

Ag column 1/1/16

Helping People....A Way of Life

As the UT Agriculture Extension Agent for Sullivan County, I embrace each day with opportunities to improve the quality of life for Sullivan County residents. For twenty-one years, I have enjoyed helping others by solving a variety of problems, offering programs to educate county clientele, coordinating the efforts of UT Extension Master Gardeners to improve our communities, and improving profitability of agricultural producers with programs like the Advanced Master Beef Producer, and many others too numerous to mention. I often say I work with everything that “grows, eats, or rots”.

I joined UT Extension in October of 1994 as a 4-H Extension Agent doing youth development work in Carter County, TN. I worked with youth from Stoney Creek to Roan Mountain to Happy Valley. I accompanied youth on trips to 4-H Congress, 4-H camp, state judging contests, and even the National 4-H Forestry Contest in West Virginia. From all of these experiences, I gained valuable knowledge I use every day in my current responsibilities.

I transferred to UT/TSU Extension Sullivan County as the Agriculture Extension Agent in October of 2001. Over the past fourteen years, I have enjoyed working with the Sullivan County Cattlemen’s Association, Sullivan County Farm Bureau, the UT Extension Master Gardeners, the Back Country Horsemen of East Tennessee, local Farmers’ Market, the East Tennessee Nursery Association, and many other local groups. Along with my agriculture program responsibilities, I was appointed to the position of county director in May of 2014.

Across all Extension programs, volunteers magnify the efforts of UT/TSU Extension. The Sullivan County office is extremely blessed to have people who volunteer numerous hours that contribute to the success of our programs. In 2015 alone, local Master Gardeners volunteered 11,304 hours in local communities by developing community gardens, coordinating horticulture workshops, and empowering individuals to grow their own food. Another group is the Sullivan County Cattlemen’s Association who educate beef producers and promote agriculture in the community. Volunteers also play a very important role in 4-H youth programs and our Family and Community Education Clubs across the county.

Personally, I enjoy church and family activities such as camping with my wife, Melissa, and my children, Amber and Austin. I also enjoy managing my small herd of Angus beef cattle. I also have a real hunger for adventure. I have enjoyed many multi-day bicycling trips all over the Eastern U.S. and Canada. My wife, Melissa, and I also enjoy riding a Harley-Davidson Road King locally and on overnight trips.

I feel very fortunate to be the Sullivan County Agriculture Extension Agent. Rarely do I look at my daily routine as work. Each day is full of opportunities to make a difference in someone’s life.