

# Oklahoma

# *Country*



The Magazine of the Oklahoma Farm Bureau  
Winter 2016



In the  
**middle**  
of it all

Oklahoma Farm Bureau's **Farm Family of the Year** shares their story of farming with integrity.

**Honoring the Greatest Generation**  
Saluting two veterans with once-in-a-lifetime trip

**Convention Review**  
A recap of OKFB's 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting

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# Oklahoma Country

Winter 2016  
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Photo by Dustin Mielke

## ON THE COVER

As winners of the 2015 OKFB Farm Family of the Year, the Mullers received a trip to AFBF convention and one year's use of a 2015 GMC Sierra 1500 pickup. Learn more about the family on page 14.

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## HIDDEN NUMBER WORTH \$50

One member family's Oklahoma Farm Bureau membership number is hidden somewhere in this issue of *Oklahoma Country* and could earn that member family \$50. To claim the cash prize, the member family must find its own hidden membership number and contact Hannah Nemecek before the last day of the month, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 405-523-2346.

The OKFB membership number hidden somewhere in *Oklahoma Country* must match the number on the face of your individual OKFB membership card for you to claim the cash prize. The membership number that appears on your magazine's mailing label is not the hidden number, but also must match the hidden number for you to claim the cash prize.

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Convention Review

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau 74th Annual Meeting was held Nov. 13-15, 2015 in Oklahoma City. Find a recap of the convention including award winners, policy changes and more on page 28.



# PRESIDENTIALLY SPEAKING

## A vision for the future

By Tom Buchanan

President, Oklahoma Farm Bureau & Affiliated Companies

**2015** ended as Oklahoma's wettest year on record. After four years of record-breaking drought, the state was replenished with heavy rainfall. In May, we were fortunate enough to see one of the wettest months on record, followed by a wetter-than-normal summer, fall and winter. For those of us that rely on the water that falls from the sky, the abundance of water was great news.

While it is easy to forget about the struggles that come along with drought when it rains, we as Oklahoma Farm Bureau members can't forget. As an organization, we strive to be the ones looking ahead to the future, preparing for what we as agriculturalists may face.

Water must be our priority at OKFB; our livelihoods absolutely

depend on it. We can no longer sit back and wait for it to fall from the sky. Rather, we should be taking action into our own hands to see that it is properly managed within our state.

At the OKFB 74th Annual Meeting in November, our voting delegates had a vision for the future when they approved changes to our organization's water policy. The updated policies allow us to continue to be the state's leader in agricultural policy.

We at Oklahoma Farm Bureau always are working for you, the member. As a grassroots organization, your thoughts, ideas and

opinions are being put to work every day at the state Capitol through the policies you approved. Hand-in-hand, we are creating a better future for agriculture, as well as Farm Bureau.

Speaking of the future, our most important step in protecting agriculture in the future is State Question 777, or the Right to Farm. This is our year! Oklahomans will head to the ballots in November to elect a new president, but we must ensure they're educated as they vote on the state question. I cannot stress enough the importance of the right to farm; we must make sure our kids, grandkids and great-grandkids can enjoy our same

rights and way of life.

As always is the case heading into the legislative session, it's important for you, as a member, to pay attention and stay involved.

Your legislator

cares where you stand on an issue. We can't afford to stand back and watch while the other side constantly attacks not only our industry, but also our livelihood. We'll work our hardest to make sure you're protected and informed.

Finally, I appreciate your vote of confidence in electing me to my second term as OKFB president. It has been my honor and privilege to serve you over the past two years and I'm excited to see where we'll go in the next.

“As a grassroots organization, your thoughts, ideas and opinions are being put to work every day at the state Capitol through the policies you approved.”

— Tom Buchanan

You can't predict your future.  
**But we can help you protect it.**

Contact your agent to see how we can help safeguard your family's future with life insurance and prepare you for a retirement that's financially secure.





# EXECUTIVE OUTLOOK

## Strengthening the voice of agriculture

By Monica Wilke

Executive Director, Oklahoma Farm Bureau and Affiliated Companies

**A**s a new year marches on, 2016 promises to be full of positive changes and exciting opportunities for Oklahoma Farm Bureau.

We, at Oklahoma Farm Bureau, are known across the state as the voice of agriculture.

Our goal this year is to strengthen that voice to all of Oklahoma, from the dirt roads of the panhandle to the streets of Oklahoma City and the steps of the state Capitol.

We want to create one united voice for Farm Bureau and agriculture in Oklahoma. To do so, we are working to further merge the insurance with the federation.

Our first step was to name Becky Samples our vice president of strategic corporate communications. She is working to improve communications with all of Farm Bureau. From the executive office to the individual member, she will help ensure every person affiliated with OKFB is armed with the latest Farm Bureau information.

To boost our legislative voice, the public policy division created a new communications role to further educate and inform OKFB members, legislators and the general public of the importance of agriculture to Oklahoma. Our state leaders must realize the impact their laws and regulations have on the agriculture industry. Be on the lookout for a new outlet to stay informed and involved in the legislative session.

We're also proud of the number of Farm Bureau members and leaders seeking public office this year. This is just another example of OKFB using its voice to preserve and protect our agricultural heritage. If elected, we know each of the members running will serve as advocates for agriculture within the walls of the state Capitol.

The Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation also is contributing to that voice for agriculture by educating students around the state through the Grown for You commodity trailer and the Bushels for Books program, which donates accurate agriculture books to Oklahoma schools. The citizens of our state—from kindergarteners to senior adults—must learn and

understand our industry, and the Foundation is working to do just that. Find more about the Foundation on page 20.

Our most important focus for the future of our state is State Question 777, or the Right to Farm. In November, Oklahomans

will determine whether to protect the state's second largest economic impact: agriculture. This constitutional amendment will ensure every Oklahoman continues to have access to a safe and affordable food supply. By preserving the freedom of farmers and ranchers to produce the food consumers demand, the right to farm also will protect the consumer's right to choose. It is absolutely critical that we pass this state question. To learn more, turn to page 12 or contact our public policy department.

All of these changes will equip Oklahoma Farm Bureau in remaining the state's leader in agriculture. I'm proud of the direction we are headed and look forward to continually serving you, our member.

Best wishes for a safe and happy 2016!

“We are creating a stronger voice to speak for agriculture throughout Oklahoma.”

— Monica Wilke



**FARM BUREAU<sup>®</sup> MEMBERS**



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<sup>1</sup> Offer available through 4/1/17. Available on qualified 2015 and 2016 Chevrolet vehicles. This offer is not available with some other offers. Only customers who have been active members of an eligible Farm Bureau for a minimum of 30 days will be eligible to receive a certificate. Customers can obtain certificates at [www.tbverify.com/gm](http://www.tbverify.com/gm). Farm Bureau and the FB logo are registered service marks of the American Farm Bureau Federation and are used herein under license by General Motors. <sup>2</sup> Dependability based on longevity: 1987–April 2013 full-size pickup registrations



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# COMMODITY CORNER

## CATTLE

Did you know cattle is Oklahoma's No. 1 commodity, based on total cash receipts? Each county has at least 10,000 head.

IN 2015, OKLAHOMA HAD A TOTAL OF

**4.6 MILLION**

HEAD OF CATTLE AND CALVES.



OKLAHOMA RANKS

**NO. 2**

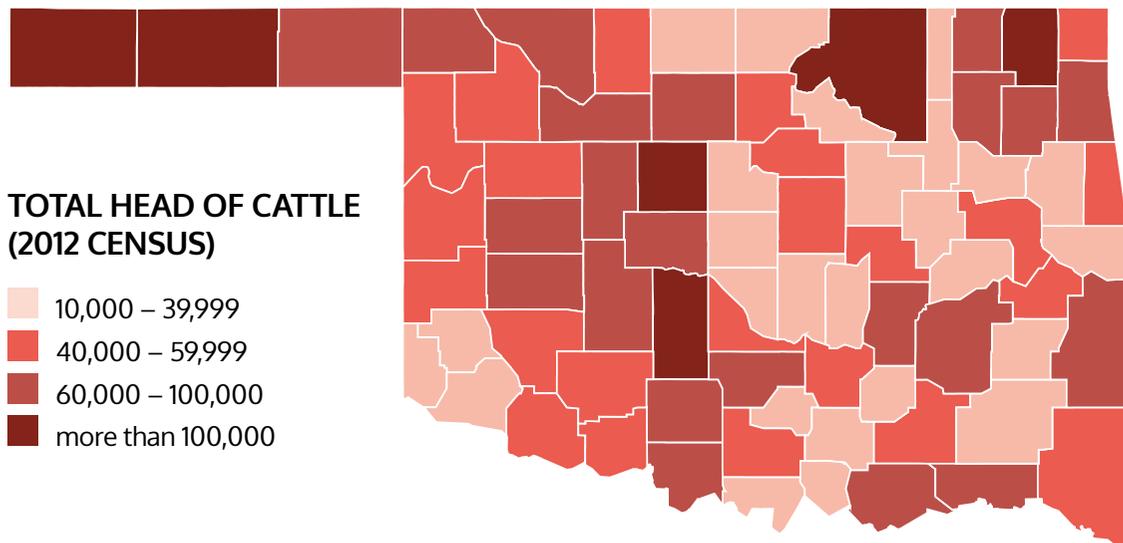
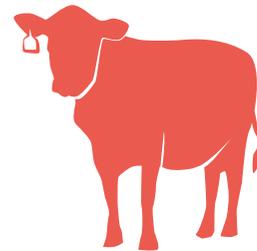
IN U.S. FOR TOTAL HEAD OF BEEF CATTLE WITH

**6.5%**

OF TOTAL U.S. BEEF CATTLE

OKLAHOMA CATTLE SALES IN 2014 TOTALED

**\$4 BILLION**



Source: NCEA, USDA NASS



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Land Owner Must NOT Have Severed Mineral Rights

**NOTE:** We Cannot Lease Your Property if you do Not Own the Mineral Rights



## Preparing agriculture for the future in 2016

It's that time again when the new year gets older and we at Farm Bureau look forward to another year at both Capitols. This year, however, is a special year for Oklahoma Farm Bureau. 2016 marks the 75th anniversary that we have been lobbying legislators at both the Oklahoma Capitol and in Washington, D.C. In these 75 years, many lobbyists have gone before us and have paved the way to the success we enjoy today. Your OKFB has led the way for 75 years, and will continue to lead the way in agricultural policy in the future.

