

MISSISSIPPI FARM BUREAU[®] FEDERATION

GRASSROOTS LEADER NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2013

MFBF ANNUAL MEETING: Approximately 650 volunteer leaders representing all 82 county Farm Bureaus across the state gathered in Jackson in early December for the 92nd annual membership meeting of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation. A time of fellowship was enjoyed as business was conducted and policy adopted that will guide the organization's efforts during 2014. Policy related to national issues will be forwarded to the American Farm Bureau Federation for consideration at its annual meeting in San Antonio, Texas, in January. Newly elected or re-elected directors include Dr. Jim Perkins, Tishomingo County, Tommy Swindoll, DeSoto County, Tripp Thomas, Panola County, Herbert Word, Monroe County, Pepper Beard, Carroll County, Kenneth Thompson, Neshoba County, Quinton Mills, Scott County, Robert Earl McGehee Jr., Lincoln County, Bobby Selman, Lawrence County, and J. B. Brown, Stone County. Young Farmers & Ranchers State Committee Chair Mallory Sayle of DeSoto County and State Women's Committee Chair Betty Mills of Montgomery County also serve on the state board. Mills was re-elected during the Women's Business Session held Sunday morning as was Shelby Williams, who will again serve as State Women's Committee vice chair. Re-elected regional women's chairs include: Region 2 – Kay Perkins of Tishomingo County; Region 4 – Jody Bailey of Yalobusha County; Region 6 – Joan Thompson of Neshoba County; and Region 8 – Wanda Hill of Humphreys County. Outstanding county Farm Bureau programs recognized at convention include: Region 1 – DeSoto County; Region 2 – Itawamba County; Region 3 – Montgomery County; Region 4 – Monroe County; Region 5 – Rankin County; Region 6 – Covington County; Region 7 – Walthall County; and Region 8 – Stone County. Stone County received the President's Award as the best overall county program in the state. More convention coverage will run in the March/April 2014 issue of our membership magazine.

MISSISSIPPI AG COMMISSIONER CITED FOR DISTINGUISHED SERVICE:

Mississippi Commissioner of Agriculture and Commerce Cindy Hyde-Smith of Lincoln County is the recipient of the 2013 Distinguished Service Award. She was cited for her work on behalf of Mississippi agriculture. Commissioner Hyde-Smith, who took office in January 2012, previously served in the Mississippi Senate for three terms and chaired the Mississippi Senate Agriculture Committee for eight years. She also served as vice chair of the Agriculture Committee of the National Conference of State Legislators. She and her husband, Michael, farm in Lincoln County. The family's cattle auction, Lincoln County Livestock, also provides them an opportunity to work alongside Michael's parents in a profession they all love. Commissioner Hyde-Smith and her husband have one daughter, Anna-Michael. The Distinguished Service Award is the highest honor Farm Bureau bestows on an individual, and it is reserved for someone who has truly made a difference in the lives of Mississippi farmers.

NARON RECEIVES EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP AWARD: Robert Naron of Bolivar County is the recipient of the 2013 Excellence in Leadership Award. A third-generation Delta farmer, Naron has served as an active Farm Bureau volunteer leader for 40 years. He is a permanent member of the Bolivar County Farm Bureau Board of Directors and a former state Young Farmer of the Year. Naron is a member of many agricultural organizations and has remained on the forefront of new and innovative farming practices. Naron and his wife have two sons, one daughter and two grandchildren, with another grandchild on the way. The Excellence in Leadership Award was established to recognize those volunteer leaders of Farm Bureau who have made a significant contribution to Farm Bureau and agriculture in Mississippi. Their contributions have been performed as a result of an unselfish effort to strengthen Farm Bureau and to enhance rural life in Mississippi.

