

# FOCUS

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

## Division Camps Offer Fun and Education

Mississippi State University's Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine (DAFVM) offers educational experiences not only to its undergraduate and graduate students but also to community youth. DAFVM's summer camps offer children and teens with endless opportunities to engage in fun

and educational activities that challenge their minds, develop character and spark interest in future college studies. The following pages highlight just some of the summer fun the division hosted this year.

### Fun with Food Camp Gets Kids Cooking



Busy schedules and hectic lives make it increasingly difficult for families to prepare meals together and find the time to sit down to enjoy them.

Sylvia Byrd, associate professor in MSU's Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion, realizes that children need positive, in-kitchen experiences starting at a young age. That is why she developed the "Fun with Food" camp for third- through sixth-grade students.

Children prepare the meals they eat all week. In the process, they learn new culinary techniques and ways to work with ingredients they may have never seen or tasted before, such as spaghetti squash.

"It is fun to see and hear their reactions to new foods," Byrd said. "We don't expect them to like everything they try, but we don't allow words like 'weird,' 'gross' or 'disgusting.'

We encourage them to really taste the foods and be more descriptive with terms like 'savory,' 'sour,' 'earthy' or 'sweet.'"

The camp provides an actual tour of the farm-to-table journey through field trips to a family-run farm, a dairy, an animal production unit and a grocery store. The trips give children a new appreciation for the ingredients they use in the kitchen for their many cooking activities.

"The trip to the tomato farm was my favorite," said camper Savannah Guyton of Starkville. "I loved using the tomatoes to dice up for making salsa."

Each day at camp brings a new cooking adventure. The campers make everything from pizza and bread to soups and quiche. The cooking activities require them to learn how to read a recipe, select appropriate culinary tools and work together.

## Summer 4-H Camp Blends Expressive Arts, Technology

Youth who enjoy drama, theater, music, art or literature and want to enhance their creativity enjoy attending the 4-H Technology and Expressive Arts Camp.

The camp, open to 4-H youth who are 14–19, offers as many opportunities as possible for youth to discover and enhance their imaginations and creativity.

"Many students in high school have amazing talents for writing, designing and creating," said Linda Mitchell, 4-H youth development specialist with the MSU Extension Service. "This camp offers those youth an outlet for their creativity that they might not have otherwise."

Each camper was placed in the creative tract of his or her choice, such as fantasy fiction writing, ballroom dancing, computer technology and robotics.

The fantasy and fiction tract was led by Bryan Davis, author of the bestselling "Dragons in Our Midst" series for teenagers. Davis discussed storytelling basics and demonstrated how word-processing software can make the writing process easier and more creative.

Three-time national ballroom champion Steve Conaway led the "Dancing with the Stars" tract. He instructed campers on how to use technology to put together music and visual art elements for a stylized dance performance and atmosphere.



Kit Lawrence

SUMMER



Kat Lawrence

## Horticulture Seminar Plants Major Thought

High school students who attend MSU's horticulture summer seminar may not always become plant scientists or landscape architects, but the experience often shapes the way they approach their future vocations.

Forty years ago, the university joined forces with The Garden Clubs of Mississippi Inc. to sponsor a four-day event each summer for high school students to explore the world of plants. Participants learn how plants create a healthy, functional environment for life on the planet.

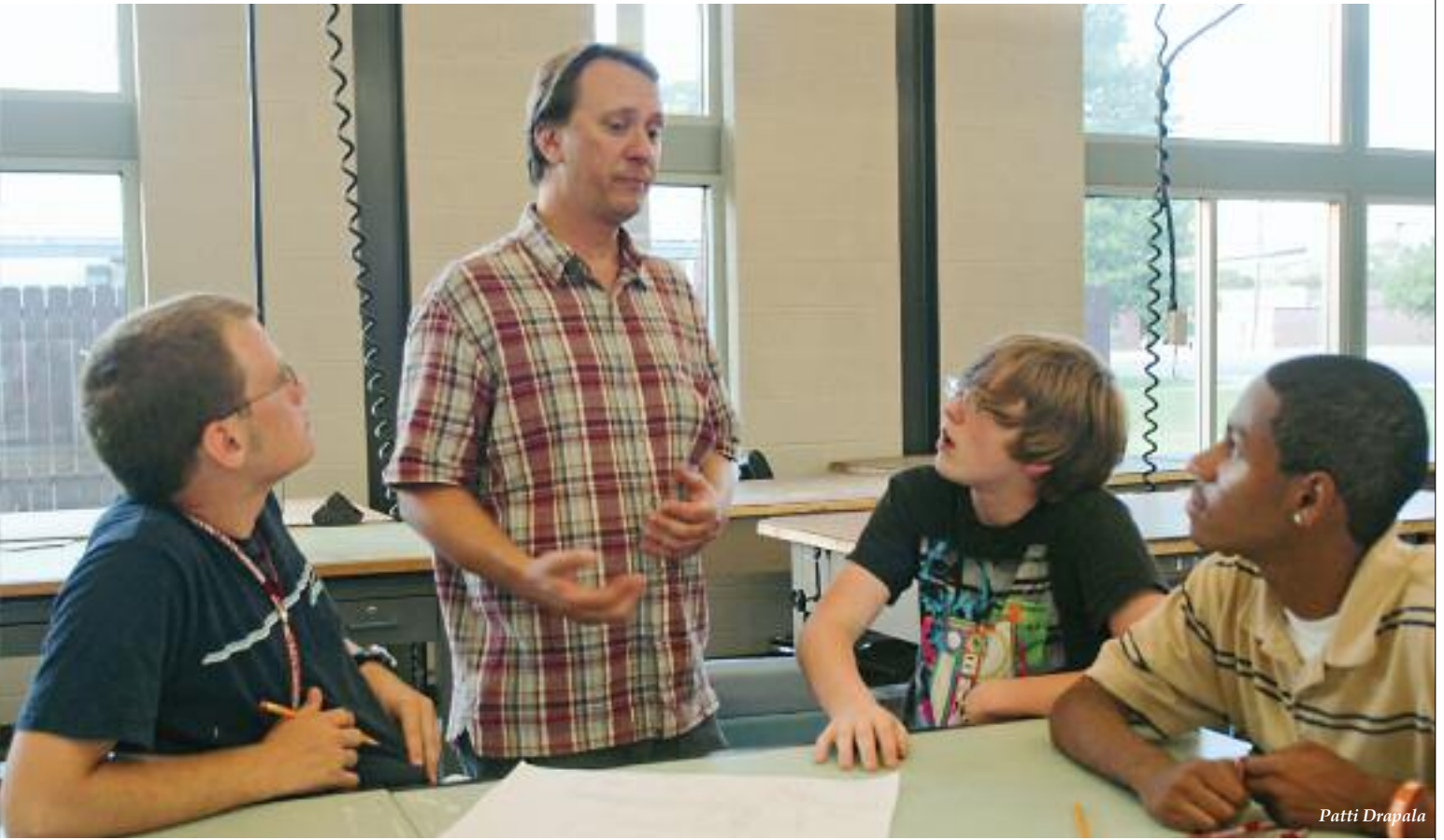
"Our goal is to get students to focus on plants, and there are always going to be students who participate because they are interested in horticulture or landscape architecture," said MSU Plant and Soil Sciences professor Richard Harkess, the seminar's coordinator. "We also have students who plan to major in business, engineering or veterinary medicine. These students enroll in the seminar because they took a vocational education class, enjoyed the experience and developed an interest in plants."

