Share and share alike

Producers agree state’s ag enhancement program helps them make the most of farm improvements

Also inside

Go behind the scenes with Lucas Oil founder and one of his factories - p. 12

Farmers try growing indigo for natural dye manufacturing company - p. 22

Beef, sheep exhibitors shine at Tennessee Junior Livestock Expo - p. 32
This feed is...
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Cover Story

Share and share alike
The 2016 Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) application period is Oct. 1 through Nov. 1, and administrators expect another record year of participants. Last year, 5,694 Tennessee farmers received nearly $21,500 in cost-share funds through the program for equipment like this bulk feed bin on the farm of Dannie Mann of Jasper. Since its inception in 2005, TAEP has helped fund more than 35,000 farm projects in livestock genetics and equipment, hay storage, and feed and grain storage as well as producer diversification.

ON THE COVER: Standing near Co-op gates and corral panels he’s purchased with TAEP cost-share funds, Mt. Pleasant’s Danny Miller, a cow/calf producer and retired Tennessee Valley Authority engineer, plans to participate in the program for the third year, this time adding a lean-to over his cattle-handling equipment.

News and features

Additive value
Diverse line of Lucas Oil products helps farmers get the most out of their machinery.

No-till meets high-tech
Held July 28, popular Milan field day shares new practices and programs with attendees.

A crop to dye for
Growing indigo for Stony Creek Colors offers a vibrant opportunity for Tennessee farmers.

Stand and deliver
Fria ryegrass proves to be a high-quality, cool-weather forage for Henry County producers.

A welcome diversion
Battling cancer, Tyler Nelson finds comfort through animals at Little Ponderosa Zoo.

TenneScene

Not sure who’s enjoying tractor time more — Williamson Farmers Co-op member Jerry Rainey or his 19-month-old grandson, A.J. Morgan. The toddler’s parents, Michael and Brooke Morgan, say that A.J. calls his grandfather “Happy” and loves spending time on the family farm in the Grassland community.

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Meet Lillard and Tim Miller, a father-son team who share an enterprising work ethic.
Swimmers lead U.S. Olympic gold rush

Like many of you, since Aug. 5 I’ve been burning some serious midnight oil watching the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro, and as red-, white-, and blue-blooded Americans, we have plenty to cheer about. From record-breaking swimmers to young female gymnasts the likes of which I’ve never seen, this year’s USA Olympians are among our best ever.

And believe me, for the past six decades I’ve tuned in to my fair share of both summer and winter Olympic spectaculars. In 1955, my junior year in high school, we got our first television set — a big black-and-white Philco table model that dominated the literal “living room” of our Whitesburg home. It was on the screen of that bulky Philco that I saw my first Olympics — the 1956 summer games in Melbourne, Australia. I was more than impressed by the stellar play of 6-foot-10 center Bill Russell in leading our USA basketball team to the gold medal as we trounced our American athletes are already focused on landing spots on those!-longing for gold as a twisting, tumbling, medal. By the way, USA Today estimated that Michael’s 22 gold medals weigh 12.1 pounds and that he covered about 2.49 miles in winning them.

There’s a lot I like about Katie: her sincere smile, how she interacts with teammates and responds to fans, and the gall and grit with which she competes. After setting a world record in capturing the gold medal in the 400-meter freestyle competition, Katie took two more golds in successive freestyle events — 200-meter and 4x200-meter relay. And then came a finale for the ages: In capturing her fourth gold medal, Katie literally swam away from the field, shaving nearly two seconds off her own record with a time of 8 minutes, 4.79 seconds. When she packs to leave for home, Katie will also take the silver medal she won in the 4x100 relay.

And Michael Phelps? At age 31, he’s the most decorated Olympian in history. In 2004, he became only the second athlete to ever win eight medals at a single Olympics, a feat he repeated in 2008! This year in Rio, Olympic onlookers have seen plenty of the Baltimore native. He carried the American flag as our huge contingent of competitors entered the stadium during the opening ceremonies. His fiancée, their infant son, Boomer, and Michael’s mother were shown frequently in the stands as he competed. And his mountain of medals? Well, I’m writing this on Sunday afternoon, Aug. 14 (this edition of the Tennessee Cooperator goes to the printer tomorrow), and last night (our time) in Rio, Michael set an Olympic record time in anchoring the USA team that captured the gold medal. By the way, USA Today estimated that Michael’s 22 gold medals weigh 12.1 pounds and that he covered about 2.49 miles in winning them.

As for the reference I made earlier about the amazing young female gymnasts who won the hearts and admiration of millions of Olympic fans, well ... they also won gold as a twisting, tumbling, balancing, bouncing, high-flying quintet who chose their own very appropriate name: “Final Five!” Team members Simone Biles, Gabby Douglas, Laurie Hernandez, Madison Kocian, and Aly Raisman dazzled judges, spectators, and a worldwide audience as they cruised to the Gold Medal ceremony with a performance for the ages. They racked up 184,897 points, 8,209 more than runner-up Russia, China, with 176,003 points, was third.

All in all, it was a memorable performance that drew high praise from 1976 Russian Olympic star Nadia Comaneci. Regarding our U.S. team, she reportedly told TeamUSA.org: “They’re not here just to compete; they’re here to make a statement that they’re the best in the world, and that’s what they’ve done. This is the best team that we have ever seen. They’re just amazing.”

As these Olympics end, I remind you that the winter games of 2018 are set for Feb. 9-25 in Pyeongchang, South Korea, and the 2020 Summer Olympics will be July 24-Aug. 9 in Tokyo. You can bet our American athletes are already focused on landing spots on those!-by-the-standards-as-he-competed. And his mountain of medals? Well, I’m writing this on Sunday afternoon, Aug. 14 (this edition of the Tennessee Cooperator goes to the printer tomorrow), and last night (our time) in Rio, Michael set an Olympic record time in anchoring the USA team that captured the gold medal. By the way, USA Today estimated that Michael’s 22 gold medals weigh 12.1 pounds and that he covered about 2.49 miles in winning them.

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As these Olympics end, I remind you that the winter games of 2018 are set for Feb. 9-25 in Pyeongchang, South Korea, and the 2020 Summer Olympics will be July 24-Aug. 9 in Tokyo. You can bet our American athletes are already focused on landing spots on those!
Farmers interested in participating in the 2016 Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program (TAEP) take note: This year’s application period, Oct. 1 through Nov. 1, is fast approaching.

Until this year, the application timeline was June 1-7, with approvals mailed in September and purchases completed by Dec. 1 or May 1. This year’s change benefits producers in two ways, according to Mark Powell, program administrator for the Tennessee Department of Agriculture (TDA).

“The three extra weeks for applying will give producers more time to assess their farms’ needs and make their purchase plans,” Powell says. “Then the majority of the paperwork will take place during the winter, with approvals mailed out before spring, which gives builders more dry days to complete their structures.”

Several new items have been added to this year’s list of eligible purchases, including pasture sprayer GPS, mobile calf catcher pen, no-till pasture drill, and self-unloading feed wagon.

Last year, nearly $21,500 in cost-share funds was awarded to a record 5,694 applications from Tennessee. That number represents 95 percent of the applications received by TDA.

In anticipation of a second record year for applications, reimbursement maximums have been reduced for 2016, ranging from $2,000 to $15,000. However, Powell adds, final maximums will be determined after all applications have been processed to accurately reflect the overall demand for cost-share funding.

Eligible purchases for the 2016 program can begin Oct. 1. Approval notifications are scheduled to begin January 2017, with a reimbursement deadline of Sept. 1, 2017, except for livestock equipment, for which it is May 1, 2017. Premises registration is no longer required; producers will be assigned a TAEP producer number instead.

Though the standard amount of cost share is 35 percent, producers who have completed advanced coursework related to their operations are eligible for 50 percent on select programs as indicated in the TAEP application brochure. Producers may need to renew their “master” status according to when they originally earned their certification. Check the TAEP website www.tda.gov/taep for details.

“There are really three major benefits for farmers who participate in this program,” says Powell. “Our educational component provides valuable classroom information to our producers and encourages them to establish a relationship with the county [Extension] agent. By helping producers purchase quality cattle-handling equipment, the health of our state’s livestock has improved. With a safer, easier process, producers are more likely to give vaccinations and treat sick animals. Lastly, with the option to purchase genetics, the overall quality of our livestock has increased, too.”

Since its inception in 2005, TAEP has helped fund more than 35,000 on-the-farm projects in the areas of livestock genetics and equipment, hay storage, and feed and grain storage as well as a wide range of producer diversification opportunities.

Applications can be submitted online at www.tn.gov/taep as well as mailed or hand-delivered. Reimbursement documents can also be submitted online. Applicants must rank projects by priority; approval is based on those rankings as long as funds are available.

TAEP applications are now available at Co-ops across the state or can be downloaded from www.ourcoop.com by clicking on the TAEP logo. For more information, visit your local Co-op, go online to www.tda.gov/taep, or call TDA at 800-342-8206.

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**News briefs**

**Arrington retires as UTIA chancellor**

University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture (UTIA) Chancellor Larry Arrington has announced that he will retire Sept. 1. He has served in that role since 2011.

UT President Joe DiPietro has selected UT Extension Dean Tim Cross to serve as interim chancellor until Arrington’s successor is found. A search is now underway for a new chancellor, and DiPietro said he hopes to have a candidate to recommend to the UT Board of Trustees by January 2017.

UTIA has a presence in every Tennessee county through UT Extension and also includes UT AgResearch, the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, and the College of Veterinary Medicine.

**Ames Plantation hosts Heritage Festival**

Avid history buffs, folk art enthusiasts, and families looking for a fun outing are sure to be pleased at Ames Plantation’s 19th annual Heritage Festival on Saturday, Oct. 8, in Grand Junction. This unique event, hosted by Ames Plantation in cooperation with the University of Tennessee, will feature more than 150 folk artists, demonstrators, and musicians who will provide a full day of entertainment and education for all ages. Visitors can take part in educational presentations, experience hands-on activities such as cotton-picking and goat-milking, and see demonstrations of blacksmithing, kettle laundry, quilting, weaving, soap-making, and more. A wide selection of arts, crafts, and foods will be available for purchase.

Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is $5 for adults, $2 for children ages 4 to 16, and free for ages 3 and under. For details, visit www.amesplantation.org or call 901-878-1067.
Danny Miller, a retired Tennessee Valley Authority engineer, originally bought his 75-acre Mt. Pleasant farm for two of his favorite pastimes, hunting and fishing. But a few years later, when he added a couple of cows to “keep the grass down,” the Goodlettsville native discovered his true passion: farming. “I fell in love with raising cattle,” says Danny. “I’ve tried to hunt, but whenever I’m sitting up in that stand, I’m noticing a fence that needs to be mended or a tree that needs trimming. That’s what I really want to be doing.”

Over the next few years, Danny expanded his herd to 19 cows, their calves, and a bull. In 2014, Danny submitted his first TAEP application — for a much-needed hay barn. Because he had attended the University of Tennessee’s Master Beef Producer certification classes, Danny received a 50-percent cost-share reimbursement instead of the standard 35 percent.

