Tales of harness racing and local history...Page 8
On the Cover
Harness racer Chad Bell trains at The Mississippi Horse Park, located south of the main MSU campus. More about harness racing is on page 8. (Photo by Bob Ratliff)

Back Cover
Campers test out the effects of mixing soda and a popular mint candy at the 4-H Technology and Expressive Arts Camp. (Photo by Kat Lawrence)

4 Hidden Treasure
A 350-acre area in Webster County contains plant and animal diversity similar to that found in the Appalachians.

6 Anniversary Blooms
The University Florist celebrates 75 years of serving the community and giving floral management majors unique learning opportunities.

8 Tall Tales
Two MSU graduates are united by a common passion for local history.

10 Gobble, Gobble
MSU researchers work to determine if there is variability in wild turkey spring gobbling.

11 Green Economy
MSU forest economists measure the economic impacts of forestry’s four major sectors.

12 Go Native
A MAFES survey collected data on whether or not the green movement is influencing the purchase and use of native plants.

14 Pecking Order
An MSU poultry science graduate reflects on her educational experience and career in the poultry industry.

16 Focus Section
DAFVM’s many summer camps offer the state’s youth fun, educational and challenging activities.

22 Ant Study
Two MSU researchers conducted a yearlong survey of ant species at the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge.

24 Research Dreams
A Greenville native follows his dream to manage an MSU research farm.

26 George County
Annual festivals and wholesale nursery businesses attract visitors from around Mississippi to George County.

27 Landmarks Editorial
MSU Extension’s Family and Consumer Science programs focus on educating and supporting community development.

28 News Notes
Read the latest news of people and activities in the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine.

30 Building Goals
Two important DAFVM renovation and construction projects need funding support.
Everyone likes to brag a little, and universities are no different. Successes in athletics, academics and research are among the areas where schools compete for bragging rights.

In the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine at MSU, we have quite a lot to be proud of, including a strong national reputation for agricultural research.

We now have one more thing to be proud of—a new vice president. Dr. Gregory Bohach will assume the top leadership role for the division in October. He comes to MSU from the University of Idaho, where he served as associate dean of the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences and as Idaho Agricultural Experiment Station director.

During the interview process, Dr. Bohach shared his vision for moving the units in the division forward with faculty and staff on campus and at MSU facilities across the state. He has also met with commodity group representatives and other stakeholders to discuss MSU’s research and outreach roles. During those meetings, it soon became evident that his reputation as someone who can communicate with and build consensus among diverse groups is well earned.

We in the division look forward to the strong visionary leadership Dr. Bohach brings to our academic, research and outreach programs.

It has been my pleasure to serve as the interim vice president for the division during the past 18 months. I look forward to continuing to work with colleagues in the MSU Extension Service, the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, the College of Forest Resources, the Forest and Wildlife Research Center, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Veterinary Medicine as we join with Dr. Bohach to serve the university and the people of Mississippi.

Melissa J. Mixon
The Appalachian Mountains stretch from Alabama to Canada with foothills in northeastern Mississippi, and some 100 miles from these foothills, in Webster County, is an area known as Old Cove.

The 350-acre area contains plant and animal diversity in deep ravines and bluff ridges similar to that found in the Appalachians. Owned by Weyerhaeuser Company, Old Cove is home to mature hardwoods, rock outcroppings, reptiles, amphibians and many plant species.

While Old Cove is not a tourist destination like the Appalachians, it is a unique and diverse ecosystem in need of preservation. Foresters in the Weyerhaeuser Company deemed it a “special place” as part of the company’s compliance with the Sustainable Forestry Initiative.

“Special place” is the phrase used for areas with unique qualities within the forest landscape that are usually protected. To preserve the rare ecosystem, Weyerhaeuser sought the expertise found in Mississippi State University’s Forest and Wildlife Research Center and the Mississippi Nature Conservancy.

“The cove habitats support many species that are not found in other types of forested habitats, and by determining the different species that inhabit the coves, we can learn more about conserving these unique communities,” said Jeanne Jones, wildlife and fisheries professor. “The cove

By Karen Brasher
habitats in combination with managed pine forests and streams side management zones support a myriad of animal and plant species.”

It is this type of diverse environment that professionals in the Weyerhaeuser Company and the Mississippi Nature Conservancy are seeking to conserve, and MSU is enthused to be a part of this conservation effort, Jones said.

To help preserve the cove area, scientists and graduate students are conducting surveys to determine the species of plants and animals that inhabit the hardwood forests and the seepages and streams of the forested cove habitats. Aaron Posner, a wildlife and fisheries graduate student under Jones’ direction, has collected data from 14 individual timber stands to compile a list of reptiles, amphibians, birds and plants found in the area.

“We have sampled each stand every two months from April 2008 to June 2009,” Posner said. “The stands range from 5-year-old pine to over 90-year-old hardwoods. We have found a variety of amphibians and plants, including many rare species.

While we have not found any endangered or threatened amphibians, we have found rarities, including a Southern Red Salamander, a species of concern in Mississippi,” he added. “We have also found some rare and unique plants, such as Solomon’s seal, Green Dragon and several rare orchids. These plants have been found primarily in moist hardwood forests and outflows of the coves.”

In addition to determining the number of species in the coves and pine forests of the Old Cove area, researchers are conducting animal and plant surveys in the streams side management zones. So far, the research has demonstrated that hardwoods in Mississippi—both mature trees in coves and those along streams—provide important habitats for numerous species, especially for rare plants and salamanders.

“By measuring animal and plant communities in streams ide management zones and the hardwood forests of the coves, we can learn what species are supported by these different habitat types,” Jones said. “Both game and nongame wildlife are found in these habitats, and one might be surprised to learn that some of the best habitat for woodland salamanders is also excellent habitat for game species, such as wild turkey and gray squirrels.”

The information being collected will help forest managers understand the role of streams ide management zones and cove forests in providing for native species that inhabit the lands they manage in the Old Cove area. This information is important, because professionals of Weyerhaeuser Company are seeking ways to retain native animal and plant diversity and protect water quality on the lands they manage.

Streams ide management zones serve as a voluntary best management practice that prevents soil erosion, protects water quality and retains habitat in and along streams and rivers during extensive land use, such as logging or land clearing. The area is at least 90 feet from the water’s edge outward, composed of undisturbed trees and other vegetation.

