

FOCUS

MAGAZINE 2025

EXPANDING OUR *Reach*

New Extension agents take posts in respective counties



CONTENTS



4 PRIME RESULTS

Extension and research collaborate to help beef cattle farmer



7 REJUVENATE, REENERGIZE AND REIMAGINE

Fort Valley State hosts family and consumer sciences conference

10 CONNECTED

Local communities cross digital gulf with help from Fort Valley State



12 HELPING FARMERS MITIGATE STRESS

FVSU Extension conducts outreach and research on farm stress

14 LEARNING BY LEADING

Fort Valley State agricultural communicators earn honors, serves as leaders in national professional development organization



16 BRIGHT IDEAS

Grant project sparks international innovation in Sub-Saharan Africa



22 4-H UPDATES



SECTIONS

Did You Know?	2
AgVice	3
In the Field Spotlight	28
Recipe	32
Meet Your County Agent/Program Assistant	34
News & Notes	36

The Focus magazine is published by the Fort Valley State University College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology. Information published herein is for educational purposes in the furtherance of the University's Land-Grant mission in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Materials contained in this publication may be reprinted for further educational use provided the meaning is not altered and proper credit is given to the College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology at Fort Valley State University.

FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FAMILY SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Dr. Keith Howard
Dean, College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAM

Dr. Mark Latimore Jr.
Associate Dean for Extension

Terrence Wolfork
Assistant Administrator of Communications, Conferencing and Technology

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Marquinta Gonzalez
Director

ChaNaè Bradley
Senior Communications Specialist

Russell Boone Jr.
Public Information Editor/Writer

Latasha Ford
Research Communications Manager

Ervin Williams
Video Specialist

Rebecca Miller
Photojournalist

Jeff Brothers
Graphic Designer

DID YOU KNOW?

Farmers experience high stress levels and have among the highest risk of suicide of any occupation (Peterson, et al., 2020).

Beginning farmers report particularly high levels of emotional distress—a recent Georgia survey showed 9% of first-generation farmers reported suicidal ideation daily (Basey et al., 2021).

According to a survey collected by the Georgia Center for Rural Health Innovation (at Mercer University) and the Georgia Farm Bureau Foundation, administered across Georgia that included all types of farms, 1,651 farmers, farm workers and spouses surveyed:

Most common health issues farmers reported:

- Arthritis **27.6%**
- Anxiety **27.0%**
- Depression **15.6%**
- High Blood Pressure **10.5%**
- Thoughts of wanting to die by suicide
 - ↳ At least once a month . . . **11.8%**
 - ↳ At least once a week . . . **8.4%**
 - ↳ Daily **1.7%**

9% of first-generation farmers reported thinking about suicide **daily**.

**Sources: Peterson, C., Sussell, A., Li, J., Schumacher, P. K., Yeoman, K., & Stone, D. M. (2020). Suicide rates by industry and occupation - National Violent Death Reporting System, 32 states, 2016. MMWR. Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 69(3), 57–62.*

Basey, S., et al. (2021). The farmer's mental well-being project. Macon, GA: Mercer University. Georgia Center for Rural Health Innovation at Mercer University, Macon, Georgia.



AGVICE

If the stress of farm life is overwhelming, help is available 24/7. Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org.

Using the 988 Lifeline is free. The conversation is confidential. The 988 Lifeline provides judgment-free care. Connecting with someone can help save your life.



Scan the QR code or visit <https://988ga.org/farmstress> for additional resources regarding farm stress and how to find help.



988
SUICIDE & CRISIS
LIFELINE



Georgia
Department of
Behavioral Health
& Developmental
Disabilities

PRIME RESULTS

Extension and research collaborate to help beef cattle farmer



by RUSSELL BOONE JR.

Farmers and landowners rely on land-grant universities like Fort Valley State University (FVSU) to develop solutions to improve their agricultural operations.

Handy Kennedy Jr., a cattle farmer and owner of HKJ Ranch in Cobbtown, Georgia, witnessed his production fall short using

traditional breeding and management methods.

He contacted Niki Whitley, PhD, FVSU Extension specialist for animal science, and discussed the problem. Since 2019, Whitley and FVSU have worked with Kennedy and AgriUnity.

Whitley shared the information with Adel Moawad, PhD, FVSU assistant professor of animal science. Together, they concluded

that artificial insemination may help Kennedy improve his livestock genetics. She briefly explained the importance of a research and Extension collaboration.

“Researchers can do applied research and test new technologies or methods of farming in real world situations which increases their opportunities for external

grant funding and provides opportunities for student research projects. Extension gets the latest research-based information and/or technologies to share with producers. It's also good public relations for FVSU," Whitley said.

Recently, the two FVSU faculty combined their efforts to successfully impregnate several of the herd through fixed-time artificial insemination. Out of 37 cows inseminated, 27 carried calves, for a success rate of 73%. This information allowed Kennedy to know the number of pregnant cows needed to be separated from the ones that weren't for economic reasons.

Moawad was not surprised with the outcome.

The Fort Valley researcher said at one point, particularly for beef cattle, the chances for success using artificial insemination was low. However, with the addition of multivitamins, food additives and other techniques, the pregnancy rate using artificial insemination has improved.

(L to R) Adel Moawad, PhD, FVSU assistant professor of animal science, Terra Odom, animal science graduate student, Lauren Wartley, animal science graduate student and Niki Whitley, PhD, FVSU Extension specialist for animal science.

Students, researcher and Extension specialist help to oversee FVSU's beef cattle herd in addition to working with AgriUnity.

Whitley said that Kennedy and other beef farmers have benefitted from this project.

"This allows them to improve their herds without a large investment. Also, improving the quality of their animals helps them gain access to additional markets looking for higher quality of beef," Whitley said.

Additionally, Moawad said that researchers collaborating with agents and clients can lead to positive results.

"We have a technique, and we're working consistently to improve it. Transferring that information to the farmers through Extension is very good because they now know we can introduce artificial insemination to help them establish a good herd of cattle. This can be used to help them improve their production," Moawad said.

Moawad also said it is important that students take part in such exercises. Whitley added that graduate and undergraduate research students get exposed to Extension work, which enhances their job prospects.

Lauren Wartley, a graduate student majoring in animal science is one of those students. She works for AgriUnity's cattle division as a livestock specialist. Her duties include visiting different farms, assessing their needs and helping farmers improve everyday skills in maintaining their livestock.

AgriUnity is an organization that helps ranchers raise value-added cattle. This allows ranchers to have access to multiple markets to sell their animals. The goal of AgriUnity is to help ranchers be successful by sharing experiences and best practices to help reduce



“ This allows them to improve their herds without a large investment. Also, improving the quality of their animals helps them gain access to additional markets looking for higher quality of beef

– Dr. Niki Whitley,
FVSU Extension specialist for animal science

mistakes and improve cattle operations.

Wartley, who completed her undergraduate degree in animal science at FVSU in 2021, began working for AgriUnity in 2024. The Columbus, Georgia, native said she has benefitted tremendously from working with the organization as a graduate student.

“I wanted to work with AgriUnity because I’m interested in becoming an Extension agent. I also enjoy working with them as a graduate student because I can apply what I learn in class to my training in the field,” Wartley said.

The FVSU graduate student also said working with AgriUnity has helped her improve her public speaking, exposed her to grant writing and allowed her to work



Graduate animal science student Venkata Tanguturi (foreground) and Adel Moawad, PhD, assistant professor of animal science, conducts pregnancy test on cows at the HKJ Ranch in Cobbtown, Georgia.

with different agencies. She said she looks forward to helping AgriUnity with future projects.

Moreover, Kennedy added that Wartley’s work with AgriUnity is a welcomed asset to the organization and its members.

Kennedy describes a positive, long-lasting relationship with FVSU and University of Georgia (UGA) Extension. He said it is comforting to know that with a phone call or e-mail, he can access resources from Extension and research to help him solve a problem.

“They have really helped me take my farm from operating at a low profit margin to a recommended profit margin. The research, knowledge and skills that they shared has been invaluable to me,” Kennedy said.

He added that FVSU’s Extension and research programs have unlimited access to information pertaining to farming. Farmers can capitalize on those resources to improve their efficiency.

FVSU, the 1890 Land-grant University in Georgia, is committed to serving the needs of all communities and families through science-based educational, research and technology.