“There’s a reason this farm is named Windy Ridge,” he jokes. “Building that hay barn was my first priority. Now I don’t have to worry with hay tarps blowing off. Since I buy my hay, being able to store it out of the elements is really important.”

Last year, the Maury County farmer used TAEP funds to add a large cattle-working system featuring Co-op-built gates and alleys, which are made at Tennessee Farmers Cooperative’s Metal Fabrication Plant in LaVergne. Many of the farm hardware products designed and manufactured by Co-op are approved in for the TAEP program. He designed the system with help from with Carl Johnson, assistant manager at Maury Farmers Cooperative, who also recommended a Priefert squeeze chute.

“In December, the vet and I were able to move 31 [animals] through the equipment, performing first rounds of vaccinations, [pregnancy] checks, and castrations in just an hour and 20 minutes,” he says. “It’s so much easier, faster, and safer now.”

This year, Danny plans to build a cover for his new equipment as the second phase of his cattle-handling set-up. “I designed the system last year knowing that I wanted to add a lean-to, so the posts are already there,” he explains.
With his two major projects completed, Danny says he’ll apply next year, too.

“I’ve had an ongoing wish list,” he jokes. “I plan on taking advantage of this program as long as they offer it.”

The livestock producer conveys a conversation he had with an ag specialist about starting his farming operation: “He told me, ‘You won’t make any money, but maybe you won’t lose too much either,’” says Danny. “Turns out, he’s right. Everything I make I put right back into the farm. With TAEP, that money goes twice as far.”

Maynardville’s Gary Kitts raises his 20-head mixed Hereford herd and produces hay on an 85-acre farm where he’s lived with his wife, Linda, for 20 years.

In 2013, when the BellSouth retiree decided to nearly double his herd, he bought working equipment — a Priefert chute, tub and alley — through the TAEP program.

Because of cost-sharing, Gary says he was able to buy higher-quality products than he could have on his own.

“It may cost more initially,” he explains, “but I’ll save money in the long run because the equipment will last longer.”

That summer, while he and Linda were working the cattle, Gary says he unknowingly decided what his next TAEP purchase would be.

“We were running those cows through the equipment and just burning up,” he says. “I said to Linda, ‘If I live another year, I’m going to put a roof over this thing.’”

Unbeknownst to him at the time, the program’s item approval list would add livestock equipment coverings for 2014, so the Kitts now have the shade of a lean-to when they work their cattle. Last year, Gary bought Tru-Test scales and says he hopes to build a hay barn sometime in the future.

“In the past few years, the family has built a hay barn, purchased a sprayer, invested in genetics, and replaced a wooden working system with panels, calf table, and W-W pen. “Before we installed the new handling equipment, we only ran cattle through once a year — more than that was just too difficult,” explains Craig. “Now we can work them as many times as we want. We can AI [artificially inseminate], background, weigh, and vaccinate whenever we need to, and fewer people can get the job done.”

Since Craig and Keith both work full-time jobs off the farm, 71-year-old Jimmy maintains the growing operation’s day-to-day responsibilities — with help from Charles, 90, who enjoys working the cattle and raking hay, and Craig’s son, Matthew, 12.

“You can’t expand unless you have the equipment,” says Keith, “and, with the TAEP program, we’ve been able to buy what we need in order to grow.”

When Jasper’s Dannie Mann and his wife, Janet Rollins, first applied for TAEP funds in 2008, they had taken a herd of four cattle and expanded it to a 120-head cow/calf operation over the course of a decade.

Maynardville’s Gary Kitts, center, purchased a Priefert squeeze chute through TAEP and watches with Union Farmers Cooperative Manager Will Phillips, right, as Tennessee Farmers Cooperative hardware specialist Gary Satterfield explains a function of the unit.

(left) With a hay barn backdrop, the Cossar family takes a work break for a portrait. From left are Charles (Walton), Jimmy, Matthew and dog Bungee, Craig, and Keith. RIGHT: Craig chats with TFC’s Chris Seiber, center, and Stockdale’s Barry Gray.

(See TAEP, page 8)
TAEP

(continued from page 7)

“We were just keeping [the four head of cattle] for my uncle [Waymon Cooper],” explains Janet, who enjoyed spending time with her uncle and aunt, Judy Cooper, at their Chattanooga stockyard, “but Dannie just fell in love with them.”

Dannie owns and operates a trucking company, and Janet is a certified public accountant. They recently downsized to 70 head and raise hay on 100 acres.

In the early days, the couple hauled their growing herd to the Coopers’ farm to work them. After Janet received her Master Beef certification in 2009, the couple turned to TAEP, first applying for funds to buy two black Angus bulls from Marion County cattleman Brad Carter and then a catch pen and working chute.

“The equipment has definitely been safer for us and, since it’s easier for us to work them more often, healthier for the cattle,” she says.

Over the years, the Marion Farmers Cooperative members also purchased a hay barn, sprayer, bulk feed bin, hay feeders, feed troughs and bulls through the cost-share program.

“The hay barn is wonderful,” says Janet. “Especially this year with the drought, we need every scrap of hay. I really like having the feed bin, too. We don’t have to buy sack feed anymore, and rats don’t get in it either.”

As for 2016, the couple says they’ll probably purchase another bull through the program. “If TAEP hadn’t offered it, I don’t think we would have ever done what we’ve done,” explains Dannie. “We just can’t afford it; it takes a lot of money to raise a cow. I don’t know that we would have been able to make these improvements without the aid.”

This year’s TAEP application period is Oct. 1 through Nov. 1. For more information about the program or to apply, visit www.tn.gov/taep or email taep.online@tn.gov.

For help with completing the application or making purchase decisions, contact your local Co-op, where most approved TAEP items are available. Co-op specialists will also visit the farm to help with planning, design, and installation. Visit www.ourcoop.com/productcatalog to view many TAEP-approved items at Co-op.
Visit PRIEFERT.COM or call 800.527.8616 to get Direct access to the experts at Priefert.

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SEE YOUR LOCAL CO-OP!

COMPLETE DETAILS AND INFORMATION...

SALE PRICES GOOD SEPTEMBER 8-24, 2016
(At Participating Co-op Stores.)
Oil drained, check. Fresh oil added to the tank, check. Mark Wright is servicing his 1981 Allis-Chalmers 7045 tractor, but the Lebanon hay farmer and trucker isn’t finished with the process just yet.

There’s a final step involved, one that Mark says keeps the 3,300-hour tractor humming along at age 35. He uncaps a jug of Lucas Heavy Duty Oil Stabilizer, adds it to the oil reservoir, then pours Lucas Complete Fuel Treatment into the diesel tank.

“I put in two quarts of the stabilizer with every oil change,” says Mark, a member of Wilson Farmers Cooperative, one of many participating Co-ops that carry the Lucas line. “In fact, anything around here that has high mileage gets Lucas. I sold a 1991 model Kenworth truck recently that had 1.3 million miles on it, and it got Lucas all through the 10 years I owned it. Never had to turn a bolt on that truck.

“I’m a firm believer in Lucas. Their stuff works.”

If anyone can understand Mark’s quest to prolong the life, increase the performance, and maximize the efficiencies of farm machinery and other vehicles, it’s Forrest Lucas, founder and president of Lucas Oil. Forrest, whose maternal grandparents hailed from Sneedville, Tennessee, has been in Mark’s shoes.

Before launching Lucas in 1989, Forrest had a 25-year trucking career. He bought his first semi at age 21, added to the fleet, and eventually headed up his own California-based trucking company.

“In the 1980s, California was days away from the rest of the country, and I realized I needed better additives for my trucks,” says Forrest, now 74 and residing in the spacious estate he shares with wife Charlotte in Carmel, Indiana. “I started studying how to make them, got a private blender, and started peddling an additive to truck stop owner-operators. They loved it so much that I decided to exit the trucking business, go into the oil business, and begin manufacturing product at a facility in Corona, California.’’

The rest, as they say, is history. From its humble beginnings, Lucas and its super-secret-formula additives have grown into a nationally and internationally known brand with more than 200 products under its label.

And with that growth, Lucas has branched out from trucking additives to also include additives, oils, lubricants, and grease for consumer automotive, motorsports, marine, hot rod/high-performance vehicles, motorcycles, and more.

“Everything [NASCAR team owner] Richard Childress Racing uses for their cars comes from us,” says Forrest, a huge supporter of motorsports through nine different Lucas Oil-branded leagues and company-sponsored drivers. “When the Indy cars race, every car out there will have our gear oil in them. We’re getting more and more into making stuff for heavy equipment like big drills.”

With a distinctive logo and bright, white packaging, Lucas Oil products are easy to spot on shelves at participating Co-op locations like Wilson Farmers Co-op in Lebanon.
and dozens. We even have gun and fishing reel oil now.”

Lucas products are blended and bottled at the Corona plant and at a 175,000-square-foot facility in Corydon, Indiana, where an adjacent 350,000-square-foot building is used for storage and shipping.

“We have 15 production lines running,” says Corydon Plant Manager Matt Conrad, a 12-year employee who started his Lucas career on the line and worked his way up to his current role. “It’s an exciting place to work. Every day, there are new challenges and opportunities. I’ve learned a lot from Forrest, and we talk at least once a day, sometimes twice. He knows the business inside and out.”

Forrest’s ties to rural southern Indiana involve more than just having a Lucas Oil location there. He was raised in this area, admitting that his family was “very poor” and explaining that his youth was largely centered around his other passion: agriculture.

“By the time I was 12 years old, I was showing registered cattle in professional breeder shows all summer long,” he says. “I always missed the first two weeks of school because I’d be at the Indiana and Kentucky State Fairs showing.”

At 15, Forrest began working at a local cattleman’s farm with the promise to his parents that he would finish high school. It was an “eye-opening” experience.

“We were breeding show cattle, but I knew we were doing everything the wrong way,” Forrest says. “I promised myself if I ever got the chance to own a cattle farm, I’d do things the right way.”

His wish became reality in the form of Lucas Cattle Company, which Forrest and Charlotte established in 2000 in Cross Timbers, Missouri. The state is also home to Lucas Oil Speedway, known as the “Diamond of Dirt Tracks,” in nearby Wheatland.

“Charlotte and I had looked at a few ranches, but when we went to the property in Cross Timbers, we knew we’d found the right place,” Forrest says. “We bought it almost on the spot.”

Starting with 3,400 acres, the ranch has grown to some 16,400 acres with more than 2,000 head of registered Angus and Simmental cattle plus another 1,000 commercial cows.

The aim of the operation, he stresses, is to “create the best genetics America has to offer.”

“I don’t like wild or mean cattle, so one thing we’ve been fortunate enough to do with ours is to cull out anything fitting that description,” he explains. “A lot of people keep a sorry old bull and pass on its genetics. We take him out.”

Forrest says his busy schedule means he only gets to the ranch — his favorite relaxation spot — once or twice a month. With each visit, however, he says he can see the progress being made.

“We’re constantly growing the herd,” he says. “I’m doing what I set out to do — improve the cattle industry. Anybody out there would tell you that we’ve got the best cattle around.”