“Our goal is to increase understanding of how streams ide management zone forests and protected cove forests contribute to the overall species diversity of lands managed for timber production,” Jones said. “This understanding will potentially help us integrate multiple goals on timbers lands—from timber production to turkey hunting to successful salamander searches by children rambling in Mississippi’s summertime woodlands.”

The cove forests are important for the survival of selected wildlife and plant species, and they are a beautiful place in which to work.

“Even though Mississippi does not have the grand cove habitats of the Appalachian Mountains, we are fortunate that the Weyerhaeuser Company and the Mississippi Nature Conservancy have worked together to conserve the unique cove areas that remain in our state,” Jones said.

Photos by Aaron Posner
The University Florist staff stays busy preparing arrangements for weddings, parties and other special occasions. Lynette McDougald is preparing these floral arrangements for an event at the Union.
The University Florist Celebrates 75 Years

By Leighton Spann and Karen Templeton

The unique enterprise known as The University Florist has operated for most of its history in the heart of Mississippi State University, where it serves as both a full-time business and a design laboratory for students.

The University Florist began 75 years ago and predates the professional program by quite a few years.

“The flower shop started in 1934 at the old greenhouses located by Allen Hall,” said Lynette McDougald, The University Florist business manager and instructor. “It was a place where horticulture students sold what they were growing in their classes. It developed, and in 1939 the flower shop became the first FTD Group Inc. member in this area.”

The shop stayed in its original location, fulfilling its original mission, for about 36 years until Ralph Null joined the horticulture faculty. Null successfully spearheaded an effort to develop what is now the floral management major at MSU.

“One of the things that I started looking at was how we could be more visible. We eventually got the space that’s next door to where we exist now,” said Null, professor emeritus.

“Along with that, we opened a branch shop, which was a tiny kiosk under the front stairs in the student Union building back in the early 1970s.”

At that time, the main florist staff members worked close to the area now occupied by the State Fountain, and the floral design lab was located upstairs at the north end of the cafeteria. Although the new location was a vast improvement in visibility and space, even better quarters were just down the street, and another move took place.

“When the dairy science building was being built on the west side of campus, the old dairy products area became available,” Null said. “We were able to get relocated here right in the center of campus.”

In every location, The University Florist has remained first and foremost a teaching tool. Working at the shop gives floral management majors unique learning opportunities.

“I worked at the florist two semesters. It was a great experience getting to see how a florist works on a university campus that has large events. I might not have gotten to experience that at an everyday florist,” said Brandi Smith, MSU floral management major from Memphis.

The shop operates under a student manager, who is typically a senior in the floral management program. The student manager is involved in all phases of the operation, working at least 20 hours a week under the supervision of the florist business manager.

“We are the only working flower shop associated with a floristry program. There are floristry programs, which are more or less design schools, but this program is a blend of the business aspect, the horticulture and floral arts. Students get a taste of it all,” McDougald said.

For student manager Christy Babin, the shop helped point her in the direction of a major and future career.

“I ended up working at The University Florist, fell in love with it, and changed my major after only a semester,” Babin said.

“Most of our graduates, Brandon Branch, works closely with Paula Deen of the Food Network,” said James DelPrince, professor in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences. “He aids in creative contributions to Ms. Deen’s media outlets, including her magazine, television show and home entertaining products.”

MSU alumnus Joe Gordy owns Natural Decorations Inc., a manufacturer of permanent botanical plants, trees and floral designs and serves as a CALS alumni fellow.

For these and many other graduates of horticulture, floral management and the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, The University Florist has been a cornerstone of their educational foundation.

“One of our graduates, Brandon Branch, works closely with Paula Deen of the Food Network,” said James DelPrince, professor in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences. “He aids in creative contributions to Ms. Deen’s media outlets, including her magazine, television show and home entertaining products.”

For 75 years, The University Florist has provided real-world work and management opportunities that enhance students’ academic experiences to become future leaders in the floral industry.

“Flowers can say things people can’t find the words to say. That’s what I love to think about, everything, all the emotions, all the events, all the things that have occurred and passed through here in those 75 years,” McDougald said.
Tom Wilburn's memories of growing up on an east Mississippi plantation, attending Mississippi State College and plunging headlong into the harness racing industry are the types of tales Jeannine Smith is eager to record. United by a common passion for local history, these two graduates of Mississippi State University spent a lifetime together in two years. Smith, who received her master’s degree from MSU in industrial technology in 1995 and a doctorate in education in 2001, began researching for a book on Artesia, her adopted hometown, in 2005.

“Every time I asked someone about the history of Artesia, they would tell me I needed to talk to Tom Wilburn,” Smith said. “So I started going to see him whenever I found a newspaper article that needed more explanation.”

With his help, Smith now knows more about the Lowndes County town than her hometown of French Camp. In fact, she probably knows more about Artesia than most of its natives.

After a few of those fact-finding visits, Wilburn called Smith with his own request. A decade earlier, his brother had encouraged him to begin tape recording “family tales” and other stories for posterity. With nearly 20 hours of tape, he needed help to make it into a book. For the next six to eight months,
Smith and Wilburn spent several hours together most Saturdays while he told his tales.

The book, “Tales of Tom Wilburn,” compiles personal stories and photos of life in Mississippi’s prairie land and of the early days of harness racing across the United States and Mexico. Set largely in the first half of the 20th century, the book records insights into the events and challenges of a member of one of Lowndes County’s oldest families. Wilburn’s family settled Smith Oaks Plantation in 1837.

“I firmly believe in the old proverb that states, ‘When an old man dies, a library burns to the ground,’” Smith said. “Mr. Wilburn has a rare gift for storytelling and a remarkable memory. I’m glad we were able to work together to record them in a book.”

The oral history takes readers from Wilburn’s initial efforts to manage the family land shortly after he graduated in 1940 from Mississippi State College (now MSU) through the career decisions that took him in his great-uncle’s footsteps as a harness-horse trainer. They include stories of exploits that earned him a place in the Illinois Harness Racing Hall of Fame, as well as his “tales” passed down from Civil War veterans and prairie residents from the late 1800s.

