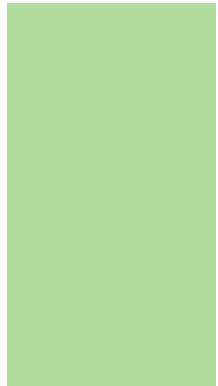
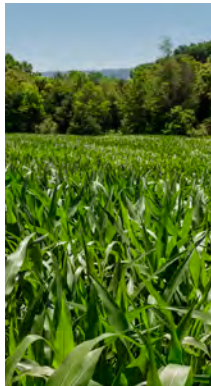
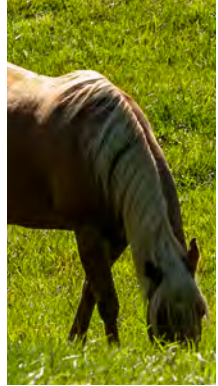
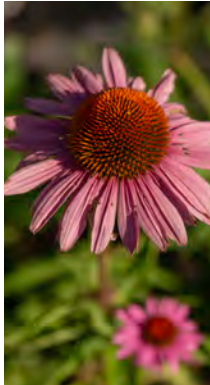
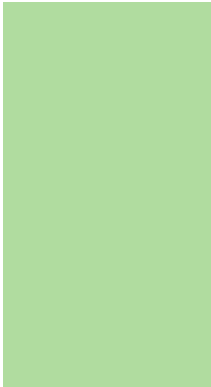
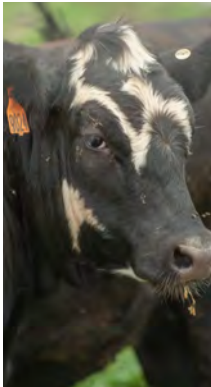
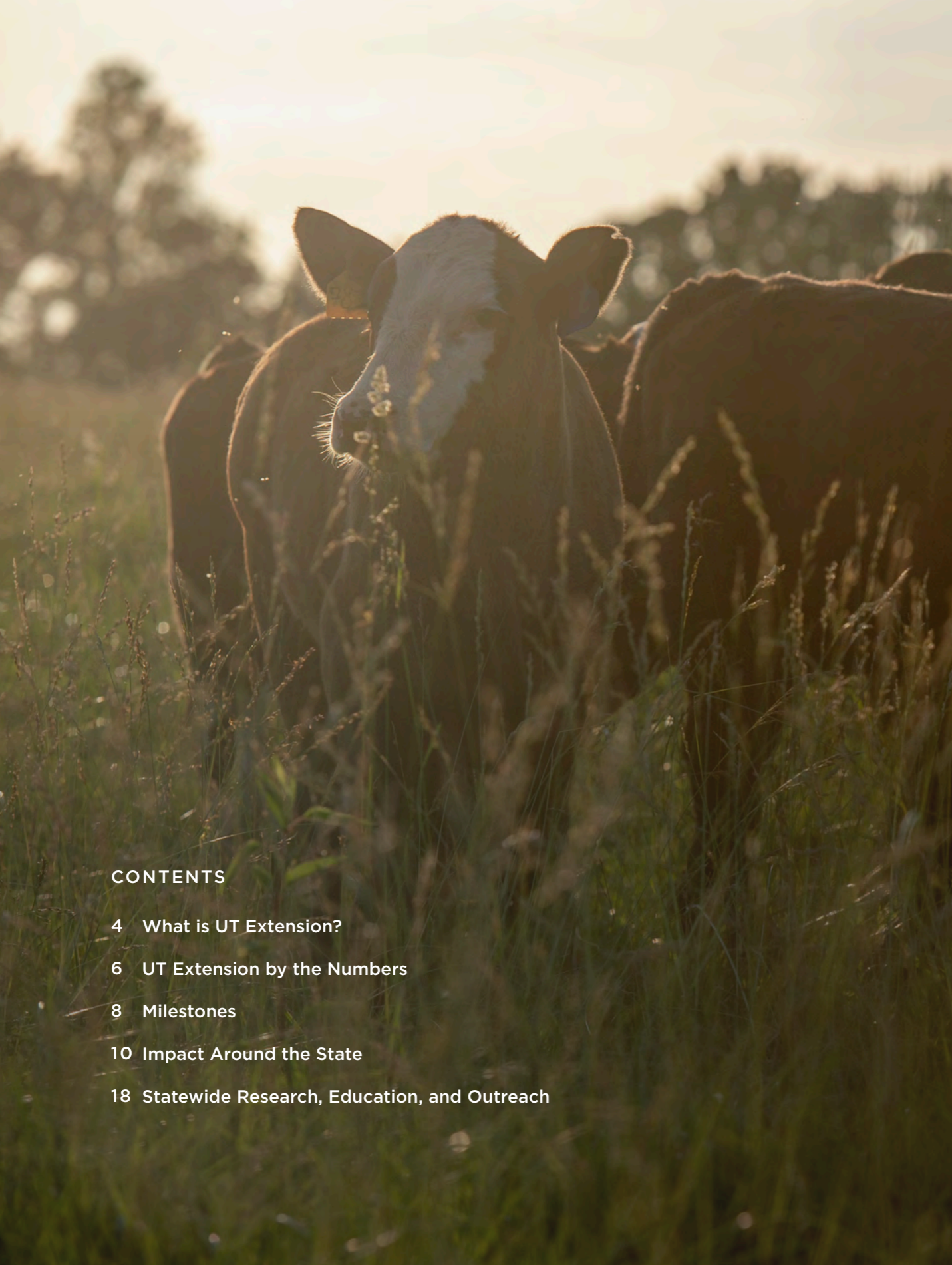


