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UT INSTITUTE OF
Agriculture
News for Employees, Students & Friends *March 2007*

At Issue
**VETERINARY CARE
 IN RURAL TENNESSEE**

Producers, veterinarians, legislators, government agencies are concerned. Is the state experiencing a shortage of **veterinary care** for its **large-animal and food-animal industries**? How would such a shortage affect our economy?

On February 20, Vice President for Agriculture **Joe DiPietro** and **Michael Blackwell**, dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine, presented to the **State House Agriculture Committee** the results of the Institute's analyses of the state's situation with regard to the availability of **veterinary services**. The studies were conducted at the request of the legislative body. Teams of researchers from the **College of Veterinary Medicine** and from the **Department of Agricultural**

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UT's Forestry Club with assistance from the **Department of Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries** is hosting the **50th Forestry Conclave of the Association of Southern Forestry Clubs (ASFC)**. The annual gathering attracts close to 300 undergraduate forestry club members and their advisers from 15 Southeastern universities for three days of physical and technical competition. This year's event takes place March 15-18 at the **Clyde M. York 4-H Center in Crossville**.



Joe DiPietro

**FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT:
 UTIA REPORT CARD**

Some of you may be wondering when you will get a chance to review the **results of the UTIA Report Card survey** conducted last fall. To give you just a taste of the results, the highest GPA, a 3.21, was for the category "Quality of Faculty" and one of the lowest GPAs, a 1.75, was provided for "Housekeeping."

Well, in next month's *Third Thursday* we will include an article that will provide in-depth Institute-wide results of the process. In addition we have provided each of the deans results of your feedback based on the units they lead and have asked them to share that information with you.

I appreciate the 408 of you who took the time to participate by filling out a UTIA Report Card online. You will recall that this effort was aimed at determining our self-perceptions of the Institute and an effort to see where we feel we need to improve. We think you will find the results interesting, thought provoking, and, some, challenging. I am counting on the information along with your teamwork and cooperation to improve our organization and move UTIA forward. I'm looking forward to hearing what you think of the results.

All the best,
Joe

*Send Roses
 Award to
 Margaret
 Taylor,
 March is
 EAP Month,
 Details inside*

third thursday

RURAL VETS, from page 1

Economics surveyed state veterinary practitioners and livestock producers, and public forums solicited input from interested parties in each of the state's grand divisions.

As with most instances where science, economics, and societal needs collide, the issue is complicated. While many areas of the state are not currently experiencing a shortage of veterinary services, others seemingly are. Eighteen percent of producers surveyed indicated they had problems obtaining veterinary services during the past year, with the most common complaint being a delay in getting a veterinarian to visit the farm. Large/mixed animal veterinarian services exist where larger numbers of cattle are located; however, 24 counties in Tennessee have two or fewer veterinarians. In a state where animal-based agriculture represents fully half of the state's \$2.5 billion annual agriculture-based revenues, access to adequate veterinary care is vital to the state's economy.

Of the state's 51,000 livestock producers, those who reported a problem obtaining veterinary services estimated their average financial loss due to a lack of services at \$1,965 per producer. One study projected these financial losses to exceed \$10 million across the state.

Veterinarians and others recognized the availability of adequate veterinary care as essential to maintaining the safety and wholesomeness of food-animal products and to minimizing the public's risk of contracting food-borne illness. Public health concerns are also central in the relationship between the need for an adequate number of veterinarians and monitoring potential zoonotic disease outbreaks. Finally, the health status of companion animals in rural areas is another issue. The state's

March is Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Awareness Month and the current issue of *UT's Making A Difference* newsletter describes how the state of Tennessee's EAP provides **professional, confidential services to full-time employees and eligible dependents**. The state's EAP Steering Committee is urging all supervisors to learn more about the program by attending one of the scheduled supervisory training classes.

Resources and training opportunities have been scheduled from April through December by Magellan, the designated EAP provider, and the state. Faculty and staff may find out more about EAP by reading the newsletter at <http://uthr.admin.utk.edu/tandd/davidNEWSLETTER/EAP/EAP.htm>. Anyone who would like to be included on a distribution list for future issues of *Making A Difference* should contact David Bowman at 974-4430 or dbowman@tennessee.edu.



equine population now numbers more than 210,000 animals, valued on average at \$2,700 each.