After initially attending Mississippi State, Wilburn briefly attended West Point Military Academy before returning to the state college in 1936. His parents believed strongly in higher education, and they hoped a degree in animal husbandry would help their son make a living on the family farm. But his eyes twinkle as he reflects on his college memories in what he described as a “joyful period” of his life.

“I learned survival,” he said. “Upperclassmen were really tough on freshmen. We tried to avoid them, and when we couldn’t, we tried to come up with ways to retaliate.”

One of Wilburn’s first paying jobs was picking sweetpotatoes on the college’s north farm for 35 cents an hour. The best jobs were working in the cafeteria. After graduation, the struggle to make ends meet raising cattle on the family farm caused him to feel a tug in a different direction. Harness racing offered, he thought, a better return on his effort.

“Having a college education helped me when I got into the harness racing business. I knew how to meet and talk to a variety of people,” he said. “But even in the harness business, like in college, when you start out, you entered on the bottom of the pile.”

Success came slowly for Wilburn’s stables, but it came.

“In 1940, I was the only harness racer in Mississippi, and it stayed that way for about 10 years,” Wilburn said. “By 1952, we were starting to get recognition in the industry. The racing money helped keep the farm in business.”

Through the 1960s and into the early 1970s, Wilburn hosted free, harness-racing events on Smith Oaks Plantation in an effort to give back to the community he loved. He estimated as many as 5,000 people would attend at the peak of the annual event’s popularity.

Smith is also motivated by a love for the community. She brakes her car as she turns onto Smith Oaks Plantation and again as she tours the city streets of Artesia to draw attention to a point of interest.

“Time capsules help people look back on what was going on at a particular time that no longer exists. The collections also reflect a desire by one generation to be remembered by a future generation,” Smith said.
Research Finds
Gobbling Peak
Varies Throughout the State

A normal gobbling pattern usually consists of three phases: rise, stabilization and fall. The rising phase typically occurs between the first and second week, the stable phase from week two through week four and the falling phase from week four to week six, Godwin said.

A study was initiated in Mississippi State University’s Forest and Wildlife Research Center to determine if there is variability among the regions in wild turkey spring gobbling.

“We looked at gobbling survey data collected in Arkansas and Louisiana during 2006 and 2007 to refine our gobbling survey technique,” said Francisco Vilella, wildlife and fisheries professor and project investigator.

The Arkansas data showed a difference of 1.5 days for gobblers heard per day between the northern and southern parts of the state. In contrast, the Louisiana data showed a difference of less than a half-day, Vilella said.

A short project at the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge during 2007 further refined the technique of detecting turkey gobblers and also helped determine logistical needs for the first statewide spring gobbling survey for Mississippi.

“The pilot study helped us determine how many individuals it would take to survey the entire state in a short amount of time,” Vilella said.

Matt Palumbo, a wildlife and fisheries graduate student and native of Lackawanna, NY, began the statewide surveys in 2008. He employed undergraduate students and technicians to survey the southern and northern portions of Mississippi.

“We placed eight survey routes north of Highway 82 and seven routes south of Highway 84 from mid-February to late May,” Palumbo said. “The routes were in areas characterized by hardwood saw timber, pine saw timber and pine regeneration.”

Preliminary analysis of the 2008 spring gobbling survey found a difference of approximately 10 days between the northern and southern portions of Mississippi.

“Spring gobbling activity peaked around April 7 for the southern portions of the state and around April 17 for the northern region of the state,” Palumbo said.

The results are markedly different from the spring gobbling data obtained for the neighboring states of Arkansas and Louisiana. The spring gobbling survey was replicated in 2009 with similar results.

“We are currently conducting data analyses to investigate the influences of weather, age and population rate on gobbling activity,” Vilella said. “We are also exploring various factors that may help explain why there is a difference in peak gobbling activity between the north and the south.”

The results will serve as the basis for long-term monitoring of spring gobbling activity across the state to enable state biologists to adaptively manage hunting seasons around gobbling activity.

“Mississippians have a rich tradition of turkey hunting, and over the last three decades the state has consistently boasted one of the largest turkey populations in the country,” Godwin said. “This study will help the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks ensure that our hunting season framework best fits the peak gobbling activity throughout the state.”

By Karen Brasher

Spring turkey hunting is a popular sport throughout Mississippi, and the sound of a gobbler responding to a call is unrivaled for the more than 30,000 hunters who spend mid-March to May in search of the elusive bird.

While the season is set for the entire state, many hunters have expressed concerns over the time frame as it relates to peak gobbling activity.

“Hunters have long thought that spring gobbling activity peaks at different times in different regions of the state,” said Dave Godwin, wild turkey program coordinator for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks. “However, little research has been done to qualify this perception.”
Forest Industry Still Providing “Green” to Mississippi’s Economy

By Karen Brasher

While the economy is sluggish throughout the country, forestry and forest products continue to make the state’s economy green.

Forestry production ranks second in the state, behind poultry, generating $1.08 billion in revenue in 2008 and providing a whopping $17.37 billion to the state’s bottom line. A recent Mississippi State University report shows just how much of the state’s economy is rooted in the 19.6 million acres of forestland.

“While it’s well known that forestry is important to the state, most residents may not appreciate that 65 percent of the state’s total land area is covered in forest,” said Ian Munn, a professor in MSU’s Forest and Wildlife Research Center.

Munn, along with forest economists James Henderson and Donald Grebner, sought to measure the total economic impact of the timber products harvested and delivered to mills and manufacturing plants in Mississippi each year.

Based on 2006 data—the most recent available—the study found that forestry-related employment accounted for 8.5 percent of all jobs in Mississippi and paid an average annual wage of $40,713.

The project examined the forest industry’s four main sectors: logging, solid wood products, pulp and paper, and wood furniture manufacturing. To determine impact, the economists looked at direct, indirect and induced effects of the four sectors.

Employing a computerized database and modeling software, they looked at employment, wages paid, total value of production, and value added through the manufacturing process. According to results of the study, the forest and forest products industry provides 123,659 full- or part-time jobs with an associated annual payroll of $4.37 billion. The industry generates $7.12 billion in value-added income and $1.66 billion in tax revenue.

The study also examined the economic impacts of potential biofuel-related activities.

