

MTSU School of Agribusiness & Agriscience

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Stories and Pictures by ABAS Faculty, Staff and Students

2012-13 Was a Great Year for ABAS

Warren Gill, Director
MTSU School of Agribusiness
and Agriscience (ABAS)

This has been a great year for the Ag School at MTSU!

Highlights:

- A \$25,000 gift from Linda Towry Overton for a Scholarship Endowment. It was special, not only because it will help students for many years to come, but also because she made a fantastic speech at the Ag Banquet. The highlight was when she credited the Super Bowl's Paul Harvey / Ram Truck Commercial for influencing the gift. This commercial is a really big deal in Ag Circles – we are probably going to market off it quite heavily.
- The International Program has continued to grow, with one class in Argentina already done and another one planned. Dr. Tony Johnston has also led students to Canada, Honduras and is planning another Argentina trip and the crown jewel is Europe this summer, including France, Germany, Belgium and

Holland.

- I think our outreach into high schools is more complete than anyone's (except the athletic department. Our dual credit program is still going great – we teach 3 courses: Greenhouse mgmt., Ag Business and Ag Leadership. We're in 42 high schools. Alanna Neely runs the program. She's special in her own right. She is director of this program, one of our most popular teachers and she is working on a Ph.D. (she just successfully defended her Dissertation, so will soon be Dr. Vaught (she also got married so is going to change her name when she gets the doctorate).

- We also host youth numerous events at the Miller coliseum and the Tennessee Livestock Center. We did a sheep shearing school last weekend – covered by RFD-TV. Junior Beef EXPO is coming up in July at the Livestock Center, and a large 4-H regional horse show is coming up soon at the Miller.

- We've started teaching Ag classes at the new MTSU Satellite campus in Shelbyville. Coming up we are also going to offer classes at the Motlow Campus in Fayetteville and McMinnville, but our biggest news is that we have been approved to hire a person to work with Dr. Gardner to implement an Ag Business Program in Lewisburg.

- Speaking of new positions, we are in the process of filling a new Faculty position. It is for Agronomy / Sustainable Agriculture and we've hired Song Cui, originally from China who got his Ph.D. from Texas Tech for the position.

- The agronomy position plus the Ag Business position means we've added two faculty lines in one year. Not very glamorous for your purposes, but to an administrator like me, it is very important. Probably linked to the fact that our enrollment increased for the 6th year in a row – I doubt many other departments can say that.

- Dr. Ricketts' coast to coast trip powered only on Sun and Water was one of the most visible accomplishments of the School of Ag ever!

- Tim Redd retiring is not a highlight, but dedicating the Ag Banquet to him was pretty special. Possibly why we had such good attendance, over 150. Senator Tracy and Representative Carr read a Joint House / Senate Resolution in his honor.

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Cooperation between MTSU Faculty, Vanderbilt Researchers and UT-Extension Results in Gene Marker Breakthrough

One of the most interesting developments in 2012-'13 was a partnership effort between Dr. Jessica Carter, Dr. John Haffner and Dr. Warren Gill from MTSU with Dr. James West from Vanderbilt and John Bartee, UT Extension Director from Montgomery County. *This is an excellent example of collaboration: MTSU personnel have the cattle expertise; Vanderbilt people have the technical ability for sophisticated gene analyses and UT Extension has the problem that needs solving (and a STEM High School Class.*

Warren Gill identified the problem (copper deficiency / mineral imbalance causing serious health issues) based upon extensive work he conducted from 2000 – 2007 while at UT. Carter and Haffner assisted with planning and implementation.

Vanderbilt personnel, led by Dr. West, bring the expertise and sophisticated laboratory equipment to read and analyze complex genetic arrays. John Bartee has worked with Gill on the mineral issue for more than a decade, so he has the ideal cattle situation in his county for doing the work. He is also the coordinator of a High School STEM / Ag program that is allowing participation by 20 enthusiastic young people in every aspect of the project.

Results so far are intriguing, with the initial trial revealing 4 genetic arrays linked to enzyme systems related to genetic propensity to copper deficiency. There was, as a side benefit, a species of skin fungus that is highly predictive of copper deficient animals. The current plan is to patent the process and continue this work with larger numbers of cattle and other breeds.



