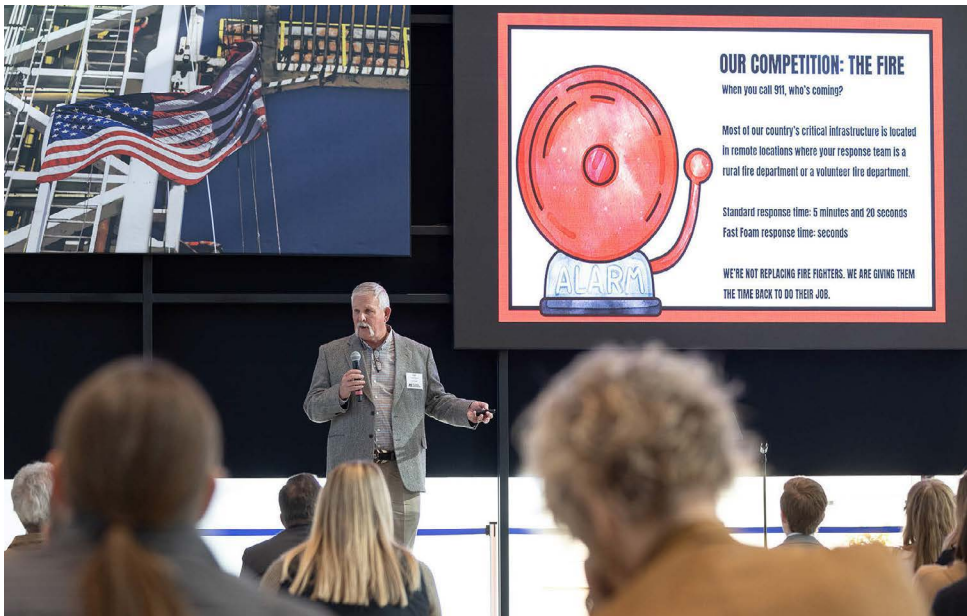


# PERSPECTIVE

December 15, 2023



## OKFB's rural business accelerators program hosts first-ever Demo Day where rural innovators pitch ideas

Ten rural Oklahoma innovators showcased their ideas, products and enterprises during the first-ever Oklahoma Grassroots Rural & Ag Business Accelerators Demo Day Monday, Dec. 4, at the Oklahoma State University Hamm Institute for American Energy in Oklahoma City.

Cohort members of the Activate Oklahoma accelerator along with participants of the program's Customized Development pipeline made five-minute presentations to a group of financial firms, venture funds, and guests. The innovators also had an opportunity to field five minutes of questions and manned booths where

they could visit with potential investors one-on-one.

Nathan Kuykendall of Claremore-based Eyedeal Innovations was one of the Activate Oklahoma cohort members who pitched an idea at Demo Day. Eyedeal Innovations created a machine-learning model to identify abnormalities in retinal photos, an innovation he hopes will allow optometrists and ophthalmologists to more easily assess retinal photos and diagnose diseases that can be spotted in such scans.

"It's very exciting – it's nerve-racking," Kuykendall said of the opportunity to present his company's innovation. "But it's encouraging

to know that this could lead to an opportunity that changes the direction of our company."

The Demo Day culminated with the graduation of the Activate Oklahoma and Customized Development participants.

Financial and venture firms present will have an opportunity to invest in the innovators they feel are a good fit for further development.

The next round of program applications for the Oklahoma Grassroots Rural & Ag Business Accelerators program will open January 1, 2024. More information and details will be available on OKFB's website at [okfarmbureau.org/accelerator](http://okfarmbureau.org/accelerator).

