

chancellor's

MAY 2021

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Report



WELCOMING THE SEASON OF
RENEWAL



SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

PREVAILS

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SU AG CENTER STAFF JUDGES THE
BRUSLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
SCIENCE FAIR

Practices of science and technology were on display at Brusly Upper Elementary School's first science fair for 5th grade students on March 5, 2021.

In five different scientific categories, approximately 83 of the 175 students who entered, were selected to present at the science fair. The projects were judged by a wealth of talented and knowledgeable individuals, Meguna Johnson, Drs. Marlin Ford, Janana Snowden, and Dana Pollard, all from the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

Members of an engineering club at the Brusly High School participated in judging as well. A rubric was designed and utilized in judging the students, and the students with the highest scores were declared the winners of the science fair.



The COVID-19 pandemic drastically impacted the traditional delivery of Extension programming for the Southern University Ag Center.

Regular face-to-face workshops and in-office visits conducted by our specialists and field agents were halted in March of 2020 to keep employees safe and slow the spread of COVID-19 during a time when the state was reporting the highest number of COVID cases per capita in the country.

During this shutdown period, our specialists turned to technology to continue providing assistance and training to our clientele. Several of our specialists will share the lessons they have learned from the use of technology and social media platforms in the delivery of Extension programming during the new normal.

"I have found, using technology and virtual platforms expands our reach for programming and allows us to engage diverse audiences," said Krystle Allen, Extension Associate for the SU Ag Center. "For example, people from across the nation joined us for a Procurement Conference and asked us to continue a hybrid format, so they can participate in future conferences that will be face-to-face. While our target audience is Louisiana citizens, it is awesome for Southern University's Cooperative Extension Program to have a national impact," expressed Allen.

This sentiment was also expressed by William Augustine, Coordinator of the SU Ag Center's Cooperative Extension's Enhancing Capacity of Louisiana's Small Farms and Businesses Certification Programs.

L e s s o n s learned by the SU Ag Center through the utilization of technology during COVID-19



“We have connected with over 400 clients and trained them on a virtual platform since the pandemic started,” said Augustine. “The Certification Programs have gained momentum and enrollment has increased due to the virtual training,” he added.

Although we have seen successes in our use of technology, we have also identified the need for additional training among many of our small-scale producers.

“We tried social media and we discovered that many socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers and veteran farmers were not as familiar with using their personal computers,” stated Zanetta Augustine, Assistant Ag Specialist at the SU Ag Center.

She said instructions on how to access email, as well as coaching farmers on the use of platforms such as Zoom, had to be conducted to enable farmers to connect with their local cattle or vegetable groups.

“The training that we provided has changed many farmer’s lives because they now have access to information for use in their farming operation,” said Zanetta adding that many more hours of training will be needed for some farmers.

The SU Ag Center plans to offer computer training sessions on our Mobile Technology Education Center (MTEC) for producers throughout Louisiana in the coming months with social distancing and mask requirements.

These are some lessons that the SU Ag Center’s Cooperative Extension Program has learned through the use of technology in the wake of COVID-19 while continuing to link our citizens to opportunities for success.



SPRINGING into GARDENING

J. K. Haynes Charter School



SU Ag Center's Extension Associate Michael Polite is introducing the young students at J. K. Haynes School in Scotlandville, LA to gardening by way of the "Eradicating Food Deserts in Neighborhoods Through the Development of School Gardens" project.

Since the beginning of the school term, Polite has been implementing a weekly introduction level Zoom lecture with Chimera LuShaw's kindergarten class. By using past material, he has been able to track the retention level of the new and old information. "The young gardeners are very excited to greet me on their screen as they eat their lunch every Friday, nourishing their mind, bodies, and souls," said Polite.

To begin their virtual lesson, the students discuss "what is for lunch?" and recall the six flavor descriptors (Salty, Umami, Sweet, Sour, Bitter, and Spicy). "As we talk about what's on the plate, I also help the students visualize where and how some of the food items originate in addition to thanking the people whose job it is to create these things for us," stated Polite. "I utilize the STEAM approach to introduce topics by reciting poetry about the seasons, showcasing paintings of my favorite fruit, using theatrics to make information entertaining, and singing songs about hot peppers. Repetition is key for our young learners," he added.

