

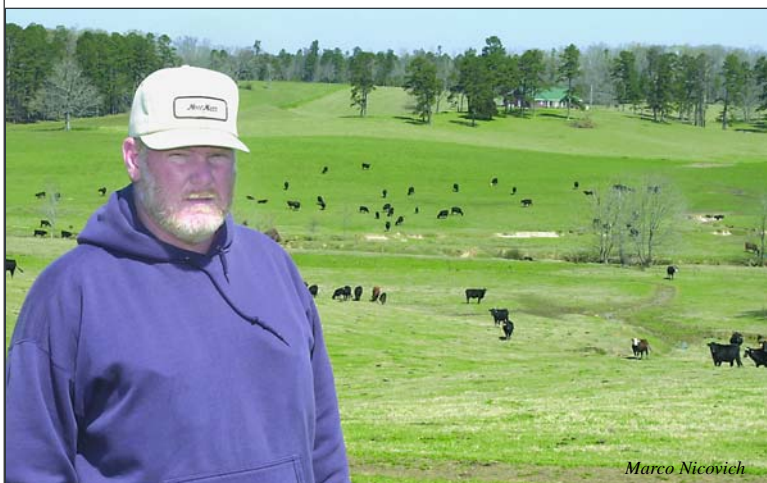
FOCUS

Teaching, Research and Outreach in the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine

Whether it's an individual with a home-based business or a senior citizen looking for personal improvement activities, the Mississippi State University Extension Service has a program that can benefit almost every Mississippian.

The following are stories of some of the people who have taken advantage of Extension programs to improve their businesses, their education or even their health.

Family beef farm adapts to meet market demands



Marco Nicovich

Wayne Doler is a second-generation cattleman in Calhoun County who has been successful in adapting the family business to meet the changing demands of the cattle market.

"We have a commercial beef cattle operation in the south end of the county, and my dad was in the same business," he said. "I've been working with our county agent and the Extension specialists for years, and they have suggested

"Extension livestock specialists have helped with about everything I do, from soil fertility right on up to marketing."

WAYNE DOLER
Calhoun County cattleman

ways to improve the quality of our cattle. They also have helped a lot with marketing."

One of the Extension services he uses is the Mississippi Farm to Feedlot Program.

For the past 11 years, Farm to Feedlot has helped producers evaluate performance and carcass characteristics of their cattle and to make profitable changes in their breeding, health and overall management programs. The program also provides educational information to beef producers about marketing alternatives.

"I started with the Farm to Feed Lot Program the year it started and am still involved," Doler said. "Working with my county agent and Extension livestock specialists has helped me get my winter feed costs down. In fact, the Extension livestock specialists have helped with about everything I do, from soil fertility right on up to marketing."

Extension part of "total package" for Humphreys County farmer



Greg Word

"Having my county agent on speed dial has played a role [in my success]."

WILLARD JACK
Humphreys County row crop producer
(shown with Humphreys County Director Eddie Harris, right)

When Willard Jack moved from Ontario, Canada, to Humphreys County almost 25 years ago he had experience growing corn and soybean and a determination to learn all he could about farming in the Mississippi Delta.

Today, the transplanted Canadian grows cotton, soybeans, rice and corn in both Humphreys and Holmes counties and was named the Lancaster/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year in 2001. His determination has been a big factor in his success. "Having my county agent on speed dial," he said, also played a role.

“The scientists do a good job with the research, but someone has to help put everything together in a total package, and that’s where Extension really fits in,” he said. “The county agent or the state crop specialists will come to the farm and make recommendations for a specific situation.”

Jack looks at his farming operation in its entirety, from soil

fertility testing all the way through to marketing, said Humphreys County Extension Director Eddie Harris.

“He is a very conscientious farmer who takes care of his business from the start to the end,” the county director said. “Part of his management package is working closely with research-based information and Extension recommendations.”

Mississippi hair bow business booming on the Internet



“Before the workshop, I knew zero about e-commerce.”

Jim Lytle

DARLENE SEALS
Marshall County business owner

“Hair bows galore” is how Darlene Seals describes her business, CJ’s Place. CJ’s is the largest hair bow factory outlet in Mississippi, but its customer base is actually worldwide, thanks in part to the help of the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Seals began selling hair bows from the trunk of her car in Holly Springs in 1991. Her monogrammed and other hair bows for children and ladies were excellent products, and the business grew.

By 2001, she needed to expand her business beyond her north Mississippi hometown, and the Internet was the logical tool to reach new customers. She had met Beth Duncan, small business specialist with MSU’s Extension Service, soon after starting CJ’s and she called on her for help with expanding to electronic commerce.