2024 UT EXTENSION IMPACT REPORT





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A MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM DEAN



Dear community members and partners,

The impact of UT Extension on our state and in our communities is immense. Over my nearly fifteen years with Extension, first as a specialist and, more recently, in administrative roles, I have admired the work of our agents, specialists, and staff. I have continually been amazed by their deep connections with residents in all ninety-five counties. It's said Extension is the front porch of the University of Tennessee, and I like the image that brings to mind. In fact, many of us have done part of our work on the front porches of the people we serve.

We work for Tennesseans across all ages in areas ranging from digital literacy to public speaking, from elder care to personal and household financial management, and from precision farming technologies to enhancing the soil and water that sustains life. Having agents who specialize in agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, and 4-H youth development in every county provides an opportunity to go far beyond scratching the surface of each of those topics. We build relationships that take our education on those topics to the point of application for a better life.

In this report, you'll see snapshots and highlights of our impact from the last few years. The scope and capacity of UT Extension are growing, and I am proud to share this information with you, our stakeholders. We sincerely appreciate your support.

Justin Rhinehart
Interim Dean and Professor
UT Extension



WHAT IS UT EXTENSION?

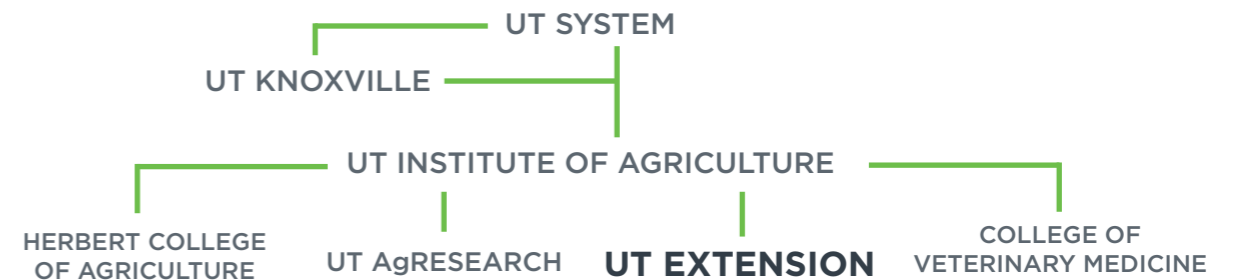
Across the state, UT Extension improves the lives of Tennesseans. We provide Real. Life. Solutions. to your family, friends, and neighbors, whether they are farmers and food or fiber producers, foresters, nursery growers, business owners, parents, or youth.