Dr. Haffner prepares to take liver biopsy for Copper Analysis



Dr. Gill explains the procedure to STEM students

2013 Ag Banquet Dedicated to Tim Redd

Over 150 students, faculty, parents and friends attended the 2013 Ag Awards Banquet held at the Community Center in the Lane Agri-Park. Senator Jim Tracy and Representative Joe Carr read a Joint House / Senate Resolution honoring Tim Redd, who retired as farm director in February, after 32 years of service.

A major highlight of the event was the awarding of nearly \$28,000 in scholarships to 26 deserving students. Scholarships included a new endowment funded by a \$25,000 gift from Linda Towry Overton honoring her late parents, Billie and Burton Towry, of Lincoln County. It was special not only because it will help students for many years to come, but also because she made a fantastic speech at the Ag Banquet. The highlight was when she credited the Super Bowl's Paul Harvey / Ram Truck Commercial for influencing the gift. [see attached photo of Linda Towry Overton and Burton and Billie Towry, l-r]



Two students were also first time recipients of scholarships awarded in memory of Mr. Paul Cantrell, retired MTSU

Dean of Students. [picture: Bradley Coppinger, Anne Cantrell, Alvin Jensen]



Sponsors for the event were Tennessee Farmer's Co-op and the Rutherford County Farm Bureau.

Tim Redd:

I've only met a couple of people in my lifetime whose broad and deep understanding and genuine honesty made me trust everything they told me.

Tim Redd is one of those people.

A man whose advice and friendship I value greatly

A man who is just as comfortable talking with a university President or a corporate CEO as he is with a student

A man who treats both with the same genuine respect

A man who is genuine, the same person every day, in all situations-what you see is what you get.

A man whose great talents are only exceeded by his enormous compassion and willingness to help others

A man who will be sorely missed by students, faculty, staff, and administrators at MTSU

Tim, thank you for setting a wonderful example of a life well lived and may God bless every day of your retirement as you blessed us every day you worked at MTSU.

I regret that I cannot be at the Ag banquet to celebrate with you and your family and friends today. Thank you for being my colleague.

'Unsung hero' Ricketts receives Silver Column Award

April 30, 2013 By MTSU News and Media Relations

Dr. Cliff Ricketts' five decades of alternative fuels research and exemplary classroom teaching have been acknowledged in a special way by MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee.

McPhee surprised the 37-year MTSU School of Agribusiness and Agriscience faculty member today when he presented Ricketts with the President's Silver Column Award in a brief ceremony at the Vocational Agriculture Building on Lightning Way.

Ricketts becomes the sixth Silver Column Award honoree since the president established the award in 2004.

"We are what we are because of people like you," McPhee said. "The President's Column Award goes out to faculty, staff and employees who go truly beyond the call of duty, in bringing recognition to the university, or for unsung heroes.

"And I just consider you for years being one of our 'unsung heroes.' You just go about and do your job. You don't expect the cameras. You don't ask for anything other than a little support to keep your work going.

"I've watched you since I've been at this university do so much for our students, the relationship you have with our students, the ground-breaking research in an area so badly needed in our country with your fuel efficiency work and most recently, your travels around the country that have drawn attention to the university from all sources around the world."

Ricketts said he felt "so honored to receive this award," later adding, "we're here for the students. We need to do all we can to help them."

McPhee said that when selecting graduation speakers and President's Silver Column Award recipients, he is a committee of one.

"This is very, very special in that not everyone gets to wear this," he said, explaining that the pin's silver column accented in blue symbolizes the enduring columns of Kirksey Old Main, one of MTSU's four original campus buildings.

"This is for you, for quietly, behind the scenes, being an extraordinary person, an extraordinary professor and an incredible researcher in terms of the work that you're doing that's really going to change lives and be a major contribution, not only to the state, but the country."



Dr. Cliff Ricketts, left, and his wife, Nancy, laugh as she affixes the President's Silver Column Award pin to his lapel April 30. MTSU President Sidney A. McPhee, who presented the pin to the longtime educator and alternative fuels researcher, is at right. (MTSU photo by J. Intintoli)

Those attending the brief presentation included Ricketts' wife, Nancy; School of Agribusiness and Agriscience director Dr. Warren Gill; agribusiness and agriscience faculty member Alanna Neely; and College of Basic and Applied Sciences associate dean Dr. Saeed Foroudastan.