For more information about FVSU’s Cooperative Extension program, call (478) 825-6296 or visit ag.fvsu.edu.

REJUVENATE, REENERGIZE AND REIMAGINE

Fort Valley State hosts family and consumer sciences conference

 **RUSSELL BOONE JR. AND CHANAË BRADLEY**

Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) Program hosted the 2025 Georgia Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (GAFCS) Conference.

The event, held at FVSU's Family Development and Child Life Center, drew more than 50 faculty, staff, students and other personnel associated with family and consumer sciences from across the state of Georgia.

Kena Torbert, interim program leader and family life specialist for FVSU's FACS Program, serves as the president-elect for the GAFCS. She also serves on the American Association for Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) Council for Certification.

Torbert said one of her duties is to take a leading role in organizing the annual event. She said FVSU serving as the host site was ideal because of her role in the organization and the university's location in middle Georgia.



Furthermore, Torbert said the event served as a training exercise for all participants.

"FACS professionals discussed a variety of subjects impacting the profession. This includes the application of technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) and FACS education in the state of Georgia from high school to college," Torbert said.

Dr. Francine Hollis, chair of FVSU FACS Department, said

Faculty, staff and students from across the state of Georgia attended the 2025 Georgia Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Conference (GAFCS) held at Fort Valley State.

it was fantastic that the GAFCS selected FVSU as the site for the 2025 conference. "This is a very significant undertaking that means a lot to us," she said.

Hollis added that with the GAFCS being the state affiliate of the AAFCS, hosting the conference improves FVSU's status within

the organization on a state and national scale.

“FVSU’s FACS program is making a significant impact on the community and so we are always willing to help and support the GAFCS,” she said. “Our students have worked with the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Supplement Nutrition Program in Peach County,” Hollis said.

The FVSU instructor also added that FACS students gain additional hands-on experience by providing instructional support to various elementary schools and

childcare development centers in the county such as Hunt Elementary and the Achieve Academy.

FACS students also attended the event. Jaequon Henderson, an FVSU graduating senior majoring in food and nutrition, said the conference enlightened him on the vast opportunities available with a FACS degree.

“The biggest takeaway I got from the conference was that FACS is universal. There are so many competencies you can learn in the profession. You can go into the culinary arts, work in the

kitchen, become an educator or an administrator in a state office,” he said.

Additionally, Henderson, a native of Orlando, Florida, said he plans to attend graduate school at the University of North Florida and major in nutrition. He is seeking a career as a registered clinical dietician working in pediatrics.

Dr. Tracy Brigman, the outgoing president of the GAFCS, is a clinical associate professor at the University of Georgia (UGA). She elaborated on the importance of the conference.

“This conference is great for networking. The Georgia Association for Family and Consumer Sciences encompasses a wide variety of knowledge for health and wellness in the community. It brings everybody together from different areas including finance, childcare, nutrition and textiles. We can network and share that information to enhance our communities when we return to our homes,” Brigman said.

In addition to conducting breakout and business sessions, GAFCS also installed officers for the 2025-26 term. Torbert accepted the gavel as president and Hollis will serve as vice president for professional development.

AAFCS is a professional organization dedicated to

Passionate About People? Build a Career That Nourishes and Nurtures!

Join the Department of
Family and Consumer
Sciences and turn your
passion into purpose.



COLLEGE of
AGRICULTURE,
FAMILY SCIENCES
and TECHNOLOGY



professionals and students in FACS. It also provides them a platform to share knowledge, research and promote a high quality of life to families and communities with experts in the FACS field. The GAFCS is the Georgia affiliate of the AAFCS.

Fort Valley State's FACS program offers one major with two concentrations. They include food and nutrition along with infant and child development. Currently there are more than 20 students enrolled in the program.



(Clockwise from left) Pix 1-Joanne Cavis (L) is presented the 60-year membership award from Tracy Brigman, EdD, associate professor and director of the UGA FACS Education Program and Vickie Rundbake, program specialist for the FCS Georgia Department of Education.

Pix 2-Fort Valley State University Extension faculty and staff accept proclamation from Fort Valley Mayor Jeffery Lundy and City Administrator Gary Lee.

Pix 3- Barrett Pirkle, (L) UGA student, is presented the Spirit of Giving Scholarship from June Thomas, PhD, secretary of the GAFCS Executive Board.

Pix 4- (L to R) Allison Penn, Ph.D. Francine Hollis, Ph.D., Billy Brown, FVSU energy educator, Tracy Brigman, EdD and Kristin Hankins received awards for five years of membership in the GAFCS.

Pix 5-FVSU FACS professionals (from left) Kena Torbert, FVSU family life specialist, and FCS county Extension agents Ginger Chastine, Terralon Chaney and Millicent Price received 15-year GAFCS membership awards.



CONNECTED

Local communities cross digital gulf with help from Fort Valley State

by RUSSELL BOONE JR.

Small rural communities may face challenges gaining access to broadband internet in comparison to their urban counterparts.

According to the Georgia Technical Authority, there are 432,374 unserved areas in the state. Of these areas, nearly 75 percent are in rural Georgia.

To address this challenge, Terrence Wolfork, FVSU's assistant Extension administrator for communications, conferencing and technology, secured a federal grant that provides funding to help Crawford, Peach and Macon Counties cross the digital divide.

The grant is called Fort Valley State University-Communiversi-ty: Piloting an Ecosystem for Digital Equity. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce's National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA). Wolfork serves as the executive administrator of the grant.

To administer this grant, FVSU Extension partnered with

Resident of Crawford County receives a laptop from Courtney Howard, FVSU's NTIA project director, during a back-to-school event.



the Public Service Telephone Company, Peach Public Libraries, Crawford County Libraries, Macon County Libraries and the Fort Valley Youth Center of Excellence to provide services.

The \$2,997,558 grant, which started on March 1, 2023, is providing broadband access and accessibility to communities within 15 miles of FVSU. It is scheduled to end on March 28, 2026.

Funds from the grant are being used to purchase materials such as computers, hardware, software and equipment needed for broadband infrastructure.

"This grant funds a pilot project from the U.S. Department of Commerce to help small universities become more involved by providing services to communities 15 miles from

the main campus. We have students and citizens who live in the area. This allows us to build the infrastructure they need for broadband access," Wolfork said.

Courtney Howard, FVSU's NTIA project director, said the grant has helped to fund a host of projects in a tri-county area.

This includes computer labs at the Fort Valley Youth Center for Excellence, the Crawford County Extension Center and infrastructure for parks in downtown Fort Valley and Roberta to make them free Wi-Fi zones. Likewise, the grant funds are being used to conduct a technology program for seniors who want to learn how to use a computer.

"Anybody who is looking to improve their digital literacy, or access to technology resources and

BY THE NUMBERS

The NTIA Digital Literacy Program serves community members across the tri-county region which includes Crawford, Peach and Macon Counties. Here's the impact:

Laptops, desktops or other hardware disseminated for use by constituents:

- 650+ Chromebooks deployed to community members and organizations
- 31 Dell all-in-one desktops (Crawford County & Marshallville Libraries, Fort Valley Youth Center)
- Three HP printers
- Multiple 75-inch smart TVs (donated to libraries, senior centers, extension offices and youth centers)
- ThinkPad laptops & Samsung tablets for 14 student workers (tech navigators)
- Six Dell all-in-one desktops for the new community computer lab at the Crawford County Extension Office

In total, 700+ devices and pieces of hardware have been disseminated to expand digital access.

Six distinct programs established or supported under the grant include:

- Senior Tech Prep Program (Crawford and Peach County Senior Centers and the Byron Senior Center)
- Community Tech Education at Libraries (Crawford County, Marshallville and Fort Valley)
- Student worker/tech navigator program (14 students employed, trained and equipped)
- Special training workshops (Microsoft Office training for Head Start staff)
- Cultivate AI Conference (September 2025)
- Digital Empowerment Series (Three-part series planned through February 2026)

Five future programs connected to the grant:

- Cultivate AI Conference – scheduled Sept. 18-20, 2025
- Digital Empowerment Series – Three-part series planned through February 2026
- High School Coding Camp – Upcoming (not yet hosted)
- Continuation of Senior Tech Prep – ongoing at three senior centers

*Information provided by Courtney Howard, NTIA project director.

broadband internet are the people we're looking to help," Howard said.