The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 established a national network of agricultural and family and consumer sciences agents, but Extension at the University of Tennessee started a few years before that with about fifty employees working in rural parts of the state when they were officially organized in 1914 under the UT Division of Extension.

UT Extension now includes nearly 900 specialists, agents, and staff spread across all ninety-five counties. Our people share research-based knowledge about agriculture and natural resources, family and consumer sciences, and economic and community development. Thanks to funding provided by the Tennessee General Assembly and Gov. Bill Lee, UT Extension has an agent in every county dedicated to 4-H Youth Development. Tennessee's 4-H program has the largest membership in the country.

About half of the counties in the state have both UT Extension and Tennessee State University (TSU) Cooperative Extension agents. UT and TSU are the state's two land-grant institutions, meaning that they operate under the Morrill Land Grant Acts of 1862 and 1890, respectively.

Units that operate under the UT Extension leadership structure include the Center for Profitable Agriculture, a partnership with Tennessee Farm Bureau; Tennessee RiverLine, through a partnership with TVA; and the Soil, Plant and Pest Center.



The UT Institute of Agriculture is made up of four units, that span multiple departments and a School of Natural Resources. Each unit houses UT Extension faculty who function as subject matter specialists supporting statewide program delivery through our county offices.

In addition, many tenure-track Extension faculty specialists have joint appointments in UT AgResearch, the Herbert College of Agriculture, and the UT College of Veterinary Medicine—meaning that, in addition to their work educating the citizens of Tennessee, they also generate new knowledge and teach undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of study in which they are trained.



2024 EXTENSION BY THE NUMBERS*

**As of June 2024*



MILESTONES



4-H Roundup Celebrates One Hundred Years

Tennessee 4-H youth and adult volunteers have been gathering for the statewide 4-H Roundup for more than one hundred years. Our 4-H program marked the one hundredth Roundup in July 2023 with attendees from all ninety-five counties. The first Tennessee 4-H Roundup, known then as State 4-H Club Camp, was held in 1923. A highlight of the event is when state 4-H project winners are announced at the annual awards banquet. Former participants often cite the opportunity to make lasting friendships while participating in cultural activities as the most memorable part of the event.

Lone Oaks Offers Education and Recreation

Children, families, and visitors find STEM learning opportunities, outdoor recreation, event venues, and more at Lone Oaks Farm in West Tennessee. The newest UT Extension 4-H Youth Development Center is located on the property's more than 1,200 acres of fields, farmland, woods, waterways, and lakes near Middleton. The state-of-the-art facility, opened in 2023, includes cabins, laboratories, gardens, and hiking trails to offer interactive learning experiences for K-12 students across the region. Lone Oaks is also internationally renowned for its shooting facility, The Clays, featuring sporting clays, skeet, and trap shooting and the Hunter Education Center for recreational and educational shooting and hunting sessions.



Center for Profitable Agriculture Marks Twenty-five Years of Added Value

What started in Knoxville as the Agriculture Development Center in 1998 to aid residents in developing a value-added enterprise on the farm became the Center for Profitable Agriculture and moved to Spring Hill in 2002. Later, it moved again to its current location in Columbia. The center is a partnership with the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation in cooperation with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Over the last quarter century agriculture has changed in Tennessee with the decrease in the number of farms and farmed acres but an increase in farmers markets, agritourism, value-added products, and direct sales from farms to individuals and retailers. Specialists at the center teach seminars, work directly with farmers, write publications, and offer programs and events.



