

Oklahoma Country

Fall 2022
The magazine of
Oklahoma Farm Bureau



The taste of summer

Meet a Farm Bureau family who grows watermelons that mark the taste of summer for consumers across Oklahoma and beyond.

Taylor made

An Okmulgee County member shares agricultural opportunities with students

Production to consumption

OKFB plans to celebrate 80 years of Farm Bureau at our 2022 annual meeting

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Meet candidates who support agriculture and rural Oklahoma in our voter guide

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ON THE COVER

Photo by Dustin Mielke

Dennis Slagell of Triple S Farms near Hydro stands in front of bins of watermelons ready for distribution that the family grows on their Blaine County farm.

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ABOUT OKLAHOMA COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Oklahoma Country magazine is the official magazine of Oklahoma Farm Bureau, mailed to Farm Bureau members four times a year. *Oklahoma Country* magazine shares the story of Oklahoma agriculture and our rural communities through the eyes of Farm Bureau members, programs and activities.

ABOUT OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is Oklahoma's largest general farm organization, dedicated to supporting the agriculture community to improve the lives of Oklahomans. As a grassroots, member-led organization, OKFB gives a voice to family farmers and ranchers through advocacy, outreach, leadership development and supporting the future of agriculture.

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Rodd Moesel

*President
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
& Affiliated Companies*

“While we have faced plenty of adversity in 2022, I have found the time I have spent with my Farm Bureau friends to be the refreshing and recharging jolt that I need.”

Connecting with friends as we create a better future for agriculture

There’s nothing quite like spending time with friends to brighten your day and lift your spirits.

This past year has been a trying one for all of us in agriculture. With ongoing drought in our state, inflation pressures increasing costs of our farm, ranch and business inputs, and supply chain scarcity, there have been plenty of challenges that can make even trial-tested Oklahomans weary.

While we have faced plenty of adversity in 2022, I have found the time I have spent with my Farm Bureau friends to be the refreshing and recharging jolt that I need.

I enjoyed meeting Farm Bureau members from around the state during our August Area Meeting season as we shared both the victories our organization has won this past year and the issues that our agriculture community faces. Our grassroots leaders always have their fingers on the pulse of rural Oklahoma and seeing their passion for our industry is always refreshing.

I hope you took the opportunity to attend your county Farm Bureau annual meeting to connect with local Farm Bureau members and see first-hand the great work our local leaders take on to serve our rural communities. There’s nothing quite like sharing a meal with fellow agriculturalists while discussing the great projects our county Farm Bureau members implement to remind us of the importance of our grassroots process.

In fact, Oklahoma Farm Bureau will take the next step in our grassroots policy development process at our state resolutions meeting. Representatives from around the state gather each and every year to consider the resolutions submitted from county Farm Bureaus that address the policy issues that are on the minds of our members. I always love hearing the discussion that plays out in these meetings. The ideas from around

Oklahoma generate intelligent, impassioned conversations from our resolutions committee members as they work out the best possible proposals for delegates to consider at our annual meeting to help agriculture and our rural communities prosper.

If you are looking for a good gathering of agriculture friends to lift your spirits and get you excited about our industry, look no further than our upcoming annual meeting held in Norman Nov. 11-13. Our largest yearly gathering of Farm Bureau members from around the state serves as an opportunity to meet both old friends and new leaders from around our organization. We will have a full slate of opportunities available at convention from our annual business meeting where our policy for the upcoming year is debated and voted on to breakout sessions that help expand our agricultural horizons and encourage us to be dedicated advocates for our industry.

Most importantly, it is a great time to connect with fellow farmers and ranchers as we share our experiences from the past year and encourage one another to adapt, grow and persevere. We all know agriculture is not the easiest way to make a living – and let’s face it, making a living from the land is downright difficult. That is what makes leaning on fellow Farm Bureau members such a blessing for all of us: we can talk to people who are facing the same challenges and come away with a refreshed perspective. While we cannot change our circumstances, the simple act of gathering, visiting and laughing with friends reminds us that we are all in this together as a Farm Bureau family.

This past year may have had more than its fair share of difficulties, but when you have friends like our Farm Bureau members, simply gathering together to share our lives with one another is just the sort of encouragement we can all use from time to time.

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A year full of victories for team Farm Bureau

Though 2022 may not yet be over, at Oklahoma Farm Bureau fall is the time where we recall our accomplishments as we plan to celebrate together with Farm Bureau members at our annual meeting in November.

As I look back at our year, it surprises me how many new and exciting programs and activities our organization kicked off in addition to our full slate of regular events Farm Bureau members have come to enjoy.

I'm proud of our efforts this year to reach out to Oklahoma's agriculture youth in new ways. We held our inaugural Youth Legislative Experience where more than 60 4-H and FFA members participated in a mock legislature as they learned how policy is developed. Numerous parents and Farm Bureau leaders told me about students who now have a desire to be involved in the policymaking process, thanks to the event. We also held our second FFA Reporters Conference, a media-training event where nearly 100 chapter FFA reporters learned how to share their FFA chapter's story throughout the upcoming year.

OKFB launched our Generation Bridge program, which provides Farm Bureau members ages 35-50 with a place to expand their agricultural experiences with fellow members from around the state. For years we heard from Young Farmers & Ranchers members who reached age 36 and wanted a state-level group to continue their agricultural advocacy and growth. Generation Bridge provides that opportunity, and this year we saw our first gatherings of these mid-career agriculturalists as they shape the future of the program.

We are also charting a new course for OKFB with our rural development initiatives. Earlier this year, we were chosen to help manage the new State of Oklahoma Business Accelerator program to encourage economic development in the rural parts of our state. We all want to keep rural Oklahoma vibrant for generations to come, and through our work to develop a rural business accelerator program, we will help connect entrepreneurs with knowledge and resources to make their ideas come to life. We are continually building our rural development program, and we are excited to share more details as soon as we can.

Our political action committee – the OKFB Ag PAC – for the first time enabled our grassroots members to endorse and support candidates running for federal offices. An evolution of our political engagement activities, the new Ag PAC gathered Farm Bureau member input to support political candidates in federal, statewide and Oklahoma legislative races in a grassroots fashion that is true to our member-driven heritage.

We always work closely with our county Farm Bureaus, and this year we partnered with our local leaders with two donation matching programs. The Community Food Assistance Matching Program helped county Farm Bureaus support local food pantries and food assistance organizations to provide meals to Oklahomans in need. Our Fire Department Matching Program combined resources from county Farm Bureaus, the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture and OKFB Insurance to support local fire departments who have been on high alert for much of the year due to the severe drought conditions in our state.

And these efforts merely scratch the surface. Throughout the year, OKFB has awarded scholarships; given out grants; advocated for policy at the Capitol; provided safety programs in local communities; shared the agriculture story with the news media; participated in U.S. Supreme Court cases through the OKFB Legal Foundation; supported agriculture youth at numerous local, regional and statewide events; sponsored a myriad of agricultural programs; and created opportunities for Farm Bureau members to gather, learn and grow together.

It has been a great year of accomplishment and achievement for our organization, and it has been a full team effort by our local Farm Bureau leaders, our state committees, and numerous OKFB members. I am especially proud of our staff who continually step up to serve our members. Just know that Farm Bureau stands ready to build upon these accomplishments and continue our mission to support Oklahoma's agriculture community.



Thad Doye

*Executive Director
Oklahoma Farm Bureau*



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A new look for our magazine, new opportunities for Farm Bureau



Dustin Mielke

*Vice President of
Communications &
Public Relations
Oklahoma Farm Bureau*

My first experiences in Oklahoma are some of my most treasured times in the Sooner State. As a junior-high-aged kid, I first visited Oklahoma with a wheat cutting crew.

I grew up loving wheat harvest back home in Montana, and a full run of the custom cutting circuit seemed to me the ideal way to spend a summer.

I spent several summers making the trip south, and my tasks included washing windshields, greasing machines and changing sickle sections. Eventually, I worked my way up the list of jobs until I reached the pinnacle of my wheat harvest career – combine operator.

Perched atop a shining Gleaner combine, I honed the skills needed to run a machine. From cutting out terraces to opening up fields, I learned the ropes of wheat harvest excellence.

One lesson that stuck with me was the requirement that every field we harvested should look “clean” – no left-behind skips of wheat, straight tire tracks (long before GPS guidance) and uniform stubble height across the entire field. Just as a beautiful, consistent field of wheat is a farmer’s reputation, a clean, even stubble field was our calling card. We strived to leave a field that neighbors would drive past, see the work we had done, and think to themselves, “those folks knew what they were doing.”

In my time at Oklahoma Farm Bureau, our communications team has worked to ensure all our products and projects leave people with that same impression. The work of our organization is tremendously important for Oklahoma farm and ranch families, and the impression all Farm Bureau members and staff work toward is one of professionalism and quality.

This issue of *Oklahoma Country* magazine marks a redesign of our largest publication. While I hope everyone enjoys the design, layout, photography and overall look, our reworking of the magazine is more than skin deep.

OKFB members may have noticed that they did not receive a summer 2022 issue of our magazine. The supply chain issues that have plagued our family farmers and ranchers struck the OKFB communications department, and we were not able to procure the paper necessary to print a summer issue. Adapting like the farmers and ranchers we strive to serve, we decided to step back, update the magazine’s design, feel and flow in order to create a publication that will better serve our members.

The new design comes with a new concept and a new approach that our OKFB communications staff will take when telling stories from Oklahoma

agriculture, Farm Bureau members and our organization. We are not just designing with a new look, we are continually thinking about new and exciting ways we can share the great news from around OKFB with our members and the general public.

Part of a redesign includes saying goodbye to certain pieces of content. Beginning with this issue, several sections that appeared in every issue will now be included on an as-needed basis. We have also discontinued our classified section, as we know there are many options for our members to sell items that provide quicker feedback and results than a quarterly publication allows.

With all that we have changed and reworked, there is still more to come. As we create future content and share Oklahoma agriculture in coming issues and coming years, we will be adding, moving, reworking and tweaking *Oklahoma Country* to make it the best platform to share our greatest stories.

With a new look and new ideas, we are excited for the new possibilities our redesigned magazine presents. We hope you enjoy the stories, information and achievements in each and every issue of *Oklahoma Country* magazine, and we are proud to showcase the amazing industry that is Oklahoma agriculture.

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETINGS



OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU

To all members of Oklahoma Farm Bureau and all affiliated county Farm Bureaus of Oklahoma Farm Bureau: You are hereby notified that Oklahoma Farm Bureau will convene its regular annual meeting of the members and the delegate body on Friday, November 11, 2022 at 1:30 p.m., at Embassy Suites by Hilton Hotel & Convention Center, 2501 Conference Drive, Norman, OK 73069. All affiliated county Farm Bureaus should make certain that your delegates are properly certified in attendance to represent your membership. This meeting will continue until all necessary business is transacted.