Neely told McPhee that she "owes a lot — 80 percent — to Dr. Ricketts" for helping her adjust from student to instructor to coordinator of the dual-credit program in the department. Ricketts said more than 30 of the department's former students pursued doctoral degrees.

Ricketts and his support teams have made back-to-back, 2,600-mile trips. In March, the journey was made without gasoline, using hydrogen from water separated by the sun, all processed on campus. In 2012, they used only 2.15 gallons of gas to complete the trip.

Ricketts' quests have generated phenomenal amounts of national and international news coverage.

This year alone, Discovery Channel Canada, RFD-TV, KABC in Los Angeles, Fox 5 in Atlanta, the Associated Press, United Press International and newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations and the Internet covered his expedition.

Ricketts has run engines on ethanol from corn, methane from cow manure, soybean oil and hydrogen from water, as well as operating a solar/electric truck and a vehicle that uses gas/ethanol/electric power and hydrogen from water separated by the sun.



MTSU professor Cliff Ricketts stands next to a sign showing gas prices at a Mobil gasoline station just off an I-40 west exit near Newberry Springs, Calif., on March 14 en route to Long Beach, Calif., and the end of a 2013 cross-country car trip without gasoline. (MTSU file photo)

A native of Mt. Juliet, Tenn., Ricketts earned degrees from the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and Ohio State University. He joined the MTSU faculty in August 1976.

Previous Silver Column Award recipients include:

- Dr. Judith Iriarte-Gross, MTSU chemistry professor, 18-year faculty member, director of the WISTEM Center and champion of the cause of recruiting girls and young women into science, technology, engineering and math fields.
- Sherian Huddleston, retired associate vice provost for enrollment services.
- Larry Sizemore, supervisor of ground services.
- Suma Clark, retired director of publications and graphics (now Creative and Visual Services) who now serves as a part-time web management team-project coordinator.
- The late Dr. Charles Wolfe, a distinguished folklorist, accomplished author and music historian and English professor.

To learn more about Ricketts' recent adventures in alternative fuels research, visit mtsunews.com/ridin-with-ricketts-2013.

— Randy Weiler (randy.weiler@mtsu.edu)



Kicking Off the 2nd Century of Agriculture at MTSU

On a beautiful September day, over 300 people showed up at the MTSU Experiential Learning and Research Center on Guy James Road to see the one-year-old dairy in action and hear a report of how well it has been working. They also saw:

- The new dairy calf barn had over a dozen new Holstein and Jersey Calves.
- The Student Gardens featured their fall selection – including Strawberries!
- The Apiary (honey bees) had plenty of new crop honey (and there is still some for sale in the Ag Building, Room 100)
- Alfalfa establishment and production
- The many new improvements on the farm were open for all

Pettus Read, Director of Communications for the Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation was the Master of Ceremonies. Guest speakers included our new Dean, Bud Fisher, and Tom Womack, representing the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. Another feature was a presentation by the Ag Student Government Official Spokesman, Boomer Harris, who told about the many things that had happened at the Center over the past year.

2013-14 Scholarship Award Recipients

We awarded 35 scholarships totaling nearly \$37,000.

Plus, HSC \$500 Moskivitz and \$2,500 Kitty Adam, so another \$3,000 (at least) totaling \$40,000

Adams FamilyKatlyn Currie
Adams FamilyAshleigh Nash
Ag Endowment.....Victoria Harrison
Ag Endowment.....Kendall Martin
Ag Endowment.....Kristina Patt
Alpha Gamma Rho.....Tyler Hobson
Billie & Burton Towry.....Haley Cobb
Boxwood Farms.....Kaylee Leydens
Catherine Ellington.....Ashley Hurst
Collegiate FFA.....Scott Moore
Dairy Science Club.....Rachel Leonard
Fowler and Ruth Nickle.....Regan Best
Hayden Memorial.....Emily Kopko
Heritage Farm.....Carrie Major
Hugh Burrum.....Sarah Aldred
Hugh Burrum.....Abby Womick
Paul Cantrell Agribusiness.....Bradley Coppinger
Paul Cantrell Agribusiness.....Alvin Jensen
Robert Alexander.....Travis Cauwels