Another effort into which Forrest has poured considerable time and financial resources is Protect the Harvest, an initiative he began in 2011 to defend and preserve the freedoms of American consumers, farmers, ranchers, outdoor enthusiasts, and animal owners.

“There are animal rights groups who want to end egg and meat consumption, halt consumer access to affordable food, eliminate all hunting practices, and outlaw rodeos, circuses, zoos and even pet ownership,” says Forrest. “It’s hard to get anyone in D.C. to do anything about this situation. I figure I’ve got just enough name and financial wherewithal to make a difference, and we have. I’ve put together a good staff and anyone who wants to get involved is welcome. We’ve got to protect our food freedom and stand up for farmers, hunters, and animal owners or our country isn’t going to be able to feed itself. That’s a fact.”

It’s a battle that Forrest declares he’ll exhaust “every possible resource” to win.

He’s equally passionate about helping agriculturists through Lucas Oil’s products.

“Since I know agriculture and the needs that go along with it, there are people on our staff that are focused just on the ag sector,” he says. “We’ve got fluid that can stop leaks and boost power in hydraulics to help that tractor last forever. We’ve got fuel treatments to stop farm equipment from smoking. They’re putting these new kinds of filters on tractors, and we’ve got stuff that will clean those filters up.

“We’ve helped folks save billions and billions of dollars.”

Bruce Odom, car care center manager at Maury Farmers Cooperative, has seen firsthand

(See Lucas, page 15)
how Lucas additives have benefited his customers’ vehicles and his own. Bruce races dirt track cars as a hobby, and that introduced him to the brand. “After seeing how well Lucas products performed for me on the track, I started buying them for the store,” he says. “I probably stock about 90 percent of the products they offer. Everything I’ve used or my customers have used from Lucas has worked just like it said it would. And for the quality of product you get, their prices are real competitive. I’ll always carry Lucas on the shelf here.”

To hear Forrest talk, Bruce had better get ready to clear more shelf space. Lucas has yet to reach the finish line in developing new products. “There are some exciting things coming down the pike,” says Forrest. “We have our own formulas and know things that nobody else in the oil industry knows. We’re not just another oil company.”

But Forrest says kindness is what he wants his real legacy to be. Those who know and work with him will tell you that is his trademark. “When I drove a moving truck, I got to help move a lot of company presidents, and one thing I realized is the guys who made it all the way to the top were always very nice,” he says. “Nice to their wives, their kids, to me. That’s the way Charlotte and I have always been. It doesn’t cost anything to be nice to somebody.”

That kindness, Matt Conrad contends, extends to Lucas employees and how they approach their work. “Forrest once told me that the greatest compliment he ever got was when he was giving a tour of our plant and the people on the tour pointed out how many employees were smiling on the job,” Matt says. “He treats us like family. You’re happy to work for somebody like that.”

For more information about Lucas Oil products, visit www.lucasoil.com or the professionals at your Co-op. To learn more about Protect the Harvest, visit www.protecttheharvest.com.
From 50,000 to 2.5 million — that's how much the number of no-till acres in Tennessee has increased over the past 35 years. That's 50 times as many row-crop acres being planted with this conservation practice that reduces soil compaction and erosion, decreases labor, and increases water infiltration.

The biannual Milan No-Till Field Day, held this year on July 28, can easily claim a role in the phenomenal adoption rate of this method among farmers. No-till was new to many of the attendees at the first field day in 1981, but now it's the norm. According to 2016 statistics, no-till practices are used in more than 76 percent of Tennessee's major row-crop production. Soybeans lead the way with 80.6 percent of acreage dedicated to no-till. Corn, cotton, and wheat follow with 75.9, 73.5, and 59.1 percent, respectively.

Farmers may no longer need to be encouraged to try no-till, but that doesn't make the educational opportunities of the Milan No-Till Field Day any less relevant, said Blake Brown, superintendent of the University of Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center in Milan, where the event was staged.

“We're not necessarily teaching people how to no-till anymore, but we are showing farmers how they can incorporate new technology into a no-till system,” said Blake. “The latest seed varieties, drones, new chemicals, precision ag — all of that fits together. That's how we see our role, and it changes all the time. No-till is as critical as ever, and we certainly can't go backwards.”

Despite inclement weather that caused parking plans to be altered and the kickoff breakfast to be moved indoors, more than 2,600 people from 61 Tennessee's 18 states, and even Australia attended the 2016 field day. The 14 tours on the agenda included popular programs related to no-till corn, soybeans, cotton, and wheat along with trendy topics such as cover crops, pollinator protection, precision agriculture, irrigation management, and unmanned aerial systems (drones). Industry experts also discussed integrating crop and cattle production, protecting farmland legacy, and harvesting timber effectively.

The tour titled “Opportunities to Protect and Promote Pollinators in Agricultural Landscapes” proved to be one of the best-attended sessions. Three different presentations and a walking tour gave guests a chance to learn more about the threat to species such as bobwhite quail, bees, and butterflies and incentives offered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to encourage landowners to establish protective habitats that include a mix of wildflowers, native grasses, and other forages.

“Planting pollinator stands is the hottest practice right now,” said Mike Hansbrough, Natural Resource Conservation Service biologist in Jackson. “Applications are coming in the door, and we're planting hundreds and hundreds of acres. It offers an annual payment for 10 years, and people like to have the wildflowers. With crop protection prices being low, this is a great alternative for conservation.”

First Farmers Cooperative members Larry and Thalia Hinton of Hardin County were among those who paid close attention during this tour, which offered advice on establishing a wildflower mix on a small scale or converting cropland or pasture to an expansive pollinator habitat.

“This has been a great tour for us because it's something we're thinking about doing,” said Thalia. “We're getting to the point where we're cutting back our farming operation, and this is a good option for some of our land.”

With glyphosate resistance becoming a greater threat to row-crop farmers, weed control strategies were incorporated into several sessions. UT researchers discussed cover crops as one way to suppress weed pressure along with new herbicide traits such as Liberty Link soybeans, Xtend soybeans and cotton, and Enlist cotton. These allow different chemistries to be applied on these crops to combat herbicide.

The 29th Milan No-Till Field Day on July 28 once again attracted thousands of visitors to learn about the latest crop production techniques, best management practices, and new technologies. The event has been staged at the University of Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center at Milan since 1981 and is now held every other year.

Story and photos by Allison Morgan
resistance that has developed in pigweed, mare’s tail, and other economically damaging weeds.

“These new technologies are exciting to see for our future toward managing resistant weeds,” said Tom Mueller, professor in the UT Department of Plant Sciences.

The precision agriculture tour was another highly popular stop for field day attendees with university and industry experts sharing information on using yield data, increasing planting capacity, and incorporating unmanned aerial systems into farming operations.

“To help compensate for rising costs of inputs, producers must find a better way to manage those inputs,” said Wes Porter, assistant professor with the University of Georgia Department of Crop and Soil Sciences. “The direct answer is implementing precision agriculture and utilizing data that is collected.”

Precision agriculture was also the focus of Tennessee Farmers Cooperative’s exhibit as part of the No-Till Field Day’s popular trade show. This year, TFC had a separate showcase tent featuring its Incompass Ag Technology program. The interactive exhibit allowed visitors to learn more about Co-op’s full range of products and services and get expert advice from knowledgeable agronomy specialists from TFC and vendor partners such as WinField, Raven, and Verde- sian. The “Incompass Learning Lab,” created by TFC subsidiary GreenPoint Ag, also generated tremendous interest from growers who wanted hands-on experience with precision ag data and software.

“All day long, we had a steady stream of visitors who were genuinely interested in what we had to show them,” said Dennis McCaslin, TFC agronomist who helped staff the exhibit during the field day. “I have no doubt the folks who were here walked through our tent. This was definitely the right place to introduce the Incompass program and Co-op’s precision agriculture services to a wide range of growers.”

Between tours, many visitors participated in the hands-on “Farmers vs. Hunger” event in which 27,864 meals were packaged for local food banks. Held inside the West Tennessee Agricultural Museum, “Farmers vs. Hunger” brought together several teams of community volunteers, 4-H and FFA members, farmers, UT staff, and industry leaders to assemble soy protein and vitamin-enriched macaroni-and-cheese meals.

“We always come to the field day, so we figured we might as well spend an hour doing this while we’re here,” said Jeremy Fowler of Atwood, a Carroll Farmers Cooperative director who was accompanied by his mother, Tina, and children, Zac, 7, and Hannah, 9. “It’s a great project that helps the needy. We’ve been blessed on our farm, so why not give back?”

Field day organizers also gave back to those who have served our country with a special Tennessee Farmer Veteran Picnic, which was open to any veteran who has also been employed in agriculture or active duty military interested in agriculture as a post-military career. The luncheon event was hosted and planned by Tennessee AgrAbility, a collaborative effort between UT-TSU Extension and USDA “to enhance the quality of life for agricultural producers with disabilities so they can increase their independence and productivity.”

AgrAbility has been working more closely with farmers-veterans in recent years to help them start new careers after their service, said Joetta Turbeville White, area specialist with UT-TSU Extension and picnic organizer.

“I wanted a way to say thank you for serving twice,” said Joetta, adding that her father, Joe Turbeville, is a farmer-veteran, too. “These men and women have protect- ed our country through mili- tary service, and now they’re providing food, clothing and shelter to Americans through agriculture. They deserve to be recognized.”

The picnic included a patriotic presentation by local 4-H students and information on programs and services available to farmers and veterans. The guest speaker was Char- ley Jordan, who operates a diversified beef, poultry, and vegetable farm in Woodlawn. The Montgomery Farmers Cooperative member is actively serving as a chief warrant officer with the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment in Fort Campbell, Ky., and was also recently named Tennes- see State University’s Small Farmer of the Year.

“For veterans coming out of the military, agriculture is a great fit,” said Charley, who told the audience his 27-year military career will end next July. “The median age for farmers is 55, but for soldiers it’s 20 to 25 years old. Veterans want to continue serving our country, but they often don’t know what to do. By farming, their commitment to our nation can carry on by taking care of its land and feeding its citizens.”

The Milan No-Till Field Day returns on Thursday, July 26, 2018. Those who weren’t able to attend this year or want more details about the research can download the tour reports at http://milan.tennessee.edu/ MNTFD or call 731-686-7362.
New at Co-op

Majesty’s Flex XT Wafers
Majesty’s Flex XT Wafers (#6816187) provide increased levels of key joint support ingredients for horses in need of extra support. Majesty’s Flex XT Wafers contain five joint support ingredients in one easy-to-feed cookie. Using nutraceuticals identical to what humans consume, this nutritional supplement increases the horse’s range of motion and aids in decreasing inflammation from high levels of activity or arthritis. Flavored with rolled oats, molasses, apples, raisins, and cinnamon, each cookie also contains 7,500 mg glucosamine, 3,000 mg MSM, 1,750 mg yucca extract, 600 mg chondroitin sulfate, and 750 mg ascorbic acid. Recommended feeding: 1-2 cookies daily for a month, then 1 cookie per day. For competition, 2 cookies per day.

