

SEMI-ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

Avoyelles Parish LSU AgCenter

Vol.1 Issue 1 Fall 2023

UPCOMING EVENTS

Avoyelles/Rapides
Parish Sugarcane
Production Meeting Feb. 14

Avoyelles/Rapides
Parish Rice Production
Clinic Feb. 20

Central Region 4-H
Challenge Camp Feb. 22-
23

Avoyelles Parish Advisory
Leadership Council
Meeting Feb. 29

Regional Shooting
Sports Match Mar. 15-
22

Central Region Cookery
Contest Apr. 4

4-H Camp Counselor
Training May 24



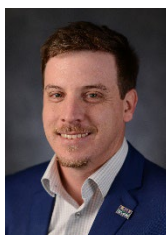
The LSU AgCenter and LSU provide equal opportunities in programs and employment.



Educate. Innovate. Improve Lives.

The LSU AgCenter is dedicated to providing innovative research, information and education to improve people's lives. Working in a statewide network of parish extension offices, research stations and academic departments, the LSU AgCenter helps Louisiana citizens make the best use of natural resources, protect the environment, enhance agricultural enterprises, and develop human and community resources. In Avoyelles, we possess a profoundly unique and distinct culture that is deeply rooted in agriculture and the connected industries that come along with it. The Avoyelles Parish LSU AgCenter remains committed to preserving this tradition by offering supportive programming that educates, innovates, and improves agriculture production, youth development, and nutrition.

Our Team:



Justin Dufour
ANR Agent
Parish Chair



Ann Soileau
4-H Agent



Amy Andrus
4-H Agent

Area Agents:

Jennifer Duhon - Nutrition
Molly Lyles - Horticulture
Brittany Zaunbrecher - Livestock
Robbie Hutchins - Forestry/Wildlife

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4-H University

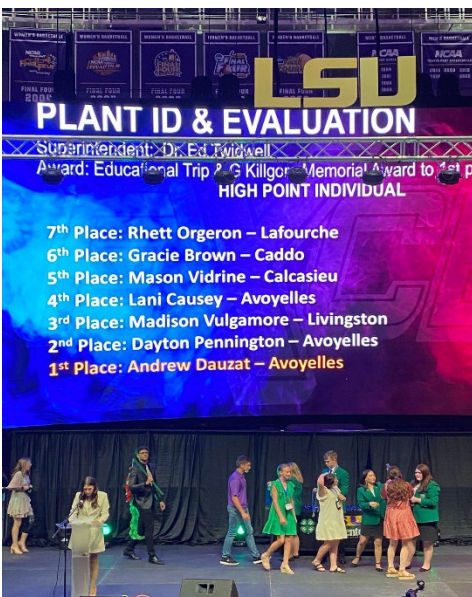
Each year 4-H members who are 8th-12th grade are eligible to attend 4-H University on the campus of LSU and A&M College in Baton Rouge to demonstrate their skills in more than 30 competitive events, workshops, and educational sessions. It is a culmination of a 4-H member's year of hard work and dedication. In June, Avoyelles 4-H agents and volunteers took 8 youth to spend three nights in LSU dorms and compete in these events. Four of those members applied to be State Board Members. This rigorous process required



them to complete applications and submit reference letters before being selected for an interview. All four of these youth excelled by being chosen to serve as State Board Members. A fifth 4-H member applied to be a Regional Representative for the State Executive Board. He had to complete an application and submit reference letters before the event. At the event, he campaigned and gave a speech to the voting delegation. He was successfully elected as one of three Regional Representatives. These five have a great responsibility throughout the upcoming year not only within Avoyelles Parish but throughout Louisiana. Their first order of business is attending a mandatory conference in Baton Rouge at the end of July. They are also required to attend and lead state board meetings and other state events that involve their selected board. In addition to being chosen or elected to serve on a state board, an Avoyelles 4-H graduating senior attended a scholarship banquet where she was awarded a \$1,000 scholarship. This scholarship will help offset some of her LSU Tuition where she will be attending in the fall. She has also been awarded a seat in LSU Vet school if she continues to meet all the requirements throughout her undergraduate program. Avoyelles 4-H may not have been the largest parish represented during 4-H University but these youth represented Avoyelles greatly from winning competitions entered to being selected to service on state boards to being awarded scholarships and trips. These youth are the definition of leaders.