### Water

Water will always be our No. 1 priority. We were blessed in 2015 with an abundant amount of rainfall, and for that we are thankful. However, we know drought is cyclical. The best time to work on water issues is when the state is not facing massive water shortfalls. You, as the members and voice of this organization, came together in Oklahoma City this year and spoke in overwhelming support for maximizing Oklahoma's water to its fullest potential. We now are calling on the leaders of the state to make sure your vision of moving water and maximizing its use is heard. This is an issue that will take years, but there is no time like the present to solve a problem for future generations.

As we go into our 75th anniversary at OKFB, our state faces many issues. The lack of revenue at 23rd and Lincoln will be the issue that draws all the attention, but I want to encourage members to look to the future and ask that we build out our water infrastructure to benefit all of Oklahoma.

### Feral Hogs

Feral, or wild, hogs are always a concern and this year is no different. We are working with the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry to stop the movement, and out right proliferation, of wild hogs in Oklahoma. Again, you were loud and clear when you stood up and said, "We want to eliminate this problem in Oklahoma."

I encourage you to call Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Jim Reese and ask ODAFF to put rules in place that will stop the transportation of wild pigs and will force the disposal of all trapped pigs. These animals are an invasive species, not a sporting species, and must be treated as such. With your help, we can either slow this problem or stop it.

We must eliminate wild pigs; doing so will add thousands of dollars to agriculture's bottom line. These are million-dollar investments that will pay billions into the future.

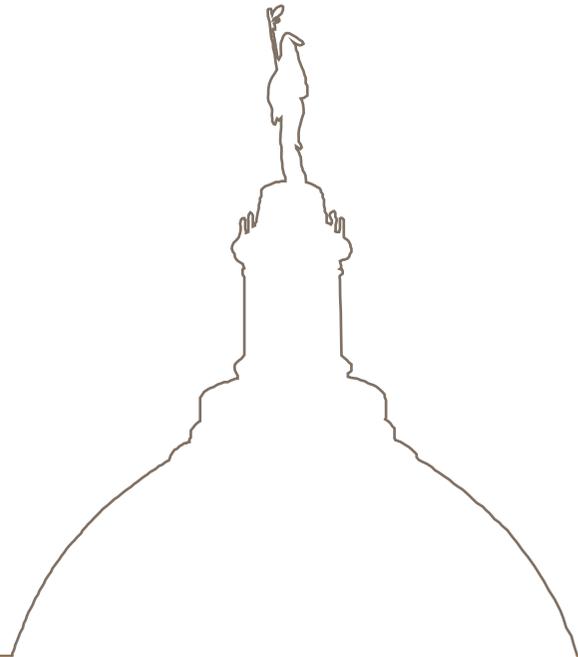
### Right to Farm

Of course, our most important issue this year is State Question 777, or the Right to Farm constitutional amendment. In November, Oklahomans have the power to safeguard our industry and our livelihood at the ballot box. Your future as a producer in Oklahoma relies on the outcome of this state question.

At OKFB, we have persistently worked to raise awareness and fund the campaign, but we cannot do it without you. As an OKFB member, you are the campaign's greatest asset. You are active in your churches, schools and community organizations.



with John Collison,  
OKFB Vice President of Public Policy



I challenge you to strike up a conversation with your friends and neighbors about the upcoming state question. Tell them of its importance to you, to their food supply, and to the state of Oklahoma. If you would like to learn more about SQ 777 or the campaign, please do not hesitate to contact us.

### Stay Involved

I encourage all of you to stay vigilant and active to solve the problems we face. Without your steady input and involvement, we accomplish little at the state Capitol.

To aid in keeping you informed and involved in legislative and regulatory issues, we've launched a new outlet called Oklahoma Ag Policy. Found at [www.OkAgPolicy.org](http://www.OkAgPolicy.org), the website provides a constant flow of news and information regarding legislation and regulations affecting Oklahoma farmers and ranchers. Also, you'll discover resources and background information all designed to keep you educated and informed on the latest at the state Capitol.

To bring breaking news or action alerts instantaneously, we've also created a new text alert system. Simply text "OKFB" to 95577 to receive the updates. The service is free-of-charge, but standard data and messaging rates apply.

In addition to staying informed, we encourage you to be in contact with your legislators. Call them on the phone, send them an email, or even make a trip to the state Capitol.

We look forward to seeing each one of you through out the year and if you're ever at the Capitol, please make sure to say hello. Thank you for your support and active service. 

To get involved, contact:

Oklahoma Farm Bureau  
Public Policy Department  
405.530.2681

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MARTHA VALLEY  
FARMS

NAVAJO  
FFA

IN

THE M



The Muller Family's passion for raising food and fiber – and for sharing their farm story – put them in the middle of the spotlight as

Oklahoma Farm Bureau's

Farm Family  
of the Year.

MIDDLE  
OF IT ALL

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
DUSTIN MIELKE

**I**n the middle of a field, surrounded by a network of dirt roads and irrigation ditches, lies the life's work of Matt and Kellie Muller. Their Jackson County farm is as idyllic as anything from a farm equipment catalog or a storybook: a one-story farmhouse, rows of grain bins, a shop and several other buildings comprise the family's home place.

It would be easy to assume that Matt, Kellie and their four children – Taylor, Levi, Luke and Lincoln – are isolated out on the flat expanse of irrigated wheat and cotton fields where billowing clouds of dust trailing behind vehicles can be seen for miles.

Just as the dirt roads and ditches connect their farm to their expanse of fields in southwest Oklahoma, the Muller family's dedication to the land and perseverance in the face of challenges and opportunities connects them to a world that uses their agricultural products daily.

This dedication, along with an understanding of how their work on the farm touches people's lives across the world, helped them earn one of Oklahoma Farm Bureau's marquee awards as they were named the organization's 2015 Farm Family of the Year. From the stage at state convention to their day-to-day chores on the farm, equal amounts of effort, faith and humility are in the middle of everything the Muller family does.

**M**att Muller is always in the middle of analyzing which crops will match the growing conditions that the family faces. Uncertainty is part of the farm family lifestyle, and Matt and Kellie manage the unknown with steadfast planning.

“I like the challenge of it,” Matt said of branching out and trying new crops. “I like the soil health benefits of rotating different crops and trying new crops. And sometimes you just have to look at the economics of it.”

The Mullers’ farm management choices go far beyond the old standby of “doing what you’ve always done.” In a state known for its winter wheat production prowess – and in a county known for its irrigated cotton fields – Matt has risen to the challenge of finding new agronomic opportunities by expanding the farm’s repertoire of crops and always advancing production methods to increase efficiency.

“We tried new things,” Matt said. “The mung beans really helped diversify things. They have been a very quick crop that can tolerate some dry spells and do well.”

The specialty mung beans the Mullers grow will be consumed in the United States as well as abroad. Matt said the Korean market for the beans is opening up as U.S. producers take on market share formerly held by Australia.

The Mullers’ cotton crop also makes an international trip to reach consumers.

The fiber crop that starts out in long, straight rows in southwest Oklahoma is harvested and ginned in the Altus area, then makes a journey to Asian countries where it is spun into yarn for textile manufacturers. Even if the tag on your favorite pair of jeans reads “Made in Bangladesh,” the cotton from which they

were spun may have very well been grown in an Oklahoma field.

Besides the southwest Oklahoma staples of wheat and cotton, and beyond the specialty mung beans, the Mullers grow grain sorghum, canola and more as growing conditions and market prices provide opportunities.

While growing crops in the arid southwest part of our state, the family has learned how to endure both drought and flood – sometimes, even within the same year. During a string of years beginning around 2011, the Muller family, like many Oklahoma farm families, faced a drought few would have imagined.

**I**n the middle of one of the driest periods on record for Oklahoma, the Muller family did more than simply dig their heels in wait for the next big rain. The family took a proactive approach, based on previous decades worth of work to improve the land, that helped them produce crops, however meager, during extremely dry years.

Perhaps the most important resource they were able to rely upon during the drought came from above, even when rain did not.

“If you would have told me in 2010 what was coming, I think I would have sold out and left because I wouldn’t have thought it would be possible to go through four years with miserable yields,” Matt said. “It works on you mentally when you’re focused on trying to grow good crops and produce and you fail time after time. So our faith really got us through it.”

“Even when a lot of guys weren’t harvesting anything, we just keep trying things.”