Majesty’s Omega Wafers
Majesty’s Omega Wafers (#6816190) are rolled oat and molasses wafers that include a therapeutic dose of flax, the perfect source for Omega 3, 6 and 9. The Omegas have been shown to improve hair and coat, hoof condition, and decrease nervousness. Feed 1-2 wafers per day.

Goat BlueLite
Hydration is the key component to helping goats stay healthy and energized. Goat BlueLite (#6817095) has been proven to be an effective way to ensure that your goats are well hydrated after they freshen, during transition, and to help maintain milk production. An easy-to-administer electrolyte, Goat BlueLite is palatable, acidified, and provides added energy sources and vitamins needed for use in dehydrated animals. A versatile and effective hydration product, Goat BlueLite helps to rehydrate and maintain normal body fluid and electrolyte balance to promote top performance.

Goat YMCP
When goats freshen, they lose essential nutrients they need to get going and transition quickly into lactation. Make recovery easier by giving Goat YMCP (#6817096) to boost levels of yeast, magnesium, calcium, potassium, and niacin. Goat YMCP provides the nutrients needed to help minimize dehydration and provide an added boost of energy after giving birth. As one of the top transition products on the market, Goat YMCP helps to reduce post-kidding complications and stimulates appetite, helping the goat reach optimum peak in lactation.
For athletic field managers, golf course superintendents, and landscape professionals, overseeding bermudagrass with perennial ryegrass is a common practice. However, proper site preparation, water management, and quality seed are critical to achieving satisfactory results. These recommendations from skilled turf managers can give you the best chance for success.

Seeding — Perennial ryegrass seed must achieve good soil contact. Scalp existing bermudagrass low enough to see the soil. A light verti-cutting will reduce thatch if equipment is available. Blow or rake clippings, and remove all debris. Spread ryegrass seed (seeding in two directions is a plus), and then drag or mat the seed in. Use a quality seed such as Turf Science Genetics Chipmate Ryegrass (#180515). Topdress the area with ¼ inch of sand (drag or mat in). Water until the seed is up and growing. Keep the area damp with irrigation; usually three to four irrigation cycles a day are best.

Fertilizing — Fertilize once the ryegrass is even with bermudagrass canopy. Fertilizing at planting is not recommended because the ryegrass is not up and growing yet. Use a good starter fertilizer such as 18-24-12 with 25-percent slow-release (or similar) at 200 pounds per acre. Fertilize overseeded turf on a six- to eight-week schedule through the winter at a rate of 0.5 pound of nitrogen per 1,000 square feet with 25-percent slow-release depending on weather conditions (do not apply immediately prior to freezing temperatures). Iron applications can be made if color improvement is desired.

Planting date — Timing is crucial. Plant late enough that bermudagrass growth has slowed and early enough that soil temperatures are still warm and will allow the ryegrass seed to germinate quickly and get established before cold weather. Planting too early increases issues with bermudagrass competition and seedling diseases such as pythium. Late plantings can prolong the time required to achieve complete cover. The ideal time is when bermudagrass growth has nearly ceased and about three to four weeks before a frost. Seeding dates vary based on location, even within the same state. The best advice is to pay attention to weather in your area and seed at the appropriate time. Generally, in the South we recommend Oct. 1 to Nov. 1.

Soil conditions — Make sure pH and soil conditions are favorable for success. Soil-testing is the only way to know this. Applying the proper products accordingly can greatly improve the chances of satisfactory results.

Planting rates — Depending on the quality you want, planting rates vary. Heavier rates of ryegrass almost always result in a more uniform stand. On golf courses, fairways need 10-20 pounds and tees 15-25 pounds per 1,000 square feet. Athletic fields need 10-20 pounds and commercial sites/lawns 8-15 pounds per 1,000 square feet.
Supplementing vitamins and minerals to grazing cattle is an accepted management practice, and with good reason. Scientific literature and university research reports confirm the positive impact of supplemental minerals on the growth, reproduction, and health of beef cattle. Deciding exactly which product to use, however, can be less clear. With dozens of products available, selecting the mineral that best fits your operation can be confusing. Information provided on the product label can be of help in making the right choice.

Feed labels are legal documents intended to direct the consumer in the proper use of the product. Their format and the details they provide conform to guidelines mandated by state and other regulatory agencies. This standardized format allows the customer to compare products and also provides assurance of what’s in the bag.

The product name is found at the top of the tag and must be appropriate for the intended use but may not provide much detail. Any number present in the name of a mineral supplement must refer to the phosphorus content, and any ratio listed must refer to the amount of calcium relative to phosphorus. The purpose statement, listed below the name, indicates how and where the product should be used. Statements such as “for mature beef cows on pasture” can be helpful in choosing the correct product for a given feeding situation.

If the supplement contains medication, the type and amount will be clearly indicated as well as the “claim” or legal intended use. When choosing a medicated product, make sure it matches the size and stage of production of your cattle. Using a medicated product outside its intended purpose can yield undesirable results.

Nutrient guarantees appear next on the label. Some are required by law, while others are listed at the discretion of the manufacturer. Macrominerals, or those provided in largest amounts, are measured in percent (%); microminerals, those present in very small amounts, are measured in parts per million (ppm). With most nutrients, more is viewed as better, as long as certain relationships are maintained. Copper, manganese, and zinc, for instance, are typically provided in a 1:2:3 ratio for optimum absorption. Vitamins are listed in international units (IU) per pound, a measure of biological activity rather than weight or mass. Levels of vitamin E, a relatively expensive nutrient, can indicate mineral supplement quality.

The ingredient listing contains the components used to make up the supplement formula. For mineral sources, look for chloride and sulfate forms, which are typically more available to the animal than oxide sources. Organic trace minerals, usually bound to amino acids, have the highest availability but can add significantly to the cost. Other non-nutritive ingredients may also be added to affect the taste, color, or consistency of the product.

Finally, the label will provide specific feeding instructions and an intended level of consumption. Feeding more than this amount results in added cost and wasted nutrients; underfeeding can result in poor performance.

Even with all this information, choosing the right product for you can still be a challenge. For more information about cattle vitamin/mineral supplements, visit with the trusted experts at your local Co-op.
Blue means green for nearly a dozen Tennessee farmers who are growing indigo for a new company that produces natural dye for the textile industry.

It’s a crop that hasn’t been grown on a large scale in the U.S. since the Colonial era and a dye-making process that was essentially abandoned more than a century ago, but Sarah Bellos, founder and president of Stony Creek Colors, wants to change that. A total of 10 farmers in Robertson, Montgomery, and Davidson counties are growing 30 acres of indigo for her company this year with a goal of increasing to 165 acres in 2017. Thousands more acres could be planted over the next few years.

“My goal is simple: I want to create a healthier, more vibrant world,” says the 33-year-old entrepreneur. “Stony Creek Colors is creating clean, safe, plant-based dyes for the textile industry, and farmers are growing our flagship product — natural indigo used mainly by denim manufacturers. It’s something that hasn’t been done in this country in some 100-odd years.”

Among the oldest dyes used in textiles and printing, indigo was one of the top three cash crops in the U.S., along with rice and cotton, in the 1600s and 1700s. The rich, blue dye extracted from the plants had high value as a commodity. However, synthetic versions of indigo, which were petroleum-based and less expensive to make, began replacing the plant-derived dye in the latter part of the 19th century. By the early 1900s, indigo crop production virtually ceased.

“Everything that goes into the production of synthetic indigo is toxic, and today it’s all imported from countries like China because environmental and worker health concerns keep U.S. companies from producing it,” explains Sarah. “Stony Creek’s indigo extraction and production methods use no hazardous chemicals whatsoever.”

A New York native and 2004 graduate of Cornell University’s agricultural school, Sarah recognized there was more than just a niche market for natural indigo when she began operating a small-batch textile dye house for independent fashion designers in Nashville. There simply was no commercial-scale quantity of plant-based dye available.

Sarah set out to fix that problem, and Stony Creek Colors was born in 2012. She took her novel idea and ran with it full force, participating in several startup company accelerator programs. She received Small Business Innovation Research grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture as well as private investments to get her company launched.

Intent on reviving interest in natural dyes, Sarah believes indigo can once again become a viable cash crop for farmers. She’s already developed a market for naturally produced indigo with Cone Denim, a leading U.S. textile manufacturer that has exclusive rights to Stony Creek’s harvest of color.

Her farm-to-fabric business model literally starts from the ground up with the indigo plants themselves. Stony Creek Colors relies on contract farmers to grow the biomass needed to extract the blue dye. Currently, growers are paid a flat rate per acre, but the company anticipates transitioning to payment based on yield as the farmers become more accustomed to indigo crop production.

“In Tennessee, we have a lot of small and mid-sized farms, where indigo would fit well in a crop rotation,” Sarah says. “It’s slightly more mechanized than tobacco, so you don’t need the seasonal labor, and it doesn’t take as much care. Our model is built around getting contract growers to produce the indigo because they can focus on what they are good at, which is growing the plants, and we can process it and take it to market.”

Indigo production is especially attractive to tobacco farmers who have reduced acreage or exited the business altogether, Sarah adds. Indigo is well suited for the climate of Middle Tennessee and uses similar equipment and processes as tobacco, making the transition easier for those farms.

A crop to dye for
Indigo offers a vibrant opportunity for Tennessee farmers

Story and photos by Allison Morgan
Greenhouse operators grow indigo seedlings in float trays, and then they’re planted in the field using tobacco setters.

“Growers in this region seem really interested in alternative crops and want to know what the next thing is going to be,” Sarah says. “They’re not abandoning tobacco, but they want a rotation with a crop that’s going to have a higher margin than corn or soybeans. We have a really good base of producers here who are really dedicated.”

One such grower is Anson Woodall, a Robertson Cheatham Farmers Cooperative member who grew two acres of indigo on his Cedar Hill farm. Anson, who has cut his tobacco production from 20 acres to seven in recent years, says he was eager to “get in on the ground floor” of the indigo endeavor.

“It would be nice to see this crop really take off,” says the diversified farmer who also raises cattle, wheat, hay, strawberries, and blueberries. “I’m always looking for ways to make the farm more profitable, and I think there’s great potential with indigo. This was my first year, but it’s been a good experience so far. I don’t know what their plans are for next year, but I’d sure like to do it again.”

Planting was a challenge, admits Anson, who says the indigo seedlings had to be placed at dense population only 11 inches apart, compared to the 35-inch spacing of his tobacco crop. He planted the indigo at the end of April, and it was harvested in late July and early August.

“It took 17 hours to plant these two acres,” he says, “I had the tractor going as slow as it would go, and my crew was planting as fast as they could.”

Otherwise, Anson says, care of the crop was simple. Adhering to soil test recommendations, he fertilized with 70 units of nitrogen from the Co-op, but there are no crop protection products labeled for use on indigo. Though insects don’t seem to be a problem, Anson says he had to cultivate the rows to control weeds.