Some of the topics covered with the students were Patterns: Weather and Life cycle of Plants; Flowers, Fruits, and Flavors; Birds, Bees, and Butterflies: the importance of Pollinators; and What's Inside? A peek into Louisiana's top farming crops.

In addition to the lectures, videos are also used to reinforce the day's material.

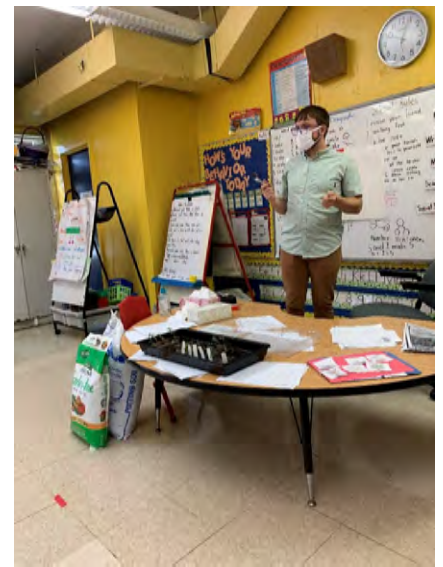
During the month of February, Ms. LuShaw allowed the students to start sowing seeds for the spring crop in a window box that was used last year – practicing sustainable gardening by reusing plastics. In March, the East Baton Rouge Parish Schools were moved into Phase 3 which has allowed extension associates to visit the schools in person.

For the students' first in-person hands-on project, Polite instructed them to grab peat pots in small groups and explained what a peat pot was and how it works. A peat pot is a pressed mold of plant material that will break down over time and won't hurt the soil. With the help of Ms. Lushaw, Principal Mary Mason, and Polite, every student took a turn performing the steps of transplanting a seedling into the container. Polite put on a pair of gloves to feed each container with an organic vegetable fertilizer and explained why it is necessary to wear gloves when working with chemicals.



The students were then allowed to go outside and water their plants with the watering can. Using the remainder of his time, Polite brought a hummingbird feeder and some nectar so the students could see a real hummingbird in their garden as mentioned in the lecture on “Bees, Birds, and Butterflies.” Ms. Lushaw instructed the students on how hummingbirds feed and fly around, she later hung the feeder with the students in the garden.

Ms. LuShaw also demonstrated the parts of a bolted mustard growing in the garden and explained why the plant can no longer be eaten; because of its bitter taste due to bolting. Polite added that while you wait to put in plants for the spring after the last frost, it is okay to leave the flowers there. Pollinators will feast on the early flowers of spring and you can harvest the seeds for the next Fall season’s crop. “The students have read a book about Seeds in the classroom with Ms. LuShaw and now we are able to help them visualize, with first-hand experience in their own garden,” said Polite. “Watching the students get excited over bolted brassicas showed me how appreciative the young gardeners are of this opportune experience and how excited they will relish the beauty of gardening with a lasting impression. I look forward to sharing the joy of gardening with many more students,” he expressed.



SU AG CENTER SET TO HOST A

virtual CONVERSATION

The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center will host a virtual conversation with Drs. Leon Tarver and Leodrey Williams at 2 p.m. on May 27, 2021.

This event will kick off a speakers series leading up to the Center's 20th Anniversary on July 1, 2021. The two speakers will discuss how and why the Southern University Ag Center was established.

Dr. Tarver serves as a member at – large for the Southern University System (SUS) Board of Supervisors. He is President Emeritus of the Southern University System and Executive Administrator (retired) of the Center of Cultural Heritage and International Programs at the Southern University and A & M College in Baton Rouge. He previously served as Board Chairman of the SUS Board of Supervisors from 2015 – 2016 and was named Chairman Emeritus during the Board's November 2016 meeting.

