Fresh hope for hungry homes

Farms to Families program helps feed the needy with nutritious food choices

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Co-op to showcase precision ag at Milan No-Till Field Day July 28 - p. 10

FFA member uses Co-op sheep feeds in award-winning research project - p. 24

Aspiring beekeepers can get started with convenient all-in-one kit - p. 28

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Cover Story

20 Fresh hope for hungry homes
Food pantries are typically known for providing people in need with mainly nonperishable items, but the “Farm to Families” program administered by Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee is working to change that. Through the program, farmers like Jimmy McAlister of Fayetteville can donate their excess or unmarketable produce, such as these sweet potatoes, to be distributed by Second Harvest through its partner agencies in 46 counties in Middle and West Tennessee. As a result, hungry families have access to more nutritious food choices.

ON THE COVER: Jimmy and Vicky McAlister have been participating in the Farm to Families program for three years, providing some 32,000 pounds of sweet potatoes this year alone. They finished packing potatoes from the 2015 crop just as this year’s plants went into the ground in early June.

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TenneScene

Late afternoon gardening takes place near a colorful quilt barn at the Embree House Historic Farm in Telford. The quilt is inscribed with the words “Emancipation Journey” – the theme of the property which contains 25 acres of natural forest, a 25-acre working farm, a bed and breakfast, and the main house that dates back to 1761. For more information, visit www.embreefarm.com.

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Visit Sanders Farms in Henry County, where a new generation is taking the reins.
Young singers make ‘Joyful Noise’ in D.C.

I have often mentioned in my columns how Christ United Methodist Church (CUMC) in Franklin — which Jane and I joined in its infancy and in which our son, Chris, grew up and was married — continues to influence my life and help keep me closer to a God who loves me despite my shortcomings. Now I’m not saying here that divine intervention helped me with a recent concern, but as the June 20 deadline for this particular issue of the Cooperator bore down hard and I had no clue about what to write, the weekly edition of “Connections,” our excellent church newsletter, arrived in our mailbox.

As we do any evening we can, Jane and I were sitting on our screened-in back porch watching birds, squirrels, and rabbits enjoy the backyard bounty we give them (Co-op products, of course).

“Doug has a great column in the church newsletter,” said Jane, who had brought in the mail and thus had dibs on “Connections.” She was referring to Doug Fuqua, CUMC’s popular and committed associate youth minister. And as soon as I read Doug’s poignant piece, I knew I had the makings for a meaningful July “As I Was Saying.” He did a wonderful job of reporting on the 10th annual Joyful Noise Choir Tour the youth of our church had taken the week before to Washington, D.C. Rev. Anne Hook, minister of music and worship; Rev. Paul Bonner, youth minister; and some parents also made the trip.

“In all, 61 youth and adults traveled to Washington where we sang to veterans, volunteers, restaurant patrons, boat riders, and people without homes,” Doug said. “Beloved’ was our tour theme, and we discussed and shared what it means to be chosen, broken, redeemed, and sent out as God’s beloved. Along the way, the group had a chance to see and experience our nation’s capital and the richness of our nation’s history.”

Doug added that during his tenure at CUMC, he has seen the number of Joyful Noise Choir Tour participants grow from fewer than 30 singers and adults on the first trip to the 61 this year. “One of the true joys of my job is that I have been around long enough to witness many youth grow from nervous 7th-graders to confident adults who understand that they are beloved.”

He gives an example from his very first trip: “I met a 6th-grader who had a great smile and an abundance of energy and words! During the next six years, I came to know this person well, and she shared her life and dreams with me. She was determined to be in the fashion industry and had aspirations to be the editor of Vogue Magazine. Somewhere along the way, plans changed as they often do, and she veered away from fashion and intentionally moved toward seeking justice for those without a voice. [During the Joyful Noise Youth Tour], I had a chance to visit her at her place of work in Washington, D.C. The little girl I first met on the retreat long ago bounced down the steps of the United States Institute for Peace in her business suit, with her same great smile and abundance of words and energy.

“I realized in that moment that God works in amazing ways and uses us as instruments of His grace and peace. I know that our community of faith supported and nurtured her throughout her journey and will continue to do so in the future. Hers is just one of many stories in our congregation of how we can live out our Belovedness.”

I’ve known the brilliant and beautiful young woman Doug so accurately described since she was a toddler. Fittingly, he chose not to identify her in his column, and I certainly won’t either.

But I thank God for young people like her and others who are committed to doing what they can to make our world a better place. Church is always a great place to start.
Making milk matter

Producers and promoters honored at annual June Dairy Month Luncheon

Story and photos by Thomas Capps

From outstanding dairy promoters to exceptional dairy producers, special guests at Tennessee’s 2016 June Dairy Month Luncheon had a common message: Milk matters.

In this time-honored tradition that officially begins the state’s Dairy Month observance each year, several hundred 4-H’ers, teachers, farmers, dairy representatives, and special guests gathered June 3 at Ellington Agricultural Center in Nashville. Randy Davis, president of the American Dairy Association of Tennessee who served as master of ceremonies for the event, opened his remarks by emphasizing the importance of the industry even as producers struggle with depressed dairy prices.

“When the good Lord allowed the Israelites to look over into Canaan, they didn’t see green beans or blueberries or anything like that. They saw milk and honey,” said Davis. “So you know how important dairy products are to us.”

Following Davis’ introductory remarks, Deputy Commissioner of Agriculture Tom Womack praised all the state’s dairy producers, describing them as “dedicated, compassionate, committed producers who are the best in the nation.”

Among those producers is Austin Berry of Warren County, a fourth-generation farmer and this year’s 4-H dairy project state winner. Addressing the luncheon guests, Berry spoke fondly of his experiences growing up on his grandfather’s farm and explained why he is so passionate about the dairy industry.

“Most kids dream of being a video game designer or computer whiz or something, but I don’t even know how to turn one on,” said Berry. “I stuck to milking cows, and I’ve really enjoyed that. Over the years, dairy has taught me the importance of life, hard work, and achievement and how to appreciate the small things. It has helped me become the young man I am today.”

Berry also said he had served as June Dairy Month chairman for his county in the past, and the 43 young people serving in that role for 2016 were recognized at the luncheon for their hard work and dedication to the industry.

Food science state winner, Victoria Clements, was also honored but unable to attend. Additionally, 4-H dairy promotion state winners were (See Milk, page 6)

Summer Saturdays offer fun activities

Fun-filled activities for the family are planned in July during “Summer Saturdays” at the Tennessee Agricultural Museum in Nashville.

The first event on July 16 features “Wild Wings and Creeping Things,” giving visitors a chance to catch and release butterflies, chat with local beekeepers, learn about wild birds, see basket-makers in action, and have photos made with a giant ant or praying mantis. On July 23, “Horsing Around” is the theme, featuring wagon rides, all types of equine, lessons in sheep shearing, dulcimer music, and spinning and weaving demonstrations.

Each event runs from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information, call 615-837-5197 or visit tnagmuseum.org/summer.html.

Pork Delegate election is Aug. 11 in Franklin

Election of pork producer delegate candidates for the 2017 National Pork Producers (Pork Act) Delegate Body will be held at 2 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 11, at Cool Springs Marriott in Franklin.

The election is in conjunction with an Executive Committee meeting of the Tennessee Pork Producers Association. Any producer age 18 or older who is a resident of the state and has paid all assessments due can be considered as a delegate candidate and/or participate in the election. All eligible producers are encouraged to bring with them a sales receipt proving that hogs were sold in their name and the checkoff deducted.

For more information, contact the Tennessee Pork Producers Association, 13994 Versailles Road, Rockvale, TN 37153; 615-274-6533, or porkpromotn@tds.net.
honored: Shelby Mainord, Jackson County, Division I; Jordan Bowling, Anderson County, Division II and the Media Award; Lucas Garrison, Sumner County, Division III and the Best Use of Theme Award; and Carlee Cowan, Lincoln County, the Great American Milk Drive Award.

Three young artists were also rewarded in this year’s fun and competitive poster contest, which used the theme, “Get More with Milk.” Each received a certificate and cash award. First-place winner and recipient of $550 was Chad Miller of Hamilton County. Second-place honors and $300 went to Warren County’s Sahastian Aughinbaugh, and finishing third with $200 was Cadence Howell from Putnam County.

In the 2016 4-H Dairy Quiz Bowl competition, Williamson County’s team, coached by Julie Ozburn, captured the junior high division title for the fourth year in a row. Team members are Sydney Lamb, Isaiah Osborne, Kendall Warpool, and Forest Ozburn. Henry County took top honors in the senior division and earned the right to represent Tennessee in the regional contest to be held in Louisville, Ky., at the North American International Livestock Exposition in November. Team members Emily Hudgins, Adam Rogers, Pierce Rose, and Tyler Miller are coached by Laura Moss.

Also recognized was outgoing chief executive officer of the Southeast United Dairy Industry Association (SUDIA), Cheryl Hayn, who is retiring after a career of more than 30 years. She was presented a basket of Tennessee “goodies” in recognition of her service to the industry.

“It has been a privilege to promote dairy products and milk, the most perfect food on earth,” said Hayn.

Milk certainly matters to this year’s Dairy Promoter of the Year, Julie Walker of Newport, described by Davis as a “friend of the dairy industry” whose life work has been “building bridges from farm to public.” Walker currently serves as agriculture communications coordinator of AgCentral Farmers Cooperative, where her tasks include social media, email newsletters, and development of agriculture marketing materials.

“There is so much in the economy that feeds off the dairy industry, from retail jobs to farms and reasons for them to exist,” said Walker in accepting the award. “I like to think that I do all I can to keep that going in the state of Tennessee.

A native of Loudon County, Walker grew up on a family farm that relocated to Cocke County in January 1970 due to construction of Tellico Dam. Being active in 4-H sparked her interest in showing registered Holsteins. She started her own registered Holstein herd, earned an animal science degree from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, and later established communications, marketing, photojournalism, and consulting business.

“I cannot tell you how much this award means to me because dairy has been my life,” said Walker, who challenged the audience to support their communities and farmers by purchasing local dairy products. “Someone once told me that people do not care how much you know until they know how much you care. I’d like to leave that with you as a take-away today.”

The luncheon’s featured speaker was another Loudon County native, Laura Herzog, deputy communications director for Tennessee Gov. Bill Haslam. Although admitting right off the bat that she was not an expert on the subject, Herzog quickly expressed her appreciation for dairy farmers and their products.