“Figuring out the weed control is one of the biggest parts of this,” says Steve Smith, Stony Creek’s farm production manager. “How do you do that efficiently when there are no chemicals? We’ve learned early cultivation is the key along with staying on top of the weeds. And sometimes, you’ve just got to do some good old-fashioned hand-pulling.”

With the rarity of indigo crop production, there isn’t much research available. So Sarah decided to do her own. On 10 acres in Greenbrier, Stony Creek is testing six different varieties of Japanese indigo, which is in the buckwheat family. At maturity, this type of indigo is about 3 feet tall with deep green, broad leaves. There also are 18 varieties of tropical indigo, a legume in the bean family. These shrub-like plants look entirely different, growing up to 6 feet tall with feathery leaves. Both produce pinkish-purple blooms that contain the seed.

The same blue dye can be extracted from either type, Steve explains, but the yields and seasonality are different. The company also conducts research in its Goodlettsville laboratory, where samples from each crop are analyzed.

“We’re testing things like harvest date, midseason regrowth, variety trials, and fertility trials,” says Steve. “There’s incredible diversity among the plants. You get the same color, but the yield per plant is so different. Understanding what is most consistent is also important as what’s the highest-yielding.”

The dye-making process relies on fresh indigo leaves, which contain the chemical indican from which the blue color is derived. Stony Creek’s proprietary, water-based process extracts this chemical from the green leaves through a series of pH modifications, converts it to a blue liquid, then a paste, and finally a powder. The process hasn’t yet opened in early August, just in time for the height of indigo harvest season.

(See Indigo, page 24)
Indigo

(continued from page 23)

been proven to work successfully with dried leaves, although Stony Creek staff is currently researching that technique. They’re also working with other natural materials to produce additional dye colors. Sarah’s team consists of eight employees, including chemists, chemical engineers, and environmental scientists.

To produce natural dye on a commercial scale, Stony Creek Colors recently opened a new processing facility in a repurposed tobacco warehouse in Springfield. The 80,000-square-foot building houses the equipment the indigo manufacturer needs to operate now and offers plenty of room to expand in the future, says Sarah. Two processing lines are operating with plans to add a third next year.

"There’s still a long way for the market to go beyond that, but it would have a meaningful impact on the agricultural community," says Sarah. "To me, farmers are at the heart of it. And when innovation happens at farms, amazing things take shape. By developing crops that bring health to the earth and prosperity to farmers, we’re making the world better for everyone."

Stony Creek Colors plans to expand to more farms in 2017. Farmers should email farm@stonycreekcolors.com or visit www.stonycreekcolors.com for more details.
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Plant Fria ryegrass. That’s the simple, straightforward advice Mark Morton shared often in August 2015 with Henry County farmers. “I’m always on the lookout for products that will be strong producers for our customers,” says the Henry Farmers Cooperative outside salesman. “It’s been a high performer in university studies, so when our Co-op started carrying Fria ryegrass, I wanted our members to give it a try.”

In fact, based on yield data collected in 2014 by the University of Tennessee, Farm Science Genetics’ Fria ryegrass ranked first as the top commercially available variety, says Greg Aston, South Central U.S. sales representative for Allied Seed. Fria and other Farm Science Genetics forages are produced by Allied Seed, which is partially owned by Tennessee Farmers Cooperative.

“In multiple studies, when Fria is grown alongside other types of ryegrass, it has always performed just as good if not better than the other varieties,” stresses Greg.

Among Fria’s many advantages, its cold tolerance was an important selling point for Mark and his customers. “It can stand up to cold weather, which is especially important for our region, and still deliver high-quality, high-yield forage,” he says. “Many of our customers gave Fria a try, and nearly all gave positive reviews.”

Among those is Veronica Steer of Paris, a fifth-generation dairy farmer who has managed her family’s 200-head registered Jersey operation since the semi-retirement of her father, Charles, in 2013. The 190-acre farm includes 68 acres of corn and ryegrass silage and more than 40 acres dedicated to pasture, but Veronica admits she sometimes struggles with the agronomic side of the business.

She’s enlisted the help of a Georgia dairy nutritionist who has developed a farm nutrient management plan, and Veronica says she also depends on Mark and Henry Farmers Co-op for suggestions on products and practices such as annual soil sampling on both pastures and cropland.

“I’m not a crop person; I’m a cow person,” she says. “That’s how we ended up giving Fria a try this year.”

Veronica explains she and her father typically borrow a drill and calculate seeding rates “on the fly” when planting their ryegrass.

“We just figure out in our heads how much seed we’ll need,” she says. “And this year we ran out of the ryegrass variety we usually plant halfway through the pasture — so we called Mark in a slight panic.”

On Mark’s recommendation, the Steers finished the pasture with Fria and planted it for silage, too.

“Fria has performed like Mark said it would,” says Veronica, adding that she was especially pleased with the ryegrass silage’s tonnage and protein quality. “As for the pasture, the whole field looks really good. During a year like this one when we have a mild winter, we depend on good-quality, cool-season forage to keep our cattle grazing and to help hold down our costs.”

Billy Sutton of Henry had a similar experience with the Fria ryegrass, which he planted on 35 of his farm’s 86 acres. Billy raises some 60 head of cattle.

“This is my first year to plant the Fria variety, and I’m pleased with it,” says the Mansfield native. “I harvested 29 rolls of hay off of my 12-acre field of Fria. It’s good-quality hay, too.”

The semi-retired plumber also planted 35 acres of pasture with a Fria, fescue, orchardgrass, and clover mix.
“It stood up real good through the winter even though I didn’t get it planted until the end of October,” he says. “In fact, we planted the Fria while the cattle were still on it. They stayed on that field until I moved them to another pasture of Fria in mid-March; they were still grazing that a month later.”

Greg says he appreciates stories like Billy’s of late planting dates and difficult field conditions.

“To me, that speaks really well for the resiliency of the Fria,” he says.

McKenzie’s Ellis Garland, a registered Angus breeder, has historically planted 150 acres of ryegrass for forage behind his corn silage crop. In late August 2015, he also planted Fria for the first time.

“The Fria has done real well for me,” says Garland. “I had a good stand of green early, and it stayed that way all through the winter.”

The 87-year-old currently raises 150 mama cows and their calves on his 705-acre farm, where until 2013 he annually hosted a popular Angus sale.

“I’ve planted other varieties of ryegrass,” says Garland, admitting that he treats his pasture much like a cash crop, “and Fria is just as good.”

Greg says some producers might hesitate changing to a new product that is “just as good” as the one they’re using.

“I’m often asked, ‘If I can’t see any difference between Fria and the one I’ve been using, why should I switch?’” says Greg. “I tell them there are really two reasons: one, it’s a variety owned by the Co-op, and that typically means it’s going to be a little less expensive than other varieties. Second, as a farmer, everyone benefits when you buy a Co-op-owned brand from your local farmer-owned and -operated Co-op store.”

For more information about Fria ryegrass and other cool-season forages from Farm Science Genetics and Allied Seed, visit www.ourcoop.com/productcatalog or talk with the professionals at your local Co-op.

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Agriculture’s future was on full display when hundreds of enterprising young people from across the state headed to Middle Tennessee to pit their prize animals against all comers in the prestigious 45th Tennessee Junior Livestock Exposition.

Beef events were held July 11 and 12 at the Tennessee Livestock Center in Murfreesboro with sheep competition following July 18-20 at the James E. Ward Agriculture Pavilion in Lebanon.

At the huge Beef Expo, 213 exhibitors from 48 Tennessee counties showed 447 head of cattle: six dairy steers, 54 market steers, 103 commercial heifers, and 284 registered heifers. Entries were judged by Kyle and Gretchen Rozeboom.

Evan Snyder and Brent Jennings judged the 645 head shown by 174 exhibitors from 39 counties at the Sheep Expo. Included were 266 registered ewes, 167 commercial ewes, and 212 market lambs.

As the largest annual event staged by the University of Tennessee Extension Service, the Junior Livestock Expo provides a venue for youth to exhibit their talents in a variety of ways.

“As time has moved on, we have been able to add more events to the Junior Expo like showmanship, premier exhibitor, and the skillathon, allowing participants to benefit by learning how to work with people,” says retired UT animal science professor Dr. James Neel. “These boys and girls can go back home, get involved in other associations within their community, and represent the agriculture industry.”

Each of the 2016 Expo events showcased the rising stars in the field of agriculture as they put their talents and skills to the test and gained experience in handling their respective animals.

Tennessee Farmers Cooperative, as a key Expo sponsor, gave a belt buckle and Co-op jacket to exhibitors of the grand champions of the Market Steer Show and Market Lamb Show.

In addition, the young competitors were exposed to helping the community. Expo’s prize-winning steers were bought by different sponsors and the meat donated to Second Harvest Food Bank to help feed people in need.

Market Steer Show
This year’s market steer grand champion was exhibited by Weakley County’s Shelley Rowlett of Weakley County is all smiles as judge Gretchen Rozeboom names her 1,290-pound market steer as grand champion at the 2016 Tennessee Junior Livestock Exposition. Beef events were held at the Tennessee Livestock Center in Murfreesboro July 11-12, with sheep shows July 18-20 at the Wilson County Fairgrounds in Lebanon.

A bright future on display
Youth from across the state gather to compete and put their skills to the test

EXTRA! Watch video coverage at bit.ly/2016TNJrExpo
Rowlett, who said she has been showing steers since age 5 and loves the feeling of accomplishment. “I have raised a few steers before, but it is awesome just knowing that your steer has come this far,” said Shelley, who received a cash bonus from TFC because Co-op feed was included in her 1,290-pound champion’s nutrition program.

Reserve champion honors went to Tyler Haley of Williamson County. Other top finishers in the Market Steer Show were the entries of Callie Fisher, Lawrence, third; Morgan Lehnert, Lawrence, fourth; and Katie Plowman, Henry, fifth.

Earning division champion honors in steer show, listed with their counties, were:

Division I — Chelsey Harvey, Claiborne, champion, class winner; Breyer Bow, Cumberland, reserve, class winner. Other class winners: Abigayle Pollock, Lincoln, and Haylee Ferguson, Rutherford.

Division II — Callie Fisher, Lawrence, champion, class winner; Collin Stanley, Williamson, reserve, class winner.

Division III — Shelby Rowlett, Weakly, champion, class winner; Morgan Lehnert, Lawrence, reserve, class winner. Other class winners: Abigayle Pollock, Lincoln, and Haylee Ferguson, Rutherford.

Division IV — Tyler Haley, Williamson, champion, class winner; Katie Plowman, Henry, reserve, class winner. Other class winners: Abigayle Pollock, Lincoln, and Haylee Ferguson, Rutherford.

The County Group of Five award went to Williamson.

Dairy Steer Show
Joseph Johns, Marshall, was named Holstein grand champion, Cross Breed grand champion, and class winner; Sam Lamb, Williamson, received Holstein reserve grand champion and class winner.

