

Oklahoma Country

Fall 2024
The magazine of
Oklahoma Farm Bureau

Growing *from* *the* grove

A **Farm Bureau family** shares their journey from harvesting pecans as a seasonal job to becoming a **preeminent pecan processor**.

Achieving the dream

OKFB's 2024 YF&R Achievement Award winner shares his agriculture story

Through the flames

Revisiting recovery efforts as ranchers get back on their feet after February fires

From bottles to books

One young Farm Bureau member turns her ag experience into a children's book

Oklahoma Country

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ON THE COVER

Photo by Dustin Mielke

Justin (left) and Jared Miller of Miller Pecan Company stand in their family's orchard just outside Miami in northeastern Oklahoma.

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Oklahoma Country magazine is the official magazine of Oklahoma Farm Bureau, mailed to Farm Bureau members four times a year. *Oklahoma Country* magazine shares the story of Oklahoma agriculture and our rural communities through the eyes of Farm Bureau members, programs and activities.

ABOUT OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is Oklahoma's largest general farm organization, dedicated to supporting the agriculture community to improve the lives of Oklahomans. As a grassroots, member-led organization, OKFB gives a voice to family farmers and ranchers through advocacy, outreach, leadership development and supporting the future of agriculture.

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Oklahoma Country **Contents**

Fall 2024

Featured stories



10 Growing from the grove
The Miller Pecan Company of Afton shares their passion for pecans.

16 Achieving the dream
Kay County Farm Bureau member Garrett Haskins sees his agricultural dreams come true.



20 From bottles to books
One OKFB member shares agriculture with young readers.



22 Through the flames
Ranchers look back at fire recovery efforts in Ellis County.



28 A positive outlook, a brighter future
Farm Bureau members prepare for OKFB's 2024 annual meeting.

Columns

6 Presidentially Speaking
Rodd Moesel, President

8 Executive Outlook
Thad Doye, Executive Director

Sections

20 Farm Bureau People

24 Farm Bureau Membership Value

26 Farm Bureau Advocacy

28 Farm Bureau Events

38 Farm Bureau Outreach

40 Farm Bureau Organization

42 All Around Oklahoma

46 Oklahoma Gardening

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETINGS



THE OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU, INC.

To all members of The Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Inc., and all affiliated county Farm Bureaus of Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Inc.: You are hereby notified that Oklahoma Farm Bureau, Inc., will convene its regular annual meeting of the members and the delegate body on Saturday, November 9, 2024 at 8:45 a.m. at the Omni Oklahoma City Hotel, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. All affiliated county Farm Bureaus should make certain that your delegates are properly certified in attendance to represent your membership. This meeting will continue until all necessary business is transacted.

— Board of Directors



OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Policyholders of Oklahoma Farm Bureau Mutual Insurance Company will begin at 8:45 a.m. on Saturday, November 9, 2024, during the Oklahoma Farm Bureau annual meeting. A report will be submitted of the activities of the company during the past fiscal year, together with a report of the financial position of the company. Any and all other activities of the company may be presented and considered.

- Board of Directors



Rodd Moesel

*President
Oklahoma Farm Bureau
& Affiliated Companies*

“Whether you vote in person or by an absentee ballot, I encourage you to register or verify your voter registration, make a plan to vote and cast your ballot.”

Grassroots at every level

Oklahoma Farm Bureau works to be the voice of family farmers, ranchers and rural Oklahoma, our ability to serve our state’s agriculture community comes from our members’ grassroots involvement at every level of our organization.

From the county level all the way to Washington, D.C., the voice of Farm Bureau members working together is vital to making sure our friends, neighbors, leaders and public officials all understand the importance of agriculture and rural Oklahoma.

I appreciate every Farm Bureau member who attended their county Farm Bureau annual meeting. Our counties are the foundation of our organization, and attending your local annual meeting is an important way to learn about the great work all 77 county Farm Bureaus are taking on in their local communities.

A key way our grassroots voices are heard from the local level all the way up to our state legislature and even to Congress is the time-tested policy development process that makes OKFB relevant and strong. I have enjoyed seeing the local resolutions our members have submitted that tackle the challenges and address the opportunities they see in agriculture and rural Oklahoma. As you read this issue of our magazine, our state resolutions committee will be working through the resolutions submitted by county Farm Bureaus as we prepare for our state convention.

I look forward to seeing Farm Bureau friends from across the state at OKFB’s annual meeting Nov. 8-10 at the Omni Hotel in Oklahoma City. From our main sessions packed with speakers and our annual business meeting to breakout sessions and fellowship

with Farm Bureau members, our convention is a great way to exchange ideas, discuss our concerns and develop our shared vision for the future of our industry.

I am also excited that we will have a chance to celebrate Rep. Frank Lucas’ 2024 American Farm Bureau Distinguished Service Award that he won earlier this year. Frank has been a friend personally as well as a friend to agriculture, and we were so excited to see him honored nationally for his important contributions to agricultural policy and, specifically, numerous farm bills that have improved the farm programs our members use on their operations.

As we look toward the future, I hope you will join me in making our rural voices heard by voting in the upcoming Nov. 5 general election. From local and county races to state legislative races all the way up to the election of our next president, this election will shape the future of our nation. Whether you vote in person or by an absentee ballot, I encourage you to register or verify your voter registration, make a plan to vote and cast your ballot. Electing our leaders is one of our most precious rights as Americans, and I encourage all Farm Bureau members to learn about the candidates and the issues and head to the polls Nov. 5.

As we head into the 2025 Oklahoma legislative session armed with a new Farm Bureau policy book, and new legislative leaders with a new speaker of the House and president pro tempore of the Senate alongside newly elected legislators. It is vital that we all make our voices heard at every level of our organization in addition to the ballot box to continue the Farm Bureau tradition of grassroots advocacy from our local communities to our nation’s Capitol.



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Farm Bureau and agriculture commentary from Oklahoma Farm Bureau Executive Director Thad Doye

Farm Bureau: something for everyone



Thad Doye
Executive Director
Oklahoma
Farm Bureau

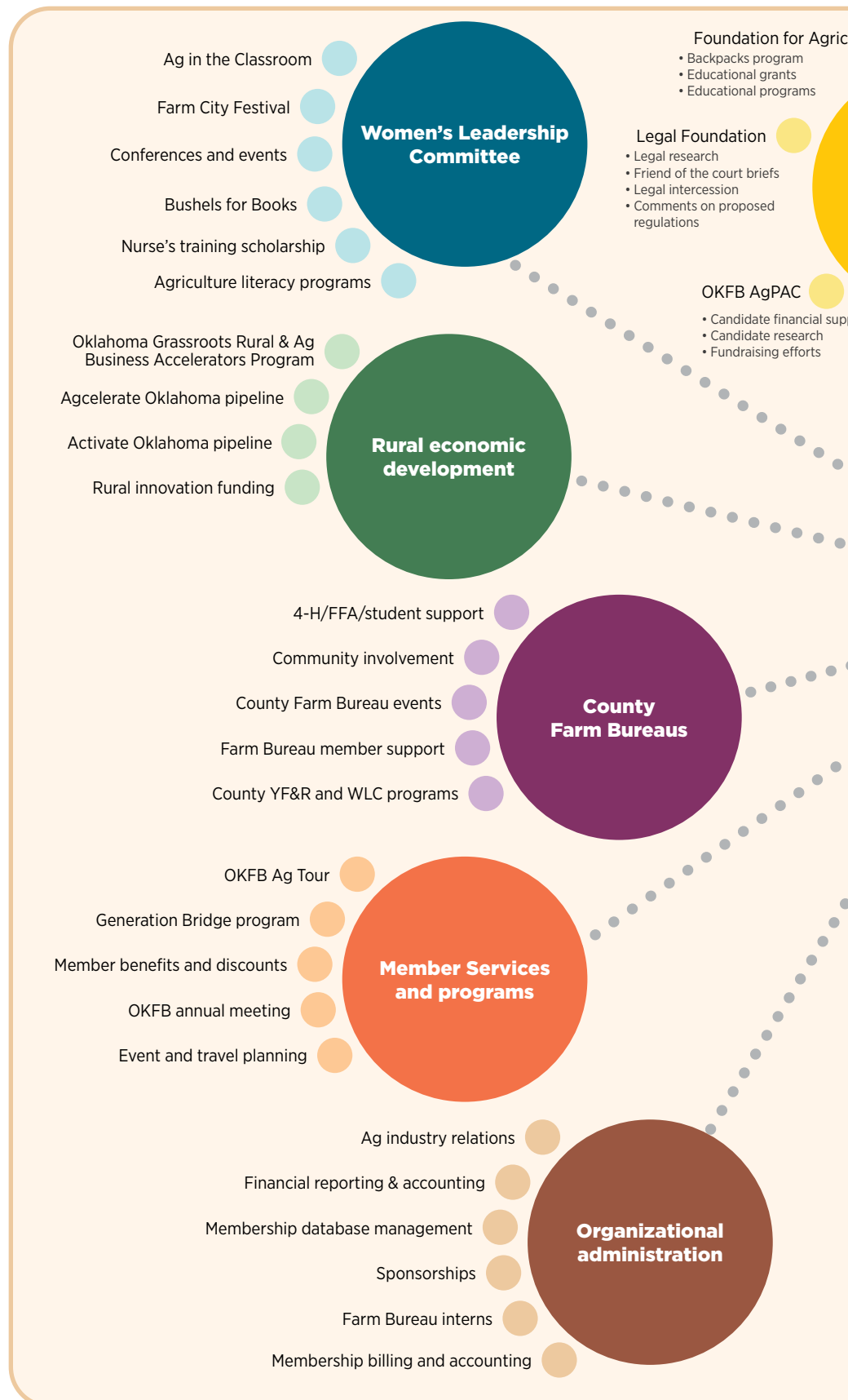
As I travel around the state and the nation sharing the important and exciting work Oklahoma Farm Bureau takes on to support our state's agriculture community, I often find myself explaining what Farm Bureau does to folks I meet.

