

THE Stateley Oak

The Diversity Edition

■ Page 22



THE Stately Oak

The Stately Oak is published
periodically for donors,
employees, retirees and friends of the LSU AgCenter
and the LSU College of Agriculture
and is printed and mailed
with private funds.

Contributions can be made
payable to LSU Foundation
and sent to LSU Agriculture Development,
101 J. Norman Efferson Hall,
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

www.lsufoundation.org/givetoagriculture
www.lsufoundation.org/givetolsuagcenter

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PUB3657-21F (2,000) 11/21

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College of
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Strengthening Diversity Efforts



— **Luke Laborde**

*Interim LSU Vice President for Agriculture
and Interim Dean, LSU College of Agriculture*

The LSU AgCenter and LSU College of Agriculture have long valued diversity, equity and inclusion, and in the past year, the two institutions have prioritized efforts to cultivate those principles by establishing the Council for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Change; hiring an assistant vice president for diversity, inclusion and opportunity; creating Diversity and Inclusion Champions in each of our academic units; and strengthening student organizations that celebrate these values.

In this issue, you can read about the strides we have made to be more equitable and inclusive. You can see how one alumnus and his wife are making a difference by offering scholarships for students from diverse backgrounds. This is just a start. We have a lot of work to do in this space, but by investing in diversity and inclusion, we can ensure that the next generation of agricultural scientists, producers and processors we are training represent the best and brightest from all sectors of the population.

We also continue to work through the ongoing pandemic — conducting innovative donor-funded research on hypoxia in the Gulf of Mexico, looking at novel ways to protect the state's citrus industry and working with private industry to find new markets for Louisiana rice.

I want to thank our alumni and donors who have made the AgCenter and College of Agriculture a priority this past year. Your support means so much to us and our students!

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A. Wilbert's Sons Internship



Citrus Research



FOODii Looks to the Future

Background photo of Monica Guient
by Olivia McClure/LSU AgCenter.



Restoring Camp Grant Walker

cover story

In her new position at LSU, Monica Guient is responsible for diversity activities ranging from developing a strategic plan and improving outreach to securing funding. See what other exciting initiatives are taking place at LSU and the LSU AgCenter, including our Diversity and Inclusion Champions program, on **Pages 22-28**.

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Wetlands Sake

Hunter Lepretre developed a strong agricultural background while growing up on a cattle farm in Vermilion Parish.

*Hunter Lepretre is the first student chosen for an LSU AgCenter internship with an endowment established by the Charles and Rose Broussard Family.
Photo by Bruce Schultz/LSU AgCenter.*

McNeese student Hunter Lepretre selected for

BROUSSARD RESEARCH INTERNSHIP

By Bruce Schultz

Hunter Lepretre, a junior at McNeese State University, was chosen as the first student selected for a research internship with the LSU AgCenter through an endowment established by the family of Charles and Rose Broussard.

Lepretre began the paid internship in May at the H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station, working in the agronomy research project under Dustin Harrell, LSU AgCenter agronomist and resident coordinator of the Rice Research Station.

A 2019 graduate of Gueydan High School, Lepretre is majoring in natural resources conservation management and general agriculture. With an interest in forages, but open to multiple career possibilities, he believes the internship will allow him to learn more about research in general.

"This gives me a chance to see everything that's going on," Lepretre said.

Lepretre developed a strong agricultural background while growing up on a cattle farm in Vermilion Parish, where he showed pigs and cattle in 4-H. He was chosen as Vermilion Parish Premier Exhibitor three times, has worked on farms and ranches and has participated in several wildlife research projects.

Kurt Guidry, director of the LSU AgCenter Southwest Region, said student workers are hired at the Rice Research Station every summer to help with research projects. He credited the Broussard children for their commitment to carrying on their parents' legacy in making the internship viable.

"I think this is going to be a step up from a typical student worker job," Guidry said. "And it wouldn't be possible without the general support the Broussards have given to the program."

Charles and Rose Broussard owned the Flying J Ranch in Vermilion Parish with a large cattle and rice farm. They were both active in numerous agricultural

and civic organizations with a lifelong commitment to 4-H.

The four Broussard children believe the internship will help carry on the legacy of their parents' commitment to agriculture and education.

"It's a wonderful memory of our parents, and encourages future generations to participate in what our parents did," Richard Broussard said.

Broussard's sister, Yvonne Broussard Simon, a 4-H leader in Vermilion Parish, echoed his sentiments on the internship program's lasting effects. "It motivates our youth to keep going in agriculture," Broussard Simon said.

Their siblings, Alan and Hal Broussard, see the internship as continuation of the Broussard legacy.

"This was inspired by knowing our parents' history in agriculture," Alan said.

Hal added, "Supporting agriculture was their life." ■



Student Hunter Lepretre of Gueydan, third from right, has been chosen for a research internship at the H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station. The paid internship was established by the Charles and Rose Broussard family. Shown with him are Alan Broussard, far right; Yvonne Broussard Simon, second from right; Richard Broussard, third from left; Hal Broussard, second from left; and Kurt Guidry, director of the LSU AgCenter's Southwest Region. Photo by Bruce Schultz/LSU AgCenter.

Retired AgCenter official makes donation to Louisiana 4-H wetlands program

By Olivia McClure

“We think the world of this program. It’s all about the students.”

— Paul Coreil

Paul Coreil has fond memories of working in Louisiana’s wetlands as an extension specialist and teaching young people about the importance of protecting these areas. His passion for the outdoors and education guided him throughout his decades-long career with the LSU AgCenter, from which he retired in 2013 as vice chancellor for extension.

Now the chancellor of LSU Alexandria, Coreil and his wife, Arlene, recently donated \$11,000 to an endowment that funds a program that has a special place in his heart: the 4-H Youth Wetlands Program. This donation brings the Dr. Paul and Arlene Coreil 4-H Youth Wetlands and Coastal Resources Fund, which was established in 2013, to a total value of \$100,000.

“We think the world of this program,” Coreil said. “It’s all about the students.”

The Youth Wetlands Program teaches Louisiana youth in grades three to 12 about issues facing the state’s wetlands and coast as well as how they can be part of solutions. The program has recently expanded to offer its lessons and activities remotely through an online learning platform for educators and youth.

The Coreil endowment has been used to purchase supplies and to fund educational trips.

Coreil recalled working with AgCenter agent Mark Shirley years ago to launch the Marsh Maneuvers camp, which has become one of the wetlands program’s signature events. The camp gives youth the chance to spend time in the marsh learning about plants, wildlife, coastal protection efforts and more.

“Marsh Maneuvers is an immersive wetlands experience for youth that is unique in Louisiana,” said Brian Gautreau, coordinator of the Youth Wetlands Program. “Youth are able to spend a workweek in the marsh learning from and working alongside scientific and industry professionals as they develop an understanding of wetland environments, culture and protection efforts. A handful of youth are selected to participate in Advanced Marsh Maneuvers in the winter, where they are able to explore wetland and coastal topics in even more depth.”

Patrick Tuck, executive director of the Louisiana 4-H Foundation, said that even after his retirement, Coreil has worked tirelessly in recent years to raise funds for wetlands education and other 4-H endeavors.

“Dr. Coreil served as a board member and collaborated with the Louisiana 4-H Foundation on annual Guns & Gumbo fundraising events,” Tuck said. “The Louisiana 4-H Foundation is thankful for the years of fundraising led by Dr. Coreil that supported its own general fund and this LSU Foundation endowment.”



LSU Alexandria Chancellor Paul Coreil and his wife, Arlene Coreil, center, present a check for \$11,000 to Patrick Tuck, executive director of the Louisiana 4-H Foundation. Their donation will support the Louisiana 4-H Youth Wetlands Program. Others pictured include, from left, Tay Moore, vice president of Collegiate 4-H at LSU; Toby Lepley, AgCenter associate vice president; and Andy Schade, AgCenter development director. Photo by Olivia McClure/LSU AgCenter.



Sugarcane is harvested at Keith Dugas Farm in Napoleonville in the fall of 2020. Photo provided by Rexanna Powers.



Mead Hardwick presents to participants at a field day held at the Hardwick Planting Company in Newellton, Louisiana. From left are Mead Hardwick, Leticia Santos, Murilo Martins and Luciano Shiratsuchi. Photo by Brenda Tubaña.

Grant-funded project focuses on conservation

By Rexanna Powers

Two model farms are demonstrating the benefits of using the best agricultural practices to address key issues in farming, a project resulting from a \$1.4 million grant from the Patrick F. Taylor Foundation to the LSU AgCenter.

Scientists working on the grant are looking at grain crops, cotton and sugarcane, which represent 65% of the total acreage of agricultural production in Louisiana.

Through field days geared toward farmers from the region, the model farms will showcase the tools and practices that researchers have developed that can improve the economics and environmental outcomes of agricultural production.

“We know that certain best management practices and tools will work,” said Lisa Fultz, a soil microbiologist with the LSU AgCenter and one of two principal investigators for this project. “In order to make the difference that we strive to make, there must be a relationship with the farmers who would be implementing the practices.”

The two model farms to test the effects of these best management practices are the Hardwick Planting Company in Tensas Parish, which features the cotton and grain portion of the project, and the Keith Dugas Farm in Assumption Parish, which has the sugarcane portion.

