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COOPERATIVE  
EXTENSION



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## **USDA, Cooperative Extension & APLU Award Top Honors in Extension Excellence and Diversity**

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Washington, DC – Recognizing visionary leadership and diversity in educational programming, the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Cooperative Extension, and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) today announced the following 2023 awards:

- **Excellence in Extension Award for an Individual:** Mary Arnold, Oregon State University
- **Excellence in Extension Team Award:** The Growing Together Multi-State Collaborative
- **National Extension Diversity Award:** The University of Florida for the “Café Latino” project

The awards will be presented at the APLU Annual Meeting in November, which USDA-NIFA and Cooperative Extension have sponsored since 1991.

*“Each year, these awards showcase the fundamental, transformative difference Cooperative Extension continues to make in our society,”* said Dr. Manjit Misra, NIFA Director. *“This important partnership and excellent programs like these are a testament to the true value of Cooperative Extension capacity funds more than a century after the Smith-Lever Act created this unparalleled system of outreach and education that enriches every community across the nation.”*

**The Excellence in Extension Award for an Individual** is given annually to one Cooperative Extension professional who excels at science-based programming, provides visionary leadership, and makes a positive impact on constituents. Mary Arnold is a Professor and 4-H Youth Development Specialist at the Oregon State University and works with the National 4-H Council. Dr. Arnold’s leadership among positive youth development professionals has improved the impact of 4-H programs across the country.

Mary’s leadership has resulted in significant national developments for preparing 4-H professionals through positive youth development academies. Her 4-H “Thriving Model” has unified the 4-H system around a common, science-based understanding and is enhancing effective youth-based programs. 4-H provides positive youth development to over six million young people across the nation.

**National Excellence in Extension Team Award** recognizes excellence of an Extension team in performing the work of Extension research, technical assistance, and outreach education. The Growing Together Multi-State Collaboration was established to expand access to fresh produce at food distribution sites. It also offers companion nutrition and gardening education to those experiencing nutrition insecurity throughout the North Central United States. Over the past three years, the multi-state collaborative has donated over 600,000 pounds, equivalent to 1.8 million servings of fruits and vegetables, to 878 food distribution sites serving 375,000 clients. The initiative’s original cooperating

state Cooperative Extension Services were based at Iowa State University, the University of Wisconsin, and Purdue University. The program has expanded to include nine states with the help of the following participating institutions: Michigan State University, Montana State University, South Dakota State University, University of Illinois, University of Nebraska, and the University of Wyoming.

**National Diversity in Extension Award** recognizes significant contributions and accomplishments in achieving and sustaining diversity and pluralism. The Coalition of Florida Extension for Latino Communities (CAFÉ Latino) is assisting in this effort. CAFÉ Latino is gaining visibility in Cooperative Extension System and in other countries. Since the Spring 2018, University of Florida's Dr. John Diaz, Associate Professor and Extension Specialist, has led the development of CAFÉ Latino in collaboration with Dr. Karla Shelnett, Professor, Jonael Bosques-Mendez, County Extension Director, and Laura Valencia, 4-H Agent to help increase the capacity and competency for Extension to serve the needs of Florida's growing Latinx population. CAFÉ Latino focuses on enhancing the access and efficacy of Extension programs.

### **Regional Awards for Individual Excellence in Extension**

NIFA, Cooperative Extension, and APLU will also present four regional awards to individual professionals for excellence this year. The recipients are:

- **1890s Region:** Cedric Ogden, Cooperative Extension Specialist, Fort Valley State University, for Leading innovative engagement with diverse communities and using technology to address economic and environmental challenges.
- **North Central Region:** Elaine Johannes, State Extension Specialist – Community Health, Kansas State University, for leading innovative engagement and partnerships for community health.
- **Northeast Region:** Jiff Martin, Extension Educator – Food Systems, University of Connecticut, for providing solid ground for an inclusive, vibrant, and sustainable agriculture industry and food supply.
- **Southern Region:** A. Stanley Culpepper, Extension Agronomist – Weed Science, University of Georgia, for innovative research and outreach to improve weed management and pesticide stewardship practices on family farms.

*“Congratulations to the outstanding Extension professionals who will be honored on November 6<sup>th</sup>”* said the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) Chair, Damona Doye, Associate Vice President, Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service Oklahoma State University. *“These leaders are making a difference by connecting community needs and university resources to address critical issues across the nation.”*

*The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) provides leadership and funding for programs that advance agriculture-related sciences. We invest in and support initiatives that ensure the long-term viability of agriculture. NIFA applies an integrated approach to ensure that groundbreaking discoveries in agriculture-related sciences and technologies reach the people who can put them into practice.*

*APLU is a membership organization that fosters a community of university leaders collectively working to advance the mission of public research universities. The association's membership consists of more than 250 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations spanning across all 50 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, Canada, and Mexico. Annually, its 210 U.S. member campuses enroll 4.5 million undergraduates and 1.3 million graduate students, award 1.3 million degrees, employ 1.2 million faculty and staff, and conduct \$48.5 billion in university-based research.*

*The Cooperative Extension System (CES), in partnership with NIFA and APLU, is translating research into action: bringing cutting-edge discoveries from research laboratories to those who can put knowledge into practice. CES empowers farmers, ranchers, and communities to meet their challenges, adapt to changing technology, improve nutrition and food safety, prepare for and respond to emergencies, and protect our environment. Extension operates through the nationwide land-grant university system and is the unique cooperative of federal government, state, and local governments.*