

**AG NOTES**  
**BY John Teague**  
**UT/TSU Extension**  
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**WHO ARE WE?**

We've been around over a hundred years, but there are a lot of folks who do not know what and who Extension is. Let us introduce, or reintroduce, ourselves.

We have our beginning back in 1862, when President Abraham Lincoln and the Congress saw the value in establishing a system referred to as the land-grant colleges. I wasn't around then, but I heard about it. These were to be schools of higher learning devoted to agricultural research and then teaching what was learned from that research to a growing population who would feed the country while it also began industrial growth. Up to that point most folks farmed and simply existed.

This system was expanded in 1890 to provide the same opportunities for minorities to learn about agriculture and mechanical arts, which was the early stages of the industrial movement. Later, both systems had instruction in the area of home economics, now referred to as family and consumer sciences. In Tennessee, the 1862 land-grant college was what would become the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and the 1890 college was what would become the Tennessee State University in Nashville.

These land-grant systems provided for a school site and actual farm land that would be used in researching all areas involved in plant and animal production for food and fiber. Later, there was a need to take that information the schools were discovering and teaching to their students on campus to those citizens in the countryside who would never attend one of these colleges. The Smith-Lever Act in 1914 was passed that established a service that would extend that information to the people in the states at the county level. That's us.

There were boys' corn clubs as early as 1906, and there were girls' canning clubs in 1910. It was recognized even then that if the youth were taught new ideas and principles of farming and homemaking they would be more ready adopters and their skeptical parents would then follow suit. There were many side-by-side plots with father and sons competing to see who could grow the most corn, etc. The sons would get the new hybrid varieties to plant, while their fathers would stick to their old favorites, and time after time the boys would win the yield contests. The same happened with the development of fertilizers.

The same thing happened with the girls and their mothers, learning how to cook, preserve and can, increase the level of sanitation and personal health, and other issues of the day. These groups became the 4-H clubs, now embracing the traditional subjects of agriculture and family and consumer science plus modern technology and personal development topics.

The first county agent educator representing the University of Tennessee here was Julius R. Hickerson in 1917, and I have his report on file. The first home demonstration agent was here a few years later. It is really interesting to read their reports, giving an insight into how people lived. Very rural is a good description. There have been great educators to follow them over the years that improved the lives of the people in all of these areas. And the 4-H Clubs of Bedford County have had a great history, with the first state project winner in 1946, in the horse project. Imagine that!

We are now UT-TSU Extension, with a blend of agents supported by both universities. Here is a short profile of those agents.

Whitney Danhof is the family and consumer science educator here now. She works with groups in special interest areas of nutrition, food preparation, health areas, family economics, etc., and on one-to-one with other issues. She maintains an active Family and Community Education Club program, with

several community clubs with members well over one hundred in number. She also works with individuals who need information and guidance in a wide range of areas.

Emily Osterhaus and Sean Giffin are the agent educators responsible for the 4-H youth development program. They maintain over one hundred clubs and over two thousand members who study personal development, workforce preparation, and many who are involved in projects from animals and plants to computer technology and environment.

We have two specialists that are assigned to work this area and they come to this county on a regular basis. Finis Stribling is a specialist from Tennessee State University and his area of specialty is dealing with small farms and the local Farmers Market. He has a background in row crops and vegetable production. Kevin Ferguson is an area specialist with UT Extension, and his specialty is farm management and he has a strong background in beef production and marketing.

Kim Harvey is our administrative person who directs the public to the appropriate source of information and help.

John Teague serves those who have an interest in agriculture, both full and part time farmers with operations of all sizes. His focus is on livestock and forage management while supporting other farm interests. He also works with residents who do not farm but do have issues with lawns, landscaping and household pests, etc.

UT TSU Extension provides equal opportunity in all of our programs and employment. We are located at 2105 Midland Road in Shelbyville, and our phone number is 931-684-5971.

## **BORN IN A BARN**

I've shared this before. I still mean it and I feel strongly about it. Agriculture is important and its roots go back before anything else. I'll share it again.

I wasn't born in a barn, but I heard about somebody who was. He was arguably the most influential person in the history of the world and still is at the center of focus for many, some for and some against. He lived for a time with animals such as a donkey and sheep. His first visitors were farmers.

I've always been comfortable in a barn. I milked when I was three, and it was love for animals from that point. My Teague grandparents taught me about animals. Precious memories. It's the most fascinating thing to me, the whole process of livestock reproduction, genetics, feeding, caring, etc. My college education is in animal husbandry. My careers have been focused on agriculture. I never wanted to do anything else.

My most peaceful times have been at the barn. Observing a quiet birth, listening to them eat, watching a baby nurse, watching for them to chew their cud. It's what I do. I've always felt that you could learn a lot about character at the barn. I know some folks who hated it, and they couldn't wait to leave it, and that's ok for them, but it's my thing.

It's a peaceful time. A busy time, but there's some real peace. Listen for it, look for it, live it. After what we've been through and going through as a human race, we need it.

## **HOLIDAY**

We operate on the University of Tennessee holiday calendar. We will be closed December 21-25, and we'll be back open December 28-31, closed on New Year's Day, and back open on January 4. The Bedford County Extension Staff wish you a great holiday season!