The subtropical climate and fertile soils of Louisiana have allowed production agriculture to be a successful industry that contributes greatly to the economic health of rural and urban communities. While crop yields have increased through the adoption of novel farming practices, soil health and environmental sustainability issues have become much more important.

Louisiana has a critical interest in nutrient management as some nutrients from fertilizer run into the Mississippi River drainage basin and contribute to the Gulf of Mexico hypoxic zone, a 5,460-square-mile area often called a “dead zone.”

Hypoxia is an environmental phenomenon where the

concentration of dissolved oxygen in the water decreases to a level that can no longer support living aquatic organisms. It is caused by a variety of factors, including agricultural water runoff.

“There are many sources that affect the area of hypoxic dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico,” Fultz said. “The primary goal of this project is to alleviate the effects that row crop farming has by developing and implementing a set of best management practices that farmers across the state of Louisiana can use.”

Fultz is looking at a variety of technologies to make this project successful, such as variable rate technology, which allows for the precise application of fertilizer. This reduces the overall output of fertilizer and prevents overuse.

“In our experience, every farmer knows which parts of the field provide higher yields,” Fultz said. “This technology allows us to fine-tune the application process and ultimately leaves more money in the pocket of the farmer by not overusing fertilizer.”

Although technology has great benefits, the researchers on this project acknowledge that accessibility to technology could be low.

Fultz has also seen more farmers adopt the use of cover crops, plants that are not harvested for profit but are sown to protect and improve soil.

“Having some type of cover on the soil surface is going to protect the soil from wind and water erosion,” she said.

Newly developed procedures and tools all come with potential concerns, and researchers continue to develop practices that will benefit both the farmer and the environment.

Fultz said the greatest success has come from raising awareness of the hypoxic dead zone and how agriculture contributes to it.

“We have held many field days since this project started,” Fultz said. “Although it is difficult to measure adoption of best management practices, we do know that attendance has grown and that speaks volumes to the future successes that this project will see.”



Katie Mestayer, an LSU College of Agriculture sophomore majoring in plant and soil systems, has an internship funded by A. Wilbert's Sons to investigate reducing weed densities in fields using cover crops. Photo provided by Katie Mestayer.

A. Wilbert's Sons funds LSU College of Ag internships

By Annabelle Stokes Lang

A. Wilbert's Sons LLC have continued to sponsor multiple undergraduate research internships for LSU students in agriculture and natural resources through the 2020-2021 academic year.

A. Wilbert's Sons is a land management company headquartered in Plaquemine, Louisiana. It owns and manages a diverse group of properties in Louisiana and Mississippi, ranging from bottomland hardwood timber, plantation pine timber, agricultural row crops, eucalyptus, pastureland and commercial real estate.

A. Wilbert's Sons research internships are a continued partnership with the LSU AgCenter. The company funded six undergraduate students' research in 2020-2021.

These internships provide undergraduate students with practical experience in researching a diverse range of agricultural and natural resource disciplines under AgCenter faculty advisers' guidance.

Erin Matherne, a junior majoring in environmental management systems concentrating in resource conservation, is working under the direction of Jerrod Penn, a professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness.

Matherne's research internship explores the best outreach methods to reach private landowners who may be considered absentee landowners. This group of landowners is often less likely to actively engage in routine land management practices.

Her project combines both conservation and social sciences research.

"Anything I can do to help with conservation efforts is fun to me," Matherne said. "I've always been aware of environmental issues, and I've enjoyed learning and focusing on the social science side of conservation."

This internship program strives to expose LSU College of Agriculture students to various scientific disciplines they might pursue as a career after graduation. ➤

Katie Mestayer, a sophomore majoring in plant and soil systems with a concentration in crop science, is working with Lauren Lazaro, a professor in the School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences.

Their research investigates reducing weed densities in fields using cover crops, varying herbicide treatments and chaff lining. This is one of Louisiana's first studies to experiment with chaff lining as a means of weed density reduction.

"Food security is something I really care about, and we cannot have that without securing our food supply," Mestayer said. "This research makes me feel like I have a place in the food security chain."

Mestayer said her A. Wilbert's Sons internship has spearheaded her involvement with undergraduate research. After completing her undergraduate degree, her goal is to pursue her degrees in higher education and a career in crop research. ■

Other research internships funded for the 2020-2021 academic year include:

- **KALI ELFTMANN**, a senior majoring in natural resource and ecology management, is working under the direction of Zhijun Liu, a professor in the School of Renewable Natural Resources, and Heather Kirk-Ballard, a professor in the School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences. The project is "Using Botanical Ingredients to Control Ball Moss on Ornamental Plants."
- **LURA FONTENOT**, a freshman majoring in general business, is working under the direction of Michael Salassi, program leader for plant and animal sciences and professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, and Wade Baumgartner, AgCenter Office of Sponsored Programs. The project is "Using Chaff Lining and Additional Integrated Weed Management Tactics."
- **HALEY JACKSON**, a senior majoring in natural resource and ecology management, is working under the direction of Phillip Stouffer, a professor in the School of Renewable Natural Resources. The project is "Successional Habitat Variation Effects on Mixed Species Bird Flock Structure and Social Networks in Bottomland Hardwood Forests."
- **GRACE ROSSEAU**, a junior majoring in natural resource ecology and management, is working under the direction of Brett Wolfe, a professor in the School of Renewable Natural Resources. The project is "Bark Water Vapor Conductance Associations with Stress Tolerance in Louisiana Tree Species."

Application information about A. Wilbert's Sons research internships can be found online at bit.ly/awilbertssons.

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MERAUX FOUNDATION,
LSU AGCENTER JOIN FOR

CITRUS RESEARCH

LSU AgCenter agent Anna Timmerman, right, talks with Bill Haines, of the Arlene and Joseph Meraux Foundation, in a new greenhouse that will be used for citrus research. Photo by Olivia McClure/LSU AgCenter.

By Rick Bogren

An expanse of nearly 9,500 square feet of compacted sand will serve as the home of the Center for Louisiana Citrus Innovation and Research at Docville Farm in Violet, Louisiana.

A partnership between the LSU AgCenter and the Arlene and Joseph Meraux Charitable Foundation, the research center will be home to a comprehensive program of strengthening the Louisiana citrus industry, said Chris Haines of the Meraux Foundation.

The Meraux Foundation is constructing the new citrus research facility at Docville Farm, its home base that is dedicated to educational and cultural purposes. It also has established a \$320,000 endowment to create four professorships to support citrus and commercial horticulture research that will take place there.

“We are proud to once again partner with the LSU AgCenter,” said Bill Haines of the Meraux Foundation. “This is another major milestone in the development of Docville Farm that will rejuvenate the citrus industry in St. Bernard Parish, across southeast Louisiana and beyond.”

The research facility will serve as a permanent demonstration of best practices for containerized citrus production, said LSU AgCenter commercial horticulture specialist Jeb Fields.

► *Continued on Page 14*



Citrus greenhouses will support studies at the Center for Louisiana Citrus Innovation and Research funded through the Arlene and Joseph Meraux Charitable Foundation at Docville Farm in Violet, Louisiana. Photo by Olivia McClure/LSU AgCenter.

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Growing citrus trees in containers and within protective screens will provide pest control and allow more trees to be grown per acre. And the microclimates will provide a buffer from freezing, he said.

A significant advantage is to protect the trees from citrus greening disease, which is caused by a bacterium that's carried by an insect called citrus psyllid, and citrus canker.

"This will be a good opportunity for sustaining the industry in Louisiana," Fields said. "We're looking forward to training the next generation of Louisiana citrus farmers."

While increasing the number of trees per acre, the greenhouse environment also will provide opportunities for interplanting other crops, particularly while the citrus trees are maturing.

With the infrastructure provided by the Meraux Foundation, the AgCenter applied for and received a specialty crop grant from the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry to get the containerized citrus research and demonstration program started.

"This will be a great opportunity to serve the citrus producers in Louisiana," said AgCenter urban horticulturist Anna Timmerman, who will be working with the project. "It also has the potential for fresh



fruit production and marketing on a small footprint in a small city lot."

The citrus research facility is not the first time the Meraux Foundation and the LSU AgCenter have partnered to deliver on a shared vision. For the past seven years, the two groups have produced AgMagic on the River, an annual educational event that takes visitors on an interactive journey that links Louisiana's agriculture and environment with people's everyday lives.

In addition, the Meraux Foundation has established a \$150,000 endowment for the LSU AgCenter State Livestock Show.

The Meraux Foundation is a private

501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that was established by Arlene Meraux to benefit the community of St. Bernard Parish by leveraging its landholdings.

Today, the foundation's board of directors is presided over by Arlene's niece, Rita Gue, and consists of members Floyd Gue, Bill Haines, Chris Haines and Sidney Torres III. Guided by Arlene's vision, the board is implementing an innovative strategy to create lasting change and build a better St. Bernard Parish.

More information is available online at merauxfoundation.org. ■

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THANK YOU

for your continued generosity.

Giving Day 2021, held on March 10, raised **\$20,000** for scholarships, student emergency support and AgCenter and College of Agriculture programs.



The Seventh Annual Cocktails and Cuisine online auction and virtual social held on Dec. 4, 2020, raised **\$7,100** for scholarships.