Dr. Williams served as the founding Chancellor of the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center. Before his chancellorship, Dr. Williams was appointed the Acting Administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Extension Service for all U.S. states and territories. He has served on several national and international committees and as a consultant in Extension administration and education in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. He has also helped to develop memoranda of understanding with the Republic of South Africa and the Republic of China. After 50 years of service, Dr. Williams retired on June 30, 2015 and was honored with the title of Chancellor Emeritus of the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center. *To register for the virtual conversation, visit <https://bit.ly/2RpCSiQ>.*

For a list of events leading up to the SU Ag Center's 20th Anniversary celebration, visit our website at www.suagcenter.com.



Dr. Leodrey Williams
Founding/Chancellor Emeritus
of SUAREC



Dr. Leon Tarver
President Emeritus
SUS System





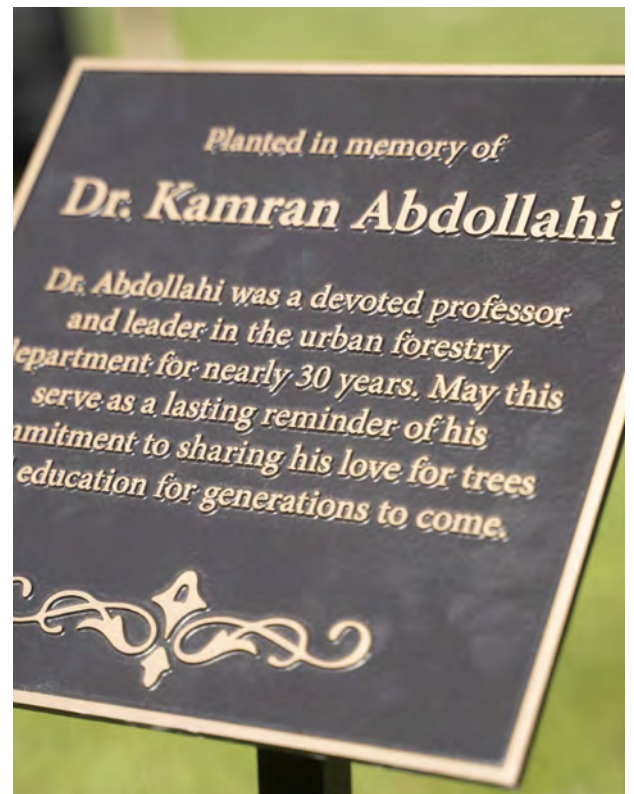
Urban Forestry students plant a tree in honor of their late Professor on Earth Day

More than 50 students, faculty, and staff in the College of Ag's Urban Forestry Department and the SU Ag Center attended a tree planting on Earth Day, April 22, 2021, to honor the memory of long-time Urban Forestry professor, Dr. Karman Abdollahi who passed away in March.

The tree planting was organized by Brooke McFarland, an Urban Forestry Master's degree student. McFarland said Dr. Adollahi was her graduate professor and advisor.

"He was a really sincere person who was involved in everything," noted McFarland. "He encouraged us to be involved as well such as attending conferences. Anytime we would speak with someone in the profession at a conference or another university they would all say that they knew Karman," she added.

The students planted a Live Oak tree and placed a plaque paying tribute to Dr. Adbollahi in front of the SU Ag Center's Headhouse Building. "He's done so much so I thought it would only make sense for us to come together and honor his memory with a tree on campus on Earth Day," said McFarland.





FREEDOM

HOSTED AT THE



THE NATIONAL
WWII MUSEUM

SU Ag Center and Ilera Holistic Healthcare will unveil the new product FREEDOM™ on May 26 at the WWII Museum in New Orleans

The Southern University Ag Center's medical marijuana partner Ilera Holistic Healthcare (IHH) and PAX Labs will unveil FREEDOM™, a new line of cannabis products formulated especially for veterans, during a press conference at 10 a.m. on May 26, 2021, at the WWII Museum in New Orleans.

Through an agreement with PAX Labs, IHH will launch its first inhalable cannabis products to the Louisiana medical marijuana (MMJ) market — a major step in the company's mission to provide patients with the most advanced medical cannabis options. FREEDOM™ and other IHH products are available through the state-licensed MMJ pharmacies and accessible to all patients in the state through a doctor's recommendation. Ilera operates in Louisiana under the license of Southern University, the only historically Black university in the nation to launch CBD and THC lines of medicinal marijuana products.