“Research has found that over 3.5 million dry tons of logging residues and unharvested materials are recoverable for use as raw material for biofuels each year in Mississippi,” said James Henderson, assistant forestry professor and co-investigator.

Harvesting and delivering the raw materials would equate to a 9 percent expansion in the logging sector and more than 1,700 additional jobs.

“Add to this the jobs created from operating a power plant or a cellulosic ethanol plant, and the possibilities are astounding,” Henderson said.

Donald Grebner, an associate professor of forestry, said that there is enough raw material to operate eight 100-megawatt power plants or five biofuel plants. Either of these scenarios would generate thousands of jobs and huge economic impact.

“While the current conditions aren’t the best, the outlook is extremely promising for the forestry and forest products industries,” Grebner said. “With the recent significant breakthroughs in the development of alternative fuels, the state is in an extraordinary position to reap the benefits of an abundant forest resource once the economy rebounds.”
The Southeast has an opportunity to capitalize on the green movement, according to a Mississippi State University consumer survey.

Richard Harkess, an ornamental horticulture professor in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, and Robert Brzuszek, a landscape architecture professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Landscape Contracting, wanted to determine if the green movement is influencing the purchase and use of native plants.

With support from the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, the two professors surveyed landscape architects, plant industry representatives and Master Gardeners in similar climate zones of Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, Georgia, South Carolina and east Texas. They hoped to identify people who grew, sold or used native plants and to obtain information on marketing trends that resulted in the sale or use of these materials.

“We found there is a lack of knowledge within the nursery industry and among the general public about the availability of native plants,” said Harkess. “Some people believe there is a shortage of native plants or the quality is not good, while others have trouble selecting native plants because many of them are not correctly identified.”

One of the survey questions asked nurseries what percentage of their stock is native plant material. Most nurseries in east Texas said native plants made up between 20 and 40 percent of their stock, while nurseries in the other five states said their plant stock was less than 20 percent native.

Interest in using or selling native plants, however, has increased considerably in recent years among the three groups surveyed.

“Respondents indicated they had minimal interest in these materials five years ago,” Brzuszek said. “There is moderate interest now, which may be a result of the green movement capturing the imagination of the public and the desire of consumers to do more for the environment by using native species in their gardens and landscapes.”
While many people think the green movement is a product of the modern age, the concept is deeply rooted in American philosophy. Henry David Thoreau offered one visionary approach in his classic novel “Walden,” which was published in 1854. He, along with other writers of his time, inspired many people to develop strategies for protecting the planet. Each succeeding generation has carried these ideas forward and added to that body of thought with new insights and discoveries about the world today.

In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed an executive order requiring landscaping around federal facilities and projects to incorporate native plants when appropriate, practical and beneficial to the environment. The use of native plants has allowed many federal buildings and projects to meet criteria for certification by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The current media spotlight on climatic change, natural resource depletion and environmental contamination has further galvanized the green movement. One of the ways landscape professionals, horticulture producers and gardening enthusiasts feel they can make a positive change is to emphasize the use of indigenous plants.

“Native plants have become an important aspect of the green movement,” Brzuszek said. “Much of our focus as educators is to teach sustainable landscaping and introduce trends and concepts that our students will use to implement an overall plan.”

Landscape architects drive the demand for native plants in many areas of the South, according to survey research. These professionals use native plants in urban settings where space, natural resources and maintenance are limited.

“Some native plants are more adaptable to harsh site conditions, which makes them the No. 1 reason landscape architects use them,” Brzuszek said. “In some instances, the topsoil has been stripped away on commercial or residential sites, and few trees may be left standing. The landscape architect has to start from scratch in designing a landscape that works well and meets the desire of clients.”

Landscape architects indicated on the survey that they tended to use trees such as magnolias and live oaks rather than other types of plants because woody plants are more adaptable to urban environments.

MSU Extension Service-trained Master Gardeners use native plants to reflect the character within a residential, commercial or public area.

“Master Gardeners said they preferred herbaceous plants such as salvias, butterfly weeds and yellow coneflowers,” Harkess said. “Much of their work involves the addition of plants to an established garden or landscape.”

While the survey reveals a desire for native plants, it does not indicate that natives will displace the use of exotic ornamentals in every instance.

“Native plants fill more of a niche market,” Harkess said. “Although some wholesale nurseries do focus exclusively on native plants, other types of nursery, greenhouse and grower operations can use this information to expand their business. Availability often comes down to what the consumer is looking for.”

The Black-eyed Susan, which is indigenous to Mississippi, can be a good choice for many landscapers who desire to use native plants, according to MSU landscape architect Robert Brzuszek, left, and MSU ornamental horticulturist Richard Harkess.
When Ryn Laster McDonald was earning her Mississippi State degree in poultry science in 1993, she was one of only two women in the program that began at the university in 1946.

Today, females make up more than a third of the 42 majors, said Michael Kidd, department head. The increase is credited, in part, to the academic major’s job placement, which, at 100 percent, can’t get any better. That’s right, even in these tough economic times, all MSU graduates find jobs—and most get two or more offers each. Kidd said there are plenty of jobs to be had.

The poultry industry is Mississippi’s top agricultural income producer, exceeding $2.32 billion in sales in 2008. The industry employs nearly 25,000 people directly, with another 23,000 indirect jobs created. Wages and salaries paid to poultry employees exceed $1 billion.

If those facts weren’t enough, consider that Jackson is home to Cal-Maine Foods Inc., the world’s largest egg processor and Wal-Mart’s biggest supplier of eggs.

The job security was what drew McDonald to poultry science after earning an earlier bachelor’s degree in English in 1991. Her first degree was a direct influence of her mother, who writes English textbooks. Attending MSU was not a question.

“I didn’t know you could go somewhere else,” she said, laughing.

After completing the English degree, McDonald entered law school at the University of Mississippi. Once she enrolled, she soon concluded the law just wasn’t the career she wanted.

“My daddy came and got me,” she recalled. “We loaded up my stuff in a cattle trailer and went home.”

McDonald found her way back to MSU, this time to study poultry science. Concentrating on poultry because of the job placement rate, she soon found herself totally immersed in the business of chickens and their feathered kindred.