Dean's Council

Created in 2012, the Dean's Council is a devoted group of alumni and friends of the College of Agriculture and AgCenter who support the academic priorities and goals of each institution through their annual investments of \$1,000 or more to the Dean's Excellence Fund.

Gifts to the Dean's Excellence Fund are instrumental in providing the tools necessary to address pressing needs as they arise and enhance the college's tradition of preparing leaders in agriculture. Private funding is crucial for the College to have the resources to recruit and retain the best and brightest students.

KATHY FIVES

“I joined the Dean's Council to offer support in furthering the efforts of the College of Agriculture. I believe every student should benefit from a well-rounded education, and it is my honor to help pave the way for these students to achieve their dreams. It may be a better professor, an extra lab offering or maybe a new state-of-the-art piece of equipment or cutting-edge technology that could make the difference in these students' futures. I donate my time and resources willingly to fund these types of programs. I believe alumni can accomplish so much together through innovative, creative and interactive fundraising. This is what I enjoy most about being a member of this type of group.”

Member Benefits:

- Invitations to events hosted by the college, including the annual Dean's Council dinner and Hall of Honor ceremony.
- Membership in the College of Agriculture Alumni Association and Friends.
- Opportunities to connect with college and university leadership.
- Recognition on the website and in the annual magazine.

Membership

Dean's Council membership requires an annual donation of \$1,000, which can easily be divided into monthly, quarterly or biannual payments upon request.

Alumni and friends under 40 can become associate members of the Dean's Council. This membership requires an annual contribution of \$500 to the Dean's Excellence Fund. Associate Dean's Council members will receive all benefits of full membership.

Call 225-578-9870 or visit
bit.ly/agdeanscouncil
for more information.

BRENDA SOMMERS

“As a loud and proud LSU Tiger mom, joining the College of Agriculture Dean's Council was my way of saying ‘thank you’ for the phenomenal experience my daughter had while at LSU. There was no way that when Allison came to me in kindergarten to tell me that she was going to LSU that I could have imagined how great this experience would be for her — it fills my heart with pride and joy.

Allison and I both know the LSU journey was a true team effort between her as the daughter and student and me as the mother. Yes, I was the major financial supporter, but more than that I was the behind-the-scenes encourager, cheerleader, volunteer, sounding board ... the list goes on, but most importantly, I was — and still am — the mom. In today's world of navigating college, it takes a team effort, and I am so glad that the College of Ag has embraced, welcomed and encouraged this idea! The LSU experience and journey was truly all Allison's, and she made it the best ever. But for me, as the mom, to be able to share in just a small part of it is something that I will treasure for the rest of my days. Thank you, LSU College of Agriculture!

”



LSU AGCENTER RICE

IS MAIN INGREDIENT IN LOUISIANA-BREWED WETLANDS SAKE

By Bruce Schultz

Short-grain rice developed by the LSU AgCenter has been planted for a New Orleans company to make sake, a traditional Japanese beverage that is becoming more popular in the U.S.

The Pirogue variety was planted on 31 acres at the H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station in April 2020 by Rick Zaunbrecher, the station's foundation seed manager, and after harvest the rice was sold to Wetlands Sake.

The company's co-founders, Nan Wallis and Lindsey Beard, were determined their sake would be made with rice grown in Louisiana.

► *Continued on Page 20*



Wetlands Sake cans stand on the 31-acre field planted with short-grain rice that will be used to make the beverage. Photo by Bruce Schultz/LSU AgCenter.



Rick Zaunbrecher, far left, explains how rice is being planted to Nan Wallis, second from left, and Lindsey Beard, second from right, both of Wetlands Sake, as Dustin Harrell looks on. Zaunbrecher, manager of the Foundation Seed Program at the H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station, planted the rice to be sold to Wetlands Sake to make its products at the New Orleans brewery. Photo by Bruce Schultz/LSU AgCenter.

Continued from Page 18

“Living in the land of rice, we definitely wanted to use Louisiana rice,” said Beard, who is part of the Brennan restaurant family.

Dustin Harrell, resident coordinator of the Rice Research Station and former LSU AgCenter rice specialist, said Beard and Wallis contacted him two and a half years ago about growing rice for sake, but he wasn’t sure the station had any offerings that would meet their needs. Then he remembered Pirogue, which was developed in 2003 by Steve Linscombe, a now-retired LSU AgCenter rice breeder.

Linscombe said a south Louisiana rice company approached him for a short-grain

rice that could be grown in Louisiana.

“That company was bringing in paddy short grain from California (S102) and milling it in Abbeville for the Puerto Rico market,” Linscombe recalled. “They asked if I could develop a short grain adapted to be grown in southwest Louisiana.”

The founders of Wetlands Sake knew little about rice when they started.

“It’s only because of Dustin and his patience that we’ve been able to come this far,” Wallis said.

A small crop of Pirogue foundation seed was planted at the Rice Research Station and used for testing.

“The short grain that Steve developed worked perfectly,” Harrell said.

Zaunbrecher grew 14 acres of rice for Wetlands Sake last year, and it yielded 49 barrels an acre. He said the approach to growing Pirogue is the same as a long-grain or medium-grain rice.

Wetlands Sake is challenging the traditional way sake is sold and consumed. Usually, the beverage is available in bottles and is considered a drink to complement Asian food, but Wallis and Beard wanted their product to be considered a stand-alone beverage like beer or wine.

“We want sake to become an everyday drink, so we decided that the best way ➤



Nan Wallis of Wetlands Sake holds a handful of rice. The short-grain rice variety, Pirogue, was developed in 2003 at the H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station by now-retired rice breeder Steve Linscombe. Photo by Bruce Schultz/LSU AgCenter.

to make that happen is to put it in single-serve cans,” Wallis said.

Buying an 8-ounce can of sake is an easier way for consumers who shied away from buying a large bottle of what they considered an exotic drink.

“You have the opportunity to try something you may not have tried otherwise,” Beard said. “I think we’ve opened up a whole new world.”

Their sake is intended to be served chilled and with or without food. It is available in filtered and unfiltered varieties and in a sparkling version flavored with blood orange or passion fruit.

Currently, Wetlands Sake is sold in the New Orleans area at grocery stores, bars and restaurants, but Beard and Wallis plan to have their products available nationwide. That would mean additional acres of Pirogue would be needed from Louisiana farmers, they said.

Unlike wine, sake has no preservatives or sulfites. Rice, water, yeast and koji spores are the only ingredients used in the five-week fermentation process. Wetlands Sake is handcrafted using traditional methods, Beard said.

Later this year, Wallis and Beard plan to open a tasting room at the brewery, located in the Warehouse District at 634 Orange St. in New Orleans.

The partnership began almost three years ago when Beard dined with Wallis, who had returned from a trip to New York, where she and her husband noticed sake on many restaurant menus. Days later, Beard found a package of rice on her doorstep with a “Let’s talk” note, and they

met to sketch out a business plan.

The Wetlands Sake website, wetlandssake.com, explains the process of making the beverage. The company also has Facebook and Instagram pages.

The heron on the company’s logo symbolizes the concern Wallis and Beard have for wetlands in Louisiana and the rest of the U.S. The company is pledging to donate 2% of its profits to Save America’s Wetlands through the Greater New Orleans Foundation.

“Giving back to the wetlands is a big part of our mission,” Beard said. “We are passionate about wetlands conservation.”

Rice mills in Louisiana lack the capability of milling sake rice, so a sake mill in Minnesota is currently milling the pearl-shaped grain. However, Harrell said a new mill at the Rice Research Station will eventually have the capability of processing short-grain rice.

Wallis and Beard also plan to work with the LSU AgCenter Food Incubator to get help with marketing.

“It really is going full circle, working with LSU. It all started at the Rice Research Station,” Wallis said.

Harrell said he’s enjoyed working on the project.

“It’s been great to see their product in the market,” he said.

Harrell said the sake is a good promotional tool for Louisiana rice.

“It’s good from the standpoint that they’re using a rice developed in Louisiana, grown in Louisiana and brewed in Louisiana,” he said. ■

“Giving back to the wetlands is a big part of our mission. We are passionate about wetlands conservation.”

— Lindsey Beard,
Wetlands Sake co-founder

“It’s good from the standpoint that they’re using a rice developed in Louisiana, grown in Louisiana and brewed in Louisiana.”

— Dustin Harrell,
Resident coordinator of the Rice
Research Station

LSU AGCENTER, COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE NAME

DIVERSITY PROGRAM LEADER



By Olivia McClure

The LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture have named Monica Guient assistant vice president for diversity, inclusion and opportunity. Guient has previously worked in roles overseeing diversity and academic programs at Binghamton University, which is part of the State University of New York system, and Xavier University of Louisiana.

Most recently, she was an assistant dean for academic diversity and inclusive excellence at the Thomas J. Watson College of Engineering and Applied Science at Binghamton University. In that position, her duties included developing a diversity strategic plan; improving outreach, recruitment and retention; coordinating support services for underrepresented students; and securing grant funding.

In her new position at LSU, Guient will be responsible for similar initiatives. She spent her first days listening to the concerns and ideas of faculty, staff, students and stakeholders.

"Part of the reason I was excited about this

opportunity was that there are already great things going on within the College of Ag, within the university and within the AgCenter," she said. "One of my goals is to showcase and expand what work is already being done."

