorado, North Carolina, Utah, and Texas participated, comprising professionals in Extension services, youth development, and ranching. Over the course of nine days, we delved into the vibrant Ecuadorian culture and agricultural practices, witnessing a diverse array of fruits, vegetables, floriculture, wildlife, and Cuye.



Notably, during our scheduled departure week, Ecuador grappled with political unrest stemming from a jailbreak and the storming of a news station during a live broadcast. In response, the newly elected government enforced a curfew and mobilized military forces to restore order, particularly in the southern regions and near the presidential palace in Quito. After thorough consultations with the secretary of state, Explorations by Thor tour group, and our local guide, we affirmed the safety of our journey and agreed to modify our itinerary as needed. Throughout our educational expedition, spanning nine days, I felt secure immersing myself in the rural Ecuadorian culture, whether in the countryside, during travel, or during our brief stay in Quito.

Our initial day included a visit to an organic rose farm, where we marveled at the farm's operations, particularly its extensive exports to various markets, including the United States. Witnessing the diverse rose varieties and the farm's evolution over 25 years, notably free from royalty fees, was truly captivating. Fiorentina Flowers, producing 52 million stems annually from 3.2 million plants, showcased the necessity of replacing UV protection every three years. Subsequently, we acclimated to the altitude and engaged with the



local indigenous community, gaining valuable insights into the agricultural calendar, planting seasons, and local cuisine. Staying with host families, we reveled in an evening of lively dancing and traditional music, enriching our cultural experience.



Our itinerary included a visit to an avocado and fruit farm, where we were educated about the Haas and Fuerte avocado varieties. The farmer expressed optimism about accessing the United States markets with their avocados, highlighting the eight-month journey from flower to ripe fruit for these crops. Subsequently, we explored Ecuahort, a key provider of vegetables for numerous grocery stores in Ecuador. Operating on leased land, Ecuahort boasts a distinctive and vibrant organic farming approach. The feedlot operation at Cuye left a lasting impression as the most impeccably maintained facility I have encountered. Cuye females undergo three gestations before being culled after a 68-day gestation period, with each female being utilized for approximately a year. Managed by a local veterinarian, the Cuye farm's success with raising Cuye has prompted exploration of other meat livestock like goats for future endeavors.

Our journey to the Amazon Basin introduced us to yet another local indigenous community. These communities represent a significant portion of Ecuador's labor force, with the Amazon Basin providing us a refreshing change from high altitudes, offering a glimpse of the tributaries contributing to the expansive Amazon River.



Subsequently, we explored historic Quito, including a visit to the presidential palace amid a subdued atmosphere due to ongoing political unrest affecting travel. The comforts of a Holiday Inn with robust shower pressure and laundry services were a welcome respite before our return to Mindo, where we delved into the realms of chocolate and coffee production, alongside bird watching.

Guided by Ivan, this immersive journey was meticulously coordinated, leaving me eagerly anticipating future excursions with NACAA.

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Science For A Better Life



LIFE MEMBER CORNER

Retirement Present

Larry R. Hulle, NACAA Life Member - New York

For 22 years of my career, I was the Dairy Science, Field Crop and Farm Business Management agent for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange & Ulster Counties in New York. I finished my career as the Agricultural Program Manager for the Watershed Ag Council which is responsible for keeping all the agricultural waste out of New York City's water supply. I'm an avid big game hunter and wanted to go on more hunts when I was able to retire. In November of 2023 I had a hunt booked in Colorado and the following article gives the highlights.

In 2000 when I earned a Master's degree to further my Ag Agent career, I wanted to go on a well-deserved mule deer hunt. However, I did not get the mule deer tag, I received my first preference point instead. One Preference point can be purchased annually. Over the years I spoke with many CO outfitters at the annual sportsman show in Harrisburg, PA and when I had less than 20 preference points the outfitters all said they either had hunting areas that only needed a handful of points or much more than I had. So fast forward to when I was two years from retirement, I contacted the *Huntin' Fool* magazine advisors to get some advice on where and who I should contact for a quality mule deer hunt. They gave me three outfitters' names and after calling several references I choose Lazy F Bar Outfitters in Gunnison CO owned by Steve Guerrieri.

In 2021 I talked with Steve about my goals to hunt in the next two years, so we booked the 4th rifle season of 2023. When I applied for the license in 2023 with 23 preference points, Steve indicated that the hunters he had the previous year were successful with 22 points so I was very hopeful. In June of 2023 I found out that I was successful for a mule deer buck tag in the 4th rifle season.

I was fortunate enough to be able to retire 6 months earlier than I originally planned. This allowed for more preparation time for the hunt. I have used my Winchester model 70 in 7mm rifle for more than 90% of my hunts for over 40 years. However, I had always wanted to own a Henry lever action rifle and 4 months prior to the hunt I purchased a Henry in 6.5 Creedmoor. Putting a Leopold 4-12 power scope on top was one of the best decisions I have made. I was able to do a good amount of practicing with the rifle setting the zero at 200 yards.



