

Contacts ~ Growing Agriculture Conference 2015

Debbie Ball, Tennessee Department of Agriculture, Director of Marketing, Market Development Division. Debbie directs the marketing and promotional services of the division to increase farm income and strengthen rural economies. This includes directing the popular Pick Tennessee Products program, which helps consumers connect with sources of locally grown and processed food products. Debbie has been with the Tennessee Department of Agriculture since 2008 serving originally as the statewide outreach coordinator for the Tennessee Agricultural Enhancement Program, she also managed the division's producer and consumer web services. *"Public Agriculture Servants."*

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David Bilderback is based in Loudon County with The **University of Tennessee Extension** as an Area Farm Management Specialist in conjunction with the MANAGE program. David's position provides him the opportunity to work directly with farm families, performing confidential whole farm plans and financial analyses through the MANAGE program. This program is designed to teach farm families to carefully evaluate their individual situation, help them develop plans for family living expenses, and assist them in improving their quality of life. David has been around agriculture his whole life, having grown up on a family dairy in Sweetwater, Tennessee. *"Land Access, leasings" & "Farm Business & Financial Planning."*

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Tera Bunch is an assistant professor of Agriculture in Production Horticulture at **Walters State Community College**. She has been employed at Walters State for five years and enjoys raising crops hydroponically. *"Extending the Season."*

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Matthew Christian, Farm Service Agency. The USDA-FSA makes and guarantees loans to family farmers and ranchers to promote, build and sustain family farms in support of a thriving agricultural economy. *"Public Ag servants."*

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Matt Dobson is the manager of **Boone Street Market**, a year-round non-profit farm store that exclusively sources locally grown products within a 100 mile radius of its downtown Jonesborough location. He is a native of Middle Tennessee, and holds his B.S. degree in Horticulture and Agronomy from UT which he applied to golf course development and management around the world. Married to Kelly Conyer last year, they own a farm in Telford, **Preservation Farms**, where he has a 25 member CSA. *"Choosing Crops for Profit."*

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Chick Fish's Newport, TN, family farm, **Fish Farms**, has been commercially growing tomatoes since 1978. She has worked part time for **Appalachian Sustainable Development/ Appalachian Harvest** distribution service for 3 years as the Ag Tech support coordinator. Chick helps growers with insects, disease, fertility, etc., to ensure that farms grow the best, high quality foods. She is also the Food Safety/GAP person for Appalachian Harvest. Personally she has been through--and passed with flying colors--USDA GAP, Harmonized, Primus, Tomato Matrix, and GFSI audits, so she is well experienced with helping other growers with such audit requirements. *"Choosing Crops for Profit."*

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Webb Flowers is Grazing Specialist with the Clinch Powell RC&D. Working closely with USDA-NRCS he consults with producers on grazing plans that effectively utilize forage to match the nutrient requirements of livestock while reducing non-point source pollution to protect water quality. Webb advises on ruminants as well as pork and poultry. *"Livestock 101."*

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Weyman Fussell, Fussell Farms, lives in Grainger County where he has a garden and a 1000 square foot high tunnel. He first began high tunnel growing in 2012. In three seasons he has learned more than a few things which he will share with those who may be thinking of a high tunnel. Weyman adds, "I have much more to learn." *"Extending the Season."*

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Ken Givens was appointed Tennessee's Commissioner of Agriculture by Governor Phil Bredesen in 2003. He served as Commissioner for seven years. Before that he was a State Representative for 14 years. He was first elected to the state House of Representatives in 1988, and he served as chairman of the House Agriculture Committee from 1997 to 2002. He was the House of Representatives' designee to the Tennessee Tobacco Farmers Certifying Board, which administered Phase II tobacco settlement funds for growers. During his 14 years in the House, Givens was instrumental in passing key farm legislation including a measure to ensure the ability of existing farm operations to expand under Tennessee's right-to-farm law. He also sponsored important legislation regarding forest management and dairy farming. He hails from Rogersville, where he continues to operate a tobacco and cattle farm. Aside from his professional accomplishments and service to the state, Givens is well known for his storytelling!

Mike Hubbs is **Tennessee Association Conservation District's Soil Health Specialist** as of 2014. Mike retired with 36 years with NRCS. He held numerous positions with NRCS such as District Conservationist and State Agronomist in Tennessee. He was Agronomist with the Soil Quality Institute, Auburn, Alabama, National Agronomist, Director of Ecological Sciences, and Financial Assistance Program Division, all in national headquarters in Washington, D. C. *"Putting Soil Health First."*

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Megan Bruch Leffew is a Marketing Specialist in **UT Extension's Center for Profitable Agriculture**. She provides leadership to the Center's programs in agritourism, direct marketing, value-added beef marketing and value-added fruit and vegetable products. Megan is a native of Yuma, Colorado and was raised on a commercial cow/calf operation. She earned a M.S. degree in agricultural economics with an emphasis in marketing and a B.S degree in agricultural business and animal science-industry from Colorado State University. She now resides in Columbia, Tennessee with her husband, John. *"Making the Web work effectively for your farm."*

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Pat Lynch along with her husband Johnny Lynch and their sons run the multi-faceted **Farmhouse Gallery and Gardens**, Unicoi. Pat has been around the block, so to speak, when it comes to farming and the Lynches have experimented with a little bit of everything on their 75-acre pre-Civil War farm. Over the years they have lovingly created a showcase of the area's natural beauty, a bird, butterfly, and wildlife refuge, surrounded by beautiful gardens, barns, pavilions, and other spaces for formal and casual events. Pat bakes wood-fired breads and treats and direct sells on the farm and at area markets. *"Public Farms - Agritourism for 21st century."*