She wants to expand partnerships with institutions such as with Southern University and leverage student input. And she wants to make sure student input is incorporated into diversity efforts.

"I see the value of youth and want the students to be co-creators in this diversity culture and inclusive environment that we're creating," she said.

A native of Texas, Guient holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Xavier University of Louisiana and a master's degree in sociology from the University of New Orleans. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in leadership and human resource development at LSU and is participating in a Cornell University certificate program in diversity and inclusion.

"What I appreciate about this role is I'm coming back to a place I know and love," she said. "It's great to give back to a place that's given me so much. I was trained at LSU. I had all of my higher education experiences in Louisiana. It's amazing, and to be trusted with that opportunity, it's an honor."

Guient also has a personal connection to agriculture.

"I'm a granddaughter of a farmer," she said. "I learned really quickly how valuable farmers are. This work is really interesting and important for me."

Whittney Lathan, academic coordinator for the Office of Student Services, and Henry Utomo of the Rice Research Station speak during an August retreat at LSU Hilltop Arboretum. Photo by Olivia McClure.





From left, Denise Fontenot of Human Resources, Subramaniam Sathivel of Biological and Agricultural Engineering, Ashley Gautreaux of Human Resources and Monica Guient of Diversity, Inclusion and Opportunity discuss diversity initiatives during an August retreat. Photo by Olivia McClure.

THE FUTURE IS DIVERSE

PLANNED GIFT PAVES WAY FOR STUDENTS

By Tobie Blanchard

While studying agricultural business at LSU during the 1970s, Michael Venker was first exposed to all the diversity a university can offer.

"The student population at that time in the ag business department had people from Malaysia, Latin America and Opelousas," he said. "It was very eye-opening."

It was in those year at LSU that he learned to be sensitive to those from other cultures. Venker said learning about others and learning to respect them became an important part of his education.

"We liked to serve pork at ag business functions, but Muslim students were also members," he said. "Instead, we would serve seafood or something else."

Drawing on his experience with diversity and multiculturalism as a student and from his long career with the Cargill corporation, Venker and his wife, Debra Benedict Venker, created a twofold \$5 million planned gift to the LSU College of Agriculture. One part of the gift will fund scholarships in the Department of Agricultural Economics & Agribusiness. The second part of the gift will fund scholarships for students of diverse backgrounds.

The Venkers said they are grateful for LSU, the university that gave them fine educations, but also to the student body that educated them in understanding and appreciating diversity.

Michael Venker, a native of St. Louis who grew up in Bloomington, Illinois, came to LSU with hopes of joining the golf team. When that dream did not work out, he immersed himself in the academics and experiences that LSU offered — the vibrant energy of the campus, the stunning architecture, his fraternity and friends. It was at an Acacia-Zeta Tau Alpha party that he met his wife.

"Just entering the campus, it was so different than the Midwest. Baton Rouge is a tropical climate, and behind my home in Bloomington was a cornfield. The plants, the architecture, the live oaks with the hanging moss, it was quite different than anything I had ever seen," he reminisced. "I was in Johnson Hall my freshman year and it was not air-conditioned. All the windows were wide-open. All the stereos were playing full blast. It was a very loud environment and a very memorable experience."

Venker said he opted to study agricultural business because of his interest in plants and farming. Growing up in McLean County, the largest corn-growing county in the Midwest, he was surrounded by agriculture. His love of gardening that started in his childhood also drew him to the profession.

It was during his sophomore year that he began feeling a strong connection to the College of Agriculture. He credits the excellent professors that were in the department at that time.

"We really got a broad perspective of agriculture," he said. "I think they were very focused on giving us the knowledge that not only could one go back to the family farm but also give you a career in agriculture. The department offered agronomy, horticulture, farm management and economic courses. The economic courses were very good."

He described his professors as passionate about what they were teaching and agriculture. He said Harlon Traylor, a professor in the department, served as one of his mentors.

"He took interest in my scholastic ambitions and encouraged me to participate broadly in ag economics functions. He was curious and interested in all aspects of business, cultures and people. He shaped my maturity in business," Venker said of Traylor.

Around the end of his time at LSU, the department started teaching futures trading.

"It was helpful for me when I was interviewing with agriculture businesses that I knew futures trading. In the interview they would ask, 'How do you know about futures trading?' I was proud that I learned it at LSU," he said.

When he graduated in December of 1978, professor Lowell Hill connected him with a research project with the University of Illinois. For a year, Venker conducted a grain flow project in Tilbury, England.

It was the first stop in a long and successful career that took him all over the world and moved him all over the country. His first corporate job was with Ralston Purina. When his division was bought out by Cargill, Venker spent the rest of his career there. He had a 35-year career with Cargill in different divisions of its business.

Drawing on his experience with diversity and multiculturalism as a student and from his long career with the Cargill corporation, Venker and his wife, Debra Benedict Venker, created a twofold \$5 million planned gift to the LSU College of Agriculture.

► Continued on Page 26



*Debra and
Michael Venker.
Photo by Katie
Thering.*



MANRRS at LSU chapter members include, left to right, Kayla Benton, Madison Gregory, Keenon Hill, Micheal Perkins, Nya Lewis, Lauren Norman, Kortni Blalock, Lauren Sanders, Raina Washington, Tadj Blackwell.

College of Agriculture student groups emphasize diversity and inclusion

By Annabelle Stokes Lang

LSU College of Agriculture students are empowered to champion diversity and inclusion for all students. Both groups complement the College's vision to foster a diverse and inclusive environment.

Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) is a national society that welcomes members from all racial and

ethnic groups interested in careers in agricultural and related sciences. The longstanding legacy and leaders of MANRRS at LSU promote the advancement of underrepresented ethnic and cultural groups within agriculture. Over the past academic year, MANRRS has successfully doubled its active members.

Tigers for Cultivating Change was established in 2021 to provide a safe,

inclusive network for LGBTQ+ and ally students interested in agriculture sciences. Focusing efforts on advocacy, education and community, this organization will promote inclusion and visibility for LGBTQ+ individuals within the College of Agriculture and the larger Louisiana State University community. Cultivating Change is a national nonprofit organization that was launched in 2016. LSU is among the first colleges to join its Collegiate Ambassadors Program (CAP).

Continued from Page 24

He retired in 2012 as president of Cargill's Dressing, Sauces and Oils division. He also served as president of Cargill Salt and Richlands Sales, a fresh produce division Cargill briefly owned. He currently resides in Saint Paul, Minnesota, but spends the winters in Louisiana, Debra's home state. The couple bought a home in Choudrant, Louisiana, and decided it was a good time to get engaged with his alma mater.

He recently became a member of the LSU Foundation's National Board. He was the September guest speaker for the LSU College of Agriculture Speaker Series. His planned gift will help support an opportunity for a diverse student experience in the College of Agriculture, giving all students a richer experience.

"When I worked for Cargill all those years, I was around a very diverse group of people. I learned to be open-minded

about people's ideas, religion, sexual orientation, who they are and what they believe in," he said. "The more diversity you have, the more creativity is available. Diversity helps you become a more creative thinker."

Venker feels that because of his experience at Cargill, a business that was encouraging of employees of all races, genders and sexual orientations, he has a greater appreciation of how that environment fosters greater success for the individual and the organization.

"Becoming a listener and having a chance to work with people different than yourself really makes a difference in your ability to connect with others and your success. In business, especially, being able to connect with diverse customers and suppliers gives you a competitive edge," he said.

The Venkers support many local charities in the Minneapolis-Saint Paul

area. One especially dear to their hearts is Open Arms, a charity founded in 1986 to serve meals to those suffering from AIDS. The charity now serves medically tailored meals to anyone suffering from a chronic illness. Venker has served on its board and as executive director. Debra is a member of the Saint Paul Garden Club, which was established in 1927. The mission of this organization is to promote horticultural knowledge and to restore, protect and improve the environment. SPGC is affiliated with the Garden Club of America, and Debra serves as the current president.

"When planning for our long-term legacy, both Debra and I wanted to support institutions with a strong historical record," Venker said. "We also want to support institutions that are moving toward the future with the values that we both have gained through our education and experiences. We feel that supporting diversity in agriculture through the LSU College of Agriculture is a good fit for our goals." ■

The LSU College of Agriculture pilots Diversity and Inclusion Champions program



Trina Biswas



Rodrigo Diaz



Hallie Dozier



Gina Eubanks



Teddy Garcia-Aroca



Thanos Gentimis



Kun-Jun Han



Erin McKinley



Vinicius Moreira



Kristin Stair



Casey Stannard

By Annabelle Stokes Lang

The LSU College of Agriculture launched its pilot program for Diversity and Inclusion Champions in January 2021. The initiative aims to connect students to faculty and staff within their respective departments and schools.

“Our faculty are critical to serving the needs of our ever-growing, diverse student body. The Diversity and Inclusion Champions exemplify the college’s unyielding commitment to diversity and inclusion,” said Monica Guient, assistant vice president for diversity, inclusion and opportunity for the LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture.

Diversity and Inclusion Champions will serve as a point of contact for students and fellow faculty in the College of Agriculture. The role of a diversity champion is intended for faculty members of the LSU AgCenter

and College of Agriculture community who are engaged with minority and underrepresented student groups.