"We are thrilled to launch our first inhalable product with Ilera Holistic Healthcare through this exciting new partnership with PAX," says Dr. Janana Snowden, director of the Southern Institute for Medicinal Plants at the Southern University Ag Center. "We all share the goal of delivering the highest quality medical cannabis to all Louisianans in a variety of methods to suit their needs. The launch of FREEDOM and other forthcoming inhalable products through this partnership are a significant step in that direction," added Dr. Snowden.

"At Ilera Holistic Healthcare, our first priority is to serve the patients and provide them with the best options for their medical cannabis treatment," says IHH CEO Dr. Chanda Macias. "Metered vaporization provides patients greater bioavailability of the medicine and a rapid onset of action compared to other delivery methods. We are so proud to partner with PAX, an industry leader that provides the highest quality technology system to bring the most advanced inhaler to our patients."

Ilera Holistic Healthcare's cannabis products are grown, cultivated, processed and packaged in Louisiana through a partnership with the SU Ag Center.

Information from this article was provided by Ilera Holistic Healthcare.



BATTLE OF THE



SCIENCES

Drs. LaShunda Anderson Hodges, Janana Snowden, and Urban Forestry Master's degree student Simbrey Majors were collaborators and contributors for the 2021 Bayou Classic: Battle of the Sciences. The following information was published in the publication.

The Mississippi River and Southern University: A Historic Environmental Relationship

The Mississippi River is the second-longest river in the world. Its 2,318 miles, moving through the middle of the United States, has been an economic superhighway before establishing the United States. The river is home to diverse cultures, ancient civilizations, and higher learning institutions, such as Southern University and A&M College.

In 1880, Southern University and A&M College was initially founded in the Mississippi River town of New Orleans, Louisiana. After the passage of the 1890 Morrill Act, Southern gained land-grant university status. Thus, establishing its Agricultural and Mechanical department. Furthermore, in 1890, Southern moved its campus from New Orleans to its current location on Scott's Bluff in Scotlandville, Louisiana, which overlooks a bend in the Mississippi River. Southern values present and past achievements in teaching, research, and extension to preserve the Mississippi River for Louisiana citizens now, as well as generations to come.

Impact of Plant Life Upon Mississippi River Environmental Health

Plants play a significant role in the health of the Mississippi River. One of the plants impacting river health is a perennial grass called Switchgrass (*Panicum virgatum*). It grows on the riverbank, as well as the soils throughout the Mississippi River Valley. Switchgrass roots can grow 10 feet deep into the ground. Thus, increasing environmental quality by filtering pollutants and decreasing soil erosion caused by rainwater and river flooding, Switchgrass can grow to a height of 9 feet tall. Therefore, they provide shelter for local wildlife, such as quail and deer. Deer use Switchgrass as bedding for their fawns. Quail prefer Switchgrass because it allows for protection from predators and provides seed for food. Switchgrass is also being research as an environmentally friendly alternative to using corn to produce gasoline fuels.

Hemp or Industrial Hemp is another plant playing a significant role in the Mississippi River environment. Its rapid growth and long fibers allow hemp to process into food, medicine, fiber, building materials, and biofuels. It also can grow in soil areas that are typically not suitable for traditional agriculture crops. However, it does have benefits to the river environment. Hemp can absorb toxic heavy metals, such as lead, mercury, cadmium, and copper. It can also absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and deposit into the soil. Thus, industrial hemp can help to reduce global warming. Therefore, it is creating a cleaner environment for future generations living along the Mississippi River.

Non-point Source Pollution and River Health

The Mississippi River and the Atchafalaya River are the two major waterways in the state of Louisiana. Although these two water bodies are not physically connected today, the Atchafalaya basin is the historic outlet for the Mississippi River to enter the Gulf of Mexico. A threat to the livelihood of both water systems is non-point source pollution. Non-point source pollution is a toxic chemical or soil sediment that cannot be traced back to where they initially entered the river.

