

PERSPECTIVE

October 20, 2023

OKFB members explore “toxic grit” with Dr. Shannon Ferrell in final mental wellbeing webinar

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members wrapped up the webinar portion of the Cultivating Healthy Minds series with a look at resilience in agriculture on Friday, Oct. 13.

The finale of the three-part webinar series featured Oklahoma State University’s Dr. Shannon Ferrell as he led members through an exploration of agriculture’s unique stressors and risks when it comes to mental health.

Ferrell shared some of Oklahoma’s disheartening mental health statistics, including ranking third nationally in citizens experiencing mental illness, ranking first nationally in adverse childhood experiences per person, and ranking 49th overall in mental health.

“When it comes to mental health issues, we are the bottom of the barrel,” he said.

Oklahoma’s suicide rates, depression rates and overdose rates have also increased, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The mental health crisis is not exclusive to rural Oklahoma, but it is often magnified in rural communities, Ferrell said.

“The rural suicide rate exceeded the urban suicide rate starting in 2009, and the gap between those two rates has been rising ever since then,” he said.

While many factors influence the prevalence of mental health issues in rural areas like isolation, older populations and overworked rural hospitals, those in agriculture face additional challenges due to their occupation.

Compared to an industry like manufacturing – where if a company does everything right, they usually get the output they expect – the agriculture industry could not be more different.

Farmers and ranchers can do everything right and still not be guaranteed a product at the end, Ferrell said.

“You might not get the calf crop,” he said. “You might not get the grain crop or whatever it is you are raising, even if you do everything right, and that is stressful.”

Stress is the root of many of the mental health problems in agriculture, Ferrell said. Factors that are out of a farmer’s control like the weather or pest

invasions only add stress to an industry that already has a relatively low rate of financial return.

“In the end, the great paradox that we face in rural mental health is some of the things that are our greatest strengths might also be the sources of our greatest vulnerabilities,” he said.

One of those vulnerabilities is the mental and physical grit that farmers and ranchers must have. Agricultural producers have to be tough, independent, and often have to be experts in a number of agricultural areas to succeed, and the same approach is often taken with mental health concerns, Ferrell said.

However, the human body is not capable of processing trauma and stress alone, according to Ferrell.

“If you’ve gone through a lot of hard stuff, you need to share that,” Ferrell said. “You need to get it out and not just bottle it up.”

Read the full wrap-up from our final Cultivating Healthy Minds webinar with Dr. Ferrell online at okfb.news/FerrellCHM.



Watch our third Cultivating Healthy Minds webinar recording on YouTube
Check out the recording on YouTube at okfb.news/CHMSession3

**AG
IMPACT**

2023 ANNUAL MEETING

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Check out okfb.news/Meeting23

THE LATEST CONVENTION SCHEDULE WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE NEXT PERSPECTIVE NEWSLETTER



Guymon Public Library



Windsor Hills Elementary



Foyil Public Schools



Peckham School



Tupelo Public Schools



San Miguel School of Tulsa

Twelve Oklahoma teachers receive accurate agriculture books through OKFB's Bushels for Books

Twelve Oklahoma teachers were recently selected to receive a bushel basket of accurate agriculture books as part of Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Bushels for Books program.

A collaboration between the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture and the OKFB Women's Leadership Committee, Bushels for Books is designed to spread agriculture literacy to children around the state through providing a selection of books that accurately portray the agriculture industry.

"As family farmers and ranchers, we are passionate about teaching others

how their food gets to the dinner table," said Mignon Bolay, OKFB WLC chair. "We greatly appreciate these educators who have made agriculture literacy a part of their curriculum."

The program is open to Pre-K through eighth-grade teachers and librarians in Oklahoma, and each teacher who applies receives an accurate agriculture book for participating.

"With less than 2% of the population involved in production agriculture, it is more important than ever that children understand where their food comes from," said David VonTungeln, OKFB

Foundation for Agriculture president. "We hope these books provide a fun learning opportunity for our young people around the state."

Oklahoma County Farm Bureau made a special donation to the Bushels for Books program to provide a bushel basket to a school in Oklahoma County. This year, Windsor Hills Elementary School in Oklahoma City received the additional basket sponsored by Oklahoma County Farm Bureau.

Find the full list of teachers who received bushel baskets through the 2023 Bushels for Books program below:

2023 Bushels for Books recipients

Fayla Ray
Guymon Public Library

Crystal Ostermann
Frederick Public Schools

Linda Deason
Windsor Hills Elementary

Anita Hawkins
Rose Witcher Learning Center

Ashley Duval
Coleman Public Schools

Tracie Garrison
Tuskahoma Public Schools

Audie Smith
Haworth Public Schools

Bobbie Hummingbird
Warner Elementary Schools

Travis Jinkens
Foyil Public Schools

Lea Ann Johns
Peckham Schools

Dana Johnson
Tupelo Public Schools

Anna Deripaska
San Miguel School of Tulsa

OKFB members urged to comment on EPA proposed herbicide strategy

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members are invited to submit their concerns about the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed herbicide strategy before the Oct. 22 comment period deadline.

EPA released the Draft Herbicide Strategy Framework in July in response to extensive litigation from environmental groups about EPA's noncompliance with the Endangered Species Act. The proposed framework is EPA's attempt to protect some 900 endangered species and their habitats through significant use restrictions and mitigations on most agricultural herbicide uses.