- Board of Directors



OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Policyholders of Oklahoma Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company will begin at 8:45 a.m. on Saturday, November 12, 2022, during the Oklahoma Farm Bureau annual meeting. A report will be submitted of the activities of the company during the past fiscal year, together with a report of the financial position of the company. Any and all other activities of the company may be presented and considered.


- Board of Directors



THE TASTE SUM

DENNIS SLAG

TRIPLE S FARMS
HYDRO, OKLAHOMA



STATE OF SUMMER

THE SLAGELL FAMILY GROWS
ONE OF THE SURE SIGNS OF
SUMMERTIME FOR THEIR FELLOW
OKLAHOMANS TO ENJOY.

BY REBEKAH NASH /// PHOTOS BY DUSTIN MIELKE

AFTER A LONG DAY IN THE HOT SUN, the quintessential summer treat never tasted better. Either directly from the field or freshly cut and out of the refrigerator, there is something about Oklahoma's state vegetable – the watermelon – that is perfectly refreshing.

With three generations farming side by side, the Slagell family has been growing specialty crops like watermelons for people around the state to enjoy. Yet, the journey from seed to melon is not always easy, but Dennis and Virgil Slagell continue to grow vegetables for others' enjoyment.

The Slagells grow a wide array of both traditional and specialty crops on their Blaine County farm including corn, cotton, peanuts, potatoes, pumpkins, soybeans, sweet potatoes, watermelons and wheat.

From June to late September, the family's focus is on growing delectable watermelons. Oklahoma's unpredictable weather prohibits them from sowing a seed directly into the soil in their fields north of Hydro, so in turn, the family starts the seeds in a greenhouse before introducing the plant to the volatile outdoor growing conditions for which Oklahoma is known.

The watermelon seedlings are planted into the ground during the first weeks of June with a specialized implement. Plants are placed in the ground at different times to ensure not all melons ripen at once.

The staggered planting of the crop ensures there are no melons left behind in the field because of the labor-intensive harvest in the fall. It also provides the Slagells with a staggered harvest season, allowing them to ship watermelons to consumers over the course of several months.

Within four to eight weeks of the seed germinating, the plant will produce blooms and need pollination to grow the fruit. But first, there is a challenge to overcome.

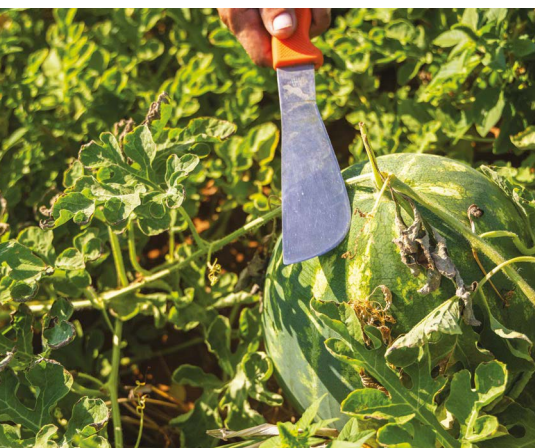
A large number of traditional crops are diploid, meaning they have two sets of chromosomes. The Slagell family grows seedless watermelons, which are triploid plants and have three sets of chromosomes, making growing the sought-after crop a bit more difficult.

Having three sets of chromosomes makes the seedless watermelon infertile, and therefore a pollinator such as bees or a pollinator plant is necessary.

While striving to be a low-cost producer and capitalizing on profit potential, the Slagells use both pollinator plants – seeded watermelons – and bees. Wind blowing the pollen through the air and bees carrying pollen to the flowers creates the mouth-watering treat.

If seedless watermelons require extra care, then why not grow seeded watermelons instead?

"We plant seedless watermelons because that is where the market is," Dennis said. "Everyone is accustomed to eating a seedless watermelon."



THE HARVEST CREW STARTS BY CUTTING THE WATERMELONS FROM THE VINE WITH A KNIFE.



WORKERS TOSS WATERMELONS INTO THE TRANSPORT VEHICLE AS THEY WALK THROUGH EACH FIELD.



WORKERS WALK THROUGH THE FIELD, PICKING UP EACH MELON AND LOAD IT TO THE TRANSPORT VEHICLE.

This iteration of watermelon production got its start in the 1980s through selective breeding, but consumers did not respond the way scientists hoped they would.

“It was not accepted by consumers easily,” Dennis said. “Typically, if watermelons did not have seeds, they were not a good watermelon. As people started trying the seedless watermelons and realized it tasted as good or better than the seeded watermelons, then it became a consumer-driven preference.

“Now, I would suspect a lot of people who are buying watermelons do not realize watermelons did have seeds in them. Since the consumers asked for seedless watermelons, we started selecting watermelons for sugar content, shipability, rind strength and other characteristics to provide the best seedless watermelons.”

Ensuring each melon is pollinated is one of the many factors monitored throughout the growing season to make certain consumers receive the level of quality for which Triple S Farms is known.

Dennis, Virgil and their families keep an eye out for many other hurdles that can arise throughout the growing season.

“Weed control in watermelons is probably the most difficult aspect of any crop we grow,” Dennis said. “We have taken several approaches to it, and we try to cut down on herbicide and pesticide use as much as possible. We rely a bit on herbicides but also on cultivation.”

Herbicides can be practical tools for many

farms and ranches, but in an effort to limit the use of food-safe chemicals, they use an innovative tool to combat the weeds.

“The weed zapper uses high-voltage current to a rod that touches a weed,” Dennis said of the implement they use for weed control. “The electricity goes through the ground to the weed and destroys the cell structure.”

However, for some of this year’s fields, the weed zapper was out of commission, and in efforts to reduce chemical intervention, watermelon fields also became the home to other types of vegetation.

Another practice the Slagell family uses to avoid pesky weeds is crop rotation. With a three-year rotation for all their crops, the farm’s goal is to break the cycle of diseases and weeds in each field, Dennis said.

“When you come back watermelons on watermelons, you are going to have the same disease attack it every year and fight the same weeds you fought before,” Dennis said. “Our practice is at least a three-year rotation.”

While controlling weeds is an ever-important part of growing any crop, success in Oklahoma agriculture usually hinges on one major element: the weather.

“This year, we went from a drought to a two-week flood in June, then it turned back into a drought again,” Dennis said. “The extreme weather conditions including high heat and rainfall is what stresses any plant, including watermelons. No year is the same, so you just deal with what you are given.”



MELONS ARE ARRANGED IN THE TRANSPORT VEHICLE, WHICH TAKES THEM TO BE CLEANED, LABELED AND SORTED.

Specialty crop producers, just like all farmers, have to deal with whatever conditions Mother Nature throws at them, a fact that was especially true during this year's drought.

"When the plants are sizing melons, there needs to be a lot of water available to the plants to translocate into the melon to get the size and sugars needed because watermelons mainly consist of water," Dennis said.

While the Slagells are feeling the burden of the drought, their fields have center pivot irrigation systems to help ensure the growing plants receive the necessary amount of water, which is critically important when growing specialty crops.

Water is readily available on the family's farm because of their location on the northern side of the Rush Springs aquifer, yet pumping water to the surface comes at an additional cost.

Throughout the majority of the growing season, the watermelons are nestled in the field, surrounded by foliage. But when the end of July rolls around, it is time to start harvesting the season's crop.

"We had a late start to harvest this year," Dennis said. "Weather conditions created a late start in the first of August. Typically, we start around the 20th of July, but we were 10 days late this year due to the weather not being predictable."

With the drought, excessive heat and late-season rains, watermelon producers faced adversity in growing a marketable crop. The labor-intensive harvesting process starts in late





ABOVE /// DENNIS SLAGELL HOLDS A WATERMELON THAT IS LABELED AND READY FOR STORE SHELVES BEFORE IT LEAVES TRIPLE S FARMS.



ABOVE /// CASH ENTZ (LEFT) AND JETT ENTZ OF HYDRO LOOK THROUGH BINS OF WATERMELONS AT TRIPLE S FARMS TO FIND THE PERFECT MELON. LOCALS FLOCK TO THE SLAGELL FAMILY'S FARM TO PURCHASE WATERMELONS.

"OUR PRIMARY GOAL IS TO DELIVER A SAFE PRODUCT TO THE CONSUMER AND AN ENJOYABLE PRODUCT, NATURALLY IN WATERMELONS"

///

DENNIS SLAGELL

July and continues through September because of the staggered planting of the seedlings.

"Growing and harvesting watermelons requires a lot of labor," Dennis said. "Each melon has to be cut in the field, then loaded onto the transport vehicle. From the transport vehicle, the melon is loaded onto a belt to be graded and taken off the belt to be placed in a bin. Each watermelon is handled at least four times."

Each person on the Slagell's harvest crew is trained to select watermelons that are in ideal condition before cutting the melon off the vine and hurtling it into the transport vehicle.

Crouching down to examine the thousands of watermelons in the fields, workers look for specimens that are blemish-free and ripe before cutting them off the vine, resulting in one to two deliverable melons per plant. Other workers share the load by piling watermelons into the transport vehicle.

After a full load of watermelons are stacked strategically into the transport vehicle, they travel a few miles to the packing facility, where they are cleaned by rolling across brushes to

remove any remaining soil. Tumbling across a belt, melons are sorted, or graded, by size into bins that will be delivered to a distributor.

"There are multiple sizes of watermelons that we sell," Dennis said. "The sizes you will see in a store are a 60-count, 45-count or 36-count. A 60-count means that there are 60 watermelons in a bin, and those typically weigh 16 to 18 pounds. They are a smaller size of watermelon, but they still taste the same as a larger melon."

A 45-count bin of watermelons is the most popular size bin that Triple S Farms sells to distributors with melons ranging in weight from 18 to 20 pounds.

Meticulous attention is placed on food safety measures throughout the entire growing, harvesting and grading process to ensure a safe, affordable and delicious melon.

"Our primary goal is to deliver a safe product to the consumer and an enjoyable product, naturally, in watermelons," Dennis said. "There are many safeguards in place, which are in place through different audits that include but are not limited to sanitization of handling equipment,



TOP LEFT ///
WATERMELONS UNDERGO A VISUAL INSPECTION AS THEY ARRIVE FROM THE FIELD TO ENSURE EACH MELON MEETS QUALITY STANDARDS.



TOP RIGHT ///
WATERMELONS PASS THROUGH A QUICK RINSE AND TUMBLE TO REMOVE SOIL LEFT OVER FROM THE FIELD.



BOTTOM LEFT ///
WORKERS VISUALLY CHECK WATERMELONS TO SELECT SIMILAR-SIZED MELONS TO PLACE INTO BINS FOR TRANSPORT.



BOTTOM RIGHT ///
BINS CONTAINING INSPECTED, LABELED AND SIZED MELONS ARE PACKED BEFORE THE WATERMELONS LEAVE THE SLAGELL FAMILY'S FARM.

Watch a video of watermelon harvest from the Slagell's farm online at okfb.news/WatermelonVideo22.

sanitization of the food handlers and records of sanitization measures. We welcome another set of eyes looking over our procedures and practices to make sure we are delivering the safest product."