“What I know about dairy is I love it,” said Herzog. “It seems like a really exciting time for agriculture. It is becoming more and more fashionable to care where our food comes from.”

A former 4-H member herself, Herzog won the state 4-H public speaking contest and served on the Tennessee 4-H Council. She told the Dairy Month crowd that she credits 4-H for setting her on the path to success. She graduated first in her class in 2001 from the University of Tennessee, where she studied broadcasting and political science. Prior to joining Gov. Haslam’s staff in 2014, Herzog worked for Senators Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker.

“She’s my basic message to you: Think big,” Herzog said. “You’re in 4-H, which automatically puts you a step ahead of so many. Besides teaching me how to communicate, compete, serve, and lead, 4-H gave me a strong sense of community, of being a part of something bigger, and a lasting network of friends. As 4-Hers, not only are we aware of a bigger world out there, but we also pledge to make it better.”

Through all her successes in 4-H, school, and work, Herzog said it was the tragic loss of her 25-year-old brother, Trey, in a car accident in 2007 that made her realize that life is “more about the examples we set than the titles we hold.”

“I had to write his obituary, and I realized that at some point all of us will be described in a few lines of ink,” she said. “That is my new goal: to matter.”

Though her remarks were geared toward youth in the audience, Herzog delivered a heartfelt and motivating message of self-accountability for everyone.

“You have to convince one key person to believe in you, and you have to give that person full responsibility and ownership for your successes and failures,” she said. “That person is you. Let your instincts, intellect and heart guide you. There is only one you, and you will pass this way only once. Do it right!”

LEF: Two of the four junior Dairy Quiz Bowl winners from Williamson County, Sydney Lamb and Forest Ozburn, celebrate their victory following the luncheon. Not pictured are Kendall Warpool, Isaiah Osborne, and coach Julie Ozburn. RIGHT: Senior Dairy Quiz Bowl team winners from Henry County display their plaque after the kickoff luncheon. From left are team members Emily Hudgins, Adam Rogers, Pierce Rose, and Tyler Miller. Team coach Laura Moss is not pictured.
The Load of Bull Sweepstakes

When you purchase a qualifying bag of Co-op Cattle Mineral, you'll be entered to win a certificate for up to $4,000 toward the purchase of a qualified herd sire (qualifications for herd sires are listed below) or a set of livestock scales (must be purchased at Co-op).

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This is a sweepstakes for a certificate for up to $4,000 for use toward the purchase of a qualified herd sire (Qualifications for herd sires are listed below) or a set of livestock scales (must be purchased at Co-op). Each participant will automatically receive one entry for each bag of qualifying mineral purchased. Individuals who wish to enter but do not purchase product can enter by sending their name, address and phone number to: Tennessee Farmers Co-op, 180 Old Nashville Hwy., LaVergne, TN 37086, Attention Feed Department. The contest will run from August 1, 2015 - July 31, 2016. A total of 3 certificates (1 per TFC Feed Mill Area) will be awarded on August 1, 2016.

Winners must purchase qualified herd sires or scales between August 1 and December 1, 2016. Winners must submit the actual invoice for the herd sire or scale purchase as well as qualifying EPD documentation for bulls. TFC will then send reimbursement for up to $4,000.

Prizes not claimed within the allotted time will be re-awarded by another drawing. Employees, immediate family members, and vendors of TFC are ineligible. Any local or other taxes or fees associated with a prize are the prize winner’s responsibility. This contest is open to legal residents of Tennessee who are 18 years of age or older. This contest is void wherever prohibited by federal, state or local law. Subject to applicable law, the Contest Sponsor reserves the right to cancel, suspend, terminate or modify the Contest Rules without prior notice and with no obligation of liability.

All incidental costs and expenses associated with the prizes are the responsibility of the prize winner. The chances for winning will depend on the number of entrants received during the Contest Period. Prize winners may be required to execute certain documentation in order to claim their prize. All entries shall become the property of the Contest Sponsor, and entrants understand that their name, residence and association with Co-op may be used for publicity or promotional purposes by the Contest Sponsor. By entering this Contest, each entrant agrees that, to the fullest extent allowed by law, the Contest Sponsor shall have no liability and shall be held harmless by the entrant for any damage, loss or liability to person or property. Due in whole or in part, directly or indirectly, by reason of entering the Contest or the acceptance, possession, use or misuse of any prize or prize activity. All entrants agree to comply with the Contest Rules, as may be amended from time to time. To the fullest extent allowed by law, this Contest shall be governed by the laws of the State of Tennessee, without giving effect to its conflict of law principles.

Bulls must meet or exceed the minimum requirements for one of the following three bull types. Each bull type has a different set of EPD requirements.

A. Balanced bulls
B. Terminal bulls
C. Calving Ease bulls

EPDs must be generated and printed from the most prominent national association of members for each eligible beef breed. Eligible beef breeds for the Co-op Herd Sire Sweepstakes program must have a national breed performance testing program that participates in a National Cattle Evaluation Program recognized by the Beef Improvement Federation.
It’s a No-Till year
Co-op will feature precision ag and more at popular Milan field day July 28

When the first Milan No-Till Field Day was staged in 1981, the event was designed to promote the use of this farming practice that eliminates plowing before planting, which was new to many attendees at the time. Fewer than 50,000 acres in Tennessee were no-tilled back then.

Today, 35 years later, no-till is the norm. According to the National Agricultural Statistics Service, more than 70 percent of Tennessee farmers use no-till practices, and an additional 20 percent use some type of conservation tillage. Nationally, more than 60 percent of cropland is planted using these methods. The technique is proven to reduce both soil erosion and greenhouse gas emissions while improving farm efficiency and the organic matter and biodiversity in farm soils.

As the nation’s oldest and largest conservation tillage event, the Milan No-Till Field Day remains highly popular even though most farmers are now familiar with the practices. It’s held every other year, and the 2014 field day attracted nearly 2,500 visitors from 19 states and several countries to the University of Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center at Milan.

The 2016 event on Thursday, July 28, will offer much more than no-till education, with 15 tours and more than 40 presentations on the latest crop production research, emerging technologies, and agricultural advances.

“The no-till farming movement changed the way we grow food and fiber, but agriculture will continue to change, especially with the demands of a growing world population,” says UT’s Blake Brown, director of the Milan center, which is known as the birthplace of no-till farming in Tennessee. “That’s why agricultural research and educational field days are so valuable. Today we continue to promote sustainable farming practices by introducing producers to new technology and more efficient methods.”

Visitors to this year’s Milan No-Till Field Day can hear presentations on research involving every major row crop grown in Tennessee. Academic and industry experts will cover optimum management strategies for no-till crop production, including nutrient enhancement, water use, new technologies in pest control, and advancements in plant breeding. Other topics include weed, insect and disease management research, nutrient loss reduction strategies, cover crop management and new research findings involving pollinator health.

In addition to the array of educational tours, field day guests can also enjoy a large trade show of agricultural vendors and organizations, including the Tennessee Farmers Cooperative system. This year, Co-op will have a separate showcase tent featuring its Incompass Ag Technology program, which bundles Co-op’s agronomic services and precision agriculture solutions under one umbrella.

At TFC’s interactive exhibit, visitors can learn more about Co-op’s full range of products and services and get expert advice from knowledgeable agronomy specialists. The interactive “Incompass Learning Lab,” created by TFC subsidiary GreenPoint Ag, will also be on site to provide hands-on precision ag experiences.

“Precision ag is turning into ‘decision ag,’” says Alan Sparkman, TFC agronomy marketing manager. “It can be a little overwhelming to figure out how the wide range of products and services fit together and lead to more profitable farming operations. That’s where Incompass can help. We feel like the Milan No-Till Field Day is the perfect event to introduce the program to a wide audience of growers.”

Additionally, field day attendees can browse the West Tennessee Agricultural Museum and participate in a hands-on community service activity, “Farmers vs. Hunger.” Participants will package meals to be distributed at local food banks.

The event is free and open to the public. Gates open at 6 a.m.; tours and the trade show begin at 7. The last tours are given at 1 p.m., and most take an hour and 30 minutes, so visitors are encouraged to arrive early if they want to attend multiple presentations.

For more information, including directions to the site and a complete program, visit http://milan.tennessee.edu/MNTFD, email recatmilan@utk.edu, or call 731-686-7362.
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‘Take Care of It’ takes top honors
TFC promotional video named ‘Best of Show’ in CCA contest

“It’s Your Co-op: Take Care of It,” a video that debuted at Tennessee Farmers Cooperative’s 2015 annual meeting, has been named “Best of Show” by the Cooperative Communicators Association (CCA), an organization of professional communicators who work for various types of co-ops in the U.S. and Canada.

Awards were presented at CCA’s 2016 Institute June 4-7 in Omaha, Neb.

The top award in the “Programs and Projects” division was one of a dozen given to members of TFC’s communications staff in the competition that attracted 628 entries. “It’s Your Co-op: Take Care of It” drew high praise from judge Terry Wilhite, who called it a “powerful, powerful video.”

“When there is common ground, relationships can be formed that lead to understanding,” wrote Wilhite. “This entry does an absolutely masterful job establishing common ground, showing the many varied and valued relationships that this cooperative has with its members and, remarkably, it leads viewers to the understanding that the co-op is YOUR co-op.”

“This is how it is done,” he concluded. “THIS is how cooperatives are communicated.” The video can be viewed on TFC’s YouTube channel at http://bit.ly/TakeCareOfIt.

On its way to capturing the top honor, the TFC entry won first place in its class for promotional videos. Staff members earned two other first-place awards. Chris Villines, Tennessee Cooperator assistant editor, topped the technical writing category with his story, “Plan Bee,” which explains strategies to help pollinators survive and thrive. The article appeared in the July 2015 Cooperator.

In the Writing Division, “Plan Bee” was also deemed the second-place headline, and Morgan took home second place for her technical story, “From battlefields to crop fields,” an August 2015 Cooperator story about Co-op’s work in the high-tech world of unmanned aerial vehicles. Communications specialist Sarah Geyer earned a third-place award for her entertaining feature, “Labor of Love,” a profile of husband-and-wife team Ronnie and Dana Tucker, who log with mules. The article appeared in the December 2015 Cooperator.