While on the surface it may seem easy to explain the activities and programs of our state's largest general farm organization, in our 80-plus years of progress and growth, we have built a formidable array of programs that touch seemingly all areas of agriculture and rural life.

The list of our activities is long and varied. To help explain and visualize all that we do, I have started using the chart shown to the right that encapsulates many of the initiatives that OKFB is proud to host, conduct and support.

As you look at the chart, I encourage you to find programs or activities that you might not be as familiar with. Each and every one of our members and staff have their own "Farm Bureau world," but when we look outside those boundaries we can find more ways to be active and engaged.

While this chart is impressive, I find it even more amazing that we could keep adding on to it if we had more space. OKFB members can be proud of the work their organization does for our state, and rest assured, there are more ideas, programs and progress on the horizon.







*Justin (left) and Jared Miller
of Miller Pecan Company*



Growing *from the* grove

The Miller family has grown their pecan legacy from harvesting trees in their spare time to a state-of-the-art pecan cracking and retail business.

Story and photos by Dustin Mielke

Just off Route 66 in northeast Oklahoma, the Miller Pecan Country Market greets travelers entering the town of Afton.

A sprawling storefront welcomes visitors, travelers and locals, enticing them to step inside the store, which features a wide array of pecans, candies, snacks, Made in Oklahoma products and more.

As shoppers browse their way through the market, enjoying the pecans and products the Miller family has carefully curated, they are unaware of the flurry of activity happening just down the hallway where the Miller family and their employees are busy sorting, cracking and processing pecans that will not only be featured on the shelves of their own market, but will also be shipped across the country for families to enjoy.

Brothers Jared and Justin Miller have built the sprawling pecan processing plant and storefront that complements their own pecan grove in a short 10-year span. The Millers created a state-of-the-art facility that transforms pecans from fresh-off-the-farm nuts to pecan halves and pieces that are used in confectionery items, baked goods and even enjoyed by the handful.

“We pretty much do everything from farm to table, from starting on the farm,” Jared said.

Starting in their sprawling 800-acre orchard that is home to rows and rows of pecan trees to their on-farm cleaning facility to their cracking facility in Afton, the Millers handle every step of the process from planting and grafting new trees to selling packaged pecans in their storefront.

The Miller family’s story – just like the pecans they sell – started in a northeastern Oklahoma pecan orchard.



Justin Miller

Jared Miller recalled helping his father harvest pecans when Jared himself was growing up in northeastern Oklahoma. Equipped with a pecan harvester pulled by a four-wheeler, Jared's dad began harvesting pecans for a little extra money as Jared and his brother, Justin, picked up sticks and dragged gunny sacks around area orchards.

"We started off really, really small," Jared said. "My dad started off just basically harvesting pecans for Christmas money and extra bill money, just picking a few thousand pounds in the beginning. It's just kind of grown from there."

As the family grew their pecan harvesting business, they leased more and more acres of pecan orchards and eventually purchased their own orchard, which they worked to grow and expand.

Today, the Millers' pecan orchards include immaculate rows of mature trees in addition to newly planted and maturing trees that they are nurturing into full production.

"Currently our native pecan production is around 723 acres, and we probably have about another 100 acres of improved varieties that we were harvesting," Jared said of the orchard. "Some of it's not in full production, and we also have another couple hundred acres of little baby trees anywhere from one year old to six or seven years old that are coming online in the near future."

"In our area, it takes close to 10 to 12

years to get trees to be big enough to put a mechanical shaker on and shake them. So it's a 401(k) investment."

As the Millers looked toward expanding their farm in the 2010s, they considered purchasing more land and pecan groves, but with land availability tight and land prices high, Jared and Justin decided to expand their pecan business vertically by starting a pecan processing plant.

"You know, when you're a farmer, if it's raining, you're basically unemployed that day," Jared said. "It's good thing and a bad thing when you're off work. But you know, we started the processing plant thinking we could work on rainy days, cold days, hot days, and, you know, it just fills in a lot of gaps."

The Millers opened their new pecan processing facility in 2014, planning to work their way through the pecans they produced in their own orchard. By the end of the season, they had cracked just under half a million pounds of pecans.

"We just planned on doing our own crop, and I think our first year we ended up cracking double what we produced that year," Jared said. "It's just grown ever since then."

Today, the Millers not only crack pecans they grow in their own orchard, but they also purchase pecans to process from neighboring orchards in addition to pecan growers from around the state, the region and the country with pecans coming as far away as Georgia.

While their own orchard currently supplies between 7% and 10% of the pecans the family processes each year, the search for quality pecans to keep the cracking plant running most of the year keeps Jared busy as he buys and sells pecans that are trucked to the family's plant in Afton.

"I've bought and sold more pecans from a tractor cab than I ever have from an office," Jared said.

What began in 2014 with the Millers processing around 400,000 pounds of pecans has grown tremendously. Today, Jared estimates the facility handles nearly 8 million pounds of pecans per year.

The Millers proudly maintain SQF level three certification – the highest level of safety standard offered by the Global Food Safety Initiative.

Starting each September, the first shipments of new-crop pecans begin arriving from Georgia. As the cracking season continues, pecans from Oklahoma and surrounding states arrive as harvest progresses across the pecan belt, supplying the pecans the family needs to keep the plant humming until summertime when the plant is broken down for a deep-cleaning.

When pecans are delivered to the Millers' plant, Jared said the nuts are inspected and unloaded, then put into a freezer to ensure quality. When the nuts are ready to process, they are run through the cracking line where they are sized, sanitized, cracked, sorted and thoroughly inspected before



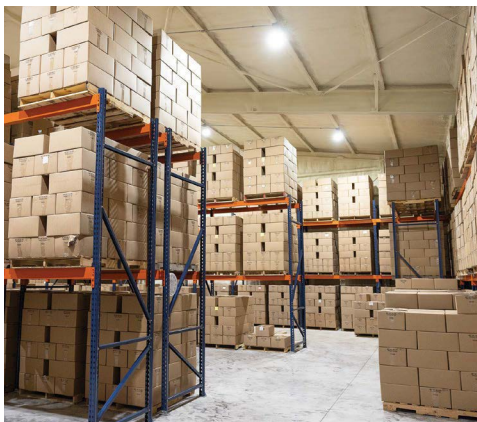
The Miller family's store welcomes customers along Route 66 near Afton.



The Millers' processing plant sizes, cracks and sorts pecans.



Employees inspect pecan halves as a final step before packaging.



Four large freezers keep pecans fresh.



Jared inspects pecans as they grow.



Jared and Justin with a color sorter.



Jared Miller

being packaged and put back into one of four freezers, which offer around 17,000 square feet of storage that helps keep the nuts fresh.

“What a lot of people don’t realize is that pecans are a produce, and they have natural oils,” Jared said. “They do go downhill sitting outside on your counter or shelf, so people can always just store them in the freezer.”

Justin oversees the plant operations where state-of-the-art equipment sizes pecans by 1/16-inch increments, and eye sorter machines use cameras and infrared sensors to rapidly inspect pecans by color and quickly eject shell fragments and retain high-quality pecans.

The Miller family keeps different varieties of pecans separate, allowing their customers on both the retail and wholesale sides of the business to get the exact types of pecans they desire.

The final step in the process is a hands-on inspection where the Millers’ employees watch pecans coming down the line and serve as a final step in removing undesirable

pieces before the nuts are packaged and put into the freezer to await shipping to destinations far and wide.

The family ships both whole pecans and pecan pieces around the country – and beyond – to be used in a variety of food and confectionery products.

“Most pecan pieces are going to confectioneries,” Jared said. “They go to ice cream makers, bread makers, cakes, cupcakes and everything. Some of the pieces go to candy and major pieces are used a lot to sprinkle on either cakes or pecan logs or on candy. The halves are either going to pie manufacturers or they’re getting covered in chocolate or being used in some form of candy.”