The idea of an audit may sound alarming, but the Slagell's have a different perspective to ensure their customers, whether it be the distribution centers or grocery shoppers, are receiving an enjoyable product.

"Rest assured, the melons have to pass rigorous tests to go into a distribution center," Dennis said. "If they are going to a distribution center and onto the store, the final product will be a good watermelon."

Local customers have grown accustomed to the high-quality watermelons the Slagell family is known for, which catapulted them to selling to a few large Oklahoma distributors.

"There is one retailer in Oklahoma this year that has really focused on local product and that is Sprouts Farmers Market," Dennis said. "They came to us really wanting an Oklahoma-grown product. A lot of retailers say local product is

important to them and not all focus on that, but in the past two years, Sprouts has really focused on a locally grown product."

In addition to the watermelons, Sprouts also requested pumpkins from Triple S Farms.

Consumers can also find the family's melons at select Walmart stores or by stopping by the farm outside of Hydro.

"We also keep watermelons available for public pick-up here at the farm," Dennis said. "It is an honor system - you pick what you want and put your money in the box."

With rows of bins lined up outside of the Triple S packing facility north of Hydro, locals can find the perfect melon for their family to enjoy. Despite the challenges growing specialty crops poses, Dennis finds joy in providing a product customers see value in.

"Watermelons are a fun product to see kids eat," Dennis said. "It is fun to see the satisfaction they get from eating a product we grow. Watermelons are not a product you have to buy, but having them available for the public for their enjoyment. It is good to see." **FB**



TAYLOR MADE

Despite a dilapidated facility and a lack of funding, one young Farm Bureau member shares how he revitalized an abandoned agricultural education program with a rich history.

Story by **Rachel Havens** | Photos by **Dustin Mielke**

Agricultural education reaches far beyond cows, sows and plows for Tim Taylor.

As a member of the National FFA Organization in high school, the Vinita, Oklahoma, native knew the standard model of traditional agricultural education would not work well for students in the northeast Oklahoma community of Okmulgee.

Okmulgee's FFA program was dissolved in 2011 after a lack of program interest and districtwide budget cuts forced the chapter to close its doors. Despite a rich and storied history dating back to the New Farmers of America in the 1950s and '60s, the program never evolved to fit the changing students at Okmulgee High School.

"Okmulgee FFA was very much a traditional program and was very livestock-based," said Taylor, Okmulgee agricultural education instructor and FFA advisor. "It was still trying to be that very traditional model of agricultural education, and it didn't fit the demographics that had changed here in Okmulgee."

The chapter was founded in the fall of 1951 as the Dunbar High School New Farmers of America. In a time of racial segregation in many areas of the country, Dunbar High School was the designated school for Black students in Okmulgee.



Okmulgee FFA started as a New Farmers of America chapter in 1951 until the organization merged with the Future Farmers of America in 1965.

Fifteen boys comprised the original NFA chapter as girls were not yet allowed to participate in agricultural education. The students transformed Dunbar NFA into a prominent NFA chapter, raising and selling broiler chickens, and participating in livestock, poultry and land judging.

"As far as I know, this was the first agricultural education class in the entire Okmulgee school system," Taylor said.

Dunbar NFA students made a name for themselves at the national level with appearances at several national contests at the Tuskegee Institute in Atlanta.



Tim Taylor (left) explains to his students the different species of plants in the chapter greenhouse. Taylor ensures his students have the opportunity to learn about a variety of agricultural practices in his class.

The chapter boasted several national-placing judging teams and a national champion public speaker in the 1950s.

In 1965, the NFA merged with the Future Farmers of America, now known as the National FFA Organization. The chapter received its official FFA charter in September 1965. Soon after, the area high schools integrated and became Okmulgee High School.

The new Okmulgee FFA became a two-teacher program that continued the original NFA chapter's success for many years. The chapter had numerous students earn their State FFA Degree and even had back-to-back State FFA Reporters in 1973 and 1974.

As the years went by and students became more urban, Okmulgee FFA saw a decline in participation. Many students no longer had the financial means to support livestock, Taylor said.

"Eventually, when there were large budget cuts around 2011, the agricultural education program was on the chopping block," he said. "They just closed the doors and walked away."

The agricultural education building remained empty and fell into disrepair until the fall of 2017 when Taylor received a call during his final semester at Oklahoma State University.

"Early on in the semester, I got a phone call asking if I'd come down to Okmulgee and talk with them about restarting their agricultural education program," he said.

Taylor said the request was not a job interview, but rather a conversation about the steps needed to restart the program.

He met with the superintendent of Okmulgee Public Schools, the Okmulgee High School principal and many others. After a tour of the facility and a discussion, the group asked him to create a presentation and speak to the Okmulgee school board.

"I came down, did the presentation and that evening they offered me the position to restart the program," Taylor said.

Taylor was hired in the spring of 2018 and began the task of restarting Okmulgee's agricultural education program.

"I worked my entire first semester with no students," he said.

Throughout the spring, Taylor's efforts focused on building relationships with school staff and the surrounding community as well as working with district maintenance staff to begin restoring the dilapidated facility.

Taylor and a group of staff and volunteers cleaned out the existing building, fixed the roof and flooring and gave the space a new coat of paint.

THE AGRICULTURAL
EDUCATION PROGRAM WAS
ON THE CHOPPING BLOCK.
THEY JUST CLOSED THE
DOORS AND WALKED AWAY.

- TIM TAYLOR

Aside from cleanliness and safety updates that were needed in the building, Taylor wanted the facility to feel different than it had in the past.

"We did not want the facility to just be the bare bones," he said. "We wanted it to feel like this is a new opportunity, this is a new program, this is a quality program."

Without a line-item for agricultural education in Okmulgee Public Schools' general fund, Taylor relied heavily on grants and money from his own pocket to help revitalize the facility.

Taylor said he and the group salvaged some existing items from the facility but largely searched for unused equipment around the school district.

"We went to some of the other school sites in the district that had classrooms that weren't being used," Taylor said. "We looked for dry-erase boards that weren't being used and fixed those up. We also had older tables that we had to scavenge from around the district to use for our classroom."

After the first year, Okmulgee FFA received funding through Oklahoma CareerTech.

"Our second year we were able to get fully funded through CareerTech, so we were able to receive program assistance money from the state," Taylor said. "We were able to use that money to buy some things that were important."

With the structural repairs in the rearview mirror, Taylor knew he needed to design an agricultural education program that fit the current students at Okmulgee High School.

"In more ways than one, most people would not consider our students the traditional FFA member," Taylor said.

Many of the students in Okmulgee live within city limits – often in apartments or tribal housing. They are also racially and ethnically diverse with a large population of Native American and Black students, he said.

"We try to reflect those demographics in our chapter," Taylor said. "We try to get a good cross-section of our student population."

The Oklahoma State Department of Education classifies nearly 94 percent of students at Okmulgee Public Schools as low-income. The district participates in the United States Department of Agriculture's Community Eligibility Provision, meaning 100 percent of students in the district receive breakfast and lunch at no cost.

Given many students' socioeconomic position, Taylor knew a departure from the traditional FFA model was necessary and recognized his students' Supervised Agricultural Experiences would likely not involve livestock.



LEANDRE
DELONIA

GRADE
Sophomore

**SUPERVISED AG
EXPERIENCE**

Raises rabbits
& chickens

**FAVORITE FFA
ACTIVITY**

Livestock shows
& speech contests

**PLANS AFTER HIGH
SCHOOL**

Attend OSU to
become a doctor

"Because we knew we could not raise traditional livestock, we knew there were a couple things we wanted to make sure we did," Taylor said. "We wanted to have opportunities for students to have their Supervised Agricultural Experiences here at the building."

Taylor jumped head-first into finding appropriate SAEs for his students. He began by developing a robust aquaponics system through a local education grant where students take care of the system and practice accurate record-keeping.

"They may not have any financial investment in that system, but they have a time investment taking care of it," he said.

Okmulgee FFA students have the opportunity to care for chickens in the chapter's chicken coop and grow vegetables in the chapter garden. Many students also show rabbits and broiler chickens on the local and state level.

Students have even begun trying their hand at several Career Development Events, including meat evaluation, floriculture, public speaking and the agriscience fair.

"We've had to combat some of the things a lot of FFA members may take for granted that we've had to work on here in Okmulgee," Taylor said.

One of those things is something many FFA members have in their closets: an FFA jacket.

The blue corduroy jacket worn by tens of thousands of FFA members across the country is something many might not think



Taylor (left) harvests eggs with Parker Larabee, an Okmulgee FFA sophomore, in the chapter's hen house. Okmulgee FFA students harvest and sell the home-grown eggs as a chapter fundraiser.

twice about buying, but it is not always feasible for Taylor's agricultural education students.

That is where the community steps in.

"We have had several community members and alumni, as well as state and national programs that we have relied on to help students get their own jacket," he said.

A former FFA member himself, Taylor knows the importance of an FFA jacket to students. To mark the occasion, the chapter has a ceremony every year where students try on their jackets and talk about the significance of them.

"It gives them a sense of uniformity and a sense of pride," he said.

Taylor said his students' involvement in agricultural education is important, no matter the career path they choose after high school.

"Even if a student doesn't pursue production agriculture as a career, everyone has to go to the grocery store," he said. "Everyone has to make those decisions on what is best for them or their potential future families. Eventually, they may want to buy a house or even just start a garden. Some of these skills we are learning here in our ag building are applicable to their lives after high school."

Sometimes the hands-on experience students receive in Taylor's class can change the course of a student's future, like one student who received a full welding scholarship to a local trade school.

"He has his tuition paid for the entire year based on some basic knowledge that he gained out here in our shop," Taylor said of the student.

But technical skills are not the only skills to be learned through agricultural education.

EVEN IF A STUDENT DOESN'T
PURSUE PRODUCTION
AGRICULTURE AS A CAREER,
EVERYONE HAS TO GO TO
THE GROCERY STORE.

- TIM TAYLOR



PARKER LARABEE

GRADE

Sophomore

SUPERVISED AG EXPERIENCE

Raises orchid flowers

FAVORITE FFA ACTIVITY

Taking trips

PLANS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

Attend college



However, an exercise in good etiquette is only part of their dining experience.


"The number of times that my students look at me and say, 'You mean I can pick anything on this menu? I can pick anything I want?' almost makes me get choked up," he said.

This year's state convention was especially memorable as Okmulgee FFA was selected to receive a Ford pickup for their work as a chapter. Okmulgee added this honor to an extensive list of accomplishments and accolades in the four years since the chapter's rebirth, including two National 3-Star Chapter awards and a National Model of Excellence Chapter award finalist.

Taylor said leading a non-traditional agricultural education program does not happen overnight. Even as the advisor, he still relies on peers and industry professionals to ensure his program is successful.

"I hope my students realize by the time they go through my program that you have to be a lifelong learner," he said. "Just because you finish one project or just because you get a degree does not mean that is the end of learning."

Though Taylor did not initially see himself as an agricultural education instructor when he began college, he understands the impact his role can have on his students.

