

MTSU School of Agribusiness & Agriscience

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Stories and Pictures by ABAS Faculty, Staff and Students
Compiled by Dr. Warren Gill and Mrs. Janet Kelly
Revised and Published by Dr. Jessica Carter and Jessie Hartle

Thank You!

By Dr. Warren Gill

Alumni, students and friends of ABAS have been a large factor in saving our Farm Laboratories when budget shortfalls threatened their existence. It might be impossible to know all of the efforts made on behalf of the ABAS Farm Lab Program, but we know the following:

- Faculty developed excellent support documentation showing the key role the Farm Laboratories play in our educational programs.
- Alumni rallied with letters, e-mails, calls and websites through various organizations and obtained support from the AGR Alumni, the Farm Bureau, Ag Credit and Tennessee Farmer's Co-op, and Tennessee Dairy Processors Association.
- Representatives and Senators from

across the state, as well as the House Agricultural Committee Chair, Stratton Bone and Commissioner of Agriculture Ken Givens all showed strong support for the Farm Labs.

- The value MTSU places on students became more evident when they testified how ABAS and the Farm Labs were changing their lives in moving letters. Student Agricultural Council President, Jessie Hartle, and Vice-President, Chad Hardy, joined with ABAS faculty in a meeting with Dr. McPhee.

President McPhee, in his "Response to Oversight Steering Committee's Report..." said, "In reviewing the comments and feedback provided, along with meeting with the appropriate individuals, I have determined that this unit is an essential operation of our Agribusiness program and adds valuable experience

for our students in this area of study. However, the department must address the operational budget deficits in the area and move rapidly toward consolidating activities at the Guy James Farm."

Thanks to the support of alumni, students and friends and Dr. McPhee's fair evaluation of our program, we have won a reprieve for the Farm Lab program. We feel now is a great time to maintain the level of support we recently received by reviving the Agriculture Alumni organization. We take Dr. McPhee's challenge very seriously, and with your help, we can continue to make our consolidated Farm Labs more sustainable on the new farm location and focus on attaining an even higher level of student experiential learning.

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First Agribusiness and Agriscience Career Fair a Success

The first-ever MTSU Career Fair for Agriculture students including ten employers in plant and animal science positions as well as internships and graduate school opportunities, was a success. The four hour event kept the exhibitors occupied with a constant barrage of questions and a shower of resumes from more than 100

eager ABAS students. Many students, employers and faculty had an opportunity to visit and review individual resumes, offering assistance for specific needs. The Student Agriculture Council, the staff and faculty of the School of Agribusiness and Agriscience and the MTSU Career Development Center teamed up to present the fair.



Dr. Gill is interviewed during the 2009 Career Fair held in the SAG in March.

SPOTLIGHT

MTSU student **Jeffrey Turner** spent 2008-2009 as the **Middle Tennessee State Vice President** for the Tennessee Association FFA. Jeffery most recently spoke on the floor of the House Ag Committee during Ag Day on the Hill.

Involving and Recruiting through 2nd Annual Raiderfest



Caleb Hodges, State FFA Reporter, poses with students.

For the second year, Agriculture Student Council welcomed almost 75 high school agriculture students and FFA members from across the state to give them the opportunity to attend agriculture seminars, visit the MTSU Campus and tour some of the Farm Laboratories, as well as meet and greet with industry professionals, the MTSU ABAS faculty and student agriculture organizations. Games, contests, face painting and BBQ'ed food were followed by a great homecoming ball game.

SPOTLIGHT

Dr. Warren Gill, Dr. Jessica Carter, and Tim Redd secured a **\$32,500 grant** from the TN Dept. of Ag. with MTSU matching funds to investigate the effects of feeding balage to weaned calves versus traditional dry hay. A new hay wrapper and baler were purchased with funds for this grant. The research project was conducted last fall. Sixty calves from MTSU were placed on trial to determine if there are improvements in animal performance when consuming balage compared to hay.

MTSU Ag Enhancement Field Day Flourishes

"We showed new innovations to farmers in Middle Tennessee."

-Dr. Jessica Carter on the importance of Field Day

Approximately 200 people attended the first-ever field day on the new MTSU Agricultural Laboratory Farm on Guy James Road. Highlights included a haylage production demonstration and a tour of newly established native warm season grasses.

