

FOCUS

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

MSU Outreach Takes Many Paths

When it comes to providing educational opportunities to the people of Mississippi, there are not many paths Mississippi State University has overlooked. That is especially true in the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine.

Each year, thousands of Mississippians turn to MSU for self-improvement, continuing education opportunities, guidelines for managing their personal resources, or information related to their farms or other business. Sometimes, all

that is involved is a visit to a Web site or a call or visit to a county Extension office. Several thousand people also take advantage of the chance to participate in activities on the Starkville campus, an MSU experiment station or other facility.

The following pages feature four diverse types of outreach activities: a field day, a garden day, an onsite equipment show and a 4-H technology conference. Information about all the happenings in the division is available on the Web at MSUcares.com.

The Biggest Show in the Woods Attracts Thousands



Rising fuel costs and stagnant forest products sales didn't stop some 6,000 from attending the Mid-South Forestry Equipment Show at the Mississippi State University John W. Starr Memorial Forest.

In its 25th year, the show is the oldest and largest live demonstration of forestry equipment in the nation. At the June 6-7 show, companies including Bandit, Barko, Caterpillar, John Deere, Rotobec, Tigercat, Stribling and others showcased the newest technology and machinery used to advance the South's timber industry.

"It's a great opportunity to have interaction with loggers, find out how their business is going, what the market conditions are and be able to explain what our new products feature," said Hubert Boatwright, sales representative for Caterpillar Forest Products.

The equipment show not only offers an opportunity for businesses and customers to interact, but also provides continuing education opportunities for loggers, landowners and foresters.

"We had 2,000 attendees receive 5,971 continuing education credits during the 2-day event," said Charles Burkhardt, show manager and forest supervisor.

Classes range from forestry ethics to business planning for loggers and managing hardwood stands for profitability, Burkhardt added. Many of the individuals who attend enjoy participating in competitions where they can use a new piece of equipment to test their skills.

"The popular Prentice Loader Championship tests the skills of professionals and is a time challenge rewarded with prizes and/or cash," Burkhardt said.

Originated in 1972, the loader contest requires participants to successfully remove vertical log blocks from a checkerboard and then return them to their original squares.

The show also sponsors a skidder contest, and there is a full range of children's activities to help future forest professionals pass the time.

"I like to come because I get to try out new equipment," said Jason Cutshaw, an Iuka logger for 17 years and father of three.

Sponsored by Mississippi State University's College of Forest Resources, Hatton-Brown Publishers Inc., Mississippi Logger's Association and the Mississippi Forestry Association, the event is designed for the entire family.



Veterinary Open House Welcomes All Ages



Tom Thompson

For more than two decades, the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine's annual open house has been a treat for young and old alike.

According to Ashley Allen, 2008 open house chairman and president of the MSU Student Chapter of the American Veterinary Medical Association, older students have the opportunity to talk to veterinary students and faculty about career paths.

"The younger students enjoy seeing a variety of animals and demonstrations they would not typically see," she said. "The petting zoo contains some common animals, and the animal show allows veterinary students to show off some of their unique and exotic pets."

The 2008 event also included the Frisbee Dog Competition and other outdoor events, as well as tours of the animal hospital and classrooms.

Tiny Beaumont Supports Big Plant Business

Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station personnel pack a lot of knowledge into a small space at the 20-acre Beaumont Horticultural Unit.

At the unit's annual field day on June 6, horticultural crop producers and processors, industry representatives and local educators were briefed on projects designed to support the area's food and gardening businesses.

David Nagel, extension professor of horticulture, reviewed development of a 4-inch onion targeted for maturity in July. The large-diameter vegetable, used for onion rings by a major fast-food chain, can be grown by south Mississippi farmers who provide fresh produce to Southeastern markets. The key to the demonstrations is to find an onion that tolerates Mississippi's summer heat.

Bennie Herring, Perry County Vocational Technical Center forestry instructor, has brought students to Beaumont for school day tours for 15 to 20 years.

"Field days help us to go back and teach the kids about the technology that is developing," said Herring. "Plus, since my school is near, I can bring students for 'hands-on' teaching. In fact, I've taught some of the guys working here."

Robin Borden, chief agronomist with Organic Growing Systems Inc. in Monticello, has been in the fertilizer industry for 25 years. The MSU horticulture and agronomy turf management alumnus' company specializes in organic fertilizers and soil amendments.

Attending the field day to network with scientists and growers, he said, "The people who attend these have similar mindsets. And, to me, the discussions between the participants are as beneficial as what we actually see here. We all tend to become segmented into our individual fields, and this is a good way to share information."

Christine Coker, associate research professor of horticulture, conducts most of her research at the Beaumont unit. The primary focus of that work is commercial vegetable production, cut flower production and Asian vegetables for both commercial and home settings.