“I came (to poultry science) for the jobs, but I found out I am passionate about it,” she said, adding that she credits her major professor, Yvonne Vizzier Thaxton, for that passion.
Thaxton began teaching poultry science courses at MSU after working nearly 30 years in the poultry industry. When she started her career in the industry, she was usually the only woman in the technical meetings.

“I never had to wait in line for the bathroom,” Thaxton quipped.

McDonald praises Thaxton for “teaching me to be passionate about the industry.” That passion led the Raymond native to earn not only another bachelor’s degree, but also master’s and doctoral degrees from Mississippi State.

After first working in research and development in Nashville and, later, at Marshall Durbin in Hattiesburg, McDonald moved to Cal-Maine, where she has been for more than a decade. She is the company’s director of food safety, a position she takes “very seriously.” Food safety is a “constant battle,” she said.

“You must stay vigilant,” McDonald added.

“The poultry industry is constantly searching for technology to further improve raw poultry safety,” Thaxton agreed. “Fully cooked product is about as safe as it can be because the industry does everything that it can. The biggest problem, I think, is the lack of kitchen hygiene knowledge in the general public.”

McDonald said Cal-Maine works to keep consumers safe by its practices, such as tracking every egg the company processes. That’s more than 25 million eggs a day.

“We even know where the soap comes from that we wash the eggs in,” she added.

In addition to consumer safety, there is the issue of humane treatment for birds in the production process. According to McDonald, Cal-Maine deals with layers (hens that lay eggs). Other plants, such as Marshall Durbin, where Thaxton and McDonald once worked, process broilers, the meat birds. Whatever a company’s focus, both women said “the dignity of the birds” is considered to be paramount.

“We ensure that our workers have respect for all living things and treat them with dignity,” McDonald emphasized. “Also, because stress affects the taste of meat and eggs, the better we treat the birds, the better they perform.”

She, Thaxton and Kidd, the department head, agreed on another popular poultry misconception: that commercial poultry is fed hormones. Not so, they said; rapid growth of the birds is due to genetics, not force-fed growth hormones.

Returning to the matter of food safety, McDonald gave high praise to the Arlington, Va.-based Safe Quality Food (SQF) Institute. The SQF Institute is a division of the Food Marketing Institute, established to administer the SQF program, a leading global food safety and quality certification and management system.

The SQF program “has been really good for us,” she said. Its certification and management program validates companies’ compliance with international and domestic food safety regulations so consumers can feel safer about their food supply.

“We’ve passed the highest safety level with SQF there is,” McDonald proudly pointed out. “We tell our workers to relate food safety policies back to their children—would they want their children eating this if the safety was compromised?”

But what about being rare women in a man’s world? McDonald and Thaxton responded to the question by recalling how they were “tested” by some male counterparts when first beginning their careers. The “tests” ranged from the condescension of having an animal held before their faces and being told “This is a chicken,” to the purposeful shock of leading them on a visit to the slaughterhouse floor. Not only did they survive their “initiations,” they went on to include some of those doubting Thomases among their closest friends.

“Any teasing, or whatever, usually clears up when they realize you know your stuff,” McDonald said.

And they do know their stuff. Thaxton remains the only woman to have served as chairperson of the Mississippi Poultry Association (MPA) board of directors, a position she held in 1991. Happily, that will change next year when McDonald becomes the second woman to hold the chair.

With offices in Jackson, the association is comprised of poultry and egg companies, producers from these companies and other businesses that help support the industry. MPA’s three main missions include member education, generic product promotion and federal and state governmental relations.

These days, McDonald often is on the road lecturing, writing and visiting other production plants. When she takes on the board position, chances are she’ll be seeing a bit less of her husband, Jim, and daughters Carlee, 11, and Camryn, 7.

Whether a wife, mother, professional, or association leader, however, for McDonald, it is all about helping others. As with her family, she obviously loves her career and believes in the life she has chosen.

Why else would she spend hours on the telephone trying to solve the problem of the cook whose meringue didn’t turn out right because “It surely must not have been the eggs!”?
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.
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.”
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.”
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 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.”
It is no secret that many ants live beneath the leaves, bark and soil of the Noxubee National Wildlife Refuge, but no one knew how diverse the population was until Mississippi State University entomologists dug up the facts.

Two researchers in the MSU Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology conducted a yearlong survey of ant species in different areas of the refuge. Their findings show that imported fire ants and other exotics have not displaced the natives. More importantly, the distribution and diversity of ants at the refuge indicate a well-managed, healthy ecosystem.

“The refuge was overgrazed and extensively farmed in the early 1900s,” said Joe MacGown, ant curator for the Mississippi Entomological Museum at MSU. “It’s amazing that this overworked area has made a comeback and can sustain such natural diversity.”

Scientists estimate that ants make up 10 percent of the terrestrial animal biomass on the planet. Ants are important to ecosystems because they disperse seeds, help dispose of waste, kill large numbers of other insects, serve as food for many animals, and aerate soil and bring in needed nutrients. Their distribution and diversity often indicate an ecosystem’s ability to maintain itself.

“Ants are good bio-indicators of what may be happening in an ecosystem because they are sensitive to disturbances that can occur,” Hill said. “The refuge offered a variety of habitats that allowed us to investigate ant populations living under different situations.”

The Noxubee refuge provided funding for the museum and the entomology department to conduct an ant survey. Refuge managers needed this information to have better tools for decision making.

The survey also allowed cooperators to carry out a U.S. Department of Agriculture mandate to document ant species and to monitor the spread of imported fire ants and other exotic ant species. MacGown and MSU entomology research associate JoVonn Hill designed the study to examine the composition of ant populations in land habitats, document potential new species and observe activities of exotics at the refuge.

“Our study will provide useful information for other ventures that are wider in scope, such as looking at the distribution of ant species in the Southeast and across the United States,” said MacGown, who also works as a research technician and scientific illustrator for the MSU entomology department. “Ant specimens collected in Mississippi are routinely used in studies by other researchers around the world.”

MacGown and Hill used baits, vegetation sweeps, litter samples and visual search techniques to collect specimens in the refuge. From September 2007 to October 2008, they surveyed six types of land habitats: pine forests; mixed pine-hardwood forests; bottomland hardwoods; upland hardwoods; open areas of grassland, roadsides and sand pits; and highly trafficked areas near buildings and picnic tables.