Outstanding Senior Awards

**Robert A. Alexander Outstanding
Agribusiness Senior Award**
Lindsay Baker

Outstanding Animal Science Senior Award
Megan Pohl

**Sam Paschal Award for
Outstanding Horse Science Senior**
Casey Cox

**Theodore C. Bigger Outstanding Plant
and Soil Science Senior Award**
Ethan Swiggart

**B.B. Gracy, Jr. Outstanding
Agriculture Senior Award**
Dalton Pate

Ag Career Day Employers 2013

Double Star Bar Farms
Farm Credit Services Mid-America
HonorGuard Pest Management
Kroger Manufacturing/Heritage Farms
McBee Dairy Farm
MTSU, M.S. in Professional Science
NaturEscape
Neff Rental
Peace Corps
Rutherford County PAWS
Tennessee Farmers Coop
Tennessee State University
The Davey Tree Expert Co.
Tractor Supply Company
Tyson Foods
USDA/Natural Resource Conservations Service
UT Extension
Weed Man

ABAS Scholarship Applications Online

Scholarships in the School of Agribusiness & Agriscience are available to students majoring in some phase of Agriculture. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of specific requirements of the donor, academic performance (grade point average), financial need, and student involvement in extracurricular activities. Upperclassman applications **DUE March 1** and Freshman applications **DUE April 1**, annually.



Meet the MTSU Farm Lab Staff

Because the Farm Lab staff are such an integral part of the School of Agribusiness and Agriscience, we would like to introduce you to them and explain what they do. There are six members of the Farm Lab Team, each assigned to a specific area of expertise; but at any time they can be found helping each other out as needed. All staff are assisted by student labor, without whom their jobs would be impossible. The real products produced by ABAS Farm Laboratories are the experiential learning that occurs and the good work ethic that is developed.

Tim Redd is the Farm Lab Director. He does everything, which includes teaching a class most semesters (e.g. Field Crops, Swine and Dairy Production, Dairy Product Evaluation, Milk Processing). He is on top of and completely involved in every aspect of the Farm Labs activities. For example, he can be found in a tractor or under it doing repairs, instructing classes on artificial insemination, operating the separator in the milk processing lab, or conducting artificial insemination on honey bees. Not to mention all of the administrative details and representing the university with tours and presentations. In a third party audit of our farm laboratory program, it was stated that Tim got more out of his staff and accomplished more with less money than other programs.

Dan Troup is the Field Crops Manager. His responsibility is to provide the majority of the food for the livestock, as well as to conduct special university or industry-lead research projects and test plots for seed development. He prepares fields, plants, harvests and maintains the equipment for corn, soybean and hay production. He is certified for spraying pesticides and herbicides. This past Fall he participated on the Dairy Product Evaluation Team as a graduate member. He won first place in both Ice Cream and Cottage Cheese.

Daniel Boyer is the Beef and Swine Herdsman. A small herd of goats have been added to his responsibilities. Daniel is very involved in the Livestock Management classes that are held year

round during Fall, Spring and Summer sessions. Most of the livestock research projects are conducted on the beef and swine, which keeps him constantly involved with the ABAS students, faculty and often industry personnel. School tours and presentations are part of his regular schedule. He and his students also give a hand in the hay field, milk processing plant, bee apiary and even the garden plots.

Jason Tanner is the Dairy Herdsman. He is responsible for approximately 100 head of Holstein and Jersey dairy cattle, including one that is fistulated. A fistulated cow is one that has had a port implanted through the cow's side to have access to the cow's stomach. The purpose is for digestion research. Most of the preschool, grade school, home school, YMCA, and Boy and Girl Scout tours take place at the dairy. Spring and summer of 2010 brought 471 children touring the MTSU Dairy. Jason also participated as a graduate member on the Dairy Product Evaluation team. He won first place for Yogurt.

Ralph Smith is the Assistant Dairy Herdsman. The cows are milked twice everyday at 3am and 3 pm, and then there's the feeding, animal husbandry, maintenance, ABAS classes and research, tours, Farm Days, FFA involvement (high school and collegiate), and Judging contests. Since Ralph came to MTSU Farm Labs with invaluable dairy-ing experience and is well ingrained in

Thank You!

The MTSU Farm Labs staff would like to acknowledge all of the support received from the university, alumni, industry and community—Thank You!

the Agriculture community in Rutherford County, he is a tremendous asset.