Furthermore, Howard discussed the numerous advantages received by communities once there is access to high-speed internet. One example she shared is how senior citizens benefit from broadband availability.

"In today's digital world, most of our community members who are 65 years old, or older, have limited access to drive to the doctor's office or to go shopping. Learning how to use the computer can open the door to such things as telehealth, which uses platforms such as ZOOM to meet their appointments. They can also have access to online shopping or connect with family members," she said.

Howard added that broadband access can help rural residents become more efficient in the workplace.

"Technology is changing every day and every year. If one does not enhance or invest in their professional development, they could fall behind when it comes to adapting to tech. This is also an opportunity for everyday workers to improve their quality to services and lifestyle."

As FVSU's NTIA project director, Howard said she enjoys providing rural residents an avenue to the digital world and one of her

favorite projects involved her hometown of Crawford County.

After a successful proposal to Crawford County commissioners, funds from the grant allowed FVSU to purchase infrastructure needed to convert David Bailey Park in Roberta, Georgia, into a free Wi-Fi Zone.

Sharon Sanders, county manager for the Crawford County Board of Commissioners, said the Wi-Fi service is very beneficial for the residents.

"So many people and families cannot afford Wi-Fi services through their phone or an internet provider. This is a way that kids can come in, log on, do homework and complete the things they need to do," said the Crawford County official.

Wolfork added that Howard has developed working relationships with several communities in providing them with broadband access. This has led to most, if not all the communities agreeing to continuing internet services once the grant ends.



For more information about this project or interests in participating in future NTIA projects, contact Howard at (478) 825-6955 (Courtney.Howard@fvsu.edu) or Wolfork at (478) 825-6053 (wolforkt@fvsu.edu).

HELPING FARMERS MITIGATE STRESS

FVSU Extension conducts outreach and research on farm stress

by CHANAÈ BRADLEY

Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension personnel participated in the 2025 Farm Stress Summit held in Statesboro, Georgia. The event took place at the Georgia Southern Center for Professional Excellence.

The Farm Stress Summit is a one-day workshop where community leaders, healthcare providers, non-profits, county officials and faith leaders connect to develop partnerships to support farm families and develop best practices for assisting farmers with mental health challenges. The 2025 summit is the fourth gathering of this group.



ChaNaè Bradley, senior communications specialist for Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program, facilitates a post-disaster recovery group discussion during the Farm Stress Summit in Statesboro, Georgia.

This event was attended by more than 130 Georgia farmers and professionals representing the University of Georgia (UGA) Cooperative Extension Service, the Mercer University Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD), the Georgia Department of Agriculture, the Georgia Farm Bureau, the Georgia Agricultural Awareness Alliance, the Southern Ag Exchange Network (SAGE) and other agricultural partners.

Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture Tyler Harper and Commissioner of the GDBHDD Kevin Tanner, shared remarks and provided observations from across Georgia. The goal was to develop solutions to help farmers combat stress and to collaborate across agencies to develop strategies.

Mark Latimore, Jr, PhD, associate dean for Fort Valley State

University's Cooperative Extension Program, attended the summit with ChaNaè Bradley, senior communications specialist for FVSU's Agricultural Communications Department.

Bradley was invited to serve as a post-disaster recovery group table facilitator. She led a small group discussion about post recovery from Hurricane Helene with farmers, mental health professionals and support groups.

"It was a good discussion where I was able to hear testimonials directly from those impacted by Hurricane Helene. It was eye-opening to learn how both mental health professionals and farmers were impacted and are still recovering from this disaster. It is also interesting to see how communities came together and the efforts that are being made to

“This work is relevant and invaluable. Its needed and I’m glad I could be a part of an important initiative that aims to address a major problem.”

– ChaNaè Bradley,
Senior Communications Specialist, FVSU
Agricultural Communications Department

mitigate challenges in the future,” Bradley said.

Her involvement with this work stemmed from a Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant awarded to UGA Extension where FVSU Extension is connected as a collaborator.

Bradley assisted Dr. Anna Scheyett, Extension behavioral health specialist, to develop resources and supports for farmers under stress. Bradley joined Scheyett as a collaborator on a proposal and with her contributions and others, UGA successfully applied and was awarded funding for the project, Sustaining the Farmer to Sustain the Farm.



Connie Baptiste, owner of Hunter Family Farm, provides the keynote address during the 2025 Farm Stress Summit in Statesboro, Georgia.

For the past two years Scheyett and Bradley have worked together to fulfill the objectives of the proposal. They have engaged in interviews with a wide range of farmers across multiple communities, analyzed interviews and are currently using those findings to shape resources and materials for farmers that can be disseminated in a range of settings.

Bradley, Scheyett and a doctoral student are currently working to publish a research journal article about this work. In 2024 they presented their work at the Professional Agricultural Workers Conference (PAWC) hosted by Tuskegee University in Montgomery, Alabama. <http://bit.ly/45v48io>

“A year ago, I connected with Dr. Anna Scheyett, coordinator for the University of Georgia’s Cooperative Extension Behavioral Health Team, to develop a focus group where we interviewed farmers about stress and suicide.

From that research we presented a breakout session at the Professional Agricultural Workers Conference (PAWC) in 2024. This work is relevant and invaluable. Its needed and I’m glad I could be a part of an important initiative that aims to address a major problem.”

Latimore said there are many stressors that farmers face daily. He said Cooperative Extension is here to help. “Extension is that outreach arm from the universities. We provide information to growers to weather the storms they currently face,” Latimore said.

In the future, Latimore hopes to host a summit on FVSU’s campus and provide literature for farmers and professional contacts.



LEARNING BY LEADING

Fort Valley State agricultural communicators earn honors, serves as leaders in national professional development organization

by RUSSELL BOONE JR.

Two staff members from the Fort Valley State University (FVSU) Agricultural Communications Department recently received honors for their work on a national scale.

The Association for Communication Excellence (ACE) held its annual conference from June 16 to 18 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. ChaNaè Bradley and Latasha Ford received awards for publications, feature writing and instructional technology.

Bradley, senior communications specialist, won a bronze award for the article “It’s Possible” in Writing 3-Writing within a specialized publication category. The article told the story of a plant science biotechnology alumna fulfilling her dream of becoming a doctor.

Ford, research communications manager, earned three team awards. This includes a silver award in Publications for Diverse Audiences for the 1890 Land-grant Communications Committee’s 2024 impact report, “Making a Difference Through Education,



Extension and Research,” and two bronze awards. The first in the Newsletters category for the Association of Extension Administrators’ Extension Today and the second in the Innovative Use of Instructional Technology in Education category for the Writer’s Playground program, a collaboration with Dr. Yolanda Surrency, FVSU’s technology curriculum specialist.

“It’s always an honor to be recognized for the work created to represent the university,” Bradley said after receiving her award. “It also encourages me to continue to strive to produce quality material that represents Cooperative Extension and tells

ChaNaè Bradley, senior communications specialist and president of the Association for Communication Excellence (ACE) Board of Directors for 2024-25, provided opening remarks during the conference in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

the impacts produced by Land-grant Universities.”

Ford also expressed words of appreciation after receiving her awards.

“It is truly an honor to have our communications committee recognized for our collaborative efforts in telling the 1890 land-grant story, as well as for the work Dr. Surrency and I do through Writer’s Playground. She and I are deeply passionate about this initiative and the opportunity it

gives us to make a meaningful impact on students,” she said.

Marquinta Gonzalez, director of FVSU’s Agricultural Communications Department, praised the duo for their award-winning work.

“We are very happy that ChaNaè and Latasha were honored by ACE for their efforts. Their high quality of work is a huge asset for the College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology,” Gonzalez said.

In addition to receiving honors for their work, Bradley and Ford also hold positions on the ACE Board of Directors.

Bradley completed her 2024-25 term as president of ACE and will serve as past president. She expressed some valuable lessons gained from the experience

(From L to R) Latasha Ford, 2025 - 26 incoming ACE president-elect, Stacey Stearns, 2025 - 26 incoming ACE president, and ChaNaè Bradley, 2024 - 25 ACE past president.



“I learned how to take data and make decisions to strategically increase the capacity of the organization. I learned how to work with people with different skill sets and personalities and bring them together to meet goals. I also learned how to recognize talent and abilities in individuals and support and encourage them by providing spaces and opportunities for them to serve,” she said.