Louisiana 4-H continues to be successful because of the planning, implementing, and conducting of high-quality educational opportunities for the youth. This is accomplished through the leadership and collaboration of these elected youth, LSU AgCenter, and the Louisiana 4-H Foundation.



Austin LeBlanc was selected as a State STEM Board Member. He placed 3rd in Automotive Care and 9th in STEM Illustrated Talk.

Marlee Mayeux was selected as a State Shooting Sports Board Member. She placed 6th in the Fishing Sports competition.

Olivia Germany was selected as a State Livestock Ambassador. Dayton Pennington was elected as a Central Region Representative for the State Executive Board. He placed 5th in Dairy Judging and 2nd in Plant Identification and Evaluation.

Dakota Rivas placed 1st in the Tiger Tank Entrepreneurship competition. He received a monetary prize.

Lani Causey was awarded a scholarship in the amount of \$1,000 and placed 4th in Plant Identification and Evaluation.

Katie Guillory was selected as a State Fashion Board Member. She placed 4th in Upcycled Fashion.

Andrew Dausat placed first in Plant Identification and Evaluation.

Andrew, Dayton, and Lani also competed in Plant Identification and Evaluation as a team. Their team placed 1st and were awarded a trip to Arkansas.

Nutrition Outreach

Teen Chef Culinary Club

In 2022, 4-H and FCS partnered for a Healthy Living grant through Walmart to develop a Teen Chef Culinary Club. Members were taught food safety, nutrition information, and culinary skills in a series of 6 monthly sessions. Part of their education was using a knife properly and following a recipe. Lessons became more rigorous as they began cooking from ingredients without recipes and were given time limits to cook and clean their area. They were introduced to different ways of cooking, such as using an air fryer, and foods from different parts of the world. This group also trained for 4-H Food Challenge competition. The club was such a success that it has become an annual program. Many of the students continued with this year's club and have become great Teen Leaders for culinary related events including clover buds and other cooking activities.



Teen Chef Sushi Night



On September 25, 2023, Avoyelles Parish 4-H agent, Amy Andrus partnered with Jennifer Duhon, Central Region FCS Regional Coordinator, to host a sushi night for local teens. Youth in grades 7th-12th came out to learn new recipes and improve their culinary skills. The event began with knife skills and a food safety lesson. Participants learned about the history of sushi and its nutritional value. After making sushi rice in a pressure cooker, they combined the rice with rice vinegar and then began rolling out portions on their sushi mats. Agents demonstrated proper ways to peel and cut avocados and cucumbers then monitored youth as they cut and prepared their ingredients. Rolling the sushi on the mats was a new experience for most of the youth attending this workshop. They had lots of laughs and showed determination as they struggled to roll their sushi. Ultimately, they persevered and successfully created sushi rolls. By the end of the evening, they had created three different rolls and homemade spicy mayonnaise. All participants tasted the sushi rolls, discussed their favorites, and analyzed ways to improve their technique. Everyone was able to leave with sushi recipes, a pair of chopsticks, and a bamboo rolling mat.

Clubs, Clinics, and Camps

Junior Master Gardening Club



Junior Master Gardening Club began September 12, 2023. Each month this group of 4-H members attend a gardening club led by Ms. Ann Soileau, one of the 4-H agents. This group spends about an hour each month learning about proper gardening technics. In their first meeting, the youth learned about proper planting of vegetable seeds. The attending youth planted bush bean seeds by first gluing seeds to a paper towel. They learned that not all seeds need the same space to thrive. Not only does the Junior Master Garden Club meet each month for an excitingly fun hands-on gardening lesson, but they are also creating a 4-H garden and going home with seeds of their own to continue their learning by teaching their families proper gardening. In addition to the beans during the fall months, the club planted carrots and lettuce seeds. They also read "Tops and Bottoms" by Janet Stevens. In this book, along with the accompanying activity, the club learned about eating different parts of vegetable plants. Their most recent lesson was on growing vegetables using grow lights. They came together and planted tomato and cherry tomato seeds in pods. These seeds are growing under a grow light with the intention that they will be transplanted into their garden when conditions are right. They are learning it is necessary to plant seeds and plants under the best conditions in the best places. In the upcoming months the Junior Master Gardeners will be learning about composing, the importance of pollinators, and planting vegetables from the vegetable itself. The skills they are learning from this club will be skills they can use throughout their lives. I can't wait to see this group grow!