Liz Troup is the Milk Processing Manager. The MTSU Milk Processing plant is the only university educational facility left in the state. We pasteurize and homogenize the milk from the Dairy Lab for use in the dining facilities and daycare on campus. Classes such as Milk Processing and Marketing utilize the Milk Processing Plant for student hands-on application during actual processing. Other class application involves lab exploration into making butter, cheese and bacteriological sampling. Randolph and Associates, a food and dairy consultant firm out of Birmingham, Alabama, utilizes the plant as a demonstration model during their Pasteurization and Sanitation workshops. These workshops expose MTSU to the dairy processing industry across the nation. Liz assists with the Dairy Product Evaluation team in sample preparation, and participated as a graduate member in which she won Cottage Cheese. She is also involved with the Beekeeping courses, maintaining the MTSU apiary, and of course providing chocolate milk for tours and presentations.

MTSU Farm Labs Educate the Public

In addition to the daily operation of the farm units, the Farm Lab staff stayed busy last year providing educational outreach to both the local community and the agricultural industry. The annual audience reached by the MTSU Farm Labs staff exceeds **5,000 people**, and that's not counting the ABAS students who work on and utilize the farm laboratories for class experiential learning.



Block & Bridle Club Update



The MTSU Block & Bridle Club had a successful year. Four members participated in the Academic Quadrathlon competition that was hosted by the University of Florida during the American Society of Animal Science Southern Section meetings held February 2-5, 2013 in Orlando, Florida. The students participated in four contests as part of the quadrathlon: written exam, laboratory practicum, quiz bowl and oral presentation. The team placed 1st in the presentation category, 4th in the written exam, and 4th overall. Twelve members attended the 93rd National Block & Bridle Convention that was hosted by Iowa State University on April 4-7, 2013 in Ames Iowa. MTSU placed 4th in the chapter website competition and Dalton Pate received 3rd place in the Outstanding Junior category.

Other annual activities included hosting the Little International Show, Preview Steer & Heifers Show, and MTSU Beef Camp.



Photo at the University of Florida: (L to R) Dalton Pate, Emily Kopko, Megan Pohl, and Boomer Harris

MTSU Farm Labs cont. from pg 6

The Farm Labs staff represents MTSU and the School of Agribusiness and Agriscience when they take MTSU students, equipment, crops, milk, livestock and bees to numerous events throughout the year, including: Ag Day on the Hill; Jr. Beef Expo; Beef Camp; 4H Fair; Beginning and Advanced Beekeeping; ABAS Field Day; Raiderfest; Aramark Sustainability Day; Leadership Rutherford; industry workshops; TN Youth Cattle Association; Bedford County Environmental Awareness; Farm Days at McFadden, Oakland's Mansion and Sam Davis Home; Mitchell Nelson Career Day; Science, Math and Technology Camp; June Dairy Day; Ag in the Classroom; National Dairy Product Evaluation Contest; state and county fairs.

In April the staff hosted agriculture students from Reaseheath College in England. The students were awarded a grant to investigate the food industry, and they chose Middle Tennessee. Since we had contacts with state regulatory and local industry, Tim Redd was able to schedule a very thorough and diversified tour. He arranged a presentation by John Sanford, TN Department of Agriculture Food and Dairy Manufacturing Administrator. He also organized tours of the MTSU Farm Labs, Kroger's milk processing plant Heritage Farms, Rich's Frozen Foods, LaVerne COOP, and Bonnie Blue goat dairy in Waynesboro. We were invited to reciprocate the visit, and our Dairy Science Club just returned from England in July.

My name is Keaira Crutchfield and I am True Blue



During my senior year at MTSU as an environmental science student I had the wonderful chance to study abroad during the 2012 summer semester for 3 months in San Ramon, Costa Rica. Numerous benefits include: having the time of my life, traveling internationally, volunteer at new local park, earn 12 hours of transferrable course credit, gain valuable connections, and participate in a internship at the Ministry of Environ-



ment. One important thing to note is that my tuition, housing, food, and travel costs were sponsored through scholarships from MTSU study abroad program, USAC (study abroad program I enrolled with), and University of Las Vegas, Nevada (host school).

My internship at the Ministry of the Environment was my first professional work assignment in my field. Which gives me work experience before graduating. My specific job duty was to organize files of all people who were charged of an environmental crime. I had to compile the pertinent information in an Excel file. Then, I had to analyze, interpret, and make graphs, charts, and statistics about matters such as: the most common environmental crime, the crimes that are increasing/ decreasing, number of repeat offenders, and offenders that have the same name as another offender. The Ministry of Environment wanted to use this information to see the areas that have the most environmental crimes. The data gathered would be used to help them decide what crimes and areas need more attention. A report was written about my findings in order to seek more funds for the department.