I decided to travel to CO with my truck and 17-foot camper and take my time instead of flying. As most hunters know that have used the airlines, you either have to go light on luggage or ship your supplies out ahead of time and ship them back after your hunt. I wanted to bring everything I thought I would need and more. Basically, if I had the room, I brought it so I could be ready for any weather or situation. I planned for a 15-day trip, 5 days for the hunt and 5 days each way to drive the 2000 miles for 30 hours, allowing time for any mishaps. I stayed at some rest areas overnight and mostly used Pilot gas stations and used their services. I got to see a lot of truckers and see what they go through as they move all their freight across the USA.



I was able to get to Gunnison CO a day ahead of schedule which helped me get used to the higher altitude. I met with the outfitter Steve Guerrieri and my guide Wyatt Baldwin along with the other 4 hunters the day before the 4th rifle season opened. We went over what to expect on the hunt and went through the necessary paperwork to ensure we had the proper licenses with us. I and another hunter wanted to fire our rifles to check the zero. I wanted to use my new 6.5 Creedmoor and I also brought my 7mm as a reliable backup. Both rifles were still on the 200 yard zero.



On day one of the hunt Wyatt and I saw over 140 deer with about 15 bucks, mostly young and small bucks, some deer within 160 yards. I actually should admit that I didn't see all of those deer as my guide Wyatt has very keen eyesight and was also using a 65-power spotting scope.

On day two we all wished each other Happy Thanksgiving! There were less sightings of deer. Quite a few groups of does with small bucks nearby. By mid-afternoon we spotted a group of deer with two bucks. One nice 4x5 with a 30-inch spread. However, two other vehicles moved to that area to look over the deer. We thought they were going to shoot but they were just using a spotting scope. Wyatt got the bigger buck in his scope and I wanted to get a closer look. We talked with the other hunters and found out one only had an elk tag and the other had declined to go after the buck. By this time the bigger buck was 220 yards up in the thick woods with no shot opportunity.

On day three of the hunt there was a weather prediction of a foot of snow but we only got a few snow flurries. We thoroughly scouted the area that the 4x5 buck had been, only saw groups of does and small bucks.

On day four we again returned to the area the 4x5 buck had been, the rut was kicking up a bit as we saw several bucks chasing does. Wyatt saw a second potential shooter buck

that was a 4x4, although not as wide as the 4x5 we had seen however he had a taller rack. I decided to go after him. To get in a better position we had to take the quad around the mountain top. During that time another hunter with a deer tag and his friend saw the same buck and ended up following us close to where we got set up to take a shot. Once they knew we were on the buck they left our area. The 4x4 was walking across the next hill and at 320 yards he bedded down. We stayed very still and waited around 20 minutes for him to make a move. I was able to kneel over a tri-pod when finally, a few does and a smaller buck came near him and he decided

to get up. He moved to the left through some sparse tree cover and unfortunately, I missed the first shot. After the shot he changed direction and jogged up the hill and stopped at 325 yards. I put him down for good with the 6.5 Creedmoor using Hornady 143 grain ELD-X bullet. Wyatt and his fellow guide Brad handled the photo session and quartering of this 250-pound buck. We were able to cape the buck and get the meat to the freezer so I could bring it back East in my cooler with dry ice.

This was a long awaited and satisfying Mule Deer Hunt. It was certainly a great retirement present.



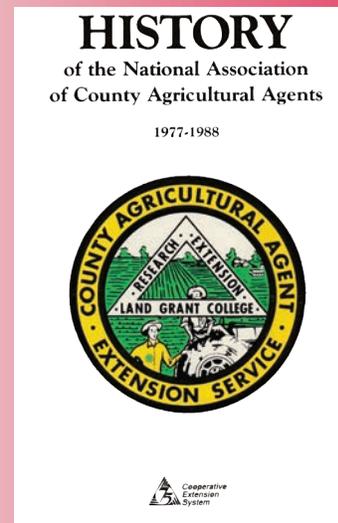
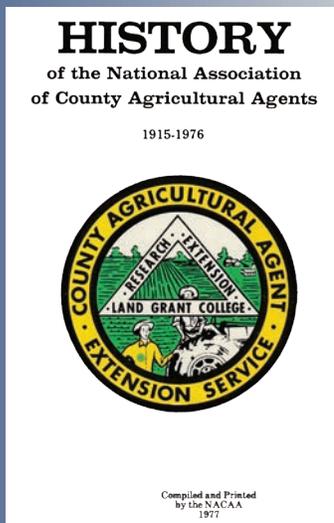


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2027

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