Among the concerns expressed at the public forums was how to increase the number of veterinary students choosing to practice large animal and food animal medicine. Students expressed worries about financial security as they face the tremendous responsibility of repaying student loan debts averaging \$80,000. On average, rural-based practices do not generate the same economic returns as small-animal, urban practices, and veterinarians operating rural practices often face longer periods of indebtedness.

On a positive note, the studies clarified the impact of having a veterinary college in the state. "We have data that indicate the UT College of Veterinary Medicine has trained more than 50 percent of the veterinarians practicing in Tennessee. We are most excited to learn that over half—54 percent—of the veterinarians in rural Tennessee communities were trained by UTCVM," Blackwell

said. "This proves we are doing some things right."

While the studies affirm the economic and societal need for veterinarians to practice in rural areas, they are not conclusive as to what actions would ensure all the state's livestock producers adequate access to veterinary care. Solutions range from letting the market for veterinarian services dictate the demand, to increasing the college's enrollment and instituting state-sponsored educational debt forgiveness.

"It's now up to our state lawmakers to sort out what kind of legislation, if any, is needed to help ensure the vitality of the state's animal-based industries," said DiPietro. "The Institute stands ready to help in any way we can. It's fundamental to our role as a land-grant institution."

The collection of studies is available online at <http://www.agriculture.utk.edu/news/ruralvetstudy/introduction.htm>.

—Patricia Clark McDaniels

NOTABLE

P. Michael Davidson, professor and interim head, **Department of Food Science and Technology**, gave the **keynote address** at the annual meeting of the **Canadian Meat Science Association/Canadian Meat Council** in Vancouver, British Columbia in early February. His presentation was titled "The Antimicrobial Preservative Conundrum."

Plant Sciences graduate student Catherine Nyinyi will be honored in May in Quebec, Canada, as the third place winner of the **2007 Biotechnology Student Excellence Award** by the **American Oil Chemists Society** for her paper, "Confirmation of Fatty Acid Modifier QTL in Soybean," co-authored by **Vincent Pantalone, Fred Allen, Dean Kopsell, and Carl Sams**. She is the fourth student of Pantalone's since 2002 to receive a major international award from AOCS.

Doris D'Souza, assistant professor of Food Science & Technology, will discuss "Viruses, Viruses Everywhere...and Not a Food to Spare!" in a **UT Science Forum lecture** on Friday, April 13. The

brown-bag event starts at noon in Thompson-Boling Arena, Dining Room C-D.

Dr. Jeremy Whitman has received the College of Veterinary Medicine's **2007 First Decade Achievement Award**. Whitman, a 2002 graduate of the college, is an associate veterinarian at Equine Medical Associates in Lexington, Kentucky. After graduating, he practiced at the Four Sixes Ranch in Texas, one of the country's premier Quarter Horse facilities. Whitman says his entire life he wanted to be a veterinarian and had "tunnel vision" for working with large animals. "I appreciate all the great mentors I had at UT. They gave me the opportunity to go places and do things I never thought would have been possible."

The national **Veterinary Business Management Association (VBMA)** has recognized the newly founded VBMA chapter at the College of Veterinary Medicine as its **best new chapter**.

December **Agricultural Economics graduate** Drew Petty placed second in the American Farm Bureau's **National Discussion Meet**. Students from

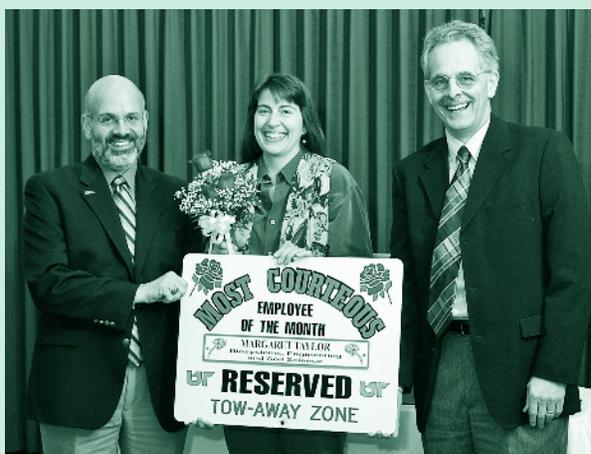
28 states competed. As runner-up, he received \$1,250 and a lot of great compliments from judges and those who attended.