REP. BILL PIGOTT IS A FRIEND OF AGRICULTURE: Rep. Bill Pigott of Tylertown is the 2013 Friend of Agriculture. Rep. Pigott represents District 99, which includes parts of Lamar, Marion and Walthall counties. He serves as the vice chair of the Mississippi House Agriculture Committee. “Some issues we dealt with this past session include the fact that rural roads and bridges don’t get the attention they deserve because of the way the Legislature is made up, with more urban lawmakers than rural lawmakers,” he said. “Those roads and bridges help farmers get agricultural products to market, and it is very important to maintain them. Another issue was water. Mississippi is fortunate to have good water, but some of the regs coming down on discharge of water can make it real hard on farmers.” Rep. Pigott was instrumental in pushing through the Cottage Food Bill, which allows small food operations under \$20,000 to be exempt from Department of Health regulations for nonhazardous foods. Rep. Pigott has served as a county Farm Bureau president and a state board member.

SEN. RUSSELL JOLLY IS A FRIEND OF AGRICULTURE: Sen. Russell Jolly of Houston is the 2013 Friend of Agriculture. Sen. Jolly represents Dist. 8, which includes Chickasaw, Calhoun, Grenada and Lee counties. He is the vice chair of the Mississippi Senate Agriculture Committee. Sen. Jolly was instrumental in getting several key pieces of legislation through the committee, including the Cottage Food Bill, the Catfish Labeling Bill and the Livestock Theft Bill. “Agritourism is another issue we’ve worked with that’s very important,” he said. “Kids today are about two or three generations removed from the farm, and agritourism teaches them what farmers go through.” Sen. Jolly sees Farm Bureau as being essential to state agriculture and to his work in the Mississippi Legislature. “Farm Bureau is probably the biggest reason I ran for the Senate,” he said. “I had served as a county Farm Bureau president and a state board member for many years so I was familiar with the agricultural issues. I also knew how important it is for agriculture to have a strong voice in the Legislature.”

FARMtastic LEADERS RECEIVE AG AMBASSADOR AWARD: Nelda Starks and Julie White, the women’s chair and women’s vice chair for Oktibbeha County Farm Bureau, received

the 2013 Ag Ambassador Award. Nelda and Julie are the leaders behind FARMtastic, an annual event that teaches schoolchildren about agriculture. This past November, the five-day FARMtastic, which was held at the Mississippi Horse Park in Starkville and open to the public on Saturday, enjoyed an attendance of approximately 1,000 schoolchildren. Seven ag-related learning stations were offered. FARMtastic is sponsored by the Mississippi State University Extension Service in partnership with Oktibbeha County Farm Bureau and many other local organizations. The Ag Ambassador Award was created to recognize individuals who have gone beyond their normal range of activities in promoting Mississippi agriculture. It's not presented every year – only when Farm Bureau feels that it has been earned.

FARM WOMAN OF THE YEAR: Rita Seward of Seward Farms in Jackson County is the first-ever Farm Woman of the Year Award recipient. Rita wears many hats on Seward Farms, which grows cotton, peanuts, corn, oats, wheat and ryegrass and raises stocker cattle and quarter horses on acreage in four counties. The Swards also operate a successful agritourism venture, which was one of the first in the state. Rita's father-in-law helped organize the Jackson County Farm Bureau and served as one of its first presidents. Rita's husband and son were active in the Young Farmers & Ranchers Program. Rita serves on her county Farm Bureau's peanuts and cotton advisory committees. The Farm Woman of the Year Award was established in 2013 to recognize, encourage and reward the achievements of women farmers. The recipient personifies the highest level of professional excellence in agriculture.