Registered Heifer Show
The Registered Heifer Show featured 12 breed classes.
Angus — Madison Blevins, Washington, champion; Alii Perry, Lincoln, reserve; Sophia Santini, Lawrence, champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Caroline Turner, Tipton, reserve champion bred-by-exhibitor.
Other class winners: Samantha Bussell, Macon; Olivia Short, Sumner; Dustin Thomas, Lincoln; Kennedy Selby, White; Alex Thompson, Lincoln; Madison Blevins, Washington.

Charolais — Haley Brazel, Sumner, champion, reserve, class winner. Other class winners: Colette Turner, Smith; Gracyle Bow, Cumberland.

Gelbvieh/Balancer — Ben Gravely, Wilson, champion, class winner; Brent Ashbury, Claiborne, reserve champion, class winner.

Hereford/Polled Hereford — Mason Collins, Marshall, champion, class winner; Kendall Martin, Lincoln, reserve; Kyra White, reserve champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner. Other class winners: Addie Rankin, Lauderdale; Sadie Conley, Hamblen; Heath Quick, Shelby; Morgan Riley, Williamson; Sinclair Conley, Hamblen.

Limousin/LimFlex — Kristen Brown, White, champion, class winner; Jacie Beaty, Cumberland, reserve, reserve bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Jenna Beaty, Cumberland, champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Eli McDonald, White, class winner.

All Other Breeds (AOB) — Cole Lehnert, Lawrence, champion, champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Ethan Hargrove, Coffee, reserve, class winner; Chloe Dill, Cannon, reserve bred-by-exhibitor, class winner. Other class winners: Maci Ferrell, Wilson; Caroline Davis, Blount; Samantha Roberts, McMinn.

Red Angus — Jessica Bridgewater, Smith, champion, class winner; Samantha Bussell, Macon, reserve, class winner; Jacie Beaty, Cumberland, class winner.

Shorthorn — Aaron Lay, Monroe, champion, class winner; Murray Perkins, Henry, reserve, class winner; Janna Owen, Lincoln, champion bred-by-exhibitor, reserve bred-by-exhibitor, class winner. Other class winners: Samantha Roberts, McMinn; Brett Short, Sumner.

Shorthorn Plus — Haylee Ferguson, Rutherford, champion, champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Anna-Lee Gravely, Wilson, reserve; Abigayle Pollock, Lincoln, reserve bred-by-exhibitor, class winner. Other class winners: Jana Owen, Lincoln; Cody DeLano, Williamson; Murray Perkins, Henry; Kendra Cornelius, McMinn.

Simmental — Emily Ivey, Loudon, champion, class winner; Ryan Conger, Wilson, reserve, class winner; Tyler Haley, Williamson, champion bred-by-exhibitor; Wyatt Haley, Williamson, reserve bred-by-exhibitor. Other class winners: Kody Anderson, Bledsoe; Kasey Harmon, McMinn; Karly Wilson, Cumberland; Lane Self, Cumberland; Cole Ledford, Bradley.

Percentage Simmental/Sim-Angus — Dylan Inman, Decatur, champion, class winner; Cole Ledford, Bradley, reserve, class winner; Brian Ownby, Bradley, champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Aaron Lay, Monroe, reserve bred-by-exhibitor. Other class winners: Kendall Martin, Lincoln; Emily Ivey, Loudon; and Kelsey Nichols, Williamson.

The County Group winner was Lincoln.

Commercial Heifer Show
Heifers that do not have registration papers are shown in the Commercial Heifer Show (See Expo, page 34)
Expo (continued from page 33)

Division. Henry County’s Katie Plowman exhibited the grand champion and Wilson County’s Ryan Conger the reserve. Emily Ivey, Loudon, won grand champion farm breed and Abbey Ivey, Loudon, won reserve champion farm breed. Class winners were Jonas Pols, Bradley; Dustin Thomas, Lincoln; Alvin Brandon III, Rutherford; Abbey Ivey, Loudon; Kendall Martin, Lincoln; Lauren Yates, Williamson; Alexandria Dies, Wilson; Caroline Davis, Blount; Kendra Cornelius, McMinn; Brittney Yates, Williamson; Eli Mundy, Claiborne; Maggie Lamon, Giles; Katie Plowman, Henry; Ryan Conger, Wilson. McMinn won the County Group award.

The Supreme Champion Heifer winners were Emily Ivey, Loudon, Simmental; Madison Blevins, Williamson; Angus; Katie Plowman, Henry, Commercial Heifer; Cole Lehnert, Lawrence, AOB; and Haylee Ferguson, Rutherford, ShorthornPlus.

Beef Showmanship

Numerous talented, hard-working youth participated in the showmanship competition as well. Placing first in beef showmanship was Abigail Pollock, Lincoln, Senior Level II; Kendall Martin, Lincoln, Senior Level I; John Travis Turner, Tipton, Junior High; Alli Perry, Lincoln, Junior; and Ethan Hargrove, Coffee, Explorer.

Tennessee Cattlemen’s Association Executive Vice President Charles Hord says the lessons learned by the youth at Expo go beyond the show ring.

“You see these kids out here learning responsibility; they have really taken it on themselves to get these animals ready for show,” says Charles. “These kids in the show ring are our future leaders, not only in agriculture but beyond as well.”

Market Lamb Show

In Expo’s highly regarded and hotly contested Market Lamb Show, the grand champion — a 143-pound crossbred black face — was shown by Tyson Warner of White County. Much like Shelley Rowlett, Tyson said he began showing as a youngster and “always focuses on the details” when in the ring. “I put everything else out of my mind,” he added.

When the judge announced Tyson’s name as exhibitor of the grand champion, the smile on the young man’s face said it all.

“I’m just so happy that I won!” he said. “I didn’t really expect it.”

Lawrence County’s John Calvin Bryant exhibited two of the show’s top five market lambs — a 155-pound crossbred black face that was named reserve champion and a 133-pound Shropshire that finished fourth. Finishing third was Hawkins County’s champion Tennessee-bred, and a natural-colored entry of Luci Allen of Macon County was fifth. The County Group award went to White.

The enterprising exhibitors who took home honors from the Market Lamb Show, listed with their counties are:

- Blue Division — John Calvin Bryant, Lawrence, champion, champion Tennessee-bred, and class winner; Gordon Moncier, Hawkins, reserve champion, reserve Tennessee-bred; Lily Braden, Lawrence, class winner.
- Hampshire Division — Gordon Moncier, Hawkins, champion, champion Tennessee-bred, and class winner; Andy Davis, Hawkins, reserve champion and reserve Tennessee-bred. Other class winners: Cora Key, Clay; Eli Mundy, Campbell.
- Katahdin Division — Faith Womack, Cannon, champion, champion Tennessee-bred, and class winner.
- Natural-Colored Division — Karley Warner, White, champion, champion Tennessee-bred, and class winner; Luci Allen, Macon, reserve champion and class winner; Arianna Gonzalez, Cumberland, reserve Tennessee-bred.
- Shropshire Division — John Calvin Bryant, Lawrence, champion, champion Tennessee-bred, and class winner; Conner Arnold, Obion, reserve champion and reserve Tennessee-bred; Shelby Summar, Rutherford, class winner.
- Southdown Division — Michael Murray, Hawkins, champion, champion Tennessee-bred, and class winner; Andy Davis, Hawkins, reserve champion; Bristol Brown, Anderson, reserve Tennessee-bred, class winner.
- Suffolk Division — Parker Saum, McNairy, champion, champion Tennessee-bred, and class winner; Megan Mills, Monroe, reserve champion and reserve Tennessee-bred.
- Crossbred Black Face Division — Tyson Warner, White, champion, champion Tennessee-bred, class winner; John Calvin Bryant, Lawrence, reserve champion, reserve Tennessee-bred, and class winner. Other class winners: Kendal Crabtree, Obion; Gordon Moncier, Hawkins; Karley Warner, White; Murray Perkins, Henry; Ahmon Watkins, Rutherford; Josie McCall, Macon; Eli Mundy, Campbell; Megan Mills, Monroe; and Garrett Franklin, Clay.
- Crossbred White Face Division — Jayden Gossett, Williamson, champion, champion Tennessee-bred, and class winner; Katie Cargill, White, reserve champion, reserve Tennessee-bred, and class winner.

Registered Ewe Show

Dorst Division — Dylan Belcher, Trousdale, champion, breed-bred-by-exhibitor, and class winner; Emily Ellison, Cocke, reserve champion, breed-bred-by-exhibitor, and class winner.

Dorst Advantage Division — Garren Hamilton, Williamson, champion, breed-bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Michael Murray, Hawkins, reserve champion, class winner; Emily Ellison, Cocke, reserve champion breed-bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Sydney Lamb, class winner.

Hampshire Division — Luci Allen, Macon, champion, reserve champion, champion breed-bred-by-exhibitor, reserve breed-bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Courtney Dickens, Trousdale, class winner.

Shropshire Division — Luci Allen, Macon, champion, cham-

As judge Gretchen Rozeboom scrutinizes market steers, Cole Garrison of Gibson County, left, and Savannah Jones of Union County display their showmanship skills.
pion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Carlee Cox, Crockett, reserve, class winner; Taylor Young, Bedford, reserve bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Britney Yates, Williamson, class winner.

Polypay Division — LaDonna Turner, Wilson, champion, champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; LeAnna Turner, Wilson, reserve champion, reserve bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Carter Higgins, Wilson, class winner.

Natural-Colored Division — Elon Cannon, Loudon, champion, reserve champion, champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Lucas Pendleton, Sevier, reserve champion, champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Ann Pendleton, Sevier, reserve champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner.

Southdown Division — Parker Saum, McNairy, champion, class winner; Garren Hamby, Williamson, reserve champion, champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Jim Morgan, Union, champion bred-by-exhibitor; Madisyn Harris, Loudon, reserve bred-by-exhibitor, class winner. Other class winners: Michael Murray, Hawkins; Brayden Lawson, Hawkins; Taylor Young, Bedford.

 Suffolk Division — Cooper Belcher, Trousdale, champion, reserve champion, and winner of all six classes.

AOB Division — Nate Long, Loudon, champion, champion bred-by-exhibitor, reserve champion bred-by-exhibitor, class winner; Kayla Kohr, Wilson, reserve champion and class winner.

**Commercial Ewe Show**

White Face Lamb Ewe Division — John Buryl Neely, Rutherford, champion and class winner; Michael Murray, Hawkins, reserve champion and class winner; Garren Hamby, Williamson, champion farm bred; Ben Davis, Williamson, reserve champion farm bred.

White Face Yearling Ewe Division — Garren Hamby, Williamson, champion farm bred; Andy Davis, Hawkins, reserve champion farm bred; and Collin Stanley, Williamson, reserve champion farm bred.

Black Face Lamb Ewe Division — Gordon Moncier, Hawkins, champion and class winner; Luci Allen, Macon, reserve champion and class winner; Parker Saum, McNairy, champion farm bred and class winner; Karley Warner, White, reserve champion farm bred. Other class winners were Hannah Sanders, Warren; Conner Arnold, Obion; Garrett Franklin; Clay: Cora Key, Clay, and Eli Mundy, Campbell.