Jared said the Millers are the northernmost pecan processor in the pecan belt. While the majority of shelling plants are spread from New Mexico to Georgia, the Millers’ more northern location makes them an ideal source of pecans for one of their customers in Canada. Jared said the family has even shipped pecans through a broker to Dubai.

While the Millers sell pecan halves and wholes by the truckload for use in confectionery, bread and other food products, their retail store serves as a welcome stop along Route 66 for travelers from around the state, nation and even the world to rest and browse a wide array of pecan-based products from the Miller’s own orchard and beyond.

What is now a sprawling store and gift shop almost did not make the cut as the Millers built their first processing facility.

“We almost didn’t build it,” Jared said of the market. “We thought, ‘Well, yes, we do want to do that too,’ but we also wondered how much traffic we would get considering where we’re located since we’re about a mile off the interstate. But we are on Route 66, so that really helps us out a bunch. But it went really well.”

After spending nine years in a 30-foot by 30-foot space, the family’s latest remodel last year tripled the size of the store, including expanded restroom facilities for buses.



Inside the store, decorated displays of pecan products span the spectrum from bags of fresh pecans to pecan oils and pies and from a wide array of pecan candies to gift items including shirts and souvenirs.

As a true example of “build it and they will come,” the Millers and their employees now get to meet travelers from around the globe who stop by the family’s store as they make their way down Route 66.

“It amazes me how many people come to this country just to drive Route 66,” Jared said. “They come from all different countries.”

The Millers also offer gift boxes of pecans and pecan products for organizations to sell as fundraisers in addition to selling gift packs during the holidays. Jared said the packs make a great gift for someone looking for a unique and welcomed gift.

No matter if it is a tourist from halfway around the world or a local neighbor popping in to buy some pecans for fall baking season, the Millers and their employees strive to


produce the highest quality pecans they can as they tend to the store, work in the plant and care for the trees in their orchards.

“And that’s how we strive to be known: shelling the best of the best quality stuff,” Jared said.

One visible sign of success is the growing facility the Millers originally built in 2014. Since beginning their pecan processing operation, Jared said the family has added on to the plant nine times in the past decade with the next addition already on the horizon.

As the next generation of Millers gets involved in the family operation, Jared said it will be up to them to decide what the future holds for the family business.

For the time being, Jared and Justin Miller are committed to producing quality pecans for friends, neighbors and customers around the nation.

“We just always want to do the best job that we can and really share with people what we get to see as farmers,” Jared said. 

Visit the Miller Pecan Company

If your autumn travels take you to northeastern Oklahoma, be sure to stop by Miller Pecan Company located at 21853 S. Highway 69 in Afton.

You can also visit their website at MillerPecanCompany.com to see all the products they offer, check out recipes featuring pecans and learn more about their fundraising offerings.

A special offer for Oklahoma Country readers

Join the Miller Pecan Nut Club online for special offers, and mention this *Oklahoma Country* article to receive **15% off your first order** using discount code **FARBUREAU15%**





Achieving the Dream

2024 YF&R Achievement Award winner and Kay County Farm Bureau member Garrett Haskins takes achievement to a different level.

Story by: Kate Jackson Photos by: Dustin Mielke

Getting up every morning and going to work on his northern Oklahoma farm is the greatest achievement for Kay County Farm Bureau member Garrett Haskins.

While today he works on his farm north of Blackwell raising crops and cattle, Haskins' path to becoming a full-time farmer didn't start at birth.

"When you do something you love every day, it's not work," Haskins said.

Haskins grew up off the farm with his grandparents. He had an uncle who custom-harvested crops for area farmers based out of Crescent, Oklahoma, who served as an agricultural mentor.

Haskins was introduced to his first combine at 12 years old. Every summer, Haskins would run combine for his uncle. When his uncle retired, Haskins purchased the combine from him and started custom-harvesting crops for community members in the Blackwell area.

The headquarters of the farm Haskins operates by himself today holds a special place in his heart. He began mowing the lawn for the farmer who previously owned the operation when Haskins was 10. As Haskins' interest in

agriculture developed and their relationship grew, Haskins was promoted to farming at age 14, allowing the farm's owner to focus on raising cattle.

Throughout the years, Haskins continued to work on the farm during the summers. When Haskins graduated high school, he took over the farm.

The farmer Haskins worked alongside lost a combine to fire about the same time Haskins purchased his uncle's combine, providing an opportunity for Haskins to move his machine to the farm and harvest the farmer's wheat and other crops.

"He sent me to OSU for four years and told me I was going to come back to the farm to take it over," Haskins said.

While Haskins was in college, he came back to the farm to work on the weekends and during the summer. During his junior year of college, he took over the farm full time in addition to his full college class schedule.

"He gave me a start and said, 'You can carry on with that,'" Haskins said about the farmer who gave him the opportunity to farm.

Haskins bought back some of the farm's



original cows that a neighbor purchased once he was out of college and farming full time.

Haskins continued to run his custom harvesting business in the Blackwell area for about 10 years.

“Everyone I custom cut for asked if I would start farming their land for them,” Haskins said. “They were older people and didn’t have anyone coming back to the farm, so I started farming their land.”

As the farm grew, Haskins got out of the custom harvesting business in 2017 and focused on farming full time.

“It’s been my goal since college to be able to say I’ve farmed all my life, and I have never done anything else,” Haskins said.

“When you do something you love every day, it’s not work.”

Today Haskins has grown his operation to around 100 cows along with 2,000 acres of farmland and 1,000 acres of pasture. His current crop rotation is wheat, milo, soybeans and alfalfa. He has integrated no-till farming practices, focused on modern seed selection and installed GPS-guided precision agriculture systems in his current tractors.

Growing up, Haskins was involved with Boy Scouts and went on to become an Eagle Scout. He has taken his leadership skills and applied them to his roles on the Kay County Farm Bureau board.

Haskins has made his own path with OKFB, serving as a leader on his county Farm Bureau board as a board member and even



as president. He also serves on the OKFB YF&R State Committee as the District 7 representative.

“Being able to farm on my own as young as I started has been quite an accomplishment for me,” Haskins said. “It takes a lot of hard work and dedication.”

Haskins was recognized for his agricultural achievements as the 2024 Oklahoma Farm Bureau YF&R Achievement Award winner.


As the 2024 YF&R Achievement award winner, Haskins will travel to San Antonio for the national competition in January 2025. The YF&R Achievement award recognizes young farmers who make their sole income from the farm alone.

“They took a kid like me, and I guess God really can make a farmer.”

Haskins’ hard work and love for agriculture have been the backbone of his success, earning him the YF&R Achievement award. However, Haskins does not take all the credit himself for his successful farming career.

“I would contribute most of my success to the people in my surrounding community,” Haskins said. “I don’t take the credit for it; they’re the reason for giving me a chance.”

Although Haskins’ farming career didn’t start from birth, his mentors instilled a love for farming in him as a young boy.

“They carved out a life for me I didn’t even see,” Haskins said. “They took a kid like me, and I guess God really can make a farmer.” 

From Bottles to Books

Story by: Kate Jackson | Photo by: Dustin Mielke

When Major County Farm Bureau member Paisley White started caring for a local bottle calf, it was the beginning of more than just an experience in animal husbandry.

The adventures of the calf – named Scout – soon found their way into the agriculture-accurate children’s book that White wrote and illustrated: “Scout the Scottish Highlander.”

White, a high school senior, has spent her entire life in agriculture. She grew up on her family’s western Oklahoma farm, was a Major County 4-H club member and is currently a Fairview FFA member.

The inspiration for White’s book began when a family in their area that raises Scottish highland cattle posted on social media that they had a bottle calf. White’s mom showed her the post and thought she needed to take care of the calf.

“I ended up bottle feeding this calf all throughout the winter,” White said.

White said her mom came up with the idea for her to write a children’s book about raising the calf. As Scout became a project for White, she started writing a story featuring Scout while creating her own illustrations with watercolors.

“I wanted to make sure this book had facts in it besides the actual story,” White said. “We added factual terms, but we had to explain them throughout the book so children would be able to understand them.”

Once she had the story down, White needed to have a picture to go with each page that put into perspective what Scout was actually doing, she said. White said most people don’t realize how many pictures go into a book like the one she created.

“I never thought I would’ve written a

book as a junior in high school,” White said. “Although I have been writing stories in my free time since about the second grade, so it wasn’t surprising that a book came from it.”

“Scout the Scottish Highlander” tells the story of a highland calf whose mother could not take care of him because she had mastitis. Scout became a bottle calf that needed love and care. Paisley, the author’s namesake and Scout’s caretaker in the book, took him in and gave him a place to stay while he was still a bottle calf. Throughout the book, Scout and Paisley become friends and have adventures out in the barnyard, one of them being Scout running through a fence.