Animal Science's **Academic Quadrathlon team** had its **highest finish yet**. Details are online at <http://animalscience.ag.utk.edu/news/AcademicQuadrathlon2006-07.htm>. The team is coached by **Aaron Fisher**.

UT alumnus Jamie Jenkins has been named **Farm Service Agency state executive director for Tennessee**. USDA Farm Service Agency Administrator Teresa Lasseter credited Jenkins' strong background in education and agricultural extension as being central to his new role in assisting Tennessee producers in optimizing their use of resources and promoting sustainable agriculture. Jenkins worked for three decades in Extension and, prior to his appointment, served as director of research for Agricenter International in Memphis.

The **Tennessee Nursery and Landscape Association** has honored **Charles Hall**, Agricultural Economics, as **Committee Chair of the Year**. Hall was recognized for his Extension program, which focuses on the economics of producing and marketing horticultural products grown in Tennessee, including marketing strategies for firms at the wholesale and retail level, financial analysis for horticultural firms, and the situation/outlook for major horticultural crops. The association inducted Area Extension Specialist **Hugh Conlon** into its **Hall of Fame**. Conlon was recognized for his work with commercial nurseries, greenhouse growers, landscape managers, garden center operators and their employees.

Vice President Joe DiPietro and Alan Chesney of Human Resources, right, congratulate Margaret Taylor, administrative specialist with Biosystems Engineering and Soil Science, on being February's Send Roses Award recipient. Tomás Martin, assistant professor with the College of Veterinary Medicine, nominated Taylor based on her outstanding service



in assisting Marisol Benitez, a Venezuelan engineer who began study at BESS this semester. "I am sure we are not the only ones to think of Ms. Margaret Taylor as a great asset for her department and an example to everyone of how a little bit of good will can touch people at every level of life," Martin wrote.

BEDFORD CO. PROGRAM BRIDGES U.S.–LATINA CULTURES

Around the table, the English and Spanish flows. Two languages, two cultures—blend as one.

The **gathering of U.S. and Hispanic women** is part of **UT Extension’s Culture Club program in Bedford County**. Once a month, the ladies gather to learn from each other and talk about traditions in their countries and ways to help their families. The Culture Club started so Latina women might improve their communication skills and gain more confidence in dealing with their new world.



“We have to make this a welcoming experience for them to learn about our culture and the expectations of our society, and to give them friendship and some women to depend on,” says Bedford County Agent **Whitney Danhof**. “If they have a question, they have a safe place to ask that question.”

Tennessee’s Hispanic population grew more than 300 percent in the 1990’s, with some of the heaviest growth in Bedford County. UT Extension received a federal grant to start this program because of this population surge.

Sylvia Escamilla came to Shelbyville from Mexico eight years ago. “I’ve learned different traditions from Mexico and for America,” she says. “Some traditions are the same. Others are different.”



You can view a video story about the Culture Club at <http://www.agriculture.utk.edu/news/VideoReleases/>.

If you have an idea for a TV story, please contact Chuck Denney in UTIA Marketing & Communications at cmdenney@utk.edu.

THIRD THURSDAY WINS AWARD

The Institute’s newsletter, *Third Thursday*, has won an **Award of Excellence** from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) District III. The newsletter represents the work of **Margot Emery, Donna Hundley, Patricia Clark McDaniels, Garvin Quinn** in Marketing and Communications Services. **It also represents the ideas of contributors like you. Please keep the suggestions coming to Margot Emery at (865) 974-7374 or memery@tennessee.edu.**



NOTABLE

The **College of Veterinary Medicine** hosted an interactive panel discussion titled “**From Slavery to Freedom**” in honor of **Black History Month**. The event was part of Black History Day at the college to celebrate and appreciate diversity through black history.

UTIA News is published monthly by the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture
Send comments and suggestions to Margot Emery, memery@tennessee.edu
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