The survey accounted for 95 species of ants at the refuge. Of this total, eight were exotics and two were “undescribed,” which meant they might be new species. Eight species also qualified as new state records, or species previously not known to occur in Mississippi.

“The rich diversity of ants that Joe and JoVonn found at the refuge is just one indication of how little we know about the insects in our state, and in this case, almost in our own backyard,” said MSU entomologist Richard Brown, director of the museum. “Their documentation of the total number of ant species at the refuge, including new state records and new species, is a testament to their competency as researchers and field biologists.”

Bottomland hardwoods had the highest diversity of ant species. More than 59 species live in that habitat.

“The bottomland hardwoods at the refuge experience periodic flooding, and we thought that ant populations might not be as plentiful,” Hill said. “We found many different species that apparently have adapted to these conditions, and some of the species had escaped flooding by moving their nesting areas to treetops.”

The study also showed that open fields supported the least diversity of ants. The two researchers found 19 species in these areas. They documented greater concentrations of exotic species in areas where people gather.

“We were surprised by the number of species we found at the refuge, which is a small area when you compare it with the Smoky Mountains, for example,” MacGown said. “Only eight more species of ants are currently known to occur in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park than the number we discovered at the refuge.”
Southeastern Ants
Offer Spin on Their Own Web

Spiders may have webs, but the ants of the Southeast have something that lasts a little longer than spun silk — their own Web page.

Joe MacGown, ant curator of the Mississippi Entomological Museum at Mississippi State University, built the page to make information easily available on different ant species found in southeastern states.

“There had been no common way to catalog information that was scattered across several platforms and in different locations,” MacGown said. “Putting this information together in one place seemed like a logical idea.”

The Web page, Ants (Formicidae) of the Southeastern United States, was funded through the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station with the support of several state and federal agencies, private groups and individuals.

MacGown compiled information from scattered sources and his own observations. He created lists of species for each state and formatted identification keys, or sections, based on written descriptions in question-and-answer format. Included with this information are photographs, a glossary of scientific terms and a list of the museum’s ant publications.

Selecting the correct couplet, or description, in the keys eventually leads to a species name. The name links to a page about that species with photographs and pertinent data.

“I used scientific names for each species, rather than common ones, because the scientific names are universally understood and used,” MacGown said. “This greatly helps the researcher in searching for information and correctly identifying the species of ant they are looking for.”

The site allows open dialog between researchers, which has resulted in collaborations with more than 100 researchers at 75 different institutions in 24 states and 12 countries.

The Web site also led to MacGown’s involvement with other ant sites, such as Ant Web, a national site about ants. MacGown is curator for the site’s Mississippi and Alabama pages.

“I started the Web site five years ago as part of my work designing a site for the museum,” MacGown said. “This initially started when I began putting together information on ant species in Mississippi and Alabama, and then branched out to include species in the Southeast.”

The popularity of the site has grown tremendously and it now averages 10,000 hits a day, MacGown said.

“We have some information gaps in the site because it is a work in progress and the taxonomy of ants is constantly changing,” MacGown said. “A time goes by, we’ll update the site and make it more complete.”

Find the southeastern ant page online at the museum’s Web site, http://mississippientomologicalmuseum.org.msstate.edu, and click on the photo of the ant.

(Above) Joe MacGown, left, and JoVonn Hill peel bark to look for arboreal species of ants at the Noxubee Wildlife Refuge. The two surveyors uncovered a sizable population of diverse ant species coexisting at the refuge.

Researchers Joe MacGown, left, and JoVonn Hill dig around in the dirt as they survey for ant species at the Noxubee Wildlife Refuge.
Even though Sean Horton’s father discouraged him from pursuing a career in forestry and agriculture, the Greenville native was determined to follow his dream.

Since 1993, the younger Horton has worked as farm manager at Mississippi State University’s Delta Research and Extension Center (DREC) in Stoneville, the university’s largest off-campus research center. At the 4,100-acre facility, Horton coordinates research with the center’s 16 scientists, provides land for them to plant, maintains their fields and harvests their crops.

“Each scientist does his or her own inputs, while our Farm Services crew handles jobs like ground preparation, planting crops, maintaining weed control and harvesting crops,” Horton said.

Some researchers focus their efforts on weeds, while others specialize in soil fertility or concentrate on insect control. They need different services from Horton’s department.

“For example, in the fields we plant for entomologists, we have to be certain to avoid doing insect control,” Horton said. “In the fields for agronomists, we handle fertilization, insect control and harvesting.”

Managing a farm as large as the Delta Branch requires meticulous record keeping. Horton and his office staff rely on the Mississippi Budget Generator computer program provided by MSU to record all that is done to each field. At the end of the production season, researchers can check for statistics such as watering, plowing, insect control, fertilization and airplane coverage.

Linda Harkins has worked in DREC’s farm office since 1985 and is familiar with Horton’s work.

“Sean is very knowledgeable about agriculture and treats employees under his supervision with respect,” Harkins said. “It is very common to see him on a tractor in the field with his crew.”

Recently, Horton’s work crew has decreased from eight to six because of retirements. Several more are eligible for retirement. Because of tighter budgets, fewer personnel are available to operate large farm equipment.
Another big challenge for Horton is making certain his work does not negatively affect any of the researchers’ work. That is where his degree in agronomy from MSU and his five years of work experience as a sales representative with Wilbur-Ellis become valuable.

“My years of working in the agricultural chemical business have helped me tremendously in what I am now doing,” Horton said. “At Wilbur-Ellis, we spent our days answering questions about chemicals for customers in all forms of farming from vineyards and orchards to row crops.”

Located close to Horton’s desk is a 2,650-page Crop Protection Reference book for quick consultation. The years at Wilbur-Ellis also honed Horton’s managerial skills, which have proven beneficial in his position at DREC.

A typical day for Horton and his crew begins at 7 each morning as they confirm plans for the station’s 1,100 acres of row crop research land.

“Unlike a regular farming operation, each field at the experiment station represents a farm in itself and is assigned to a different researcher each year. I keep a color-coded layout of assigned fields,” Horton said.

Mississippi State recognized Horton’s expertise in agricultural management at its 2009 staff recognition day on June 26 by presenting him with the Doris and Louis Wise Support Staff Award. MSU’s Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine has presented the annual recognition since 1987.