The first time White read the book was to a local pre-K class that came out to the family’s farm to meet Scout. The students had the opportunity to learn first-hand how calves are fed and raised.

“In the future I’d like to be a Pre-K teacher,” White said. “The book allows me to bring some of the ag world into the education world.”

“I feel like I’m getting to experience bringing ag into my future classroom before I become a pre-K teacher in the future.”

Since the book has been released, White has had numerous opportunities to read her book to local pre-K classes, including during September’s Read an Accurate Ag Book Week. She also had the opportunity to attend the Oklahoma Agriculture in the Classroom conference with a booth to share her own book with Oklahoma educators.

“Yes, this is an accurate agriculture book,” White said. “But it’s a true story.”

You can find “Scout the Scottish Highlander” on Amazon to purchase your very own copy. 

Paisley White proudly displays her ag-accurate book "Scout the Scottish Highlander."





Bill Peetoom stands in one of his family's Ellis County pastures that was ravaged by wildfires in February 2024. After a summer's worth of growth and rest from grazing, the grass made strides in recovering in the wake of disaster.

THROUGH THE FLAMES

Story and photos by Dustin Mielke

Ellis County ranchers look back on a summer of recovery, hope and resilience after wind-fueled wildfires ravaged their farms and ranches in February 2024.

As Bill Peetoom drives down gravel roads that crisscross Ellis County, Oklahoma, just a few miles from the Texas border, he points out contrasting colors and patterns in the grass pastures and prairies on either side of his pickup.

To the casual observer, the grass appears to be a solid, unified stand of native and improved prairies, but Peetoom can identify where fires blackened the rolling hills as catastrophic wildfires – fueled by winds – ripped across the county in February 2024.

The day the fires broke out, Peetoom received a call while in nearby Cheyenne alerting him to the fires near his family's ranch headquarters.

As he headed back home to the Shattuck area, Peetoom said he recalled what it was like driving north toward the billowing smoke.

"When I was coming home from Cheyenne, it was just paralyzing to think what you could be coming back to," Peetoom said.

The Catesby Fire burned more than 90,000 acres in Ellis county, and was one of several wildfires that roared across western Oklahoma and the Texas Panhandle. More than 152,000 acres burned in Oklahoma alone, according to the Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management.

Immediately following the fire, donations of hay bales, fencing supplies, cash and more poured into

the area from across the state and the region. The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture purchased fuel cards to refuel trucks delivering donated hay.

When OKFB visited with Peetoom a week after the fires, there were many unanswered questions: How much hay was needed to carry ranchers through the winter? How long would it be until the pastures were usable? How long would recovery efforts take?

Six months later on a mid-September day, Peetoom stood in one of his pastures that had been scorched by fires. A few hundred feet away sat stock trailers with the tires burned off. A corner post on a nearby fence was blackened but mostly intact.



March 2024



September 2024

Aside from the burned equipment and torched fence line, the grasses, trees and other plants looked the way one would expect for late summer. Peetoom said timely rains helped burned areas bounce back with life, and he elected to keep cattle off recovering land, helping the much-needed forage to reestablish itself.

“It was just a matter of a few weeks before we started getting some showers, and everything started greening up immediately,” Peetoom said. “That moisture came at the right time to really set things off and grow back. We had also had a really good year the year before. The rains the year before came later, so we had green up into the fall, and it actually carried over a little bit of moisture.”

“With the timeliness of the rains this spring combined with the little bit of the carryover we had, it just fell together and the recovery we had was just phenomenal.”

Peetoom said the hay donations that poured into the area likely saved several ranchers from liquidating their herds after losing almost all their available forage in late winter.

“It saved a lot of ranches,” Peetoom said of the donated hay. “Practically everybody in our area lost some if not all of their hay and different amounts of pasture land from marginal burns to complete burns. The ones with the more complete burns, a lot of them lost numerous cattle, which in some cases were insured to a certain extent. Some of them had no insurance on the cattle themselves.”

“There were numerous ranches that would have had to sell out because they had no pasture and no hay. If it hadn’t been for the donated hay, their operations were done right there.”

Beyond the grass lost during the


fire, area ranchers lost miles and miles of fences. Peetoom said the first crews were able to start rebuilding fence on his family’s ranch in early September due to the sheer scale of rebuilding efforts in the area.

“My estimate right now is that between our two places, we’re probably going to end up having somewhere between \$120,000 and \$150,000 worth of fencing replaced, which basically is 20 years’ worth of fencing costs,” Peetoom said. “And that’s just getting us up and functional.”

In addition to the lost forage, equipment and sadly even cattle in the fire, Dennie Jenkins, a rancher and a member of the Catesby Volunteer Fire Department, said seven homes were lost north of Shattuck, impacting several rural families.

Jenkins said the lush grass across the area, particularly in acres enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, presents a challenge to the volunteer fire departments who serve as the first line of defense for their neighbors during a fire.

“That grass gets all the way from knee-high to waist-high, and gets thick as hair on a dog,” Jenkins said. “When fires go through that grass, it takes a lot of water to knock down those flames.”

Through the efforts of local and regional fire departments, lives and properties were protected from the flames. With the influx of support from the Oklahoma and Texas agricultural communities, livelihoods were sustained until the grass returned. Amidst ongoing recovery efforts and prayers for timely rains, Peetoom and his neighbors will carry on their ranching legacies thanks to the blessings of community. 

*The Oklahoma Farm Bureau
Foundation for Agriculture*

SUPPORTING VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS

In the aftermath of the February 2024 fires in western Oklahoma, the Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture collected donations that poured in from around the country to support the affected agricultural producers and rural communities.

The foundation, Oklahoma Farm Bureau and Oklahoma Farm Bureau Insurance each donated \$30,000 to match relief donations. Within a week of the fires, \$10,000 worth of fuel cards were donated to support the transportation of donated hay into the affected areas.

The foundation is making additional donations in October 2024 to the rural volunteer fire departments that responded to the fires, helping them replenish funds and maintain readiness.

50

*Rural volunteer fire departments
received donations of \$2,000 each*

\$110,000

*In donations and matching funds
given to fire relief efforts*



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Learn more about all the benefits available to OKFB members on OKFB's website at okfarmbureau.org/benefits, or use the brochure that is mailed with every membership renewal bill.



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2024

General Election

A preview of what to expect on the ballot in November

Voters across the United States will take to the polls on Tuesday, Nov. 5, for the 2024 general election. In addition to the presidential ticket, Oklahomans will cast their ballots in two state questions and a number of congressional, statewide, state Senate and state House races. Following is a preview of all Oklahoma-specific races taking place in November and the candidates who will appear on the ticket.

Incumbent candidates are listed with an asterisk ().*

State Questions

SQ 833: Public Infrastructure Districts Amendment

This measure adds a new section, section 9E, to article 10 of the Oklahoma Constitution. Section 9E will permit the creation of public infrastructure districts to provide support, organization, operation, and maintenance of services. To create such a district, proponents for creating the district must file a petition with the municipality. The petition must include the signatures of one hundred percent of all surface property owners falling within the district's proposed boundaries. The municipality possesses the right to impose limitations on the district's powers prior to approving the district. Once approved, the district will be governed by a board of trustees.

Through the board, the district may issue bonds to pay for all or part of all public improvements

implemented by and for the public infrastructure district. The district will be limited to issuing bonds issued for such improvements not exceeding ten (10) mills. For repayment of the bonds, the district, acting through its board of trustees, will levy and assess a special assessment on all property benefiting from the improvements in the district. Section 9E also authorizes the Legislature to enact laws necessary for the implementation of public infrastructure districts.

SQ 834: Citizenship Requirement for Voting Amendment

This measure amends Section 1 of Article 3 of the Oklahoma Constitution. It clarifies that only citizens of the United States are qualified to vote in this state.