Innovations implemented on the farm years before the drought hit helped the family grow harvestable crops when others in the area were not so fortunate.

“We drilled some irrigation wells 10 to 20 years ago to supplement what we did,” Matt said. “That became our sole source of water and we always had a few acres make a crop.”

Along with the wells, Matt installed subsurface drip irrigation systems in several fields, which delivers water directly to crops’ root systems with minimal waste.

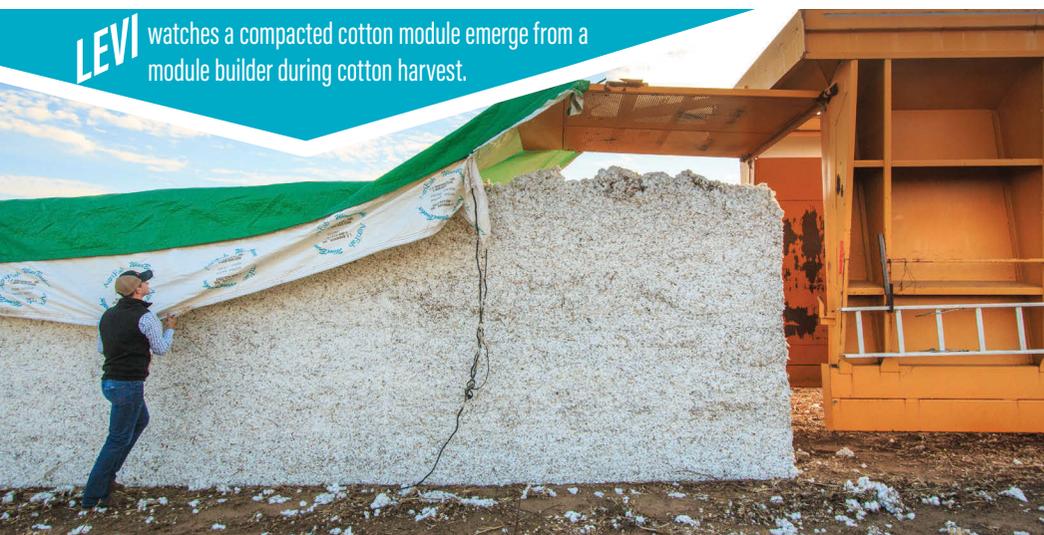
“We continued – even during the drought – to expand the money we were sinking into sub-surface drip irrigation to get our irrigation systems as efficient as possible,” Matt said.

The Mullers also installed a runoff rainwater collection system that captures rainwater as it drains off the roofs of their farm’s buildings. An innovation that might seem to some like a suburban fad has provided another source of valuable water for the farm.

“That water is so much higher quality,” Matt said of the runoff rainwater. “The ground water a lot of time is hard water – it has minerals in it – and the pH can be high. That will interact with a lot of crop protection products we use. By using pure rainwater, I don’t have to use an agent in the water to soften it.”

“During the drought, we realized how precious every drop and every gallon of water is. When you have none, you really appreciate that.”

The Mullers also plant cover crops that help prevent soil erosion during winter and spring months when fields would traditionally lie bare before spring planting. Matt said the cover crops also help retain moisture in the soil by shading



**LEVI** watches a compacted cotton module emerge from a module builder during cotton harvest.



**LINCOLN**

ties down a tarp on a cotton module to protect it from weather. Each of the Muller kids are involved in the farm work, learning from a young age how to put forward the effort production agriculture requires.



## A COTTON PICKER

glides through a cotton field on the Muller's family farm. The 2015 cotton crop had high yields thanks to spring and summer rains, although cotton prices were disappointing.

the ground and by keeping water and nutrients in place during heavy rains like those in 2015.

Matt said Ken Burns' The Dust Bowl documentary, which was released in the middle of southwest Oklahoma's drought, resonated with him as an agronomist.

"We started using cover crops," Matt said. "Even though the drought, at times, was as dry or drier and as hot or hotter, was as windy or windier than the 30s, we didn't have dust storms. We held our soil in place because of no-till and cover crops."

All the efforts the Mullers take to conserve their resources and protect the environment demonstrate an ethos of doing the right thing that influences every aspect of the family's approach to farming and life.

"Our house, which is our farm headquarters, sits in the middle – literally – of wheat and cotton fields on all four sides of us," Matt said. "Whatever activities we do are going to affect me and my family first, and I care very much about the health of my family."

"There are things we need to do to protect the environment and help conserve things that you just do because it's the right thing."

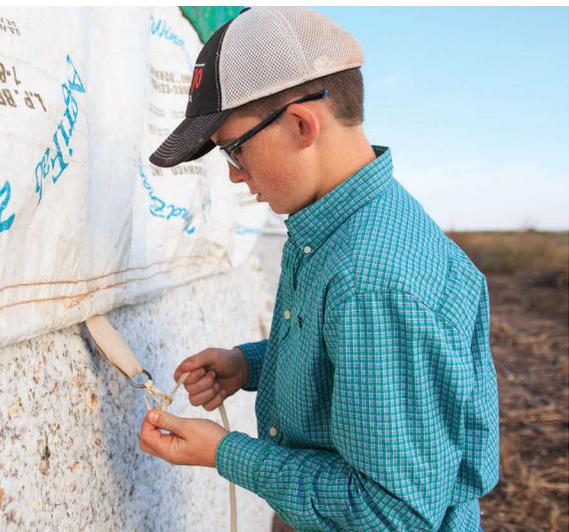
## THE MULLERS

work together on the farm during all seasons, but especially during harvest where hours make the difference between harvesting a good crop and losing profits due to weather.



## TAYLOR AND KELLIE

use a cotton module builder to compact newly harvested cotton bolls into a compacted module for easy transportation from the field.



## LUKE

feeds show goats on the family's farm. The Muller kids are heavily involved in a myriad of extracurricular activities and events, including athletics, 4-H, FFA and livestock showing.



**I**f you're looking for a rural school, Navajo school fits the bill perfectly. Located northeast of Altus, the four Muller children have all attended Navajo.

"Their school sits in the middle of a pasture," Matt said of the school building.

While it may be a small school to some as a Class 1-A high school, the two oldest Muller children, Taylor and Levi, were selected as Oklahoma academic all-state during their senior years in high school. Only 100 students are selected each year in the state of Oklahoma, from all high schools, to receive the honor.

"We took full advantage of what was offered to us," Taylor Muller said.

"We knew the same people through our entire education and we grew closer to them."

The Muller family's dedication to education is apparent in the way their children study and achieve in the classroom and beyond. The kids have been active in 4-H, FFA, showing livestock, athletics, concurrent college classes and more as they make the most of every opportunity offered.

Beyond the classroom, the entire family works to tell the story of agriculture to residents of Jackson County and beyond. Matt and Kellie invite school, church and community groups to their farm to see first-hand what farmers do each and every day. For what some may consider a rural community, the Mullers have observed some eye-opening experiences.

"We have actually gone to schools and invited kids to come out just so we can educate them on what we do and why we do it," Kellie said. "They can get hands-on and see where some of their food and fiber comes from.

"We had a group from Navajo, pre-K

and Kindergarten. They got to go to the field and hand-pick cotton. They got to shell corn. We talk about the different crops that we raise and then show them food products that they use in their own homes so they understand where these products come from."

The family's involvement in their community and across the state places them firmly in the middle of making a difference both locally and beyond. Matt is a member of the Navajo school board, and the couple serves on numerous booster clubs. The couple is also active in their local church, helping with a myriad of programs and events.

Matt has served on the Jackson County Farm Bureau board, Oklahoma Farm Bureau's state water committee, as a delegate to the American Farm Bureau convention and more. The Muller family is a fixture at Farm Bureau meetings across the state. They were given one of American Farm Bureau's highest honors when they were named AFBF's 2006 Young Farmers & Ranchers Achievement Award winners.

However, it's not the awards or the involvement that Matt and Kellie hang their hats upon – it is the drive and determination they have passed along to their children that the couple knows will help them everywhere they go.

"Farm work gives our kids a good work ethic," Kellie said. "When they become adults they should be productive citizens and be able to hold down a job and work hard. Hopefully it will help them in the future when they try to get a job. We hope to instill that in them: there's nothing wrong with hard work."

"All of our kids have excelled academically in a lot of fields, but I think science is more real to them because of

what they get to observe and watch it on the farm," Matt said.

Even though the Muller kids have a variety of interests and goals that will likely take them far beyond the farm gate, Matt and Kellie know wherever they go, the lessons learned at the end of the dusty dirt road will put them in the middle of great things for years to come.

**A**s the setting sun cast golden light across the landscape and shadows of the Mullers' farm buildings grew long on the landscape one late autumn day, it was a picturesque ending to what was already a full day of work picking cotton, harvesting milo and taking care of the kids' show animals.

However, the Muller house was abuzz with activity as family members threw on jackets and boots as they prepared to return to picking cotton in dropping temperatures. With Oklahoma's ever changing weather, it was time to return to work, even after taking several hours out of their day to visit with me and take their farm family photos.

When most families would be settling down for the evening after dinner, on this particular Saturday night, everyone was gearing up to harvest a cotton crop that was the manifestation of their prayers for rain in previous years.

It was time for the Muller family to return to what they love doing. It was time to get back in the middle of a field, working hard, providing food and fiber people across the world and caring for the land – together. 