STATE YF&R ACHIEVEMENT AWARD RECIPIENTS: Beef cattle and row crop farmers Matt and Carrie Edgar of Yazoo County are the state winners of the Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) Achievement Award. They were recognized for their farming innovations, leadership skills and involvement in Farm Bureau and their community. As state winners, the Edgars received a new Ford pickup truck, the use of John Deere and Kubota tractors, \$500 from Watson Quality Ford and \$1,800 toward the purchase of technology from Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation. The finalists in this competition received \$500 from Southern Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Company and \$500 from Southern Ag Credit. In January, the Edgars will compete for the national title at the 2014 American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting in San Antonio, Texas. Matt is president of Yazoo County Farm Bureau. He and Carrie are former members of the YF&R State Committee. The Edgars have two sons, Adam, 7, and Wyatt, 3.

STATE YF&R EXCELLENCE IN AGRICULTURE RECIPIENTS: Reid and Kate Nevins of Lowndes County are the state winners of the Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) Excellence in Agriculture Award. They were recognized for their involvement in agriculture, their leadership ability and their involvement and participation in Farm Bureau and their community. As state winners, the Nevins received a Toro zero-turn lawnmower, sponsored by Southern Ag Credit, and an expense-paid trip from Farm Bureau to the national convention. Regional winners received a Yeti cooler from the Mississippi Farm Bureau Insurance Sales Department. Reid is the county coordinator for the Lowndes County Extension Service. Kate works at a local bank.

On their farm, the Nevins grow produce and collect honey from their apiary to sell at local farmers markets. They also use their farm as an outdoor classroom to teach children about the source of their food. The Nevins have one son, Eli. The YF&R Excellence in Agriculture Award is presented to those individuals or couples who do not have the majority of their income subject to normal production risk.

FARM BUREAU AMBASSADOR: Collin Ray Hutcheson of Lee County was named Farm Bureau Ambassador for 2014. He will serve as a spokesperson for Farm Bureau and agriculture during the coming year. First alternate was Joanna Lee King of Yazoo County. Collin receives a \$2,000 scholarship, and Joanna receives a \$1,000 scholarship. The contest is sponsored annually by the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Women's Program.

BLANKENSHIP SAFETY AWARD: Winners of this year's Mike Blankenship Outstanding County Safety Award are Panola County in North Mississippi, Neshoba and Smith counties in Central Mississippi, and Marion County in South Mississippi. The award is given to the counties that have had the most safety programs taught by Farm Bureau safety educators during the past year.

OUTSTANDING COUNTY WOMEN'S PROGRAMS: Outstanding county Farm Bureau women's programs include the following: Region 1 – Panola County- Linda Holland, chair, and Cammie Rone, vice chair; Region 2 – Union County-Mary Manning, chair; Region 3 – Simpson County-Tammy Layton, chair, and Ann Layton, vice chair; Region 4 – Montgomery County-Georgia Caffey, chair, and Becky Jordan, vice chair; Region 5 – Amite County-Betty Edwards, chair, and Amy Bean, vice chair; Region 6 – Lauderdale County-Rachel Jones, chair; Region 7 – Stone County-Louise Brown, chair, and Jane Brewer, vice chair; Region 8 – Carroll County-Betty Taylor, chair.

Counties receiving the Women's Outstanding Achievement Awards for 2013 include:

.Information, Organization and Government Relations – DeSoto County-Deniese Swindoll, chair, and Carolyn Neergaard, vice chair

.Agriculture in the Classroom – Leflore County- Gail O'Neal, chair, and Corrie O'Neal, vice chair

.Community Service – Marion County- Glenda Shivers, chair, and Patsy Lowery, vice chair

.Youth Safety Volunteer – Jackson County- Debbie Hackler, chair, and Rita Hall, vice chair

STATE YF&R DISCUSSION MEET WINNER – Brandi Karisch of Oktibbeha County is the state winner of the 2013 Young Farmers and Ranchers (YF&R) Discussion Meet. She received a 4-wheeler from Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company, \$500 from Southern Ag Credit and \$500 from Watson Quality Ford. YF&R Discussion Meet finalists received \$350 from Southern Ag Credit. Brandi, an Extension beef cattle specialist at Mississippi State University,

will compete nationally at the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting at San Antonio, Texas, in January.