The champions host coffee chats and guest lecturers and attend College of Agriculture events throughout the academic year. Guient emphasizes that the college’s students are the co-creators of the inclusive space that they envision. These faculty members serve as mentors, confidants and advocates for students in their respective departments.

“Creating a diverse and inclusive educational environment requires that everyone has a seat at the table,” Guient said.

These faculty members will serve as champions for one calendar year but may reapply to serve for an additional year. There are plans to expand the Diversity and Inclusion Champions into the LSU AgCenter in 2022.

The 2021 Diversity and Inclusion Champions:

- **Trina Biswas**, Department of Agricultural Economics & Business
- **Kristin Stair**, Department of Agricultural & Extension Education & Evaluation
- **Vinicius Moreira**, School of Animal Sciences
- **Gina Eubanks**, School of Animal Sciences
- **Kun-Jun Han**, School of Plant, Environmental & Soil Sciences
- **Hallie Dozier**, School of Renewable Natural Resources
- **Erin McKinley**, School of Nutrition & Food Sciences
- **Casey Stannard**, Department of Textiles, Apparel Design & Merchandising
- **Thanos Gentimis**, Department of Experimental Statistics
- **Teddy Garcia Aroca**, Department of Plant Pathology & Crop Physiology
- **Rodrigo Diaz**, Department of Entomology



Agriculture Student Association
president leads the way for
**BLACK FEMALE
STUDENTS**

By Malorey Uzee

Kyla Benton, a senior majoring in animal sciences with a concentration in science and technology, has been named president of the LSU Agriculture Student Association (ASA). She is the Agriculture Student Association's first Black female president.

Benton strives to empower other Black women and minority students on LSU's campus, having spent her collegiate career being involved as a leader in student organizations.

In addition to ASA, she serves as a co-chair of the Black Women's Empowerment Initiative. The organization strives to promote, maintain and advance the well-being of Black women at LSU.

Benton was previously the president of the LSU chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS). Under her leadership, MANRRS grew from five active members to 23.

Benton says she knew she wanted to run for ASA president after spending the last two years serving as a peer mentor and working closely with the college's recruitment and retention team. She was able to work directly with the assistant dean of recruitment and student development, Amanda Martin.

"She really showed me what it means to be selfless and how you can care for those around you," Benton said. "My eyes

were opened to all the students who may have felt unheard or unaccommodated when it comes to being a student here at LSU, especially those who are a part of underrepresented groups. I ran to be the voice of those exact people and those who need a person to advocate for them in their college years."

Benton says that being the first Black female president makes her feel joyful to be able to pave the way for other students.

"I am proud to be a figure for people to look up to, such as those who may not have ever believed someone who looks like them could be as involved and fight for them like I have been doing and will continue to do," Benton said.

Throughout her time as ASA president, Benton hopes to develop new traditions, events and initiatives for College of Agriculture students. She is looking to open a student lounge so students have a place close to the dean's staff where they can easily have access to the resources available to them.

"We are planning to have a Cajun carnival for our welcome week. I am so excited to be able to finally interact with students after such a tough year of adjusting to COVID and all of the hardships both in and out of the LSU community," she said.

Benton says that she also hopes to start a new tradition of having an annual College of Agriculture Gala where students, staff, faculty, administrators and organizations are recognized for their efforts and hard work.

ASA MISSION

The mission of the College of Agriculture Student Association (ASA) is to represent the needs of the students in the LSU College of Agriculture by promoting camaraderie, expanding networks and creating opportunities that collectively foster personal growth and professional development and provide premier student experiences.

The ASA serves as the governing body for all College of Agriculture student organizations and the voice of students

in the LSU College of Agriculture. The ASA conducts programming that amplifies student involvement, including hosting monthly meetings, service initiatives and events. The ASA also assists clubs and organizations by providing need-based funding, promotion of events, conferences and competitions. The ASA serves as a liaison between students and College of Agriculture administration, LSU Student Government and the LSU administration.

OFFICERS



Kayla Benton,
President



Zachary Mayfield,
Vice President



Mary Brady,
Secretary/
Treasurer



Tristan Foret,
Service,
Community and
Outreach



Gabby Davis,
Public Relations
Chair



ASA officers with advisers Amanda Martin, assistant dean of recruitment and student development, left, and Ashley Grant, manager of internships and student engagement.

2021-22 LES VOYAGEURS

MEMBERS



Alexa Bates,
Environmental
Management
Systems



Caroline Bonin,
Animal Sciences



Zachary Bonser,
Environmental
Management
Systems



Ashlyn Brewer,
Animal Sciences



Sophia Discua,
Nutrition and
Food Sciences



**Josephine
Engelman,**
Environmental
Management
Systems



Tristan Foret,
Agricultural
and Extension
Education



Madison Gregory,
Agricultural
and Extension
Education



Lauren Hamilton,
Natural Resource
Ecology and
Management



Avery Hebert,
Agricultural
Business



Olivia Heeg,
Animal Sciences



Cailey Hoff,
Natural Resource
Ecology and
Management



Salem Johnson,
Agricultural
and Extension
Education



Sophie LeBlanc,
Animal Sciences



Zachary Mayfield,
Agricultural
and Extension
Education



Nick Musso,
Nutrition and
Food Sciences



Taylor Perrodin,
Agricultural
Business



Brian Sonnier,
Nutrition and Food
Sciences



**Raina
Washington,**
Environmental
Management
Systems



Alexis Young,
Animal Sciences

Environmental management systems student named K.C. Toups Memorial

LES VOYAGEURS AWARD RECIPIENT

“

Being a Les Voyageur is special to me because of all the people I get to meet.

”

— Josephine Engelman

This award honors K.C. Toups, a former Les Voyageur and veterinarian who died in a car accident in 2011 while transporting animals to a veterinary hospital. The award is based on a willingness to serve, pride in the College of Agriculture and LSU and passion — all things Toups was known for.

By Annabelle Stokes Lang

Josephine Engelman was named the 2021 K.C. Toups Memorial Les Voyageurs Award recipient. Engelman is majoring in environmental management systems with a concentration in resource conservation.

The K.C. Toups Memorial Award is given to an outstanding senior member of Les Voyageurs, a student ambassador organization for the college. The award recipient is selected based on the recipient's willingness to serve and help others.

Engelman shows pride for the College of Agriculture and LSU. In addition to serving as a Les Voyageur, she is the president of the LSU rowing team and an agriculture senator for Student Government.

“Being a Les Voyageur is special to me because of all the people I get to meet,” said Engelman. “As an ambassador, my job is to encourage students to pursue higher education with the College of Agriculture, and this is important because I genuinely do love to see people reach their full potential and achieve more than what they thought possible. Les Voyageurs is an avenue for me to help people do that.”

Engelman shared that one of her favorite experiences at LSU was getting to have a close look at Mike the Tiger. Mike's veterinarian, David Baker, met with the Les Voyageurs group to show them an in-depth look at the caretaking process for the tiger, including a tour inside the tiger habitat facility.

Once she receives her degree from LSU, Engelman plans on working as a soil conservationist. She spent one summer interning with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service, where she developed a passion for helping landowners care for their land.

She feels that her degree and collegiate experiences have helped her discover her full potential.



Josephine Engelman.
Photo by Annabelle
Stokes Lang.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD IS FOUND AT FOODii

FOOD FOR THE FUTURE MEANS
HAVING A SAFE, SECURE,
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SUPPLY WHILE
EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE FOODS
AND FOOD PRODUCTION.

Charles Boeneke, associate professor at the School of Nutrition and Food Sciences, preps for a run at the LSU AgCenter Food Incubator bottling line. Photos by Olivia McClure/LSU AgCenter.

By Tobie Blanchard and V. Todd Miller

It may seem impossible, but we could survive without smartphones, cars and many of our daily comforts. We cannot, however, live without food.

With the global population estimated to reach 9 billion by 2050, agricultural researchers and food scientists are striving to meet the food demands of the growing world. That work is happening at the LSU AgCenter Food Innovation Institute.

Launched in July 2013 as the LSU AgCenter Food Incubator, the institute — known as FOODii — began with 10 tenants. Its mission was to develop emerging

► *Continued on Page 34*

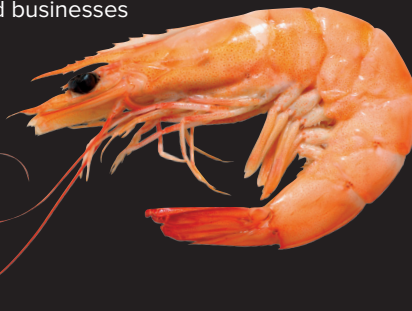
AREAS OF FOCUS:

1. Producing: Food Product Development

From concept to commercialization, budding entrepreneurs and larger food companies have found success through the LSU AgCenter FOODii. The food and beverage products make their way out of the institute, onto store shelves and into the homes and hearts of consumers. The program has launched thriving businesses and products that benefit the state's economy. It also helps solve some of the challenges small and large businesses face. FOODii also serves a diverse clientele with 11 women-owned businesses and seven minority-owned businesses.

FOODii works with the Center of Excellence for Crop Biotechnology to use its advanced crop development and improvement methods to grow new food products that meet the demand for plant and protein foods to feed the world.