Study abroad has completed my college experience from gaining new friends, boosting my resume, and to working in my field. I encourage everyone to look into study abroad options, as it is a mind opening and very rewarding opportunity. It offers unique benefits to every individual that participates.

International Agriculture

The MTSU School of Agriscience and Agribusiness (ABAS) has gone international! For the past two years, Dr. Tony Johnston, agribusiness professor, and his students have made annual trips to Canada, Honduras and Argentina to study Wine Appreciation and International Agriculture. Students travelled to France, Belgium, Holland and Germany in the summer 2013 session to study the International Wine Industry, and plans are being made to add Mongolia, Italy, Ireland and Mexico as well as other countries to the list of places Agriculture students can accompany ABAS faculty to for study abroad.

Our students greatly benefit from being taken outside the US to learn about the world-wide nature of agriculture, and based on comments from students who have been able to participate thus far, we can confidently state that these opportunities are life-changing events. ABAS Study Abroad helps us produce the best educated and most competent graduates possible to meet the global challenges we face in Agriculture today.



Courses Include:

Wine Appreciation, ABAS 2500

This on-campus class includes an optional 4-5 day trip to the Niagar-on-the-Lake region in Ontario, Canada. The class is a designated EXL course and the trip includes visits to Niagara Falls, Canada, and Niagara College.

International Wine Industry, ABAS 3200

Taught entirely outside the US, this course focuses on the international nature of the wine business today. Tours of wineries and lectures by international wine company executives highlight the highly competitive market for wine.

Wine was one of the first agricultural products traded and continues to be traded today. Students not only learn about the types of wines produced internationally, they also learn about the cultures associated with wine in the countries visited.

International Agriculture, ABAS 4190

This course is also taught entirely outside the US and is focused on the international nature of the food production system that exists worldwide. The exporting and importing of food products is a multi-billion annual dollar business that shows no signs of decreasing in value or demand.

Students also learn about the culture of the countries that export food products into the US and the rest of the world. It is only possible to successfully conduct international business by knowing the cultures with which you are working.

Bahamian higher ed officials tour MTSU for university ideas

The chairman and secretary of The College of The Bahamas Council, the governing board of that nation's public institution of higher education, visited MTSU in February 2013 to collect ideas and insights as the college prepares to become The University of The Bahamas.



Chairman Alfred Sears, a former education minister for The Commonwealth of The Bahamas, and Secretary Michael Stevenson said the delegation was most impressed with MTSU's "close relationship between industry and the university," as well as its shared governance with faculty, its priority on experiential student learning and the cohesion and shared vision on student success.

On Friday, the delegation toured MTSU's Guy James Agricultural Campus and the university's new dairy barn before leaving to visit the University of Memphis.

"Your emphasis on student-centered learning and student engagement are going to be two of the biggest things we are going to take home as lessons," Stevenson said.

"We were also impressed with the level of passion among your faculty and the attention and caring of the work being done by faculty and administrators on campus."

Liz Troup, milk processing manager for the MTSU Dairy, explained the facility's operations to a contingent of visitors from The College of the Bahamas Council during the group's campus tour.

MTSU's agriculture programs caught their eye since most of The Bahamas' food supply is imported, Stevenson said.

Dr. Warren Gill, chair of MTSU's Department of Agribusiness and Agriscience, said the university's recently completed dairy barn caught the eye of the delegation members.



"I think they got the lesson that our focus is on student-centered learning," Gill said. "There are very few ways to better learn animal science than hands-on learning."

Dr. Bud Fischer, dean of the College of Basic and Applied Sciences, said MTSU faculty stressed student engagement and community outreach to the visitors.

"We spent time talking about how to engage students in learning about agriculture and their ability to make a living in agriculture," he said.

MURFREESBORO — The MTSU Student Farmers Market will be open from noon to 3 p.m. Friday, June 21, at the Horticulture Center on Lightning Way across from the Tennessee Livestock Center. The event is open to the public.