UT Hopyard Connects with Industry

Tennessee's craft brewery industry is booming, and UT Extension is providing support to help it continue to grow. The new UT Hopyard at the East Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center Plant Sciences Unit opened in 2023. UTIA researchers and UT Extension specialists provide research data while demonstrating different varieties, production practices, and market preparation techniques. In 2024, Yee-Haw Brewing Company announced a partnership with UTIA and the creation of a fund to support hop production research and education.

Turfgrass Award

The UT Turfgrass Team won the national Excellence in Extension Team Award for its global impact and industry innovations. Presented by the US Department of Agriculture National Institute of Food and Agriculture (USDA NIFA), Cooperative Extension, and the Association of Public Land-Grant Universities (APLU), the award honors the team's excellence in research, technical assistance, and outreach education. Team initiatives include a certified lawn care professional program, an online weed identification app, and the TN Turf Tuesday series that provides continuing education during the growing season.





UT Extension offices are often the centerpiece of the county, and agents work hand-in-hand with local government officials and business leaders. You will find our agricultural and natural resources (ANR) agents working with farmers, agribusinesses, homeowners, and gardeners. Our 4-H Youth Development agents are in schools, teaching classes and leading group activities in the afternoons and on weekends. Family and consumer sciences (FCS) agents work with residents to help them find jobs, shop for and prepare healthy meals, save money, and live better lives. These are just a few examples of our impact around the state and in our counties and communities.

IMPACT AROUND THE STATE



FLOOD RELIEF EFFORTS

Hurricane Helene struck Tennessee on September 27, 2024, following days of heavy rain in the mountains. The result was catastrophic flooding that wiped out major roads and interstates, infrastructure for cities and towns, homes, and farms. The hardest hit counties were Washington, Carter, Unicoi, Johnson, Greene, and Cocke. Extension offices were damaged, and one staff member's home was destroyed. In the immediate aftermath, county agents went door-to-door with emergency workers and helped coordinate donation efforts. Specialists and staff created a website with extensive resources for homeowners, farmers, and producers. Soil scientists analyzed the thick layer of sediment and silt that covered farmland to help farmers make plans for their spring crops and published a fact sheet as guidance for farmers and producers. Damage to agriculture, forestry, and associated industries in Tennessee counties was estimated to be more than \$1 billion, and recovery will likely take many years.



GETTING ON THE SMALL SCREEN

Family and consumer sciences agents in Northeast and Southeast Tennessee have worked diligently to increase brand recognition through partnerships with local television. June Puett in Hamilton County and Lydia Hoskins in Sullivan County have been instrumental in securing television time for agents to provide education and marketing. This work has led to increased brand awareness in local counties. Rural counties are experiencing the most benefit as locals comment routinely on how proud they are to see their Extension agent on television. Since 2023, agents have appeared monthly on television and represented UT Extension well.



FIRE UP THE GRILLS FOR 4-H

More than 300 people attended the Eastern Region Grill Master Challenge at the Blount County office in Maryville to watch 158 4-H members from 21 counties compete in three different divisions. It was the largest Grill Master contest in the region's history. Of the forty-eight judges, many were members of the Blount County Highway Department, which provided the location and signage, coal disposal, and flag display.

YOUNG BIRDERS CLUB LEARNS ABOUT MORE THAN BIRDS

The Davidson County 4-H Young Birders Club, active since 2018, meets monthly during the school year on Saturday mornings at the Shelby Bottoms Nature Center. Members, which number between fifteen and twenty-five a year, learn bird identification and behavior, teambuilding, and citizenship. Each year, the group has taken on a different service project, which has included removing invasive plants, raising money for bird-safe windows, and putting on a bird conservation festival. Youth enrolled in this project group typically join 4-H Wildlife and Forestry Judging Teams. For the 2024-25 school year, this club moved from being agent-led to a youth-led club, matching the structure of Young Birder clubs throughout the nation.