*As OKFB's Farm Family of the Year, the Muller family won a trip to the AFBF convention in Orlando in January and one year's use of a GMC Sierra 1500 pickup.*



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## Bushels for Books: An investment in our future

By Amanda Rosholt

Director of Fundraising and Public Relations for the Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation

Investing in the next generation now can reap long-term benefits. It is imperative for farmers and ranchers to make an investment in raising the next generation of informed producers and consumers. The Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation, in partnership with Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers, is putting that mission to action with the Bushels for Books Program.

During the OKFB annual meeting in November, five Oklahoma schools were awarded bushel baskets of accurate agriculture books for their classrooms and school libraries.

Neddy Sandels from Goodwell Elementary in the Oklahoma panhandle said agriculture is the area's income-based lifeline. The books will be used to enrich science and integrated curriculum for pre-K through fourth-grade students.

"We represent a rural school in the biggest agricultural area of the state," Sandels said. "We have a tremendous opportunity to share the books in traditional classrooms and outdoor classrooms as well."

Cindy Storer, from Buffalo Public Schools, said although the panhandle's economy is still tied to agriculture, it has few students being raised on family farms.

"The agricultural books will help the teachers and faculty of our school continue re-enforcing the traditions of both the past and the future," Storer said.

Christy Schmidt, from Springdale Elementary School in Tulsa, will use the books to teach students who have little knowledge

of or experience with agriculture.

"Our school library currently does not have many agriculture related books, so this program will have a large impact on our students," Schmidt said. "The books will help teach our students where their food comes from and how it reaches their tables."

Even in a rural setting, many students do not have a firm grasp of how agriculture works. Blaise Glory, from Hulbert Public Schools, said the books will benefit students and teachers alike.

"These resources will present true knowledge about agriculture and will enhance concepts in our curriculum with applications in STEM activities, writing projects and even art," Glory said.

The final recipient, Shawna Wright, from East Side Elementary in Chandler, said the books will help

teach many units in their classes.

"The books will be so beneficial in helping students learn more about where their food comes from and the processes that take place to provide it," Wright said.

The Bushels for Books program allows farmers to donate a few bushels from their harvest each year, or make cash contributions, to purchase bushel baskets full of accurate agriculture books to be placed in Oklahoma schools. Teachers and librarians are given the opportunity to apply for books in October. This year's recipients also received a specialty "Cropopoly" game courtesy of Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom and the OKFB Women's Leadership Team. **FF**

“The books will teach our students where their food comes from and how it reaches their tables.”

— Christy Schmidt  
Tulsa Public Schools

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JOHN IRICK STANDS IN THE WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

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# greatest generation

SPONSORED BY THE OKLAHOMA FARMING AND RANCHING FOUNDATION, TWO WORLD WAR II VETERANS VENTURE ON THE TRIP-OF-A-LIFETIME TO VISIT THE MEMORIAL BUILT IN THEIR HONOR.

BY HANNAH NEMECEK  
PHOTOS BY DUSTIN MIELKE

**a**n older gentleman in a wheelchair sits reverently underneath the shade of a war memorial in Washington, D.C. As he takes in the solemn sights, high school students on a field trip slowly begin to notice him.

The man's years of wisdom and experience are obvious to the students. One stops to ask a question, and a group of students gather around.

Born in the 1920s, the man has lived to see many changes in the world. He tells them story after story, and they listen intently. As the man finishes, the students begin to applaud.

A World War II veteran, the man is on a trip to see the memorial dedicated to his service. He was a participant on the final Oklahoma Honor Flight, along with 80 other veterans.

The Oklahoma Honor Flights program provides WWII veterans a trip to Washington, D.C., to visit the memorials and monuments created for them.

"The national World War II memorial was built six decades after that war ended," said Rep. Gary Banz, Oklahoma Honor Flight executive director. "Unless someone acted on their behalf, most would never see the memorial."

The Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation sponsored John Irick and Gerald Turner, both WWII veterans, agriculturalists and Oklahoma Farm Bureau members, on the Oct. 21 Oklahoma Honor Flight.

Turner and Irick said the trip was a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

"Everybody ought to go to Washington, D.C. once," Turner said.

The Arlington National Cemetery was Turner's most memorable experience.

"I think it means more to a veteran than just an ordinary person," he said.

At the cemetery, Turner witnessed the changing of the guard ritual.

"It just about brings tears to your eyes," he said.

Irick said his favorite part of the trip was visiting with Oklahoma's congressional delegation.

"I saw a lot of things," Irick said. "I really enjoyed Washington."

More than only WWII veterans, the men also are members of America's so-called "greatest generation."

They grew up in a world marked by poverty and suffering. As children, they witnessed their parents suffer through the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. Hard work, sacrifice and hardship were the norm.

Irick, born on a farm in the 1920s, said he remembers seeing his parents live nearly a year on just a few dollars.

"There wasn't any money in the Depression," Irick said. "There wasn't any money anywhere."

Irick said his father worked in the oilfield for \$1 a day.

"People don't know what hard times are," he said.

To help his family, Irick said he worked on the farm as early as five years old.

"We didn't have any choice and we knew it," Irick said. "(My father) would just say, 'Come on, son.'"



GUIDED BY HIS DAUGHTER, GERALD TURNER IS APPLAUDED BY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETERY.

THERE WASN'T ANY MONEY IN THE DEPRESSION. THERE WASN'T ANY MONEY ANYWHERE. PEOPLE DON'T KNOW WHAT HARD TIMES ARE.

Turner, also born in the early 1920s, grew up working on a farm in Pawnee, Oklahoma.

Because the farm did not yet have electricity, Turner said his family lived in town and drove to the farm each day.

He said he remembers his parents hanging a wet sheet in the kitchen doorway to keep the dust out during the “dirty thirties.”

“The Dust Bowl was really bad,” Turner said. “I don’t think you could hardly raise anything. It was so dry and dusty then.”

When Turner was a senior in high school, Pearl Harbor was bombed. Two years later in 1943, he volunteered for the Army Air Corps.

Turner said he started at “rock bottom.”

“The first day over there, they had me sandblasting spark plugs,” he said. “That’s about as low as you can get.”

Turner eventually became an Army Air Corps sergeant and worked as an aircraft mechanic, a B-17G crew chief and a German prisoner-of-war guard.

In 1945, Irick also volunteered to join the Army.

“I didn’t want to, but I thought it was necessary,” Irick said.

Being a farm kid granted him an

advantage overseas, he said. He was accustomed to working in the fields with little water to get him through the day.

The war forced Irick to work with no guarantee of drinking water.

“The town guys couldn’t take it,” he said. “It didn’t bother me one bit.”

When given water, Irick said he would conserve it throughout the day while the other men in his group would drink theirs in the morning.

“I’d carry mine on my hip, and they’d start begging for it before noon,” he said. “I’d say ‘No, I might need it this evening. They could bring some, but they might not and I’ll need it if they don’t. It stays right here.’”

Because of his experience on the farm, Irick said he became a demolition specialist. He was required to use his own innovation to create booby traps, destroy fences, railroads, bridges and more.

“I knew how to use a shovel, pitchfork, a posthole digger,” Irick said. “The town boys were no good at that. You can’t dribble a basketball out in the Army and do any good.”

Irick said he learned how to create the things he needed using only the few supplies he had.

He was taught to run all kinds of equipment, remove engines from trucks, and clean water to drink.

"You learned how to do stuff in the Army just as well as the way you were raised," he said.

After returning from the war, Irick married and raised six children. He studied to be an electrician at Oklahoma A&M College School of Technical Training, now known as Oklahoma State University Institute of Technology.

Irick worked for an electric utility company until moving to Prague, Oklahoma. He then started a job in the oilfield while running a dairy business.

"I've had to work too hard," Irick said, laughing. "I worked day and night almost steady for 28 years."

As a 90-year-old, Irick remains active

in the oilfield, with his cattle, and working on old tractors.

When Turner came home from war, he married his wife Ella Mae and raised five children.

"Things were pretty tough then," Turner said.

To make his land payments, Turner said he had to work a full time job, plus a couple of part time jobs.

"We had to work," Turner said. "Cattle weren't very high then. I'd work nights and then run cattle during the day."

A producer his entire life, Turner said he has seen the industry drastically change over the years.

"It's just tremendously different," Turner said. "I can remember when the pickup bed could hold 50 bushel.

"You'd haul wheat into the elevator 50

bushels at a time. Now they've got semis hauling 51,000 or 52,000 pounds."

The World War II veteran still remains involved on his family farm.

"We've always had cattle," Turner said. "I've had cattle all my life."

Despite the hard work and difficult times both Irick and Turner experienced throughout their lives, neither have complained or sought honor. They both simply did what needed to be done.

"We didn't have a choice," Irick said.

Although America remembers these men as the greatest generation, Turner humbly said, "They do greater and bigger things today."

"We were defending our country," Turner said. **■**



A SOLDIER COMPLETES THE CHANGING OF THE GUARD RITUAL AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETARY.



81 VETERANS AND OKLAHOMA HONOR FLIGHT PARTICIPANTS POSE FOR A PHOTO AT ARLINGTON NATIONAL CEMETARY.



REP. FRANK LUCAS (MIDDLE) VISITS WITH JOHN IRICK (LEFT) AND GERALD TURNER (RIGHT).