Federal Races

U.S. Congress - District 1

Kevin Hern (R)*
Dennis Baker (D)
Mark David Garcia Sanders (I)

U.S. Congress - District 2

Josh Brecheen (R)*
Brandon Wade (D)
Ronnie Hopkins (I)

U.S. Congress - District 4

Tom Cole (R)*
Mary Brannon (D)
James Stacy (I)

U.S. Congress - District 5

Stephanie Bice (R)*
Madison Horn (D)

Statewide Races

Corporation Commissioner

Brian Bingman (R)
Harold Spradling (D)
Chad Williams (I)

State Senate Races

Senate District 3

Julie McIntosh (R)
Margaret Cook (I)

Senate District 7

Warren Hamilton (R)*
Jerry Donathan (D)

Senate District 15

Lisa Standridge (R)
Elizabeth Foreman (D)

Senate District 21

Randy Grellner (R)
Robin Fuxa (D)

Senate District 25

Brian Guthrie (R)
Karen Ann Gaddis (D)

Senate District 33

Christi Gillespie (R)
Bob Willis (D)

Senate District 35

Dean Martin (R)
Jo Anna Dossett (D)*

Senate District 37

Aaron Reinhardt (R)
Andrew Nutter (I)

Senate District 39

Dave Rader (R)*
Melissa Bryce (D)

Senate District 43

Kendal Sacchieri (R)
Sam Graefe (D)

Senate District 46

Charles Barton (R)
Mark Mann (D)
David Pilchman (I)

State Senate 47

Kelly Hines (R)
Erin Brewer (D)

State House Races**House District 1**

Eddy Dempsey (R)*
Victoria Lawhorn (L)

House District 4

Bob Ed Culver (R)*
Christopher Wier (D)

House District 12

Mark Chapman (R)
Crystal LaGrone (D)

House District 16

Scott Fetgatter (R)*
Rosie Lynch (D)

House District 20

Jonathan Wilk (R)
Mitchell Jacob (D)

House District 26

Dell Kerbs (R)*
Kerri Keck (D)

House District 34

Andrew Muchmore (R)
Trish Ranson (D)*

House District 37

Ken Luttrell (R)*
Carter Rogers (I)

House District 38

John Pfeiffer (R)*
Doyle Lewis (D)

House District 39

Erick Harris (R)*
Richard Prawdzienski (I)

House District 41

Denise Crosswhite-Hader (R)*
Mike Bockus (D)

House District 43

Jay Steagall (R)*
Cassie Kinet (I)

House District 45

Matt Watson (R)
Annie Menz (D)*
Robert Murphy (L)

House District 46

Alexander Torvi (R)
Jacob Rosecrants (D)*

House District 62

Daniel Pae (R)*
Allison Offield (D)

House District 63

Trey Caldwell (R)*
Shykira Smith (D)

House District 64

Rande Worthen (R)*
Tom Sutherlin (D)

House District 66

Clay Staires (R)*
Kenneth Blevins (L)

House District 70

Brandley Banks (R)
Suzanne Schreiber (D)*

House District 74

Mark Vancuren (R)*
Aaron Brent (I)

House District 79

Paul Hassink (R)
Melissa Provenzano (D)*

House District 83

Eric Roberts (R)*
Jimmy Lawson (D)

House District 84

Tammy West (R)*
Jeremy Lamb (D)

House District 85

David Hooten (R)
Cyndi Munson (D)*

House District 86

David Hardin (R)*
Anne Fite (D)

House District 87

Dave Schnitter (R)
Ellyn Hefner (D)*

House District 88

Ellen Pogemiller (D)
Bobby McCollum (I)

House District 90

Emily Gise (R)
Nana Dankwa (D)

House District 94

Suzanne Jobe (R)
Andy Fugate (D)*

House District 95

Max Wolfley (R)*
Tegan Malone (D)

House District 98

Gabe Woolley (R)
Cathy Smythe (D)

House District 100

Marilyn Stark (R)*
Chaunte Gilmore (D)



Preview your official ballot on the OK Voter Portal at okfb.news/VoterInfo.



A POSITIVE OUTLOOK, *A BRIGHTER FUTURE*

OKLAHOMA FARM BUREAU'S 83RD ANNUAL MEETING

NOVEMBER 8-10 • OKLAHOMA CITY

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members are invited to attend the organization's 83rd annual meeting Nov. 8-10 at the Omni Hotel in Oklahoma City.

As the largest annual gathering of Farm Bureau members, OKFB's annual meeting is a chance to discuss, learn and grow alongside fellow farmers and ranchers.

The jam-packed weekend will be filled with general sessions, speakers, policy discussions, fellowship with Farm Bureau members and more.

The 2024 annual meeting marks the second year at the Omni Hotel in downtown Oklahoma City. The Omni offers a number of in-house dining options and is only minutes away from many downtown restaurants and entertainment venues.

The annual meeting will include grassroots business sessions where Farm Bureau members will consider, discuss and vote on new policy resolutions submitted by county Farm Bureaus. The resolutions passed at the annual meeting will be added to the OKFB policy book, which serves as a guide for the organization during Oklahoma's legislative session each year.

Farm Bureau members will elect new leaders throughout the weekend. Districts 2, 5 and 8 will caucus to elect their respective district directors, and Young Farmers and Ranchers and Women's Leadership Committee members will gather to vote on new state leaders for their programs.

The 2024 annual meeting also boasts a robust lineup of speakers and entertainers, many of whom are featured to the right.



JAMES LANKFORD

U.S. Senator • Sunday Worship

Sen. James Lankford has served his fellow Oklahomans in the U.S. Senate since his election in 2014 after serving four years in the U.S. House of Representatives.



FRANK LUCAS

Congressman • Saturday Dinner & Awards

Congressman Frank Lucas is a fifth-generation Oklahoman whose family has farmed in Oklahoma for more than 120 years. He has served in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1994.



BART FISCHER

Texas A&M • Saturday Dinner & Awards

Bart Fischer is a research associate professor and co-director of the TAMU Agricultural and Food Policy Center. He previously served as chief economist for the House Agriculture Committee.



JESSICA CABRERA

AFBF • Cultivating Healthy Minds

Jessica Cabrera manages the development and implementation of member engagement programs and projects such as the Farm State of Mind campaign.



BLAKE & JENNA BOLERJACK

Christian music artists • Sunday Worship

Blake and Jenna Bolerjack are an award-winning Christian music duo. As husband and wife, Blake and Jenna meld their voices to create a signature, velvety blend.

ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE

Schedule subject to change

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 7

- 4 p.m.WLC Committee Meeting
- 5 p.m.Collegiate Discussion Meet Orientation
- 5:15 p.m.Collegiate Discussion Meet Round One
- 6 p.m.Collegiate Discussion Meet Round Two
- 7 p.m.Collegiate Discussion Meet Finals

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8

- 8 a.m. State Board Breakfast Meeting
- 8 a.m. Credentials Committee Breakfast Meeting
- 8 a.m. YF&R Discussion Meet Orientation
- 9 a.m.Registration, Trade Show and Silent Auction Open
- 10 a.m. County Administrators Training
- 10 a.m. County Board Member Training
- 9 a.m. YF&R Discussion Meet Round One
- 10 a.m. YF&R Discussion Meet Round Two
- 11 a.m. Cultivating Healthy Minds Meeting & Luncheon
- 12:30 p.m. YF&R Discussion Meet Final Four
- 1:30 p.m. Opening General Session**
- 3:15 p.m. Breakout: Rural Economic Development
- 3:15 p.m. Breakout: Cultivating Healthy Minds
- 3:15 p.m. Breakout: Protecting Landowners' Rights in Wind and Solar Leases
- 4:30 p.m.WLC Business Meeting
- 4:30 p.m.YF&R Dinner & Caucus
- 5:30 p.m.WLC Dinner
- 7 p.m. OKFB Game Night & Entertainment**

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 9

- 7:30 a.m. OKFB Foundation for Agriculture Flapjack Breakfast
- 7:30 a.m. Credentials Committee Breakfast Meeting
- 7:30 a.m. Financial Committee Breakfast Meeting
- 7:30 a.m. Resolutions Committee Breakfast Meeting
- 8 a.m. Registration Opens
- 8:45 a.m. OKFBMIC Policyholders Meeting
- 9 a.m. Trade Show and Silent Auction Open
- 9:30 a.m. General Session**
- 11:45 a.m. WLC Advocacy Luncheon
- 12 p.m. Credentials Committee Luncheon Meeting
- 1 p.m. OKFB District Caucuses (Districts 2, 5 and 8)
- 1:30 p.m. General Session**
- 5 p.m. Farm Family Reception
- 5 p.m. County Presidents Reception
- 5:30 p.m. Ag Community Reception
- 7 p.m. Dinner & Awards Program**

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10

- 7:30 a.m. County President Coffee Talk
- 7:30 a.m. WLC Coffee Talk
- 7:30 a.m. Public Policy Coffee Talk
- 8:45 a.m. Worship Service & Group Breakfast**

URE



More than 50 Young Farmers and Ranchers members traveled to Tulsa for the three-day YF&R summer conference. Members had the opportunity including the Tulsa Port of Catoosa, A-Bar Ranch and the Public Service Company of Oklahoma power plant facility.



YF&R members tour the Tulsa Port of Catoosa and learn about the port, which is one of the largest inland river ports in the nation.



YF&R members Bruce Trammell (left) and C...
"Charley Border," one of the river barges used...

OKFB Young Farmers and Ranchers travel to Tulsa July 26-28 for

More than 50 Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers gathered in Tulsa for the 2024 YF&R Summer Conference July 26-28.

Farm Bureau members ages 18-35 had the opportunity to tour local agricultural facilities and network with fellow farmers and ranchers during the three-day event in Tulsa.

Tommy and Chalayna Salisbury welcomed the group Friday evening for dinner at their sale barn, where

Meggie and Jake Gibbs shared financial resources and opportunities for farmers and ranchers.