"These students are excited and are willing to go the extra mile, so I get to show them what is possible through FFA and agricultural education," he said. "I have a great support system at the school, and the community is really supportive. As long as they will have me, I will be here." 

"Another important thing is some of the soft skills that FFA develops, like knowing how to shake someone's hand before an interview or how to look them in the eye, how to create a résumé, knowing how to lead a discussion for more than a few sentences, how to speak with purpose and dress the part," Taylor said.

"Some of these are things that some people may take for granted in FFA, but for these kids who may not have the home background or have someone who is there to guide them, FFA is here to create some of those experiences," he said.

One special experience for many of Taylor's students is taking an overnight trip to the State FFA Convention, he said.

"A lot of our students do not get to go on a lot of overnight trips," Taylor said. "For many of them, that is their first time staying in a hotel."

Aside from attending convention sessions and activities, Taylor uses the experience to help the students develop some useful soft skills.

Taylor said he likes to take his students to nicer restaurants while on out-of-town trips to help them practice their mealtime etiquette.

Tim Taylor is a member of Okmulgee County Farm Bureau. He serves as vice-chair of the Okmulgee County Young Farmers and Ranchers and participates in YF&R events on the state and national level.





OKFB Ag PAC board members (right to left) Alan Jett, LeRoy Odell and Roger Fisher discuss candidates to support and endorse at the Ag PAC meeting in August.

A LASTING IMPACT

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Ag PAC plays an important role in both state and federal elections

Farm Bureau members understand the importance of having a voice in elections at every level, from local city councils to the United States Congress. To guarantee the voice of agriculture and rural Oklahoma is heard in both state and federal elections, Oklahoma Farm Bureau members voted to create the OKFB Ag PAC in 2019.

The OKFB Ag PAC is a political action committee through which Farm Bureau members can lend financial support and endorsements to political candidates who uphold the values of rural Oklahoma and understand the importance the agriculture industry plays in Oklahoma's economy.

Support for candidates through the Ag PAC starts at the grassroots level. Each election year, Farm Bureau members from across the state gather in county meetings to discuss potential support for candidates in their areas.

A single member from each county is selected at the county meeting to represent the county at the coinciding district Ag PAC meetings where county representatives bring the thoughts and perspectives of their county to further discuss candidates. During the district meetings, members select an individual to represent their district on the state Ag PAC board.

The state Ag PAC board convenes at the OKFB home office after the district meetings conclude to discuss district

recommendations and review the voting records of any incumbent candidates. The Ag PAC board ultimately votes to determine final candidate support and endorsements. While the Ag PAC lends financial support to a number of candidates, an endorsement is the highest level of support given to an individual.

This year, the state Ag PAC board met May 25 and again on July 8 and August 29 to determine candidate support for the 2022 primary, runoff and general elections, respectively. The PAC endorsed 19 candidates and extended financial support to a total of 64 individuals. A full list of endorsed and supported candidates can be found in the OKFB Voter Guide on the following pages of this issue of *Oklahoma Country*.

The PAC is funded through voluntary contributions made by OKFB members when they renew their Farm Bureau membership or through individual contributions throughout the year. To strengthen your voice on election day, consider making a contribution to the OKFB Ag PAC during your membership renewal period.*

**Contributions or gifts to the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Ag PAC are not tax deductible as charitable contributions.*



Logan County Farm Bureau member Gaye Pfeiffer (right) listens in at the District 3 Ag PAC meeting. Recommendations begin at the county level as part of the organization's grassroots process.

\$97,300

IN FINANCIAL SUPPORT

64

CANDIDATES SUPPORTED

19

ENDORSEES

95

PERCENT SUCCESS RATE

At the time of printing

EVENING OF IMPACT

Help support rural Oklahoma's voice in upcoming elections by attending the 2022 Evening of Impact fundraising event Friday, Dec. 2 in Oklahoma City.

To learn more about the 2022 Evening of Impact, visit okfb.news/eveningofimpact22.

2022 OKFB AG PAC BOARD

The OKFB Ag PAC board is a group of farmers and ranchers selected by their peers to advise and direct the work of the OKFB Ag PAC. Each member serves a term of two years and cannot serve more than two consecutive terms.

MIKE SCHULZ | CHAIR

District Two
Jackson County

ALAN JETT

District One
Beaver County

BRITTANY HUKILL

District Three
Caddo County

ROGER FISHER

District Four
Cotton County

BRIAN KNOWLES

District Five
LeFlore County

ALLEN CAMPBELL

District Six
Cherokee County

RYAN PJESKY

District Seven
Alfalfa County

LEROY ODELL

District Eight
Pottawatomie County

SUE FARMER

District Nine
Lincoln County

VOTE 2022

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Ag PAC has identified the candidates in the Nov. 8 general election who it believes will best represent the interests of agriculture and rural Oklahoma. Below, find the congressional, statewide, state House and state Senate candidates funded by the Ag PAC. Candidates with an endorsement – the highest level of support given – are listed with their photos.

United States CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES



JAMES LANKFORD
U.S. Senate



MARKWAYNE MULLIN
U.S. Senate



KEVIN HERN
U.S. House District 1



JOSH BRECHEEN
U.S. House District 2



FRANK LUCAS
U.S. House District 3



TOM COLE
U.S. House District 4



STEPHANIE BICE
U.S. House District 5

Oklahoma STATEWIDE CANDIDATES



KEVIN STITT
Governor



CINDY BYRD
State Auditor



KIM DAVID
Corporation Commissioner

SUPPORTED CANDIDATES

Matt Pinnell
Lieutenant Governor

Todd Russ
State Treasurer

Leslie Osborn
Labor Commissioner

Oklahoma SENATE CANDIDATES



DARCY JECH
Senate District 26

SUPPORTED CANDIDATES

Ally Seifried
Senate District 2

Tom Woods
Senate District 4

Bill Coleman
Senate District 10

Kristen Thompson
Senate District 22

Grant Green
Senate District 28

John Michael Montgomery
Senate District 32

John Haste
Senate District 36

Brenda Stanley
Senate District 42

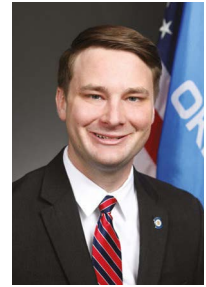
Oklahoma HOUSE CANDIDATES



JOSH WEST
House District 5



DELL KERBS
House District 26



KYLE HILBERT
House District 29



KEVIN WALLACE
House District 32



ANTHONY MOORE
House District 57



TREY CALDWELL
House District 63



JON ECHOLS
House District 90

SUPPORTED CANDIDATES

Eddy Dempsey
House District 1

Bob Ed Culver
House District 4

Steve Bashore
House District 7

Mark Lepak
House District 9

John Kane
House District 11

David Smith
House District 18

Sherrie Conley
House District 20

Collin Duel
House District 21

John Talley
House District 33

Ty Burns
House District 35

Ken Luttrell
House District 37

Chad Caldwell
House District 40

Denise Crosswhite Hader
House District 41

Cindy Roe
House District 42

Jay Steagall
House District 43

Kendra Wesson
House District 46

Tammy Townley
House District 48

Marcus McEntire
House District 50

Mark McBride
House District 53

Nick Archer
House District 55

Rhonda Baker
House District 60

Rande Worthen
House District 64

Clay Staires
House District 66

Ross Ford
House District 76

Eric Roberts
House District 83

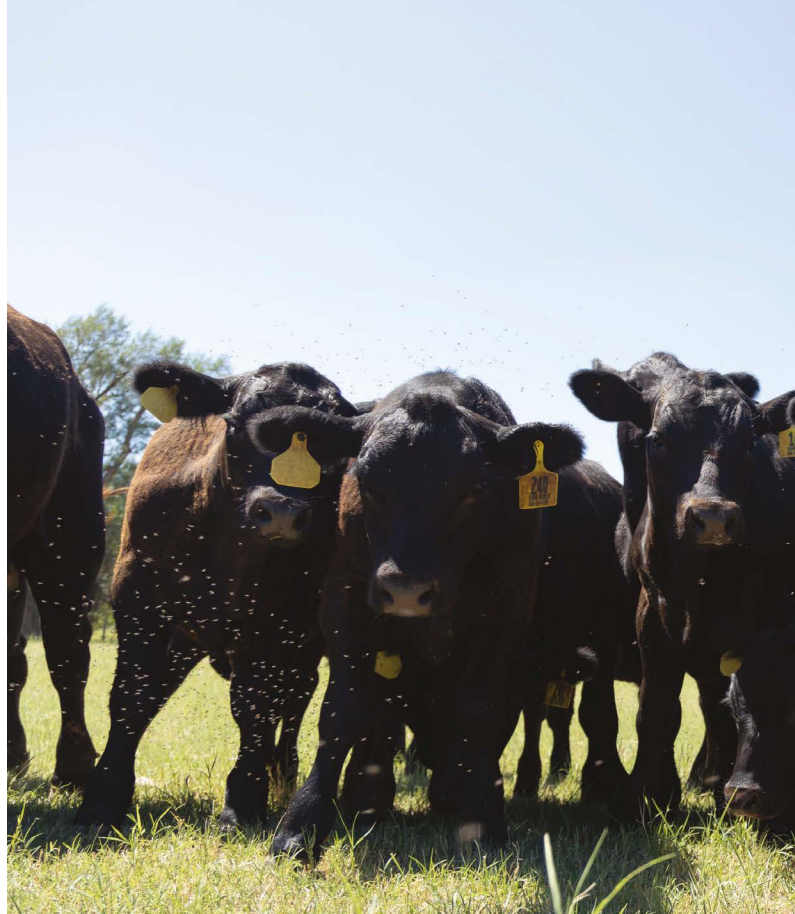
Tammy West
House District 84

Cyndi Munson
House District 85

Max Wolfley
House District 95

Marilyn Stark
House District 100

View these candidates and additional voter resources in OKFB's online voter guide at okfb.news/vote22.



Tightening

Walking through what should be a lush, green pasture was not the reality for most ranchers in western Oklahoma this summer. Instead, hearing the crunch of dormant grass and seeing hundreds of grasshoppers flying through the air was the experience farmer and rancher Eldon Merklin faced.

With little-to-no rainfall and blazing temperatures, all 77 Oklahoma counties felt the tightening of the soil as drought conditions continued from spring into summer.

"It really is one of the most serious droughts I can remember in recent years," Merklin said. "I've never had to feed cattle in July like I am this year. The grass is really short, and we have had a plague of grasshoppers that has not helped. Between the drought and grasshoppers, some of our pastures are looking short."

The cow-calf producer, like others in his area, began feeding his cattle hay much earlier than normal due to the abysmal amount of forage in his pastures. Merklin had the opportunity for his cattle to graze native and improved pastures, but in July, he was still relying on feeding wheat and Bermuda grass hay.

"I am feeding some wheat hay," he said. "My wheat crop this year was not great, so I ended up putting it into hay, which I am thankful now that I am able to feed my cows."