Additionally, Bradley said that she was able to meet the goals she set during her term.

“I set a major goal of reaching untapped audiences to increase ACE membership. With the board of directors, I was able to connect and successfully host 37 communicators from 10 of the 19 1890 Land-grant Universities. In addition, I was able to make connections with Tribal Colleges and Universities. From these interactions, a Tribal College representative will serve on the

2026 planning committee for the conference in Billings, Montana. Furthermore, I was able to help the organization raise sponsorship funds in the amount of \$48,000. This was a record-breaking amount,” she said.

Ford will serve as president-elect for 2025-26 before assuming the role of president in 2026.

“As president-elect, I am excited to continue building meaningful connections within and beyond the land-grant system. My goal is to help ensure our organization remains strong for years to come. Since joining the Fort Valley State University Wildcat family in 2017, I have felt a strong sense of community on campus and across the land-grant system. I experienced that same welcoming spirit when I became an ACE member. Serving on the board has been a pleasure, and I am grateful for the chance to learn from and work alongside such inspiring leaders,” she said.

ACE is composed of professionals practicing all facets of communications. The organization provides a chance for professional development and networking for individuals involved in promoting knowledge about agriculture, natural resources, and life and human sciences.



To learn more about the organization, visit aceweb.org.



BRIGHT IDEAS

Grant project sparks international innovation in Sub-Saharan Africa

by CHANAË BRADLEY

Cedric Ogden, PhD, Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Extension engineer and state coordinator for the Southern-Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program, traveled to Sub-Saharan Africa as a part of a research team to share his expertise in renewable energy systems, digital tools and remote sensing. Through Ogden's expertise in precision agriculture, FVSU has one of the largest solar farms located on a college campus at approximately 11 megawatts. In this Q&A, learn how his efforts are helping FVSU Extension connect with partners across the globe in innovation and technology.



Where did you travel to and why this location?

"I traveled to Windhoek, Namibia, July 4-13, to conduct a working group session and share information under a capacity

building grant called IDEAS. Rayton Sianjina, PhD, served as the principal investigator of this grant project titled, "Establishing a Consortium and Cultivating Leaders Between

FVSU and Selected Sub-Saharan Institutions." These Sub-Saharan countries were chosen because of the partnership between the University of Zambia, Midland State University and the host institution, the University of Namibia."

What was the purpose of this trip?

"The purpose of this trip was to increase our capacity to administer study abroad programs. We aim to expand our research agenda, foster international partnerships and drive progress in agricultural research and food systems. Our faculty working group focused on the areas of climate, energy and the environment, innovation and technology and global health."

Who traveled with you?

“Fort Valley State University traveled with a delegation of five. This included Rayton Sianjina PhD, director of FVSU’s Global Studies Program. Andrea Romero, program specialist for FVSU’s Global Studies and Engagement Program, Nirmal Joshee, PhD, FVSU associate professor of plant science/ biotechnology and Hamidah Sharif-Amanyi, EdD, FVSU associate professor of public health. Researchers and faculty from Midland State University, the University of Zambia and the University of Namibia were also in attendance.”

Describe the location, people and the culture.

“When we traveled it was their winter in early July. The temperature ranged between 40 degrees and the low 70’s. We visited several markets in the Single Quarter community. There were a variety of diverse delicacies that ranged from barbecued wild game (kapana) to roasted mopane worms. We ate with the people and shared our upbringings and daily life. We saw several tribes and visited a reserve where we shared breakfast in the presence of white rhinos.”

What role did you play in this initiative?

“I chaired a week-long working group session in innovation and technology. The theme of this working group session was titled, “Innovative technology

 **The purpose of this trip was to increase our capacity to administer study abroad programs. We aim to expand our research agenda, foster international partnerships and drive progress in agricultural research and food systems.**

– Cedric Ogden, PhD,
FVSU Extension engineer and state
coordinator for the SARE program

– Providing a pivotal role in advancing sustainability across sectors.” I focused on renewable energy, remote sensing technology, sustainable agriculture and artificial intelligence (AI) & machine learning.”

What are some of the results/ impacts of this trip?

“We are continuing to share knowledge and guidance in research and educational curriculums. We maintain communication and one day plan to host students and faculty here in Fort Valley. Also, we are looking into the artificial intelligence (AI) platform that the University of Zambia is using in their labs to collect information on the growing rates of forest

stands. As a plant grows, they can monitor its growth rate and make recommendations based on environmental conditions. It’s in development.”

What was your most memorable experience and what role is Extension having in international agriculture?

“My most memorable experience is the comraderies that we had with faculty from the universities. We were able to share our challenges and successes in our respective careers and research areas. Regarding Extension’s international outreach, this is the mission of Extension. Our purpose is to provide outreach and impact those who need it.”

What are some next steps?

“We are still working on student engagement and student exchange with the study abroad program. We want to increase our student exposure so they can understand global challenges and work together for solutions.”

What did this experience teach you?

“This experience has taught me the importance of not working in silos. This project allows us to work interdisciplinary. It taught me that we are all connected and should work outside our labs and across disciplines more often to address global concerns.”



EXPANDING



OUR *Reach*

A photograph of three individuals, two men and one woman, standing behind a raised garden bed filled with green leafy plants. They are all wearing blue shirts. The man on the left has long brown hair and a beard, wearing a blue polo shirt with a yellow lanyard. The man in the center is older, with a grey beard, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt. The man on the right is older, with a grey beard, wearing a blue t-shirt and a blue baseball cap. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background shows a wooden structure, possibly a greenhouse or covered walkway, with trees visible in the distance.

New Extension agents take posts in respective counties
Fort Valley State University (FVSU), a state and land grant university is continuing its mission by providing services to Georgians through its Cooperative Extension Program.

Cooperative Extension is a national network of approximately 35,000 professionals from 112 universities with presence in every county, borough, parish and territory.

Recently, FVSU added six new agriculture and natural resource (ANR) agents serving in several counties. Millie Coleman is serving in Irwin County, Collie Graddick is serving in Talbot County, Terrence Lewis is serving in Macon County, Wesley Padgett is serving in Houston County, Austin Roper is serving in Sumter and Terrell Counties and Ashton Roper is serving in Dougherty County.

Dr. James Brown, professor and ANR program leader, said these individuals will play a key role in helping farmers, ranchers and landowners become more efficient.

Cooperative Extension agents have many roles and responsibilities in their respective counties. Some of these include developing and supervising educational programs focused on agriculture and family living, performing community outreach, working with researchers to solve problems presented to them by clients and overseeing 4-H youth development programs.

Cooperative Extension aims to empower communities of all types and sizes through educational programs, resources and research-



New agriculture and natural resources (ANR) agent Millie Coleman (Irwin County)



New ANR agent Wesley Padgett (Houston County)



New ANR agent Collie Graddick (Talbot County)



New ANR agent Austin Roper (Sumter and Terrell Counties)



New ANR agent Terrence Lewis (Macon County)



New ANR agent Ashton Roper (Dougherty County)

What is a county Extension agent/educator?

County-based educators, often referred to as county agents, work with local citizens and interest groups to find solutions to problems. Agents collect information and relay it to university experts (academic researchers and specialists) who conduct research and translate the research-based information to targeted audiences. This can be in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, 4-H and youth development and community development and outreach. By living and working in communities, county educators can depend on existing relationships to respond to local needs to help improve communities.

**Source. U.S. Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).*

based information to help improve quality of life. Cooperative Extension agents are divided into three areas, family and consumer sciences (FACS) agriculture and natural resources (ANR) and 4-H and Youth Development.

Brown said that for a county agent to be successful, they must stay abreast with the latest technologies and methods used in record keeping as well as crop and livestock production. Agents accomplish this by attending training sessions so they can relay information to the farmer.

Additionally, Brown said the agent must have a passion for what they do and have a strong relationship with the farmer. This makes it easier to relay what is

needed to improve agricultural operations.

He added that county agents can be supportive of the farmer by bringing them up to date with respect to growing crops and livestock production.

Millie Coleman, whose office is in Irwin County, said she wanted to become an Extension agent to assist farmers and landowners.

“I want to help them by providing educational programs and resources to improve their farm operations and land management,” she said.