TFC took two out of three awards in the speechwriting category for messages crafted for the cooperative’s 2015 annual meeting. Villines earned second place for “Commit to Take Care of It,” which was delivered by TFC Board Chairman Larry Paul Harris, and Morgan won third for “It’s Your Co-op’s Future: Take Care of It,” a speech given by TFC Chief Executive Officer Bart Krisle.

Following the same “Take Care of It” theme, TFC’s 2015 annual brochure was named second place in the brochures, pamphlets, and one-time publications (budget more than $5,000) category. This publication is an effort of the entire TFC Communications Department.

Two other individual honors for Morgan round out TFC’s awards this year. Her photo, “Backyard Buddies,” earned second place in the unpublised portrait category. The photo features young Ally Jo Cook and one of the chickens she’s raising on her family’s Cohutta, Ga., farm. And Morgan’s photo story, “Broken Wings,” earned an honorable mention for words and pictures. This piece featured the Blue Monarch rehabilitation center in Coffee County and appeared in the April 2015 Cooperator.
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**ARE YOUR TIRES SAFE?**

Check your tires before you leave on long trips!
Three days of celebrations with customers and their communities recently capped off the completion of major renovations for both Humphreys and Dickson Farmers Cooperatives.

Humphreys’ store in Waverly hosted a Customer Appreciation Day on Friday, May 13, with nearly 500 attendees touring the store’s new 2,400-square-foot power equipment showroom.

The Co-op’s manager Randy Hite said the need for additional power equipment space is the result of the work of the department’s manager, Barry Clark.

“During the six years he’s been here, Barry has taken the power equipment department from $200,000 in sales to more than $1 million,” said Randy. “He’s smart, likeable, and good with people. I’m proud to have him on our Co-op team.”

The expansion not only allows more room for Barry to stock a wider variety of products but also a larger service area.

“Relocating the power equipment freed up space in our main showroom,” says Randy. “So we took the opportunity to remodel that area — rearranging and replacing shelves to create a more open appearance — and to give our outside entrance a much-needed facelift.”

Randy adds that most of the construction was completed by customers or members, including Darren Gilmore, owner of Southern Home Repair and general contractor for the project; Chris Woods with Pro Steel, metal work; Bubba Gant, concrete; Keith Goff with ACE Electric, wiring; Ken Gentry, air conditioning; and Clint Bailey, prep work.

“The Co-op and this community have always supported each other,” says Randy. “We wouldn’t be here without our customers and wanted our open house to also be a day to show our appreciation to them.”

Along with games, food, and special sales, an auction was held to help raise money for Barry’s daughter, Abigail, 4, who was recently diagnosed with leukemia.

“The vendors who work with Barry as well as many of his customers donated some really nice items for our auction,” says Co-op employee Lisa Binkley. “Because of their generosity and care and concern for Barry and Abigail, we raised $7,500 that day.”

Barry says he is grateful and overwhelmed by the community support but adds that he
doesn’t think what he does is that special.

“I just treat people the way I would want to be treated,” he says.

Ray Gentry, a Humphreys County resident, says that’s the reason Barry’s department is such a success.

“He knows his equipment, and he tries to be fair,” Ray adds. “Barry Clark is the reason I continue to bring my business to the Co-op.”

A few weeks later, on Friday and Saturday, June 10 and 11, more than 1,000 members, customers, and guests participated in Dickson Farmers Cooperative’s two-day grand reopening event, which spotlighted the store’s relocated entrance, additional parking, new covered outdoor garden area, and expanded showroom.

“It was a long project that took teamwork from our board and employees and patience from our customers,” says Dickson Farmers Manager Paul Sullivan, who adds that one of the Co-op’s customers, Jamey Irwin, served as the project’s general contractor.

During construction, the store’s entrance was moved to the side of the building, where the parking area could be tripled in size. The original entrance faced busy, four-lane Highway 70 and had limited room for customers to park with only 15 spaces. That area has been transformed into a covered outdoor seasonal sales center. Inside the store, the showroom was doubled in size to nearly 3,000 square feet.

“It’s obvious that these changes were made with the shopper in mind,” says longtime member Bird Armstrong. “They solved the parking problem, which is huge, and the extra space really makes the showroom inviting. I think it’s the best thing that’s ever happened to this store.”

Attendees of the two-day event were treated to tours of the upgraded facility, special sale prices, an inflatable bounce house and slide for the kids, and lots of food hot off the grill.

“I think this renovation has been a great asset to what we are doing,” says Dickson Farmers Co-op Director Beth Dawson. “It’s just the start of good things to come.”

With its recently renovated showroom of nearly 3,000 square feet — double the store’s original size — Dickson Farmers Co-op has expanded many of its product lines and enlarged some departments, including the popular sporting goods section.

The front entrance to Dickson Farmers was moved to the side of the building and is designed to attract customers to come in and see what the store has to offer.

Don’t Let Them Go THIRSTY This Summer

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Dickson Farmers Co-op Manager Paul Sullivan grills chicken for his employees and customers at the store’s grand reopening event on July 10.
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Tennessee 4-H officers visited Tennessee Farmers Cooperative headquarters in LaVergne May 31 during their Ambassador Tour. Front from left are Hannah Nave, all star chief; Kendall Garrell, governor; and Luci Allen, junior representative. In back are J.R. Smith, senior representative; and John Calvin Bryant, vice president.

Hundreds of 4-H and FFA members from across the state will be packing up their boots and show attire and hauling their prize beef cattle and sheep to Murfreesboro and Lebanon this month to compete in the 45th annual Tennessee Junior Livestock Exposition, one of the nation’s premier shows of its kind.

For many participants and their families, Expo is an annual journey in pursuit of plaques, trophies, and scholarships in competition with some of the best exhibitors and livestock that Tennessee has to offer. For others, especially those making their Expo debuts, it will be a valuable learning experience, one they’ll build on year after year.

Beef events will be held Monday, July 11, and Tuesday, July 12, at the Tennessee Livestock Center on the campus of Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro. Sheep competition will follow the next week — Monday, July 18, through Wednesday, July 20 — at the Wilson County Fairgrounds in Lebanon.

Co-op is a longtime supporter of Expo, which featured 1,187 animals in last year’s shows. Exhibitors also participate in a wide variety of activities to showcase their knowledge and skills developed by participating in 4-H livestock projects, including skillathons and showmanship competitions.

For more information, visit the University of Tennessee’s Animal Science website at http://ag.tennessee.edu/AnimalScience/4-H. Look for 2016 Expo coverage and a complete list of winners in the September Cooperator.

Celebrate Swiss Heritage July 30

The Grundy County Swiss Historical Society’s annual “Celebrating the Swiss Heritage” event will be Saturday, July 30, at the Stoker-Stampfli Farm Museum in Gruetli-Laager from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m.

This event celebrates the Swiss Colony of Gruetli that was settled in 1869 as a community composed almost entirely of German-speaking Swiss in an effort to preserve their culture in a new land. The upcoming celebration will feature Swiss-style music and food along with hayrides, a silent auction, demonstrations of primitive farm skills and more. The farm and all its outbuildings will be open for tours. Admission is $5 for ages 12 and older.

For more information, call 931-235-3029, email jackie@lawleyfamily.net, or visit swisshistoricalsociety.org.

Exhibitors gear up for Expo
Beef July 11-12 in Murfreesboro, sheep July 18-20 in Lebanon

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Sentry Natural Defense Natural Flea and Tick Squeeze-On for Dogs and Puppies kills and repels fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes for up to four weeks, yet it’s safe for use around children and pets when applied as directed – even in multiple-pet households. Each carton contains four applications that feature natural active ingredients such as peppermint oil, cinnamon oil, lemongrass oil, and thyme oil.
- For dogs and puppies 12 weeks of age or older.
- Veterinarian tested.
Available for dogs under 15 pounds (#6815991), 15-40 pounds (#6815992), and 40 pounds and over (#6815993).

**Sentry Natural Defense Natural Flea & Tick Squeeze-On for Cats & Kittens**
Sentry Natural Defense Natural Flea and Tick Squeeze-On for Cats and Kittens (#6815994) kills and repels fleas, ticks, and mosquitoes for up to four weeks, yet it’s safe to use on your cat or kitten and around your family when applied as directed. Each carton contains four applications that feature natural active ingredients such as peppermint oil, lemongrass oil, and clove oil.
- For cats and kittens 12 weeks of age or older and of all weights.
- Veterinarian tested.

**KnockOut Ant, Flea, and Tick Killer**
KnockOut Ant, Flea, and Tick Killer (#6812692) kills and repels ants, fleas, and ticks. KnockOut kills grubs, mole crickets, earwigs, spiders, centipedes, grasshoppers, and others. Consult the label for a full list. The 10-pound bag treats up to 8,300 square feet. For best results, water immediately after application.

**Powerfields Economy Gate Handle**
The sturdy Powerfields Economy Gate Handle features an internal expansion spring, an oversized hook, and large end flanges to reduce the risk of getting shocked when opening the gate. Available in white (#219243); black (#219241); and yellow (#219242).

**Powerfields 3-Way Gate Connector for T-Post**
Powerfields Economy 3-Way Gate Connector for T-Post (#219244) attaches to a t-post as a hook or junction point for gate handles or cross fence.

**Powerfields Stainless Steel Mini-Spring**
Powerfields Stainless Steel Mini-Spring (#219246) is designed for polywire, polytape, stainless-steel wire, or aluminum wire. Use to indicate the amount of tension on the wire, to act as a shock absorber, and to keep fence tension more uniform. For temporary or permanent fences. Low-tension applications only.

**Powerfields Strainer with Quick Ends**
The clever design of Powerfields Strainer with Quick Ends (#219245) allows fence wire to be attached to the strainer without crimp sleeves or other connectors. Use with 12 gauge wire.

**Powerfields Polytape End Tensioner**
Powerfields Polytape End Tensioner (#219247) fits all 1½-inch polytape. The stainless-steel triangular tensioner holds the polytape tight, deters tearing from impact, and allows easy retightening if the polytape becomes loose due to impact or stretching from snow and ice load. The tensioners swivel back and forth and rotate around the plastic insulated post bracket, allowing for up-and-down grade changes. This prevents the tape from bunching in the tensioner. Sold in packages of two.
Patriot’s Bear and Nuisance Animal Fence Kit (#219252) is a lightweight, easy-to-use product that can be set up and torn down in a matter of minutes! This basic kit provides a simple solution to deter raccoons, bears, or other similar-size nuisance animals. Protect your beehives, garbage bins, compost piles, fruit trees, small campsites, feed grain, and so much more with this effective kit. It requires an electric fence energizer with a rating of 0.5 joules output or higher (energizer sold separately).