Watch the drought video we captured in late July with Eldon Merklin on YouTube at [okfb.news/DroughtVid22](https://www.okfb.news/DroughtVid22).

soil

Ranchers across Oklahoma are facing continued drought conditions into the fall. A Woodward County Farm Bureau member shares how he is tackling the historic drought.

Merklin is fortunate to have a stockpile of hay. Many ranchers who do not have grass in their pastures or hay in their barns are struggling to find hay sources and are looking to other states to purchase the highly sought-after commodity.

For Merklin and other ranchers, the vegetation that was supposed to be green and full of life looked crispy and dormant – like the dead of winter.

After the first visit to Merklin's in late July, the skies opened and provided area ranchers more than three inches of rain, greening up both the native and Bermuda grass pastures his cattle graze on, preserving his hay reserves for what could shape up to be a brutal winter.

"We were very fortunate to receive a good couple of rains the last two days of July, and it has made a world of difference," Merklin said. "Everyone knows one rain does not break a drought, but we are in considerably better shape than we were a few weeks ago."

While the inches of rain made an incredible difference, ranchers were thinking the rain and growth on their pastures may be too little too late to carry the pastures into the winter.

"Normally, our grass would be a lot taller than it is right now," Merklin said. "It has greened up, but it does not have the growth we have in a normal year."

Even with the sporadic showers and the semi-green pastures,

ranchers across the state need to make critical management decisions to ensure their cattle received the proper nutrition.

"There are a lot of differences between eastern and western Oklahoma," he said. "Eastern Oklahoma may get twice the rainfall that we do here, but I know they can get dry, too."

A drought does not have to look like gaping holes in the ground and inch-tall grass in pastures. For ranchers in eastern Oklahoma, it looks like green blades of grass blowing in the breeze, but there is not the normal amount of growth compared to an average year, which is equally taxing on farmers and ranchers.

Despite the frequent challenges producers face, they press on to continue feeding, fueling and clothing the world.

Merklin has hope for future rains that would help ensure his cattle and pastures can be passed on for generations to come.

"There were always two things around this ranch my granddad always said – appreciate a new calf and appreciate a rain," Merklin said. "So, we are always hopeful for another rain out here in western Oklahoma."

From grass-sparse pastures to dirt-pit ponds and from drooping orchards to crop-empty fields, farmers and ranchers across the state are feeling the effects of the drought this year and will be feeling the effects for years to come.



Above | Oklahoma Farm Bureau Treasurer Jim Meek (second from left) attends the first meeting of the Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board. Meek, an Okmulgee County Farm Bureau member, shares his experience with rural broadband accessibility as the board's vice chair.

Meek brings rural perspective to Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Treasurer and District 9 Director Jim Meek was recently elected as vice-chair of the newly formed Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board.

A rancher from Okmulgee County, Meek was one of two individuals appointed to the board by Oklahoma House Speaker Charles McCall.

“As a third-generation rancher, Jim Meek will be an effective advocate for making sure the broadband office prioritizes Oklahoma’s unserved and under-served rural areas first,” McCall said. “I’m thrilled he is bringing his experience and the voice of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau to the table for this transformational opportunity for rural Oklahoma.”

The Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board, comprised of nine members, will oversee the work of the Oklahoma Broadband Office established by the passage of the Oklahoma Broadband Expansion Act during the 2022 legislative session.

The board has a goal of serving 95% of Oklahoma with adequate broadband

internet capabilities by June 28, 2028.

As a resident of rural Oklahoma, Meek recognizes the need for reliable internet access in under-served areas of the state.

“I fully understand the difference the internet makes,” he said. “As we move forward, this is the biggest thing since electricity to hit rural Oklahoma.”

Meek said he saw firsthand the differences in broadband access during his 25-year tenure at Oklahoma CareerTech.

“When I was officed at Stillwater, I always had the latest and greatest technology – the best computers and the best internet service on the market,” he said. “I sat down at my desk, and I could do anything from my computer, and it would respond immediately.”

The same cannot be said for his home in rural Okmulgee County. Meek said his dial-up connection could handle accessing his email – so long as there were no file attachments.

As more of his daily work

transitioned to being done at home, he moved to using a satellite internet service provided by his local electric cooperative. Meek said the satellite proved usable until the COVID-19 pandemic hit.

“My satellite got almost as slow as the dial-up,” he said. “I couldn’t participate in Zoom meetings, and I couldn’t do a lot of my work when I was still working from home. I would have to get up early and drive to Stillwater to use a computer or drive over to Taft – my other office – to use a computer.”

Aside from work and daily tasks, Meek expressed the importance of quality broadband internet for the safety of rural Oklahomans.

Living just 15 miles outside of town, Meek said his house is in a cell phone dead zone. If his phone is not connected to Wi-Fi, he often cannot get reception.

“If we have a bad storm, and it knocks out our telephone service, we have no phone service at our house,” he said. “If somebody got sick, we



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couldn't get an ambulance out there. If we had an emergency, we couldn't get a fire truck out there."

Meek emphasized the need for the Broadband Governing Board to identify solutions to bring broadband internet to under-served areas that is both high-speed and affordable. Dial-up and satellite connections are not the answer, he said.

"Let's use the best technology we can afford to keep it affordable for our friends in rural areas and small towns so everyone can have access to it," he said.

Meek said access to high-speed broadband internet is critical for Oklahomans today, whether to apply for a job, access medical services, learn remotely or work from home.

"This broadband will do more to improve the lives of Oklahomans – rural, small towns, even bigger cities – than probably anything since electricity because of the versatility and things it is going to allow them to do that they haven't been able to do," he said.



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Production to consumption

OKFB members from around the state will gather for fellowship, celebration and policy development at our 2022 annual meeting Nov. 11-13 in Norman

Oklahoma Farm Bureau invites you to join fellow agriculturalists to celebrate 80 years of OKFB at the organization's 81st annual meeting Nov. 11-13 at the Embassy Suites and Convention Center in Norman.

OKFB's annual meeting serves as the largest yearly gathering of Farm Bureau members from across the state. Featuring general sessions, Young Farmers and Ranchers competitive events, a Women's Leadership Committee conference, organizational awards, business sessions and the opportunity to connect with like-minded agriculturalists, there is something for every member.

This year's theme – Production to Consumption – recognizes OKFB members' hand in every step of food production from tilling the soil to placing agricultural products on the shelf. Our farmers and ranchers understand what it takes to feed, fuel and clothe the world.

OKFB members will work to improve agriculture and the rural way of life through policy development, engaging speakers, and leadership and personal growth sessions.

The 2022 Annual Meeting will feature a wide array of events and activities for OKFB members including:

Friday evening fun

OKFB Derby Night on Friday is modeled after the Kentucky Derby, where members will have the opportunity to purchase tickets to select the winner of five separate horse races. Farm Bureau members are encouraged to wear their best derby attire, and the OKFB WLC will have a booth for members to make their own derby-style hats.

Policy development

Policy priorities will be discussed, voted on and set by our grassroots membership, who drafted, amended and approved the policies throughout the policy development process.

YF&R competitive events

Young Farmers and Ranchers competitive events will take place on Saturday, with winning individuals advancing to the American Farm Bureau Annual Meeting Jan. 6-11, 2023, in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

WLC activities

The Women's Leadership Committee will gather during the Program of Work Luncheon and conference to provide Farm Bureau women an opportunity to connect and grow.



2022 OKFB Annual Meeting planned schedule

Friday, November 11

8 a.m. Credentials committee breakfast
9 a.m. Registration, trade show and silent auction opens
9 a.m. YF&R Excellence in Agriculture presentations begin
9:30 a.m. YF&R Discussion Meet orientation
10 a.m. County board member training
10 a.m. YF&R Discussion Meet round one
10:45 a.m. YF&R Discussion Meet round two
11:30 a.m. YF&R Discussion Meet finals luncheon
12 p.m. County board member training luncheon
12:15 p.m. YF&R Discussion Meet finals
1:30 p.m. Opening general session
3 p.m. AFBF Issues Advisory Committee Reports
3 p.m. Drones and Agriculture with Loren Sizelove
3 p.m. Women's Leadership Committee Conference
4:30 p.m. YF&R Dinner and Caucus
7:30 p.m. OKFB reception and derby night

Saturday, November 12

7:30 a.m. Credentials Committee breakfast
7:30 a.m. Financial Committee breakfast
7:30 a.m. Resolutions Committee breakfast
8:45 a.m. OKFBMIC policyholders meeting
9 a.m. Registration, trade show and silent auction opens
9:30 a.m. General session
11:30 a.m. WLC Program of Work luncheon
12 p.m. Credentials Committee luncheon
1 p.m. OKFB district caucuses (districts 3, 6 and 9)
1:30 p.m. General session
5 p.m. County presidents reception
5:30 p.m. OKFB Ag PAC reception
7 p.m. Dinner and awards program
8:30 p.m. Reception

Sunday, November 13

7:30 a.m. County presidents coffee talk
7:30 a.m. WLC coffee talk
7:30 a.m. Public policy coffee talk
8:45 a.m. Worship service and group breakfast

Awards program

Top county Farm Bureaus and members will be recognized for their efforts to help build agriculture and rural Oklahoma during the awards program Saturday evening.

Trade show

The OKFB Expo trade show will be open on Friday and Saturday, featuring a variety of vendors for members to visit, and the silent auction will return as well.

District caucuses

OKFB members from districts three, six and nine will each caucus to select a representative to serve a three-year term on the OKFB board of directors.

Informal coffee talk sessions

Sunday morning will feature several coffee talk sessions as an opportunity for members to visit with OKFB leaders and staff to discuss ideas and opportunities to help our organization grow.

We hope to see you at our 2022 OKFB Annual Meeting as we gather to shape the future of agriculture.

Please note: The annual meeting schedule is subject to change. The final schedule will be published in the annual meeting program. For the latest schedule and information, visit okfb.news/Meeting22.



Above | Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Youth Legislative Experience gave students the opportunity to gain first-hand experience with the legislative process by moving student-written legislation through a mock legislature convened in the Oklahoma State Capitol.

OKFB hosts inaugural Youth Legislative Experience at Oklahoma State Capitol

4-H and FFA members learned about the legislative process as they worked through their own proposals in the Oklahoma House chambers

Nearly 70 FFA and 4-H members descended on the Oklahoma state Capitol for the inaugural Oklahoma Farm Bureau Youth Legislative Experience July 12-13 in Oklahoma City.

The first of its kind for OKFB, the Youth Legislative Experience was an immersive two-day event for high school juniors and seniors to learn about Oklahoma's legislative process and how a bill becomes law through a mock legislature held on the floor of the Oklahoma House of Representatives.

Each student arrived at the state Capitol with legislation in-hand that they crafted in the weeks prior to the conference. Delegates presented and lobbied for their bills in one of four committees in hopes of having their legislation heard on the floor.

"I never realized how much effort and work has to be put in just for one bill, even if it fails," said Cora Sullivan, a Lawton FFA member.