Duncan said Seals is a smart entrepreneur and sensitive to

her customers’ needs, which is an important part of e-commerce.

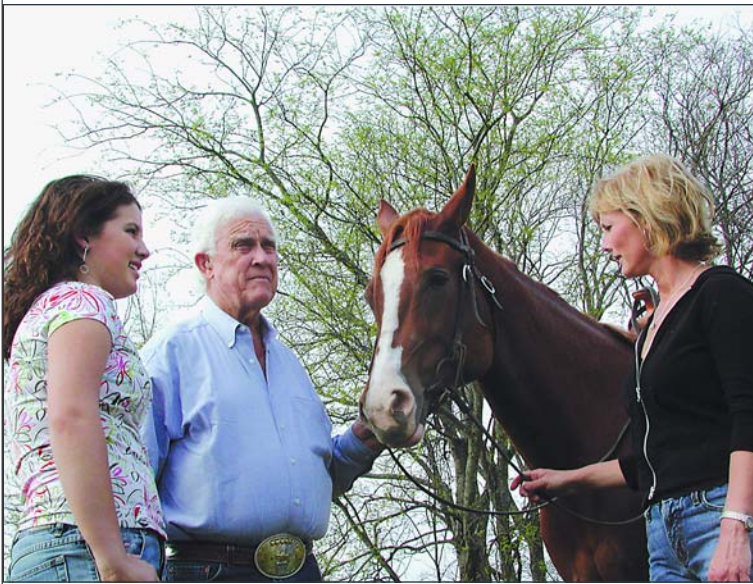
“The Internet is customer-driven, but it can be very impersonal,” Duncan said. “Darlene, however, keeps in touch with her customers to ensure satisfaction.”

In fact, Seals said an emphasis on customer satisfaction is the first thing she learned when she attended an Extension e-commerce workshop.

“Before the workshop, I knew zero about e-commerce,” she explained. “The first thing I learned about this type of business is that you have to earn the trust of your customers by being prompt. When you e-mail a customer with a promise to do something you have to be prompt in doing it.”

Seals’ Internet site, www.cjsbows.com, has expanded her business 40 percent, but she finds time to help other Mississippians enter e-commerce by speaking at Extension-sponsored workshops.

4-H horse program becomes way of life



Greg Word

Half a lifetime is a long time to commit to anything, but a 4-H horse program volunteer believes the program's benefits to families make the time well spent.

"I've been involved with the 4-H horse program for 35 years, and I raised four children in the 4-H program. Now I have grandchildren in 4-H," said Bobby Crawford of Indianola. "It's a wonderful program. I've contributed time

"We can keep the children involved with 4-H programs and keep them away from drugs, drinking and mischief."

BOBBY CRAWFORD
Sunflower County community volunteer
(shown with granddaughter Sydney Parker, left and daughter Sheila Parker)

and effort for half my lifetime, and I've enjoyed it so much."

Crawford said it would be difficult to count the number of hours he spends helping out with the program.

"Whatever time it takes is the time I spend helping, whether it be at night trying to get a judge for the state 4-H show or anything else that needs to be done," he said. Crawford works directly with Gale Chrestman, Mississippi State University's Extension 4-H livestock specialist.

The benefits to children and their families keep Crawford inspired to help out with the 4-H program.

"During 4-H programs at night or on weekends, we have these children and we know where they are and what they're doing. We can keep the children involved with 4-H programs and keep them away from drugs, drinking and mischief," Crawford said. "4-H is something we need to keep our children involved in—not only the horse program, but all 4-H programs."

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Therapeutic horseback riding helps youth



Jim Lytle

Beginning in her toddler years, Heather Bouchillon of Louisville found joy in riding horses. A potentially deadly car accident in 1993 not only threatened to sideline the 16-year-old from horseback riding, but also from walking or talking. Today, Heather not only walks and talks, she rides.

"I ride a horse every Tuesday for therapy. It's helped me straighten up and walk better. I can see a big difference,"

"Therapeutic riding works better for me than other types of therapies."

HEATHER BOUCHILLON
Winston County teen

Heather said. "It's fun, but it's also a lot of work to keep my balance on the horse."

The Mississippi State University Extension Service's 4-H therapeutic riding program is conducted at the Mississippi Horse Park near Starkville. Under the supervision of a physical therapist and a certified therapeutic riding instructor, Heather's horse moves through an obstacle course while she exercises various parts of her body. The therapy helps riders facing various physical, mental, language and emotional challenges.

"Therapeutic riding works better for me than other types of therapies," Heather said. "I wish I could do it every day because it helps so much."

Mississippi State 4-H TEAM, or Therapeutic Equine Activity Member, is nationally accredited by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association. TEAM is the only such organization in the state to have this accreditation.