Livestock Ambassadors

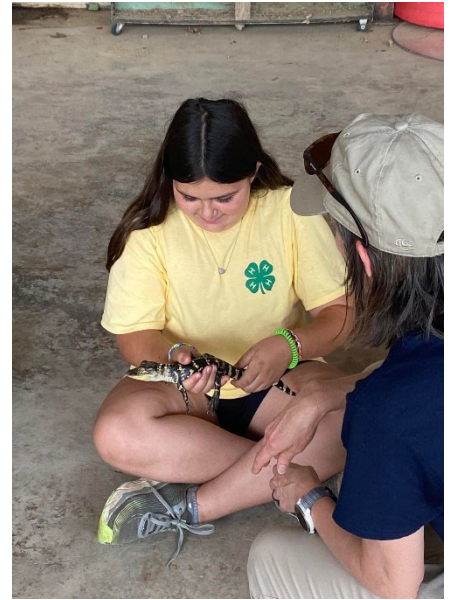


Each year Avoyelles 4-H has new livestock ambassadors. Not all livestock exhibitors can be ambassadors. In addition to being required to apply with detailed accomplishments throughout their years of being 4-H members and be interviewed. They must be enrolled in Avoyelles 4-H, classified in the 7th-12th grade, and exhibit a livestock project the year they serve as ambassadors. Being an Avoyelles Parish Livestock Ambassador comes with many responsibilities. They worked with their 4-H agent, Ms. Ann Soileau, in choosing the Champion buckles, the showmanship awards that will be awarded at the Avoyelles Livestock Show in January 2024. September 9, 2023, the eight Avoyelles 4-H Livestock Ambassadors hosted a livestock exhibitor day. Accompanied by their animals, each one educated those that attended on what it takes to show an animal at a livestock show. Their goal was to promote their livestock program and gain new livestock families. In addition to preparing for this local event they spend two to three nights a week at the Avoyelles 4-H office practicing for the State Livestock Quiz Bowl at the Louisiana State Fair. Their hard work and dedication paid off! Saturday, October 28th Dayton, Olivia, Dalton, Clara, and Andrew came home with the first-place trophy. Saturday, December 9, 2023, Dayton, and Clara competed in the Louisiana 4-H Dairy Judging contest in Baton Rouge. The Avoyelles 4-H Ambassadors work extremely hard to ensure they have a successful and fun livestock show. Last livestock show they added a live auction to their livestock show. To ensure that this year's auction is just as successful as last year's, the ambassadors

reach out to Avoyelles Parish High School Agriculture teachers. In addition to getting their schools involved each ambassador has been collecting items throughout their communities. The monies collected through the auction will help offset the cost of the livestock show and allow this event to continue to improve each year. Not only do they have their own animals to exhibit during the parish livestock show, but they also have additional responsibilities during the show. They each have ring and ribbon responsibilities. They are to assist the judges of the show with anything needed. The Avoyelles 4-H Ambassadors invite you all to come out to the Avoyelles 4-H Livestock Show Friday, January 19th and Saturday, January 20th, 2024.