The Tennessee Department of Agriculture's Tennessee Ag Enhancement Program (TAEP) was featured, and The University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service was a partner in the event. John Hood, former State Representative and current MTSU Director of Community Engagement

and Support, kicked off the event by introducing Commissioner of Agriculture Ken Givens, who pointed out the important role of the millions of dollars that the Tennessee Ag Enhancement Program has played in improving Tennessee's ability to compete in the agricultural economy.

ABAS Alumni Survey Gives Important Insight

Recently, a questionnaire was sent to the ABAS Alumni in an effort to understand the opinions of our graduates. The responses we received play a pivotal role in shaping the future of our department. The thought process seems right on target, as many of the areas of suggested improvement have been considered

or are already being implemented. One respondent replied, "Is there any way to link college classrooms to high school classrooms? I would love to better prepare my students for the future by giving them a taste of what they might experience on the college level." To do just that is the aim of the new agriculture Dual Credit

course for high school agriculture students in Greenhouse Management. We hope to further take into consideration the helpful suggestions of our alumni. To review an entertaining summary of the responses, visit our website at www.mtsu.edu/~deptabas.

GET INVOLVED—We had our first ABAS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION Meeting April 30, 2009.....Would you like to be a part of this great association. Contact Dr. Warren Gill at 615-898-2404 or by e-mail at wgill@mtsu.edu

2008 MTSU Beef Camp Provides Outlet for Success

The 19th annual MTSU Beef Camp was held on June 11 – 14, 2008 at the Tennessee Livestock Center on Middle Tennessee State University's campus. Beef Camp was co-sponsored by the MTSU Block & Bridle Club and the Tennessee Cattlemen's Association. Additional sponsors included Tennessee Farmers' Co-op, and Tennessee Beef Agribition. MTSU Block & Bridle members organized the event and served as

camp counselors. Highlights for the event included a beef quiz bowl competition, clipping & grooming demonstrations, herdsman's quiz, livestock judging contest, and a showmanship contest. Fifty-three campers representing 18 counties in Tennessee participated. This year's Beef Camp is scheduled for June 10-13, 2009. For more information, contact Dr. Carter at igcarter@mtsu.edu.



Campers to MTSU's Beef Camp are all smiles.

Experimental Vineyard Sets MTSU Apart

Did you know that MTSU has an experimental vineyard? MTSU and the Rutherford County Agricultural Extension Office signed an agreement in 2005 that established the only joint TBR-UT system experimental agricultural venture in the state. 2008 marks the third year for the vineyard and the first in which fruit will be harvested. In light of

the severe drought experienced in 2007 and the significant lack of rainfall this year, fruit production this year is unexpected but welcomed. The fruit will be used in the teaching of a wine making class being offered by Dr. Johnston this fall. The vines can be seen from the road and everyone is encouraged to take a look when you have a chance!

The vineyard is located at the north end of the Rutherford County Agricultural Extension office land, at the corner of Gresham Lane and John Rice Boulevard in Murfreesboro.

Animal Science Student Makes ABAS History

Animal Science student Jordan Dawdy graduated in December as the first ABAS student accepted to the Ronald McNair Post-baccalaureate Achievement Program. The program is designed to prepare low-income, first-generation college students and students from underrepre-

sented groups in graduate education for doctoral level study. One aspect of the program is a summer of mentored and sponsored research. Jordan worked with our own Kevin Downs and Angela Mertig from the department of Sociology and Anthropology. His project, entitled *A Mystery On*

Our Plate: Beliefs About Agriculture From A College Peer Group consisted of interview surveys with MTSU students during the summer sessions. Jordan presented his findings at the McNair symposium in late July and in Delaware, Missouri, and the Social Science symposium at MTSU this fall.

SPOTLIGHT

Students taking ABAS 3130, **Agricultural Marketing and Price Analysis**, are picking up skills that will be valuable on the job market. Dr. Gardner and his students uses a commodity market simulator, *Tradesim*, a program that uses real-time commodity prices. "Just for fun, I give extra credit to students that wish to use the simulator to speculate in the commodities markets," says Dr. Gardner. "Last year one student made almost \$50,000 - too bad it wasn't real money."

Dr. Gill and Dr. Ricketts took 3 ABAS students to the Ag Day on the Hill in April. Dr. Gill spoke in front of the House Ag Committee about MTSU ABAS.