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Elizabeth Malayter lives in Rogersville, TN with her husband John and her 10 year old daughter, Emma. At **JEM Farm** they raise laying hens, broilers, pastured pigs, goats, turkeys, guineas, ducks, chicken and geese. For two years they have had two hoop houses under almost year round production of greens, herbs, and assorted market produce. JEM Farm has been adding diversity of their farm landscape and their product offerings with native plants like elderberry, yellow root, swamp oaks, serviceberry, hazelnut, persimmon and more. You can find the farm at farmers markets and local grocers in the Tri-cities, Knoxville, and the surrounding area. *"Certified Farming" & "Extending the Season."*

jemfarm@gmail.com / <http://jemfarm.blogspot.com/>

Jimmy McAlister is a **beef and grain farmer** in Greeneville who has exclusively leased land for his operations working with around 10 different landowners since he got started a decade ago. He has also leased for crops. *"Land Leasing."*

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Patty McCloud has worked with the **USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service** for 19 years in Ohio, North Carolina, Virginia, and now Tennessee. She has been the District Conservationist serving Grainger and Hamblen Counties since May 7, 2012, a graduate of UT with a major in Animal Science, and a minor in Plant & Soil Science. *"Public Ag Servants."*

patty.mccloud@tn.usda.gov / <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/tn/contact/local/>

Gary Moore, Land Trust for Tennessee, leads the land trust's farmland protection efforts in middle and east Tennessee. He will be available to talk about conserving farm and forest land with

conservation easements. Before joining The Land Trust, Gary spent 37 years with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. *Consultant.*

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The Myers: Ethan Myers is a student in Agriculture at Walter State Community College, but he has been farming his whole life as the son of Eldon and **Vera Ann Myers, Myers Farm and Pumpkin Patch** in Greene County. The Myers family manages a 500-acre farm through a herd of 500 beef cattle, various crops, greenhouses, and a major agritourism component during the fall months. Myers Farm was the first corn maze in northeast TN and an early on-farm tourism innovator. Vera Ann Myers has served in leadership positions with the the Tennessee Agritourism Association for many years. *“Generational Family Farms” & “Public Farms - Agritourism.”*

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Jennifer Niceley lives and works on her family's multi-generational farm, **Riverplains Farm**, in Strawberry Plains. Working with her parents, uncles and siblings, she is helping to restore health and sustainability to the land where she grew up, with grass-based livestock production and organically grown, non-GMO, open-pollinated corn. In addition to the hands-on farming, she co-owns and operates the food truck Mister Canteen, serving the produce and meats grown on the farm. *Morning Keynote and “Generational Family Farms.”*

jennifer@riverplainsfarmgoods.com / <http://riverplainsfarmgoods.com>

Dusty Saylor works full-time on his family's 300-acre **Pleasant Valley Farm**, Jonesborough, alongside his parents and 92-year-old grandfather. Together, they take care of more than 100 beef cattle, 60 pigs and a whole lot of produce. His parents run a honey and bee-keeping operation. Dusty sells his produce through farmers markets and wholesale distributors. *“Choosing Crops for Profit” & “Generational Family Farms.”*

(423) 431-8435

Roy Settle, First Bank and Trust Agricultural Lending. Roy Settle worked on tobacco farms and a dairy while in high school and college before serving with SCS/NRCS in field positions across Tennessee. From 1994 to 2012 he led the Appalachian RC&D Council in Northeast TN in projects ranging from conservation education, agri-tourism, business development and promoting locally grown and manufactured products. Since 2012 he has served as an Agricultural Loan Officer with First Bank & Trust in NE TN, SW VA and Western NC. *Consultant.*

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Julie Walker's life work has been "building bridges from farm to consumer." From registered Holsteins to gourmet food to traditional and out-of-the-box family-farmers, Julie Walker has traveled the two-fold path of both production and value-added agriculture, marketing products and enterprises from her own farm and the farms of others. As the first Director of Market Development, her efforts were key in the launch of Sweetwater Valley Farm, still growing after 17 years in business. At times in the lead, and at times as part of a supporting cast, she has

experience from a local to an international level. Currently, she serves as Agriculture Communications Coordinator of AgCentral Co-op. Her consulting business is **Agrivoice**. *Consultant & “Winds of Change in Agriculture.”*

agrivoice@yahoo.com / 423-797-1853

Hollis Wild has worked with farmers for the last 10 years, the last 3 of those working with **Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project** in the highcounty of Boone, NC. Through her work with ASAP she helps connect farmers, restaurants, and farmers markets with ASAP's programs including Appalachian Grown certification and promotional materials. She also helps connect farmers with markets and helps restaurants source local food. Hollis and Jay Wild operated a small flowering tree and shrub nursery for 30 years and now sell herbs plants and produce after recycling the use of their greenhouses. *“Direct Marketing Strategies”*

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Chris Wilson has been in farming all her life, having been born and raised on a small farm. She started with cattle and vegetables then added sheep, but after a few years sold the cows and stayed with sheep. Twenty years have passed since then and now she direct markets all her lambs. **Clover Creek Farms** became an Animal Welfare Approved farm almost 10 years ago and, according to Chris, “it has meant a lot to have a certification to convey the way I raise my sheep.” *“Certified Farming.”*

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Conference Organizers

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