Fishing Clinic

Avoyelles 4H hosted a three-day fishing clinic in the late spring of 2023. This is a great annual event held at The Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries Camp on Boggy Bayou Rd in Spring Bayou. The youth that attended learn from the experts. Through this three-day event the attending youth learned about Macro Organisms that are living in our waters and how to properly set up and take down a tent, presented by 4H agent Amy Andrus. Stacy Blomquist with Kisatchie National Forest presented lessons from Project Learning Tree, and Derrick Ware with Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries taught the youth about boater safety. Avoyelles 4-H also partnered with Avoyelles Parish Sheriff Dauzat. He talked to youth about drug use and introduced them to a dog that is trained to detect illegal drugs. Tanya Sturman, Carrie Salyers, and Caitlin Joubert with Wildlife and Fisheries taught lessons on Whooping Cranes, the Louisiana Black Bear, knot tying, fish ID and casting. Ann Soileau led the lessons on tackle display, fish prints, and fishing. Each year Avoyelles 4-H agent, Ann Soileau, partners with Wildlife and Fisheries and Kisatchie National Forest to host a hands-on learning experience for the 4-H youth of Avoyelles.



Sewing for Service



The Avoyelles Parish 4-H Sewing Board members hosted a Sewing for Service workshop on November 27, 2023. The Sewing Board is comprised of 3 teens who applied for this position based on their exceptional sewing skills and leadership attributes. They led 12 younger 4-H members in creating weighted teddy bears, pin cushions, and pillowcases. Youth used seam rippers to open the teddy bears and remove some of the stuffing. They placed two-pound bags of rice inside each bear. They then sewed the bears back up by hand. Each youth made two of these bears, one for themselves and one to be donated. The weighted teddy bears will be donated to Shriner's Hospital in Shreveport. In addition to hand sewing, participants also learned about using a sewing machine. After a lesson on parts of the machine, they used sewing machines to make pillowcases. These pillowcases will be donated to our local Faith House. By participating in this workshop, youth learned both sewing skills and about helping others in need.

4-H Camp



On June 12, 2023, three school buses left the Mansura location of the LSU Ag Center with the Avoyelles Parish 4-H agents, adult volunteers, teen counselors, and 84 4-H members. These youth were able to experience camping life for four days and three nights. When they arrived at Camp Grant Walker in Pollock, they settled into their cabins before taking a swim test, choosing educational tracks, and participating in ice breaker activities to get to know the youth from the 8 other parishes in attendance. Youth had the following options as their educational focus for the duration of their stay: Food & Fitness, Hunter Safety Certification; Science, Engineering, & Technology; Louisiana Wetlands & Wildlife, Outdoor Adventures, Water Safety, and The Artist Within. In addition to educational tracks, campers also had daily recreation time where they could swim, play sports, create art projects, and explore aspects of alternative tracks. Evening activities included skits, a talent show, dancing, and Vespers. Campers were able to engage their minds through hands-on learning while making new friends. By the end of this camping experience, our 4-H members had gained a new sense of independence and made memories that will last a lifetime.



Agriculture and Natural Resources

On-Farm Demonstration Variety Trials



On-farm demonstration variety trials remain a huge part of the AgCenter ANR program. Agents and producers collaborate to organize and implement these trials, based on information needed for each commodity. Official variety trials are conducted with both commercially available and unlaunched varieties; however, on-farm demonstration trial allows producers to evaluate performances of these lines in their own production and environment. These results are published and relied upon for other producers in the general area. In 2023, Avoyelles Parish had a total of 6 on-farm demonstration trials: 1 wheat, 1 corn, 1 cotton, 2 soybean, and 1 grain sorghum trial.



Table 11. Lint yield (lb/a) summary of the 2022 cotton on-farm core block demonstrations at nine locations identified by parish.

Brand	Variety	Avoyelles	Caddo	Catahoula	Franklin	Madison	Morehouse	Ouachita	Richland	Tensas	Average ¹
Deltapine	DP 2127 B3XF	1,314	1,492	1,573	686	1,236	1,074	1,262	655	1,222	1,114
Deltapine	DP 2115 B3XF	1,153	1,194	1,614	794	1,047	1,074	1,398	870	1,065	1,091
Stoneville	ST 4595 B3XF	1,242	1,222	1,535	724	1,099	1,079	1,294	737	1,149	1,081
PhytoGen	PHY 411 W3FE	1,240		1,365	854	1,070			707	1,148	1,064
Stoneville	ST 5091 B3XF	1,023	1,295	1,534	601	1,179	1,110	1,320	821	1,207	1,061
Dyna-Gro	3535 B3XF	1,101	1,088	1,387	724	1,089	895	1,009	740	1,187	1,038
PhytoGen	PHY 415 W3FE	1,156		1,311	716	1,189			514	1,077	994
Dyna-Gro	3644 B3XF	1,018	914	1,128	747	1,012	1,025	1,042	663	880	908
	Location average	1,156	1,201	1,431	731	1,115	1,043	1,221	714	1,117	