Food packaging and labeling must appeal to consumers but also meet Food and Drug Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture standards, so FOODii experts research optimal packing use with materials that have a lower environmental impact. Experts also assess the nutritional value of food products for labeling and offer these technical services to major Louisiana companies that once sought these services out of state.



2. Promoting: Marketing Products and Services

FOODii works with Louisiana Farm to Table to promote and highlight Louisiana products, such as cane sugar, rice flour, pecans, strawberries, satsumas, honey, shrimp and dairy.

In the state-of-the-art AgCenter Sensory Services Lab, faculty and students test new products and provide consultation, consumer tasting and sensory preference services, and education to FOODii clients.

FOODii provides educational programs and training for budding entrepreneurs, existing food companies and students on product marketing, better business practices, point of sale practices and how to start a food business.



► Continued on Page 35



Bottles make their way down the line at the LSU AgCenter Food Incubator bottling facility.

Continued from Page 32

food ventures and provide technical services to companies to help them survive and grow during the startup period by providing business support, services and resources.

FOODii now boasts 25 to 40 tenants at any given time and is positioned to deliver solutions for today's food needs while innovating to meet the demands of tomorrow. Through innovation and education, the FOODii of 2021 seeks to ensure a sustainable food supply, protect the environment and improve the economic well-being of the world's growing population.

Steve LeBlanc with Our Cousin Vinny's Red Gravy Pasta Sauce has joined the institute to take advantage of all the professional support services required for a startup food manufacturer.

"You get to start out with confidence because the fear of the unknown is eliminated," LeBlanc said.

LeBlanc said that now with the availability and aid of FOODii, Our Cousin Vinny's has a place to facilitate and educate its team to do their own manufacturing.

"All the economies of scale work in our favor as the processor, and we receive more profit to the bottom line," he said. "As of now



Phase 2 of the FOODii expansion will result in 19,126 total square feet for the operation. Artist rendering.

we are setting up to expand Our Cousin Vinny's line items with two new flavor profiles. LSU's School of Nutrition & Food Science will be helping us with our flavor formulation, nutrition label and so much more."

FOODii is well positioned to grow. The current facilities in Ingram Hall and the Animal and Food Sciences Laboratories Building have 11,323 square feet available. Phase 1, which added a new bottling line, is now operational, and with the addition of Phase 2, the total space will grow to 19,126 square feet. It will feature the bottling line plus refrigeration and freezer spaces, a storefront and more. ➤

Continued from Page 33

3. Protecting: Food Safety and Security

FOODii works with the LSU School of Nutrition and Food Sciences to reformulate products to extend shelf life and create functional packaging to reduce spoilage and waste of perishable foods.

Maintaining food security also means awareness of the possibility of food terrorism that targets processed foods. This type of contamination can happen during processing, manufacturing, storage, transport, distribution or service. FOODii provides monitoring education in the area, and the LSU AgCenter's proposed Agroterrorism Research and Studies Hub can offer preventive food terrorism training.

With AgCenter experts in food safety and food sustainability, the institute will meet the needs of an array of clients and their innovative products, benefiting the entire food industry of the South. These types of innovative products will be driving the way we eat in the decades to come.



Bottle caps go down a conveyor.

"As we've grown, so has the need for a larger space to produce these value-added and specialty food products using Louisiana commodities, such as dairy, sugar, rice, seafood and sweet potatoes," said Gaye Sandoz, FOODii director.

John Panaro also joined the institute as a tenant earlier this year after attending several seminars Sandoz had conducted for the incubator. His business, Panaro Food Innovations, partnered with FOODii to produce healthier sweeteners made with fruits, vegetables and spices. Panaro has a background in food chemistry and culinary arts but was able to get assistance from FOODii staff with product development, designing his logo and packaging and getting the product onto store shelves.

"Everyone has been very helpful, answering all my questions as I try to get my product to market," Panaro said.

He said he may have been able to successfully launch Immuno Sweet powdered sweetener on his own, but not in the timeframe the institute allowed for. "It would have taken me a lot longer," he said. ■

Contributors: Frances Gould
and Gaye Sandoz.

Insect
flour and
muffin
mix.



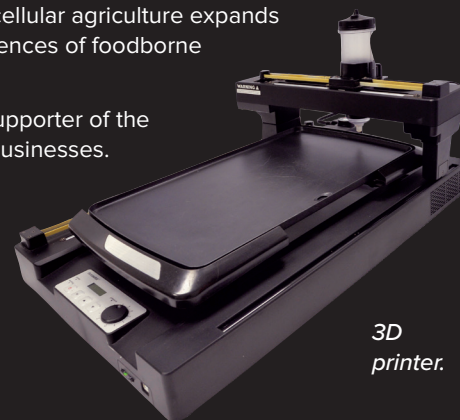
FOOD FOR THE FUTURE

FOODii embraces the concept of "food for the future," which includes these advances:

- 3D printing of food to deliver meals based on a person's metabolic panel. FOODii researchers will develop formulations for food capsules that are loaded into a 3D printer to print a meal.
- Alternative sources of food and protein. Partnerships with local businesses make it possible to create sustainable products, such as flour made from insects as well as crops other than wheat.
- Production of meat and seafood from animal and plant cells grown in a cultivator. This type of cellular agriculture expands the food supply and reduces incidences of foodborne illness.

Steve LeBlanc said he is an avid supporter of the institute and its role in growing local businesses.

"It keeps businesses local and allows them to generate income for our economy," he said.



3D
printer.

Orgeron awarded Ben Legendre professorship



Orgeron uses a broad approach to deliver research-based weed management information to growers.

By Johnny Morgan

LSU AgCenter weed scientist Al Orgeron has been named the Benjamin L. Legendre Sr. Sugar Heritage American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists Professor.

Orgeron, an associate professor and integrated pest management specialist with the LSU AgCenter, is the first recipient of the professorship.

As a specialist, he is responsible for developing and conducting weed management education programs for the Louisiana sugar industry. He works closely with sugarcane producers, extension agents, private crop consultants and agronomists with the American Sugar Cane League to address weed control problems.

He uses a broad approach to deliver research-based weed management information to growers through face-to-face producer meetings, result demonstrations at parish field days, producer trainings, in-service training for extension agents, news articles, websites, email correspondence, phone calls and social media.

His research responsibilities include testing and evaluating new herbicide and ripener products that benefit sugarcane production in Louisiana. He monitors new weed problems in sugarcane and evaluates management options.

Orgeron also conducts soybean research in the fallow year of the sugarcane crop cycle to maximize soybean yield while maintaining weed control for the next cane crop.

Legendre devoted his career to the advancement of the Louisiana sugar industry through research and extension, Orgeron said.

The American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists has a mission to promote the general study of the sugar industry in all areas and to disseminate that information through meetings and publications.

Legendre served on the executive committee of the society's Louisiana Division for many years and was a key player in advancing its goals.

Upon his death and to honor his memory, the Louisiana Division executive committee charted a course to establish a professorship.

Legendre's family and members of the Louisiana Division of the American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists raised \$80,000 to fund a professorship. The Louisiana Board of Regents matched the gift with \$20,000 and established the professorship.

Orgeron graduated from LSU with a bachelor's degree in dairy science, a master's degree in sugarcane breeding and a doctorate in weed science and ripeners under the direction of his major professors, Legendre and Jim Griffin.

LSU AGCENTER, COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

By Craig Gautreaux

The LSU AgCenter and the LSU College of Agriculture announced the winners of their annual faculty and staff awards during a virtual ceremony held Dec. 16.

Blair Hebert, an area agricultural agent from Iberia Parish, received the Floyd S. Edmiston Award for his efforts with the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. Hebert has worked for the AgCenter for 26 years with a focus on row crop field work and 4-H activities.

Hebert has served as Iberia Parish chair since 2008 and is responsible for overseeing parish extension programming and personnel. His role in yearly 4-H fundraisers has helped the Iberia Parish 4-H foundation grow from \$20,000 to more than \$250,000. In 2018, he became the

area sugarcane agent for Acadia, Iberia, Lafayette, St. Martin, St. Mary and Vermilion parishes.

Sara Shields, Central Region horticulture agent, was the recipient of the Extension Excellence Award. She is the coordinator of the Louisiana Master Gardener Program, overseeing more than 1,500 volunteers across the state.

Shields has spearheaded several important changes to the program, including introducing a "flipped classroom" training model, updating training materials and using new technologies to engage volunteers. She also helps organize educational programs and events such as AgMagic Cenla.

Receiving the G & H Seed Company Inc. Research Award was **Jeff Davis**, an entomologist housed on the Baton Rouge

campus in the Department of Entomology. This award recognizes a researcher who has conducted exemplary work during the past five years.

Davis' research focuses on the biology and management of multiple insect species across several crop systems, including soybeans, sweet potatoes and grain sorghum. He created an internationally recognized integrated pest management program for controlling the invasive redbanded stink bug, a leading crop pest of soybeans.

Zhi-Yuan Chen received the Doyle Chambers Award. As a plant pathologist on the Baton Rouge campus, he conducts innovative research addressing critical needs of corn and soybean production, which represent more than 50% of the state's total row crop acreage.