Powerfields Polytape Corner Tensioner
Powerfields Polytape Corner Tensioner (#219248) fits all 1½-inch polytape. The stainless steel triangular tensioner holds the polytape tight, deters tearing from impact, and allows easy retightening if the polytape becomes loose due to impact or stretching from snow and ice load. The tensioners swivel back and forth and rotate around the plastic insulated post bracket, allowing for up-and-down grade changes. This prevents the tape from bunching in the tensioner. Sold in packages of two.

Powerfields Polytape Wide Tape Tensioner with Gate Plate
Powerfields Polytape Wide Tape Tensioner with Gate Plate (#219249) is a premium end tensioner/insulator with gate plate for all 1½-inch polytape. The gate plate is stainless steel for secure connection and maximum conductivity.

Powerfields 1½-inch Polytape Gate Handle
Powerfields 1½-inch Polytape Gate Handle (#219250) is an electric gate handle that is practically unbreakable. The handle includes a tensioner connector to attach wide polytape.

Powerfields 4-inch Snap Fin Spirolator
Powerfields 4-inch Snap Fin Spirolator (#219251) is unlike a normal fin tube that must be put on before tensioning wire; the snap fin is put on after the wire is tensioned. With a quick twist of the wrist, it snaps onto the wire. Sold in packs of 25 and comes with staples.

Lightning Diverter
This Lightning Diverter (#219233) is a one-of-a-kind device that attaches directly to your electric fence. 100 feet away from your charger to keep lightning from getting close. Other diverters are mounted at your fence charger, but when lightning goes to the ground it can spread out, follow the fence ground wire, and damage your box. The Lightning Diverter will not allow this to happen.

Polytin Calf Catcher
The Polytin Calf Catcher weighs approximately 350 pounds, measures 4 feet by 6 feet, and has 8 inches of ground clearance. The spring-loaded gates are opened by pulling a rope while seated on an ATV or UTV. The gates are opened by stepping on a latch that is located near the ATV operator’s right foot. All the hardware, components, and assembly instructions to mount on a standard ATV are included (#VH001). An extended hitch design (#VH002) is required for two-person UTV applications such as a Mule, Ranger, or Gator.

3-D Quik Hand Cattle Sprayer
The 3-D Quik Hand Cattle Sprayer (#3D001) is a convenient, fully automatic unit that provides a safe and stress-free way to spray your herd. The 3-D Quik Hand is portable, making fly control easy in any pasture. Its exceptional versatility and low maintenance make 3-D Quik Hand the only one of its kind.

• Operated by a small, 12-volt battery that is solar-charged.
• Equipped with a 15-gallon tank; spray is delivered through three nozzles.
• Activated as cattle pass through it.
• Spraying is limited by a five-second shut-off.
• Because the sprayer senses direction of travel through the opening, it only sprays as the cattle pass in one direction.
• Also equipped with a counter that tracks the number of exits.
• Two expandable gates will close off openings of up to 16 feet.

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Sheep and goats have often been viewed as secondary animals able to survive on lower-quality forages left behind by cattle or other livestock. While it is true that small ruminants are capable of utilizing less-desirable forages, it does not mean their nutritional needs can be ignored if animal performance is a consideration.

Modern breeds of sheep and goats — with their enhanced genetic potential to grow faster and produce more milk — require more than just a minimal level of nutrition. Knowledgeable producers understand the positive impact of supplemental vitamin/mineral nutrition on health, reproduction, and growth and will provide supplements in some form. But, because of the variety of information and products available, good intentions can sometimes lead to unintended consequences. Here are a few considerations to be aware of when providing free-choice vitamin/mineral supplements to sheep and goats:

Salt (sodium) is the only mineral element for which animals have an innate desire. They will seek out salt in their environment but normally will not overconsume it. Feed manufacturers take advantage of this characteristic to both encourage and limit overconsumption of free-choice supplements to achieve a targeted level of intake. Adding or blending additional salt into a vitamin/trace mineral supplement at the farm is not recommended since it only serves to dilute the mineral and further reduce consumption.

Trace mineral salt, while relatively inexpensive, is not an adequate vitamin/mineral supplement. Typically containing 90-percent to 95-percent salt, low levels of trace minerals, and no vitamins, it will not meet nutritional requirements when consumed free-choice by the animal. In this instance, you do get what you pay for.

An important difference between sheep and goats is that sheep are more susceptible to copper toxicity. Therefore, supplements intended for sheep generally contain no added copper. Sheep do have a requirement for copper, but the quantity is so small that the amount provided by forage alone is usually adequate. Because any copper above the requirement accumulates in the liver and can eventually reach a lethal level, it is recommended that sheep receive no supplemental copper.

It’s also worth noting that the administration of copper oxide wire particles is gaining popularity as an aid to parasite control, particularly in situations where the overuse of dewormers has led to anthelmintic resistance. Although the exact mode of action is not fully understood, the copper oxide is slowly released into the digestive tract where it has been shown to reduce the numbers of certain parasites. This fact, however, does not validate the use of excessive levels of copper in mineral supplements. Organic forms of copper and copper sulfate are much more readily absorbed than copper oxide, and feeding levels in excess of the requirement can put even goats at risk of copper toxicity.

Remember that the goal of any supplementation program is to meet the animal’s requirement while avoiding imbalances, excesses, and possible toxicities. Co-op has sheep and goat products specifically designed to do just that. Visit with the folks you can trust at your local Co-op for more information.
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Early on a Friday morning, the lines are long at the Mobile Pantry food distribution at Midland Baptist Church in Bell Buckle. Smiling volunteers help appreciative patrons fill their grocery carts with everything from bread and milk to canned and boxed goods to fresh fruits and vegetables.

For many, this sustenance is all that will stock their kitchens until they visit the pantry again.

“This means everything to me,” says Mike White of Unionville as he selects a package of fresh mushrooms. “I’m disabled, and I can’t get a job anywhere, so this here is what I eat. It’s a big, big help. To be honest, I don’t know what I’d do without it.”

The numbers show the need. Statewide, an estimated one in six Tennesseans is considered “food insecure,” and Midland’s ministry alone serves more than 500 families in Bedford and Rutherford counties each week.

“This isn’t typical food banking,” says David Cloniger, food resource manager at Second Harvest. “The overall goal is to get more fresh produce — the healthiest food we can give out — to the people we serve while helping out farmers. It’s a win-win for everybody involved.”

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council, up to 40 percent of American-grown produce is never consumed. Most of that food is discarded because of visual imperfections that keep it from going to market but don’t affect its taste or nutritional value. Last year, Second Harvest sourced more than 650,000 pounds of produce from farmers within 120 miles of its Nashville headquarters.

“As a food bank, we’re always looking for more food to bring in and sources to draw from,” says David. “Farms grow a lot of produce they can’t sell because of market restrictions, and they end up feeding animals with it, composting it, or sending it to landfills. With the Farm to Families program, they can donate that food to us, and we can pay them a little to cover costs of labor and materials.”

When the Farm to Families program began in 2011, only

LEFT: Mike White of Unionville adds a package of fresh mushrooms to his shopping cart at Midland Baptist Church’s weekly food pantry distribution. Disabled and out of work, he says the free food is what stocks his kitchen from week to week. This ministry serves more than 500 families per week in Bedford and Rutherford counties. RIGHT: Crystal Miller, left, and Chris Turner, farm managers for The Hermitage Hotel, oversee operations at the Glen Leven Farm in Nashville. Surplus produce is given to the Farm to Families program, and Second Harvest volunteers help with chores at the garden. The hotel, which purchases supplies from the farm, is operated by the college’s hospitality department.

These days, food pantries like this offer much more than nonperishable items, thanks to the “Farm to Families” program, which works with local farmers to glean excess or unmarketable produce and make it available to those in need. The program is administered by Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee, a hunger-relief organization that serves 46 counties through 450 partner agencies in Middle and West Tennessee.

Bro. Doug Mitchell, pastor at Midland Baptist in Bell Buckle, shows some of the farm-fresh sweet potatoes that will be distributed through the church’s Mobile Pantry food distribution site, which is supported by Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee. — Photos at right and below by Chris Villines

LEFT: McAlister family members all pitch in to help pack sweet potatoes for Second Harvest. In back, from left, are Jimmy McAlister and his wife, Vicky; Jimmy’s father, Bobby, and mother, Dot; and the late Joe Roper, Vicky’s uncle. Joe died unexpectedly on June 4, a few days after this photo was taken. In front are Jimmy and Vicky’s granddaughters Jamie Moorehead, 3, and her sister, Daylen, 5. Right: Bro. Doug Mitchell, pastor at Midland Baptist in Bell Buckle, shows some of the farm-fresh sweet potatoes that will be distributed through the church’s Mobile Pantry food distribution site, which is supported by Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee.
1 percent of Second Harvest’s overall food distribution was fresh produce, says David. Now, it’s more than 25 percent. “We’ve come a long way,” he says. “We see the results when we go out to our Mobile Pantry food distribution sites. People aren’t used to getting fresh produce. They’re used to food in cans and boxes, which are what they can access more readily on their own. We see ourselves as filling a gap. We want everyone to be able to get locally produced food, not just the ones who can afford to go to farmers markets or purchase a CSA [community supported agriculture] share.”

Tennessee boasts a diverse selection of fruit and vegetable crops, offering ample opportunity for Farm to Families to capture produce that would otherwise be wasted, adds David. The state is among the top five in the nation in production of tomatoes and snap beans, and Second Harvest has programs in place to utilize surpluses in both those industries.

Surplus sweet potatoes from McAlister Farms in Fayetteville are among the healthy choices at food pantries throughout Second Harvest’s distribution network. Jimmy and Vicky McAlister and their family grow 17 acres of sweet potatoes along with smaller numbers of Irish potatoes, cantaloupes, watermelons, and pumpkins on their farm near the Tennessee-Alabama state line. The McAlisters are members of Lincoln Farmers Cooperative, where they purchase their crop inputs and other farm supplies.