Saturday morning began at the Tulsa Port of Catoosa, where members had the opportunity to tour the port while learning its history. Tour guide Shelia Shook shared how the port allows for international commodities to reach local communities.

Members had the opportunity to visit the Public Service Company of Oklahoma power plant in Tulsa before

rounding out their evening in Claremore at A-Bar Ranch. Here, the Armitage Family shared their story of how their ranch began and their traditional approach to ranching.

"One of the reasons of being involved in YF&R is the networking," said Tommy Salisbury, YF&R District 9 Representative. "You get to meet people from all over the state. You'll use that networking further in life, and if you stay involved in agriculture, you'll end up needing it."



to tour agricultural facilities around the Tulsa area



lancey Harris observe the Tulsa Port of Catoosa
ed at the port.

summer conference

Jamie Stevenson concluded the conference Sunday morning sharing a devotion with the group.

See more online

Watch our video of the 2024 YF&R Summer Conference to see the sites the group visited in the Tulsa area and hear about YF&R member Tommy Salisbury's conference experience.

okfb.news/24SummerConfVideo



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(Above) students work together during FFA Communications Conference to proofread news releases they created in the writing breakout session. The students attended four breakout sessions covering a wide array of communications topics and skills.

OKFB hosts fourth-annual FFA Communications Conference

Oklahoma Farm Bureau hosted nearly 90 FFA members at the organization's fourth-annual FFA Communications Conference Tuesday, July 23, at the Hilton Garden Inn in Edmond.

The one-day conference gave FFA members the opportunity to learn from various speakers in each segment of communications and elevate their overall skills to use within their FFA chapters.

FFA members were split into breakout sessions where they heard from speakers who are professionals in the agricultural communications field. There were a total of four breakout sessions, which included design, writing, social media, and photography and videography.

The design session was taught by Taylor Gazda, who owns Gazda The Brand, a full-service agricultural marketing service. She focused on teaching students the importance of creating clean, creative and consistent graphics. She also walked them through several design platforms students can use for their FFA chapter communications work.

Ruth Inman of Ruth Inman Creative Services led the social media session, where she taught students what to post and what not to post on various social platforms. She also gave the students tips and tricks on how to write captions and how to use social media graphics.

The writing session was taught by Kirsten Hollansworth, public engagement specialist for the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry. She taught students how to write a press release and other news-related content. She also had the students craft a press release of their own about the event.

Ariel Scholten and Jono Horry of Neat Media House taught the photography and videography session. Ariel and Jono explained to students the art of taking photos and recording video footage. Students also had the opportunity to learn about how to capture quality photos and videos and the equipment they could use.

During the morning session, FFA members heard from Oklahoma FFA adviser Scott Nemecek about the importance of sharing the FFA story. Students also heard from Ron Hays with the Radio Oklahoma Network about sharing the agriculture story.

OKFB's own Dustin Mielke presented the final conference session. He shared with FFA members his agricultural communications story and showed examples of how FFA members can effectively share the agriculture story.

FFA members received crucial tools they can use to be a voice for their FFA chapter and to share their chapter's story on social media and in their communities.



(Above) Scott Nemecek, Oklahoma State FFA adviser speaks to students about the importance of sharing the FFA story effectively with their chapters and local communities.

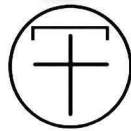


(Above) Students snap headshots to understand what makes a good photo and how to get good angles during the photography breakout session.



(Above) OKFB President Rodd Moesel shares Farm Bureau's programs and activities available to students and the importance of effective communication.

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The OKFB YF&R Shotgun shoot hosted more than 47 teams with a total of 188 shooters participating in the sporting-clay-style tournament.



(Above) The Woodward FFA shooting team won first place in the junior division.



(Above) The Eskridge Chevy team won first place in the open division.

OKFB Young Farmers and Ranchers raises more than \$10,000 for OKFB Foundation for Agriculture

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers committee held their annual shotgun shoot fundraiser Friday, Aug. 9, at Silverleaf Shooting Sports in Guthrie.

More than \$10,000 was raised for the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture to continue to support Oklahoma agriculture and promote agriculture throughout the state.

More than 47 teams with a total of 188 shooters participated in the sporting-clay-style tournament across 12 stations that tested their skills with real-world hunting scenarios.

Awards were given to top shooters in both youth and open divisions.

The winning team in the open division received \$100 for each shooter and a shotgun shell pouch.

The winning junior division team also won \$100 for each shooter and a shotgun shell pouch. The top shooters in both divisions received a shotgun shell pouch and \$50. The second- and third-place teams received gift cards to Bass Pro Shops and Cabelas.

The top team in the junior division was Woodward FFA with Kash Rose earning the top shooter award.

The open division was won by the Eskridge Chevy team with Dayne Perryman receiving the division's top shooter award.

Proceeds from the event were donated to the OKFB Foundation for Agriculture, which supports Oklahoma's farming and ranching community as well as rural Oklahoma communities through philanthropic efforts while providing educational resources and opportunities to increase awareness and knowledge of Oklahoma agriculture.

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The OKFB Young Farmers and Ranchers hosts more than 2,000 4-H and FFA students during the 2024 state fair livestock judging contest.



Students judged eight classes of livestock, including sheep, goats, cattle and hogs.



Students evaluate a class of sheep during the State Fair Livestock Judging Contest.

OKFB YF&R hosts more than 2,000 4-H and FFA members at 2024 state fair livestock judging contest

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau hosted 64 schools, totaling 2,023 4-H and FFA members, at the annual Young Farmers and Ranchers State Fair Livestock Judging Contest Thursday, Sept. 19, at the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds.

Students rotated through eight breeding classes of cattle, sheep, goats and hogs while evaluating for breeding and market quality. Participants answered two sets of questions about one class cattle and one class of hogs.

The top three individuals in the

junior 4-H division were Bennett Landreth, Lomega 4-H: 462; Dax Inman, Mulhall-Orlando 4-H: 455; and Hayes Anderson, Purcell 4-H: 449. The top three teams were Fort Gibson 4-H: 1298; Alfalfa County 4-H: 1275; and Silo 4-H: 1274.

The top three individuals in the junior FFA division were Kendra Dillingham, Drummond FFA: 466; Raygen Greathouse, Fort Gibson FFA: 464; and Gracie Gis, Fort Gibson FFA: 463. The top three teams were Fort Gibson FFA: 1385; Checotah FFA: 1346; and Fairland FFA: 1317.

The top three individuals in the senior 4-H division were Madison Hood, Keys 4-H: 476; Kolton Kohler, Grady County 4-H: 468; and Berkley McKaye, Mullhall-Orlando 4-H: 464. The top three teams were the Keys 4-H: 1374; Kay County 4-H: 1352; and Dibble 4-H: 1348.

The top three individuals in the senior FFA division were Oakley Gross, Stillwater FFA: 480; Major Langley, Adair FFA: 478; and Dade Delozier, Adair FFA: 477. The top three teams were Adair FFA: 1412; Stillwater FFA: 1402; and Cushing FFA: 1389.



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OKFB hosted a total of 11 annual August Area Meetings with more than 400 members and guests in attendance to kick off this year's grassroots policy development season.



(Above) District 4 members discuss amongst each other during the District 4 West August Area Meeting in Lawton.



(Above) OKFB President Rodd Moesel provides an update for OKFB members at the District 5 August Area Meeting.

OKFB members kick off grassroots policy development season with August Area Meetings

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members convened for a series of 11 August Area Meetings to discuss issues, challenges and opportunities facing agriculture and rural Oklahoma in preparation for the organization's grassroots policy development season.

More than 400 members and guests attended the meetings where top issues raised by OKFB members

included water issues, animal ID tags, rural broadband, the farm bill, tax policy, the upcoming national election and spam phone calls.

OKFB members also heard updates from numerous OKFB programs and activities including reports from district Young Farmers and Ranchers representatives, Women's Leadership Committee district representatives, various OKFB department staff and

organizational leaders.

Farm Bureau members will now take the ideas discussed during the meetings and craft policy resolutions to be considered at their county resolutions meetings. Resolutions that are passed by county Farm Bureaus will be presented for consideration at the OKFB state resolutions meeting, which will be held Oct. 22-23 in Oklahoma City.



(Above) Demo Day graduates are recognized for their participation in the spring 2024 Activate Oklahoma cohort during the program's graduation Wednesday, Sept. 11.

OKFB's Oklahoma Grassroots Rural & Ag Business Accelerators program hosts 2024 Demo Day Sept. 11

Six rural entrepreneurs graduated from the Oklahoma Grassroots Rural & Ag Business Accelerators program's Activate Oklahoma rural development pipeline during the program's annual Demo Day Wednesday, Sept. 11, in Oklahoma City.

Demo Day showcased the new class of founders as they presented their pitches to other cohort members, guests and program partners. Each of the founders also received a graduation certificate for participating in the program.