“I had no idea I was going to receive this,” Horton said.

In addition to a plaque, he received a cash award of $500. Horton’s managerial and leadership skills are helping keep DREC at the forefront of agricultural research. The station focuses its research on cotton, catfish, corn, rice and soybean, which are crops that grow well in the Mississippi Delta. At the end of each production year, the branch sells its crops, giving the money back to the state of Mississippi. The station generates about $250,000 each year from its 1,000 acres of land certified for row-crop production.

“We participate in Farm Service Agency programs just like individual farmers,” Horton said. “Part of my job is to produce as much as I can.”

Horton first came to work at the Delta Branch in February 1984 as a farm technician for research professor and agronomist Wayne Ebelhar. Horton left the Delta Branch for a five-year stint at Wilbur-Ellis and worked for another five years as farm manager at MSU’s North Mississippi Research and Extension Center in Verona.

“Most of the jobs I have had were related to farming,” Horton said. “I grew up on a farm in the Mississippi Delta and have worked on farms since I was 11. If you grow up in the Delta, farming is inherently a part of your life. It’s in your blood.”
**1/82: George County**

**MSU in George County:**
George County Extension Office  
7128 Highway 198 East  
Lucedale, MS 39452  
Email: george@ext.msstate.edu

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**County Seat:** Lucedale  
**Population:** 22,406  
**Municipalities:** Lucedale  
**Commodities:** Cotton, Peanuts, Cattle, Timber and Ornamental Nurseries  
**Industries:** Forest Products and Metal Fabrication  
**Natural Resources:** Pascagoula River and Lucedale Greenway  
**History Notes:** Settled in late 1700s, George County was formed in 1910 from the lower part of Greene County and the upper part of Jackson County. The county was named after James Z. George, a well-known U.S. senator, military officer, lawyer and author.

**Attractions:** Historic sites include the Merrill Bridge, which spans the Pascagoula River at the convergence of the Chickasawhay and Leaf Rivers. The county is also home to the George County Courthouse, a beautifully restored early 20th century building. The Gingham Tree Arts and Crafts Festival, held each November, attracts visitors from around Mississippi and surrounding states. Lucedale hosts a large birding festival each spring.

**Did you know?**  
George County is the wholesale nursery and peanut capital of Mississippi.

“*It has been a blessing to be raised in such a beautiful area and to be able to come back and work and to give back to my hometown. A client summed it up best last week when she commented on the reason she moved to George County. She said, ‘This is the perfect place to live. We have beautiful weather, located near any needs I may have and the nicest people in the country.’*”  
**Mike Steed, Extension County Director**

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Editors note: 1/82 is a regular feature highlighting one of Mississippi’s 82 counties.
Perhaps the ideal community was described by the great educator-philosopher John Dewey more than 70 years ago. In his books, such as *The Public and Its Problems* and *How We Think*, Dewey describes the “Great Community.” Dewey identifies the community as an organized group of people, directly and indirectly affected by good and evil. Guardians (leaders) who regulate the actions of individuals and groups care for a community’s interest. However, current cultural indicators show that we have distanced ourselves from our neighbors. There is less participation in our communities and less involvement in civic associations. Many communities have become fragmented and disconnected where human relations are cold and competitive, sometimes violent. Bureaucracy has depersonalized even relationships in the work place. These things that affect our development and community makeup have a direct impact on the family, education, economy, etc.

According to Frances Lappe and Paul Dubois, we do not know how to come together to solve our problems. They indicate “we lack the capacities to address the issues or remove the obstacles that stand in the way of public deliberation. Too many Americans feel powerless.” Yet, if you trace the lineage of the “community,” you find that educational institutions, like Mississippi State University, came into existence because the community willed it. The MSU Extension Service’s Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Program is a basic component of the Smith Lever Act of 1914, which established the Extension Service, as well as the recent Farm Bill, which provides funds through a cooperative agreement between the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the state of Mississippi. FCS programs came into existence to provide citizens with practical research-based information on subjects related to human and community development through base programs in Leadership Development, Family Resource Management, Child and Family Development, and Health, Nutrition and Food Safety. The research-based information continues to change, but the concept of educating and supporting human and community development remains the same.

FCS programs are available to all Mississippi citizens. Many methods are used to provide programs for clientele. As needs, issues and problems are identified, educational programs are developed and implemented to meet the situation. For example, FCS educational programs may focus on parenting education, family relationships, housing decisions, self-care skills for better health decisions, proper nutrition for a healthy lifestyle, managing family and individual resources, and building human capital through leadership development and volunteerism. Well-trained professional Extension FCS agents deliver these programs in all 82 counties. To support these programs, state and area subject-matter specialists scan the environment and access the latest research and technology in preparing meaningful curricula and other informational materials.

FCS agents provide a tremendous amount of leadership for the economic stability and security of individuals, families and communities through informal educational activities and related problem-solving assistance to Mississippians. Last year, FCS agents alone made approximately 2 million contacts through organized educational programs. They also were rewarded more than $7 million in external funding to support human and community development programming and research in our state. More importantly, impact studies reveal that FCS programs are making a significant difference in the lives of individuals, families and communities. In addition, the studies prove that FCS agents already know the secret to having a “Great Community” by remaining connected to the people and everyday life and by using education to energize and mobilize individuals, families and communities for action.
New Extension Dairy Specialist

A Mississippi State University Extension Service employee with 22 years of experience in county-level programming for agricultural and natural resources, 4-H, consumer education and community development is the new statewide dairy specialist.

Lamar Adams, who was Extension director in Walthall County, began his new job May 1. Adams will develop educational programs for dairy producers throughout the state as a faculty member in MSU’s Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences.

“Having been a part of Mississippi’s dairy industry essentially all of my life, I understand the opportunities and challenges facing our producers,” Adams said. “I plan to provide leadership and support by developing, implementing and evaluating programs to meet the needs of the industry.”

Adams worked as 4-H youth agent in Smith County before moving to Walthall County to serve as agricultural agent. He later became county director and began work on a doctorate in agricultural and extension education at MSU.