FILLING A NEW ROLE FOR PERFORMING ARTS

The Marion County 4-H Performing Arts program was established in 2021 to help students across the community gain equal access to musical theatre and performing arts education. The program is open to all Marion County 4-H members in grades 7-12. The 2024 production was Irving Berlin's, *Annie Get Your Gun* and was held at Jasper Elementary School in April. The cast and crew consisted of students from six schools and several dedicated adult volunteers who worked diligently over five months to ensure this program reached its full potential. The support from numerous community sponsors and a total attendance of more than 1,000 community members over a span of four sold-out shows was not only overwhelming but also solidified the evaluated need for performing and creative arts education in the county.



THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM

During September's Suicide Awareness and Prevention Month, the team of six Family and Consumer Sciences agents in the Central Region addressed the elephant in the room, literally. The Elephant in the Room is a newsletter-based program, and in 2024, the focus was addressing stigmas and providing resources for improving mental health. Agents discussed how to have tough conversations, create boundaries, and manage work-life balance. They used a social media toolkit and offered in-person classes and workshops for county schools, Head Start programs, senior centers, and more, reaching people of all ages and backgrounds. One facilitator said after a program session, "I want to thank you for what you do. Lives were touched and most likely saved."



TRAINING THAT TURNS INTO JOBS

Several Central Region family and consumer sciences agents offer the Babysitting ROCKS program. In Trousdale County, agent Christen Newby-Hood hosted a two-day day camp for nine seventh- through ninth-graders. Through a partnership with a retired EMS volunteer, all participants were certified in CPR. Survey results indicated that hands-on activities, such as diaper changing and creating sensory bottles, were the most popular. Follow-up reports show that two participants have since earned income as babysitters. In Cannon County, a woman who previously completed the program in her youth now owns and operates a licensed daycare.

RIVERLINE SUMMIT SHOWCASES SUCCESSES

In February, the Tennessee RiverLine team hosted its 2024 summit at Pickwick Landing State Park in Hardin County, bringing together 140 partners and volunteers for workshops, networking, excursions, and the inaugural Awards Dinner. This event celebrated the outstanding achievements of RiverTowns communities and partners and provided opportunities to explore the river's cultural and natural heritage.



BUFFALO RIVER MARKERS

UT Extension Perry County and partner organizations created the Buffalo River Blue Way Project, adding GPS mile markers along all forty-two miles of the Perry County section of the river to assist first responders in accessing emergency situations. More than 130 markers have been installed on riverbanks and on all thirteen bridges.



GOING BIG FOR AGRICULTURE

Climb atop a million dollars? Several million, even. Sure thing! Students in McNairy County had the opportunity to climb in and take a seat in several pieces of modern farm machinery at their county's inaugural Ag Day event. Modern tractors with the latest technology and high-speed planters were on display, along with a round baler cotton picker with a price tag above a million dollars. UT Extension McNairy County hosted the event for Adamsville and McNairy Central High School's agriculture students at the new McNairy County Agriculture Event Center. The event highlighted the importance of agriculture to the county and West Tennessee and introduced students to various career opportunities in the agriculture industry. With the support of numerous sponsors, vendors, farmers, and volunteers, the event was a huge success for the 110 students attending.

INCREASING FINANCIAL LITERACY

Money Week is a financial education program introducing financial concepts through lessons and hands-on activities to first and second graders. In 2023, 2,019 students from twenty counties across Tennessee participated in the program. And the impacts are great: 86 percent increased financial literacy skills; 97 percent learned to count currency; 94 percent learned to manage money with spend, save, and share banks; 94 percent learned the difference between wants and needs; and 93 percent learned to better identify money values. Money Week is supported by the Tennessee Financial Literacy Commission.