Black Face Yearling Ewe Division — Charlie Armour, Meigs, champion and class winner; Tyson Warner, White, reserve champion and class winner; Parker Saum, McNairy, champion farm bred; Jacey Moncier, Hawkins, reserve champion farm bred; and Gordon Moncier, Hawkins, class winner.

The champion commercial ewe was exhibited by Gordon Moncrier of Hawkins County, and Charlie Armour, Meigs, received reserve champion honors. For farm bred, Parker Saum of McNairy was named champion, and Ben Davis of Hawkins received reserve champion. White County was named County Group winner.

**Sheep Showmanship**

Breedings Ewe — Explorer: Bristol Brown, Anderson, first; Carlee Cox, Crockett, second; Junior: Brock Trew, Polk, first; Parker Saum, McNairy, second; Junior High: Madisyn Harris, Loudon, first; Grace Powell, Wilson, second. Senior Level I: Taylor Young, Bedford, first; Noah Collins, Hamblen, second. Senior Level II: Jim Morgan, Union, first; Luci Allen, Macon, second.


Team — Class 1: Hannah Nave and Emily Nave, Rutherford, first; Luci Allen, Macon, and Collin Stanley, Williamson, second; Emily Ellison, Cocke, and Nate Long, Loudon, third; Lucas Pendleton, Sevier, and Jim Morgan, Union, fourth. Class 2: Parker Saum, McNairy, and Murray Perkins, Henry, first; Madisyn Harris, Loudon, and Taylor Young, Bedford, second; Ben Davis and Andy Davis, Hawkins, third; Taylor Davis, Blount, and Brooke Hyleman, Hamblen, fourth; LaDonna Turner and Carter Higgins, Wilson, fifth. Class 3: Noah Collins and Micah Collins, Hamblen, first; Jacey Moncier and Brayden Lawson, Hawkins, second; Katie Pardon, Lincoln, and Ethan Riddle, Giles, third; Garren Hamby and Sydney Lamb, Williamson, fourth; Lily Christlieb and Will Christlieb, Decatur, fifth. Class 4: Brock Trew and Wesley Trew, Polk, first; Lane Brooks and Levi Brooks, Hamblen, second; Miranda Nix and Preslee Lamberson, Wilson, third. Class 5: Grace Powell and Madelyn Eastes, Wilson, first; Iris Samulski, Knox, and Carlee Cox, Crockett, second; Alley Skiera and Caden Goforth, McMinn, third. Tied for fourth: Isaac DeBusk and Gracie Skiera, McMinn; Morgan Barnett and Avery Daniels, Knox.

**Premier Exhibitors**

Premier exhibitor designations are given to Expo participants who place in showmanship, skillathon, and the show for a total of 300 points. First-place winners were:

Market Steers — Senior II: Collin Stanley, Williamson; Senior I: Emily Johnson, Loudon; Junior High: Kendra Sellers, Knox; Junior: Eli Mundy, Claiborne; Explorer: Ruth Ann Johns, Williamson.

Registered Heifers — Senior II: Abigail Pollock, Lincoln; Senior I: Garrett Franklin, Clay; Junior High: Kayla Lambert, Campbell; Junior: John Buryl Neely, Rutherford; Explorer: Jayden Gossett, Williamson.

**Skilathon**

This contest gives students a chance to test their knowledge of the livestock industry. First-place winners were:

Cattle — Senior II: Abigail Pollock, Lincoln; Senior I: Aaron Lay, Monroe; Junior High: Jana Owen, Lincoln; Junior: Walker Housey, Rhea; Explorer: Jonas Pols, Bradley.

Sheep — Senior II: Luci Allen, Macon; Senior I: Garrett Franklin, Clay; Junior High: Kayla Lambert, Campbell; Junior: Micah Collins, Hamblen; Explorer: Charlie Majors, Sevier.

(Photos by TFC Communications intern Thomas Capps. Story compiled by Jerry Kirk, Thomas Capps, and Sarah Geyer)
One word — one frightening word — turned Tyler Nelson from a soccer-playing 17-year-old at Cumberland Gap High School to someone waging battle in a far more serious game.

Cancer.

Tyler, grandson of Claiborne Farmers Cooperative LaFollette Branch Manager Mike Welch and wife Jevonna, was diagnosed with the disease in May after an MRI revealed a tumor in the distal femur of his right knee. What doctors first thought was a torn meniscus was stage 1 bone cancer. Instead of finishing his sophomore year, Tyler, with mom Mickki at his side, headed to the renowned St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital in Memphis for several rounds of chemotherapy.

“They got in touch with St. Jude on a Thursday, and we were there by Sunday,” says Mickki, whose husband, John, stayed behind to care for the family’s other four children: Elijah, 14, Josh, 13, Addie, 10, and Zoey, 8. “Through it all, Tyler’s been in good spirits and had a great attitude about everything. The only thing that dampens his days is the chemo because it makes him sick.”

Determined to beat cancer, Tyler says, “I just want to get this out of me and go on with my life. I won’t be able to play soccer again, but I’m going to be a manager for the team, and the school is going to retire my number and hang my jersey in the office.”

Once the first wave of chemotherapy was completed, Tyler was able to return to East Tennessee in mid-July for a week’s visit before returning to Memphis with his mother for more treatment and Aug. 1 knee replacement surgery. On July 14, the Little Ponderosa Zoo and Rescue in Clinton welcomed Tyler and his family for a “VIP tour” of the complex and hands-on interaction with some of the nearly 700 animals residing there.

“Mike [Welch] had mentioned to me that Tyler wanted to come here and see our animals once he got out of the hospital, and I was more than happy to oblige because that young man has been through a lot the past few months,” says James Cox, director and founder of Little Ponderosa Zoo and a longtime customer of both Claiborne and Anderson Farmers Cooperatives. “I want to help sick children in any way I can. It breaks my heart that Tyler and his family are having to go through this, so I’m glad to have them here at the zoo and hopefully put smiles on their faces with our animals.”

“Mike [Welch] had mentioned to me that Tyler wanted to come here and see our animals once he got out of the hospital, and I was more than happy to oblige because that young man has been through a lot the past few months,” says James Cox, director and founder of Little Ponderosa Zoo and a longtime customer of both Claiborne and Anderson Farmers Cooperatives. “I want to help sick children in any way I can. It breaks my heart that Tyler and his family are having to go through this, so I’m glad to have them here at the zoo and hopefully put smiles on their faces with our animals.”

Tucked away on rural Granite Road, Little Ponderosa was started in 1990 to provide pony rides for area children. It has since expanded to a 20-acre attraction featuring a wide array of animals “from the jungle to the barnyard,” many of which were rescued from owners who could no longer provide care. In fact, James says 98 percent of the animals at Little Ponderosa are rescues. Some 50,000 people visit the zoo each year, and a “free admission day” in April alone attracted more than 14,000.

“I got them from a big cat rescue operation out of Winfield, Oklahoma,” James says. “We had to secure a [Tennessee Wildlife Resources Association] Class I permit to bring them here. When I went to pick them up, that was probably the big-
gest day of my life outside of my children being born.”

James then notes that it takes a lot to feed the two mammoth animals.

“They eat 50 pounds of meat a day,” he says. “We’re so grateful that our local Walmart stores in Clinton and Oak Ridge have teamed up to provide us with around 25 tons of their out-of-date meat and produce every week.”

Another trusted partner for Little Ponderosa, James stresses, is Co-op.

“Most of our animals are given feed that we purchase from both Anderson and Claiborne Co-ops,” he says. “I’m at the Co-op all the time for something. We get our animal health supplies there, fencing — you name it. And they’re awesome folks to work with. Co-op’s been a big, big help to us.”

Mike says he’s thankful for the zoo’s loyal patronage through the years and adds that he isn’t surprised by its owner’s kind gesture of hosting Tyler and family.

“James is a first-class fellow who I consider a friend,” says Mike. “He’s followed Tyler’s progress from the time he was diagnosed, and that means a lot. I’ll forever appreciate how they treated Tyler to a day he and his brothers and sisters will never forget. He so looked forward to it, and he still talks about how much he enjoyed going to Little Ponderosa. It was nice to see him smiling and enjoying himself. It’s been devastating to know he has cancer, and we’re all praying for the best.”

Tyler says the trip to Little Ponderosa provided a welcome diversion from the discomfort of chemotherapy and the drudgery of inactivity while hospitalized.

“It was a great day,” he says. “I got to pet a wallaby and a camel, see a baby zebra that was feisty and pretty funny, and meet a kangaroo named Scooby. It helped a lot to get out and be with my family and talk to everybody.”

“Tyler says the trip to Little Ponderosa provided a welcome diversion from the discomfort of chemotherapy and the drudgery of inactivity while hospitalized.”

If all goes according to plan, Tyler will complete his chemotherapy in December and be cancer-free. He’s keeping a positive mindset.

“Ain’t nothing as trivial as cancer gonna take me,” he proclaims. “It will be the best Christmas present ever to be rid of it!”

Little Ponderosa Zoo and Rescue, located at 629 Granite Road in Clinton, is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and on Sundays from noon to 6 p.m. For more information, visit www.littleponderosazoo.com.
S eptember is National Biscuit Month, the perfect excuse to bake up a batch of this favorite Southern food. There are many different methods of making biscuits, from tried-and-true traditional recipes to savory or sweet versions as shared by our readers this month.

Creativity aside, every cook needs a basic biscuit recipe that can be used in a variety of ways. That's exactly what we have with “Angel Biscuits” from Betty Newman, our Cook-of-the-Month for September.

“As a young woman I wasn’t much interested in cooking,” says Betty. “I was like my mother; I’d rather be outside. However, marrying a farm boy meant that I needed to learn to cook. I’ve often said that I learned to use a hammer from my mother but learned to cook from my mother-in-law, who gave me this recipe. The dough keeps in the refrigerator up to a week, allowing you to make fresh biscuits every morning! Unbaked biscuits freeze well, as do prebaked biscuits. The dough is also great for individual pot pies, breakfast pockets, or fruit pies.”

Other featured recipes are Almost Whole-Wheat Biscuits, Maple-Cinnamon Biscuits, Sweet Potato Biscuits, Upside-Down Orange Biscuits, Rustic Garden Herb Biscuits, Taco Boulders, and Pimiento Cheese Biscuits. Enjoy!

### September 2016 winning recipe

#### Angel Biscuits

**What you will need:**
- 1 package active dry yeast (2¼ teaspoons if using bulk yeast)
- 2-3 tablespoons warm water
- 5 cups self-rising flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¾ cup shortening
- 2 cups buttermilk

**Directions:**

Dissolve yeast in warm water in a 2-cup measuring cup; set aside. Sift flour in large bowl; whisk in sugar. Cut in shortening either by hand or with a pastry cutter. Pour buttermilk into yeast mixture; stir to blend and then add to flour mixture. Mix well using either your hands or a fork. When well mixed (but still moist), cover and refrigerate for at least two hours or overnight. (You can store the dough up to a week in the refrigerator.)