While most of their crops are sold directly to a network of grocery stores and fruit stands, the McAlisters save their edible but unmarketable produce for the Farm to Families program. Out of the 2015 crop of sweet potatoes, the McAlisters and their crew packed some 32,000 pounds for Second Harvest.

“The ones that go to Second Harvest may be blemished or too large, something that my market won’t have,” explains Jimmy, the fourth generation to grow sweet potatoes on his family’s farm. “They’ll use stuff that I couldn’t sell other places, so somebody is getting food value out of it. Before, it was just a loss. I’d much rather know that we’re feeding hungry people.”

Along with rescuing produce that would otherwise be wasted, Farm to Families added a volunteer component last year to help promote a greater awareness and appreciation for local agriculture. Through the program, Second Harvest crews work on participating farms in Middle Tennessee, helping to grow and harvest the crops that will be distributed through Second Harvest and its partner agencies.

“We have weekly opportunities for folks who want to supplement their volunteer experience in the warehouse by helping farms do what they need to thrive, and those farmers, in turn, give us their surplus harvest,” says David. “These are usually small farms without a lot of mechanization, so they...” (See Hungry, page 22)
Hungry

(continued from page 21)

need people to help tend to the crops. Last year, we had 500 volunteer hours on four farms and gleaned more than 11,000 pounds of produce. This year, we hope to double that.”

The Glen Leven Farm in Davidson County is among sites where Second Harvest volunteers perform chores such as planting, weeding, hoeing, and gathering produce in the large garden that provides fresh fare for The Hermitage Hotel and its Capitol Grille restaurant in downtown Nashville. The historic farm is conserved by the Land Trust for Tennessee and the hotel operates the two-acre garden plot, which includes seasonal selections such as corn, greens, onions, beets, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, zucchini, herbs, okra, peppers, melons, leeks, beans, beets, lettuce, and spinach.

Everything here is harvested for the hotel’s use, and surplus produce is earmarked for Farm to Families. Crystal Miller, farm manager for The Hermitage Hotel, even plants extra vegetables just to give away.

“The volunteer program is such a relief, especially in the middle of summer, when there’s a lot of harvesting to do,” she says. “They’re a tremendous help to us, and every time a crew is here, we send Second Harvest home with as much as they want. Plus, the volunteers learn about farming and experience where their food comes from. For many, they’re reconnecting to their roots.”

This is the third year that the Hermitage Hotel has supported the Farm to Families program — a relationship that was cultivated by kale.

“It all started with a bunch of greens we grew but didn’t need in our hotel kitchen,” explains Crystal, a customer of Dickson Farmers Cooperative. “We called Second Harvest to see if they could use it, and we’ve been providing fresh produce to them ever since.

The greatest thing is knowing that this food we’re producing is going to good use. I don’t want to think the energy I’ve put into this garden is going to waste. It feels good to know that we’re able to help feed those around us.”

Pastor Mitchell sees the benefits firsthand at Midland Baptist’s food pantry, where produce from the Farm to Families program is offering fresh hope for hungry homes.

“These are the things that most people we serve here wouldn’t be able to buy,” he says. “The cheapest food you can get isn’t the best food — it’s junk food. The fresh fruits and vegetables we get here are healthy and nutritious, not just something to fill hungry bellies.”

Fruit and vegetable farmers in the areas served by Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee are invited to participate in the Farm to Families program. For more information, contact Betsy Aho, Farm to Families coordinator, at 615-721-2276 or betsy.aho@secondharvestmidtn.org, or visit online at secondharvestmidtn.org.

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Shooting Hunger event to benefit Farm to Families

Second Harvest Food Bank of Middle Tennessee’s Farm to Families program will benefit from the proceeds of the second annual Shooting Hunger Sporting Clays Fun Shoot on Thursday, Sept. 29, at the Nashville Gun Club.

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative is a major sponsor of the shoot along with Tennessee Farm Bureau and Farm Credit Mid-America.

“When we have partners like this come to the table to help raise funds, then it’s a game-changer for us,” says David Cloniger, food resource manager for Second Harvest. “We couldn’t offer programs like this if we didn’t have people who are willing to support us and believe in our ideas. Otherwise, we’d have to find room in our budget, and that’s difficult when we’re trying to do so many things.”

TFC’s involvement reflects one of the Co-op system’s guiding principles, concern for community, says Chief Executive Officer Bart Krisle.

“With the Farm to Families program, many of the fruit and vegetable producers Co-ops serve are giving back to their communities by donating farm-fresh produce,” says Krisle. “We feel like it’s our responsibility to help support these hunger-relief efforts just as the Co-op helps support those farming operations.”

Fun Shoot registration begins at 10:30 a.m. with lunch at 11:30. Competition starts at 1 p.m. Five-person teams will play up to 13 stations. Prizes will be awarded for the top three teams and best individual shooter. Door prizes also will be given away.

Entry deadline is Monday, Aug. 15. Corporate sponsors are welcome. For more information, visit www.tnfarmbureau.org/2016shootinghunger.
Rebecca Arwood admits it: She’s a perfectionist. It’s a trait that has served the Johnson City 18-year-old well in the classroom. She graduated in the top 10 percent of her class at Daniel Boone High School last month and next month will start college on a full scholarship at nearby East Tennessee State University.

“If I start something, I want it to be the best it can be,” Rebecca says. “I’m a very driven person.”

This determined mindset has earned Rebecca another distinction. With her parents, David and Deana, and sisters, Jessica and Elizabeth, in attendance, the Daniel Boone FFA member was named Tennessee FFA 2016 Star in Agriscience at this year’s state convention in Gatlinburg.

The annual award goes to the top student who best demonstrates knowledge and skill in agriscience research and experimentation.

Rebecca, who was East Tennessee FFA regional sentinel for 2015-16, received the honor for her supervised agricultural experience (SAE) in which she conducted research on sheep growth using commercial feeds. She began this long-term project during her freshman year in 2012-13.

For her test subjects, Rebecca needed only to head out the back door of her family’s home. That’s where their 45 head of natural-colored and Tunis sheep reside. The Arwoods began raising the ruminants in 2004 when oldest sibling Jessica — then a student at Daniel Boone — became interested in showing sheep. They purchased three lambs to start and have since consistently grown the flock’s numbers.

“I wanted my project to be related to our sheep and be something that could be used to help other people who might be getting into the industry or those who had questions,” says Rebecca, who will represent Tennessee in national FFA competition to become the American Star in Agriscience. “When I started looking into feeds, I questioned whether I wanted to use different brands but decided it would be better to use one brand that benefits local farmers. So I went with Co-op feeds.”

For her FFA supervised agricultural experience (SAE), Johnson City’s Rebecca Arwood, left, conducted agriscience research on feed effectiveness for her family’s 45 Tunis and natural-colored sheep. With help from younger sister Elizabeth, right, older sister Jessica, and parents David and Deana, Rebecca utilized four different Co-op Sheep Feed varieties to determine weight gain rates in sample groups of lambs. The extensive research resulted in Rebecca being named Tennessee FFA 2016 Star in Agriscience.

Elizabeth and Rebecca look over part of their flock just prior to feeding time. The sisters are wearing “Co-op Knows Ewe” t-shirts specially designed for Washington Farmers Cooperative, where the Arwood family purchases its feed and farm supplies.
Starter (#353), and Co-op Show Lamb Feed (#93531) — were given at a rate of 1.5 pounds per sheep per day.

“We found that the 16% Lamb Grower/Finisher produced the highest rate of weight gain,” says Rebecca, who was aided by the rest of the Arwoods in what she calls a true “family” project. “After that, we started feeding it to all our lambs.”

Her work impressed the judges, who awarded Rebecca first place in her division at the 2013 Tennessee FFA Agriscience Fair. She also placed 13th at the National Agriscience Fair.

“It is always great to see quality young people who are interested in the scientific method,” says Dr. Paul Davis, Tennessee Farmers Cooperative’s director of feed and animal health. “Rebecca’s observations help demonstrate how today’s modern, healthy, and fast-growing animals can positively respond to good nutrition.”

Rebecca’s research, however, wasn’t finished. Buoyed by the findings in her initial project, she brought in Elizabeth — a senior-to-be at Daniel Boone — and the sisters collaborated to add a new variable to the sheep growth study. Elizabeth has also been an active member of the school’s FFA chapter and was secretary this past school year.

“We took the 16% Lamb Grower/Finisher and mixed it with a different supplement for each group,” Rebecca explains. “We used corn gluten pellets, cottonseed meal, and soybean meal.”

For the second project, conducted during the 2015-16 school year, Rebecca and Elizabeth increased the sample size to four groups of three lambs apiece. Each feed/supplement mix consisted of 40 ounces as follows:

• Group 1 — 40 ounces feed, no supplement
• Group 2 — 34 ounces feed, 6 ounces soybean meal
• Group 3 — 34.8 ounces feed, 5.2 ounces cottonseed meal
• Group 4 — 33 ounces feed, 7 ounces corn gluten pellets

In both experiments, the Arwoods purchased all their feed and supplements from Washington Farmers Cooperative in Jonesborough, where they are longtime members. The second trial was conducted over a five-month period to “see how it affected the sheep in the long run,” according to Rebecca. The test concluded that soybean meal added the most protein to the lambs’ diet and gave them more weight gain.

“Soybean meal has long been a staple ingredient in Co-op feeds,” Dr. Davis says. “We utilize thousands of tons each year. It is valued as a protein source.”

Like the first project, the research earned top honors in the Tennessee FFA Agriscience Fair. Rebecca and Elizabeth also placed 11th at the 2015 National FFA Agriscience Fair.

“It was a great learning experience,” says Elizabeth, who spent last month attending the prestigious Tennessee Governor’s School for Agricultural Sciences at the University of Tennessee at Martin, as did Rebecca last year. “Our whole family is really close, so it was fun to be able to work together on this project. I’m planning on doing a research project of my own next year, though I haven’t decided what it’s going to be yet.”

For her achievement as the Tennessee Star in Agriscience, Rebecca and the four other state Star recipients were honored last month during the weeklong Tennessee FFA Star Tour. The trip focused on Tennessee agriculture and gave the winners a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to visit agribusinesses, meet key industry leaders, and showcase their superior projects.

“To see your hard work pay off feels gratifying,” Rebecca says. “But the credit doesn’t just belong to me. This was a family project.”
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Planting peppers with petunias? Cucumbers next to coleus? Garden designs are trending away from the purely ornamental to more functional layouts that provide sustenance as well as style.