After the graduation ceremony, guests who attended Demo Day had the opportunity vote for the People's Choice Award, which was awarded to Aegis Production Services.

Activate Oklahoma is a rural innovation pipeline that connects rural entrepreneurs and innovators with resources from Oklahoma's world-class business development community.

The program also connects current cohort members with business leaders and alumni to provide mentorship during the program.

During the program, participants also received input, consultation and resources from program partners including AgLaunch, Oklahoma Small Business Development Centers, Oklahoma i2E, Oklahoma CareerTech, Oklahoma State University's Food and Agricultural Products Center and the Noble Research Institute.

Activate Oklahoma graduates

The rural Oklahoma innovators below graduated from the spring 2024 Activate Oklahoma cohort on September 11.

Aegis Production Services

Created a system that uses thermal and flash distillation to treat water.

Perfect Pose

Created a device that helps hunters achieve the perfect photo of their trophy animal.

The Diabetes Revolution

Provides personalized diabetes and weight loss care using nutrition and technology to help clients reverse their diagnosis with a goal of reducing reliance upon medications.

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Allied Innovation Partners

Has developed a new type of market that blends e-commerce with traditional commodity exchanges.

Bay Block

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OKFB Women's Leadership Committee awards nursing students with \$500 scholarships



The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee was proud to award three \$500 scholarships to rural Oklahoma Farm Bureau members who are pursuing a career in nursing.

The scholarships were awarded to Karley Smart of Seiling, Chelsey Summerlin of Chandler and Raylea Burrows of Ramona.

"The Women's Leadership Committee understands the challenges students face when financing their education," said Mignon Bolay, OKFB WLC chair. "We are proud to support these young ladies throughout their educational journeys to provide quality healthcare across rural communities."

Smart, a Woodward County Farm Bureau member, is a high school senior concurrently

studying nursing through Redlands Community College. Summerlin is a Lincoln County Farm Bureau member studying to become a registered nurse at the University of Oklahoma. Burrows is a Nowata County Farm Bureau member studying at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, where she has completed her nursing degree and is enrolled in the registered nursing program.

The WLC provides their annual nurse's training scholarships to help Farm Bureau members complete their education in nursing so they can provide much-needed healthcare services to fellow Oklahomans. Applicants must be enrolled half-time or more in a nurse's training program at an accredited college, university, technical school or trade school.

Meet our 2024 OKFB WLC Nurse's Scholarship recipients

Karley Smart
Seiling

Chelsey Summerlin
Chandler

Raylea Burrows
Ramona

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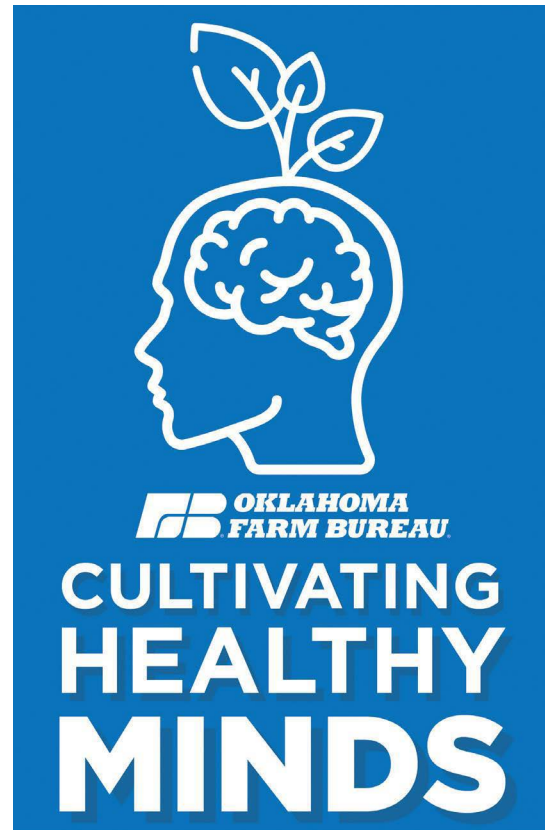


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OKFB continues mental well-being journey with second CHM session featuring Monica McConkey

Oklahoma Farm Bureau members and guests continued their mental well-being journey with the second Cultivating Healthy Minds session Friday, Sept. 6.

The session, focused on managing relationships, featured Monica McConkey, founder of Eyes on the Horizon Consulting.

McConkey was raised on a farm and now has served 25 years working in the rural behavioral health field. She created Eyes on the Horizon Consulting in 2016 where she has been serving rural families in Minnesota.

During the session, McConkey defined many relationships in the lives of farmers and ranchers and explained the factors that could make them unhealthy, including frequent disrespect, lack of trust, poor communication, negativity, manipulation and lack of support.

She explained how unhealthy relationships can impact our lives, whether it be mentally, emotionally,

physically or spiritually.

McConkey also emphasized how boundaries can play an important role in all relationships, whether they are healthy or unhealthy. She explained why setting boundaries may be difficult for some people, including fearing coming off mean or rude, being a people pleaser, being anxious about future interactions after the boundary has been set, or simply having no idea where to start.

Much like the impacts of an unhealthy relationship, setting boundaries can have a similar impact, but for the better.

McConkey gave examples of what setting boundaries could look like with example words to use and explained the differences between an emotional, mental, physical or spiritual boundary.

At the end of the webinar, she used an analogy of a school bus to illustrate healthy boundaries.

McConkey encouraged Farm Bureau

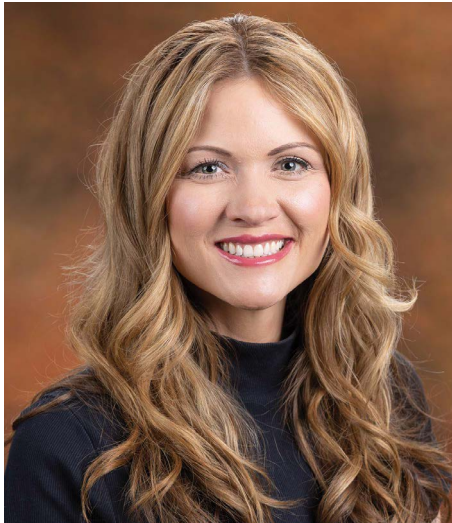
members, the bus drivers, to keep their close, healthy relationships in the front of the bus, their just-okay relationships in the middle, and their unhealthy relationships in the back.

In addition to McConkey's keynote presentation, the second session also featured a testimonial speaker, Gaye Pfeiffer, a Logan County Farm Bureau member. She spoke about her family's tragic automobile accident in the early 1990s and how community support can make a difference in a family's mental wellbeing.

Pfeiffer mentioned the extraordinary amount of care and help her family received after the accident from family, friends and neighbors in their small community. She also spoke about the importance of leaning on your community and support system in times of tragedy.

To watch the recording of the second webinar or learn more about the Cultivating Healthy Minds program, visit okfb.news/chm24.

OKFB names Anderson northeast field representative



Kinsey Westwood



Gage Milliman

OKFB names Westwood head of public policy, Milliman joins department

Oklahoma Farm Bureau has selected Kinsey Westwood to lead the organization's public policy department as senior director of public policy and has tapped Gage Milliman to join the policy department as a director of public policy.

Westwood has served as OKFB's senior public policy consultant since 2023 in addition to a previous stint with the organization from 2011-2012. In her new role, Westwood will oversee the advocacy efforts of Oklahoma's largest general farm organization at the state legislature and through the rule-making and regulatory processes. Westwood will also work with Oklahoma's congressional delegation and federal agencies to advance OKFB's grassroots policies at the federal level.

"I am excited to help Oklahoma's family farmers and ranchers by amplifying their voices and grassroots policy through Farm Bureau's advocacy efforts," Westwood said. "I am proud to help make a difference for Oklahoma agriculture through OKFB's public policy efforts across the state and in Washington, D.C."

Milliman will advocate for OKFB's grassroots member-developed policies at the state Capitol and beyond as director of public policy. Milliman will also work to connect Farm Bureau members from around the state with the legislative process.

Milliman previously served as the northeast field representative for the organization since 2015 where he worked as a liaison between 14 northeastern county Farm Bureaus and the state organization. Milliman's agriculture background includes raising registered Charolais cattle with his wife, Trista, and son, Henry, in Nowata County.

"After nine years of working with our members and the agriculture community as a member of the OKFB field staff, I feel like I can continue to be an asset to Oklahoma Farm Bureau in our Public Policy Department," Milliman said. "I'm looking forward to getting started in my new role."

Alisen Anderson of Fairland has joined Oklahoma Farm Bureau as northeast field representative.

In her new position, Anderson will assist 14 county Farm Bureaus in northeastern Oklahoma with programs, activities and operations as she serves as a liaison between the county organizations and the statewide OKFB organization.