# CONVENTION REVIEW



Newly reelected OKFB President Tom Buchanan addresses Farm Bureau members and encourages them to stand with State Question 777 during the 74th Annual Meeting Nov. 13-15 in Oklahoma City. Buchanan will serve OKFB for another two-year term.

## Buchanan reelected OKFB president, other leaders elected

**V**oting delegates at the 74th Oklahoma Farm Bureau Annual Meeting reelected Jackson County Farm Bureau member Tom Buchanan to serve as president of the organization Nov. 14 in Oklahoma City. Buchanan served as OKFB president for the past two years and previously represented District Two on the OKFB board of directors for six years.

"Agriculture, rural Oklahoma and Farm Bureau are my passions," Buchanan said. "Over the past two years, I've remained committed to Farm Bureau's mission of improving the lives of rural Oklahomans, and I'm thankful for another opportunity to serve our members."

Buchanan raises a commercial beef herd and winter wheat on his farm near Altus. He also grows irrigated cotton, when water is available. Buchanan is the manager of the Lugert-Altus Irrigation District, and he serves on the Oklahoma Water Resources Board.

Delegates also reelected three board members to serve three-year terms. Monte Tucker, of Sweetwater, was reelected to represent District Two; Gary Crawley, of Savanna, will represent District Five; and John Grundmann, of Shawnee, will represent District Eight.

The OKFB Young Farmers and Ranchers selected Josh and Kim Emerson, of

Checotah, to lead the state YF&R Committee in 2016.

Four other YF&R couples were selected to serve on the committee. Brent Howard and fiancé Jennifer Jensen of Altus will represent District Two; Steve and Mindy Clark of Byron, Justin and Chrissy Maxey of Delaware, and Brent and Jenny Haken of Stillwater were elected at-large.

The OKFB Women's Leadership Committee elected three women to serve on its state board. Paula Sawatzky of Clinton will represent District Two; Brenda Nobles of Heavener will serve District Five; and Jeanette Gibson of Ada will represent District Eight.



## Mullers named 2015 OKFB Farm Family of the Year

**M**att and Kellie Muller of Altus, along with their children Taylor, Levi, Luke and Lincoln, were named the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Farm Family of the Year during OKFB's 74th Annual Meeting Nov. 13 in Oklahoma City.

The Mullers, one of four OKFB district farm family finalists, were chosen for their embodiment of the best traditions of Oklahoma agriculture and rural life.

"It's very humbling to be representative of all the many thousand neighbors we have across the state," Matt Muller said. "It's just very humbling."

The Muller family grows cotton, wheat, grain sorghum, canola, soybeans, mungbeans, alfalfa and Bermuda grass hay on their southwestern Oklahoma farm. The Mullers' diversified farm has included soybeans and peanuts in the past, changing to meet growing conditions and the agricultural economy.

"We want people to know their food supply is in good hands," Matt Muller said. "We do due diligence to make sure not only are we taking care to produce a safe product, but we're also doing it in a sustainable way to take care of the environment so that future generations will be able to do the same thing."

Matt and Kellie served as the state Young Farmers and Ranchers chairmen in 2003-2004, and received the 2006 American Farm Bureau Federation YF&R Achievement Award, the only Oklahomans ever to win the award.

“We want people to know their food supply is in good hands.”

— Matt Muller



The Muller family is presented with OKFB's Farm Family of the Year award at the organization's annual meeting Nov. 13. Pictured left to right: Tom Buchanan, OKFB president; Kitty Beavers, OKFB WLC; Luke Muller; Lincoln Muller; Taylor Muller; Levi Muller; Kellie Muller; Matt Muller; Cameron Colter, Vance Auto Group; and Monica Wilke, OKFB executive director.

Both also are active in the Jackson County Farm Bureau, where Matt serves on the county board and Kellie has served as Women's Leadership Committee chair. The couple has attended AFBF annual meetings and served on numerous state Farm Bureau committees.

"We just feel honored to be able to tell our story," Matt Muller said.

"(It's) the same story that other Oklahoma farmers and ranchers have about how we get up every day and work hard to provide the consumer with a good product that's safe for them to eat that they can feel very happy putting on their plates at suppertime for their families."

The Muller family is very active in their community, their

church and the agricultural industry. Matt serves on the local school board and on the regional farmers' cooperative board of directors, and has served in various leadership positions in their church. Kellie serves on the county Farm Service Agency committee, the county 4-H advisory committee and works with children at their church.

As state winners, the Muller family received the use of a 2015 GMC Sierra 1500 Double Cab pickup for one year and a trip to the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting in January in Orlando, Florida.

## Mitchell honored with OKFB Distinguished Service Award



Ervin Mitchell

**E**rvin Mitchell of Beaver County was recognized with the Distinguished Service to Oklahoma Farm Bureau Award during the OKFB 74th Annual Convention Nov. 13 in Oklahoma City.

The Distinguished Service Award honors OKFB members who have made outstanding contributions to agriculture and the Farm Bureau organization. Mitchell has been in agriculture for nearly 70 years and served on the state Farm Bureau board of directors for nine years.

“As far as I’m concerned, Farm Bureau members are the cream of the crop,” Mitchell said.

At 88 years old, Mitchell farms with his son and grandson in Beaver County. The family operation produces wheat, corn and grain sorghum, along with cattle.

“[The award] makes you realize maybe

“As far as I'm concerned, Farm Bureau members are the cream of the crop.”  
— Ervin Mitchell

you had an impression on Farm Bureau,” Mitchell said. “It makes us real proud. We really appreciate it.”

Mitchell served as president of the Oklahoma State School Boards Association, president of the National Conservation District for two years, and served on the Oklahoma Water Resources Board for 21 years.

## Farm Bureau members approve water policy changes

**O**klahoma Farm Bureau members approved changes to the organization’s water policy at its 74th Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City.

“Water is the most important asset to the state of Oklahoma,” said Tom Buchanan, OKFB president.

The delegate body, made up of Farm Bureau members from all 77 Oklahoma

counties, approved suggestions with moderate changes from OKFB’s 21-member water committee, which was created at OKFB’s 2014 annual meeting at the request of the organization’s delegates. The committee spent the last year discussing water policy and learning from water experts around the state and the nation in an effort to understand

Oklahoma’s water needs and resources.

The water committee’s suggestions modernized OKFB’s water policy, allowing OKFB leaders to work toward the development of all Oklahoma’s water.

“Water is a very important resource for all Oklahomans,” said Matt Muller, OKFB water committee member and Jackson County farmer. “We wanted to start healthy discussions around the state on how we can best advance good utilization of the water resources we have in this state that would benefit all of Oklahoma.”

Muller said the changes in water policy place the grassroots organization in a position to consider all sides of the water conversation.

“If you’re only known as the party of no on something, then it’s hard to be involved in something that could be beneficial,” Muller said. “I think this better positions us to look at opportunities to raise revenue, to help Oklahoma infrastructure, and utilize a source that we currently are not utilizing.”





Clint and Jessica Wilcox of Major County are named winners of the 2015 Oklahoma Farm Bureau YF&R Achievement Award at the organization's 74th annual meeting. As state winners, the couple received a Kubota RTV500 and an expense-paid trip to the AFBF Convention in January.

## Major County couple wins YF&R Achievement Award

**C**lint and Jessica Wilcox of Major County were named the winners of the 2015 Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Achievement Award. They were recognized as OKFB's top young farming and ranching couple at the organization's 74th Annual Meeting on Nov. 13 in Oklahoma City.

"It's a great honor, something that we don't take lightly," Clint Wilcox said. "We're very proud and very honored to be chosen."

Clint and Jessica grow wheat, canola, grain sorghum, mungbeans and other specialty crops, along with some cattle on their farm near Fairview, Oklahoma. The couple also serves clients statewide as crop insurance agents.

"We strive to be the best farmers

we can be and we strive to be the best insurance agents we can be," Jessica Wilcox said. "It's a challenge, but we both love what we do. We always wanted to farm."

The Wilcox couple has served on the state YF&R committee and the Major County YF&R committee. Clint also serves as president of Major County Farm Bureau.

As Achievement Award winners, the Wilcox family received a Kubota RTV500 courtesy of Great Plains Kubota,

an Icehole cooler, and an expense-paid trip to Orlando, Florida, for the 2015 American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting.

“It's a challenge, but we both love what we do. We always wanted to farm.”

— Jessica Wilcox

The couple competed on a national level for the AFBF Young Farmers and Ranchers Achievement Award during the AFBF Annual Meeting in January.

OKFB's Young Farmers and Ranchers Program is open to both men and women, ages 18 to 35, who hold a membership in his or her county Farm Bureau.



OKFB President Tom Buchanan and John Grunewald with Farm Credit of Western Oklahoma present Beth and Tyler Norvell with the 2015 OKFB YF&R Excellence in Agriculture Award along with Kile Furr of Chisholm Trail Farm Credit and OKFB YF&R Chairman Zac Harris at the 2015 OKFB annual meeting Friday, Nov. 13.

## Grady County couple named YF&R Excellence in Agriculture Award winners

**T** Tyler and Beth Norvell were named the winners of Oklahoma Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers Excellence in Agriculture Award on Nov. 13 at OKFB's 74th Annual Convention in Oklahoma City.

"Farm Bureau has always been a huge part of agriculture and supporting young people, farmers and ranchers," Tyler Norvell said. "It means a lot to represent this great organization at the nationals and to be honored at the state level."