AGRICULTURE DISPLAY CONTEST: The recipient of the 2013 Agricultural Display Award is Monroe County. Other quarterly winners this past year include Lauderdale and Montgomery counties. This contest was established to reward county Farm Bureaus for the hard work and dedication they put forth to educate people in their communities about Mississippi agriculture and Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation. One winner is honored per quarter for an exceptional agriculture display exhibited in their county Farm Bureau office.

SAYLE TO LEAD YF&R STATE COMMITTEE: In activities held before convention, Mallory Sayle of DeSoto County was elected by her peers to chair the 2014 Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) State Committee. Mallory will also serve as the young farmer representative on the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Board of Directors. Mallory and her husband, Jim, are row crop farmers at Lake Cormorant.

AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE: Mississippi will receive an American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) Award of Excellence in the following program areas: Education and Outreach, Member Services, Public Relations and Communications and Leadership Development. Each year, all 50 state Farm Bureaus compete in the AFBF Awards of Excellence competition. This contest judges each state in several categories and rewards them if they reach certain predetermined goals. The results will be announced during the Recognition and Awards Program at the upcoming AFBF annual membership meeting in San Antonio, Texas.

IN MEMORIAM-MATT OWEN: Matt Owen, 36, of Moselle passed away Nov. 1 at Forrest General Hospital in Hattiesburg. A poultry farmer for Wayne Farms, Matt served as president of Forrest County Farm Bureau and as a member of the county's Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee. Matt was a graduate of South Jones High School and Jones County Junior College. He was a member of the First Baptist Church of Glendale, an active member of the Mississippi Poultry Association and a Little League baseball coach. Matt and his wife, Jennifer, have two sons, Tyler and Jacob, and one daughter, Anna Claire. Please keep this family in your prayers.

COLORING CONTEST: Each year, as part of the Ag in the Classroom program, second-graders are encouraged to color a farm scene and win a prize. Regional winners receive \$25, and the state winner is awarded \$50. This year's deadline for regional entries is Feb. 15, and the deadline for state entries is March 1. Contact your county Farm Bureau office or the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation Women's Program at (601) 977-4245 for more details.

TEACHER OF THE YEAR PROGRAM: The deadline for submitting a Teacher of the Year essay is March 15. The winning teacher will have an opportunity to take an expense-paid trip to the National Ag in the Classroom Conference in Hershey, Pennsylvania, and will participate in the annual Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) Women's Leadership Conference in

Jackson. For more information, contact your county Farm Bureau office or the MFBF Women's Program at (601) 977-4245.

2013 RICE FARMER OF THE YEAR: Joe Aguzzi of Cleveland has been named 2013 Rice Farmer of the Year. The award, sponsored by Horizon Ag, Rice Farming magazine and the USA Rice Federation, honors a producer who has shown determination, innovation and dedication in growing rice. Aguzzi has harvested 60 rice crops and continues to oversee one of the most well-respected rice farms in the Mississippi Delta. He is an on-farm cooperator with university research and Extension. He is involved in the Bolivar Medical Center Foundation and the local chamber of commerce. Aguzzi was recognized by Delta State University for his support. He is a longtime member of Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, Delta Council and the Mississippi Rice Growers Association. He is an active member of his church and a decorated World War II veteran. Aguzzi and his wife, Margaret, have seven children, 15 grandchildren and 12 great-grandchildren.

VOICES OF AGRICULTURE: The next "Voices of Agriculture" will feature highlights from the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation and American Farm Bureau Federation annual meetings. "Voices of Agriculture" airs Feb. 12 at 5:30 p.m. and Feb. 15 at 2:30 p.m., CST, on RFD-TV. You will find RFD-TV on these channels: Channel 231 on Dish Network and Channel 345 on DirecTV. "Voices of Agriculture" is a production of Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation.