Plant and Soil Science Club Works on Vegetable Garden Project

In the spring 2008 Vegetable Gardening (ABAS 3660) course, students planned, grew transplants, and planted a large vegetable garden on the MTSU farm property. During the summer, members of the Plant and Soil Science Club maintained the garden. Produce from the garden was marketed to the campus community, and funds generated from the produce sales were used for Plant and Soil Science Club activities throughout the year. Interior and landscaping plants were also sold.



(top) The Vegetable Gardening class plants tomatoes. (left) Plant and Soil Science club members Nathan Marsh, Maggie Clissold, and Ryan Sheehan at the produce and plant sale.



The MTSU Agriculture Scholarship Program awarded \$9,000 in scholarships at the 2009 Agriculture Banquet to 5 ABAS students.

MTSU Reaches Out to Mongolian University

ABAS has helped develop a Master of Science program for the Mongolian Agriculture University in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. Working with Virginia Tech, Mississippi State and Mongolia V.E.T.Net, a development organization in Mongolia, MTSU has entered into an educational cooperation agreement for the purpose of enhancing the educational opportunities and experiences for students and faculty. The initial phase of this program has been the development of a series of courses designed for Mongolian veterinarians to

increase their awareness and understanding of modern veterinary medical information and techniques. The first 5 candidates were selected and began the program in September. This project is a result of MTSU faculty working in Mongolia over the past several years teaching and doing research on Mongolian horses. MTSU students have been instrumental in preparing educational material for the Applied Physiology and Introduction to Rural Practice courses. Dr. John Haffner leads this effort for MTSU.

SPOTLIGHT

This was the biggest year ever for enrollment in the **Agricultural Education Certification Program**. There were three student teachers in the fall semester and 11 in the spring semester. All the MTSU Ag Ed Alumni are appreciated for working with these student teachers as they are placed in 22 different high schools.

Ricketts's Alternative Research Continues

The alternative fuel research continues under the supervision of Dr. Cliff Ricketts. He has four major projects underway. The first is completing a converted Toyota Tercel that runs completely off hydrogen. The second research is hydrogen enrichment. A device has been added which separates the hydrogen and oxygen onboard and the two elements are with mixed with the gasoline. The third project is the conversion of a

Toyota Prius to a Plug-In Hybrid Hydrogen Fuel Cell Vehicle. This project is funded a grant from the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation. The fourth project is a MTSU ABAS developed solar/hydrogen electric vehicle. The concept is the same as the new Chevy Volt which will be marketed in a couple of years. Many outstanding ABAS students have worked in the development of these projects along with Mr. Ralph Bar-

rett and his associates. Partnerships with Tractor Supply Company, Bridgestone/Firestone, Valspar Paints, TVA, and HyPower Fuel are crucial and appreciated, as is MTSU-Sponsored Programs support. Tony Trout and Joe Borck of General Hydrogen provide tremendous technical support.



(above left) One of Dr. Ricketts's newly painted alternative fuel vehicles on display at the Career Show at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis, Indiana.. (above right) Dr. Ricketts discusses his projects with Jean Anne Rogers, candidate for state legislature, and Congressman Bart Gordon.

Dual Credit Course Flourishes

Agricultural Education at MTSU and the Department of Career and Technical Education has implemented a new Dual Credit Class in Greenhouse Management. This was powered by a \$157,000 grant written by MTSU Alumna and current faculty member Ms. Alanna Neely. The grant is with 13 schools in Middle Tennessee. Twenty-seven total schools are in the pilot involving a total of about 225 students. Students that take Greenhouse Management in high school can get college credit for a new class called Introduction to Ornamental Horticultural Sciences. Once these students come to MTSU, the credit will be activated on their transcripts.

SPOTLIGHT

The **MTSU Delta Tau Alpha** chapter will host the **DTA National Convention** in early spring 2011. This will be the first time the convention has been held at MTSU since 1992. Between 100 and 150 students and advisors are expected to spend 2-3 days on the MTSU campus during the meeting. The MTSU chapter will be spending an increasing amount of time planning and preparing for the event between now and then. All former DTA members are invited to return for this event and assist in the production of this exciting event. Contact Dr. Tony Johnston for details send a note to Johnston@mtsu.edu

2009 Agriculture Banquet Honors ABAS's Best

The annual Ag Banquet, organized by the Student Agriculture Council and the ABAS faculty and staff was held on April 11, 2009 at the Lane Agri-Park in Murfreesboro. Ms. Neely's Interior Landscaping class provided beautiful centerpieces for each table, and a well-crafted display in the entrance of the banquet hall. Banquet attendees had the honor of hearing from the President of MTSU, Dr. Sid-

ney McPhee. Block & Bridle was awarded the Foutch Cup, and Chad Hardy was elected Student Agriculture Council President.