AgCenter weed scientist named to endowed chair for cotton research

By Olivia McClure

Daniel Stephenson, an LSU AgCenter weed scientist, has been named to the Jack Hamilton Chair in Cotton Production.

Stephenson has been with the AgCenter since 2008 and is based at the Dean Lee Research and Extension Center near Alexandria. His work focuses on identifying effective weed control strategies in row crops, including cotton.

The Hamilton chair is associated with a \$1 million endowment that helps support research, faculty travel, support staff salaries and technology transfer projects.

"Dr. Stephenson is a highly deserving recipient of the Jack Hamilton Chair in Cotton Production," said Mike Salassi, LSU AgCenter associate vice president. "He is a very productive researcher who is not only highly respected by his peers for his extensive research program in the area of weed science but is also highly regarded by producers for his work in addressing the production issues and challenges faced by cotton producers in the state.

His research program incorporates the production of cotton within multiple cropping production systems in order to provide comprehensive and sustainable recommendations to producers."

The chair is funded by \$600,000 in donations from the cotton industry plus \$400,000 from the Louisiana Board of Regents. It is a memorial to Jack Hamilton, a Lake Providence farmer and ginner who was a major figure in the Louisiana and U.S. cotton industry before his death in 2001.

The holder of the chair must be vetted by the Board of Regents and demonstrate excellence in research aimed at improving the productivity, profitability and sustainability of the Louisiana cotton industry.

Over the course of his career, Stephenson has written or contributed to more than 200 publications and earned more than \$1 million in grant funding.

"Mr. Hamilton's passion for and achievements in the cotton industry are awe-inspiring," Stephenson said. "I am honored and humbled to receive the Jack Hamilton Chair in Cotton Production."



Stephenson has written or contributed to more than 200 publications and earned more than \$1 million in grant funding.

ANNOUNCE FACULTY, STAFF AWARD WINNERS

Chen has developed novel strategies that have helped reduce aflatoxin infection in corn. He has generated funding from 67 competitive grants totaling more than \$3 million to support his research.

A team that developed an integrated pest management strategy program for Tabasco peppers received the Denver T. and Ferne Loupe Extension Team Award. Members of the team are **Mary Helen Ferguson**, **Kiki Fontenot**, **Raj Singh** and **Ron Strahan**.

The team was formed to help find solutions to biotic and abiotic plant problems caused by Louisiana's hot, humid climate. The group developed a manual and pocket guide containing information on all aspects of Tabasco plant health issues.

The program recommended by the group has led to a 50% reduction of pesticide

usage during the last two years, according to officials with the McIlhenny Company.

Margo Castro, Assumption Parish 4-H agent, and **Cherie Roger**, Terrebonne Parish 4-H agent, received the Rosalie Bivin 4-H Youth Development Award. The two were recognized for their hurricane relief efforts in the Southwest Region.

Deborah Cormier, an administrative coordinator in the St. Martin Parish extension office, was the winner of the Ganelle Bullock Outstanding Service Award.

Chris Dunaway, an extension horticulture agent in St. Charles Parish, was named winner of the Outstanding Service Award for Associates.

Lynn Kennedy, alumni professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, received the Sedberry Award

for Outstanding Graduate Teacher.

Lisa Fultz, an associate professor in the School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences, was awarded the Sedberry Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teacher.

Nathan Lord was the author of the Louisiana Agriculture Magazine Article of the Year. The article was titled "Color of Jewels: Studies of Beetle Coloration Shed Light on Insect Sight and Communication."

Service awards were presented to two faculty members for their years of service on the Louisiana Agriculture magazine's editorial board. Recipients were **Naveen Adusumilli**, associate professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness, and **William "Buddy" Pitman**, professor at the Hill Farm Research Station in Homer.

CHAIRS & PRO

LSU AgCenter

Chairs and Professorships	Type	Recipient
Pennington Chair for Wildlife Research	Chair	Lane Foil
F. Avalon Daggett Professorship in Rice Research #1	Professorship	Herry Utomo
F. Avalon Daggett Professorship in Rice Research #2	Professorship	Eric Webster
F. Avalon Daggett Professorship in Rice Research #3	Professorship	Vacant
Mosaic Company Professorship	Professorship	Dustin Harrell
American Cyanamid Professorship for Excellence in Plant Biotechnology, Molecular Biology, and Crop Pest Management	Professorship	James Oard
American Cyanamid Professorship for Excellence in Plant Genetics, Breeding, and Variety Development	Professorship	Vacant
John B. Baker Professorship for Excellence in Weed Science	Professorship	Donnie Miller
Jack Hamilton Regents Chair in Cotton Production	Chair	Daniel Stephenson
G & H Seed Company Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Vacant
A. Wilbert's Sons Professorship in Agriculture and Natural Resources #1	Professorship	Michael Salassi
A. Wilbert's Sons Professorship in Agriculture and Natural Resources #2	Professorship	Michael Salassi
Luella Dugas Chambers Distinguished Professorship	Professorship	Gina E. Eubanks
L. D. Newsom Professorship in Integrated Pest Management	Professorship	Fangneng Huang
Roy A. and Karen Pickren Endowed Professorship in Extension Water Resources	Professorship	Brian LeBlanc
Tom and Martha Burch and Delta and Pine Land Company Endowed Professorship in Cotton Production or Genetics	Professorship	Daniel Fromme
Jack E. and Henrietta Jones Professorship	Professorship	Brenda Tubaña
Floyd S. Edmiston Sr. Professorship in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management	Professorship	Jeff Hoy
ASSCT-Denver T. Loupe Sugar Heritage Professorship	Professorship	Kenneth Gravois
Doyle Chambers Distinguished Professorship	Professorship	Vacant
R. Chabreck Professorship in Coastal Wildlife Research Management	Professorship	Vacant
Meraux Foundation Supreme Champion Livestock Professorship	Professorship	Toby Lepley
Chalkley Family Endowed Chair in Agriculture	Chair	William B. Richardson
Warner L. Bruner Professorship in Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness	Professorship	Kurt Guidry
Donald E. Welge Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Rex Caffey
J. Nelson Fairbanks Endowed Professorship in Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness	Professorship	Matt Fannin
Gilbert J. Durbin Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Krishna Paudel
Mr. and Mrs. Herman E. McFatter Endowed Professorship in Animal Sciences	Professorship	Vacant
Doyle Chambers Professorship in Animal Sciences	Professorship	Richard Cooper
Gerald A. Simmons Professorship in Animal Sciences	Professorship	Vacant
H. Rouse Caffey Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Adam Famoso
Paul K. Adams Professorship in Urban Entomology	Professorship	Claudia Husseneder
A. George and Mildred G. Caldwell Endowed Professorship in Agronomy and Soils	Professorship	Jim Wang

FESSORSHIPS

LSU AgCenter

Chairs and Professorships	Type	Recipient
Walker T. Nolin Professorship	Professorship	Steve Harrison
Lucien and Peggy Laborde Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Don La Bonte
Crosby Land & Resources Company Professorship in Forest Sector Business Development #1	Professorship	Richard Vlosky
Weaver Brothers Endowed Professorship for Excellence in Forestry	Professorship	Sabrina Taylor
Roy O. Martin Sr. Professorship in Composites and Engineered Woodproducts	Professorship	Qinglin Wu
Bryant A. Bateman Professorship in Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries	Professorship	Allen Rutherford
Crosby Land & Resources Company Professorship in Forest Sector Business Development #2	Professorship	Richard Vlosky
Horace J. Davis Endowed Professorship in Food Science & Technology	Professorship	Witoon Prinyawiwatkul
Grace Drews Lehmann Professorship in Human Ecology	Professorship	Ioan Negulescu
F. A. Eugene, Marcel and James Graugnard Professorship in Sugarcane Research at the Sugar Research Station	Professorship	Vacant
Andrew P. Gay Professorship	Professorship	Collins Kimbeng
Sterling C. Bain Professorship in Sugarcane Production	Professorship	Vacant
Benjamin L. Legendre Sr. Sugar Heritage ASSCT Professorship	Professorship	Albert Orgeron
Andrew Price Gay Jr. and John Fleming Gay Professorship in Sugarcane Variety Development	Professorship	Vacant

LSU College of Agriculture

Chairs and Professorships	Type	Recipient
Gordon D. Cain Endowed Chair of Agriculture	Chair	Qinglin Wu
J. C. Floyd Endowed Professorship in Agriculture	Professorship	Michael Burnett
George William Barineau Jr. Professorship in the College of Agriculture	Professorship	Michael Kaller
Ann Armstrong Peltier Professorship	Professorship	Georgianna Tuuri
Martin D. Woodin Endowed Professorship in Agricultural Business	Professorship	Rex Caffey
Dr. William H. Alexander Endowed Professorship	Professorship	James Fannin
Meryal Newsom Annison Professorship in Agriculture	Professorship	Philip Elzer
Ralph and Leila Boulware Professorship	Professorship	Vacant
Dr. D. L. Evans Professorship in Dairy Science	Professorship	Cathleen Williams
Daniel Ivy Dupree Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Kenneth Bondioli
Austin C. Thompson Distinguished Endowed Professorship in Entomology	Professorship	Tom Reagan
Ola Cook Holmes Professorship in Horticulture	Professorship	Jeff Kuehny
F. O. Bateman Distinguished Professorship	Professorship	William Kelso
Dr. Alma Beth Clark Professorship in the School of Human Ecology	Professorship	Vacant
Adrienne Gravois Brazan Professorship in the School of Human Ecology	Professorship	Vacant
Mary Sandefur Tobin Professorship	Professorship	Vacant
Doris Lasseigne Carville and Jules A. Carville Jr. Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Chuanlan Liu

\$100,000 raised for memorial scholarship honoring Vermilion 4-H'er

By Bruce Schultz

The sale of Pearl the pig raised \$100,000 in Vermilion Parish for a scholarship fund to honor 10-year-old Kaylee McLain, who died last year in an accident.