The award recognizes successful young adults ages 35 years or younger who are involved in farming, but whose primary occupations are not farming or owning an agricultural business. Winners are chosen based on their involvement

in agriculture and participation in Oklahoma Farm Bureau and other community organizations.

The Norvells currently serve on the state YF&R committee and Tyler serves as a Grady County Farm Bureau board member. Both are highly involved in the agricultural industry, as Tyler serves as executive director of the Oklahoma Youth Expo and Beth serves as president of the Diamond Hats club. The family runs a few head of cattle and remains active in Tyler's family farm operation. They reside in Tuttle with their two children, Madilyn and Saylor.

"We have two daughters at home and we're trying to raise them in the same way that we were, in an industry that we

know is vital to this world and it's vital of course to Oklahoma and to our country," Beth Norvell said. "We're doing our best to make sure that production agriculture and the meaning of it is not lost, at least in our family."

The couple received a Polaris four-wheeler, courtesy of Farm Credit of Western Oklahoma, Chisholm Trail Farm Credit and Farm Credit of East Central Oklahoma, an Icehole cooler, and an expense-paid trip to the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting Jan. 10-13 in Orlando, Florida.

The Norvells placed in the top 10 in the National YF&R Excellence in Agriculture Award during the AFBF Annual Meeting.

## Coblentz named YF&R Discussion Meet winner

Charlie Coblentz of Mayes County was named the 2015 Young Farmers and Ranchers Discussion Meet winner at the Oklahoma Farm Bureau 74th Annual

Meeting Nov. 13 in Oklahoma City.

Coblentz competed against five other participants in three rounds of debate-style discussion where performance

was evaluated on the exchange of ideas and information on pre-determined topics. Participants were judged on their ability to offer constructive criticism, cooperation and communication while analyzing agricultural problems and developing solutions.

"It can be very challenging to get your point across because it's very competitive," Coblentz said. "If you stick to the topic, you'll get a chance to make your point. But it was very nerve-racking."

As the state discussion meet winner, Coblentz received a John Deere X320 Lawn Mower, presented by P&K Equipment, an Icehole cooler, and the opportunity to compete in the national discussion meet contest at the American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting Jan. 10-13 in Orlando, Florida.

Coblentz runs a cow-calf operation and dairy farm with his father and brothers in Choteau, Oklahoma. They also grow various row crops including corn, wheat, soybeans and milo.



Charlie Coblentz, second from right, wins the OKFB YF&R Discussion Meet at the 2015 annual meeting on Nov. 13 in Oklahoma City.

## Seminole County receives top county Farm Bureau award

Oklahoma Farm Bureau has named Seminole County as the John I. Taylor Award winner for 2015. The announcement was made at the OKFB 74th Annual Convention Nov. 13 in Oklahoma City.

The John I. Taylor Award is named after OKFB's first president and serves as the organization's highest county honor. County winners are required to earn the Four-Star Presidential Award and excel in at least six different program areas.

"The recognition is great from the state," said Ralph Black, president of Seminole County Farm Bureau. "Our county works really hard to fulfill all we can for our members. We're really proud of our county."

Seminole County is active in multiple program areas including membership, public policy, women's committee, legislative affairs, service to members and safety.



Ralph Black accepts the John I. Taylor award on behalf of the Seminole County Farm Bureau from OKFB Executive Director Monica Wilke.

## Givens receives Farm Bureau Golden Eagle Award

**K**erry Givens of Comanche County Farm Bureau was presented with the Golden Eagle Award Nov. 13 during the Oklahoma Farm Bureau 74th Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City.

The Golden Eagle award is presented each year to the individual or county who has worked to recruit the most new members throughout the year. These memberships are not based on insurance services, but instead are stand-alone members of the federation.

“The people we really go after are the ones that are involved in agriculture that maybe don’t belong to an organization such as Farm Bureau,” Givens said. “They’re actually recipients of things that Farm Bureau has done for many, many years and they don’t even know that.”

As the winner of the Gold Eagle Award, Givens received a traveling trophy and a personalized jacket.



Kerry Givens of Comanche County Farm Bureau receives the Golden Eagle Award, presented to the individual who recruits the most Farm Bureau members in a year.

## Sequoyah County Farm Bureau recognized for local affairs and public relations

**O**klahoma Farm Bureau presented Sequoyah County with the Lewis H. Munn Farm Bureau Builders Award during the OKFB 74th Annual Convention on Nov. 13 in Oklahoma City.

The award is named after the second president of Oklahoma Farm Bureau, and each year a specific area of involvement is

judged for the award. This year’s area was local affairs and public relations.

Sequoyah County Farm Bureau worked to develop relationships with local businesses and people by participating in its local retirement fair, women’s expo and county livestock show. The county promotes its various events with a regular

column in the Sequoyah County Times.

The county also gained publicity by delivering doughnuts to 12 local businesses, presenting a citizenship seminar at the local school, providing the VFW with a new flag and shrubs, and hosting various OKFB safety programs.

## Comanche County honored with top county YF&R award

**O**klahoma Farm Bureau’s Comanche County Young Farmers and Ranchers committee is the 2015 recipient of the Charles L. Roff Award. The award was presented in Oklahoma City at the OKFB 74th Annual Meeting Nov. 13.

The Charles L. Roff Award encourages county YF&R groups to improve their local committees and activity participation while strengthening the Farm Bureau organization.

“It’s a great accomplishment,” said Isaac

Fisher, chairman of Comanche County Farm Bureau. “We’re so proud to have it for all the hard work everyone’s put in in our county.”

The goal of Comanche County YF&R throughout the year was to encourage younger generations to pursue careers in agriculture in the future.

“Basically, we just want to promote agriculture in our county,” Fisher said. “(We) do what we can to spread the word, get the truth out there that we want to

raise a safe and reliable source of food for the world.”

Comanche County’s highlight activities for the year included sponsoring a farmhand olympics, assisting at county livestock shows, judging local speech contests and hosting a commodity tour. Members of the county YF&R also served on various statewide committees in OKFB and the agricultural industry.

The county received a traveling plaque for their outstanding involvement.

## Graves named 2015 Secretary of the Year

**S**hannon Graves of the Payne County Farm Bureau office was honored as the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Secretary of the Year at the OKFB 74th Annual Meeting Nov. 13 in Oklahoma City.

“It’s been the greatest honor I’ve had working anywhere,” said Graves, who has worked for Payne County for two years.

“My board of directors has been so allowing and enthusiastic in all of the activities and events we’ve wanted to participate in. Without their support, there’s no way I could’ve done half of what we accomplished this year.”

County secretaries serve as the face of the county Farm Bureau office with not only customers, but also with potential new members.

“I’m out there talking with people and when they see me they see Farm Bureau, that’s what I want to try to do,” she said.

Graves served Payne County Farm Bureau this year by using social media to showcase county activities, creating activities for Farm Bureau week, organizing an Earth Day community



Shannon Graves of the Payne County Farm Bureau office receives her award for 2015 Secretary of the Year from OKFB Executive Director Monica Wilke.

service project, planning county meetings and receptions, and more.

As Secretary of the Year, Graves received a plaque and an expense-paid

trip to the 2016 American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida in early January.

## OKFB delegates reelect three board members



Monte Tucker  
District Two



Gary Crawley  
District Five



John Grundmann  
District Eight

# ALL AROUND OKLAHOMA



The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee Fall Rally attendees gather in front of a monument at the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center in Duncan, Okla. Nearly 100 women participated in the two-day conference that included various workshops, activities and tours.

## Farm Bureau women gather in Duncan for fall rally

**T**he Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee hosted its 2015 Fall Rally Oct. 30-31 in Duncan, Oklahoma.

Held at the Simmons Center in Duncan, nearly 100 women attended the two-day event featuring various speakers, workshops, entertainment and tours.

"It's always fun and exciting when the women of Farm Bureau gather together," said Kitty Beavers, OKFB WLC chairman. "The conference gives us all a chance to reconnect, learn and fellowship with our friends from across the state."

During the opening lunch, the women heard from Tricia Howell of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services; Shawna McWaters, head of the OSU-OKC Division of Agriculture Technologies; and Amber Powers, Stephens County 4-H member.

Conference workshops featured legislative issues and State Question 777 from John Collision and LeeAnna McNally of OKFB public policy, floral arrangements from a local florist, and prevention of accidental poisoning from the Oklahoma Poison Control Center.

After a day full of activities, the women were entertained with a fashion show from 3 French Hens in Duncan and a concert by the Gospel Travelers.

On Saturday, the women toured the Duncan area, the Stephens County Historical Museum and the Chisholm Trail Heritage Center. The conference ended with a chuck wagon lunch at the heritage center.

To learn more about the WLC, contact Marcia Irvin at 405-523-2300. Find pictures from the event on the Oklahoma Farm Bureau flickr page.



## Samples promoted to vice president of strategic corporate communications

Oklahoma Farm Bureau and Affiliated Companies recently promoted Becky Samples to vice president of strategic corporate communications.

In her new role, Samples will work with senior leadership and oversee communications for Oklahoma Farm Bureau and Affiliated Companies.

“Becky is a tremendous asset to our organization, and we look forward to her leadership in this new role,” said Monica Wilke, executive director, Oklahoma Farm Bureau and Affiliated Companies. “As the state’s largest general farm organization, Becky will lead OKFB’s efforts to efficiently and effectively

communicate with our membership, including policyholders of our insurance company.”