Anderson joins the OKFB staff after years of involvement in the organization as an active Farm Bureau member. Anderson has served as Ottawa County Farm Bureau president; OKFB Young Farmers and Ranchers Chair with her husband, Jared, from 2022-2023; and on the national level as a member of the American Farm Bureau YF&R committee from 2022-2024.

Anderson also fostered the growth of the Collegiate Farm Bureau chapter at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College in Miami when she worked as an instructor at the school and served as chapter adviser.

"For years, my Farm Bureau family has pushed and guided me to pursue so many opportunities in agriculture to better our industry," Anderson said. "Now, I get to give back every day to those same people. I am finally home, right where I belong, working for the farmers and ranchers who are feeding our world."

Anderson, her husband and her three children own and operate a farm and ranch in Ottawa County where they grow wheat, corn, soybeans and other crops in addition to managing their cattle herd.



Alisen Anderson

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If you have any questions or comments concerning this *Joint Privacy Notice* or our privacy standards and procedures, please write us at Post Office Box 53332, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73152-3332. Our functional regulator is the State of Oklahoma, Department of Insurance. If we cannot resolve your concerns or answer your questions, feel free to contact our regulator. This Joint Privacy Notice describes our privacy policy and practices in accordance with the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act, 15 USC §6801, et seq., and with Oklahoma laws and regulations.

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All Around **Oklahoma**

Farm Bureau news, events and programs from around Oklahoma

OKFB holds series of informational private property rights meetings



Oklahoma Farm Bureau held the first two of several public meetings on private property rights on Wednesday, Aug. 14, at the Lincoln County fairgrounds in Chandler and on Wednesday, Sept. 4, at the Craig County Fairgrounds in Vinita.

These educational meetings focused on the importance of private property rights in Oklahoma in light of recent renewable energy developments in the state.

“Oklahoma Farm Bureau has a long history of advocating for



private property rights, and we were proud to offer local community members the opportunity to share their experiences and thoughts on how renewable energy projects impact landowner rights and property values,” said Rodd Moesel, OKFB president. “OKFB believes in local, grassroots input, and we appreciate the involvement and input from area residents, which will help our organization better understand and represent rural voices through ongoing discussions about renewable energy projects.”

Comanche County Farm Bureau hosts Ag Days



Comanche County Farm Bureau hosted their annual Ag Days for more than 1,400 students from schools across the county.

This agriculture-education-focused event featured several farm-focused stations including commodities, horticulture, animal husbandry, farm equipment, aquaculture and forestry.



OKFB Women’s Leadership Committee attends State Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom, Women in Ag and Community Gardening conferences

The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Women’s Leadership Committee attended multiple conferences during the first week of August, where they promoted OKFB and agriculture.

WLC members attended the State Oklahoma Ag in the Classroom conference Tuesday, July 30, where they helped with activities and programs for teachers from around the state.

The women also hosted a booth at the Women in Agriculture Conference Thursday, Aug. 1, and they assisted with the School and Community Gardening Conference Friday, Aug. 2.



OKFB Foundation for Agriculture raffling rifle to raise funds



The Oklahoma Farm Bureau Foundation for Agriculture is selling raffle tickets for a chance to win a Henry Golden Boy lever-action rifle in .22 WMR valued at \$722 MSRP.

Tickets are available for a donation of \$20 each and can be purchased from OKFB field representatives or by contacting foundation director Holly Carroll at (405) 523-2300.

The drawing for the rifle will take place at the OKFB annual meeting in Oklahoma City in early November. Ticket holders do not have to be present to win.

Each ticket purchaser is bound to the terms and conditions of the drawing, which are available on the reverse side of each ticket stub. The ticket purchase price is not tax deductible.

OKFB remembers Sen. Jim Inhofe



Oklahoma Farm Bureau President Rodd Moesel issued the following statement after learning of the passing of Oklahoma Sen. Jim Inhofe on Tuesday, July 9.

“Oklahoma Farm Bureau members were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Sen. Jim Inhofe. Sen. Inhofe was a remarkable leader and wonderful friend to agriculture and rural Oklahoma since his time in the state legislature more than 50 years ago.

“During his tenure in the U.S. Senate, Sen. Inhofe was

awarded the American Farm Bureau Golden Plow Award, AFBF’s Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award, and OKFB’s Distinguished Service Award – the highest honors from both organizations. His commitment to serving his fellow Oklahomans through his time in both the U.S. House and Senate leaves a lasting legacy for years to come, and we are forever grateful for his service to Oklahoma agriculture.

“Sen. Inhofe will be greatly missed, and our thoughts and prayers are with his wife, Kay, and his family.”



OKFB Ag Defense Fundraiser tickets now available for Dec. 14 event

Oklahoma Farm Bureau is set to host the second-annual Ag Defense Fundraiser Saturday, Dec. 14, at 6 p.m. at Castle Falls in Oklahoma City.

Tickets for the event are \$250 per person. Table sponsorships are available for \$2,500 and include eight seats and recognition at the event. Funds raised during

the evening will support involvement in the political sphere to defend production agriculture from threats that seek to limit the ability of Oklahoma’s farm and ranch families to produce food, fiber and fuel in our state.

Reserve your spot at the fundraiser online at okfb.news/agdefense24.

Payne County hosts buddy calf show



Payne County Farm Bureau hosted the Heart of Payne County Bucket Calf Buddy show during the Payne County Free Fair.

The buddy calf show gives children with disabilities and special needs the opportunity to participate in their own livestock show. They get hands-on experience with the calves, learn about animal husbandry, all while showing their calf in the show ring.

OKFB hosts Farmhand Olympics at 2024 Oklahoma State Fair

Oklahoma Farm Bureau hosted the Farmhand Olympics Saturday, Sept. 14, at the Oklahoma State Fair.

More than 50 attendees participated in activities that paid tribute to real-life farm chores and tasks.

The event gave children and adults an opportunity to have fun with a host of agriculture-based activities to connect Farm Bureau and rural Oklahoma agriculture.



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OSU Photo Credit: Mitch Alcalá, OSU Agriculture

Mulch serves a multitude of purposes in the landscape

By *Trisha Gedon*

Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service

Quality soil and adequate moisture are two things that are must-haves when it comes to successful gardening.

Mulch is another key factor that plays an important role in gardening, not only for aesthetics but also for plant health.

Gardeners put a lot of effort into their landscape, and adding mulch will help reap many benefits, said David Hillock, Oklahoma State University Extension consumer horticulturist.

“Mulching garden soil is probably one of the most valuable cultural practices of gardening,” Hillock said. “Using organic mulch provides many benefits, including controlling weeds, reducing water evaporation, increasing water absorption and retention, regulating soil temperature and decreasing water runoff and soil erosion.”

Mulch also has the additional benefits of more easily harvested crops, reduction of fruit rot, preventing trunk damage from lawn equipment, providing a home for beneficial organisms like earthworms and making it easier to maneuver in the garden when the soil is wet.

In addition, he said mulch helps prevent soil compaction caused by foot traffic in the garden. Soil compaction can have a detrimental effect on plant

root growth because it inhibits access to air and water.

Hillock said there are two types of mulch – organic and inorganic. Organic mulches come from natural materials such as wood chips, cotton seed hulls, peat moss, compost, sawdust, ground corncobs, straw or leaves. They are typically low-cost, can deter insects and pests, and, as an added bonus, can increase soil quality as they decompose. Inorganic mulches include shredded rubber, recycled glass or rocks.

“A lot of soil in Oklahoma has high mineral content but is low in organic matter,” Hillock said. Using organic mulches in the home garden and incorporating them into the soil at the close of each gardening season is an opportunity to increase the organic matter content, improve the physical condition of the soil and add nutrients.”

Generally, mulch is applied soon after the plants sprout from the ground in the spring. If the soil has not warmed sufficiently, delay mulch application for a while. Also, in the event of a very wet spring, plant roots may develop in the mulch layer. Delaying mulch application would be desirable in this instance, as well.

When applying mulch, the depth will vary depending on what type is being used because one of the primary

objectives of mulch is to reduce the germination and growth of annual weeds and grasses. Another depth factor is the need to protect foliage, flowers and fruits from soil-borne disease organisms that could splash on the plants.

Hillock said mulch can also prevent the development of fruit rots or leaf diseases. Do not mound the mulch directly around the base of trees and shrubs because it can cause trunk rot.

Landscape fabric is an alternative to mulch and is used mainly as a weed barrier. Water and air can penetrate the surface. Most gardeners who choose landscape fabric use it as a base layer to put decorative mulch on top. The downside to landscape fabric is after some time, the material becomes plugged up by soil particles and other debris, resulting in poor water and oxygen movement to plant roots. When this happens, plant roots creep up to the surface of the soil in search of water, oxygen and nutrients, which leads to plant stress. Therefore, landscape fabric is generally not recommended in the home landscape.

“With much of the gardening season coming to a close, start thinking about your spring gardening goals and how you can incorporate mulch into your plans for a more productive garden with hopefully fewer weeding chores,” Hillock said.

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