Citizens of Louisiana have been working for a long time to deal with non-point source pollution. In the 1800s, The Atchafalaya River, the only remaining distributary of the Mississippi River, became polluted because it captured a significant amount of water and sediment discharge from the Mississippi River.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers at the Old River Control Station dredged the Wax Lake Outlet in 1942 to aid in the increased flooding of the Atchafalaya Basin and Morgan City, LA. The Bonnet Carre' Spillway and Wax Lake Outlet are the oldest diversion systems constructed for flood control in the basin. The Mighty Mississippi River and its other connected water bodies are severely affected by non-point source pollution. Most rivers in the United States eventually empty into the Mississippi River. Therefore, the Mississippi river receives non-point source pollutions from all over the nation. Every day, this pollution passes right by our cities of Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

How does the non-point source pollution enter the Mississippi River from all over the United States? Rainfall flows across the landscape. It then washes soil particles, bacteria, pesticides, fertilizer, pet waste, oil, and other toxic materials into the lakes, streams, and groundwater, which drain into the Mississippi River. Agricultural Runoff is one of the leading causes of water pollution in the United States. Agricultural runoff adds nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus to water systems, which cause them to become eutrophic. Eutrophic is when there is an increased and dangerous amount of nitrogen and phosphorus in a water system. It results in green algae blooms that remove oxygen from the water—thus killing fish and marine life and creating a dead zone. In 2017, the Dead Zone in the Gulf of Mexico caused by non-point source pollution existing from the Mississippi River was the size of New Jersey. It is the largest one on record.

ALUMNISPOTLIGHT



Robert Easley Jr., is a Gulf Coast native and a two-time graduate of Southern University Agricultural & Mechanical College, in Agricultural Sciences and Urban Forestry. Easley often shares lighthearted memories of being introduced to both **Southern University and Agriculture through the Beginning Agricultural Youth Opportunities Unlimited (BAYOU) Program**. The BAYOU program, which served as an opportunity to provide Easley with first-hand knowledge on careers in Agriculture, Consumer Sciences, and other related disciplines ultimately propelled him to the next level.



ROBERT EASLEY

His infinite love for ag and philanthropy led him into a predestined future. While matriculating through his undergraduate studies, he was afforded an internship opportunity with the Southern University System Foundation. This is where he honed his skills in donor relations and learned to navigate the non-profit sector.

“When you really care about something, you become proximate to it,” said Easley. **Southern University, agriculture, and its students have been the lifeblood that keeps him going.**

As the newly appointed Director of Advancement for the Southern University Agricultural Research & Extension Center, Easley spends a large percentage of time immersed in local communities.

Why did you choose to work in the non-profit sector? As African Americans, and minorities we make up a small percentage of this industry. There are many professional opportunities to gain employment. The non-profit sector essentially affords me the opportunity to connect agriculture with higher education, and give back to my community.



What does your day-to-day role consist of as Director of Advancement for the Southern University Agricultural Research & Extension Center? First and foremost, all things alumni from the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences. That can consist of getting email addresses, adding alumnus to the distribution list, making direct phone contact, and speaking with them about their personal experiences while attending Southern University to garner support. The personal connectedness to the university is what helps to build capacity and expand the ongoing work of the SU Ag Center and the College of Ag. It essentially boils down to identifying and securing resources to help us continue to be the number one campus in the system.

What types of support are typically derived once you have made contact with alumni? Support and engagement from alumni can range from financial contributions, gifts-in-kind, advising, and consulting.

If any, what are some of the challenges you have faced while fundraising for the College of Ag? Of course, the pandemic has slowed us down just a little, but overall we do a great job at mitigating challenges. We are in control of our own narrative, and being in control means telling our own story. We engage our constituents often, making sure they are aware of the many great things that are happening at Southern University. So we are still meeting our benchmarks as far as private fundraising.

What is your primary focus right now to build capacity for the SU Ag Center & the College of Ag? We are building the Morrill Society. This prestigious giving circle consists of alumni who are serving in the private, and state/local government sectors of agriculture. Many of its current members are graduates from the College of Ag who are doing some amazing things and are definitely giving back through financial contributions. We are not only creating a philanthropic culture throughout the system, but actually seeing it activated and being very transparent while doing so.



20 YEARS
of
AG
SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY



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