Previously, Samples served as strategic communications director of OKFB. Before joining OKFB, she served as the communications manager for Groendyke Transport in Enid, Oklahoma and as public relations director for the City of Enid.

She is a native of north Alabama and earned her Bachelor of Arts in public relations from Auburn University. Samples is a graduate of Leadership Oklahoma Class XXVIII.



Becky Samples  
Vice President of Strategic  
Corporate Communications

## Collegiate Farm Bureau purchases gifts for Salvation Army, White Fields Boys Home



Left: Nine Collegiate Farm Bureau members from Oklahoma State University visit Kohl's Nov. 30 to purchase Christmas gifts for the Salvation Army's Angel Tree program and the White Fields Boys Home. Above: Tyler Schnaithman (left) and Bray Haven choose a toy to donate.



Monica Wilke, OKFB executive director (middle), and Tyler Norvell, district three YF&R committee member (second from right) receive the Honorary American FFA Degree Oct. 30 at the National FFA Convention in Louisville, Ky. Joining the honorees are Jack Staats, Oklahoma FFA adviser (far left), Travis Bradshaw, Burlington FFA adviser and Honorary American FFA Degree recipient, and Kent Boggs, Oklahoma FFA executive secretary (far right). Photo courtesy of Ron Hays.

## Wilke, Norvell receive Honorary American FFA Degree

**M**onica Wilke, executive director of Oklahoma Farm Bureau and Affiliated Companies, received the Honorary American FFA Degree Oct. 30 at the National FFA Convention & Expo in Louisville, Kentucky. Tyler Norvell, OKFB district three Young Farmers & Ranchers committee member also received the Honorary American FFA Degree.

Presented by the National FFA Organization, the award recognizes individuals committed to advancing agricultural education and FFA. It also creates an opportunity to thank those who have made an extraordinary long-term difference in the lives of students, inspiring confidence in a new generation of agriculturalists.

“Agricultural education and FFA

played a critical role in developing my own leadership skills, and continue to develop young leaders in agriculture,” Wilke said. “As a former member and long-time supporter, I am humbled to receive this award.”

Wilke grew up on a farm in the southwestern Oklahoma town of Grandfield, where she was actively involved in FFA. She served the Oklahoma FFA Association as state FFA secretary during her freshman year at Oklahoma State University.

She continues to serve the Oklahoma FFA Association as a member of the Oklahoma FFA Foundation board of directors. Under Wilke’s direction, Oklahoma Farm Bureau has remained a

“Agricultural education and FFA played a critical role in developing my own leadership skills.”  
— Monica Wilke

supporter of FFA programs including state convention, livestock judging contests, speech contests and more.

Norvell, of Tuttle, serves as the executive director of the Oklahoma Youth Expo, which is known as the world’s largest junior livestock show.



Left: A young livestock judger answers questions on a class of livestock at the OKFB YF&R-sponsored contest. Top Right: A student analyzes a class of sheep during the contest. Bottom Right: OKFB YF&R Chair Zac Harris presents the Central High 4-H team with the first place senior 4-H division plaque.

## YF&R hosts state livestock judging contest

**M**ore than 900 students participated in the Sept. 17 Oklahoma State Fair Livestock Judging Contest, sponsored by Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers.

Contest participants analyzed classes of beef, goats, sheep and swine and ranked the animals based on correct market characteristics.

"It's such a good thing for the kids," said Zac Harris, state YF&R chairman. "It's a good thing for Farm Bureau, too. The kids get to see that we are so much more than just insurance."

A former livestock-judging participant, Harris said he remembers the lessons he

learned by competing in contests.

"It's learning today you might not have been the best today but maybe next week you can go home and study and get a little better," Harris said. "These skills are the foundation for success in whatever career you go into."

Awards were given to top three teams and top three high individuals in the junior 4-H, senior 4-H, junior FFA and senior FFA categories.

In the junior 4-H division, the top three teams were: Kay County, first place; Lindsay 4-H, second place; and Indianola 4-H, third place. In the senior 4-H division, top three teams were: Central

High 4-H, first place; Kingfisher 4-H, second place; and Kay County 4-H, third place. 009682238

In the junior FFA division, top three teams included: Yukon FFA, first place; Kingfisher FFA, second place; and El Reno FFA, third place. In the senior FFA division, top three teams included: Tuttle FFA, first place; Kingfisher FFA, second place; and Weatherford FFA, third place.

For the full list of results, visit [www.JudgingCard.com](http://www.JudgingCard.com). To view available photos of the teams, visit the OKFB flickr page.



## OKFB President Tom Buchanan addresses Oklahoma legislators in water study

Left: OKFB President Tom Buchanan speaks before an Oklahoma House of Representatives interim study on drought conditions and the redistribution of water from eastern Oklahoma to western Oklahoma on Nov. 2. Buchanan reminded the state legislators that the livelihood of Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers depends on the availability of water. J.D. Strong, executive director of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, and Rep. Doug Cox also presented at the study.

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Hannah Nemecek

## Nemecek named OKFB director of public policy communications

**H**annah Nemecek has been named Oklahoma Farm Bureau's director of public policy communications.

In the new position, Nemecek will work alongside the public policy staff to inform OKFB members, legislators and the general public about legislation and policy affecting Oklahoma agriculture.

"Most of the population doesn't understand the importance of agriculture and how legislation and regulation affects the industry," Nemecek said. "I'm excited to share how vital our farmers and ranchers are to the success of our economy and our lives."

Nemecek said her goal is to present the policy news in a simple, easy-to-understand manner.

"I want to provide a central place for all Oklahomans to easily find agricultural policy information," she said.

A native of Skiatook, Oklahoma, Nemecek was hired as a communications specialist after graduating from Oklahoma State University with a degree in agricultural communications.

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# OKFB selects favorite photos from 2015

Right: A curious cow peers over its herdmates in southeastern Oklahoma's McCurtain County.

After combing through photos taken in fields, on farms and in pastures around the state of Oklahoma in 2015, the photo was selected as one of OKFB's favorite photos from the year. The images, assembled in a Flickr gallery, span the calendar year and reflect the hard work and dedication Oklahoma's farmers and ranchers put into growing and raising food, fuel and fiber for the United States and the world.

To view this image and more, visit the OKFB Flickr gallery at [www.flickr.com/photos/okfarmbureau/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/okfarmbureau/).



## Beef for Backpacks

The Beef for Backpacks and Pork for Packs programs use donated cattle and hogs to produce nutritious beef and pork sticks for the Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma and the Community Food Bank of Eastern Oklahoma's Food for Kids program.

For more information on how to donate livestock, contact Thad Doye by phone at (405) 523-2307 or by email at [thad.doye@okfb.org](mailto:thad.doye@okfb.org).

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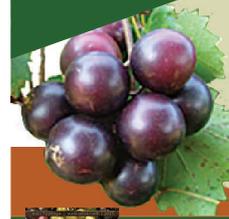
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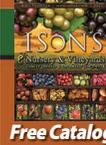
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## Wildlife is a great addition to the winter landscape

By Trisha Gedon  
Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

**A**lthough some people are already counting the days until spring, there is still plenty of cold and wintry weather ahead for Oklahomans.

Winter days can be gray and dreary, and often there is not much to see in the landscape, said David Hillock, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension consumer horticulturist.

“Fortunately for wildlife enthusiasts, the winter landscape can come alive with colorful birds and other watchable wildlife,” Hillock said. “Homeowners can encourage these creatures to visit their yards by giving them a hand during the lean winter months and providing the simple necessities of life – shelter, food and water. As in the summer, birds require food, water and shelter in order to survive. Providing feeders and maintaining woody plants in the landscape will help meet many of these needs.”

Evergreen trees and shrubs provide both food and shelter. If possible, consider a landscape design that mimics the multiple layers of cover found in natural areas. Large trees provide a canopy that protects an understory layer of smaller trees, a layer of shrubs and finally, herbaceous plants close to ground level. These different levels provide a range of habitat for different species of birds, reptiles and mammals.

Hillock said the canopy trees might include oaks, maples, pecans and pines.

“The understory layer is important because it provides nesting sites and roosting sites for many animals,” he said. “The

rounded crown of dogwoods and redbuds provides a protected sheltering place for wildlife. As an added bonus, songbirds will flock to the fruits later in the season.”

The dense foliage of holly trees serves as an ideal roost for a variety of species. Winter fruits attract bluebirds and other thrushes, woodpeckers and mockingbirds. Shrubs provide fruit at different times of the year, and a great selection for the winter landscape is the genus Mahonia. Bundles of silver/blue berries are available in mid to late winter, which are attractive to songbirds.

Low-growing perennials and grasses also provide valuable shelter throughout the winter. Hillock said these plants provide insulated cover for nesting mammals and hibernating reptiles and amphibians. In addition, some even provide a source of seed to birds throughout the winter.

Just as water is vital to human survival, a reliable source of fresh, unfrozen water also is necessary for birds. Water features with moving water are a wonderful and eye-catching addition to any landscape. Because the water is moving, it is less likely to freeze, which is very beneficial to birds. A simple bird bath also will work. Check with your local garden store about a heater that can be used to help keep the water from freezing, but make sure it shuts off when the water reaches about 40 degrees Fahrenheit so it does not get too warm.

A constant supply of water serves a two-fold purpose – not only is water important for birds to drink, but also is important





for bathing and helping the birds keep their feathers clean. Clean feathers insulate better from the cold weather.