“Lamar has extensive experience working with the dairy industry and is highly regarded by producers,” said Terry Kiser, animal and dairy sciences department head. “His appointment as our Extension dairy specialist comes at a crucial time because of the serious economic situation in the dairy industry.”

Adams said he will be involved with regional and national Extension programming for milk marketing and herd management strategies. He also said he plans to network with Louisiana State University personnel as part of a long-standing agreement between the two universities to share research and educational resources.

Gale R. Ammerman Remembered

Professor emeritus of food service and technology Gale R. Ammerman passed away on April 21, 2009. Ammerman had a long career with MSU as a professor of food service and technology and as the first head of the Food Science and Human Nutrition Department.

“Dr. Ammerman could be called the ‘Father of Food Science’ at MSU,” said Benjy Mikel, head of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion. “It was his unrelenting attitude in the late ’60s and early ’70s that helped MSU be recognized by the state Legislature as the flagship program for food science in the state.”

Mikel said that in addition to Ammerman’s leadership abilities, he was also a world-class teacher and researcher. He could bring the “real world” into the classroom for students because of his extensive background in the food industry. Ammerman led many efforts in the research arena to add value to farm-raised catfish products.

After 23 years, he retired and became professor emeritus. The Ammerman-Hearnsberger Pilot Food Processing Lab is named in his honor.
Recipients of the William M. White Awards are Wayne Porter (left), area specialist with the MSU Extension Service; Charles Mischke, MSU Delta Research and Extension Center; Sam Riddell, MSU Forest and Wildlife Research Center; Din-Pow Ma, MSU Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology; and Filip To, MSU Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering. Not pictured are Menghe Li and Danny Oberle of the MSU Delta Research and Extension Center.

Recipients of the Louis and Doris Wise Support Staff Awards are Lowell Wilson (left), MAFES Research Support unit, professional/nonprofessional category; Sean Horton, MSU Delta Research and Extension Center, service/maintenance category; and Joy Odom, MSU Department of Agricultural Economics, secretarial/clerical category. With the honorees is Doris Wise.

Recipients of the Rosalind and Rodney Foil Teamwork Award are Kevin Walters (left) and David Christiansen of MSU’s College of Veterinary Medicine. With the honorees are Rodney and Rosalind Foil.
Located in the heart of MSU’s campus is the Lloyd-Ricks building with its treasure of architectural features. An ongoing renovation of the facility, one of the CALS’ main buildings, will enrich the learning experience for students.

“The renovation of the Lloyd-Ricks building will afford MSU the opportunity to compete and maintain a competitive edge as it prepares students to be innovative leaders in a global society,” said Melissa Mixon, interim vice president for the division, who is also serving as dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. “Today, competition for the best and brightest faculty and students requires state-of-the-art facilities.”

The expansion will accommodate growth for the academic units currently housed in the facility—the School of Human Sciences and the Department of Agricultural Economics. The renovation also will return many of the building’s original architectural features. Lloyd-Ricks was built in 1929 and expanded in 1939.

While the federal government and the state are supplying much of the funding for the project, a significant amount is being raised through private gifts. Renovations of Lloyd-Ricks are scheduled for completion Fall 2010.

“The total project budget is $12 million, with $2.8 million in federal money and approximately $9.2 million in state funds,” Mixon said. “The private funds will help us enhance specific areas of the building.”

Offices and conference rooms will occupy the renovated first floor. The second floor of the facility will remain home to the School of Human Sciences, which boasts the largest enrollment of the college and focuses its academics on areas from preschool teaching to consumer economics. The Department of Agricultural Economics, housed on the third floor, is widely recognized for its analyses of complex problems facing agriculture. Many of its graduates have become leaders in developing national public policies.

The renovated basement area will house four new classrooms, two of which will be equipped to provide distance-learning courses to students throughout Mississippi and the nation.

Outright gifts and five-year pledges of future support may be designated for the project. Naming opportunities are available with commitments ranging from $10,000 to $100,000. Donors may name classrooms, conference rooms, offices, lounges and laboratories in honor or in memory of family, friends or mentors.
The College of Veterinary Medicine Referral Center

The College of Veterinary Medicine is expanding its reach beyond the university’s Starkville campus. Private support will pave the way for the college to become a cooperative partner in the operation of a referral specialty practice near Jackson. The venture will expand CVM’s medical and surgical services to benefit clients in central and south Mississippi and enhance student learning opportunities.

In July, construction of a 5,200-square-foot emergency and referral clinic began in the suburb of Flowood. Once completed in early 2010, CVM will operate the referral component of the facility. A second phase of the project, which is expected to take up to 36 months, will be the construction of an adjoining referral center. The proposed addition of 8,000 square feet will expand the referral center and provide a library, classrooms and living space for veterinary students rotating through the facility as part of their 3rd and 4th year clinical experience.

“The new specialty practice will enhance teaching and clinical services currently provided on our MSU campus,” said Kent Hoblet, dean of veterinary medicine. “Our very presence in this partnership should assure the public that we are committed to working with veterinarians to provide the highest level of emergency and specialty care for companion animals. The public support in Mississippi that CVM has received is phenomenal, and we want to continue to show that we appreciate their trust.”

The strategic alliance will be a win-win situation for the CVM and the Jackson area. Students will experience hands-on referral case management and emergency care for patients at the new complex and interact with staff at the Mississippi Veterinary Research and Diagnostic Laboratory in nearby Pearl. Additionally, over time, pet owners will have access to other board-certified specialists, including surgeons, internists, dermatologists and ophthalmologists.

“The college seeks to acquire private funds to construct an adjoining addition to the Referral Center. The new facility will operate as the MSU Animal Emergency and Referral Center,” said Lee Tyner, CVM special projects director.

The opportunity to name the new referral center requires a minimum $3 million commitment to the university. Select features within the facility are available for varying amounts. An imaging unit may be named with a $500,000 commitment. The facility’s surgery unit, critical care unit or medical suite will require separate gifts of $250,000. A library area or individual classrooms may be named for $150,000 each. Dorm rooms require gifts of $100,000. A private gift of $6 million will create a naming opportunity for the entire complex. All commitments are payable over a five year period.

Gifts of any amount for these facilities are welcome and may be made in the secure online environment of the MSU Foundation at www.msfoundation.com.

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It’s all in the name. Check it out for news and information from the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine.