

# FARMERS' Quarterly

## ★ ★ ★ YOUNG PEOPLE IN AGRICULTURE ★ ★ ★



Caroline and brother, Samuel Webb, are fifth-generation farmers. Webb Farms' crops include wheat, corn and soybeans.

Photo by Caroline Webb

### Fifth-generation farmers *Siblings put own spin on family business*

By **AMY COBB**  
Kentucky Living Magazine  
Special to Farmers' Quarterly

Samuel and Caroline Webb's roots run as deep—maybe even deeper—in the Hickman County soil as the wheat and stalks of corn rustling in the spring breeze at Webb Farms. This brother and sister are fifth-generation farmers, cultivating a family tradition spanning more than a century on the same farmland purchased in 1899 by their great-great-grandparents, George and Stella Webb.

"It's always been a part of me," Samuel says, recalling childhood memories of working in the fields alongside their dad, Tommy, and grandfather, Thomas. At age 7, Samuel first drove a tractor; by 12, he'd mastered the combine. Not to be left out, then 10-year-old Caroline learned to maneuver

the tractor and grain cart. After high school graduation, Samuel became a full-time farmer—planting, harvesting and incorporating modern technology and precision farming into the operation, served by Gibson Electric. Caroline took a different path. She earned a health and human performance degree from the University of Tennessee at Martin and contemplated chiropractic school before ultimately deciding to join in at the family farm. In addition to wheat and corn, they grow soybeans and have diversified into canola.

"Everybody works long hours to make it happen," says Caroline. "It really is a family affair."

Even so, perhaps having inherited an entrepreneurial spirit from great-grandmother Opal—an innovative, early

see *SIBLINGS*, page A4

### UK study suggests maple syrup industry can greatly tap into and expand Kentucky's forest economy

By **Jordan Strickler**

Lexington, Ky.— Kentucky's forests, traditionally valued for their timber and recreation, could soon become a source of sweet economic opportunity, according to a new study conducted by researchers at the University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

The study, "Economic impacts of maple syrup production potential in Kentucky: Input-output analysis," published in *Forest Policy and Economics*, shows that maple syrup production has the potential to significantly boost local economies across the Commonwealth by creating jobs, supporting rural businesses and increasing tax revenues.

The study, supported by the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of

Agriculture, estimates that statewide maple syrup production has the capacity to circulate up to \$25 million each year, create more than 1,300 jobs and contribute roughly \$1.6 million in taxes once the sector reaches its upper projected potential.

Maple syrup, long associated with New England states and Canada, is made by collecting sap from maple trees — primarily sugar and red maples — and boiling it down into syrup. While the industry has thrived in northern regions for centuries, this study highlights the untapped economic potential of maple syrup production in Kentucky, thanks to the state's favorable climate and abundant maple trees.

"Kentucky sits at the southern edge of traditional maple syrup regions, yet our state has millions of acres of suitable maples that are largely untapped," said Thomas Ochuodho, associate professor of forest economics and

policy in the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, the study's principal investigator and co-author. "We wanted to explore what potential economic impacts tapping into this resource could have for our communities."

The multi-institutional research team across UK, Purdue University and U.S. Forest Service, analyzed data on tree density, sap yield, tapping season length and current market prices. Using those figures, the researchers modeled three levels of production potential — low, medium and high — then ran each scenario through economic impact modeling software to generate potential regional economic impacts, accounting for direct, indirect and induced impacts in an input-output analytical framework.

According to the team, the study's high range, roughly 1.4 million liters of syrup could annually enter the market, supporting jobs not only for producers in the woods and sugarhouses but also for suppliers, haulers, packagers and retailers whose businesses grow in tandem along the supply chain. Even the modest scenario, based on tapping a quarter of suitable trees, would still have the potential to support more than



Statewide maple syrup production has the capacity to circulate up to \$25 million yearly.

Photo by Steve Patton

see *STUDY*, page A4

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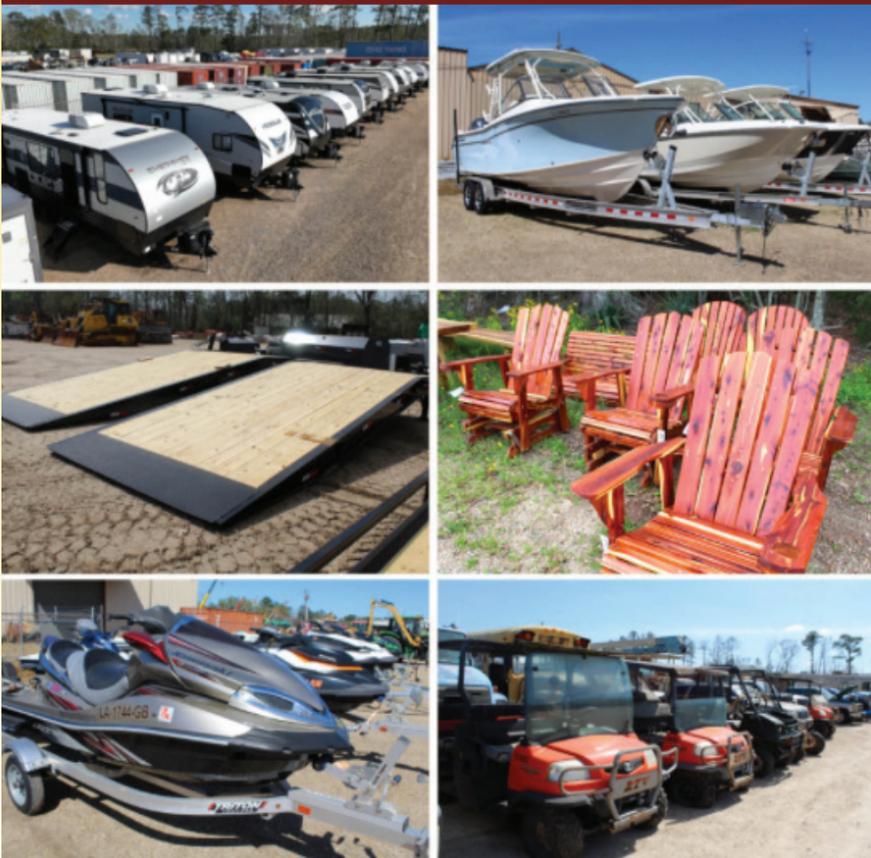
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# Commissioner Jonathan Shell announces new Kentucky Agricultural Economic Development Board



Commissioner Jonathan Shell

five members to serve on the inaugural Kentucky Agricultural Economic Development Board: Dr. Kenny Burdine - Dr. Burdine serves on the Kentucky

Agricultural Finance Corporation and will represent local economic development. He is an Extension Professor in livestock economics at the University of

Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food, and Environment. Lori Noel - Lori Noel serves on the Kentucky Agricultural Finance Corporation and will

represent specialty crop producers. She is the Executive Vice President and Chief Lending Officer at FNB Bank in Western Kentucky. Kevin Fields - Kevin Fields serves

on the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board and will represent livestock producers. He owns a cow-calf

see **BOARD**, page A7

FRANKFORT, Ky. — During the 2025 Regular Session, the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 28, establishing the Kentucky Agricultural Economic Development Board.

This board was created to strengthen and expand Kentucky's agricultural economy through strategic planning, targeted partnerships, and financial incentives. The board will administer programs, such as grants, forgivable loans, and revolving loan funds, to support infrastructure upgrades, market expansion, and value-added agricultural development. The overall goal is to attract private investment, create new economic opportunities, and uplift farming communities throughout Kentucky.

The creation of this board is the result of Commissioner of Agriculture Jonathan Shell's vision that "Agriculture is Economic Development." In 2024, Commissioner Shell conducted a statewide listening tour, hosting regional meetings with farmers, business leaders, and community stakeholders. The input gathered during those meetings shaped the priorities and design of this new initiative.

Commissioner Shell will serve as Chairman of the Board and will appoint the following

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Heirloom Acres at Webb Farms is a certified farm market owned by Caroline Webb. It is located at 485 Webb Road in Clinton. May's Greenhouse and Gift Shop hours: Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m.-5 p.m. CST; Sat. 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Photo by Deidre Webb

**SIBLINGS,**  
from page A1

1900s businesswoman who was a beekeeper and ran an egg delivery route—Caroline wanted a niche all her own. So, in 2021, she established Heirloom Acres, which has grown from a booth at the farmers market to two greenhouses, a garden center and a gift shop.

“There are different ways to incorporate agriculture into your family’s business,” says Caroline. Customers can purchase bedding plants—like tomatoes, squash and peppers—as well as hanging baskets of geraniums, petunias

and more. The gift shop features everything from seasonal items to home decor and women’s clothing.

Caroline was recently recognized with the Hickman County Chamber of Commerce Partner of the Year award. She plans to expand Heirloom Acres, saying, “It’s definitely taken off

and it’s growing, and I’m trying to grow with that momentum that I’ve got going right now.”

AMY COBB is the author of two book series for children, Band Geeks and Libby Wimbley. This story first appeared in the May 2025 issue of Kentucky Living.

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Webb Farms’ crops include wheat, corn and soybeans.

Photo by Caroline Webb



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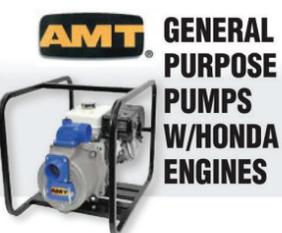
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**STUDY,**  
from page A1

300 jobs and generate \$6.2 million in economic output.

Where the process begins

The economic ripple starts with a winter harvest that leaves the forest standing. Sap is drawn through small taps placed in healthy sugar and red maples, then boiled until natural sugars concentrate into syrup. Because the same trees provide sap year after year, landowners gain a renewable revenue source that complements timber, livestock grazing and recreation without clearing additional acreage.

Kentucky holds more than 12.5 million acres of forest and maples rank among the state’s most common hardwoods. Most family woodlands already contain the resource. A relatively small investment in food-grade lines and an evaporator can turn an idle season into income while keeping tree cover intact.

“The beauty of maple syrup production is its sustainability,” Ochuodho said. “Unlike traditional timber harvesting, maple syrup production doesn’t require trees to be harvested, allowing forest owners to sustainably manage their land while still earning income.”

Ochuodho also emphasized the broader community benefits.

“Our research demonstrates a real opportunity for rural

communities to enhance their economic resilience,” he said. “When producers invest in maple syrup operations, local businesses see increased demand for goods and services, creating a positive economic cycle.”

National demand According to the study, the United States’ maple syrup market is currently valued at more than \$150 million annually, and consumer demand for natural, locally produced foods continues to rise. Kentucky producers would be well-positioned to supply local and regional markets where interest in farm-to-table and artisanal food products is strong.

Demand for pure maple syrup continues to outpace supply across the lower Midwest and South. Shoppers drawn to simple ingredient lists often pay a premium for syrup delivered by local producers; farm markets and specialty grocers routinely sell out before the next spring thaw.

The study suggests this gap presents an entry point for new operations: Kentuckians demand more syrup than the state produces. Moving even partway toward self-reliance brings money home, keeps woodlands working and opens doors for agritourism.

Climate questions often arise when syrup production migrates south of traditional hubs like Vermont and Quebec. Ochuodho

explained that red maples extend well below the 40th parallel, and Kentucky’s rolling topography delivers the freeze-thaw cycles that trigger sap flow.

“We already see small but steady operations bottling syrup in several counties,” he said. “Our numbers demonstrate what could happen if more woodland owners tap into that potential.”

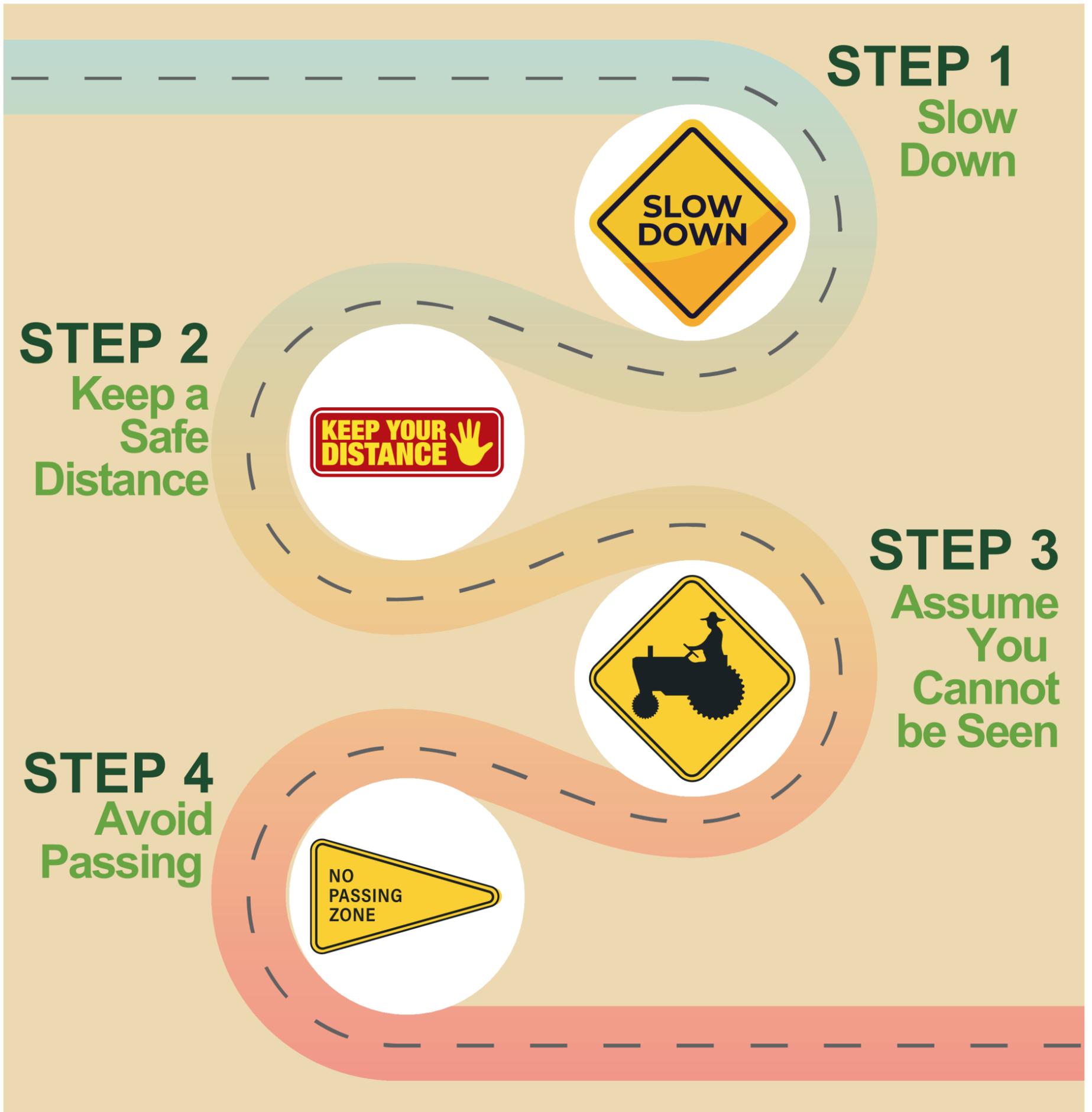
The next steps involve education and coordination.

The UK Cooperative Extension Service, in collaboration with the Kentucky Maple Syrup Association, Kentucky Division of Forestry and the U.S. Forest Service will host offseason workshops on tree identification, sanitation, evaporator efficiency and marketing. Researchers plan to refine cost estimates with real farm budgets, explore value-added products such as maple-infused beverages and candies, and study long-term forest health under sustained tapping.

“Our findings represent a starting point for community discussions and policy considerations,” Ochuodho said. “If Kentucky embraces maple syrup production, the benefits could extend beyond economic gains, supporting environmental sustainability and community resilience.”

To learn more about the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, visit <https://forestry.ca.uky.edu>

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# YOUNG PEOPLE IN AGRICULTURE:

## Bussey Bros. Layman working in marketing to keep auctions forward in a professional manner

By: Laurna Todd  
Farmers' Quarterly  
feature writer

For Alex Layman, auction day is not just about high bids; it's about connection, hard work, and a deep respect for the equipment and the people involved in the sale.

Alex works as a marketing and sales professional for Bussey Brothers, a family-owned business that specializes in consignment equipment auctions. Although he is not related to the family running the company, his description of the team makes it clear that he feels a strong sense of belonging. "It's like one big family," he says. "We support each other. We even bring meals to share during busy weeks—it makes a



Alex Layman

long day go by a little faster."

Each auction, which occurs about six times a year, requires a significant amount of effort. The team catalogs anywhere from 1,500 to 2,500 items for each event. Alex, along with others,

rotates through the detailed task of photographing and documenting each piece of equipment. "We take 50 to 100 photos of every item. Year, make, model, hours—it all gets documented," he explains. "That process alone can

take a couple of weeks per auction."

Alex thrives on the fast pace and enjoys the opportunity to build relationships. "My favorite part is meeting new people and learning more about equipment values," he states.

His background, growing up on a farm and working in excavating, provided a strong foundation for his career. He never expected to end up in the auction business until he was approached by Grant, the business owner, a few years after obtaining his real estate license.

Despite the intensity of auction weeks, Alex credits his wife and his team for helping him stay grounded. "My wife is my biggest supporter. And our team? We're all in this together. That really makes the hard days worth it."

As the popularity of auctions grows, especially for land and houses, Alex encourages others to get involved in the industry. "We need more auctioneers, but we also need people willing to do the behind-the-scenes work. It's not always glamorous, but it's rewarding."

# YOUNG PEOPLE IN AG:

## Q & A with Ellen Donaldson of Seven Springs Farms

**1. What inspired you to pursue a career in agriculture, and how did you become involved with Seven Springs Farms?**

I grew up on a cattle farm and was very involved in the Ag community and 4-H. But it was really the Hutson School of Agriculture that inspired me to pursue a career in this field. When I started college, I thought I wanted to be an engineer. It only took one class to know that it wasn't for me. Engineers are great but I was missing the community that was so evident in my only Ag class. That first semester I switched my major to Agri-business and never looked back.

I started at SSF shortly after graduation. The SSF office had an opening after one of the owners' daughters went on maternity leave. My sister-in-law was good friends with a daughter of one of the SSF partners and I was able to get an interview with them for an office position. That was 10 years ago, and I have worked in just about every faucet of the farm since.

**2. Can you share a memorable experience from your early days that solidified your passion for this work?**

Probably that first week of college is what sealed the deal for me. When I walked into my first engineering class the students were silent. No greetings, no introductions, nothing. When the professor came in, he went straight to the board and started writing never turned to address the class. When class was over the professor packed up his stuff and said "Class Dismissed" without every looking up. Everyone filed out in silence.

For someone who likes to talk this was so weird for me! My next class was Horticulture. I was just taking it to fill some credit hours, and I liked working with plants. When I walked in everyone was chatting with each other, introducing themselves, saying hi to friends they had made through 4-H or FFA. The professor was kind and greeted the class with a smile. The whole feeling of the class was the opposite of intro to Engineering. It felt inviting and supportive, and just like the Ag community I was used to.

**3. How has your role evolved since you started at Seven Springs Farms?**

My role at SSF is ever changing. I think that is what I like about it so much. There is always something different going on and no two days are the same. There is also always a way you can pitch in and make a difference. My first role was just answering the phone and figuring out where I could be useful. In my first week I took the office dog, Kate, to her vet appointments, organized a storage room in desperate need of attention, ran parts, and entered information into so many spreadsheets. If there is one thing SSF likes it spreadsheets! I worked hard to make myself useful and accessible to everyone.

There are so many different roles I have had at SSF, some of those included:

- Bookkeeping for the Wallonia Café and Southern Springs Event Center
- Marketing and selling of Jolly Farm Beef
- Tracking cost and data entry for the SSF Cattle

see DONALDSON, page A10

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**BOARD,**  
from page A3

operation in Madison County and is co-owner of Tri-County Fertilizer and Propane Co.

Neil Denton - Neil Denton serves on the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board and will represent row crop producers. He is a farmer, co-owner of Atlas Media Solutions, owner of Agri-Move LLC and serves as president of the Kentucky Small Grain Association.

Missy Vanderpool- Missy Vanderpool was nominated by the Kentucky Association for Economic Development. She is the Executive Director of the Henderson Regional Industrial Authority.

The Kentucky Agricultural Economic Development Board will operate within the Kentucky Department of Agriculture's Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy, under the leadership of Executive Director Brandon Reed. More specifically, it will be housed within the newly created Division of Agricultural Economic Development, led by Director of Economic Development Jacob Estes.

The establishment of the Board comes at a significant moment, as the Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2025. The Board represents a collaborative effort between the Department of Agriculture, the General Assembly, Kentucky farmers, business leaders, and community stakeholders, all working to strengthen and expand Kentucky's farm economy.

"As the Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy marks 25 years of service, it is only fitting that we launch the Division of Agricultural Economic Development," Executive Director Brandon Reed said.

"Commissioner Shell's vision and passion for advancing Kentucky agriculture are second to none, and I'm proud the General Assembly recognized that by creating this Board. I look forward to working alongside my longtime colleague Jacob Estes to bring that vision to life."

"The Kentucky Agricultural Economic Development Board is a yearlong collaboration between the Department of Agriculture, farmers, business leaders, community stakeholders, and the General Assembly," Commissioner Shell said. "I am excited to see the work this board will accomplish to move Kentucky agriculture forward, and I couldn't ask for a better group of individuals to get this work started."

## KY Agricultural Economic Development Board



The Kentucky Agricultural Economic Development Board, which was established in the 2025 Kentucky General Assembly, had its first meeting Monday at the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA). Pictured are, first row from left, board members Lori Noel and Missy Vanderpool, Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy Executive Director Brandon Reed, and Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell, who will also serve as board chair. Back row are, from left, board members Kevin Fields and Neil Denton, and Division of Economic Development Director Jacob Estes. Not pictured is board member Dr. Kenny Burdine. The Board will operate within KDA's Kentucky Office of Agricultural Policy, housed within the newly created Division of Agricultural Economic Development.

Kentucky Department of Agriculture photo

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### 2014 JOHN DEERE 7230R

Serial Number: 1RW7230RPES082871  
MFWD, 5628 hrs, 480/50 rear duals, 4 SCV, E23 trans, 59 GPM hyd pump, windshield cracked, Stock #2621

**\$88,500**



### 2009 JOHN DEERE 8230

Serial Number: RW8230P044966  
7588 hrs, rear duals, 3 SCV, 1000 PTO, quick hitch, 16 sp powershift, 245 hp, Stock #2754

**\$71,500**



### 2006 JOHN DEERE 7520

Serial Number: RW7520D052104  
MFWD, C/H/A, 5395 hrs, 150 hp, 3 SCV, 540/1000 PTO, IVT transmission, Stock #2781

**\$54,500**



### 2020 JOHN DEERE 708C

Serial Number: 1H00708CCLX810095  
Corn head, knife rolls, 8 rows, 30" spacing, hyd deck plates, header height sensors, Stock #2742

**\$49,500**



### 2015 JOHN DEERE 5085E

Serial Number: 1LV5085ELFY441789  
MFWD, C/H/A, 1802 hrs, JD H240 loader w/bucket, 2 SCV, 540 PTO, 12 speed, LHR, Stock #2605

**\$48,500**



### 2018 CASE IH 4408

Serial Number: YHH632699  
Corn head, 8 row, 30 in. spacing, wagon not included, Stock #2610

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### JOHN DEERE 4960

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### 2022 JOHN DEERE 5075E

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### J&M 1151

Serial Number: 6072  
Grain cart, 1000 PTO, roll tarp, 68x50.00-32 tires, single axle, Stock #2747

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### 2014 JOHN DEERE 612C

Serial Number: 1H00612CTEX765603  
Corn head, knife rolls, 12 rows, 30" spacing, hyd deck plates, header height sensors, Stock #2770

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### JOHN DEERE FC204

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### 2015 JOHN DEERE 640FD

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**TAKEUCHI TB216**

Serial Number: 216102446  
Mini excavator, 2145 hrs, push blade, 16" bucket,  
ROPS, Stock #2809

**\$14,250**



**FRONTIER FM 1017**

Serial Number: 1XFFM10XCN0001032  
Rotary cutter, 17, 540 PTO, 204 in cutting width,  
Stock #2793

**\$13,500**



**1982 JOHN DEERE 2940**

Serial Number: 411864  
2WD, canopy, 5672 hrs showing, 10.00-16 front  
tires, 18.4-34 rear tires, 2 SCV, 8 speed, Stock #2796

**\$13,500**



**2004 CASE IH JX55**

Serial Number: HFJ015612  
2WD, canopy, 1079 hrs showing, 1 scv, 540 PTO, 12  
speed, 58 hp engine, Stock #2797

**\$9,500**



**JOHN DEERE 1890**

Serial Number: H01890X672028  
Drill, 30' width, no till, w/JD 1900 commodity cart,  
190 bu tank size

**\$9,500**



**GREAT PLAINS 2220**

Stock Number: 2727  
Air drill w/GP NTA 3010, 30' width, 7.5" spacing,  
no till

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**BUSH HOG 3008-2**

Serial Number: 12-13764  
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Stock #2788

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36' header trailer, Stock #2769

**\$5,500**



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Stock Number: 2753  
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**DONALDSON,**  
from page A6

Backgrounding operation  
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· Managing trade show booths like the National Farm Machinery Show

My roles have expanded and been added to. Now that I am expecting I'm sure my roles will change again but I will continue to look for ways I can add value to SSF.

**4. Could you walk us through a typical day in your role?**

A typical day for me is entering orders for SSF Erosion Control Blankets, organizing logistics for delivery and upkeeping inventory spreadsheets for SSF and our partners in the erosion control industry. I also take care of our labeling of our products. Today my work includes preparation for wheat harvest meals and making sure our straw blanket inventory is where it should be before we go to a skeleton crew during wheat harvest. (Wheat harvest is an all-hands-on

deck situation so our day shift and the straw blanket factory will come over to the farm side and help with wheat/straw harvest) We must be prepared to still service our customers during the three weeks of harvest in June.

**5. What specific responsibilities do you have in the sod production process?**

We do not produce sod, but we do produce straw erosion control blankets. My specific responsibilities as it pertains to erosion control are attending trade shows or vendor events throughout the year, invoicing customers, coordinating logistics, tracking inventory, managing socials, handling new orders, and customer relations, as well as keeping DOT certifications up to date.

**6. How do you coordinate with other team members to ensure efficient farm operations?**

When we had the Cattle Farm (sold it in March of this year) we utilized an app called Slack to keep everyone on the same page. On the Straw & Fertilizer side we are constantly communicating over email and text message. The main farm has a group message that goes out to all employees and during harvest times there is always a morning meeting for all employees. Throughout the rest of the year the main managers



Ellen Donaldson

will meet each morning to discuss the plan for the day. Communication is key and sometimes we aren't the best at it, but everything runs more smoothly when there is open communication.

**Sod Farming Specifics**

7. What are some unique challenges associated with sod farming compared to other agricultural practices?

There are several unique challenges to straw production specifically for erosion control. Getting into the erosion control business has completely changed the way we plant and harvest our wheat crop. In erosion control the quality of your straw is imperative to a high-

quality blanket. Debris in the straw is the #1 no no. So, we plant only behind soybeans or ground that has been tilled before planting. We also cut the wheat about 6" off the ground to help keep debris, like sticks, deer antlers, and rocks out of the straw. Harvesting with stripper headers followed by swathers to keep the straw the longest possible length. This has all been discovered through trial and error over the past several years.

**8. How do seasonal changes impact sod cultivation and harvesting at Seven Springs Farms?**

Erosion control follows the same seasonal trends as traditional farming. It is busy in the spring and fall, slow in the summer and practically nonexistent in the winter.

**9. Can you discuss any innovative techniques or equipment used in your sod farming operations?**

We use stripper headers and swathers in our straw harvest. Those are mostly used out west and not seen much in our area. Stripper heads strip the wheat of just the grain and leave the whole wheat shaft standing for the longest possible straw.

**Women in Agriculture**

**10. As a young woman in a traditionally male-dominated field, what challenges have you faced, and how have you overcome them?**

I think women in Ag have an advantage over other male dominated fields. There are always people who will make it hard on you but most of the Ag industry is filled with people who recognize the importance of strong women and the value they bring to the table. Just go to any farm office and you will find women in leadership roles as well as support roles.

**11. What advice would you offer to other young women interested in pursuing a career in farming?**

Make sure your opinion is known; they don't have to agree with you or choose your way of doing things but make sure your voice is heard, nonetheless. Learn to say no. If you don't know the answer, find someone who does and learn from them. Always be looking for ways to make yourself valuable to the team.

**12. How does Seven Springs Farms approach sustainability and environmental stewardship in its operations?**

SSF does its part to keep our soil healthy and protect it from erosion. We install many straw blankets in our waterways and work to maintain them every fall and spring. This is also part of the reason we got into erosion control. We found that there wasn't a good option out there for farmers looking to repair or build new waterways. The only size blanket we could find locally was 8' x112.5' at \$45 each, and they were crappy blankets made with low quality short straw. When a farmer is working on 5 miles of waterways and must stop every 100' to start a new blanket it is slow going and terribly inefficient.

We specialize in providing farmers with larger blankets up to 16'x562.5' made with the highest quality long straw. This saves them time and labor making erosion prevention easier, more cost effective, and longer lasting.

**13. Can you share any recent initiatives or projects aimed at improving efficiency or productivity on the farm? No answer**

**14. How do you see technology shaping the future of farming, particularly in sod production?**

As technology continues to change and grow it is our job in Agriculture to change and grow with it. We must find ways to use it to solve our problems and become more efficient.

**15. What are your personal goals within the agricultural industry over the next five years?**

My goal is to continue to support SSF in any way possible. I will continue to do what I can to help the farm run smoothly and be more efficient.

**16. How do you envision the future of Seven Springs Farms, and what role do you hope to play in it?**

I hope to retire from SSF! I see us continuing to grow and innovate to be the best producer of quality straw and erosion control blankets. We will continue to provide a quality product help farmers protect their soil for future generations.

**17. Are there any specific people that have been a big support for you whether it is friends, family or coworkers?**

My husband has always been my biggest supporter, helping me to navigate issues and encouraging me to do my best.

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Matt Sween, UC Davis, Animal Science Department

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# Tiffani Crawford brings it home!!



Tiffani Crawford has officially taken the title of 2024-25 KY High School Rodeo Association Goat Tyer Champion, along with 2024-25 Girls Cutting Champion!! State finals were held May 9-10 at Muhlenberg County Ag Center. She will be competing in Rock Springs, WY in July. Crawford is currently sitting 5th in the NATION in the National Little Britches Rodeo Association in Goat Tying. She has qualified and will compete in Guthrie, OK in June.

Photo via LCHS Athletics Facebook

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# Like many FFA chapters across Kentucky, Western Hills students selling plants they've grown

By Chris Aldridge  
Kentucky Ag News

FRANKFORT – Every spring, for more than 20 years, FFA students at Western Hills High School in Frankfort have sold flowers and ferns they grew through the winter in a 2,160-square-foot greenhouse behind the school at 100 Doctors Drive.

“It’s a tradition here,” said agriculture teacher Jeff Shaffer, one of Western Hills’ three FFA advisors. He teaches four horticulture classes and manages the greenhouse.

“We do a Mother’s Day event” the day before the big day, according to Shaffer. This year, that falls on Saturday, May 10.

“We invite mothers to come and, for free, their children can paint a pot and pick out a flower for their mommas,” Shaffer said.

“The day before Mother’s Day is one of our biggest days of the year,” he added. “People, especially dads, come in and get last-minute gifts.”

Since kicking off its spring sale April 21, the greenhouse is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

weekdays and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays through the end of May.

“If the weather is real pretty on Saturdays, a lot of people will come,” Shaffer said. “A lot of students and students’ parents come in, as well as community members that wait for this sale every year and want to support their local greenhouse.”

Shaffer said the greenhouse’s biggest seller is hanging baskets, especially those containing ferns.

“They love the ferns,” he said. “The ferns come in 1-inch plugs in August, and we grow them all winter until spring.”

Other baskets contain colorful petunias and other varieties in full bloom.

“We usually grow 250 hanging baskets,” Shaffer said. “This year, we grew over 300 just for Mother’s Day. We’ve already sold 150, so I had to order some so we wouldn’t run out.”

Western Hills will double its greenhouse space next year. The finishing touches are being made on a nearly identical



Western Hills High School FFA students, from left, Addison Shaffer, Carter Hutcherson, and Cheyenne Robinson, and FFA advisor Jeff Shaffer, are selling flowers and ferns, some in hanging baskets, in the greenhouse behind the school at 100 Doctors Drive in Frankfort. The greenhouse is open 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. weekdays and 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. Saturdays through the end of May.

30-by-72-foot structure right next to the current one, half of which will be converted to aquaponics.

“We were crowded this year,” Shaffer said. “The new one is 10 feet tall. The old one is 8 feet. It’s annoying because I hit my head on hanging baskets all the time!”

Growing flowers and ferns provides hands-on experience for Western Hills’

FFA students, some of whom don’t live on farms.

“I have four greenhouse classes of students that help me grow them,” Shaffer said. “They work out there (in the greenhouse) with me. I teach them things like plant science, pest management, and greenhouse maintenance.”

Western Hills FFA’s next project is growing a popular

autumn flower, chrysanthemums.

“Before school is out, we’re going to plant 700 mums to sell in the fall,” Shaffer said.

Western Hills is just one example of many local high school FFA chapters across Kentucky that host similar spring plant sales. Whether it’s hanging baskets, ferns, or colorful flowers, these fundraisers offer a chance for the public

to support agricultural education and the students who are shaping the future of the ag industry in the Commonwealth.

“Buying local flowers from FFA chapters is a simple way to invest in the next generation of Kentucky agriculture,” Kentucky Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell added.



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Stk. #25ATRO399DUMP.....**\$35,000**



**2013 KENWORTH T660**, Good truck, fleet maintained, good condition! PW, tilt/tele, diff lock, dump valve, full guage pkg, air seat, heated mirrors, 10 speed, air ride suspension, cruise control, tilt/tele, 5th wheel, sliding, left hand drive.  
Stk. #13ISX888T660SADC.....**\$15,000**



**2011 VOLVO VNL64T300**, Nice truck, runs great, clean, air seat, A/S 5th, diff lock, dump valve, fleet maintained, power w/m, heated mirrors, manual 10 speed trans/new clutch, cruise control, 435 hp, 5th wheel type, sliding wheel.  
Stk. #11D13719VNLDC.....**\$10,000**



**2016 INTERNATIONAL PROSTAR**, Good truck, runs great! Well main. truck, not rusty/southern ran, air seat, power w/m, heated mirrors, diff lock, dump valve, sliding 5th wheel, smart wheel, 10 speed, cruise control, 172 in. wheel base.  
Stk. #16ISX675PRODC.....**\$15,000**



**2025 WITZCO CHALLENGER NGB-52 TON/24 FT WELL**, New trailer, chain tie downs, D-rings, Honda Pony engine, chain/binder storage, non-ground bearing detach, fac. wrnty, \*12 FET must be paid with purchase.  
Stk. #25WIT094NGB52.....**\$60,000**



**2012 FREIGHTLINER CASCADIA 125**, Nice truck, runs and drives excellent! Southern truck/no rust. Air seat, air brakes, dump valve, diff lock, A/S 5th, dual air ride seats, power w/m, heated mirros. \*Long wheel base (219) ready for a 16 ft. bed!  
Stk. #12ISX628CASDC.....**\$14,000**



**2020 TIMPTE 40 FT HOPPER**, Nice trailer, good shape, dump valve, good tires, good tarp, 2 hoppers, standard hopper type, manual, roll tarp, ladder front and rear, catwalk front and rear, 40 ft length, air ride suspension, aluminum/steel wheels.  
Stk. #20TIM101HOPPER.....**\$33,000**



**2015 JET 42 FT HOPPER**, Nice trailer, excellent shape, good roll tarp, good doors, nice wagon, 2 hoppers, ag hopper type, ladder front and rear, air ride suspension, 68,000 lb. gross vehicle weight, mud flaps.  
Stk. #15JET844HOPPER.....**\$22,000**



**2012 TIMPTE 42 FT HOPPER**, Good trailer, roll tarp, good doors, vibrators, 2 hoppers, standard hopper type, manual operator, knock rails, ladder front and rear, catwalk front and rear, air ride suspension, tandem rear axles, 65,000 lb gross veh wt.  
Stk. #12TIM390HOPPER.....**\$20,000**



**2024 WITZCO CHALLENGER NGB-35**, New trailer, 23 ft well, chain tie downs, D-rings, Honda Pony engine, excavator pkg, chain/binder storage, factory warranty, tabs for future wheel covers. \*12% FET tax must be paid with purchase.  
Stk. #24WIT024NGB35.....**\$50,000**



**2002 FONTAINE 35 TONE DETACH**, Nice trailer, good tires, dump valve, 29.5 ft. well, 2 ride height positions, 18 in. ground to floor! 87,093 lb. gross vehicle weight, 35 ton payload capacity, air ride suspension, aluminum/steel wheels, 48 ft. length.  
Stk. #02FONT978DET.....**\$25,000**



**2021 VOLVO VNR64T300**, Very nice truck, fleet maintained. Runs excellent, air seat, tilt/tele, differential lock, dump valve, power windows, power door locks, power mirror, heated mirrors, cruise control, 631,380 miles, 405 HP.  
Stk. #21AV631VNRDC.....**\$27,000**



**2015 FREIGHTLINER CORONADO 132**, Good truck, runs great, clean, air seat, air brakes, dual exhaust, dual air ride seats, diff lock, dump valve, A/S 5th, cruise, tilt/tele, power windows, Series 60 12.7 DDEC IV engine, 10 speed, turbo.  
Stk. #15DET662CORDC.....**\$35,000**



**2014 PETERBILT 337**, Good truck, very clean, runs and drives excellent, air seat, air brakes, automatic transmission, dump valve, power windows, 330 hp, PACCAR engine, 12,000 front axle wt, 22,700 rear axle wt, air ride suspension.  
Stk. #14PETE361SADC.....**\$15,000**



**2020 INTERNATIONAL RH**, Good truck, runs excellent, fleet maintained, power windows, power door locks, smart wheel, cruise, A/S 5th, dump valve, tilt/tele, air ride suspension, 12,000 lb. front axle wt, 40,000 rear axle wt.  
Stk. #20YEL574PRODC.....**\$12,000**



**2019 PETERBILT 579**, Good truck, fleet maintained, runs and drives excellent, power w/m, heated mirrors, differential lock, dump valve, air seat, air brakes, tilt/tele, cruise, 450 hp, 5th wheel type, 12,000 lb. front axle wt, 40,000 lb. rear axle wt.  
Stk. #19ISX747579DC.....**\$22,500**



**1998 MACK RD6885**, Good truck, heavy duty truck, runs and drives great, air seat, air brakes, not rusty! 9 speed, differential lock, MACK E7-350 engine, 14,600 lb. front axle wt, 44,000 lb. rear axle wt, heated mirrors, alum/steel wheels.  
Stk. #98RD605TADC.....**\$14,000**



**2006 CATERPILLAR D5NXL**, New set of tracks and rails included in price. Nice machine, runs and operates excellent, 6-way blade tilt, heater, cloth seats, powertrain transmission, 3 speed, Caterpillar engine.  
Stk. #06CATD5NDOZ.....**\$45,000**



**2018 MACK PINNACLE CXU613**, Nice truck, low miles, fleet maintained, runs excellent, power w/m, power door locks, dump valve, A/S 5th, differential locks, good tires, not rusty! 12,000 lb. front axle wt, 40,000 lb. rear axle wt.  
Stk. #18CXU300TADC.....**\$24,000**



**2018 MACK PINNACLE CXU613**, Nice truck, fleet maintained, runs excellent, Power right window, power mirrors, power door locks, dump valve, A/S 5th, differential lock, good tires, good tires, 12,000 front axle wt, 40,000 lb. rear axle wt.  
Stk. #18CXU987TADC.....**\$15,000**



**2020 VOLVO VNR64T300**, Good truck, runs excellent, fleet maintained, air seat, tilt/tele, differential lock, dump valve, power w/m, power door locks, heated mirrors, cruise control, very nice truck! 12 speed, 405 hp.  
Stk. #20AV516VNRDC.....**\$23,000**



**2022 VOLVO VNR64T300**, Very good truck, runs excellent, fleet maintained, air seat, tilt/tele, differential lock, dump valve, power w/m, power door locks, heated mirrors, cruise control, very nice truck! 425 hp, air ride suspension.  
Stk. #22D13520VNRDC.....**\$36,000**



**2014 KENWORTH T800**, Nice truck, runs great, clean! Air seat, air brakes, differential lock, full locking rears, A/S 5th, dump valve, cruise, air seat, power w/m, power door locks, 13,200 lb front axle wt, 40,000 lb rear axle wt, air ride suspension.  
Stk. #14MX648T8DC.....**\$20,000**



**2017 KENWORTH T880**, Nice truck, runs great, clean, fleet maintained! Air seat, power w/m, heated mirrors, differential lock, dump valve, 430 hp, PACCAR engine, air ride suspension, 12,000 lb front axle wt, 40,000 lb rear axle wt.  
Stk. #17MX636T880DC.....**\$25,000**



**2019 MACK ANTHEM 64T**, Very nice truck, runs great, very clean, air seat, power w/m, power door locks, heated mirrors, dump valve, differential lock, tilt/tele, 425 hp, air ride suspension, 12,000 lb front axle wt, 40,000 lb rear axle wt.  
Stk. #19591ANTHDC.....**\$28,000**



**2012 INTERNATIONAL PAYSTAR 5900**, Good heavy duty truck, runs great, clean, dual breathers, differential lock, dump valve, sliding 5th, power w/m, power door locks, wet kit, air ride suspension, tandem rear axles, tilt/tele, cruise.  
Stk. #12MF185PAYDC.....**\$24,000**



**2012 HITACHI ZX85USB-3**, Nice machine, runs and operates excellent, push blade, side shift boom, 18 in. bucket, nice cab, good glass, good U/C, A/C, 55 hp, 20,500 lb, enclosed interior.  
Stk. #HCM1P700H00081717.....**\$32,000**



**2017 DEERE 210G**, Clean machine, runs and operates excellent. Straight body, rails need attention and boom has been welded on, a/c, 2 speed, standard battery type, ROPS.  
Stk. #1FF210GXCHF524847.....**\$35,000**



**2016 PETERBILT 579**, Good truck, fleet maintained, truck runs and drives perfect! Good tires, clean cab, power w/m, power door locks, tilt/tele, differential lock, dump valve, 455 hp, PACCAR MX-13 engine, air ride suspension, aluminum/steel wheels.  
Stk. #16MX807579DC.....**\$20,000**



**2015 MACK PINNACLE CXU613**, Nice truck, fleet maintained, runs excellent. Power right window, power mirrors, power door locks, dump valve, A/S 5th, differential lock, good tires, cruise control, A/C.  
Stk. #15CXU638TADC.....**\$16,000**



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## From Roots to Canopy' brings urban forestry and art together

By Jordan Strickler

Lexington, Ky.—  
The University of Kentucky's Bolivar Art Gallery bustled with visitors as "Resiliently Rooted: From Roots to Canopy" filled the UK College of Fine Arts School of Art and Visual Studies with photographs, paintings, mixed-media pieces and sculpture that explored a single question: "How do trees inspire and sustain us?"



**"Resiliently Rooted" gave Graciela Martinez a way to put her love of nature and art together. Photo provided by Graciela Martinez.**  
Portrait of Jordan Strickler

**Resiliently Rooted**  
The American Chestnut by Sara Grace Eames garnered a first place ribbon. Photo provided by Graciela Martinez.

The five-day showcase was organized by the Urban Forestry Initiative (UFI), housed within the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. The event spanned April 14-18, with a public open house April 17, and featured work from students and community members across the Bluegrass. Submissions ranged from literal depictions of trunks and canopies to abstract reflections on ecological connection.

"The Resiliently Rooted open house was a fantastic success," said UFI coordinator Ignazio Graziosi. "Those who attended the showcase were able to admire more than 30 art pieces

submitted by UK students, the city of Lexington and the Bluegrass area community members."

The exhibition welcomed entries from any Kentucky resident. Graziosi said local middle and high school art clubs, retirees experimenting with sculpture and professional photographers all shared wall space with UK students, highlighting UFI's mission to connect diverse neighbors through trees. The gallery recorded more than six hundred visits over the week.

**One student's assignment**

The project began as the independent internship assignment of Graciela Martinez, a junior in Environmental

and Sustainability Studies and an intern with UFI. Martinez invited the public to send digital images of their work through the UFI website, then arranged for the selected pieces to be displayed on campus. Artists were required to submit a short statement explaining how their work related to the theme.

"Trees have always been nature's storytellers," Martinez said. "Seeing classmates translate that idea into so many different mediums demonstrated how deeply urban trees shape our lives."

"Resiliently Rooted" capped Martinez's semester-long internship. Each UFI intern proposes and executes a project intended to advance regional canopy goals; previous interns have mapped heat-island hot spots and developed neighborhood pruning workshops. Martinez said she chose art because it bridged her academic focus on urban forestry with her minor in interdisciplinary arts.

Coordinating the showcase required scheduling with the gallery, negotiating installation logistics for three-dimensional pieces and drafting contest guidelines.

Martinez said the experience sharpened her event-planning abilities, strengthened communication with campus units and local nonprofit partners and confirmed her interest in a career as a sustainability coordinator.

"Art lets people feel value before they count or measure it," she said. "If one painting nudged someone to notice a sapling along their bus stop and wonder how they might protect it, the whole effort was worthwhile."

To learn more about the Urban Forestry Initiative, including projects like Resiliently Rooted, visit <https://ufi.ca.uky.edu>

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# Food is Medicine Initiative is a success

**By Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell**

I thoroughly enjoyed a delicious Food is Medicine Initiative kickoff recently when a hospital in Russell Springs partnered with a local beef producer to offer premium all-natural, locally raised beef as an option for meals served to the hospital's patients, staff, and visitors.

If the hamburger I scarfed down is medicine, start me a prescription! Sampling burgers along with me were the beef producer, Dry Branch Stock Farm owner Zach Gibbs, and Russell County Hospital CEO Russell Thompson. We were joined by Brian Andrus, who works in sales and marketing for Dry Branch, and Travis Burton, who represented the Kentucky Hospital

Association (KHA).

This partnership exemplifies exactly what Food is Medicine is working toward – connecting Kentucky's hardworking farmers with local healthcare providers to deliver fresh, nutritious food straight to patients. It's a win for our farm families, a win for community health, and a testament to the power of agriculture as a cornerstone of Kentucky's future.

I began Food is Medicine last year in collaboration with KHA. The initiative aims to improve health outcomes in the state by integrating healthy, locally grown and produced foods into healthcare settings. It recognizes that high-quality nourishment is essential for well-being. Richer nourishment can result in healthier lifestyles, improved health, and long-term

positive results for individuals and communities.

I'm happy to help Kentucky hospital officials connect to local producers giving them access to nutritious food closer to their hospital locations. By sourcing beef from Dry Branch, Russell County Hospital is taking a significant step toward that goal while strengthening ties with Kentucky's agricultural community.

Dry Branch beef cattle graze the rolling green pastures of its farm near Danville. They are never treated with antibiotics or growth hormones. As the cattle get older, they are finished with natural grain made with non-GMO corn. The farm works with a local livestock nutritionist to create rations that meet its high standards to create flavorful, marbled, high-quality

beef.

Ounce for ounce, beef is more nutrient dense than many other protein foods. Beef provides 10 essential nutrients, including: protein, iron, zinc, vitamins B6 and B12, choline, phosphorus, niacin, riboflavin, and selenium. Beef also contains healthy fats, such as omega-3s and

monounsaturated fats.

Dry Branch oversees every step of production. The best cattle are hand-selected for slaughter to assure the highest quality of beef. Cattle are butchered one at a time in Dry Branch's own small slaughterhouse, which is inspected by the U.S. Department

of Agriculture. The beef is dry aged for 14 days, creating a rich flavor.

Dry Branch sells its beef, pork, lamb, poultry, and eggs through its Meat Shoppe & General Store at 125 W. Main St. in downtown Danville. For more information, go to [www.DryBranchStockFarm.com](http://www.DryBranchStockFarm.com).



Caption for attached photo: As a part of the Food is Medicine Initiative, Russell County Hospital is now offering Dry Branch premium all-natural beef as an option for meals for staff, patients, and visitors. At the event's kick off were, from left: Russell County Hospital CEO Russell Thompson, Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell, Dry Branch Stock Farm Owner Zach Gibbs, Brian Andrus, from Dry Branch Stock Farm, and Travis Burton, representing the Kentucky Hospital Association.

Kentucky Department of Agriculture photo

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# Registration for 2025 Kentucky Woodland owners short course now open

*The workshop aims to help woodland owners improve their woodlands*

By Jordan Strickler

Lexington, Ky.— The University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment has opened registration for the 2025 Kentucky Woodland Owners Short Course (WOSC), the state's flagship workshop for landowners who want to conserve and improve their woodland acreage.

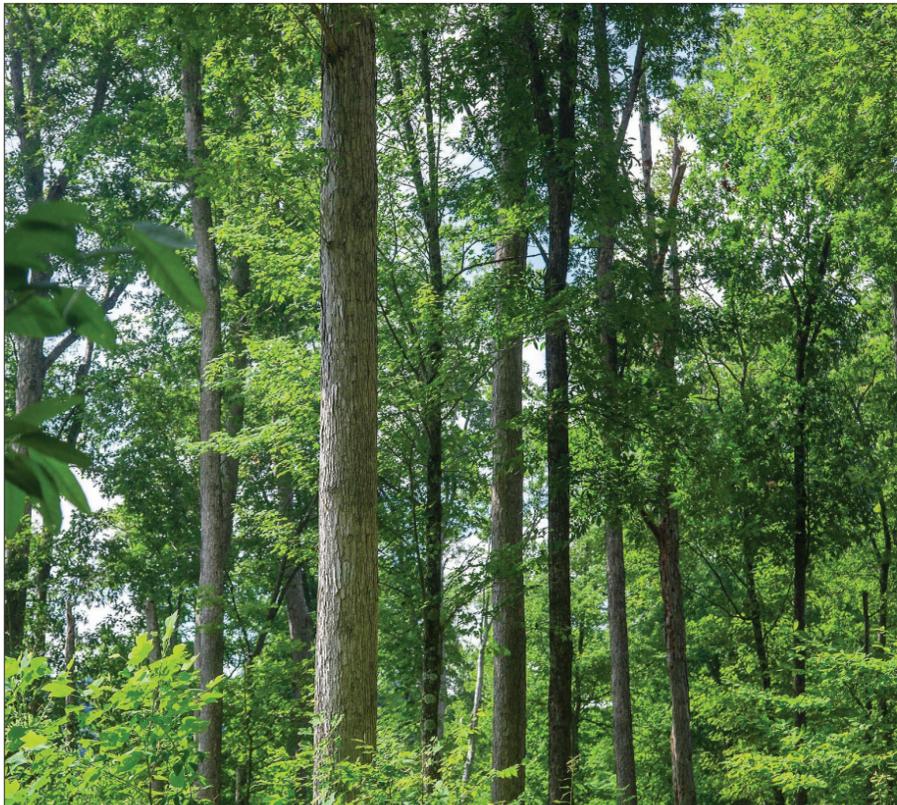
Beginning June 10 and running through June 26, the Short Course delivers six live weeknight webinars from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Eastern Time. Topics range from tree identification and day-to-day woodland management to forest health, wildlife interactions, timber harvesting and ways Natural Resources Conservation Service programs can bolster both woodland vitality and downstream water quality. Every session is recorded, allowing registrants to revisit the material at their convenience.

"Everyone involved is looking forward to this year's Short Course," said Billy Thomas, extension forester with the UK

Department of Forestry and Natural Resources. "The online classes tackle the questions woodland owners ask us most often, while the field sessions place them shoulder-to-shoulder with experts who can show practical solutions on the ground."

After the webinars are completed, instruction then moves from the screen to the woods during two optional field days, the first on July 19 in Whitley County and the second on Aug. 16 in Pendleton County. Each event features a woodland owner farm tour where attendees can observe hands-on management practices and speak directly with forestry, wildlife and conservation professionals. New for 2025 is a Woodland Owner Resource Extravaganza where participants can meaningfully connect with the organizations and agencies who can directly help them with the stewardship of their own property.

"Participants go home with clear ideas for their own property and the contact information for professionals who can help them follow



This year's topics range from tree identification, day-to-day woodland management, forest health, wildlife interactions, timber harvesting and more.

Photo by Matt Barton

through," Thomas said. "We are always ecstatic when we get to pass along information to help both our state's woodland owners and ecosystem."

Thomas emphasized that the hybrid format works for owners of any experience level. Even if woodland owners cannot attend the field sessions, they can gain a tremendous amount of knowledge and contacts from the

online sessions.

Registration is available at [www.KYWOSC.org](http://www.KYWOSC.org). An online-only registration costs \$10 per person. Adding a field day raises the fee to \$30 for an individual or \$45 for two members of the same household, which includes lunch and a resource binder. Because space in each field session is limited, early sign-up is encouraged; online-only

registrants may upgrade later if places remain.

Since its inception in 2004, the WOSC has been a collaboration between the UK Forestry and Natural Resources Extension in partnership with the Kentucky Division of Forestry, Kentucky Woodland Owners Association, Kentucky Tree Farm Committee, Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife

Resources, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Kentucky Association of Consulting Foresters and other conservation groups.

To learn more about the Department of Forestry and Natural Resources, visit <https://forestry.ca.uky.edu>.

###

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## Specialty Crop application window opens, Ag Commissioner announces

FRANKFORT, Ky.— Agriculture Commissioner Jonathan Shell announces the proposal window is open for the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

"Kentucky's specialty crops already make up a significant part of Kentucky's agricultural economy, but there is always room for growth," Commissioner Shell said. "With the intention of making Kentucky specialty crops more competitive in domestic and foreign markets, the specialty crop program is now seeking application proposals to creatively increase those markets."

Applicants must describe how the project potentially

affects and produces measurable outcomes for the specialty crop industry and/or the public. Privately owned companies, small business owners, 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations, and quasi-government entities, including public universities, are eligible to apply. All projects are subject to the availability of funds. KDA will not award grant funds for projects that solely benefit a particular commercial product or provide profit to a single organization, institution, or individual.

Preliminary proposals must be submitted on the form at [kyagr.com/marketing/documents/SC\\_Concept\\_Proposal.pdf](http://kyagr.com/marketing/documents/SC_Concept_Proposal.pdf)

and emailed to Brett McQueary at [Brett.McQueary@ky.gov](mailto:Brett.McQueary@ky.gov) no later than 4:30 p.m. EST on June 2, 2025.

Qualifying applicants will be notified and invited to complete a full grant application. Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticultural products, nursery crops (including floriculture), and honey. For a comprehensive list, interested parties may visit [ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop](http://ams.usda.gov/services/grants/scbgp/specialty-crop).

KDA receives grant funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) for the specialty crop grant program and conducts an

annual competitive application process to award grant funds.

For more information about the

Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, go to [kyagr.com/marketing/crop-block-grant.html](http://kyagr.com/marketing/crop-block-grant.html) or contact

Brett McQueary at (502) 782-4114 (office), (502) 330-6044 or [Brett.McQueary@ky.gov](mailto:Brett.McQueary@ky.gov).

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Commissioner of Agriculture Jonathan Shell, center, was surrounded by Kentucky beef industry personnel and producers as he celebrated May as Beef Month in Kentucky at The Yards in Lexington. The Yards, in the Blue Grass Regional Stockyards Marketplace, is an education center focusing on science and practices of the beef industry.

Kentucky Department of Agriculture

# Cattle producers celebrated during May as Beef Month in Kentucky

*Kentucky is the largest beef cattle state east of the Mississippi River*

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Kentucky cattle producers and industry representatives joined Kentucky Commissioner of Agriculture Jonathan Shell Monday as he signed a proclamation commemorating the month of May as Kentucky Beef Month.

“With 869,000 head of beef cattle in the Commonwealth, Kentucky remains the state with the largest beef inventory east of the Mississippi River,” Commissioner Shell said. “We retain that

title with the hard work of our cattle farmers. I ask that Kentuckians join me in recognizing their effort, diligence, and perseverance as we celebrate May as Kentucky Beef Month.”

The United States is the world’s largest producer of beef, primarily high-quality, grain-fed beef. Kentucky ranks 14th nationally for total cattle inventory and eighth in the nation for beef cattle. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service,

Kentucky is home to 31,060 beef cattle producers of the 69,400 total farms in the state.

“May is Beef Month — a time to honor the hardworking Kentucky beef producers dedicated to bringing high-quality beef to your table,” said Kelly Baird, Kentucky Beef Council Director of Communications and Events. “During May — and throughout the entire year — we celebrate Kentucky farm families and the vital role they

play in ensuring a safe, sustainable, and nutritious food supply. Through every challenge, our beef producers work tirelessly to support our communities, our economy, and our Commonwealth.”

January 2025 numbers for all cattle inventory are down 2 percent from 2024, with beef cattle numbers seeing a larger decrease of 2024 over last year. Kentucky’s decrease in beef cattle numbers matches what’s happening nationally. The U.S. beef cattle reached a

64-year low in 2025. Several factors including low calf prices, high costs, and drought across the county have played a role in the declining inventory.

In contrast the lower number of beef cattle has created a higher market demand and driven up the sale prices for farmers. The tight national cattle supply and higher market prices will likely contribute to higher agricultural receipts for the state. In 2024, gross receipts from cattle production totaled more than \$1

billion, ranking it in the top five of all Kentucky commodities.

It’s predicted Kentucky’s anticipated strong livestock sector could help maintain overall cash receipts above \$8 billion for 2025, approaching the all time high of \$8.3 billion hit in 2023.

The top five Kentucky counties for number of beef cattle are:

- Barren
- Pulaski
- Madison
- Breckinridge
- Bourbon

# UK student leader connects peers with agriculture industry through Agriculture Future of America

By Zoey Ortega

Lexington, Ky— While Miranda Donnelly grew up riding horses, coming to the University of Kentucky was her introduction to agriculture on a larger scale. She started as a natural resources and environmental science major, but like many students, she discovered new passions and changed her area of study to reflect that. Now in the animal sciences program, Donnelly uses her experiences inside and outside of the classroom to support other students and further pursue her dreams.

Donnelly was introduced to the organization Agriculture Future of America (AFA) during UK's K-Week activities her freshman year. From there, Donnelly became more involved, attending conferences and eventually becoming UK's college ambassador for AFA. She aims to use this position to support UK students and share AFA's resources, opportunities and mission—building bridges for young leaders and fostering engagement and innovation in agriculture.

"I always knew I wanted to be a leader, I just didn't

know where or how it would look," Donnelly said. "UK and AFA has allowed me to explore my interests and find my place."

In the fall of 2024, Donnelly participated in the AFE 100 peer instructor program, in which she grew her leadership skills through teaching and supporting incoming freshmen. Donnelly has also been a member of the UK Eventing Team since her freshman year. This has given Donnelly a consistent community and avenue to express her love of horses.

"Being involved in so many things has definitely forced me to prioritize my interests and develop my time management," Donnelly said. "I have also been trying to surround myself with people that uplift and support me."

Becca Dobbs, Martin-Gatton CAFE Living Learning Program coordinator and staff adviser for AFA, has been an impactful mentor for Donnelly.

"The organization is connected with global agriculture industries and students across the nation," Dobbs said. "Their goal is to increase students'

professional development, build skills and connect students with internships, scholarships and future careers."

AFA is open to students of all majors and allows various commitment levels. Students can attend the annual leaders conference, up to six institutes ranging from policy to plant science throughout the year, and/or apply for scholarships. There is also an alumni alliance program to allow continued involvement after graduation.

This year's AFA Leaders Conference is being held in Kansas City, Missouri on Nov. 6-8, 2025. Registration is currently open and students who attend with AFA will have all expenses other than travel covered.

"If I could give one piece of advice to students looking to get into agriculture, it would be to start conversations and put yourself out there," Donnelly said. "You don't know what you don't know, but there really is a place for everyone within agriculture."

To learn more about Agriculture Future of America and the Leaders Conference, visit <https://www.agfuture.org>.

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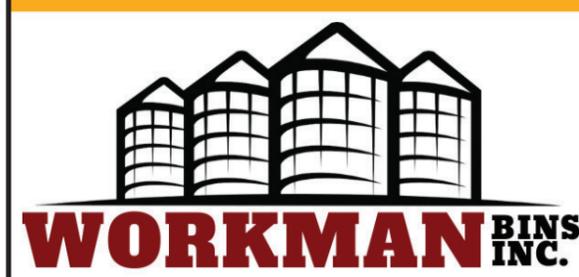
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# Room to Grow:

*How a University of Kentucky student found and created opportunities to thrive*

By Bailey Vandiver

LEXINGTON, Ky.— As an equine enthusiast, Jaida Alee is continuing the family business. Growing up in Louisville, Kentucky, Alee saw both her mother and grandmother involved in the equine industry. Her mom, Marjorie Keele, rode saddle seat, while her grandmother, Linda Alicea, used to train racehorses.

“I just kind of caught the bug for it, and I fell in love with horses,” Alee said.

Alee started riding hunter jumpers in the sixth grade and continued competing through high school. When it was time to choose a college, she knew she wanted to study equine.

“During my college

search, I was having trouble finding anywhere else with such an extensive program as UK,” Alee said.

UK seemed the most supportive for equine students, she said, with the ability to provide the most tools, resources, research opportunities and more.

Alee graduates in May 2025 with a bachelor’s degree in equine science and management, with a double minor in business and international business.

*‘An exemplary choice’ for the Lyman T. Johnson Torch Bearer Award*

In fall 2024, Alee was the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment



Jaida Alee, the 2024 Lyman T. Johnson Torch Bearer Award recipient, graduates from the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment in May 2025, with hopes of joining the equine industry.

recipient of the Lyman T. Johnson Torch Bearer Award, which celebrates Johnson’s legacy and is given to one student per UK college for academic excellence and impact on others.

One alumnus per college is also

awarded the Torch of Excellence Award; Mya Price was honored for Martin-Gatton CAFE in 2024.

Kendriana Price, assistant dean for community relations and engagement, nominated Alee for the award.

“Lyman T. Johnson

paved the way for desegregation at the University of Kentucky, and Jaida continues his legacy by creating inclusive spaces for students both within and outside the college,” Price said. “Jaida consistently demonstrates leadership with humility, compassion, and an infectious-spirited energy, making her an exemplary choice.”

Alee said it was an honor to have been nominated by Price and to receive the award.

“It made me feel really special and that my work is being recognized, which always feels good,” Alee said.

*‘Fostering a sense of belonging’*

At UK, Alee found

opportunities for connection—and where she didn’t find opportunities, she created them.

Two women pose for a photo, holding a gift in front of a backdrop that says UK Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

Since her freshman year, she’s been part of the Wildcat Wranglers, an equine ambassador program for Martin-Gatton CAFE.

She’s also held leadership roles with the UK MANRRS chapter, an agricultural professional development organization. This year, as the public relations chair, she runs the Instagram account and makes the chapter’s

see *GROW*, page B7

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**GROW,**  
from page B6

graphics. MANRRS has given Alee opportunities for scholarships, jobs and internships, and friendships. Attending the MANRRS National Conference each year is a highlight of her college career. "I've just gained so much from that organization, and I'm just really proud to be a part of it," she said.

Alee has been passionate about cars since watching the "really fun" Fast and Furious movies. This fascination led her to create the UK Car Club, an unofficial and "low-key club" for the car community at UK.

Price said "fostering a sense of belonging" is crucial

for students, particularly at large universities, and Alee has excelled at that for herself and others.

"Jaida's quiet yet impactful presence makes her an exemplary leader and role model. Though she may not be the loudest in the room, she excels at creating spaces where voices can be heard and work can be accomplished," Price said. "She leads by example, inspiring others to engage and get involved. Jaida is a great example of coming to a large university and both finding and creating the spaces that interest her and help her fit in."

Alee has always had a strong work ethic, encouraged by her mom, and her academics and

involvement with UK organizations have only grown her drive.

"Those organizations have just been a big part of fostering that work ethic that I have, and just giving me the room to grow, and giving me a safe space to just be a college student and do everything that I need to do," she said.

*'The way I want to go'*

When Alee's grandmother started in the equine industry, there weren't many other women, so her working had an "impact."

Even today, it's still a traditional and male-dominated industry, Alee said, but she looks forward to adding to the number of

women professionals.

"The impact of getting more women into the industry is definitely a big deal," she said. "Sometimes you just need a woman's opinion, so I think that'll be really good."

Within the equine industry, Alee wants to work in Thoroughbred bloodstock sales.

"I've definitely got a little bit of a knack for it, and I feel like that's the way I want to go," Alee said.

Though she knew many of her passions and goals before she came to college, Alee said being at UK in Lexington "opened me to this world of opportunity."

"Being in Lexington is a whole new world when you think about the horse industry," Alee said. "This is the horse industry."

To learn more about UK Ag Equine Programs, visit <https://equine.ca.uky.edu/>.



Jaida Alee, pictured here with Savannah Robin, is recognized for completing her internship at Keeneland.

Photo provided by Jaida Alee



Jaida Alee's grandmother, Linda Alicea, and mother, Marjorie Keele, with horse Bad Storm Comin.

Photo provided by Jaida Alee

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# KY Agricultural Development Board approves more than \$1.3M for projects across the Commonwealth

**FRANKFORT** – The Kentucky Agricultural Development Board approved \$1,365,578 for agricultural diversification and rural development projects across the Commonwealth at its monthly board meeting.

“The projects awarded today help weave a vibrant patchwork of agricultural diversity across Kentucky,” said Commissioner of Agriculture and Kentucky Agricultural Development Board Chair Jonathan Shell. “With each investment, the Kentucky Agricultural Development Board is helping build a stronger, more resilient, and prosperous future for our farm families and communities.”

County and State Funded Projects

- Barren County

Board of Education was approved up to \$212,675 in multi-county funds to expand its agriculture education livestock facility to include a USDA meat processing component. For more information, contact Andy Moore at [andy.moore@barren.kyschools.us](mailto:andy.moore@barren.kyschools.us).

- Bluegrass Animal Clinic was approved up to \$49,188 in state funds and \$9,838 in county funds as part of the Large & Food Animal Veterinary Incentives Program to purchase a truck and Portavet. For more information, contact Dr. Philip Whitley at [bluegrassanimalclinic@gmail.com](mailto:bluegrassanimalclinic@gmail.com).

- Grace Elizabeth Boyd was approved up to \$23,564 in state funds and \$4,713 in county funds as part of the Large & Food Animal Veterinary Incentives Program to purchase a truck.

For more information, contact Dr. Grace Boyd at [Dr.boyd@heritage.vet](mailto:Dr.boyd@heritage.vet).

- Harton Farms LLC was approved up to \$3,750 in state funds for consultation fees for assistance in maintaining its Food Safety Plan, and a Good Agricultural Practices audit. For more information, contact Jill Harton at [Jill.harton@gmail.com](mailto:Jill.harton@gmail.com).

- Kentucky Fresh Harvest was approved up to \$3,750 in state funds for food safety consulting to prepare for a third party audit as a part of the Food Safety & Efficiency Incentives Program. For more information, contact Julian Gander at [jgander@gandercpa.com](mailto:jgander@gandercpa.com).

- Logan County Agricultural Extension Foundation, Inc was approved up to \$7,000

in Logan County funds to purchase fencing to enclose its outdoor arena. For more information, contact Lonny Epley at [lonnyepley@yahoo.com](mailto:lonnyepley@yahoo.com).

- University of Kentucky Research Foundation-UKDRS was approved up to \$35,048 in state funds to purchase forage testing equipment. For more information, contact Kim C. Karter at [ospa@uky.edu](mailto:ospa@uky.edu).

- W&W Veterinary Services, PLLC was approved up to \$66,241 in state and Madison County funds to make upgrades to its large animal handling facility as a part of the Large & Food Animal Veterinary Incentives Program. For more information, contact Dr. Nicholas Werle at [werleDVM@gmail.com](mailto:werleDVM@gmail.com).

## County Programs

### County Agricultural Incentives Program (CAIP)

CAIP provides Kentucky agricultural producers with cost-share assistance on practices to allow them to improve and diversify their current farm operations. CAIP

covers a wide variety of agricultural enterprises in its 11 incentive areas, including, but not limited to, beef and dairy cattle; farm infrastructure, fencing, and water enhancement; equine; forage; goats and sheep; horticulture; poultry; swine; bees and honey; timber and technology, as well as energy efficiency and production; marketing; and value-added production.

Eight CAIPs were approved by the board in the following counties totaling \$799,811:

- Clay (\$270,800)
- Green (\$63,000)
- Johnson (\$68,000)
- Knott (\$38,000)
- Logan (\$51,421)
- Mason (\$40,000)\*
- Rockcastle (\$148,590)
- Washington (\$120,000)

### Deceased Farm Animal Removal (DAR)

The Deceased Farm Animal Removal Program serves as a measure to facilitate the coordination of environmentally sound and cost-effective disposal of deceased livestock for Kentucky producers. Two DARs were

approved by the board in following counties totaling \$30,000:

- Scott (\$15,000)
- Shelby (\$15,000)

### Next Generation Farmer Program (NextGen)

NextGen addresses the growing need for a specialized program that would benefit producers ages 18 to 40 that have been engaged in an agricultural operation for a minimum of three years.