(above left) Samantha Cobb, Ag Council Representative, with President McPhee. (above right) Jessie Hartle, 2008-2009 Student Agriculture Council President, turns her office over to Chad Hardy.

Dairy Products Judging Teams Are Best in the Nation

The dairy products judging team has been very successful during the past three years of competition. The 2006 and 2007 teams won the national competition. The 2008 team competed in two contests during the fall semester. The first contest was the Midwest Regional that was held in Chicago, Illinois on October 15, 2008. The team won the contest, placing as the high team all products. Thomas Koch was the high individual overall. Team members included Kevin Colvert,

Andrianna Jones, Thomas Koch, Lauren Johnson, and David Redmon. Jason Tanner competed in the graduate division. After winning the regional contest, the team competed in the national dairy products judging contest that was held in Newark, Ohio. The team placed fifth high overall and earned several individual honors including high individual in ice cream (David Redmon), 7th high in ice cream (Lauren Johnson), high

individual in yogurt (Thomas Koch), 3rd high in cheddar cheese (Thomas Koch), and 9th high in milk (David Redmon). Jason Tanner was the high individual in yogurt in the graduate division. The team was coached by Dr. Charles White, Tim Redd, and Liz Troup.

2009 Livestock Team Excels

The 2009 livestock judging team competed in two contests during the spring semester. Members of the team included William Bates, Hannah Carrick, Caitlin Hampf, Ashley Holbrook, Jessica Morgan, and Amanda Waller, and was coached by Dr. Jessica Carter. The team competed at the Dixie National in Jackson, MS and the UT Round-up contest in Knoxville. Jessica Morgan and Amanda Waller placed in the top five overall at the Round-up contest.

Collegiate FFA Successful

In late February, Collegiate FFA President Ashley Long organized her members for competition at the Tennessee FFA Alumni Convention at Montgomery Bell State Park. Kinsey Doss was named State Champion in the Agribusiness Interview contest. Jessie Hartle and Brett Butler placed 2nd in the Agriculture Professions and Agriculture Education interviews, respectively. Jonathan Black placed well in the Agriculture Production interview.

MTSU Students Excel in National Horticulture Competition

Middle Tennessee State University students from the School of Agribusiness and Agriscience traveled to Orlando, FL to participate in this year's competition against students from around the world. Three students, Ben Kelly, Josh Webb, and Justin Stefanski presented their undergraduate research in competition. Ben Kelly was awarded second place in the Research Poster competition with his poster, while Josh Webb's poster captured the 3rd place prize. In addition, the students from MTSU had a strong showing with 3rd place finishes in Floriculture (Ben Kelly), Nursery (Ben Kelly), and Commodities Judging (Josh Webb).

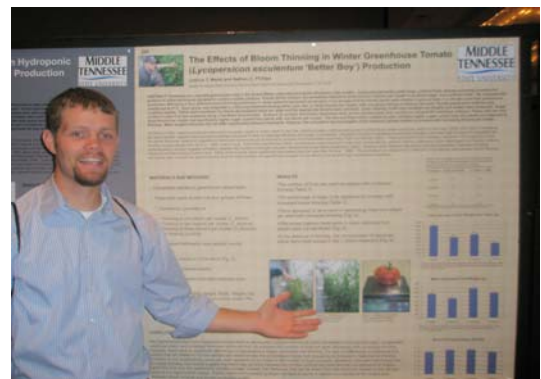
(top) Ben Kelly (middle) Josh Webb (bottom) Justin Stefanski