MTSU School of Agribusiness and Agriscience

"Hands-on" Learning Is Our Highest Priority

- Over half our classes involve the horse science or farm laboratories.
- 750 acres are farmed by our students.
- Students are directly involved with managing the horse barn, the beef and swine units, the dairy/dairy calf barn, the milk processing plant, the garden/nursery/greenhouse areas, the farmer's market, the apiary, and row crops.

What Our Students Say

- 94% rate MTSU Agribusiness and Agriscience as excellent.
- 97% say that MTSU Ag faculty are "friendly, open, and supportive."

What Our Students Do

- They are involved in organizations: Agricultural Business Society, Alpha Gamma Rho, Block and Bridle, Dairy Science Club, Horseman's Club, Plant and Soil Science Club, Pre-Vet Club, Sigma Alpha, Student Ag Government Association.
- They compete for individual and team honors on the Equitation Team, the Horse Judging Team, the Livestock Judging Team, and the Dairy Products Judging Team.
- They do research. Graduate students in the Horse Science program and many undergraduates are involved in research and present papers at university, regional, and national levels.

Middle Tennessee State University

School of Agribusiness and Agriscience

www.mtsu.edu/abas

**Agriculture Feeds the World.
We Take You There.**

MTSU Ag students and friends can visit (often as a class or part of a class) the following countries: Argentina, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Holland, and Honduras (so far).



**MIDDLE
TENNESSEE**
STATE UNIVERSITY

Programs of Study

Agribusiness
Plant and Soil Science
Animal Science
Animal Science
(Horse Science Concentration)
Animal Science (Pre-Vet)
Agricultural Education Certification

2013 Agricultural Outlook Forum held in Arlington, Va.

Robin Avison was among 30 students from across the country selected by U.S. Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack to attend the 2013 Agricultural Outlook Forum held in Arlington, Va. February 21 and 22. Students from universities all over the nation submitted essays on the subject of "Agriculture as a Career" for a chance to attend the forum free of charge. The USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum Student Diversity Program is designed to expose students to contemporary agribusiness, future trends, scientific research, and agricultural policy in today's real world environment.

The first two days of the Student Diversity experience concentrated on taking the student finalists to various USDA agencies around the DC, Maryland and Virginia areas to tour the different USDA facilities. These facilities offered aspects of USDA career possibilities which included agricultural economic options, as well as various laboratory and field research facility experiences.

Experiential learning presentations on these field tours repeatedly emphasized the importance of student internships and was the central theme of all of the instructional programs to which we were exposed. They stressed how the internship experience provided the student with an opportunity to "test" a selected career prior to graduation. As more students are entering the field of agriculture from non farming families, internships are now vital for students with limited rural/agricultural background. Many internship opportunities are available through the USDA. They may be found at WWW.USAJob.gov by typing in "Internship".

The final two days for the students were spent in attendance at the USDA Annual Outlook Forum: Managing Risk in the 21st Century. This forum opened with the keynote address from USDA Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, and opening remarks from former Senator Thomas Daschle. Tom Vilsack had this to say regarding the new generation of students graduating from the nation's agriculture schools in his opening statements:

"In the years ahead, a new generation of food and agricultural professionals will play a key role in solving the major challenges before us." "The Outlook Forum will give these students the chance to hear from leading government and industry voices on a broad range of topics, opening and expanding their opportunities to excel in agriculture-related fields."

Not surprisingly the sessions for this forum were largely related to the impact that last year's drought will have on the future of our economic status locally and globally. Genetic modification implications for drought protection for future incidents

were hot topics of debate and last but not least, several plenary sessions were offered on the "food safety revolution" in light of all of the recent contamination incident's resulting in large scale sickness and product recalls.

To conclude, I promised Dr. Harry Baumes (see picture) I would come home and emphasize to our agricultural teachers and mentors, the importance of working with their students on the pursuit of internships during their academic time in school. The USDA stated that there is now a trend that employers require that a prospective applicant have at least one internship included within their resume when applying for a position within their establishment. This is already a mandatory requirement for USDA job applications.

I'd also like to add that, USDA contest aside, I think that this conference is something worth trying to send an MTSU agriculture student to annually. Maybe we can obtain sponsorship through a local business as a banquet award for a Junior who can attend in their Senior year (since the conference runs every February). It's an absolutely invaluable student experience and would provide the lucky candidate a wonderful networking opportunity.

I'd also like to thank Drs. Gill, Downs, and Kym Stricklin at MTSU for assisting me in the essay preparation for the USDA competition with such a tight time frame.

