



## Items of Interest

### SRDC Staff: Mary Grace Frost Joins SRDC as Administrative Assistant



Mary Grace Frost joined the Southern Rural Development Center in April in the position of Administrative Assistant.

Mary Grace is a graduate of Mississippi State University. Before coming to SRDC, she was a Human Resources Specialist for LIFECORE Health Group, in Tupelo, Mississippi.

Please join us in extending a warm welcome to Mary Grace.

### SRDC Celebrates Our History with a 50 Years of History Video



The Southern Rural Development Center celebrates its service to rural communities since 1974 with a video that highlights publications and events from over the last 50 years.

To view the video and other information regarding the SRDC's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, please visit <https://srdc.msstate.edu/50th-anniversary>

Video link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcFHfeDwrQw>

## Webinars:

### 2024 SERA-47 First Tea & Coffee Hour

**June 13, 2024, 1PM CT / 2PM ET**

*Guest Presenter: Brenda Williams, Communities Unlimited*

SERA-47 is hosting quarterly, virtual Tea & Coffee Hours for 2024. Each session will feature a presentation with a Q&A session.

The first webinar will feature guest presenter Brenda Williams, Healthy Foods Coordinator at Communities Unlimited. Brenda is responsible for managing the Food LINC program, a value chain initiative focused on increasing access to and availability of healthy foods for residents of food deserts in the Memphis Mid-south region.

[REGISTER](#)

## Regional Spotlight

### The University of Georgia (UGA) Behavioral Health Team



UGA Extension translates the science of everyday living for families, farmers, and communities to foster a healthy and prosperous Georgia. Over the past several years UGA Extension has expanded its efforts in health and wellbeing, grounded in the National Framework for Health Equity and Well-Being. Our latest initiative is the creation of a new Extension team. Just like we have a Cotton Team or a Vegetable Team, we now have a Behavioral Health Team.

Behavioral health encompasses mental health, substance use, and related aspects of emotional stress and wellbeing, and is an important part of overall health. The goal of Extension's Behavioral Health Team is to provide research-based education on behavioral health topics, and information on resources for prevention, community education, treatment, and recovery. We do this to build the capacity of all Extension staff and to meet the needs of local communities throughout Georgia. As in most of our programs, we would prefer proactive education to prevent problems rather than reactive programming to solve a problem.

Team members are Extension Specialists from the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, and School of Social Work. Each team member is involved in research on behavioral health topics, including healthy family and couple relationships, positive youth development, farmer suicide prevention, disaster response, community-based opioid abuse prevention, healthy nutrition, and health literacy. Our programs are informed by our research activities, so we can disseminate the latest information on pressing issues in behavioral health.

You can find the Behavioral Health Team at major agricultural events like the Sunbelt Ag Expo and the Southern Regional Fruit and Vegetable Growers Conference, where we provide workshops and information on health and well-being. We are also available as a resource to county Extension agents and help to increase their capacity and knowledge in this area. In addition, we are available when they or their community needs information on behavioral health topics. Team members provide trainings to Extension staff on topics like *What is Behavioral Health and Why Should Extension Care About It?* & *Preparing for and Recovering from Natural Disasters and Stress and Suicide on the Farm: What Everyone in Extension Needs to Know*. Another area of focus has been community capacity building for better understanding of behavioral health issues. This includes providing the Mental Health First Aid and Youth Mental Health First Aid curricula to Extension agents as well as to community members, as well as QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) training for suicide prevention. We also have team members who build community capacity for healthier family relationships through Elevate, a 12-hour couples training to manage stress and improve relationships. In everything we do, the Behavioral Health Team uses research-based behavioral health information to foster the emotional health and well-being of the people of Georgia.

You can find more information and resources we provide on these websites:

[Rural Georgia Growing Stronger](#), [SAGE: A Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network Project](#), [Thriving on the Farm: A Weekly Blog](#)



Team members at a Writing Retreat. Pictured from left to right: Virginia Brown, Maria Bowie, Anna Scheyett, & Diane Bales.

## Grant Connections

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### STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT: USDA Rural Development Seeks Input to Improve Access to Grants and Help More Communities Thrive

**Improvements Will Make It Easier to Apply for, Receive and Use Funding**

**WASHINGTON, May 2, 2024**

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Under Secretary Dr. Basil Gooden today invited public input on a plan to make it easier for more people in rural areas to access grant funding that will strengthen their local economies, communities, and quality of life.

Through the [Better Grants Better Service](#) initiative, USDA Rural Development is gathering and analyzing input from customers, agency staff and other stakeholders to streamline its more than 30 grant programs into a superior customer experience.

To learn more, read full [Stakeholder Announcement](#).

### STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT: USDA Invites Applications for Grants to Strengthen Rural Cooperatives and Expand Access to New and Better Markets for People in Rural America

**WASHINGTON, April 4, 2024**

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development Under Secretary Dr. Basil Gooden today announced that USDA is inviting applications for grants to strengthen rural cooperatives and expand access to new and better markets for people in rural America. **Electronic applications must be submitted to [grants.gov](https://grants.gov) by 11:59 p.m. Eastern Time on June 3, 2024.**

USDA is making the \$5.8 million in grants available under the [Rural Cooperative Development Grant \(RCDG\)](#) program to start, improve or expand rural cooperatives and other mutually owned businesses that will help improve economic conditions in rural areas.