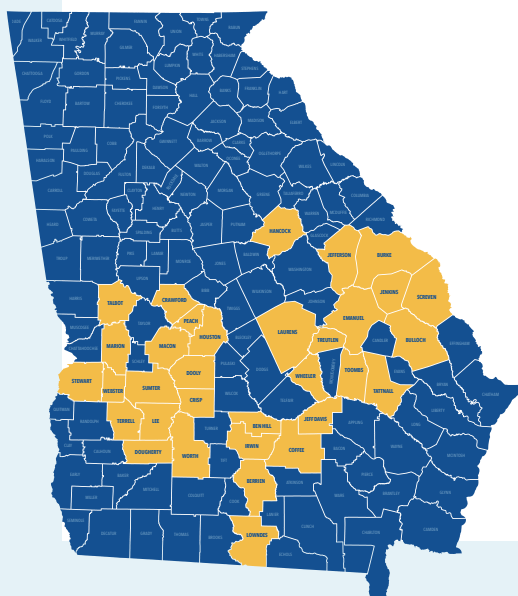
In Houston County, Extension agent Wesley Padgett said his goal is to uplift, encourage and assist small farmers and landowners.

“Another goal of mine is to develop more interest and care in the field of agriculture, especially among young people. This job encompasses many things, and they are intertwined and vitally important to community, food and livelihood,” Padgett said.



For more information about FVSU's ANR program, contact Brown at (478) 825-6296 (brownj01@fvsu.edu).

Where are FVSU county agents located throughout Georgia?



BULLOCH, BURKE, EMANUEL, JEFFERSON, JENKINS, SCREVEN, AND TATTNALL COUNTIES
Vacant

CRAWFORD COUNTY
Millicent Price

DOOLY AND CRISP COUNTIES
Rolanda Willingham

DOUGHERTY COUNTY
Ashton Roper
HANCOCK COUNTY
Ginger Chastine

HOUSTON COUNTY
Wesley Padgett

IRWIN COUNTY
Millie Coleman

JEFF DAVIS, LAURENS, TOOMBS, TREUTLEN AND WHEELER COUNTIES
Titus Andrews

LOWNDES COUNTY
Joshua Dawson
MACON COUNTY
Terrence Lewis
Alicia Montgomery

MARION COUNTY
Vacant

PEACH COUNTY
Sabrena Johnson

SUMTER AND TERRELL COUNTIES
Austin Roper

TALBOT COUNTY
Collie Graddick

TAYLOR COUNTY
Vacant

TWIGGS COUNTY
Terralon W. Chaney
Phillip Petway

4-H UPDATES



Beyond Ready

Fort Valley State University's
4-H Program receives
\$124,000 grant

by *RUSSELL BOONE JR.*

Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development Program recently received a grant for \$124,000 from the National 4-H Council.

The grant will fund the "Fort Valley State University (FVSU) 4-H Beyond Ready Emotional Intelligent, College and Career Ready and Content of Character Steady" project which started in August 2025 and will conclude on Dec. 31, 2027.

Woodie Hughes Jr., FVSU assistant Extension administrator 4-H program leader, is the principal investigator (PI) for the grant.

"Funds from the grant will cover limited professional development training for the project's 4-H adult

volunteer mentors, consultants and staff. They will be trained in the areas of emotional intelligence (EI) and other character strengths that foster resilience, leadership and lifelong success," Hughes said.

A collaboration between the National 4-H Council and the Lilly Endowment Incorporated provides funding for the grant. It's part of the Lilly Endowment's Character Development through Youth Programs initiative which supports organizations focused on cultivating positive traits in young people across the U.S.

Additionally, the FVSU Extension administrator said that funds will cover costs for 4-H participants registration fees, airplane tickets and lodging to attend national 4-H events in Washington, D.C.

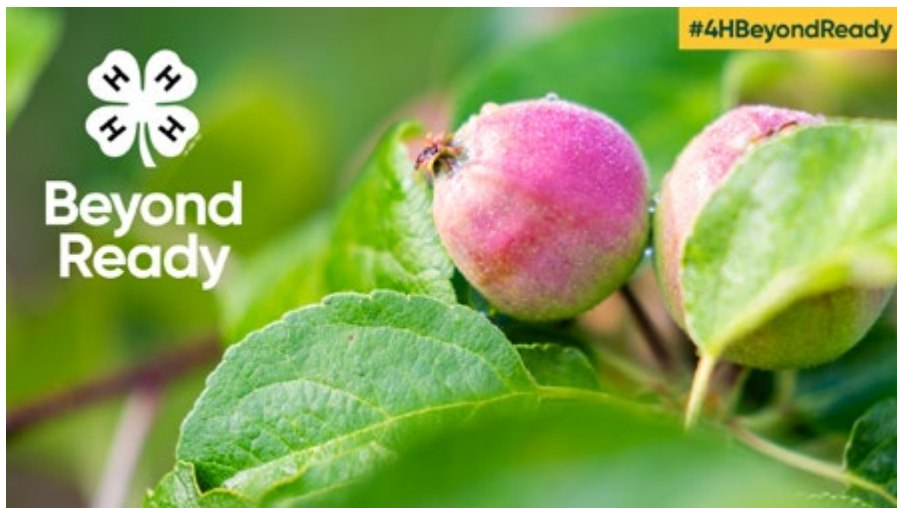
Hughes also provided details concerning the program's objectives.

"The program will create experiential learning opportunities for youths to learn emerging careers adaptability skills, digital literacy, problem-

solving skills, character development, and college and career readiness," Hughes said. "Also, the program will create experiential leaning opportunities for 4-H youth development and strengthen their adaptability and growth mindset through the acquisition of emotional intelligence, which may help them to resolve conflicts, collaborate effectively, and learn coping strategies for high-pressure personal and professional life situations," Hughes said.

Furthermore, the FVSU program director said program youth will develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, responsible decision making and social skills.

"These skill sets are increasingly recognized as critical for students to obtain academic achievement and career readiness," Hughes said. He added that research indicates 4-H alumni exhibit higher levels of life skills that include nurturing relationships, teamwork and communication compared to their non-4-H peers.



He also added that subjects such as 4-H college and career readiness, 4-H employability, 4-H entrepreneurship education, and 4-H civic engagement will be covered in the program.

Hughes said he was motivated to create the Beyond Ready Program to help youths. He cited the story of Ty'Jhon Jefferson, who participated in FVSU's 4-H Village Community Garden 4-H Positive Youth Development Program.

Jefferson, a native of Sylvester, Georgia, is autistic. He graduated from Worth County High School (WCHS) in May 2025, with a 4.06 GPA and accomplished this feat while completing two years of dual enrollment from three different colleges during his junior and senior years in high school. He took three college courses a semester, totaling nine college courses and simultaneously completed his

regular high school classwork earning all A's in the process.

For his efforts, Jefferson received \$90,000 in college scholarship funding that can only be applied to one of the top 20 schools in America. He currently attends Oberlin College in Ohio where he is studying chemistry and engineering.

The former FVSU 4-H student shared how participating in the organization helped him.

"One of my most defining characteristics is me having autism. Throughout most of my life before high school, I struggled heavily with social interactions and tasks most people take for granted like tying my shoes or writing," Jefferson said.

Moreover, Jefferson said that despite being able to perform well academically, he still struggled mentally. However, he used it and

Ty'Jhon Jefferson (right), a former 4-H student from Sylvester, Georgia, graduated from high school with honors and received \$90,000 in scholarship offers. He now attends Oberlin College in Ohio.

his mother's support as a source of motivation.

"Through her, I learned to advocate for myself and that persisting through your worst times is strength. Understanding that she could still balance being a mother, advocate, employee and student at the same time made anything seem possible to me and gave me a reason to keep going," he said.

Furthermore, Jefferson said he didn't want to be seen as a monolith or statistic, and he wanted the sacrifices his parents made for him to matter.

"4-H was one of the most important factors in my life with the confidence and experience it provided me," Jefferson said.



Hughes said Jefferson's journey is truly inspiring.

"I am so thankful that God allowed me to work with Ty'Jhon through the FVSU 4-H positive youth development program," Hughes said.

He added that the FVSU grant project will be able to create 4-H positive learning opportunities for youth across Georgia like Jefferson.

For more information about the FVSU 4-H Positive Youth Development Program, contact Hughes at (478) 825-6296 (hughesw@fvsu.edu).

