

**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 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, 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 lot 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.

Emily Osterhaus and Jeffrey Hester are the agent educators responsible for the 4-H youth development program. They maintain nearly one hundred clubs and some twenty-five hundred 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 a program assistant who works with the food and nutrition programs of the Tennessee Nutrition and Consumer Education Program for those who need special assistance. Yesenia Lira-Garcia has been on our staff for some time now, and she is a great resource. She is bilingual and is a big help to us and our community.

Kim Harvey is our administrative person who directs the public to the appropriate source of information and help. She's been here a long time and is a huge help in working with us and our clients.

I'm John Teague and I serve those who have an interest in agriculture, both full and part time farmers with operations of all sizes. I also work with residents who do not farm but do have issues with lawns, landscaping, household pests, etc. Although my specialty is livestock management, and this is one of the largest livestock counties in the state, I do work with a wide range of areas. If I don't know the answer, I'll try to find the one who does.

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.