Growers located in pesticide use limitation areas – or PULAs – which include many parts of Oklahoma, could be subject to even greater restrictions. Many of the proposed restrictions will be unworkable, forcing growers to adopt outdated cropping practices that are costly, burdensome and irrelevant to modern agriculture.

The agency extended the original 60-day public comment period on the proposed framework an additional 30 days, and OKFB members are encouraged to make the voice of farmers and ranchers heard through submitting a comment urging the EPA to withdraw the proposal.

How OKFB members can submit public comments

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members can choose to submit public comments on the EPA's proposed herbicide strategy in one of two ways: submitting an online form on their own through the regulations.gov website, or by submitting their comments to OKFB's online form for OKFB staff to submit on a member's behalf.

The link to the regulations.gov portal along with OKFB's online form for members to submit their comments to OKFB staff for posting to the regulations.gov website can be found online at okfb.news/EPAComent23.

The deadline to submit comments directly is **Sunday, Oct. 22**. The deadline to submit comments through the form on OKFB's website for staff to review and submit is Friday, **Oct. 20**.

For more information or clarification, contact Marla Peek, OKFB senior director of regulatory affairs, at (405) 523-2300.

YF&R, collegiate and high school discussion meet registration now open

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee will host three discussion meets during the 2023 OKFB Annual Meeting Nov. 9 and 10 in Oklahoma City, and competitors can now register for the three events.

The committee will host discussion meets for OKFB YF&R members ages 18-35, collegiate Farm Bureau members and Oklahoma high school students.

The discussion meet competitive event simulates a committee meeting where participants address an issue facing agriculture and work to actively discuss an issue and arrive at possible solutions and outcomes that would positively impact agriculture.

The high school discussion meet will be held Thursday, Nov. 9. Orientation will begin at 5 p.m., and students will participate in two rounds of

competition. The top four individuals will receive scholarships ranging from \$1,500 to \$250.

The collegiate discussion meet and YF&R discussion meet will both be held Friday, Nov. 10, with three total rounds of competition, including the finals.

The YF&R discussion meet winner will represent OKFB at the 2025 American Farm Bureau convention.

The winner of the collegiate discussion meet will represent OKFB at the AFBF collegiate discussion meet in Omaha, NE, in March 2024. The top four participants will also receive cash prizes.

Discussion meet registration and a list of discussion meet topics are both available on the OKFB website at okfarmbureau.org/applications. Participants must register online by **Friday, Oct. 27**.

Meek elected as chair of Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board



Oklahoma Farm Bureau Treasurer and District 9 Director Jim Meek was recently elected to serve as chair of the Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board at the group's regular meeting Tuesday, Oct. 10.

The Okmulgee County rancher was elected by unanimous vote after having served as vice chair since the governing board's inception in 2022, when he was appointed to the board by Oklahoma House Speaker Charles McCall.

Meek and newly elected vice chair Amanda Mullins will lead the charge in the effort to expand access to reliable, affordable high-speed internet service in the state of Oklahoma.

"The future of rural Oklahoma depends heavily on access to quality and affordable broadband service," Meek said. "Not only is agriculture becoming more dependent on technology, but many vital community resources, including medical services, financial transactions and educational opportunities rely on broadband availability to deliver their services to Oklahomans."

The Oklahoma Broadband Governing Board oversees the work of the Oklahoma Broadband Office, which was established by the passage of the Oklahoma Broadband Expansion Act during the 2022 legislative session.

The nine-member board is composed of the lieutenant governor, the state treasurer, three appointees from the governor and two appointees each from the Senate president pro tempore and the speaker of the House.

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OKFB foundation, members team up to donate \$9,400 to Hawaii wildfire relief efforts

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, together with Farm Bureau members and rural Oklahomans, donated \$9,400 to the Hawaii Farm Bureau Foundation for wildfire relief efforts after

devastating fires ravaged parts of Maui and the Big Island.

OKFB members and the public donated \$4,700 to the relief efforts, which the foundation matched dollar-for-dollar.

The funds will be used by the Hawaii Farm Bureau Foundation to help agricultural producers impacted by the catastrophic fires rebuild fences and restore structures and land scorched in the blazes during the summer of 2023.

YF&R Roff award applications now open

Applications for the Charles L. Roff Award, which recognizes the top county Young Farmers & Ranchers committee, are now available online.

The award is judged on the activities a county YF&R committee takes on during the year to advance Farm Bureau and agriculture.

The applications can be downloaded from the OKFB website at okfarmbureau.org/applications. Roff Award applications must be submitted by **October 26**.

Foundation for ag rifle raffle tickets available

Raffle tickets are still available for the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture's rifle raffle fundraiser.

Tickets for a chance to win a Weatherby Vanguard S2 Sporter rifle in Creedmoor 6.5 are \$20 each and can be purchased from your area field representative or by contacting foundation director Holly Carroll at (405) 523-2300.

Terms and conditions apply, which are available on the reverse side of each raffle ticket.

County Farm Bureau matching grants open

The OKFB Foundation for Agriculture's County Farm Bureau Matching Grant Program applications are now available.

The **\$500** matching grants are available to counties who need financial assistance in hosting a new outreach program that showcases Farm Bureau and agriculture.

Interested county Farm Bureaus can contact their field representative for an application, which is due **December 1, 2023**.