The student Outlook Forum would also not be possible this year without the sponsorship of the USDA's Office of the Chief Economist and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture launched the program in 2007 with support from CHS Inc. and Farm Credit. Sponsoring corporations and USDA agencies include: CHS, Inc. and Farm Credit; USDA's Agricultural Research Service, Economic Research Service, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Respectfully submitted by Robin Avison
13th March 2013

Close encounters: MTEC class lets students experience walking horses

Students from Middle Tennessee Education Center visited the grounds of the Tennessee Walking Horse National Celebration Wednesday and had a chance to meet Shelbyville's signature horse up close and personal.

The trip was part of Dr. Warren Gill's "Agriculture in Our Lives" annual curriculum. The class is now offered at MTEC in Shelbyville, a satellite campus of Middle Tennessee State University.

Gill has been teaching the elective class for years, and the Celebration is always a regular stop for his students.

'Real world' look

"This class helps them find out exactly how the real world of agriculture works," Gill said. "We come every year."

Gill, who has box seats at the Celebration, said his class is a win-win for students as well as MTEC.

With Shelbyville being horse country, he says his class attracts several local students who might not otherwise utilize the satellite campus.

"I want to see this program work," he said.

CEO joins group

Mike Inman, executive director for the Celebration, gave the students a tour and had four horses on hand to demonstrate the breed's versatility, a mare and her colt, a country pleasure mount, and a performance stallion. He first showed the baby, which walked alongside its mother with a distinctively long stride in its hind quarter and a head shake unique to the walking horse.

"This is bred into the horse," he said. "If you're not a walking horse, you can't be taught how to do this."

He explained trainers then develop and build on the natural gait.

Inman spoke to the breed's versatility, saying the walking horse makes a phenomenal trail horse, as well as pleasure horse. Those with the athletic ability become show horses.

Young and old

The Celebration, which will celebrate its 75th anniversary this

year, also attracts a variety of competitors of the human like. Last year, the youngest competitor was six and the oldest, 91.

"That shows the flexibility we have at our horse show," he said. Gill told his students he's a fan of both the show and the horse.

"These animals are athletes," he said. "They are supremely conditioned to get to this point."



Test drives

Several students had the chance to jump in the saddle and try out the horses, including Kate Ellis, who rode the performance stallion.

"She's riding him for the first time and she already looks like a pro," Inman said. "That's the versatility of this horse."

Inman also explained the shoeing process and showed students the pads and chains worn by many walking horses. The chains, which critics say are harmful to the horse, are just six ounces in weight and are used only as a way to stimulate the breed's natural gait, he explained.

Equestrian Team and Horse Science host young riders

Creating opportunities for young people to interact with horses, learn positive life lessons and view what college may have to offer was the purpose of the “Blue Raider Cup” held Dec 1st and 2nd at the Miller Coliseum. The MTSU Equestrian Team, Horse Science and Murfreesboro’s Team Need-a-Hand joined forces to host 7 middle school and 8 high school teams from OH, TN and GA for a weekend of competition and fun. The event was held under the rules of the Interscholastic Equestrian Association. Nearly 100 young riders competed for team and individual awards and they and their parents had a good look at the students, facilities and horses of MTSU. Team Need-a-Hand Coach and MTSU Alumna Courtney Smith said “This is a great opportunity for our kids to work with MTSU equestrian team members and learn how to host a competition in such a professional manner. Both the parents and our team members are thrilled with the outcome of the show.”

While our students and horses were helping the young riders prepare for and compete in the coliseum, Horse Science faculty were kept busy speaking with prospective students and their parents many of whom were not aware of what MTSU has to offer.



Ryder Gebhart from Murfreesboro gets ready to compete on MTSU’s Jay R with the assistance of Alumna Cristin Jordan and current student Clematris Jarrett at the Blue Raider Cup in the Miller Coliseum Dec 1st.

New magazine features horse science program, Murphy Center

The January 2013 edition of the award-winning MTSU Magazine is stepping high with a profile on the university’s unique Horse Science Program and its outstanding results in placing graduates in jobs in the horse industry.

MTSU, which has the only horse science program in Tennessee and added one of the nation’s first master’s degree options in 2011, is well-regarded throughout the South-east for both its equestrian teams and its equine education programs.

The magazine is also available online at www.mtsumagazine.com

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