Attendees chose from amongst themselves individuals to serve as Speaker of the House and Floor Leader to run the floor sessions in the House alongside former Rep. Joe Dorman of the Oklahoma Institute of Child Advocacy.

Delegates discussed, debated and voted on legislation involving restrictions of the herbicide 2,4-D, changes to sport hunting seasons, required increases in the number of school therapists, regulation of medical marijuana and more throughout the two general floor sessions.

During the conference, students heard from Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur as well as Kirby Smith, chief of staff for Lt. Gov. Matt Pinnell. The two



Above | Nearly 70 4-H and FFA members from around Oklahoma attended the 2022 Youth Legislative Experience.



Above | Students debate proposed bills in committee during the Youth Legislative Experience. Students were divided into committees and worked through bills to amend, pass or fail each piece of mock legislation before moving to the full assembly.



Above | YLE attendees gather around the mock legislative floor leader to ask for their bills to be heard. Students wrote their own legislation and worked not only to move it past committee, but also request its consideration before the full body.

shared the importance of civic engagement and giving agriculture a voice in the policymaking process.

Ryne Crosthwait, a delegate from Payne County 4-H, echoed the importance of advocating for agriculture at the state Capitol.

“(Agriculture) is one of the most important things we can advocate for, if not the most important thing,” Crosthwait said. “Without agriculture, we do not eat.”

The Youth Legislative Experience gave many students the opportunity to visit the state Capitol for the first time and see firsthand career opportunities in policymaking.

“I know a lot of the students were not looking into going into legislation or politics,” said Lexie Zuniga of Fairview FFA. “I do think it opened students’ eyes to what they can do after high school.”

Guest state legislators assisted with the mock legislature and visited with the delegates in attendance, including Rep. Kyle Hilbert, Rep. Brian Hill, Rep. Dick Lowe and Sen. Blake Stephens.

Attendees also enjoyed an afternoon at Riversport OKC and completed a community service project at the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma where they packed more than 7,300 pounds of food for a total of 6,096 meals.

Watch the video

See how students worked through the legislative process on YouTube at okfb.news/OYLEVideo22



Above | Paige Endres with the Oklahoma Pork Council teaches FFA members about graphic design during the 2022 OKFB FFA Reporters Conference.



Above | Kaylee Travis, agricultural communications lecturer at the Oklahoma State University Ferguson College of Agriculture, teaches press release writing to FFA members at OKFB's 2022 FFA Reporters Conference.

OKFB hosts second-annual media training conference for Oklahoma FFA members

Oklahoma Farm Bureau hosted more than 90 FFA members for a day of media training at OKFB's second-annual FFA Reporters Conference Monday, July 11 at the Sheraton Oklahoma City Downtown Hotel.

The event equipped FFA chapter reporters and presidents with ideas and skills to effectively communicate about their chapter's activities during the upcoming school year.

The workshops focused on writing, layout and design, photography, social media and messaging with special emphasis on sharing FFA members' activities. Students received real-world training and experience from faculty and graduate assistants from the Oklahoma State University Ferguson College of Agriculture Agricultural Education, Communications and Leadership department along with staff from the Oklahoma Pork Council and OKFB.

"Communication is key to everything," said Josh Wilson, Stilwell FFA reporter. "Without communication, how can we get a message across? Taking what I learned today showed me that I can communicate well. If I do not communicate well or as I should in anything I do, then how can I thrive?"

A social media training session taught by Ruth Inman of Agorapulse was offered to FFA advisors to provide them with skills to help

students manage their FFA chapters' social media platforms.

Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur spoke to the group during lunch, encouraging FFA members to stay involved and engaged in Oklahoma agriculture from their education into their careers.

A panel of Oklahoma agricultural leaders including OKFB Vice President Monte Tucker, OPC Executive Director Kylee Deniz and Oklahoma Beef Council Executive Director Heather Buckmaster provided a discussion about the need for accurate agricultural communication and consumer outreach.

Mary Peck with AgYouth Magazine and KC Sheperd of the Radio Oklahoma Ag Network offered opportunities for FFA members to share their news and activities throughout the year with their respective media outlets.

Oklahoma FFA state officers Emily Beaner and Presley Pullen were on-hand to greet the students and energize the group with icebreaker activities.

Door prizes were awarded to Paige Burns of Washington FFA who won a smartphone lavalier microphone kit, Jenna Gore of Kellyville FFA who won a smartphone tripod kit, Tori Simmons of Bluejacket FFA who won a smartphone gimbal and Sierra South of Choctaw FFA who won a video ring light kit.

Watch the video

Hear more from Stilwell FFA member Josh Wilson in our Reporters Conference Video on YouTube: [okfb.news/Reporters22Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okfb.news/Reporters22Video)



OKFB hosts 13 high school seniors for annual Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture conference

Thirteen high school seniors from across the state participated in Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture conference June 14-17 in Oklahoma City.

The four-day conference provided students with the opportunity to tour local agricultural enterprises including American Plant Products, Oklahoma National Stockyards Company, Restore OKC and Whitmore Farms. Students volunteered at the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, learned how to share the story of agriculture with the news media and completed a team-building ropes course.

Students also heard from agricultural leaders including Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur and Director of Continuing Education for the Oklahoma State University College of Veterinary Medicine and Beef Cattle Specialist Rosslyn Biggs. Various agriculture industry groups shared their work to move agriculture forward including Oklahoma Pork Council Executive Director Kylee Deniz, Oklahoma Agricultural Cooperative Council President and CEO RJ Gray, Radio Oklahoma Ag Network Farm Director KC Sheperd, Leadership Exchange Academy Executive Director Mike Robins and Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom Professional Development Coordinator Annie Davis.

The conference also allowed students to gain more knowledge about Farm Bureau by hearing from

OKFB President Rodd Moesel, OKFB Director of Membership and Foundation for Agriculture Holly Carroll, OKFB Women's Leadership Committee Chair Mignon Bolay and American Farm Bureau YF&R committee member Alisen Anderson.

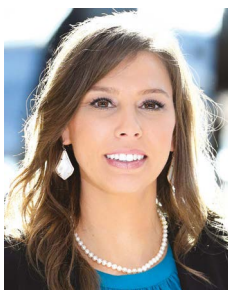
The thirteen students were Macy Shelton, Carter County; Halle Pullen, Garvin County; Luke Tate, Grady

County; Kage Collins, Johnston County; Haley Pedon, Johnston County; Weston Knowles, LeFlore County; Mason Factory, Lincoln County; Lexie Zuniga, Major County; Clarissa Smith, Okfuskee County; Mattie Morgan, Rogers County; Mason Tucker, Roger Mills County; Hunter Wilson, Texas County; and Kellen Bradford, Woods County.

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OKFB hosts three Generation Bridge Summer Series events

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members ages 35-50 gathered together for three different evenings of fun and fellowship in July and August during the OKFB Generation Bridge Summer Series events.

The three events, which were held July 28 in Tulsa, Aug. 12 in Enid, and Aug. 26 in Oklahoma City gave mid-career Farm Bureau members the opportunity to enjoy an informal evening to socialize with fellow farmers, ranchers and others involved in the agriculture industry.

More than 40 members gathered in Tulsa on Aug. 12 for an evening at Tulsa Drillers Stadium where the group enjoyed a baseball game.

Enid Brewing Company hosted the second event on Aug. 12 where more than 20 Farm Bureau members enjoyed an evening of agriculture-themed trivia. Enid Brewing Company co-owner Brady Sidwell shared his experience with adding value to Oklahoma agriculture products through the grain-to-glass brewery, Chisholm Trail milling and other agricultural enterprises.

The final event was held at Remington Park in Oklahoma City on Aug. 26 with more than 50 members enjoying an evening at the races.

During each event, members were encouraged to discuss and share their hopes and goals for upcoming Generation Bridge events and activities to broaden their agricultural horizons while growing together with fellow Farm Bureau members from across the state.

OKFB's new Generation Bridge program targets OKFB members who are in the middle of their agriculture careers and want to expand their agricultural knowledge, connections and leadership experience.



Above | Brady Sidwell shares his experience with adding value to agricultural commodities and connecting with consumers during the Enid Summer Series event.



Above | Farm Bureau members ages 35-50 and their families enjoyed an evening with the Tulsa Drillers Baseball team at the July 28 Generation Bridge Summer Series event.



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YF&R Shotgun Shoot raises more than \$19,000 for OKFB Foundation for Agriculture

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers committee hosted their annual shotgun shoot Aug. 27 at Silverleaf Shotgun Sports in Guthrie, raising more than \$19,000 to benefit the ongoing work of the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture.

The group hosted nearly 140 shooters on 34 four-person teams. The event tested shooters' skills at stations mimicking real-life hunting scenarios and situations.

The first-place team – comprised of Hayden Hillary, Koy Davidson, Charlie Zimmerman and Cooper Davidson –

and second-place team – comprised of Cody Richerds, Hunter Campbell, Clay Robertson and Nolin Marcus of Murray State College – received a cash prize. The high individual award was presented to Clay Robertson. Door prizes were also presented to competitors.

A YETI cooler was raffled to provide additional funds for the foundation.

The OKFB Foundation for Agriculture connects consumers with accurate agriculture information as well supporting agriculture and rural communities in Oklahoma.

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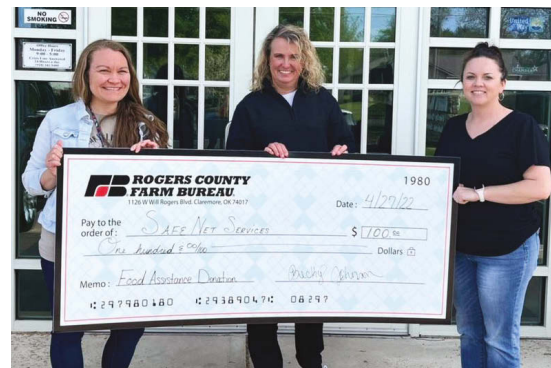
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Above / Garfield county Farm Bureau members present a check to RSVP Enid Mobile Meals as part of OKFB's Community Food Assistance Match Program. The program provides meals, transportation, handyman services and more to seniors in the Enid area.



Above / Rogers County Farm Bureau presents a check to Safenet Services, which helps survivors of domestic violence through a variety of services.

Nearly \$15,000 donated local nutrition programs through OKFB's Community Food Assistance Matching Program

County Farm Bureau organizations teamed up with Oklahoma Farm Bureau to donate \$14,735 to community food pantries, food banks and other food assistance programs through the OKFB Community Food Assistance Matching Program during the month of April.

The program connects county Farm Bureaus with their communities through donations to local food assistance programs. OKFB matched county donations up to \$100, doubling the impact of each gift.

Thirty-eight county organizations and three county Women's Leadership Committees answered the call to battle food insecurity in their local communities by participating in the OKFB Community Food Assistance Matching Program.

Donations were made by county Farm Bureaus to a wide variety of organizations and programs that help battle food insecurity to Oklahomans, predominantly in the rural communities where local Farm Bureau members live.