Faculty from the MSU Department of Plant and Soil Sciences and the Department of Landscape Architecture present lectures on subjects ranging from plant propagation and floral arrangement to landscape contracting and architectural design.

"We are encouraged to unleash and explore our creativity, which is a great introduction to college life," said Damion Poe, 17, a senior at Starkville High School. "Sometimes, high school learning is like being inside of a box. Here, the professors expect you to step out of the box and think for yourself."



Patti Drapala



Patti Drapala



Patti Drapala

## Unique Setting Attracts Insect Campers to MSU

MSU's 4-H Entomology and Horticulture Camp is one of the few of its kind to offer overnight stays for nocturnal collecting, which attracts participants to the event just like moths to light.

"We introduce campers to the technique of attracting night insects using black lighting, which opens up a new world for them," said retired MSU Extension Service entomologist Mike Williams. "You could jokingly say we end activities with a last call for the appropriate type of alcohol."

The substance to which Williams refers is isopropyl alcohol, which is often used to preserve some insects for collections.

Williams began the camp in 1994 as a way to expose young people to science and provide hands-on learning that makes what they read in books come alive. Since that time, the camp has grown in stature and pulls in nature enthusiasts of all ages from all corners of Mississippi and from as far away as Vermont, Michigan, Texas and the West Coast. The camp is a partnership between the state 4-H program, the MSU Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, and the MSU Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Discovery and exploration are the foundation upon which MSU's camp rests. Campers find that organizers believe in challenging boys and girls, particularly newcomers, to overcome their fears and squeamish reactions so they can enjoy the full adventure in the woods.

"Water is an important part of the life cycle for dragonflies and other types of insects," said Leslie Burger, who coordinates 4-H projects for the MSU Department of Wildlife and Fisheries. "These insects often provide protein and food sources for animals and fish, so this is a chance for campers to investigate how ecological systems work and thus need to be managed wisely for the benefit of all life found there."

*Photos by Kat Lawrence*



## The College of Forest Resources' Camps Offer Break from Lazy Days of Summer

The College of Forest Resources' five summer camps not only gave students an opportunity to explore natural resources but also gave parents a break from the 'I'm bored' syndrome, which seems to strike students during the midyear vacation.

The camps included Upland Ecology and Outdoor Sports, Wetland Ecology and Outdoor Sports, Insect and Plant Ecology, Advanced Concepts and Natural Resources Summer Camp.

The upland, wetland and insect camps are geared for students who are 10 or older. These intergenerational camps are sponsored by the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries and directed by John Guyton and Leslie Burger. The insect camp is cosponsored with the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology. All three of these camps are intergenerational, with parents and grandparents participating alongside students.

Activities include scuba diving, bow fishing, gun training, archery, seining, electrofishing, insect collecting, tracking and telemetry.

The advanced concept camp is open for students in the ninth grade and up who previously attended a wildlife and fisheries summer camp. Students complete a habitat project along with other activities.

The natural resources summer camp is designed specifically for high school students interested in a career in natural resources. Students participate in a full range of natural resource activities, including tree identification, invertebrate sampling, mist netting for birds and papermaking.

"We are hardwired to nature, but in the last few generations, our separation from the land has become an increasing problem," Guyton said. "The camps return children to the woods and teach them how to enjoy our natural resource heritage."



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Photos by Karen Brasher



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