When it comes to providing food for the birds, there are many options available. Be sure to match the type of feeder to the type of bird you want to attract.

“Smaller birds such as chickadee, tufted titmouse and finch prefer the tube style feeders. Larger birds, including cardinals and blue jays, like hopper or platform feeders,” Hillock said. “Finally, birds such as the mourning dove prefer to eat seed on the ground.”

Birds prefer different types of food, just as people do. Thistle and black oil sunflowers are great choices for smaller birds. Sunflowers of all types, along with millet, are good for birds that feed on the ground. Woodpeckers and nuthatches prefer suet. A good overall bird feeding mix is white proso millet and black oil sunflower.

Be sure to keep bird feeder placement in mind. Hillock said proper placement of feeders in your landscape can increase the likeliness your feathered friends will stop by for a visit.

“A few other things to remember are feeder shelter and protection from predators, as well as feeder visibility, to ensure as much activity as possible,” he said. “It won’t be long until the colors of spring and summer fill your landscape, but in the meantime, sit back and enjoy the sights and sounds of the wildlife.” 



Photos by David Hillock, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension

## New institute launched to help improve nation's soil health

Organization to be hub for measurement, research, economic analysis and education

**W**ith more than one million organisms in a single teaspoon of Earth, soil is the starting point for plant, animal and human life. It is the foundation for society, providing the basis for food production, healthy families and economies.

To ensure that soil continues to be a vital natural resource for generations to come, The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation and Farm Foundation, NFP, announced the formation of the Soil Health Institute. The announcement coincides with World Soil Day (Dec. 5) and celebrates the 2015 International Year of Soils.

The Soil Health Institute's mission is to safeguard and enhance the vitality and productivity of the soil. It will work directly with conventional and organic farmers and ranchers, public- and private-sector researchers, academia, policymakers, government agencies, industry, environmental groups and consumers – everyone who benefits from healthy soils.

The organization will serve as the primary resource for soil health information, working to set soil health standards and measurement, build knowledge about the economics of soil health, offer educational programs, and coordinate research in all aspects of soil and soil health.

“Leonardo DaVinci once mused ‘We know more about the movement of celestial bodies than about the soil underfoot,’” said Bill Buckner, Noble Foundation president and chief executive officer. “Hundreds of years later that sentiment is just as accurate. The Soil Health Institute will provide much needed research funding so we can better understand our soil. We will make that research publicly available, so we can work together to provide solutions for improving our soil and protecting it for our children and grandchildren.”

The Soil Health Institute is an evolution of the Soil Renaissance, an initiative established in 2013 by the Noble Foundation and Farm Foundation to advance soil health and make it the cornerstone of land use management decisions. The Soil Renaissance brought farmers, ranchers, soil scientists, economists, environmental interests, agribusinesses, NGOs and government agencies together to examine the role of soil health in a vibrant, profitable, sustainable natural ecosystem. Their work identified the need for a national organization to serve as a hub for measurement standards, economic data and coordinated research.

“There are many short-term initiatives in progress that are regionally focused or examining only selected elements of soil and soil health,” said Neil Conklin, Farm Foundation president. “The Soil Health Institute will be a permanent organization that will coordinate the long-term work needed in this area.”

The Noble Foundation will continue to provide financial support for the new institute. Next steps will be to broaden the base of involvement with both private and public entities to provide necessary funding for the Soil Health Institute's activities. 

### How Can You Help?

For more information about the Soil Health Institute, visit [www.soilhealthinstitute.org](http://www.soilhealthinstitute.org).



The Soil Health Institute, established by the Noble Foundation and Farm Foundation, NFP, works to safeguard and enhance the vitality and productivity of the soil.

**Farm Foundation, NFP** serves as a catalyst for sound public policy by providing objective information to foster a deeper understanding of issues shaping the future for agriculture, food systems and rural regions. The Foundation does not lobby or advocate. Its 83-year reputation for objectivity allows it to bring together diverse stakeholders for discussions on economic and public policy issues. The issue of soil health became prominent in discussions of *A Dialogue on Food and Agriculture in the 21st Century*, a Farm Foundation initiative to promote discussions on the challenges to be addressed if agriculture is to feed 9 billion people in 2050, while protecting and maintaining natural resources.

# COUNTRY CLASSIFIEDS

## AUTOMOTIVE

1978 Ford Granada. 28,000 original miles. One owner. Must sell. 580-298-6846.

1968 Mercedes for sale as is. 9.8 Outboard Motor. Needs coils. Looks good, does not run. \$350 OBO. Serial # 2294227. 918-486-5531.

## FARM MACHINERY/EQUIPMENT

Hay for sale: Round grass, alfalfa and square alfalfa. 12-foot Krauss one way on hydraulic. A 5 bottom Case Mow board. 450 Farmall wide front end in barn. 405-556-0504.

Nature form 2000 incubator. Temperature and humidity controls, auto mist. Humidaire 2000, 7 tray hatcher, Model D. Wood pallets, \$5. 580-263-0014.

Fence charger repair. All makes. Rebuilt until for sale. Pioneer Electronics. 580-603-0063 or 580-758-9471.

Propane tank. 500 gallon. 8.5 feet long x 3.5 foot diameter. \$350. 918-366-8759.

JD924 Flex Header with Bish Adapter for Case Combine. \$1900. Text or leave voicemail. 580-541-2326.

## LIVESTOCK

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Serviceable Age Angus or Maine Bulls. Have F.T. 750 gallon Wako. Sprayer ground driven on trailer used very little. 405-381-4307.

Bred cows for sale. Can send pictures or video. 405-258-6559.

Brood mares for sale. Easy Jet, Triple Chick granddaughters. Alive N Firen daughter. If interested, call for more info, we raised these mares. 405-399-2333.

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*Deadline for the next issue is April 29, 2016.*



Used oilfield pipe. 2 3/8; 2 7/8; 4 1/2; large pipe; all sizes sucker rods; 1 1/4" fiberglass posts. 405-627-3920. [www.branchauction.com](http://www.branchauction.com).

Pheasants for sale. Hunt ready. Call for pricing. 580-371-1925 or 757-469-6862.

Antique full size brass bed – no lacquer. \$500. 405-659-0305.

42" pavilion wood drafting table. \$44. 405-659-0305.

Walnut cabinet with 33 1/3 player. 32"x15"x26"height. \$49. 405-659-0305.

Old comic books. 1960 to present. All genres. All conditions. \$20 per dozen. Pick up in Sallisaw. 918-968-5368.

Spring, summer wedding dresses. Size 6 and size 10-12. One \$20 and one \$50. 405-598-1202.

Antique 59-year-old Gretsch Electric Guitar. Has model and serial number inside. Sunburst finish. Nice collector's item. 580-332-2468.

Rainbow Vacuum Cleaner with carpet shampooer. \$2,000 value – asking \$750. Works very well. 580-443-5454.

Solid wood sewing machine cabinet. \$200. 580-824-1041

Homegrown pork and rabbit. Easy payment plan. 300 red cedar fence stays \$1 each. 405-220-2322.

1935 Gilbarco gas pump, 1947 Tokheim 39 short gas pump for sale. Call 405-379-2378.

## REAL ESTATE

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Double wide mobile home near Westcliffe, Colorado. 2.5 acres. Mountain views. Good hunting area. Cotopaxi schools. \$80,000. 719-942-4030.

## WANTED

WANTED: Lake lot/land with view of lake for small cabin. Hudson, Fort Gibson, Tenkiller Area. Will consider other areas. 918-645-1748.

WANTED: Lockwood Tree (Pecan) Shaker, 3 pt. PTO model for parts. Also any JD#30 combine parts you might have in your barn. 918-366-2403.

WANTED: Railroad locks, keys, lanterns, signs, badges and miscellaneous – Especially Oklahoma railroads. 580-399-8866.

WANTED: Unused knitting materials; magazines, books, patterns. Please write to S. Furnish P.O. Box 3613 Bernice, OK 74331. 



Presented by the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee

## Peanut Butter Pie

### Ingredients

1 8-oz. package cream cheese, softened  
2 cups powdered sugar  
2/3 cup peanut butter  
2 8-oz. containers whipped topping

### Preparation/Cooking

Beat cream cheese with powdered sugar. Mix in peanut butter. When well mixed, fold in cool whip. Place in pre-made pie crust of your choice. Makes two pies.

## Rotini Salad

### Ingredients

1 12-oz package rotini noodles, cooked as directed  
1/3 cup onion, chopped  
1 cup bell pepper, chopped  
3 large tomatoes, diced

### Dressing

1 cup mayonnaise  
1/4 cup red vinegar  
1/2 cup sugar  
1 teaspoon salt  
1 teaspoon pepper  
1 teaspoon mustard seed  
1 teaspoon celery seed

### Preparation/Cooking

Mix all ingredients except tomatoes together in a large bowl a day or two before serving. In a separate bowl, combine dressing ingredients.

Pour dressing over pasta mixture. Store in fridge until ready to serve. Mix in tomatoes before serving. 

If you are a Farm Bureau member and want to see your recipes featured in *Oklahoma Country*, send a full list of ingredients along with preparation and cooking instructions to [Hannah.Nemecek@okfb.org](mailto:Hannah.Nemecek@okfb.org) or mail a hard copy to Oklahoma Country Recipes, 2501 N. Stiles Ave., Oklahoma City, OK 73105.

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