When ready to bake, empty dough onto a well-floured bread board; add enough flour to be able to knead dough. Roll out about ⅛- to ⅛-inch thick and cut with a biscuit cutter or Mason jar ring. Place biscuits on a greased baking sheet. Place them close together for soft “roll-like” biscuits or with space between them for a crustier edge. For crispy bottoms, bake on a cast-iron griddle.

Preheat oven to 375°. Bake until brown, approximately 25-30 minutes (unless baking from frozen.) If desired, brush tops with melted butter before serving.

Betty Newman, Kodak, Knox and Sevier Farmers Cooperatives

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### Almost Whole-Wheat Biscuits

- ½ cup brown sugar
- 2 packages Rapid Rise yeast
- 5 cups whole-wheat flour (whisk flours before measured), divided
- 1 cup all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon Kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- 2½ cups milk warmed to approximately 100°
- ½ cup butter, softened

Use stand mixer and dough hook (beater). Sift together brown sugar, yeast, 3 cups of whole-wheat flour, all-purpose flour, salt, and ginger. Spoon into mixing bowl of a stand mixer. Using a dough hook (beater), beat on speed 2 for 30 seconds. Add warm milk and softened butter. Beat on speed 2 for 2½ minutes. Add more
**Sweet Potato Biscuits**

1/2 cup shortening  
1 teaspoon sugar  
1/4 teaspoon salt

2 cups mashed sweet potatoes  
3 cups flour, divided  
Work shortening, sugar, and salt into potatoes. Mix in 2 1/2 cups flour, leaving 1/2 cup flour to pat out biscuits. Bake at 450º for 10-15 minutes.

Yield: 3 dozen.

Esther Stoltzfus  
Pembroke, Ky.
Montgomery Farmers Cooperative

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**Maple-Cinnamon Biscuits**

2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
3 tablespoons cinnamon-sugar, divided  
3 teaspoons baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon baking soda  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
1/2 cup cold butter, cubed  
1/2 cup buttermilk  
1/2 cup maple syrup  
1/2 cup finely chopped pecans  
2 tablespoons buttermilk

In a large bowl, combine flour, 2 tablespoons cinnamon-sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Cut in cold butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in buttermilk and maple syrup just until moistened. Fold in pecans.

Turn dough onto a floured surface; knead eight to 10 times. Roll out to 1/2-inch thickness; cut with a floured 2 1/2-inch biscuit cutter.

Place biscuits 2 inches apart on an ungreased baking sheet. Brush with milk; sprinkle with remaining cinnamon-sugar. Bake at 400º for 12-15 minutes or until golden brown. Serve warm.

Ricky Keen  
Mountain City  
Tri-State Growers, Inc.

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**Upside-Down Orange Biscuits**

1/2 cup melted butter or margarine  
1/2 cup orange juice  
1/2 cup sugar, divided  
2 tablespoons grated orange rind  
2 1/2 cups sifted flour  
3 tablespoons baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
6 tablespoons butter or margarine  
1 1/2 cups milk  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Combine melted butter or margarine, orange juice, 1/2 cup sugar, and orange rind. Boil for two minutes. Pour mixture into a greased round 9-inch baking pan. Sift together flour, baking powder, and salt. With a pastry blender, cut 6 tablespoons butter or margarine into the flour until coarse crumbs are formed. Add milk and stir with fork until soft dough is formed.

Knead dough 30 seconds on a lightly floured board. Roll out to 1/4-inch thickness. Brush with a little melted butter and sprinkle with remaining sugar and cinnamon. Roll dough jellyroll style. Cut in 1-inch slices. Place cut side down over orange mixture. Bake at 450º for 20 to 25 minutes.

Yield: 6 servings.

Earlene Stark  
Dickson  
Dickson Farmers Cooperative

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**Rosemary butter:**

1/4 cup butter, softened  
1 teaspoon honey  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh rosemary

In a small bowl, mix rosemary and sugar, divided. Combine 1/2 cup cold butter, cubed, with butter mixture. Serve warm.

Jewel Martin  
Allons  
Overton Pickett Farmers Cooperative

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**Upside-Down Biscuits**

1/4 cup melted butter or margarine  
1/4 cup orange juice  
1/4 cup sugar, divided  
2 tablespoons grated orange rind  
2 1/2 cups sifted flour  
3 tablespoons baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
6 tablespoons butter or margarine  
1 1/2 cups milk  
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon

Combine melted butter or margarine, orange juice, 1/4 cup sugar, and orange rind. Boil for two minutes. Pour mixture into a greased round 9-inch baking pan. Sift together flour, baking powder, and salt. With a pastry blender, cut 6 tablespoons butter or margarine into the flour until coarse crumbs are formed. Add milk and stir with fork until soft dough is formed.

Knead dough 30 seconds on a lightly floured board. Roll out to 1/4-inch thickness. Brush with a little melted butter and sprinkle with remaining sugar and cinnamon. Roll dough jellyroll style. Cut in 1-inch slices. Place cut side down over orange mixture. Bake at 450º for 20 to 25 minutes.

Yield: 6 servings.

Earlene Stark  
Dickson  
Dickson Farmers Cooperative

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**Orange Biscuits**

2 1/4 cups biscuit baking mix  
6 tablespoons sugar  
3 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
3/4 cup sugar, divided  
1 1/2 cups buttermilk

In a large bowl, whisk together the dry ingredients. Add buttermilk and peppers; stir just until moistened. Drop mixture by 1/4 cupfuls into greased muffin cups. Bake 25-30 minutes or until golden brown. Cool five minutes before removing from pan to a wire rack.

In a small bowl, mix rosemary butter ingredients until blended. Serve with warm biscuits.

Mildred H. Edwards  
Lebanon  
Wilson Farmers Cooperative

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**Taco Boulders**

2 1/4 cups biscuit baking mix  
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded taco cheese  
2 tablespoons canned diced green chilies, drained  
1/2 cup milk  
3 tablespoons butter, melted

Combine 1/4 cup melted butter or margarine, 1 1/2 cups flour, leaving 1/2 cup flour to pat out biscuits. Add cheese, pimiento, and garlic powder in greased muffin cups. Bake at 450º. Line baking sheet with parchment paper or coat with nonstick cooking spray; set aside.

Combine melted butter, chili powder, and garlic powder in small bowl. Transfer biscuits to wire rack and immediately brush with butter mixture. Serve warm.

Yield: 12 biscuits.

Jewel Martin  
Allons  
Overton Pickett Farmers Cooperative

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**Make December merry with cranberries**

Legend has it that the Pilgrims served cranberries at the first Thanksgiving, and ever since those tart little berries have been showing up on holiday dinner tables everywhere.

We’re continuing that tradition with our December “What’s cookin’?” column, which will feature cranberry recipes. Each person submitting a recipe chosen for publication will receive $5 and a special certificate.

Monday, Oct. 24, is the deadline for your cranberry 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 independently 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 Cooper. 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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There was a time when Lillard Miller owned a tractor dealership, Oneida Equipment, that was one of the first in the U.S. to sell Kubota tractors.

“I was one of the top Kubota salesman in the U.S. two years in a row,” Lillard, 80, says of his Scott County business, which he exited in 1987 after 20 years. “I carried everything you could name. We had a good line of Massey Ferguson stuff, too.”

That’s impressive enough in its own right. Throw in the fact that Lillard was simultaneously running a coal-stripping operation, performing excavation work, and tending to his Oneida cattle farm — putting in “lots of 16-hour days” in the process — and it’s clear why son Tim, 57, looks at his father with such admiration. Following Lillard’s lead, Tim also juggled farming with running Miller Concrete, a business he started and operated for 20 years before selling it in June.

“Growing up, there were times we’d only see Daddy on the weekends,” says Tim. “He would leave in the morning before we got up, and we would be in bed when he came home at night.”

Though it involved sacrificing time with Tim, wife Dorla, and their three other children — sons Kim and Kevin and daughter Lisa, who passed away in 2011 — Lillard says he was simply plying the work ethic passed down to him from his father, the late Will J. Miller.

“He had me up milking cows by hand every day before sunrise,” says Lillard. “We would bottle our milk and had customers we would take it to every day. We had to work hard at it, and I always tried to instill in my children that they wouldn’t have anything if they didn’t work hard all of their lives. They’ve done pretty well for themselves.”

Like Tim and his concrete business, his two younger brothers have inherited their father’s entrepreneurial gene. Together, Kim and Kevin operate a local paving contracting company, Miller Paving. And altogether, the family’s cattle herd numbers some 200 head of Angus and 55 head of Herefords, a breed Lillard added a few years ago after having Angus for “as long as I can remember.”

“As I got older, I wanted cattle that were more gentle and calmer,” Lillard explains. “With these Herefords, you can go out in the field to pull a calf, and that mama cow will never get up. You can walk right up to these cows like you’re petting a dog.”

As local business owners themselves, Lillard says the Millers believe strongly in supporting others in the community, including Scott Morgan Farmers Cooperative. The family buys feed, fencing, crop protectants, nutrients, and numerous other farm supplies at the Co-op, where Tim has followed Lillard and Will J. to become the third generation of the family to serve on the board of directors.

“I’ve enjoyed being on the board because you learn a lot and you’re working together to help other farmers,” says Tim, a Scott Morgan farmer for more than a decade. “Farmers would be hurt if it wasn’t for the Co-ops around them. We’ve always believed in buying locally and supporting the people who have bought from us.”

A regular purchase the Millers make at the Co-op is Co-op 12% Pelleted Beef Feed (#94440), which they buy in bulk and use in combination with a rotational grazing program. They also supplement their cattle with Co-op Supreme Hi-Mag Mineral (#638).

“I’ve got my herd at five different places, and each place has two or three paddocks where I rotate them every few weeks,” explains Tim, who has been raising cattle since the age of 6. “There’s nothing better for them than that green grass.”

There’s also another emerging facet to Miller Farms’ agritourism. True to the family’s hard-working, enterprising nature, they’ve built nine log cabins on the farm that they regularly rent to folks visiting Big South Fork National Park.

“I built four of them myself, and then Kim and Kevin built the other five,” says Lillard. “It’s a way for us to use our acreage on land that’s not suitable for farming. The cabins are fully furnished — everything from the saltshakers on up. A lot of people who stay here like it so much they’ll make reservations for the following year as they check out.”

Tim says the continual drive to put sweat equity into their work defines the Miller family. And it’s what he and his brothers are now passing down to their sons and daughters. Among the three of them, they have nine children.

“I remember a teacher making a comment to me one time that Daddy was too hard on us,” says Tim. “But the work ethic he instilled in us growing up on the farm has made me and my brothers who we are today. We’ve taught our kids what our father taught us and what our grandfather taught him.”
Every Farmer Has A Story

Tim Miller, left, and his father, Lillard, make a late afternoon check on Miller Farms’ herd of Hereford cattle. Lillard first established the farm in 1959 by clearing 100 acres of primarily woodland and built a home on the farm in 1974. Tim and his family now live in Lillard and wife Dorla’s former home located just a couple of miles away. The Millers are members of Scott Morgan Farmers Cooperative, where three generations of the family have served on the Co-op’s board: Tim, who is a current director, Lillard, and Lillard’s father, Will J.
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