SUPPORTING HEALTHY HABITS

Hancock County, the most rural Tennessee county with adult obesity rates over 40 percent, is participating in the High Obesity Program funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Hancock County Extension agents and staff planned a series of three Walk Across Tennessee events over eight weeks that were supported by the Tennessee HOP initiative, Be More Tennessee. Walk Across Tennessee is a team-based walking program that aims to increase physical activity in Tennessee. More than fifty county residents attended the kickoff event. They walked, participated in a variety of physical activities, and sampled fruit and salad grab-and-go cups, trail mix, and citrus-infused water to promote healthy eating and beverage consumption.



STATEWIDE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND OUTREACH



LIFE-SAVING TRAINING

Nearly 800 rescue personnel, farmers, producers, and UT Extension agents have participated in Tennessee Grain Bin Safety and Awareness Training since 2020, and it has already saved lives. The training is offered through a partnership between Tennessee AgrAbility and the Tennessee Association of Rescue Squads. The training fee is sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Farm Credit Mid-America, and the Goddard Family Memorial Endowment. Tennessee Farm Bureau offices in many counties and other organizations have donated more than \$217,000 in rescue equipment. During the training, participants learn about Hudson Corum, who died in a grain bin in 2018 while visiting his family's farm in Ethridge. Some of the first responders at that accident were among Lawrence County rescuers and farmers who participated in a 2022 training. About a year later, they rescued a farmer trapped in his grain bin and sinking fast into the dry corn. He was unharmed.



SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

For the third year in a row the Upper Cumberland Extension Team, consisting of eleven counties in the Central Region, has delivered a phenomenal program focusing on "Women in Agriculture." Why is this such an important audience? According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture for these eleven counties, there are 10,770 total ag producers with 3,737 (34.7 percent) being female. The 2024 event at Billbrey's Crossing in Overton County reached more than 220 females of all ages and backgrounds. Attendees included farmers, educators, and other ag industry professionals. The 2024 "Women in Ag Summit" agenda touched on many topics from farm stress and mental health to gardening, beef cattle production, food preservation, and a motivational push for women to become more active in leadership positions within the agricultural community. The Upper Cumberland Extension Team hopes that events such as this will equip women with the skills they need to meet the unique challenges and opportunities that come with being a woman in agriculture.

JOB TRAINING FOR TENNESSEANS

Skill Up Tennessee is UT Extension's SNAP Employment and Training program conducted in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. The program helps individuals gain the knowledge, skills, and industry-recognized credentials needed for good jobs. The program can cover costs of training and supportive services to help remove barriers for eligible participants. Since 2019, more than 3,000 people have signed up and more than 2,000 have participated at some level. There are two current pilot programs to help reach and equip individuals to take the next step on their career path. "Future Ready—Career Exploration Powered by VR" is a program recruitment effort to help individuals explore career opportunities they can pursue in the real world while potentially receiving support. Job Search Training helps individuals gain the skills needed to enter the workforce quickly. Plans are to roll both programs out statewide pending the outcome of the pilots.





FIELD DAYS AND GARDENS EVENTS SHOWCASE IMPACT

Nearly 40,000 farmers, gardeners, students, researchers and others visit UT AgResearch and Education Centers and the UT Arboretum for annual field day events. UTIA researchers and Extension specialists lead workshops and talks about their latest research related to row crop farming, livestock management and production, horticulture and gardening, sustainability practices, and more.

Milan No-Till at the AgResearch and Education Center at Milan marks the height of summer in July and recognizes Tennessee as the leader in no-till crop farming implementation. Attendance at the 2024 event in Milan included more than 1,200 visitors from forty-four Tennessee counties, eleven states, and six countries. Milan No-Till is held every other year, swapping out with the Summer Celebration at the West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center and UT Gardens in Jackson, which draws garden and lawn enthusiasts.