Making History

National 4-H Council team visits 4-H Village Community Garden

by *RUSSELL BOONE JR.*

Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) 4-H Program along with officials and patrons of the FVSU 4-H Village Community Garden Outdoor Research Laboratory of Learning hosted a meeting with a group of national 4-H officials.

Jill Bramble, chief executive officer (CEO) of the National 4-H Council and her team visited the garden as part of the "4-H Beyond Ready Feedback, Why Does 4-H Matter to You Discussion," program. The program is a continuation of the 2025 Ignite Ultimate Youth Summit held in Washington, D.C.

Joining Bramble were Raymond Shange, PhD, administrator and chair of the 1890 Association of Extension Administrators (AEA), and Richard Whittington, PhD, 4-H program leader and the 1890 Region 4-H program leader representative of the National 4-H

Program Leaders Working Group. Both Shange and Whittington represent Tuskegee University Cooperative Extension.

Additionally, Bramble and her National 4-H Council team wanted to visit and experience the

4-H Village Community Garden. They were inspired by seeing photos posted on social media of free food given away to families for the past 12 years.

Woodie Hughes Jr., assistant Extension administrator 4-H program leader for FVSU's Cooperative Extension 4-H Positive Youth Development Program, explained the significance of the group's visit.

"This is the first time in the history of FVSU's Cooperative Extension Program that the National 4-H Council CEO and their team visited an FVSU 4-H Youth Development site. By God's grace, the FVSU 4-H Village Community Garden Outdoor Research Laboratory of Learning is in its 12th year of existence," Hughes said.

Other people attending the event included local 4-H students from Sylvester, 4-H Village Community Garden Sankofa 4-H volunteers and 4-H students and mentors

Fort Valley State University 4-H Staff, Village Community Garden volunteers, National 4-H Council members along with faculty, staff and students from Chattahoochee Hills 4-H Charter School pose at the Village Community Garden in Sylvester, Georgia.

from the Chattahoochee Hills 4-H Charter School in Fairburn, Georgia.

The 5-acre site, commonly known as the FVSU 4-H Village Community Garden, is located in Sylvester, Georgia. Founded in 2013 by Sam X and his wife, Eda Garcia in a working community collaboration partnership with FVSU Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth Development Program, it annually provides more than 1,000 families in the area with free, fresh produce. Developed from a location once used for dirt biking, it now features a 4-H garden, artwork displays and oversees what the 4-H youth call the Village Community Garden Lake.

“This is a love project,” said Sam X, co-CEO of the 4-H Village Community Garden. “We are creating the largest art sculpture that bridges arts and agriculture that feeds people for free,” he said.

Hughes then explained why the phrase “Beyond Ready” is used in the title.

“Andy Ferrin, a colleague of mine, serves as the senior vice president and chief strategy officer for the National 4-H Council. He said that ‘Beyond Ready’ does not



only mean agricultural careers, but it also means being ready for anything in general.” Hughes said.

Furthermore, Hughes said Ferrin is impressed that FVSU’s Extension Program is using the garden as a training facility.

“The FVSU 4-H Extension team is using the outdoor research learning lab to teach youth how to use chemistry, engineering and agriscience to manage aeroponic systems. They are also teaching students how to implement irrigation technology and showing them pathways to careers while meeting immediate community needs,” Ferrin said.

Ty’Jhon Jefferson is one of the students participating.

Bramble told the story of how Jefferson, a Sylvester student who will attend Oberlin College this fall to study engineering and chemistry, convinced his grandmother to get involved with activities at the garden.

“He encouraged her to eat healthier which prompted her to lose 150 pounds. She then became fast friends with the other mature volunteers (known as Village Community Garden Sankofa 4-H Volunteers) associated with the garden. They now practice an activity known as ‘agricise’-a combination of agriculture and



exercise, by working in the garden several days a week.

It's a powerful example of what's possible when Cooperative Extension, 4-H and community leaders can achieve when they work together," Bramble said.

Jefferson also explained why he got involved with activities associated with the garden and how those activities inspired him to get involved with his community.

"Investing in yourself is the first step at being able to bring any meaningful change to a community. The FVSU 4-H Village Community Garden 4-H club taught me that. For me, community has always played a vital role in facilitating growth in my life," Jefferson said.

The Worth County native added that being able to see himself in others within his community will act as a source of inspiration for him during his journey into post-secondary education.

For more information about FVSU's Cooperative Extension 4-H Positive Youth Development Program, contact Woodie Hughes Jr., at (478) 825-6296 (hughesw@fvsu.edu).

4-H'ers "Ignite" in the nation's capital

4-H students travel to Washington D.C. for experiential learning opportunities, career exploration

by CHANAÈ BRADLEY

Woodie Hughes Jr., Fort Valley State University (FVSU) assistant Extension administrator 4-H program leader, traveled to Washington D.C. with six 4-H'ers and two educators

for the Ignite 4-H Teen Summit in Washington D.C. The 2025 summit drew more than 1,400 youth from across the country.

4-H is the largest youth development organization in the country, reaching 6 million young people annually. It is delivered through Cooperative Extension, a network of more than 100 Land-grant Universities across the nation. FVSU, and 1890

Land-grant University hosts 4-H meetings in multiple counties throughout the state of Georgia.

Hughes said this trip to D.C. was possible through sponsored scholarships.

"We were blessed to secure 4-H scholarship funding for six wonderful 4-H'ers and two exceptional educators who serve as 4-H mentors/4-H adult volunteers for the FVSU 4-H Positive Youth Development Program. I truly thank the CHS Foundation Inc., Bayer, Nationwide Foundation, Charles Schwab Foundation and the National 4-H Council, for making this national 4-H premiere experiential learning Beyond Ready opportunity possible for Chattahoochee Hills FVSU 4-H Charter School 4-H youth delegation to attend," Hughes said.

Jill Bramble, CEO of the National 4-H Council, said the summit met the purpose and goals set forth by the organization.

"I saw bright minds collaborating, creating, and cultivating everything our Beyond Ready Initiative represents," Bramble said. The Beyond Ready Initiative aims to show how positive youth

development programs help youth be ready for life after high school.

During the summit, youths were able to create Artificial Intelligence (AI) resumes, explore careers in sports industries, play games, launch drones, learn about aquaculture, agriscience and financial literacy.

In addition, the summit included inspiring panels, respected speakers, engaging workshop sessions, entertainment and tours of the Capital. The summit also provided 4-H experiential learning opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering and

Mathematics (STEM), agriscience, healthy living, career readiness, and emotional well-being outreach education workshops for all 4-H teen summit participants.

Hughes said he is grateful for the leadership and the continuous support of personnel at Chattahoochee Hills 4-H Charter School. This includes Patrick Muhammad, principal, Alexis Borden, coordinator of exceptional learning, James Nelson, Jr. exceptional education teacher and Chaz Patterson-Ellis, chief financial officer. Hughes was able to work with students

at the school through the FVSU 4-H Positive Youth Development Program.

For more information about FVSU's 4-H Program, visit <https://bit.ly/3YjUPiz>



(From L-R) James Nelson, Jr., 4-H adult volunteer/4-H mentor/exceptional education teacher, Harlem Jackson, 4-H youth, Carter Weaver, 4-H youth, Estelle Leonard, 4-H youth, Woodie Hughes Jr., (center), assistant Extension administrator 4-H program leader for Fort Valley State University Cooperative Extension 4-H Positive Youth Development Program.

Jordan Carter, 4-H youth, Eva Lake, 4-H youth, Ja'Mari Little, 4-H youth and Alexis Borden, 4-H adult volunteer/4-H mentor/coordinator of exceptional education, parent liaison & paraprofessional.

Woodie Hughes Jr. (seated), FVSU assistant Extension administrator, 4-H program leader, along with 4-H students, mentors, educators and volunteers, participated in the Ignite 4-H Teen Summit held in Washington D.C.

IN THE FIELD SPOTLIGHT

Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension personnel educate clients through technical trainings on campus, media services and by hosting outreach events. Being "In the Field" allows Extension to consistently serve as a resource for the state of Georgia. The following events and projects took place from January 2025 – August 2025.