MTSU's DTA Stands Out

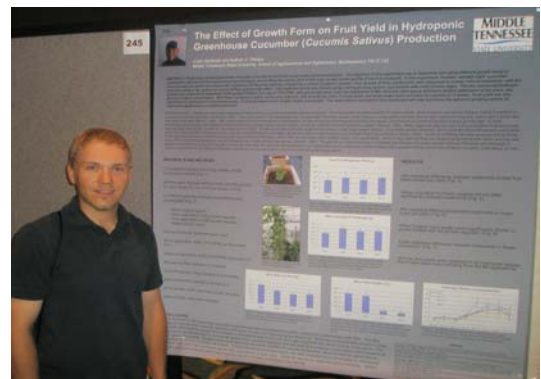
The MTSU Delta Tau Alpha Quiz Bowl team took home top honors in the 2008 competition at Ft. Hays State University. The MTSU delegation was flown to the 2008 National Convention in western Kansas by the MTSU Aerospace department on the MTSU corporate plane. Members of the club also enjoyed visits to beef feedlots and process-

ing plants, an airplane manufacturing plant, and Ft. Hays State Park while participating in the meeting. The 2009 National Convention is scheduled to return to Southwest Missouri State University for the 50th anniversary of the founding of the organization at the campus where it began.



SPOTLIGHT

The MTSU Collegiate FFA Chapter traveled to Indianapolis, Indiana for the 81st National FFA Convention. Dr. Ricketts, Ms. Neely and the collegiate members worked the TSC booth in the career show. TSC and MTSU partner every year at National Convention to promote Dr. Ricketts's alternative fuel research. Visitors from all 50 states came by the booth to get a glimpse of the vehicles, speak to MTSU students, play some games and learn more about our university.



Equestrian Team Dominates Competitions

The Equestrian team began the competition season with an excellent performance at the first two shows. The University of the South hosted two hunter seat shows the weekend of Oct 4th and 5th, and MTSU placed Reserve Champion Team on Saturday and Champion Team on Sunday. Winners for the Raiders were Freshman Demi

Potts, Sophomores Angela Smotherman and Megan Hephner, Junior Julianna Hackworth, and Senior Brittany Lehman. The biggest project of the year was hosting the IHSA National Championship Show April 23 – 26, 2009, where all the best riders and teams in the nation competed for championship honors in the Miller Coliseum.

MTSU Horse Judging Team Takes Top Honors in Texas

at the recent American Paint Horse Association Spring Sweep Stakes Judging contest. Competing in a field of twenty one senior teams the MTSU won three of the four divisions for a near clean sweep. Team members were Brittany Lehman senior, Mt. Juliet, Kristen Chandler junior, from Brentwood, Megan Hephner, sophomore, from Lexington, Ky, Matt McMurtrey, from Orlando, Fl, Samantha Cobb, sophomore, from Fayetteville and Bethany Woodall senior, from West Virginia.

Brittany won second high individual, Megan was fifth, followed closely by Kristen in ninth while Samantha placed sixteenth and Matt was seventeenth out of 118 contestants. The team placed first in conformation judging, second in performance judging, first in oral reasons to gain the top spot overall. Colorado State earned second overall followed by Sam Houston State, Kansas State and Virginia Tech. The MTSU team was coached by Dave Whitaker.

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MTSU teaches first Beekeeping course April 2-May 22, 2009, each Thursday and Friday evening. If you are interested in taking the next course, send Mr. Tim Redd an e-mail at tredd@mtsu.edu

MTSU Agribusiness and Agriscience Joins Tornado Relief Effort

MTSU School of Agribusiness and Agriscience students, faculty and alumni joined with the Tennessee Beef Industry Council, the Tennessee Cattlemen's Association, the Tennessee Pork Producers Association, the Tennessee Poultry Association, Farm Credit, Tennessee Farmer's Co-op, Purity, Rutherford Extension to grill about 800 sandwiches (hamburgers, pork chops and chicken breast fillets) to provide food for tornado relief workers.

Teb Batey (Rutherford Co. Trustee and cattle farmer) worked with Emergency Management in the County to arrange for county trucks to distribute the sandwiches.



Beth Jones (Alumna), Dr. Jessica Carter, Laura Rosser, Laura Harrington, Dr. Warren Gill, Kayla Lannom and Josh Howard all pitched in to help prepare food for tornado relief workers.

2009 State FFA Poultry Career Development Event was held on Saturday, April 25th on the MTSU campus. Eighty-four FFA high school students participated in poultry carcass, egg, and live bird evaluation classes. Twenty-one teams from the three regions of Tennessee participated with the winning team and high individual all from Cocke County. Dr. Kevin Downs, Animal Science professor coordinated the event.

If you need our assistance or want to send us a note, please send to wgill@mtsu.edu or check our WEB page: <http://www.mtsu.edu/abas/>

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Dr. Tony Johnston, Professor of Agribusiness
Dr. Patrick Kayser, Clinical Specialist in Equine Health
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