Many events and field days across the state are partnerships between UT AgResearch and UT Extension, and some feature assistance from Tennessee Extension Master Gardeners in various counties. More than 1,200 people participated in the 2024 Fall Gardeners' Festival at the Plateau AgResearch and Education Center and UT Gardens, Crossville. It was primarily organized by Cumberland County Master Gardener volunteers with assistance from UT-TSU Extension Cumberland County and UT AgResearch. UT Extension horticulture specialists gave presentations on a wide range of gardening topics.

Across the state in Jackson, Fall in the Gardens is a popular two-day event, featuring a plant sale and lecture series. Madison County Extension Master Gardeners help host the event, and members offer demonstrations on a variety of horticulture topics. Extension specialists and agents work with researchers and staff at the West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center to organize the event.

Similarly, the UT Gardens in Knoxville hosts several events throughout the year, including the Smart Yards and Friends Festival in August and Fabulous Fall Plant Sale in October. Knoxville County Extension Master Gardeners, Tennessee Smart Yards, UT Extension, and Tennessee State University Cooperative Extension hosted the Smart Yard and Friends Festival, which encourages the public to learn ways to enhance and improve the sustainability of their lawns, gardens, and property. Tennessee Smart Yards is an Extension-led program that guides Tennesseans on practices to create healthier and more ecologically-sound landscapes and communities.



Beef Improvement Federation's Research Symposium and Convention



International Diffuse Reflectance Conference



The Extension and Research Support Staff Association (TERSSA) Annual Conference

NATIONAL CONFERENCES COME TO TENNESSEE

UTIA hosted the fifty-sixth annual Beef Improvement Federation's Research Symposium and Convention in June 2024. Producers and industry leaders joined university faculty and Extension specialists from around the country and the world to learn more and network. A highlight of the convention was a tour to a Hereford farm near Pikeville, the Plateau AgResearch and Education Center in Crossville, Sweetwater Valley Farm in Philadelphia, and an Akaushi farm in Louisville.

Experts and industry leaders from more than twenty countries and various states attended the twenty-first International Diffuse Reflectance Conference in Knoxville. The 2024 event highlighted the vibrant community within UTIA and showcased advancements in diffuse reflectance spectroscopy through insightful keynote speakers and a diverse technical program. The 110 attendees engaged in discussions and networking opportunities, reinforcing Knoxville's role as a hub for innovation in the field. Plans for the next conference in 2026, also in Knoxville, were announced, promising another inspiring gathering.

The Extension and Research Support Staff Association (TERSSA) held its annual conference in Pigeon Forge in 2024. TERSSA includes members from twelve states and fourteen universities. At the 2024 conference, Ashley Mike, who works in Extension administration, won the Award of Excellence, and Cindy Winchester, business manager at the Clyde York 4-H Center in Crossville, won a professional development scholarship. Trudi Neubeck, the president of TERSSA and administrative specialist for 4-H, was awarded the 2023 Above and Beyond the Call of Duty Award. The 2023 Executive Board Award was presented to Winchester, and Jennifer Stewart of UT Extension Humphreys County received the 2023 Professional Scholarship.



GEORGE MCDONALD

If you have eaten a watermelon from Kroger or purchased Chattanooga Whiskey, there is a good chance you have already experienced some of what one Tennessee farm, Catesa Farms, has to offer. George McDonald, owner and operator of that exceptional farm, was named the 2024 Tennessee Farmer of the Year. Catesa Farms—which is located some 50 miles northeast of Nashville in the community of Riddleton, Tennessee—grows more than 9,000 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat, milo, hay, watermelons and strawberries. The Tennessee Farmer of the Year is chosen after a detailed and rigorous application process coordinated by UT Extension and the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation. McDonald also won the award in 1996.



FARMER OF THE YEAR

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR

UT Extension is a great place to work! The International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) named UT Extension as its 2023 Employer of the Year. This award recognizes employers with a workplace culture that strives to realize the full potential of administrative professionals and encourages their professional and personal growth.





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Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and County governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.