Themed “The Garden of Eatin’,” the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture’s Summer Celebration Lawn and Garden Show on Thursday, July 14, will focus on creatively adding more edibles to your landscape. Many of the event’s 17 garden talks will provide tips for successfully adding fruits, vegetables, and herbs to ornamental flowerbeds and containers. Held at the West Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center in Jackson, the celebration will offer visitors a chance to see edible landscape designs during guided tours of the UT Gardens, learn about proper plant selection, siting and maintenance, and pick up a few new culinary concepts.

Summer Celebration hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is $5 for adults and free for children under 18. More program information can be found online at west.tennessee.edu/events.

“If you’re looking to enhance your lawn or garden, Summer Celebration is the event to attend,” says Bob Hayes, director of the West Tennessee AgResearch Center. “Our presentations feature some of the Mid-South’s leading horticulturists, our Diagnostic Center is manned by some of the region’s top plant and pest experts, and our display gardens are simply stunning.”

In keeping with the theme, the UT Kitchen Divas will feature herb-infused recipes in their cooking demonstrations. There is an additional $5 charge to attend the Divas show, which includes generous samples of their signature dishes. A total of seven shows will be presented hourly beginning at 10 a.m. Tickets can be purchased at 9 a.m. outside the demonstration kitchen for morning shows and 12:15 p.m. for afternoon shows.

Visitors to Summer Celebration can also shop an extensive selection of hard-to-find trees, shrubs and other perennials at the Master Gardener Plant Sale. Plus, dozens of businesses will be on hand selling plants, lawn equipment, garden art, and crafts. New this year, Summer Celebration will feature creations from members of the West Tennessee Artisan Trail.

The Master Gardener Plant Sale and Exhibitor Tents open at 9 a.m. Garden talks begin at 10 a.m. Most sessions take place outdoors under spacious tents, but six talks are offered indoors in air-conditioned auditoriums.

A wagon tour of the West Tennessee AgResearch Center departs every 30 minutes. Food and drink are available for purchase from 4-H All Stars and Gourmet Your Way.

The West Tennessee AgResearch Center is located at 605 Airways Boulevard. Visit the website or like the UT Gardens, Jackson Facebook page for the most up-to-date information.

For large groups of 20 or more, event organizers say pre-registration is appreciated. Call 731-425-4751.
Beginning beekeepers now have a simple solution for setting up their own backyard hive with a new product available through most local Co-ops.

The Backyard Beekeeping Kit, produced by Harvest Lane Honey, takes the guesswork out of beekeeping. The hive is already assembled and painted, and the kit includes all the necessities to get started with four essential beekeeping tools: in-hive feeder, smoker with fuel, steel hive tool, and soft-bristled bee brush. An instructional DVD, “Getting Started with Beekeeping,” accompanies the set. Because sizes vary, protective clothing is not included.

“With the convenience of Harvest Lane Honey’s all-in-one starter kit, we hope customers will be encouraged to give beekeeping a try,” says Christy Hicks, product manager with Tennessee Farmers Cooperative’s Home, Lawn, Specialty Department. “It really is as simple as opening a box and adding bees.”

Need help buying the bees? Visit the Harvest Lane Honey website, www.harvestlanehoney.com, where bee supplier information is listed by state. The site also includes information on the required registration of your bees and the locations of your state’s apiary associations.

“I was impressed with Harvest Lane’s educational customer support, both with the kit’s DVD and the company’s website,” adds Christy. “They address every step of the beekeeping process and even have links to instructional videos. We’re excited to offer this product for Co-op customers.”

Harvest Lane Honey owners Mindy and Jason Waite of Toole, Utah, say their company spawned from the couple’s backyard beekeeping hobby. Frustrated with the lack of beekeeping equipment options, the couple, along with Mindy’s parents, Mike and Rhonda Wells, created their own supplies in the Waites’ garage.

“Ten years ago, as beekeepers, we found that the bee products out there weren’t as durable as we wanted,” says Mindy. “Most of the hive covers were made with exposed wood, and with our harsh Utah weather, they would only last a year or two. Also, the tongue-and-groove design of the bottoms couldn’t support the heavy weight of the honey. We thought people needed a better value for what they were buying, so we found a way to create products that were both functional and long-lasting.”

Word of their new enterprise spread quickly to other beekeepers, and in 2006 the family began selling their products.

Today, Harvest Lane Honey is located in a 20,000-foot production facility and employs 25 full-time and eight part-time employees. With the launch of their website, Mindy says prospective customers often called with a common problem — confusion about where to begin.

“When one customer asked if we could just put together everything he’d need to get started, the idea for the Backyard Beekeeping Kit was born,”
she says. “I suspect many people don’t try the hobby because they’re overwhelmed with bee terminology. We created the kit to make getting started a little easier. Then, as their hive expands, so will their knowledge, and they can add on from there.”

Cedar Grove’s John Barr, a customer of First Farmers Cooperative, purchased his Backyard Beekeeping Kit at the Lexington branch in late spring, not long after Harvest Lane products first arrived on Co-op shelves.

The longtime Henderson County resident says he instantly thought of the all-in-one kit when a neighbor asked him to take an unwanted swarm of bees.

“I knew I needed to move the colony quickly into a hive if we wanted the honeybees to stay in our community,” says the retired postal employee who has raised bees occasionally since childhood. “I really love that everything I needed, even the tools, was right there in one box. I had the bees in their new home in no time.”

The sturdy construction and interlocking design of the hive make it a quality product, says John, as does the manufacturer’s attention to detail.

“The large-capacity feeder is great,” he says. “It sure does use a lot less space than the mason jars with holes in the lids that we used as kids. I also like that the brood chamber boards don’t fit flush against the frame like a lot of other hives. This gives the bees more room to work.”

John says he anticipates a flourishing garden this year, thanks in part to the nearby addition of these bees.

This connection between honeybees and agriculture is a message Jack Price shares often in his role as University of Tennessee Extension agent for Hawkins County.

“Most people don’t understand that pollinators — like honey bees — are responsible for the food we eat,” says Jack. “About one out of every three bites we take is because of the work these little fellows do. It’s important that we protect them.”

The Extension agent practices what he preaches. Last year, Jack — who teaches several classes, including master gardening — introduced two hives next to the class’ garden plot.

“Understanding the importance of pollination is one thing,” he admits, “but watching those fascinating insects up close every day took my learning and my students’ to the next level.”

This spring, with his hands-on experiences fresh on his mind, Jack, who also is the county’s 4-H agent, shared an idea with friend Hal Thurman, crop and livestock specialist at Hawkins Farmers Cooperative. The youth leader wanted to start a beekeeping club for 4-Hers.

“I could see Hal’s wheels turning while I was talking,” says Jack. “Next thing I know, he presents me with a Backyard Beekeeping Kit donated by the Co-op so the kids can work on their own hive.”

Hal, a longtime beekeeper, points out the importance of passing his knowledge on to the next generation.

“Just like in farming, the average age of beekeepers is getting up there,” he says. “So when Jack suggested starting a club to get youth interested in the hobby and hopefully carry it on, I knew our Co-op would want to partner with him.”

Jack’s vision for the club is unique. With a few young beekeepers already on board, the beginners will learn from student mentors instead of adults.

“I’ve set the 4-H hive up next to the other two, and the kids — with my guidance, of course — will be completely responsible for the care and maintenance of their hive,” explains Jack. “So when there’s honey to harvest, they can sell it and then put that money back into their club. My hope is that we’ll build a few lifelong beekeepers from this.”

For more information about Backyard Beekeeping Kit or other Harvest Lane Honey beekeeping products, contact your local Co-op or visit www.harvestlanehoney.com.
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### Chicken Meal & Rice Formula

**Ingredients**

Chicken Meal, Brown Rice, Rice Flour, Rice Bran, Chicken Fat (preserved with mixed tocopherols), Dried Beet Pulp, Flaxseed, Dried Egg Product, Potassium Chloride, Salt, Choline Chloride, DL-Methionine, Vitamin A Supplement, Vitamin D3 Supplement, Vitamin E Supplement, Zinc Sulfate, Ferrous Sulfate, Nicacin, Calcium Pantothenate, Riboflavin Supplement, Copper Sulfate, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Thiamine Mononitrate, Manganese Sulfate, Zinc Proteinate, Manganese Proteinate, Copper Proteinate, Calcium Iodate, Cobalt Carbonate, Folic Acid, Sodium Selenite, Biotin, Vitamin B12 Supplement.

**Guaranteed Analysis**

- Crude Protein, not less than 26.0%
- Crude Fat, not less than 16.0%
- Crude Fiber, not more than 4.0%
- Moisture, not more than 10.0%
- Omega-6 Fatty Acids, not less than 3.75%
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids, not less than 0.40%

*Not recognized as an essential ingredient by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles.*

Calorie Content (M.E. Calc.): 3,650 kcal/kg, 370 kcal/cup.

### Lamb Meal & Rice Formula

**Ingredients**

Lamb Meal, Brown Rice, Rice Flour, Peas, Rice Bran, Menhaden Fish Meal, Chicken Fat (preserved with mixed tocopherols), Dried Beet Pulp, Flaxseed, Dried Egg Product, Salt, Potassium Chloride, Choline Chloride, DL-Methionine, Vitamin A Supplement, Vitamin D3 Supplement, Vitamin E Supplement, Zinc Sulfate, Ferrous Sulfate, Nicacin, Calcium Pantothenate, Riboflavin Supplement, Copper Sulfate, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Thiamine Mononitrate, Manganese Sulfate, Zinc Proteinate, Manganese Proteinate, Copper Proteinate, Calcium Iodate, Cobalt Carbonate, Folic Acid, Sodium Selenite, Biotin, Vitamin B12 Supplement.

**Guaranteed Analysis**

- Crude Protein, not less than 22.0%
- Crude Fat, not less than 12.0%
- Crude Fiber, not more than 5.0%
- Moisture, not more than 10.0%
- Omega-6 Fatty Acids, not less than 2.23%
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids, not less than 0.79%

*Not recognized as an essential ingredient by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles.*

Calorie Content (M.E. Calc.): 3,340 kcal/kg, 340 kcal/cup.

