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OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU

Perspective

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OKFB foundation, WLC donate ag books to 14 Oklahoma educators

Fourteen Oklahoma educators from across the state were awarded a basket of agriculture books for their schools during Oklahoma Farm Bureau's 77th Annual Meeting held Nov. 16-18 in Norman.

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture, alongside the OKFB Women's Leadership Committee, sponsored this year's Bushels for Books program. The program takes donated bushels of any commodity crop, as well as monetary donations from farmers and ranchers, and provides bushel baskets of accurate agriculture books to Oklahoma educators.

"Agriculture is one of Oklahoma's leading industries, but few truly understand what it takes to produce our food, fiber and fuel," said David VonTungeln, foundation president. "We're thrilled to help our state's educators teach the next generation about Oklahoma farmers and ranchers."

Applications were accepted from teachers across the state, and winners were chosen by the WLC state board. The books cover various agriculture topics and were picked from the American Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture's list.

"It's so important for all of our students to learn about agriculture," said Kitty Beavers, OKFB WLC chair. "Many of our schools don't have any books about agriculture in their libraries. We're pleased to help present these books to educators who help teach our children about the important role agriculture plays in their everyday lives."

Educators receiving books include Kellie Badley, Laverne; Rhonda Cotton, Lawton; Tammy Coffee, Oklahoma City YMCA; Haley Curfman, Blackwell; Lynn Ferrari, Canute; Celicia Hamilton, Porter; Thorma Jackson, Bray-Doyle; Amanda Jones, Timberlake; Mary Lassiter, Enid; Elizabeth Martin, Ponca City; Dawn Meurant, Indianahoma; Barbara Pemberton, Frontier; Christie Puckett, Maysville; and Megan Sowers, Sand Springs.



Tammy Coffee
Oklahoma City YMCA



Haley Curfman
Blackwell



Thorma Jackson
Bray-Doyle



Barbara Pemberton
Frontier



Dawn Meurant
Indianahoma



Left: Jackson County Farm Bureau member Bob Howard speaks about an issue during the resolutions session on Saturday, Nov. 17 at OKFB's 77th Annual Meeting. Right: OKFB President Rodd Moesel (left) and OKFB Vice President Gary Crawley (right) preside over the resolutions session.

Farm Bureau members set 2019 policy

Extension services, the agriculture sales tax exemption and feral hogs were issues prioritized by Oklahoma Farm Bureau members as they worked to set the organization's 2019 policy on Saturday, Nov. 17 during the OKFB annual meeting in Norman, Oklahoma.

All 77 county Farm Bureaus submitted resolutions to the OKFB policy book which were reviewed by a statewide committee and voted on by the delegate body during the annual meeting. The policy sets the direction of the organization for the year.

"It's not just the power of our public policy staff, it's not just the power of our board," OKFB President Rodd Moesel said of the organization's grassroots policy. "It's the power of our members in all 77 counties meeting today and all of our members speaking out on these issues."

"The policy may have started in Grant County, it may have started in Pontotoc County or it may have started in Jackson County, but it ends up here (at the OKFB annual meeting) when all 77 counties take action and vote and set the agenda for the next year."

Farm Bureau members voted to prioritize maintaining at least one cooperative extension office, with a 4-H educator, in

each county. The policy also supports a multi-county model for extension specialists. Funding for cooperative extension, which provides cutting-edge research to farmers and ranchers, has dwindled as the state has grappled with budget shortfalls over the past few years.

"The extension service is near and dear to many Farm Bureau hearts," Moesel said. "We made it a priority issue to support not only keeping that one 4-H agent in every county, but also rebuilding the extension system with area agents that might serve several counties as an agronomy or horticulture or rural development expert."

"As our state's blessed with extra income, the extension service – which has been one of the things that's been punished in the last few years – is something we're anxious to see restored and rebuilt," he said.

Members also voted to reaffirm OKFB's support for the sales tax exemption on agricultural production inputs, which was a policy fought for by Farm Bureau for nearly 30 years.

"All 50 states offer an exemption on the inputs that go into ag production just like they do the manufacturing companies," Moesel said. "If suddenly we removed that ag exemption in Oklahoma, we would

immediately – depending on the local, city and county – be at a 7 to 10 percent disadvantage compared to competing with farmers in Texas, Kansas and New Mexico."