GRAIN BIN SAFETY WORKSHOPS RETURN IN 2014: Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) will sponsor a series of grain bin safety workshops on Feb. 24-26. Last year, this program was well received, with an estimated 600 farmers, farm labor and first responders participating in the seminars. We will have the locations for you in the near future.

2014 WINTER COMMODITY CONFERENCE: Make plans to attend the 2014 Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation (MFBF) Winter Commodity Conference to be held Jan. 27-28 at the MFBF Building in Jackson. The meeting will offer an informative group of speakers and an opportunity to visit with fellow farmers from around the state. Breakout sessions for individual commodity advisory committees are also planned. The annual Legislative Reception will be held on the evening of Jan. 27. The *Land and Forestry* segment of the conference is Jan. 27 at 10 a.m., followed by the *Apiculture and Row Crop* segment at 1 p.m. Speakers will include Dr. David Kohl, president of Agrivisions LLC; Dr. Elwynn Taylor, an Extension climatologist at Iowa State University; Dr. Catherine Enright, executive vice president of food and agriculture with the Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO); Stan Ingram, an oil and gas attorney; and Dr. James Henderson, an Extension forestry specialist. The *Aquaculture & Livestock* segment will begin at 8:30 a.m. on Jan. 28. Speakers will include Dr. Taylor, Dr. Enright and a market outlook speaker TBA. For more information, contact Nancy Britt at (601) 977-4230.

2014 SECRETARIES' CONFERENCE – Make plans to attend the 2014 Secretaries' Conference to be held April 22-23 at the Mississippi Ag and Forestry Museum in Jackson. For more information, contact Merlene Partridge at (601) 977-4233.

2014 WASHINGTON D.C. FLY-IN: The 2014 Washington D.C. Member Fly-In is scheduled for Feb. 10-12. This event takes Farm Bureau members to Washington, D.C., to visit with elected officials. If you would like to participate, please contact your Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation regional manager for more information.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: *Women's Day at the Capitol and Food Check-Out Day will be held Feb. 18. The Young Farmers & Ranchers Leadership Conference is set for Feb. 21-23 in Vicksburg, and Ag Day at the Capitol is scheduled for March 4.*

CHRISTMAS IN THE PARK – Tylertown's annual Christmas in the Park will be held Thanksgiving Day through New Year's Eve, weather permitting, at Holmes Water Park. The park is open seven days a week from 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Admission is \$5 for cars and \$20 for buses. For more information, call (601) 876-4911. You can also visit the website at www.walthallchamber.com/Christmas.html or join Tylertown Christmas in the Park on Facebook.

GINGERBREAD GALLERY – The Gingerbread Gallery exhibit from the New Albany High School culinary arts students will be featured at the Union County Heritage Museum in New Albany through the holidays. For more information, visit www.uchheritagemuseum.com.

Calendar of Events

Jan. 7	Legislative Session Convenes
Jan. 12-15	AFBF Annual Meeting, San Antonio, Texas
Jan. 22-23	Delta Ag Expo, Cleveland
Jan. 27-28	Winter Commodity Conference, Jackson
Jan. 27	Legislative Reception
Feb. 7-10	AFBF YF&R Conference, Virginia Beach, Virginia
Feb. 10-12	Washington D.C. Fly-In Visit
Feb. 18	Women's Day at the Capitol & Food Check-Out Day, Jackson
Feb. 21-23	MFBF YF&R Leadership Conference, Vicksburg
Feb. 24-26	Grain Bin Workshops
March 4	MFBF Ag Day at the Capitol, Jackson
April 22-23	Secretaries' Conference, Jackson
April 25	Women's Leadership Conference Jackson

Grassroots Leader is a monthly e-newsletter for Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation volunteer leaders. If you have information for the January issue, please contact Region 1 Regional Manager Justin Ferguson at (601)720-4238 or jferguson@msfb.org or Glynda Phillips at (601) 540-6868 or gphillips@msfb.org.