Farming for the Future

Tobie Blanchard, LSU AgCenter (12/15/23)



The Farming for the Future workshop, held at the LSU AgCenter Avoyelles Parish Extension Office on Dec. 8, offered beginning farmers information on risk and financial farm management. Participating in the workshop were farmers from Avoyelles, Rapides and Grant parishes who represented 20,000 acres in soybean and feed grain production. Justin Dufour, LSU AgCenter extension agent, said the workshop was developed through feedback from stakeholders who wanted to help the newer generation of farmers. “We felt offering something like this was important because often times when we talk about sustainability, our minds default to actual production practices, but this particular workshop was about supplying our stakeholders with tools and knowledge to be financially sustainable as well,” Dufour said. The topics covered during the workshop ranged from interpreting market data, constructing enterprise budgeting, preparing financial analysis, mechanics of crop leases and the implementation of various risk management strategies. “While every farming operation is different, we chose to conduct a workshop that allowed producers to use their own production data/expectations to evaluate the potential change that crop selection, commodity prices, input usage and field operations may have on their bottom line,” said Michael Deliberto, LSU AgCenter economist, who presented during the workshop. Deliberto worked with the small group to construct multiple scenarios that considered a change in one or more parameters. He discussed the U.S. Department of Agriculture farm program election along with different crop insurance options. A marketing session introduced farmers to concepts such as futures and options and the strategy behind them and influence of marketing conditions. “While risk cannot be completely eliminated, it can be mitigated to a degree,” Deliberto said. Dufour said farmers who started just in the past five years have experienced a range of weather patterns and price fluctuations. “For a successful operation, it takes strategic planning and, most times, flawless execution, with the most influential factor being something you have absolutely no control over — the weather,” Dufour said. Tara Smith, executive associate vice president and director of the LSU AgCenter Cooperative Extension Service, gave opening remarks. “The financial aspects of farming are ingrained in every aspect of production agriculture. Increasing awareness and knowledge of budgets and available resources early on will ideally enhance financial decision making for years to come,” Smith said. This workshop catered to soybean and feed grain production, but Dufour plans to offer a sugarcane and rice version next year.

Rice Verification Program

Tobie Blanchard, LSU AgCenter (11/21/23)



The Louisiana Rice Research Verification Program brings results from the research station to the farm, aiming to help rice producers improve sustainability and profitability. Six fields across central and southwestern Louisiana made up the program for 2023. LSU AgCenter rice specialist Ronnie Levy said even with the extremely hot and dry conditions, the fields performed well. "Overall, we had a good year. We had a couple of fields that were probably not quite as good as we would have liked," Levy said. Acadia, Allen, Avoyelles, Calcasieu, Evangeline, and Vermillion parishes each had a field in the program. Most of the fields were planted in late March or early April, with the Avoyelles field planted in early May, later than the ideal time. Varieties planted included Provisia 03, Mermentau, CLL17, Jupiter and DG 263L. Most of the farmers who cooperated were first-time verification participants with the exception of the farmer in Evangeline Parish. Weekly visits to the fields with the farmer, parish AgCenter agent and crop consultants helped Levy work with the team to make decisions on how to manage the field throughout the season. Levy's reason for administering the program is to assist in implementing new technologies developed through research efforts into wide-scale use in Louisiana rice production. He said farmers participate in the program for different reasons. "Some are looking for higher yields. Some of them are looking at not necessarily the high yields, but the profitability in it," he said. While Levy works to employ best management practices across all fields, the actual management will vary. "If you try to manage for a real high yielding crop on some of the marginal land you know the potential is not quite there," Levy said. That's the benefit of the verification program that

farmers have seen year after year. Good management practices can help farmers achieve higher yields, increase profits, and use fertilizers and herbicides more efficiently. Levy said the program also provides a good opportunity for teaching newer AgCenter agents about rice and rice production, training them to better serve the rice farmers in their parishes.