With feral hogs plaguing Oklahoma farmers and ranchers for years, Farm Bureau members bolstered the organization's call for complete eradication of the invasive species by any means possible. Many producers are working proactively to reduce the population on private land, but OKFB members voted to urge municipal, state and federal agencies to also eradicate feral hogs on public lands.

"It's clear from the voice of the Farm Bureau voters that they don't see the feral hog problem getting reduced, they see it even becoming more serious," Moesel said.

Members also considered a variety of other issues including voting to oppose mandatory Country of Origin Labeling, to urge cell-cultured food products to be labeled properly, to encourage federally-funded research on industrial hemp production, to affirm support for free and fair international trade.

The OKFB board of directors will vote on final approval of the grassroots policy at its December meeting.

Save the date: OKFB Leadership Conference to be held in February

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members are invited to attend the 2019 OKFB Leadership Conference to be held Feb. 18-19 in Oklahoma City. Designed to help members develop leadership skills and stay informed, it will be an event you don't want to miss! Stay tuned for more details.

Bree Kisling earns \$1,000 college scholarship for Ag in the Classroom work

Chisholm High School senior Bree Kisling recently was awarded a \$1,000 college scholarship through the Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture Ag in the Classroom Scholarship Challenge by the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee on Saturday, Nov. 17 at the organization's annual meeting in Norman, Oklahoma.

She earned the scholarship for her work to teach local students in her community about Oklahoma agriculture. During a visit to Chisholm Elementary School, Kisling taught pre-kindergarteners a lesson based on the book, *The Little Red Hen*. The students learned about chickens, and about how wheat is planted, harvested, milled and used for baking.

"The project allowed me to teach the next generation about agriculture, even if it was just in a basic way," Kisling said.

The lesson has prompted Kisling to explore other opportunities to engage



Bree Kisling (center), a senior at Chisholm High School, earns a \$1,000 college scholarship from the OKFB Women's Leadership Committee for her work to teach local students about agriculture. Kisling was presented the scholarship on Saturday, Nov. 17 by OKFB WLC Chair Kitty Beavers (right) and Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom's Cheri Long at OKFB's 77th annual meeting in Norman.

elementary students in agriculture.

"I have already begun discussing future teaching opportunities with the pre-K teachers and creating other presentations about topics such as fruit, sheep, baby animals and honey bees," she said.

The scholarship is open to students who participated in OKFB's Oklahoma Youth Leading Agriculture conference, where they learned how to share agriculture with students in their area.



Caitlin Williams of KSWO-TV in Lawton (right) accepts the OKFB Journalist of the Year award from OKFB President Rodd Moesel during the organization's awards banquet on Saturday, Nov. 17, at the 2018 annual meeting in Norman. Williams was recognized for her coverage of local agriculture issues and for focusing on the activities of agricultural youth in 4-H and FFA.

Williams named OKFB Journalist of the Year

Caitlin Williams, an anchor for KSWO-TV in Lawton, was recognized with the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Journalist of the Year award Nov. 17 during the organization's 77th Annual Meeting.

The award honors journalists for their contributions through reporting accurately and regularly about Farm Bureau news, agricultural issues and the importance of these to Oklahoma and the nation.

Williams was nominated for the award by county Farm Bureaus in southwest Oklahoma after developing a weekly segment highlighting FFA and 4-H members in the area.

"Spotlighting our young agriculturalists is so important," she said. "They are our future and they deserve to have their accomplishments shouted from the rooftops. I'm proud to have a small part in showing the world what southwest Oklahoma brings to the table."

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Garfield County Farm Bureau donates \$15,000 to OKFB foundation



Garfield County Farm Bureau members, along with OKFB Executive Director Thad Doye (far left), pose for a photo with the donated trailer. Doye, who coordinates the donation of animals across the state, will use the trailer to transport donated animals.

Garfield County Farm Bureau recently donated \$15,000 to the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture to provide a new livestock trailer for the foundation's Pork for Packs and Beef for Backpacks programs. The trailer was unveiled at OKFB's 77th annual meeting held Nov. 16-18 in Norman, Oklahoma.

"We're so thankful for the generosity of Garfield County Farm Bureau members," said David VonTungeln, foundation president. "Their generous donation will help the foundation provide food for thousands of hungry children."

A partnership between the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture, Oklahoma FFA Association, Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma and other agricultural organizations, the Pork for Packs and Beef for Backpacks programs use donated cattle and hogs to produce protein sticks for the food bank's Food for Kids program.

The Food for Kids program provides backpacks filled with non-perishable, kid-friendly food to eat on weekends and school holidays.