The fundraising effort came during the auction of 4-H animals in January 2021.

"We have amazing and generous people in Vermilion Parish," said Shannan Waits, LSU AgCenter 4-H agent in Vermilion Parish.

In the midst of their grief, Kaylee's parents, Erin and Allen McLain, set up the scholarship fund to help provide students with education in Catholic schools.

Gwen Broussard, a 4-H volunteer who helped the McLain family set up the scholarship fund, said word spread about the upcoming sale, and numerous people pledged money to buy the pig.

"When this happened, people wanted to find a tangible way to support the family," Broussard said. "Before the pig even sold, we knew we had \$38,000."

The pig wasn't sold to just one individual for \$100,000; numerous people placed winning bids on the pig, then donated the animal for another round of bidding. At the auction, Pearl was sold, then donated back for another sale 26 times, Broussard said. In total, more than 100 families and businesses contributed to the final amount.

But even after auctioneer Mike Dominique struck the final gavel with a total of \$96,000, the bidding wasn't over. Waits said as her husband, Hilton, also a 4-H agent, was talking to the audience about the significance of the donations, a 4-H supporter, Danny Meaux, rose to speak.

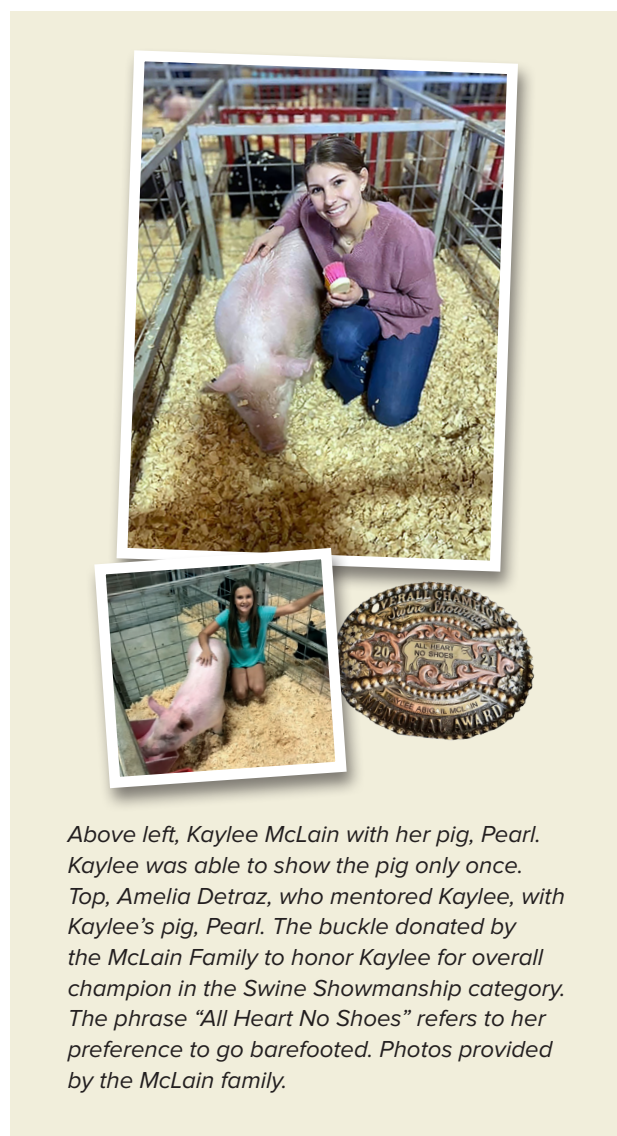
"He said, 'We're not going to leave it at \$96,000. We're going to put up another \$4,000,'" Shannan Waits said.

Broussard said people were taken aback. "The crowd gasped. It was so emotional. The family couldn't believe the amount of money raised."

During the livestock show, Waits said, Kaylee's fellow 4-H students were wearing ribbons made by the Pointe Coupee Parish 4-H Junior Leader Club. She said the idea for that gesture came from Brandi Frey, 4-H agent in Pointe Coupee, whose husband attended the LSU Ag Leadership program with Allen McLain, a rice and crawfish farmer.

"It was just something they did out of the kindness of their hearts," Waits said.

The McLain family also donated a belt buckle for the winner of the Swine Overall Champion Swine Showmanship award. The buckle was inscribed with the phrase "All Heart No Shoes" to recognize Kaylee's enthusiasm for her 4-H swine project and her



Above left, Kaylee McLain with her pig, Pearl. Kaylee was able to show the pig only once. Top, Amelia Detraz, who mentored Kaylee, with Kaylee's pig, Pearl. The buckle donated by the McLain Family to honor Kaylee for overall champion in the Swine Showmanship category. The phrase "All Heart No Shoes" refers to her preference to go barefooted. Photos provided by the McLain family.

preference to go barefooted. "She never wore shoes anywhere," Broussard said.

The award and buckle were won by Paityn Martin. Broussard said the family plans to continue sponsoring the award.

Broussard said Kaylee, who died Dec. 10, 2020, was a devout, kind soul.

"This was the kid who was always laughing and having fun," Broussard said.

She said it was the first year that Kaylee was eligible to participate in a livestock project, and she and Pearl entered the show ring in November in a preliminary event for Vermilion Parish competitors.

"She worked with her pig every day," Broussard said.

Pearl was shown at the parish show by Kaylee's mentor, high school student Amelia Detraz, and Pearl managed a respectable fifth place in her class.

"Amelia had helped Kaylee with her pig, so it was special that Amelia got to show Pearl," Waits said.

Beloved 4-H camp facility awaits repairs

By Olivia McClure

The campgrounds at Grant Walker 4-H Educational Center in Pollock were unusually quiet this summer — as they have been for more than a year. The COVID-19 pandemic canceled 4-H camp in 2020, and two hurricanes lashed the facility last year, leaving damage that couldn't be repaired in time for the 2021 camping season.

Pine trees fell during Hurricane Laura, smashing into a bunkhouse, a log cabin, two outdoor pavilions and an arts and crafts building. Structures that managed to escape Laura unscathed were flooded a few weeks later when Hurricane Delta brought heavy rains.

► *Continued on Page 42*



Grant Walker 4-H Educational Center Support Fund

A fundraising effort is underway to help fund repair projects at Grant Walker Educational Facility. The center sustained major damage from hurricanes Laura and Delta. If you are able to make a gift to support repairs and the restoration of Grant Walker, please consider contributing to the Grant Walker 4-H Educational Center Support Fund.

Throughout the year, the Grant Walker 4-H Educational Center offers spacious meeting facilities, lodging and youth camps. During the summer, youth from all 64 parishes in Louisiana have access to the center's 10-week camp

program. These beloved experiences and community spaces have long had an important role in the local community, as well as in uniting youth statewide during the summer for swimming, canoeing, creating and learning together. Each year, campers are supported by a trained staff of student educators and certified lifeguards along with parish extension agents, teen counselors and adult volunteers.

Donations can be made through the LSU Foundation by visiting <https://bit.ly/GWECFund>.

Continued from Page 41

"It's a little sad," said camp director Christine Bergeron. "This place is very busy, not only during the summer with 4-H camp, but also during the fall and spring because we're a rental facility. We have groups out here almost every weekend. We haven't had that. It's been quiet. It's been different."

Bergeron and her staff are patiently waiting for the rebuilding process to begin. They traveled around Louisiana this summer to conduct one-day events with educational and recreational opportunities for individual parishes.

A group of 4-H agents from the Central Region recently did their part to get Camp Grant Walker ready to welcome kids again,

"Camp is something we can't really replicate somewhere else. Camp is a special place."

— Esther Boe, Central Region coordinator

too. They painted a new backdrop for campers to use in photos and put up new designs on bulletin boards in classrooms.

"Camp is near and dear to our hearts," said Esther Boe, 4-H coordinator for the Central Region. "All of the agents were very excited to plan the activities and to come out here and just to be at camp together. We hope one day to be back here with our kids."

Attending camp and being away from home offers a chance to grow, said Evangeline Parish 4-H agent Kim Deville. Campers have responsibilities in their cabins and have to choose what "tracks," or activities, they participate in.

For many, "it's the first time they get to actually make choices and do things that they know they picked for themselves," Deville said.

Camp also provides unique experiences that create lifelong memories, such as swimming in a creek and attending nightly dances with new friends from across the state under one of the pavilions that was damaged by Hurricane Laura.

"Camp is something we can't really replicate somewhere else," Boe said. "Camp is a special place."



A pine tree fell on an outdoor pavilion at the LSU AgCenter Grant Walker 4-H Educational Center in Pollock during Hurricane Laura in 2020. Other buildings also sustained damage and experienced flooding. LSU AgCenter file photos.

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