Nonprofit organizations and institutions of higher education are eligible to apply for grants to provide technical and cooperative development assistance to individuals and rural businesses. The maximum award is \$200,000. USDA is particularly interested in applications that will advance Biden-Harris Administration priorities to:

- Reduce climate pollution and increase resilience to the impacts of climate change through economic support to rural communities.
- Ensure all rural residents have equitable access to Rural Development (RD) programs and benefits from RD-funded projects; and
- Help rural communities recover economically through more and better market opportunities and through improved infrastructure.

To learn more, read the full [STAKEHOLDER ANNOUNCEMENT](#).

## Job Opportunities

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### Extension Leadership Specialist, University of Georgia Extension

The University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES) seeks a dynamic and innovative professional for the position of Extension Leadership Specialist with primary responsibilities in leading the national faculty leadership development program, LEAD21, which is sponsored by the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) and administered through a contract with the University of Georgia. This is a full-time Faculty appointment home-based in Athens, Georgia. The position reports to the Director for the Office of Learning and Organizational Development.

**Applications received by Dec. 15, will be assured full consideration, but the position is open until filled.** Applicants must submit their application via the UGAJobs website (<https://www.ugajobsearch.com/postings/349481>) and will require the following documentation: (1) a letter of application; (2) curriculum vitae; and (3) contact information for three letters of reference. Please contact Michael Toews, Search Committee Chair, [mtoews@uga.edu](mailto:mtoews@uga.edu) with questions.

### Assistant Professor & Extension Specialist in Tourism Economic Development, Auburn University

Auburn University is seeking a 12-month tenure track assistant professor and Extension specialist to provide statewide leadership in tourism economic development. This position is housed within the Horst Schulze School of Hospitality Management at Auburn University in the College of Human Sciences. This position is designed to assist the College of Human Sciences and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in developing the state's full economic tourism potential. The selected applicant will provide strategic and inclusive leadership in tourism economic development in the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Required qualifications include an earned doctorate in Hospitality and Tourism Management, Tourism Economics, Sustainable Tourism Development, Outdoor Recreation, Natural Resources, Economic Development, or a related field when employment begins.

Applicants should also have evidence of, or strong promise in, building a record or scholarship, grantsmanship, and multi-disciplinary collaborations. The candidate selected for this position must also be able to meet eligibility requirements to work in the United States when the appointment is scheduled to begin and continue working legally for the proposed term of employment.

Apply online using the link: <https://www.auemployment.com/postings/40771>. Provide application letter, complete CV, transcripts from all universities attended, research and educational interests, and three (3) professional references (names, email addresses, and phone numbers). For more information about the position, contact Dr. Alecia Douglas, Ph.D., Chair- Search Committee, at [acd0011@auburn.edu](mailto:acd0011@auburn.edu).

### Assistant Administrator, Community Development and Outreach, Fort Valley State University

The assistant Administrator for Community Development and Outreach will develop, coordinate, and facilitate programming through the Cooperative Extension Program designed to assist communities to realize their long-term goals; through provision of education, technical assistance, and opportunities to secure grants that support strategic planning and community visioning to provide a foundation for economic development. Coordinate or assist in the coordination of programs through outreach efforts with USDA Agencies, State, private and public and nonprofit entities. Master's degree in Agricultural Economics, economics, business administration or other business disciplines is required. Preference will be given to applicants with extension and strong community development experiences. Applicants with degrees in closely related disciplines with community development experiences may also apply. To learn more and apply, visit <https://fvsu.applicantpro.com/jobs/2568591>.

## Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

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### National Extension Climate Initiative (NECI) Connecting Climate to Communities Webinar Series

NECI is hosting a free webinar series featuring 17 outreach perspectives for engaging different communities in addressing climate. The goal is to share resources, stories, methods, and tools from across the U.S. for re-use locally.

**June 26:** AGING & Climate, [REGISTER](#)

### 2024 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Conference

**In-Person: June 17-20, 2024, Marriott Marquis Houston, Houston, Texas**

Save the date for the 2024 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) conference.

[LEARN MORE](#)

### The Delta Regional Forum

**In-Person: June 26-27, 2024, Coahoma County Higher Education Center, Clarksdale, Mississippi**

*Theme: Population Health, Community Development, and Innovation in Local and Global Contexts*

Hosted by the Delta Directions Consortium (DDC), the Delta Regional Forum is intended to engage community and regional development practitioners and scholars working in and with partners in the multistate Delta Region to learn from each other in pursuit of population health and wellbeing, economic renewal, and community resilience.

This year, a wide range of topics applicable to the health and economic renewal of the Mississippi Delta Region will be discussed. Kick-off on day one will include an introduction to the DDC, followed by presentations from the undergraduate Delta Scholars and a networking reception. Day two will include panel sessions focused on collaborations, a networking lunch, and facilitated world café dialogue sessions throughout the afternoon.

To learn more and register, visit <https://srdc.msstate.edu/programs/delta-regional-forum>

### 2024 Community Development Society (CDS) Creating Capacity for Resilient Communities Conference

**In-Person: July 14-17, Omaha, Nebraska**

Save the date for the 2024 annual Community Development Society (CDS) Conference.

[LEARN MORE](#)

### 2024 Rural Sociological Society (RSS) Conference

**In-Person: July 24-28, Madison, Wisconsin**

The 86<sup>th</sup> meeting of the RSS will explore the theme “Reconceptualizing Rurality: Toward a More Diverse and Inclusive Understanding.” Abstract submissions for individual papers, posters, and special organized sessions are being considered! Submissions that are relevant to the symposium theme are encouraged, as are those that focus on rural life and livelihoods, demography, community structures and economies, technologies, environmental conditions, agriculture and food systems, or other sociological knowledge of rural communities.

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