One NextGen was approved by the board in Washington County totaling \$30,000.

### Youth Agricultural Incentives Program (YAIP)

YAIP encourages youth to engage in and explore agricultural opportunities.

Two YAIPs were approved by the board in the following counties, totaling \$90,000:

- Logan (\$70,000)
- Washington (\$20,000)

All application periods and deadlines for CAIP, NextGen, and YAIP will be advertised locally.

\*Existing programs receiving additional funding.

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# A behind-the-scenes look at the University of Kentucky's first-ever bourbon release

By Grace Sowards

LEXINGTON, Ky.— In August of 2024, a select group of students headed to their first day of class in a new course, not knowing what to expect. Today, they have created the first distilled spirit brand at the University of Kentucky.

Honorary professor Herb Heneman's Commercialization of Distilled Spirits course at the UK James B. Beam Institute for Kentucky Spirits (JBBI) set students on track to learn how a bourbon brand is born after the spirit is made. In the fall, Heneman split the class into teams to brainstorm and pitch ideas to one another—what to name the brand, what the label should look like, how to bottle and process the spirit.

"We wanted to give students a foundation for actually taking a bourbon from concept to completion," Heneman said. "What better way to learn than by doing?"

The four class groups hit the ground running to create a name and label ideas for the spirit. Heneman gave students complete creative freedom here and looked forward to learning what inspired them.

Mary Grace Vest, a senior studying biomedical engineering, was in the group that pitched WildCask.

"I thought since this was the first brand, it had to be something

that represented not only the university, but the Institute itself," Vest said. "WildCask sort of just

store shelves. Vest explained another element of keeping craft and tradition front and center on

semester and created the artwork.

"I couldn't be happier with what it looks like now. It's so

Bourbon Co. to the Independent Stave Company Boswell Family Warehouse on campus. The 12

reserve a bottle of the first batch at the 2025 JBBI Industry Conference in March. Individuals who reserved bottles were invited to purchase and pick them up on campus on April 28. The in-person payment and pickup requirement allowed patrons to meet Heneman, DeBolt and the student creators, many of whom autographed bottles. Proceeds from the sales of the inaugural release will be invested in students, research and programming at JBBI.

WildCask creators also learned a lesson in distribution through Herb's class. As a result, a small portion of bottles were sent to retailers like Liquor Barn and Kroger Wine and Spirits.

"Making the liquid is one very important part," DeBolt said. "But when you look at a pie chart of all the employment opportunities in this industry, probably about two-thirds of those opportunities are in the sales, marketing, procurement, and other commercial aspects. Bringing this class in fills out our ability to meet our mission of creating the best graduates for the next generation of distillers and distillery workers."

For more information on the Distillation, Wine and Brewing Certificate offered at the Beam Institute, visit <https://beam.institute.ca.uky.edu/>.



The Bardstown Bourbon Company allowed Beam Institute students to learn the bottling process at their facility. While there, students also packaged and labeled boxes of WildCask for distributors.

Photo by Matt Barton

popped into my head, because it sounds like wildcat. The cask is the center of the story when it comes to bourbon. It spoke to the university, but it also speaks to the craft."

To make their product stand out the most, students wanted the label to be different than the understated branding with minimal logos and text that can often be found on liquor

the label: the White Oak tree centerpiece.

The tree, in combination with the sketch of the Beam Institute building and the bright blue label, perfectly encapsulates WildCask's message: This spirit is for and inspired by the UK community. William Bahan of WBahan Design took the final brand pitch, a collaborative effort of the whole class during the second

much better than our original pitch, so it's awesome," Vest said.

The JBBI team, led by Director Seth DeBolt, has been waiting to see this moment since before the Beam Institute was officially formed. Even before ground was broken on the building, they knew the goal: to make the first-ever distilled spirit from the world's largest teaching distillery.

DeBolt knew Heneman could be vital to reaching that goal.

"Herb is a real industry legend, and he spent 30 years commercializing products in the industry across many categories," DeBolt said. "His rolodex of contacts and knowledge is second to none."

Heneman got the project off the ground by donating bourbon from his personal stock at Bardstown

donated barrels were a variety of ages, with a total value of just under \$40,000. The liquid from Heneman's barrels was combined with the product of barrels donated by Freddie Noe and the James B. Beam Distilling Co. to make the perfect, unique blend that is WildCask. The class also used the Bardstown Bourbon Co. bottling facility, allowing for a behind-the-scenes look at how they bottle thousands of spirits every day.

"I'm so grateful to Herb for sharing his knowledge with us," Vest said.

Mary Grace Vest, left, pictured with her fellow students signing bottles outside of the Boswell Family Independent Stave Company barrel warehouse on campus. Photo by Sabrina Hounshell

JBBI offered the opportunity to



Three students outside of the Beam Institute signing WildCask bottles.



Seth DeBolt holding up WildCask bottle in front of JBBI building.

# 'Everything comes from plants': UK professor dedicates 35 years to plant pathology

By Christopher Carney

LEXINGTON, Ky.—

A love for sustainability, international agriculture, teaching and teamwork are the cornerstones that best defined Paul Vincelli's plant pathology career at the University of Kentucky.

After 35 years, Vincelli is retiring as a Cooperative Extension Service professor and plant pathologist at the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment—leaving a legacy in extension, teaching and service. His work focused primarily on applied research and extension of corn, forage and turfgrass diseases as well as emerging issues in plant pathology and global agriculture.

For more than three decades, Vincelli has been an ambassador, advocate and educator of plant pathology and genetic engineering—travelling all over the world, writing numerous publications and cited papers, syncing up with some of the best researchers and scientists, and finding innovative ways to teach his students, and the community, about this dynamic field.

"It was an honor to work at the University of Kentucky," Vincelli said. "I'm very proud of how extension

programming continues to grow and serve the entire community. I couldn't have done half of what I did without a team of dedicated individuals that helped me along the way."

One of those teammates was Larry Grabau, current professor emeritus in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences at Martin-Gatton CAFE, who was a strong encourager in Vincelli developing and delivering the online Master of Science in Science Translation and Outreach (STO) degree program.

"I very much enjoyed working with Paul on the initiation of the STO program for the benefit of our county extension professionals," Grabau said. "There were abundant challenges; however, Paul continued to find the energy and to take the initiative to keep that project going forward. His courageous and thoughtful support of sound agricultural practices to support the health and well-being of the environment, on which we all depend, was deeply appreciated."

When Vincelli joined UK in 1990, he was a colleague with Jimmy Henning, now an extension professor emeritus at Martin-Gatton CAFE, to diagnose problems associated with alfalfa



Paul Vincelli always had a "love for teaching" students at the University of Kentucky.

Photo by Matt Barton

spring seedings.

"Paul took this on and found that these losses were due to aphanomyces, a new disease for alfalfa in Kentucky," Henning said. "This discovery led to a change in seeding recommendations for alfalfa. I kidded Paul about the correlation between hiring a new plant pathologist and finding a new disease. Paul took that kidding with the good humor he is known for."

He credits Vincelli for helping not only launch the STO online degree, but helping Henning advance the program as the director of graduate studies.

"Paul led the effort

to get the degree program defined and shepherded it through the approval effort, which is quite an arduous process," Henning said. "This degree is especially helpful for Kentucky county agents to get their MS degrees without coming to campus. Thanks to Paul's efforts, I was able to step in and build on his foundation for this very important program."

His "love for teaching" exuded through his fun examples in explaining seemingly complex topics in an understandable way for his students and audience—which can be seen in his explanation of genetic engineering.

What is plant pathology? It starts with breakfast.

Plant pathology is the study of plant disease, but for Vincelli, it's much simpler than that.

Vincelli shared a story when he meets with people that want to know more about what he does and what exactly plant pathology is all about.

"One of the fun aspects is talking about the importance of plants in peoples' lives. I love it when someone asks, 'So, what do you do for a living?' Of course, I always respond, 'I'm a plant pathologist.'"

This is always a key moment in the conversation for Vincelli. For Vincelli, plant pathology is as simple as what folks had for breakfast.

"Either their face lights up when they recognize what that means, or they look puzzled as they process this. If they are puzzled, I ask them what they had for breakfast. And they might say, toast and orange juice. If so, I will suggest that these come from plants."

Vincelli adds, "They sometime say, 'a couple of sausage links.' But I might say, sausages don't come from plants—they come from hogs. Then I ask, what does the hog eat? Mostly plants and plant products. So, very quickly, people come to understand that studying plants and plant health are important to them as consumers because almost everything comes from plants, starting with your breakfast."

Biography Vincelli's international career began as a botanist for U.S. Peace Corps in Colombia and Nicaragua from 1977-1980.

Vincelli later joined the UK Department of Plant Pathology an assistant extension professor in 1990, then became an associate professor

in 1995 and professor in 2001. Since 2007, he has served as UK's Provost Distinguished Service Professor. Vincelli also serves as the Southern Region Scientist at Large for the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program.

Vincelli has published more than 50 research publications, over 100 extension and trade publications, won three Fulbright awards, and served as a Jefferson Science Fellow at the National Academy of Science, Engineering and Medicine and US Agency for International Development. He was voted "Man of the Year" by the Kentucky Turfgrass Association at the Kentucky Turfgrass Conference in 2002.

Vincelli has also won multiple teaching awards including The American Phytopathological Society (APS) Excellence in Teaching Award (2007), UK's Provost's Award for Outstanding Teaching (2011) and the Great Teacher Award from the University of Kentucky Alumni Association (2011).

Vincelli is internationally recognized for his role in sustainable plant pathology and service to the state of Kentucky for work on corn, forage and turfgrass pathology. Additionally, he has developed resources on topics like molecular detection of pathogen species, genetically engineered crops, climate resiliency and sustainable agriculture for farmers and the public.

"Working in international agriculture overseas was a privilege," Vincelli said. "We need to be influential in the world. When we lead, everyone wins. This is so important for our field and our future."

To learn more about plant pathology and its department at Martin-Gatton CAFE, visit <https://plantpathology.ca.uky.edu>



Paul Vincelli always enjoyed explaining plant pathology to people.

Photo by Matt Barton

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