A handful of examples of donations made include:

- **Caddo County Farm Bureau** donated funds to a total of 12 local programs, including senior nutrition assistance programs
- **Major County Farm Bureau** made a donation to the Fairview Schools Food Closet
- **Oklmulgee County Farm Bureau** donated to the Okmulgee County

Family Resource Center, which helps victims of domestic violence along with abused and neglected children

- **Pottawatomie County Farm Bureau** provided assistance to the Community Market of Pottawatomie County, which provides residents facing food

insecurity with a grocery-store-type shopping experience to select food items

The matching program serves as an opportunity for farmers and ranchers to help members of their local communities through the very products our state's agriculturalists grow and raise.





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OKFB chosen as rural State Business Accelerator Program partner by state of Oklahoma

Oklahoma Farm Bureau has been chosen as one of three entities to manage the new State of Oklahoma Business Accelerator Program.

OKFB was selected to administer the program in rural parts of the state by the Oklahoma Center for the Advancement of Science and Technology.

The accelerator program was created to help Oklahoma companies grow while creating jobs in the state. The program has been a priority for Gov. Kevin Stitt and is funded from appropriations made by the state legislature in 2021.

“As Oklahomans we understand the role that main-street businesses play in our small towns and rural communities,” said Rodd Moesel, Oklahoma Farm Bureau president. “Our goal is to spur the growth of Oklahoma agricultural businesses involving food processing and value-added businesses that utilize

Oklahoma agricultural products.

“Through this program we hope to help expand and support new agricultural production technologies, equipment and services to address needs in fertilizer and crop inputs, drones and crop scouting, record keeping and management.

“Additionally, we hope to encourage and support new or expanding manufacturing and service businesses across Oklahoma to help produce jobs and income to stimulate growth in our rural communities.”

OKFB has partnered with national nonprofit AgLaunch, which operates an agricultural business accelerator centered on farmers and innovation to create an accelerator program to provide resources for agricultural and rural-based businesses in Oklahoma.

The accelerator will provide education, knowledge and experience to help such businesses grow. OKFB’s future efforts will also provide

financing options for businesses that successfully complete the accelerator program curriculum.

The accelerator for Oklahoma City businesses will be operated by gener8tor, and the Tulsa-based accelerator partner will be announced at a later date.

“We are striving to keep Oklahoma moving forward in technology and economic development,” said Elizabeth Hutt Pollard, Oklahoma Secretary of Science and Innovation. “These accelerators and partnerships with gener8tor and Oklahoma Farm Bureau are a significant investment in our state’s business ecosystem. It is a tremendous step in fostering new innovation, creating jobs for Oklahomans, and diversifying our economy, not just in the metro areas, but across the state.”

OKFB will continue to develop its accelerator program with a full rollout planned in the near future.



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Left | Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee members present blankets to the Norman Veterans home on Monday, July 18. Pictured, left to right, are: Cindy Schoeneke, OKFB WLC district 9 member; Arlene LeMaster, OKFB WLC district 5 member; Jesse Jacques, Norman Veterans Home resident; Candice McIntire, Norman Veterans Home activities director; Sandra Berry, OKFB WLC District 4 member; Mignon Bolay, WLC chair; and Paula Sawatzky, WLC District 2 member.

WLC donates blankets to Norman Veterans Home

The blankets were made by Farm Bureau women at the 2022 Women's Leadership Committee State Conference

Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee members presented approximately 50 handmade blankets crafted by OKFB women to the Norman Veterans Home on Monday, July 18.

The blankets were made by OKFB members as a community service project during the WLC's annual conference held in April.

Candice McIntire, activity director at the Normans Veterans Home, said the blankets are an invaluable resource for the veterans who call the facility home.

"Several of our veterans – as they get older – they get cold," McIntire said. "They will be used to keep them warm. Even in the summer heat we are experiencing, they are cold, so the blankets will be used to put over their laps or over their wheelchairs. It will mean a lot to our veterans."

The Norman Veterans Home is a long-term care home for veterans. The facility has 301 beds and is home to 15 World War II veterans and 14 Purple Heart recipients.

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Giving together **Growing together**

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members have more options than ever to donate to OKFB's foundations and political action committee

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is our state's largest general farm organization thanks to dedicated Farm Bureau members from every corner of our state who step up and lend their voice and their labor to support Oklahoma family agriculture and our rural communities.

The dues that Farm Bureau members pay make this increasingly important work possible as OKFB shares the farm and ranch story with consumers, elected officials, federal agencies and Oklahomans from communities both urban and rural.

However, OKFB members have an opportunity to make an even bigger impact by donating to OKFB's two foundations and our political action committee: the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture, the OKFB Legal Foundation and the OKFB Ag PAC.

Each of these entities plays an important role beyond the core mission OKFB supports.

Our Foundation for Agriculture is able to partner with like-minded organizations both around Oklahoma and beyond our state to make funds available to expand the agricultural horizons of Oklahoma students and consumers, ensuring current and future generations of Oklahomans understand how their food is grown.

The Legal Foundation participates in legal cases by monitoring litigation, filing briefs and joining cases to represent the interests of Farm Bureau members when regulatory overreach threatens proven farm practices or our rural way of life.

OKFB's Ag PAC supports candidates running for public office in state legislative, statewide and federal races who understand the important role agriculture plays in the daily lives of all Oklahomans. Supporting candidates who know the essential role of family farmers and ranchers helps ensure food security for all

Oklahomans and a bright future for our rural communities.

Donations from Farm Bureau members beyond their regular membership dues are the fuel that increases rural Oklahoma's voice in a number of important arenas.

Our foundations and our PAC are directed by grassroots Farm Bureau leaders – farmers, ranchers and rural Oklahomans who understand the needs of agriculture and who have a vested interest in making our state vibrant for future generations.

When donating, OKFB members can elect to give any amount they choose. Whether a gift is a few dollars or several thousand dollars, each contribution helps us continue our important work as Farm Bureau members stand up for rural Oklahoma.

Learn how your contributions can support agriculture on the next page, and take the next step in supporting Oklahoma agriculture through giving.

2 easy ways to donate

Voluntary contributions

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members can donate when renewing their membership by electing to give **voluntary contributions**. Members can choose to give the suggested amount on their membership invoice, or any amount they choose to donate.

No matter if you renew your membership by mail, online or at your county office, you can elect to give any amount to OKFB's foundations or our Ag PAC*.

Give any time

You can donate any amount you choose to our foundations or to the OKFB Ag PAC* any time. Donations can be made by mailing a check to either foundation or the Ag PAC* at 2501 N. Stiles, Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Donations to the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture can also be made by shopping with our Amazon Smile link or through our online donation platform. Get all the details on our website at okfarmbureau.org/give.

3 great places to make an impact with your contributions

OKFB Foundation for Agriculture

What your donation supports

Donations to the Foundation for Agriculture support grants that connect consumers with agriculture, help provide a reliable protein source for Oklahoma children in need and provide relief for Oklahoma's agriculture community in times of disaster.

2022 highlights

The Foundation for Agriculture donated more than **\$22,000** to local schools and groups to fund hands-on agriculture programs. More than **640,000** pork sticks were produced to help feed hungry Oklahomans.

How you can donate

- Donate voluntary contributions when renewing your Farm Bureau membership
- Mail a check to help fund the foundation
- Use the foundation's Amazon Smile link when shopping on Amazon
- Donate using the foundation's online giving platform

OKFB Legal Foundation

What your donation supports

Donations to the OKFB Legal Foundation help fund the foundation's involvement in legal battles and court cases where private property rights or production agriculture face challenges from outside groups.

2022 highlights

The OKFB Legal Foundation participated in three friend of the court briefs in cases before the **U.S. Supreme Court**, speaking up for the interests of Oklahoma farmers, ranchers and rural community members.

How you can donate

- Donate voluntary contributions when renewing your Farm Bureau membership
- Mail a check to help fund the foundation

OKFB Ag PAC

What your donation supports

Donations to the OKFB Ag PAC support candidates for elected positions who understand the important contributions Oklahoma agriculture and our rural communities make in our state, nation and world.

2022 highlights

The grassroots OKFB Ag PAC committee awarded **19 endorsements** to candidates in federal, statewide and Oklahoma legislative races, and gave financial support to **64 candidates** during the 2022 election cycle.

How you can donate*

- Donate voluntary contributions when renewing your Farm Bureau membership
- Mail a check to help fund the Ag PAC
- Attend the Ag PAC's Evening of Impact on Dec. 2 (view details on page 47)

Find all the donation instructions and options online at okfarmbureau.org/give

*Contributions or gifts to the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Ag PAC are not tax deductible as charitable contributions.

All Around **Oklahoma**

Farm Bureau news, events and programs from around Oklahoma

OKFB hosts American Farm Bureau Southern Region Presidents & Administrators Conference

The event shared Oklahoma agriculture with Farm Bureau leaders from 14 southern states

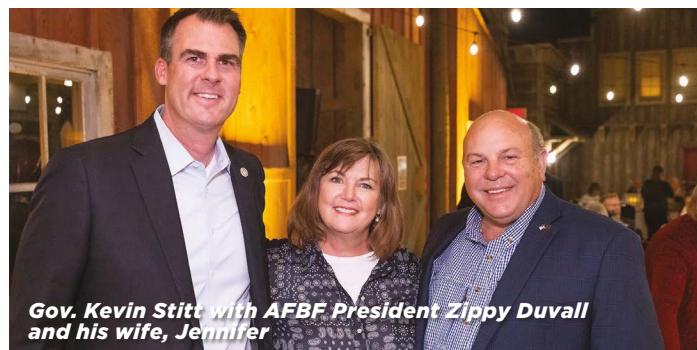
State Farm Bureau leaders and staff from around American Farm Bureau's southern region gathered in Oklahoma City April 28-30 for the annual AFBF Southern Region Presidents and Administrators Conference.

OKFB planned and hosted the three-day event for leaders and their spouses from 14 states in AFBF's southern region, which stretches from Oklahoma to the eastern seaboard.

The fellow Farm Bureau members toured agriculture,

industry and travel destinations during the conference. The group heard from a wide array of Oklahoma elected officials and leaders, including Gov. Kevin Stitt, Secretary of Agriculture Blayne Arthur, Rep. Frank Lucas and Attorney General John M. O'Connor.

AFBF President Zippy Duvall was on-hand for the event, and asked the group to share the top agriculture issues and ideas from around the region to help improve Farm Bureau and agriculture.



Gov. Kevin Stitt with AFBF President Zippy Duvall and his wife, Jennifer

OKFB Foundation for Ag Community Harvest Grant applications due Nov. 1



The OKFB Foundation for Agriculture is offering their Community Harvest grant program to support student programs and create food assistance opportunities.

Individual 4-H clubs and FFA chapters may apply for the program to receive up to \$1,000 to support a service-learning project focused on creating and implementing sustainable food production to address hunger in the community. Applications must be submitted by **November 1**.