### Meet the rural innovators who presented during Demo Day

#### Activate Oklahoma

**Apexloads** • Hinton

**Cimarron Maltworks** • Guthrie

**Electromagnetix** • Shawnee

**Eyedeal Innovations** • Claremore

**Fast Foam Suppression** • Altus

**Trailer Butler** • Ponca City

#### Customized Development

**33 Processing** • Spiro

**Newalla Fish Company** • Newalla

**Symbiotic** • McAlester

**UpTerra** • Cordell

## Ottawa County honored as top county YF&R program



OKFB President Rodd Moesel (right) presents members of Ottawa County Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee with the 2023 OKFB Charles L. Roff Award.

The Ottawa County Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee was honored with the 2023 Oklahoma Farm Bureau YF&R Charles L. Roff Award on Saturday, Nov. 11 during the organization's 82nd annual meeting in Oklahoma City.

Presented to the state's top county YF&R committee, the Charles L. Roff Award encourages YF&R members to improve their local committees while strengthening Farm Bureau.

"When we started our YF&R chapter a couple years ago, we just hoped to have a place where folks of similar age and industry who were going through similar things could come together and fellowship," said Dillon Johnson, Ottawa County YF&R committee chair. "Along the way, we started doing some programming and found that we could really be a service to the community through YF&R. Our membership keeps

growing, and it's really just a testament to the dedication of the folks in our county YF&R that we've gotten this far."

The Ottawa County YF&R committee hosted a number of activities throughout 2023. Most notable was the first-ever Ottawa County Farm Bureau YF&R Pedal Tractor Pull held in August.

The YF&R committee planned and executed the event, which brought more than 30 participants to the inaugural competition. The committee worked with local businesses to obtain sponsorships and partnered with First Class Pedal Pulls of Inola to ensure the competition standards allowed participants to compete at the state contest and beyond. Proceeds from the event went to a local community crisis center in Ottawa County.

The county received a traveling plaque in recognition of their outstanding committee involvement.

## Northeastern Oklahoma A&M recognized as top Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter



The Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College was honored with the first ever Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Moesel Award on Friday, Nov. 10 during the organization's 82nd annual meeting in Oklahoma City.

The Moesel Award recognizes the top Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter that works to improve their local chapter while strengthening the Farm Bureau organization.

NEO Collegiate Farm Bureau hosted a number of activities for their members during the 2022-2023 school year, including several commodity tours, where members toured local agricultural enterprises from traditional livestock and grain operations to coffee shops and Christmas tree farms.

The NEO chapter also packed care packages for local farmers in celebration of Farmer Appreciation Day, read agriculture books to elementary students, hosted a mock discussion meet and more.

## Stowers honored with Distinguished Service to OKFB Award

Terry Stowers was recognized with the Distinguished Service to Oklahoma Farm Bureau Award on Saturday, Nov. 11 during the organization's 82nd annual meeting in Oklahoma City.

The award honors individuals who have made outstanding contributions to agriculture and the Farm Bureau organization.

Stowers earned the award for the two decades he spent advocating for

the rights of individual and family mineral owners in Oklahoma through the Coalition of Oklahoma Surface and Mineral Owners.

"Terry Stowers has been an incredible partner and key adviser to farmers, ranchers and mineral owners in Oklahoma for more than two decades," said OKFB President Rodd Moesel. "We are incredibly grateful for the countless hours he has volunteered over the years to provide input and guidance

on mineral rights, and we look forward to continuing his legacy through the Royalty Owner Coalition of Oklahoma."

ROCO is a non-profit corporation that provides a structured, consistent and strong voice for the interests of Oklahoma mineral owners. OKFB partnered with several other agriculture organizations to establish ROCO in 2021 to continue Stowers' work after he announced his retirement.



## OKFB YF&R names discussion meet winners



Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers named the winners of four discussion meet competitive events on Saturday, Nov. 11 during the organization's 82nd annual meeting in Oklahoma City.

Leslie Lewis of Okmulgee County was named the 2023 winner of the YF&R Discussion Meet, which was held in late July during the OKFB YF&R Summer Conference. Jacob Beck of Logan County was named the 2024 winner after the discussion meet competition during OKFB's annual meeting on Nov. 10.