### Fish Meal & Rice Formula

**Ingredients**

Menhaden Fish Meal, Brown Rice, Rice Flour, Rice Bran, Chicken Fat (preserved with mixed tocopherols), Dried Beet Pulp, Flaxseed, Dried Egg Product, Salt, Potassium Chloride, Choline Chloride, DL-Methionine, Vitamin A Supplement, Vitamin D3 Supplement, Vitamin E Supplement, Zinc Sulfate, Ferrous Sulfate, Nicacin, Calcium Pantothenate, Riboflavin Supplement, Copper Sulfate, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Thiamine Mononitrate, Manganese Sulfate, Zinc Proteinate, Manganese Proteinate, Copper Proteinate, Calcium Iodate, Cobalt Carbonate, Folic Acid, Sodium Selenite, Biotin, Vitamin B12 Supplement.

**Guaranteed Analysis**

- Crude Protein, not less than 22.0%
- Crude Fat, not less than 12.0%
- Crude Fiber, not more than 5.0%
- Moisture, not more than 10.0%
- Omega-6 Fatty Acids, not less than 2.40%
- Omega-3 Fatty Acids, not less than 1.00%

*Not recognized as an essential ingredient by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles.*

Calorie Content (M.E. Calc.): 3,410 kcal/kg, 350 kcal/cup.

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“There’s nothing more exciting than watching a horse that belongs to you — or one that you’ve trained for somebody else — compete on the track. It’s a real rush, like watching one of your own kids play a sport.”

Getting these graceful animals race-ready takes intensive groundwork that lasts from six months to a year, depending on each horse’s abilities. Don gives a glimpse into the process:

“Usually, the first 60 to 90 days are spent breaking the horses. They are taught to lead — that’s it. You want them to be calm and relaxed and just as gentle as any other type of horse. Once they’re broken, we start training them to race. When the horses start to get some body condition and definition, we start them on short workouts. Instead of running 1/4 mile, they’ll go 1/16 mile a couple of times a week to show those small bursts of speed so we can see what they’ve got.”

“We’ll swim older horses two to three days a week but try not to swim the younger ones more than twice a week. Older horses have a different set of muscles; the swimming is therapeutic for them and helps build up their back ends. If you overswim the younger horses, you’ll make their muscles sore. There’s a lot of work involved, but you’re hopeful that the work pays off.”

Don adds that another criti-
cal element in preparing these thoroughbreds for competition — and keeping them sound between race appearances — is proper nutrition. For the Campbells, the ration that consistently meets this need is Co-op Pinnacle 1400 (#321) horse feed. They buy it in bulk from Montgomery Farmers Cooperative’s Stateline branch, where they also purchase other farm supplies.

“These are high-performance horses, and they need a premium feed to give them that extra boost and help them maintain excellent body condition,” says Don. “You could tell a difference in the horses when we started feeding Pinnacle. Within a month, you could see that they had better muscle definition. And with the number of horses we feed, I like that you don’t have to feed as much to give them everything they need. We’ll feed in small amounts three, and sometimes even four, times a day. We’re not wasting feed because we’re only giving them the amount they’re going to digest. It’s more economical.”

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative equine nutritionist Dr. Jennifer Earing, who, coincidentally, is a University of Kentucky graduate, says Pinnacle 1400 has the energy level needed to sustain a high performance and balance of amino acids to support increased muscle development.

“Coupled with that, the Pinnacle 1400 includes high-quality vitamins and minerals, both of which play a critical role in gut health and immune function,” says Jennifer. “Because we’ve worked to refine the nutrient profile of our Pinnacle feeds, these horses are getting the nutrients they need to perform at the expected level, even when they’re in a high-performance environment like the racetrack.” Besides having textbook conditioning and feeding programs in place, Kim says it’s also important to plot strategy heading into each racing season. She and Don have raced 11 thoroughbreds this year and in the past have taken as many as 20 to the track.

“Like people, some horses are simply more talented than others,” says Kim. “We’ve got one horse that we’re sending up to northern Ohio to run because she’ll never win at the tracks around here, but she has a chance up there. You’ve got to put the right horses in the right conditions.”

“Every track is different,” Don adds. “I never knew there were so many different types of sand, but there are. And every jockey is different — some specialize in riding 2-year-old horses while others are known as good at riding in the mud, with sprinters, or over long distances. That’s where your expertise has to come in.”

The span of time between races must also be added into the equation, stresses Kim. “We give them at least 10 days, and depending on the horse it can be up to a month,” she says. “You want to make sure you’ve given them enough time to come back sound. A thoroughbred will let you know when it’s ready to run again — you can tell by its body language.”

Though Don concedes that being a “small-time” trainer/owner can be daunting, he’s quick to add that the rewards outweigh the risks.

“We’re competing with people who might have as many as 100 horses and put 20 horses on five different tracks,” he says. “And here we are with 20 horses total. It’s been hard for us to do as well as we have, but we’ve managed to make it so far. There’s a place for people at all levels of the thoroughbred industry.”

For more information about Campbell Farm and Training Center, call 270-604-1331 or 270-265-2186 or email cstables@bellsouth.net.

To learn more about Co-op Pinnacle 1400 Horse Feed or other equine products, visit with the experts at your local Co-op or online at www.co-opfeeds.com.
Beyond the baste

It’s great for grilling, but barbecue sauce can be used in so many other ways

S ummer is the season of barbecue sauce. We all know how to use it: baste it onto some chicken or ribs or use it straight-up as a dipping sauce. But there are so many more ways to use this sweet, tangy condiment to perk up everything from meat to veggies and more.

For our July “What’s cookin’?” column, we’ve rounded up some of our readers’ favorite recipes for creating and using delicious barbecue flavor. There are the usual suspects — chicken, beef, and pork — but we’ve also thrown in some veggies and even a pizza for good measure.

Ricky Keen, our Cook-of-the-Month for July, slow-cooks bratwursts in a mixture of barbecue sauce, peppers, and onions for a unique twist on a summertime favorite. Serve these “Barbecue Brats” on buns topped with the sauce, peppers, and onions.

Other featured recipes are BBQ Baked Potatoes, Best Barbecue Burgers, Barbecue Green Beans, Honey BBQ Marinated Chicken Drumsticks, Barbecued Chicken Pizza, 4-H Barbecue Sauce, BBQ Pork Chops, Picnic Baked Beans, and Barbecued Country Pork Ribs.

Enjoy!

These aren’t average hot dogs! They’re “Barbecue Brats,” slow-cooked in a mixture of barbecue sauce, peppers, and onions for a sure-fire, summertime hit. The recipe was submitted by Ricky Keen of Mountain City, our Cook-of-the-Month for July.

— Food styling and photo by Allison Morgan

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**Clip, save, and serve**

**Barbecue Brats**

**July 2016 winning recipe**

**What you will need:**
- 2 (12-ounce) bottles beer or non-alcoholic beer
- 1 (16-ounce) bottle barbecue sauce
- 1/2 cup ketchup
- 1 large sweet onion, halved and sliced
- 1 large sweet yellow pepper, cut into strips
- 1 large sweet orange pepper, cut into strips
- 1 jalapeño pepper, thinly sliced
- 10 uncooked bratwurst links
- 10 brat or hot dog buns, split

**Directions:**

Place the first eight ingredients in a 5-quart slow cooker; stir to combine. In a large skillet, brown bratwurst on all sides over medium-high heat; transfer to slow cooker.

Cook, covered, on low for six to eight hours or until sausages are cooked through and vegetables are tender. Serve bratwursts and pepper mixture on buns.

---

**BBQ Baked Potatoes**

- 4 large potatoes
- 4 pieces of aluminum foil
- 1 medium onion
- 1 medium green, yellow, and red bell pepper
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 8 tablespoons butter
- Barbecue sauce

Slice each potato in half lengthwise; place on aluminum foil. Slice onion and peppers in rings. Place some on each potato. Add salt and pepper to taste. Put 1 tablespoon of butter on top of each half. Pour barbecue sauce over all. Wrap in foil. Grill until fork goes through potatoes. (May also be baked in the oven).

Yield: Four servings.

Linda Bain
Bethel Springs
Mid-South Farmers Cooperative
Best Barbecue
Burgers

Sauce:
1 cup ketchup
½ cup brown sugar
¼ cup honey
2 teaspoons mustard
1½ teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
½ teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon Liquid Smoke
½ teaspoon pepper

Burgers:
1½ pounds hamburger meat
1 egg
½ cup oatmeal
½ teaspoon onion salt
½ teaspoon garlic salt
¼ teaspoon pepper
½ teaspoon salt
½ cup sauce (recipe above)

Mix sauce ingredients until well blended. Beat egg; combine with remaining burger ingredients. Form into eight burgers. Grill until burgers reach desired doneness, basting with sauce.

Yield: Eight servings.

Karen Yoder
Guthrie, Ky.
Montgomery Farmers Cooperative

Barbecued Chicken

2 teaspoons lemon juice
¼ teaspoon hot chili sauce
Salt, to taste

Place chicken in large shallow dish. Combine remaining ingredients. Pour over chicken. Store in refrigerator for one hour or overnight. Grill to desired doneness.

Barbara Tedder
Harriman
AgCentral Farmers Cooperative

Marinated Chicken

Note: Do not cook sauce on
refrigerator for one hour or over-
ments. Pour over chicken. Store in
dish. Combine remaining ingredi-
ents together. Mix the next five

2 quarts green beans
1 to 2 tablespoons mustard
3 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce

Yield: Eight servings.

Glenda Kauffman
Cottage Grove
Henry Farmers Cooperative

Honey BBQ
Marinated Chicken

Drumsticks

1 pound chicken drumsticks
½ cup ketchup
½ cup honey
½ cup vegetable oil
2 tablespoons soy sauce
¼ teaspoon crushed pepper-porcums

¼ cup sauce

Mix all ingredients except sauce. Pour sauce over chicken. Store in refrigerator for one hour or overnight. Grill to desired doneness.

Marcella Spence
Lewisburg
Marshall Farmers Cooperative

BBQ Pork Chops

6 butterfly pork chops
¼ cup minced onion
1 cup shredded cheese
Salt and pepper, to taste

Barbecue sauce:
1 cup ketchup
¼ cup brown sugar
1 tablespoon mustard
1 tablespoon Liquid Smoke
¼ cup hot sauce
6 slices bacon

Combine barbecue sauce ingredients together, mixing well. Pound each chop flat; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Rub each chop lightly with barbecue sauce; add onion and cheese. Fold each chop over, wrap with one slice bacon, and secure with a toothpick. Grill until done and lightly brown on both sides. Rub pork chop on both sides with barbecue sauce, turning over and over for 15 minutes.