Ned Browning

Home Gardeners Enjoy Dishing Dirt on Plants



Patti Drapala



Patti Drapala

Home gardeners want to share their dirty little secrets.

They will forego any inconvenience if they feel they can help even one person. Such enthusiasm for plants and nature is why some people across the state will drive a good distance to exhibit at or attend field days, such as the Spring Garden Day at the North Mississippi Extension and Research Center in Verona.

Lelia Kelly, horticulturist with the Mississippi State University Extension Service, said she thinks the popularity of gardening events is all about the sense of community many Mississippians feel.

“People who garden have a need for knowledge and a desire to share,” she said. “A garden day is a great opportunity for people who enjoy plants to network, interact informally and exchange new ideas.”

Melvin Campbell of Verona, who has exhibited with other members of the Old South Iris Society at past garden days, decided to venture out on his own this year. His daylily cuttings, which he produced for sale, attracted a crowd.

“One lady stayed behind and we talked for a long time,” he said. “She helped us pack when the garden show ended, and I learned more about daylilies from her than she did from me.”

“Growing up, I always had chores to do in the garden because it was part of my job as a member of the family,” Campbell said. “I don’t remember exactly when that perception grew from a chore to a labor of love, but it happened. It is thrilling to watch your babies grow.”

Mary Hodges of Nettleton is another member of the iris society who exhibited for the first time at Verona. She said she has no favorites among the irises, daylilies, roses and hostas that she grows.

“I just like plants,” she said. “2008 has been a wonderful year for gardening.”

“Earth Lady” columnist Margaret Gratz, who writes for the *Northeast Mississippi Daily Journal*, said the gardeners she meets at shows often give her inspiration. A self-published author, Gratz just released her second book, *At Home in the Earth Lady’s Garden*.

“People who love plants love to talk,” she said. “If you love plants, you will always have something to talk about and something to write about.”

Conference Covers Technology from Web to Robots



Mariah Smith

One of the newest events on the 4-H schedule is the State Science, Technology and Engineering Conference. The first conference was held in 2007, and participation doubled to almost 100 for 2008.

This year's conference included session on Flash software, Web site design, geographic information systems, digital photography and a communications session on speaking and entertainment. Also included were new sessions on robotics and rocketry. All of the sessions are designed for participants to learn while having fun.

"They are learning basic engineering techniques and critical-thinking skills," said Mariah Smith, Extension instructor and coordinator of the robotics sessions.

The robotics participants had to build four different robots to complete progressively more difficult tasks based on an archeological theme. One task involved programming a robot to drive up and stop on a pressure point on the floor before lifting a scroll and returning to the starting point.

"It's really fun," said 11-year-old Emoree Heiselt, a junior helper for the robotics sessions. "It's amazing to see what these can do."



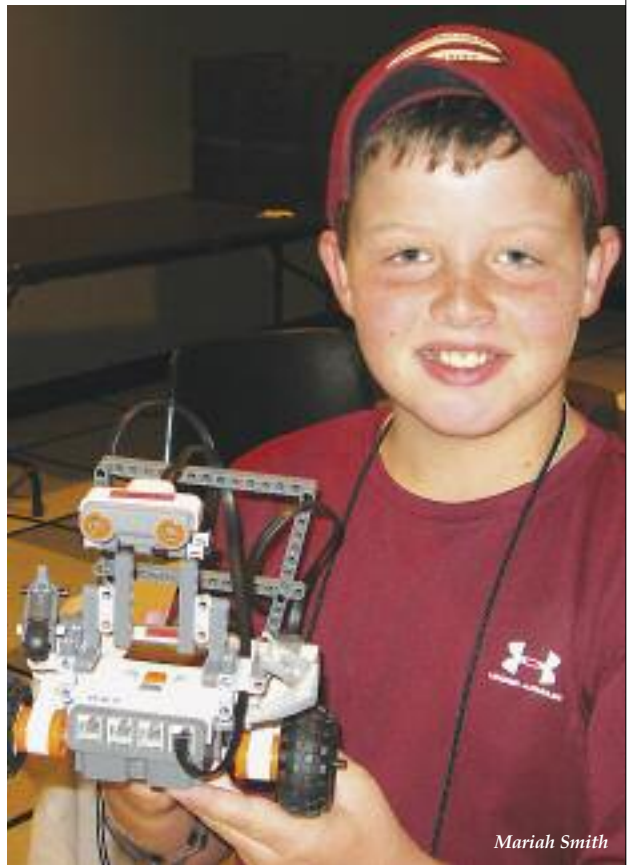
Kerry Smith



Marco Nicovich



Marco Nicovich



Mariah Smith



Marco Nicovich