FVSU College of Ag travels to D.C. to engage elected officials

A team of leaders and staff from Fort Valley State University and local farmer Darlene Williams, PhD joined representatives from other land-grant universities in Washington, D.C., this week for the annual Council for Agricultural Research, Extension and Teaching (CARET) Conference. The FVSU team visited the offices of Georgia elected officials on Capitol Hill — Congressmen Sanford Bishop, Austin Scott and David Scott, Congresswoman Lucy McBath, and Senators Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock. The purpose of the visits was to share the impactful stories of 1890 Land-grant Universities like FVSU and highlight their contributions to communities, students and farmers through Cooperative Extension, agricultural research and education, while emphasizing the need to continue supporting these efforts.

Extension collaborates with WIC to provide fresh produce

Fort Valley State University Cooperative Extension and District 5-2 Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program collaborated to host a WIC Farmers Market. Participants were able to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables grown by Tilford Farms in Houston County.





Extension shares the impact of digital equity during national conference

Fort Valley State University's Yolanda Surrency, EdD, and Terrence Wolfork showcased their work on “Leveraging Partnerships to Invigorate Digital Equity in Rural Communities” at the Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) Conference in Arlington, Virginia.

FVSU Extension hosts the 43rd annual Ham and Egg Breakfast

Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program hosted the 43rd Annual Ham and Egg Legislative Breakfast. U.S. Representative Sanford D. Bishop Jr. presided over the breakfast. More than 100 elected officials, alumni and members of the community attended the event. Participants enjoyed a southern style breakfast and received updates from the Georgia Department of Agriculture, the Georgia Legislature and farmers.



Peach Concerned Citizens tour campus, learn about Extension

Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program hosted the Peach Concerned Citizens Incorporated. The group toured FVSU's agricultural facilities including the solar panel complex and a blueberry field.

IN THE FIELD SPOTLIGHT



FVSU serves as panel sponsor during State of Agriculture Luncheon in Perry

Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program served as the panel sponsor for the first State of Agriculture Luncheon/Panel Discussion held at the Georgia National Fair Grounds. During the luncheon Dr. Mark Latimore Jr, associate dean for FVSU's Cooperative Extension Program, introduced the panel of agricultural leaders in the state as they discussed current issues impacting the industry. The panel included Dominica Lariccia, field director for the Georgia Department of Agriculture, Katlyn Cobb, regional assistant director for the University of Georgia Grand Farm, Cheryl Smith, agritourism manager for Georgia Grown, Rep. Robert Dickey and local growers and agribusiness owners. FVSU President Paul Jones, PhD, FVSU dean of the College of Agriculture, Keith Howard, PhD, and FVSU Provost, Derrick Scott PhD, were also in attendance.

Family and consumer sciences agent serves community through gardening

For more than 10 years, Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension program has collaborated on gardening projects with the Twiggs County Senior Center in Jeffersonville, Georgia. This year the tanks were filled with vegetables and herbs such as banana peppers, collard greens, bell peppers, tomatoes and cilantro.



Extension employees highlight research and outreach during conference

Fort Valley State University Extension showcased its impactful work in digital access, creative writing & technology, and estate planning, alongside the University of

Georgia, at the National Urban Extension Leaders (NUEL) Southern & 1890's Regional Conference in Durham, North Carolina.



Agriculture and natural resources agent organize egg candling class

Joshua Dawson (right), Fort Valley State University Extension agent for Lowndes County and Haleigh Goodroe (left), agriculture compliance specialist for the Georgia Department

of Agriculture, collaborated to organize an egg candling class in Valdosta, Georgia. More than 70 people attended two classes to obtain egg candling certification.

Extension communications specialist assists with farmer focus group in the U.S. Virgin Islands

The 1890 Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN) Advisory Group (AG) recently traveled to the U.S. Virgin Islands to collect data with the goal of expanding research and Cooperative Extension programming opportunities on disaster management and grassroots resilience in St. Thomas and St. Croix. During the trip, the team conducted focus groups with local farmers, Cooperative Extension professionals, government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and fisherman. ChaNaë Bradley, Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) senior communications specialist, captured photos, assisted with the focus groups, interviewed farmers and developed content for the newsletter. She has served with the 1890 EDEN AG since 2024. Universities represented during this trip included Prairie View A&M University, North Carolina A&T University, Tennessee State University, Florida A&M University, Washington State University and FVSU. The visit was organized by the University of the Virgin Islands and the 1890 EDEN AG. Southern SARE helped to fund the trip.



FVSU Extension share resources during farmers meeting

The Southern Farmers Collaborative Group conducted its 2025 annual Train-The-Farmer Conference in Albany, Georgia. Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program participated in the event with Dr. Mark Latimore Jr. providing Extension and agriculture highlights. Presentations also took place in FVSU's Mobile Information Technology Center (MITC) and Mobile Health Unit (MHU).

RECIPE





Green beans, smoked turkey and potatoes can be enjoyed as main meal or a complementary side. Sabrena Johnson, Fort Valley State University family and consumer sciences (FACS) agent for Peach County, shows how to prepare this dish in 40 minutes (20 minutes preparation, 20 minutes cooking time).

YOU WILL NEED

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup or 4 oz. deboned turkey legs
- 2 cups or 16 oz. of water
- 1 cup or 4 oz. of fresh red potatoes, unpeeled and diced $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch
- 1 tablespoon of trans fat free margarine
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup or 2 oz. of chopped fresh onions
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon of minced garlic
- 1/8 teaspoon of ground thyme
- 1/8 teaspoon of ground black or white pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon of onion powder
- 2 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups or 11 oz. of frozen green beans thawed and drained.

DIRECTIONS

1. Shred turkey legs into small pieces.
2. Add turkey, water, potatoes, margarine, onions, garlic, thyme, pepper and onion powder into a large saucepan.
3. Cook uncovered over medium heat for 8 minutes and stir well. About half of water will remain in
4. Add green beans and cook over medium heat for 10-15 minutes. Do not overcook! Drain excess liquid if needed.
5. Pour green beans and turkey mixture into a medium sized serving bowl.
6. Portion and serve with 4 oz. slotted spoodle (1/2 cup)
7. Makes 6 servings.

NUTRITIONAL FACTS

Serving Size: $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

Servings per recipe: 6

Amount per serving:

Calories 85

Calories from fat 27

Total Fat	3g
Saturated Fat	1g
Trans Fat	0.0g
Cholesterol	16mg
Sodium	209mg
Total Carbohydrates	8g
Dietary fiber	2g
Sugars	2g
Protein	7g
Vitamin A	10mcg RAE
Vitamin C	5mg
Vitamin D	11 IU
Calcium	32mg
Potassium	245mg

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Childcare 6-Serving Recipe Project.

MEET YOUR AGENT

Houston County



Wesley Padgett

County Extension Agent

Coverage Area: Houston County

Type: Agriculture and Natural Resources

Houston County residents looking for assistance in small scale fruit production and horticultural projects can rely on the knowledge of Wesley Padgett. Padgett has experience working with gardeners and starting field plots. He also specializes in pest control identification and has conducted research on blueberries. Likewise, he has experience with livestock including cattle and goats.

Padgett provides services in the following areas:

- Raised bed planting
- Gardening
- Pest control
- Fruit production
- Hoop house construction
- Livestock care



FORT VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY

EXTENSION



For more information about programs offered in Houston County, contact Padgett:

2030 Kings Chapel Road

Office Pod #123

Perry, GA, 31069

Cell: (478) 391-5203

Office: (478) 987-2028

wesley.padgett@fvsu.edu

WHAT IS EXTENSION?

The Cooperative Extension System is a nationwide educational network. Each U.S. state and territory has a state office at a land-grant university, such as Fort Valley State University, which has a network of regional offices.

Within these offices staff and experts are available to provide useful, practical and research-based information to agricultural producers, small business owners, youths and others in rural areas and communities of all sizes.

Wesley Padgett, based in Houston County, is one of 13 county agents and program assistants who work personally with residents in 30 counties throughout middle, east and south Georgia.

WHO DOES THE EXTENSION PROGRAM SERVE?

Extension has something for every Georgian, including limited-resource farmers. One-on-one assistance, agricultural events and workshops are available to address an array of issues facing clients. Services and expertise vary with each coverage area.

Extension is here to help Georgians with their challenges. Clientele Include:

- Animal Producers
- Families
- Future and Current Homeowners
- Gardeners
- Limited-Resource Farmers
- Parents
- Seniors
- Youths

NEWS & NOTES

Fort Valley State University Extension conducts outreach during national events



Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program participated in two national events in October of 2024.