Cassidy Cashen of Oklahoma

State University was named the 2023 Collegiate Farm Bureau Discussion Meet winner, and Ashlee Purvine of Thomas-Fay-Custer FFA was named the High School Discussion Meet winner.

YF&R competitors faced fellow participants in a panel-style discussion where each competitor's performance was evaluated on the exchange of ideas and information on predetermined topics. Participants were judged on their ability to offer constructive input, cooperation and communication while analyzing agricultural problems and developing solutions.

As the YF&R Discussion Meet winners, Lewis and Beck received a John Deere lawnmower, sponsored by P&K Equipment. Lewis also won a trip to the 2024 American Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Beck won a trip to the 2025 AFBF Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, where they will compete in the national discussion meet contest.

The collegiate winner received an expense-paid trip to represent Oklahoma at the 2024 AFBF Collegiate Discussion Meet in Omaha, Nebraska, and the high school winner received a cash prize.

## Sheperd named OKFB Journalist of the Year

KC Sheperd, director of farm and ranch programming at the Oklahoma Farm Report, was presented with the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Journalist of the Year Award on Friday, Nov. 10 at the organization's 82nd annual meeting in Oklahoma City.

The award honors a journalist for their contributions through accurate and regular reports about Farm Bureau news, agricultural issues and the importance of these issues to Oklahoma

and the nation.

Throughout 2023, Sheperd regularly attended OKFB events, highlighting the organization's efforts while sharing the importance of Oklahoma's agriculture industry through reports and updates produced for the Oklahoma Farm Report and the Radio Oklahoma Ag Network, which provides agriculture news and market updates on 45 radio stations across Oklahoma, Texas, Kansas, New Mexico and Missouri.



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## Mullin introduces Black Vulture Relief Act in Congress

Sen. Markwayne Mullin, along with Sens. Tommy Tuberville of Alabama and Cindy Hyde-Smith of Mississippi, introduced the Black Vulture Relief Act in Congress to allow farmers and ranchers to protect their newborn livestock from black vultures without burdensome government interference.

Mullin's legislation provides regulatory relief by allowing farmers and ranchers to take black vultures anytime the birds threaten their livestock without a depredation permit.

Despite being listed as a species of lowest conservation concern, black vultures are still protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, making it illegal to take one without a depredation permit from U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. FWS currently operates a pilot program that allows state entities to register for a master permit and disburse sub-permits through individual states to ranchers. However, these sub-permits limit ranchers to 3-5 black vulture takes per year, even though

attacks normally involve more than 20 black vultures at a time.

"Oklahoma ranchers should have the right to protect their livestock from nasty predators that threaten their livelihoods," said Sen. Mullin. "Attacks from black vultures have become far too common and our livestock producers are suffering the consequences. As a rancher myself, I know firsthand the implications of the rapidly growing black vulture population and the negative effect this has on livestock production. Removing the requirement for a depredation permit will allow Oklahomans, including small and family-run ranches, the ability to do what is necessary to protect their livestock and reduce economic hardship. The current federal regulation is outdated, and it's vital to the livelihood of ranchers across the country that we get this fixed."

According to a press release from Mullin's office, the U.S. black vulture population has increased by 468% since 1990. Mullin's bill would require annual

reporting of vulture takes and continue the prohibition on using poison as a method of depopulation.

"Many Oklahoma Farm Bureau members have long faced extreme challenges with black vultures and the devastating effects they can have on livestock herds," said Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Rodd Moesel. "When these birds attack cattle and other livestock, ranchers are rendered helpless without first engaging in the lengthy process to obtain a depredation permit. We have heard countless stories from our Farm Bureau members about the threat vultures pose specifically to newborn livestock, and as caretakers of our herds and flocks, agriculturalists need appropriate measures to protect our animals. The Black Vulture Relief Act is a welcome sight for our members affected by these predatory birds, and we applaud Sen. Mullin for his work to help ranchers protect their livestock and their livelihoods."