For more information about the foundation's grants, visit okfb.news/FoundGrants22.

OKFB hosts summer intern

Megan Fragasso joined the Oklahoma Farm Bureau communications department during the summer as the OKFB 2022 summer communications intern.

Fragasso, a senior at Oklahoma State University studying agricultural communications, gained hands-on communications skills as she produced a number of communications products for the organization, including stories, photos, event coverage and more.



Megan Fragasso

YF&R members hold summer conference in Enid

Nearly 60 Farm Bureau members ages 18-35 gathered for the annual Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Summer Conference July 29-31 in Enid.

The group toured area agribusinesses, competed in a discussion meet and connected with fellow YF&R members.



OKFB WLC awards four Nurse's Training Scholarships

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee recently awarded four scholarships to students pursuing a degree in nursing.

The recipients of the WLC Nurse's Training Scholarship are: **Kristy Fitzl** of Morris, **Victoria Gerald**s of Mangum, **Ariya Regnier** of Cushing, and **Madison Rowe** of Oklahoma City.

The scholarship is awarded to students attending an accredited college, university or trade school, and who are an Oklahoma Farm Bureau member or a member of a Farm Bureau-member family.

The WLC recognizes the significant role nurses play in ensuring a high quality of life for all Oklahomans, especially those in rural areas. With the cost of education rising yearly, the committee is proud to provide four students with scholarships to aid in their pursuit of a career in nursing.

More than \$8,000 and 300 hogs donated to Pork for Packs program through FFA Hunger Challenge



A total of \$8,370.84 and 322 hogs were donated by 142 FFA chapters to the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's Pork for Packs program as part of the 2021-2022 Oklahoma FFA Hunger Challenge program.

Pork for Packs – a collaboration between the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture, the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma and the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma – provides protein sticks for chronically hungry children in Oklahoma. The protein sticks are included in food-filled backpacks given to

students to eat during weekends and holidays, when meals at school are not available.

The FFA Hunger Challenge encourages students to donate their animals to the program during the Tulsa State Fair and the Oklahoma Youth Expo. Chapters can also make cash contributions through adding 25 cents to the price of each fundraising product sold throughout the year.

Kellyville FFA was recognized as the FFA chapter with the highest monetary contribution, donating \$1,500 to the program.

OKFB Ag PAC to hold Evening of Impact fundraiser Dec. 2

Oklahoma Farm Bureau will host the second-annual Evening of Impact fundraising dinner benefiting the OKFB Ag PAC.

The event will be held Friday, Dec. 2, at the Petroleum Club in Oklahoma City. The event will kick off with a reception at 6 p.m., and dinner will begin at 7 p.m.

Tickets for the event are \$250 per person. Funds raised will help the Ag PAC financially support and endorse candidates running for political office who understand the important contributions agriculture rural Oklahoma make to our daily lives.

The Ag PAC committee is comprised of Farm Bureau members who gather input from members through a grassroots process, ensuring decisions are based on local input from around the state.

**Contributions or gifts to the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Ag PAC are not deductible as charitable contributions.*



Payne County Farm Bureau hosts Palooza cattle program

Payne County Farm Bureau hosted their second-annual Payne County Palooza on May 7.

The event prepares students for a future in the cattle industry while promoting agricultural literacy in Payne County.

Kids learned about animal care, livestock showing tips and techniques, and even learned about calving with Oklahoma State University Extension's calving simulator.

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If you have any questions or comments concerning this *Joint Privacy Notice* or our privacy standards and procedures, please write us at Post Office Box 53332, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73152-3332. Our functional regulator is the State of Oklahoma, Department of Insurance. If we cannot resolve your concerns or answer your questions, feel free to contact our regulator. This Joint Privacy Notice describes our privacy policy and practices in accordance with the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, 15 USC §6801, et seq., and with Oklahoma laws and regulations.

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Above | Using a broadcast spreader will help homeowners evenly distribute fertilizer on the lawn. (Photo by Elizabeth Brock, OSU Agricultural Communications Services)

Making sense out of fertilizer labels

By Trisha Gedon

*Oklahoma Cooperative
Extension Service*

Just like a car engine needs gas and oil to operate, garden plants and turfgrass need fertilizer in order to grow. Bags and bottles of fertilizer are readily available at the garden center, but what kind should be purchased?

Let's first start with the definition of plant fertilizer – it's either a chemical or natural material added to the soil to increase its fertility and help with plant growth.

"In the past we had the thought of 'feeding the plants,' but today's thinking has us leaning more toward 'feeding the soil,'" said David Hillock, Oklahoma State University Extension consumer horticulturist.

"Incorporating the proper amount of needed fertilizer into the soil is a good way to promote plant growth."

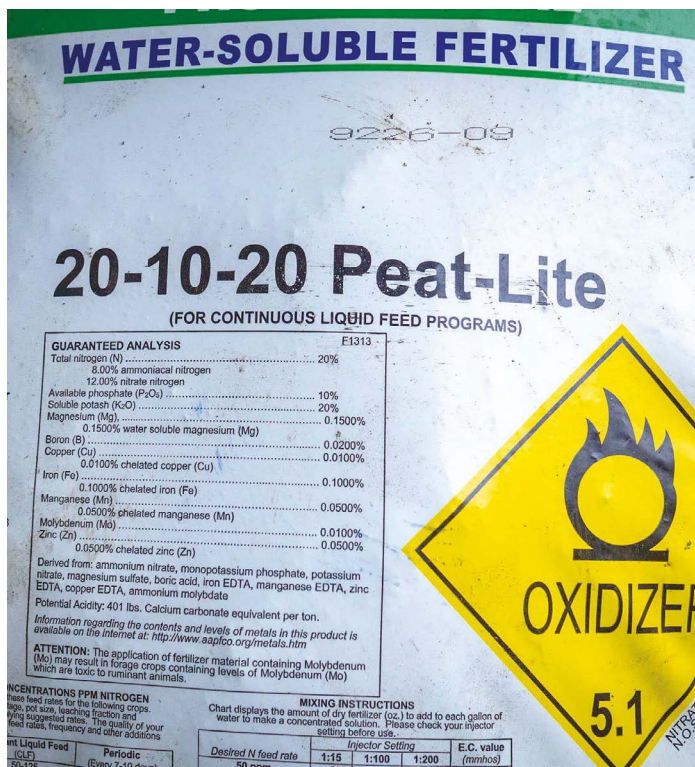
Before heading off to the garden center in search of fertilizer, it's a good idea to do a soil test first. The results of the soil test will help determine what kind and how much fertilizer is needed. Gardeners can get even more tips in the Oklahoma Homeowner's Handbook for Soil and Nutrient Management.

"All of the numbers on the fertilizer

packaging can be confusing, so it's best to first determine what help your soil needs. That's where the soil test comes in," Hillock said. "Then gardeners can head to the nursery to pick up the type of fertilizer that best suits their needs."

Along with air, sunshine and water, there are 17 known nutrients that are important for normal plant growth; but there are three that are essential to plant life – nitrogen (N), phosphorous (P) and potassium (K), which are represented by the numbers on the labels.

When browsing the shelves at the store, the labels will feature a series of three numbers such as 5-10-10, 12-0-0 or 30-3-12. But what do these numbers mean? They indicate how much (percent) of each nutrient – nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and potassium (K) – is in a bag of fertilizer. For example, a 50-pound bag of fertilizer with an N-P-K of 5-10-10 means there are 2.5 pounds of N (5% of 50 pounds), 5 pounds of P (10% of 50 pounds) and 5 pounds of K (5% of 50 pounds) for a total of 12.5 pounds. But what makes up the other 37.5 pounds of that bag?



Above | Look for a series of three numbers to determine the nutrients available in a bag of fertilizer.
(Photo by Elizabeth Brock, OSU Agricultural Communications Services)

Above | Fertilizing turfgrass will help ensure a lush, green lawn.
(Photo by Elizabeth Brock, OSU Agricultural Communications Services)

“The rest of the material in the bag of fertilizer consists of other compounds that are used as a carrier,” Hillock said. “The role of each of these nutrients, both alone and in conjunction with each other, can be complex. To make it easy, gardeners need to remember nitrogen is essential to vegetative growth, phosphorus is necessary for young plants and seedlings to develop, and potassium promotes reproductive growth.”

He also pointed out it’s important to remember that phosphorous and potassium levels in the soil don’t change a lot from year to year, like the oil in your car. However, plant-available nitrogen changes from year to year – sometimes within the season, like the gas in your car.

One advantage of inorganic fertilizers is they become available to the plants just as soon as they’re dissolved in water, while organic fertilizers such as manure, break down slowly over time providing a slow release of nutrients.

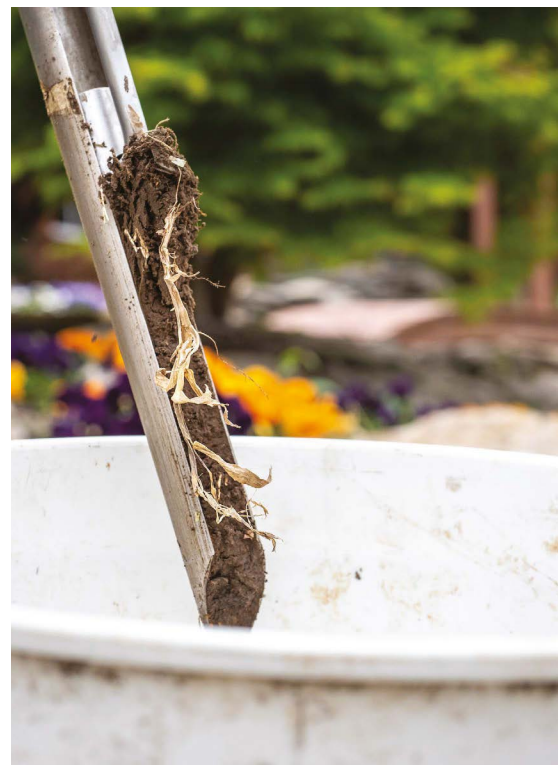
“Once you’ve established what type of fertilizer is best suited for your

gardening needs, be sure to read and follow the directions on the label. Fertilizing your plants doesn’t fall under the ‘more is better’ way of thinking,” he said. “In fact, overfertilizing can have negative consequences.”

For example, excessive uptake of nitrogen causes lush green growth that weakens plants and makes them droopy. This also can make the plants more susceptible to pests and disease.

What about gardeners who don’t have traditional beds, but instead grow everything in containers? Hillock said in most cases, gardeners fill those planters with potting soil, which typically contains a balance of needed nutrients, so fertilizer isn’t needed. However, if that soil is used from year to year, the nutrients get washed out over time and will need to be replenished with added fertilizer.

“Fertilizer is a great component of gardening, but must be used with caution,” he said. “You want just enough to do the job, but not too much that it ends up damaging the plants.”



Above | Getting a soil sample analyzed before applying fertilizer will help homeowners determine the right kind of fertilizer needed. (Photo by Todd Johnson, OSU Agricultural Communications Services)



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