The Georgia National Fair (GNF), taking place at the Georgia National Fairgrounds and Agricenter in Perry, Georgia, drew nearly 500,000 people from October 3-13.

Annually FVSU hosts two exhibits. One exhibit is in the Beef Dairy Barn where livestock such as goat and sheep are on display, highlighting agricultural research and academic programs. In addition, a second exhibit is in the Georgia Grown Building where fairgoers can learn more about Extension services available throughout the state.



Extension annually participates in the Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition as an exhibitor. The Sunbelt Ag Expo is an agricultural-based trade show held at Spence Field in Moultrie, Georgia. From

October 15-17 more than 1,200 exhibitors showcased the latest in farming technology, education and outreach. This event exposes FVSU to a crowd of nearly 70,000 people.

This exposure occurred in five locations on site. It included a 6,250-foot permanent facility where samples of several goat products like jerky, burgers, ice cream and soap are provided. In addition, FVSU had a presence inside the Morton Building where student recruitment takes place, as well as the Will R. Getz Small Ruminant Section highlighting work with sheep and goats. Lastly, the university displayed the Mobile Information Technology Center (MITC) and the new Mobile Health Unit.

Fort Valley State helps bring free Wi-Fi to Crawford County Park



Residents in Roberta, Georgia, visiting David Bailey Park will be able to enjoy a free Wi-Fi Zone thanks to Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program.

Bringing Wi-Fi to Crawford County is made possible by the Fort Valley State University-Communiversities: Piloting an Ecosystem for Digital Equity Grant. This is funded by the National Telecommunication and Information Administration (NTIA). FVSU is partnering with Public Service Telephone Company to provide the service.

The purpose of the grant is to provide broadband access and accessibility to communities within 15 miles of FVSU

Courtney Howard, FVSU's NTIA project director, said the free Wi-Fi provided in the park will help citizens in Crawford County obtain internet access. It will also provide the city a key resource when hosting certain events.

When presenting a proposal to the county commissioners, two activities discussed included Peaches to Beaches and Crawford County's Fall Festival.

"Peaches to Beaches is a huge event that involves vendors along highway 341. It allows vendors in the Roberta area a chance to set up, connect to Wi-Fi and conduct touchless payments. At the Fall Festival, events such as concerts are held and attendees can use the Wi-Fi as well," Howard said.

Furthermore, Howard said that students in Crawford County who do not have Wi-Fi at home can utilize the service available at the park.

Sharon Sanders, county manager for the Crawford County Board of Commissioners, said the Wi-Fi service is very beneficial for the residents.

"So many people and families cannot afford Wi-Fi services through their phone or an internet provider. This is a way that kids can come in, log on, do homework and complete the things they need to do," said the Crawford County official.

Dr. Mark Latimore, associate dean for Extension at FVSU, said that FVSU is very proud and excited to partner with Public Telephone Company in providing the service to Roberta residents.

Additionally, Howard, who grew up in Crawford County, is proud of the fact she has helped residents gain free internet access. She said the project is very near to her heart.

"I feel like I've made a small footprint in the county I grew up in to help it achieve access to technology. It means the world to me," she said.

In addition to providing technology resources to Crawford County residents, Howard said the NTIA grant also provides technical education and awareness to the area with classes and workshops.

For more information about upcoming NTIA projects, contact Howard at (478) 391-5790 (courtney.howard@fvsu.edu) or Terrence Wolfork, assistant administrator of communications, conferencing and technology at (478) 825-6053 (wolforkt@fvsu.edu).

Fort Valley State University Extension presents research during professional conference



Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Cooperative Extension employees traveled to Montgomery, Alabama, November 17-19, 2024, to present original research and information to attendees of the 82nd Professional Agricultural Workers Conference (PAWC).

ChaNae Bradley, FVSU senior communications specialist, partnered with Dr. Anna Scheyett, coordinator for the University of Georgia's Cooperative Extension Behavioral Health Team, and presented a breakout session called Stress Management Help for farmers. The session focused on the results from a focus group where Bradley and Scheyett interviewed Black farmers about stress and suicide.

The project is funded by a Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) grant. Both Bradley and Scheyett collaborated and discussed findings. They also provided resources to help farmers deal with stress. In addition,

Latasha Ford, research communications manager, and Yolanda Surrency, EdD, technology curriculum specialist, presented a poster called, "Uplifting Voices and Improving Communications and Digital Skill Sets Through Writer's Playground." Writer's Playground, implemented in 2022, is a free creative writing and technology course that fosters students' creative thinking and writing. High school students in middle and south Georgia have benefited from the program.

Furthermore, Terrence Wolfork, FVSU assistant Extension administrator for communications, conferencing and technology, and Surrency, conducted a breakout session called, "Promoting Technology Adoption and Awareness to Invigorate Rural Entrepreneurship."

The presentation focused on the role that FVSU Extension is playing in helping underserved communities address barriers to technology awareness, adoption and access to broadband technologies.

For more information about Extension programs at FVSU, visit ag.fvsu.edu or follow us on Facebook or X.

Twiggs County 4-H students conduct presentations during national conference



Members of Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Twiggs County 4-H program recently participated in a national conference at the nation's capital.

Kayla Flowers, a homeschooled 12th grader and Aniya Green, a 10th grader at Twiggs County High School, attended the National 4-H Conference in Washington, D.C.

Senior 4-H students (ages 15-19) from across the country gathered at the event and participated in numerous activities. This included roundtable discussions with peers, presentations to members of federal agencies and networking at a job fair with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and other federal agencies.

Aniya's roundtable group discussed the topic, "Fostering Healthy Eating Among Youth" to representatives of the USDA. Kayla's group covered the topic, "Strategies to Support Recovery and Wellness." She presented to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

"By participating in National 4-H events, it gives our 4-H'ers an opportunity to build relationships and connections with other youth from across the country," said Phillip Petway, FVSU's 4-H agent for Twiggs County.

Additionally, Petway said that conferences open doors for 4-H'ers to learn more about job and career opportunities available within the USDA.

"Kayla and Aniya represented FVSU's Twiggs County 4-H Program very well. They were selected to attend the national conference based on their 4-H activities, leadership skills and school experiences," Petway said.

Furthermore, the Twiggs County 4-H agent said the two students successfully used those attributes in preparing their presentations for the national conference and participating in roundtable group discussions.

Petway said this allowed the students to be actively engaged and vocal in sharing their thoughts and ideas.

FVSU's Twiggs County 4-H Program is part of the FVSU Cooperative Extension 4-H Positive Youth Development Program. For more information about the program, contact Philip Petway (petwayp@fvsu.edu) or Woodie Hughes Jr., assistant Extension administrator 4-H program leader (hughesw@fvsu.edu) at (478) 825-6296.



COLLEGE of
AGRICULTURE,
FAMILY SCIENCES
and TECHNOLOGY

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS
P.O. BOX 4061
FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
FORT VALLEY, GEORGIA 31030-4313
AG.FVSU.EDU



**FVSU offers
Neighbor Waivers!**
Qualified students from
Alabama, Florida, South
Carolina and Tennessee pay
in-state tuition. Find out more
and apply today at fvsu.edu.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers, employees, and applicants for employment on the bases of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity, religion, reprisal and, where applicable, political beliefs, marital status, familial or parental status, sexual orientation, or all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program, or protected genetic information in employment or in any program or activity conducted or funded by the Department. (Not all prohibited bases will apply to all programs and/or employment activities.) If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax (202) 690-7442 or email at program.intake@usda.gov. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech disabilities and wish to file either an EEO or program complaint please contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or (800) 845-6136 (in Spanish). Persons with disabilities who wish to file a program complaint, please see information above on how to contact us by mail directly or by email. If you require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) please contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension Work, based on the passage of the Food & Agricultural Act of 1977 on September 29, 1977, and in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Mark Latimore Jr., Associate Dean for Extension for the College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology, Fort Valley State University, a State and Land-Grant Institution, University System of Georgia. Fort Valley State University is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to award baccalaureate and master's degrees. Contact the Commission on Colleges at 1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097 or call 404-679-4500 for questions about the accreditation of Fort Valley State University. Fort Valley State University is an affirmative action, equal opportunity institution and does not discriminate against applicants, students or employees on the basis of race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability or marital or veteran status.