Plant Propagation Workshop



On September 27, 2023, Horticulture Agent Molly Lyles hosted a Propagation Workshop at Moncla Nursery in Avoyelles Parish. We had a really good time with 21 people in attendance. At the workshop we covered propagating plants by taking cuttings. After the talk, the participants filled their own trays with soilless media and took cuttings from plants around the nursery. We ate snacks that were made with produce from the Moncla Garden, and I gave out Hibiscus tea and seeds for them to plant next year. Learning how to propagate plants allow them to take cuttings from plants that they have and want to multiply or give away to other people. Collaboration with local clientele also provides a great opportunity to network and brainstorm for future events that will serve community needs and increase knowledge.

Pecan Tree Borers



Over the past few years, Avoyelles Parish agents have fielded numerous amounts of calls regarding pecan tree decline. A lot of visits and pictures consisted of similar symptoms: partial limb loss within the tree. Upon inspections, we would often notice a collection of frass and saw dust in the forks or at the base of the tree. This damage was often characterized by severe, premature leaf loss and yellowing. In the Summer of 2023, Justin Dufour received a call about these symptoms and made a site-visit to confirm the diagnosis. The homeowner had already cut down the dead tree, but saved a collection of larvae that was found within. The Flat-headed Appletree borer was discovered within the bark. These particular borers will target stressed trees and begin to bore within the bark, which would eventually compromise the tree's ability to conduct nutrient and water transport. Dr. Michael Polozola and Justin Dufour published a video that gives more insight into identifying and controlling Pecan Tree Borers.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjRtWvhlI4k>

Rice Straw Forage Quality Project

Louisiana has battled through one of the hottest, driest summers on record in 2023. These extreme conditions have caused steep declines in quantity and quality in grazing and hay pastures which has resulted in the taking of drastic measures for many producers. In response to the shortage of hay production, many cattle producers have resorted to baling and feeding rice straw as a source of forage to cattle. As feeding rice straw as a source of forage to cattle is an unconventional practice, 52 samples of multiple varieties of rice straw, 5 from Avoyelles Parish, were collected across the state and analyzed for necessary nutrient values such as dry matter, protein, fiber, minerals, and energy value. The samples were then compared to 13 grass forage samples that were baled at the same time. The goal of this study was to determine any significant nutrient value differences in rice straw (varieties) compared to grass forages that were baled at approximately the same time. When comparing nutritive values of rice straw to grass forages (as shown in Figure 1), it is evident that rice straw will likely contain less crude protein, energy (TDN), and have a lower relative forage quality. This indicates that producers will likely need to supplement with an additional commodity or commodities to meet the nutrient requirements of beef cattle. While rice straw alone will not meet the nutrient requirements of most beef cattle, it can be incorporated into a ration as a cost-effective commodity. Agents and specialists with the LSU AgCenter can assist in determining nutrient requirements of your herd, as well as formulating a ration.

Cultivar	Crude Protein, %DM	Total Digestible Nutrient, %DM	DM Intake, % body weight	Relative Forage Quality
Bahia	7.71AB	56.78AB	2.08AB	96AB
Bermuda	7.84A	62.37A	2.52A	129A
CLL16	3.51C	46.43C	0.96C	36C
CLM04	2.80C	49.54BC	1.23C	50C
Cheniere	4.58BC	52.64BC	1.55BC	68BC
Jasmine	3.25C	49.36C	1.20C	49C
Jupiter	3.70C	49.62C	1.27C	52C
PVL03	4.01C	50.75BC	1.40C	58C
7321	3.69C	47.98C	1.14C	45C
P- value	< 0.0001	< 0.0001	< 0.0001	< 0.0001



For more information, contact your local LSU AgCenter Office

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