Polly Dodd
Toone
Mid-South Farmers Cooperative

Picnic Baked Beans

2 (16-ounce) cans pork and beans, partially drained
¼ cup barbecue sauce
¼ cup brown sugar
1 medium onion, chopped
1 tart apple, peeled and chopped
3 slices uncooked bacon

Mix all ingredients except bacon. Pour into baking dish; top with bacon. Bake uncovered in 350º oven for 1 hour or until bubbly.

Brenda Buntin
Whitwell
Marion Farmers Cooperative

Barbecued Country
Pork Ribs

1 cup barbecue sauce
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 teaspoon Dale’s Seasoning
1 teaspoon teriyaki sauce
Dash hot sauce
¼ teaspoon garlic powder
¼ teaspoon onion powder
2 pounds country-style pork ribs

Mix together first seven ingredi-
ents. Marinate ribs in sauce three to four hours. Baste with sauce while grilling over low to medium heat until pork is thoroughly cooked to 170º internal temperature.

Lorraine Darocha
Mountain City
Tri-State Growers, Inc.

Honey BBQ
Marinated Chicken

Drumsticks

1 pound chicken drumsticks
½ cup ketchup
½ cup honey
½ cup vegetable oil
2 tablespoons soy sauce
¼ teaspoon crushed pepper-porcums

4-H Barbecue Sauce

1 cup apple cider vinegar
2 tablespoons salt
¼ cup cooking oil
4 tablespoons Tabasco hot sauce

Baking a batch of biscuit recipes for September

September happens to be National Biscuit Month — the perfect excuse to bake up a buttery batch of one of our favorite Southern foods. There are many different ways to make biscuits and use biscuits in recipes, and we’re looking for your favorite, creative entries for our September “What’s cookin’?” column. Each person submitting biscuit recipes chosen for publication will receive $5 and a special certificate.

Monday, Aug. 1, is the deadline for your biscuit recipes.

Don’t forget: Only recipes with complete, easy-to-follow instructions will be considered for publication. Several recipes are disqualified each month because they do not contain all the information needed to prepare the dishes successfully. Recipes featured in “What’s cookin’?” are not inde-
pendently tested, so we must depend on the accuracy of the cooks sending them. Always use safe food-handling, preparation, and cooking procedures.

Send entries to: Recipes, Tennessee Cooperator, P.O. Box 3003, LaVergne, TN 37086. You can submit more than one recipe in the same envelope. You can also e-mail them to: amorgan@ourcoop.com. Be sure to include your name, address, telephone number, and the Co-op with which you do business. Recipes that appear in the “What’s cookin’?” column will also be published on our website at www.ourcoop.com.
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This summer, 24 interns are working at Tennessee Farmers Cooperative and its member Co-ops. Interns and their Co-op affiliations are, front row, from left: Leah Piper, Smith; Mackenna Vaughn, Jefferson; Abbey Best, AgCentral; McKenzie Carnell, Gibson; Jennifer Holbrook, Alliance Animal Care; Josh Howland, TFC Feed; and Zachary Crews, Lawrence. Middle row, from left: Ryan McCulloch, TFC Agronomy; Colton Smith, Benton; Keaton Tipp, Franklin; Keith Yantz, Fentress; Jonathan Smarsh, Tenco Feed Mill; Sam Savage, Maury; and Trey Johns, Tipton. Back row, from left: Thomas Capps, TFC Communications; Jody Sullivan, Marshall; Bascom Brown, Rutherford; Zach McClun, First; Tyler Sams, Weakley; Adam Bagley, Giles; Taylor Bumbalough, White County; and Hank Pedigo, Gibson. Not pictured are Cayce Bredlau, Montgomery, and Julie Smith, TFC Agronomy.

The University of Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center at Greeneville will hold a Tobacco and Forage Field Day on Thursday, July 21, beginning at 3 p.m.

The event, which is free to attend, features presentations by experts from the UT Institute of Agriculture and the University of Kentucky and includes concurrent tours on tobacco and forage production as well as an overview tour of the operations at the AgResearch and Education Center.

The tobacco tours will explore different aspects of burley production research, including new variety development, practices proven to increase profits, sucker control options, application techniques, and new research on how hormones in the plant affect sucker growth and control.

The forage tour will discuss summer annuals in a grazing program and strategies for extending the grazing season.

Three pesticide recertification points will be available in Categories 1, 4, 10 and 12. Each tour will be presented twice throughout the evening. A trade show featuring private vendors and educational and informational displays will also be available.

A sponsored dinner will be served at 7 p.m.

The field day site is located on East Allens Bridge Road, off Highway 70 in Greeneville. For directions and more information, visit online at greeniville.tennessee.edu or call the center at 423-638-6532.
Every Farmer Has A Story | Sanders Farms

Acres of tradition

New generation takes over row-crop responsibilities at Sanders Farms in Henry County

Residents of the Pleasant Hill community near Springville will notice a familiar and welcome sight on Melvin Sanders’ farm again this summer: two acres of sweet corn.

It’s corn for the community, a custom that Melvin, 81, started in the late 1970s. Every year, he plants the sweet corn patch in the midst of his production acreage, leaving plenty of room for family, friends, and neighbors to drive through and park while they pick. He gives all of the crop away.

“He’s been doing this as long as I can remember,” says grandson Andy Troutt. “We have a big family day out here and cut off and freeze all the corn we want, and then he turns the neighbors loose on it. There’s lots of traffic out here during that time.”

With Andy and his brother, Travis, taking over the reins of their grandfather’s 400-acre row-crop operation this past spring, some may have wondered if the sweet tradition would continue.

“Granddad has us handling the row crops,” says Andy. “But he’s still very much involved in the sweet corn patch and his little herd of cattle.”

Melvin admits that although he’s turned the operation over to a younger generation, he’ll still give a suggestion or two.

“I can’t help but give advice,” says Melvin. “I’ve farmed this land for as long as I can recall.

Sixty-eight years to be exact. The Henry County native began farming at 13, helping his father, Woodrow, on the family’s 60-acre operation while the elder Sanders ran a sawmill nearby.

“Since my dad was logging, I took care of the crops,” says Melvin. “Of course, he helped a little bit and told me what to do. We had a mule and a little one-row planter. I thought that first crop — four acres of corn and two acres of cotton — was so big!”

At 14, Melvin quit school and began working full-time with his father, who also had an eighth-grade education, and younger brother, Cotton, 11, on the farm and at the sawmill.

Within five years, Melvin, still a teenager, had increased his father’s six-acre crop to nearly 50, with 20 acres of corn and 27 acres of cotton. Around the same time, Melvin had fallen in love with a local girl, Selonia Swor, and wanted his own land to farm and start a family.

“My dad sold me some of his land at a discounted price so I could get started,” says Melvin. “Today, Selonia and I still live on part of the same farmland I plowed as a kid.”

Over the next 15 years, the couple had four daughters — Donna, Debbie, Phyllis, and Lynn. Melvin, who worked full time at Holley Carburetor Plant in Paris, steadily bought adjacent land to expand their farm to 150 acres. When he turned 35, Melvin quit the factory to farm full time with his wife’s help. During the couple’s prime years, they planted 1,500 acres of soybeans and corn with 500 acres of double-cropped wheat.

By the time Melvin reached 65, his farm was debt-free, and he was ready to reduce his workload, releasing most of his rented acres and selling some land.

“At that point, none of my seven grandchildren seemed interested in farming, so I wanted to get the farm to a manageable 400 acres for Selonia and me,” says Melvin. “Besides, I just wanted to slow down a bit — I wasn’t ready to stop.”

Growing up, Andy and Travis spent weekends and summers on their grandparents’ farm.

“I’d like to say that we helped, but I think we probably tore up as much as we helped out,” jokes Andy. “I really didn’t have any notions of farming. My parents always drilled it in our heads that we were going to college. I knew I wanted to be a dentist, and I guess I never really considered anything else.”

Fast-forward 15 years. The Troutt brothers are family men with successful careers — Andy, 37, is a dentist in Camden and Paris, and Travis, 34, is an assistant unit operator with the Tennessee Valley Authority. And, surprisingly, both own small farms. Travis, who lives in Big Sandy, bought 110 acres in a neighboring county and rents it to a local farmer. Andy owns two pieces of land. The first, bought from his grandfather, he uses for duck-hunting. It even has a duck pond and a field to flood.

“After a few years of working on that property, I began to think that maybe I could be the next farmer in my family,” says Andy. “but, boy, I had a lot to learn.”

When a piece of local land became available in 2013, Andy seized the opportunity.

“I told Granddad that maybe nine acres wasn’t worth farming,” says Andy. “And he said, ‘Well, you’ve got to start somewhere.’”

With Melvin’s equipment, Andy planted soybeans, corn, and wheat.

“That was my time to learn the ropes,” he says, “and pay more attention to what Grand-dad’s been doing all along.”

With his crop’s first harvest, Andy discovered that not only could he farm but that he really enjoyed it — something Travis realized, too, while spending off-time helping on Melvin’s farm.

Separately, the brothers shared their newfound love of farming with their aging grandfather, who told them both, “I’m finally ready to stop.” By working together, the pair decided they could juggle full-time jobs, families, and a 400-acre row-crop operation.

They’d need a bigger sprayer to reduce time in the field and a new tractor to pull it, and, like their grandfather, they’d turn to Henry Farmers Cooperative for guidance.

“For us, so many of our decisions are based on time,” says Travis. “Since we can’t do as much research as I’d like on product trials and studies, we can call Jerrod [Allen, outside sales-man for Henry Farmers] and ask him what Co-op recommends. We’re also counting on a sugges-tion or two from Granddad.”

Jerrod says he’s proud he can help the next generation of Sanders Farms carry on the family’s agricultural tradition.

“The fact that these young men can farm 400 of their own acres speaks to the kind of manager Mr. Melvin has been over the years,” says Jerrod. “He invested in something that he knew would be valuable to his family for many years to come.”
Melvin Sanders, center, may have handed over his 400-acre row-crop operation to the younger generation — grandsons Travis Troutt, left, and his brother, Andy — but the original owner of Sanders Farms plans to continue raising a few acres of sweet corn planted in the production field behind them, as a free gift for the community.
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