

THE **AG**CENTER

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REPORT

2022 | JANUARY

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# 860lbs

SU Ag Center & College of Agricultural, Family & Consumer Sciences Donate 860 Pounds of Food to The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank

Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center, and the College of Agricultural, Family & Consumer Sciences collected non-perishable food items during the holiday season. The community was challenged through social media, and internal communication to drop off donations to various collection points throughout the Ag Center and College locations.

Louisiana is still facing a looming food scarcity—leading the nation with the highest food insecurity rate among children, and seniors.

Feeding America's recent study, Map the Meal Gap, indicates the greater Baton Rouge area needs over 19 million meals to ensure families receive three meals per day.

The collaborative holiday food drive received 860 pounds of food, which is the equivalence of 717 meals. All donations were delivered to the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank just in time for the holidays.



Small Farmers from throughout the state gathered on the Southern University campus for the SU Ag Center's 10th Annual Louisiana Small Farmer Conference

# Louisiana Small Farmers CONFERENCE

A hundred and twenty-five small farmers from throughout Louisiana participated in the Southern University Ag Center's 10th Annual Louisiana Small Farmer Conference on December 2, 2021, in the Smith-Brown Memorial Union's Cotillion Ballroom.

The conference, which was themed Investing in Your Small Farm Success, was held in-person and online. It provided an opportunity for all Louisiana's small farmers to gather and network with each other and collectively gain insight that could impact the survival of their agricultural businesses.

Sessions held during the conference included HEMP Production in Louisiana, Sustaining the Farm for the Next Generation, GMO vs. Non-GMO Corn Productions, Solar Farming: Alternative Enterprise or Not!, Writing Grants! Strategies for Success, and SARS/COVID-19 Pandemic: Managing Safety and Health.

The conference also included the annual Louisiana Living Legends Luncheon. The event, which has been previously held as a banquet during the conference, honors individuals who have made significant contributions to Southern University in the areas of teaching, research, and extension.

***The 2021 honorees were Willie J. Rawls (Research), Yemane Ghebreyessus (Teaching), and Terry Washington (Extension).***

The legends are nominated by the faculty and staff of the SU Ag Center and the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences and selected by a vote of members on the Louisiana Small Farmer Conference committee. Nominations are open to anyone in the agricultural and food sciences with ties to Southern University, not just alums.

The banquet was created in 2005. To date, 33 individuals have been honored with this recognition.

For additional information about the SU Ag Center's Small Farmer Conference, contact Zanetta Augustine at [zanetta\\_augustine@suagcenter.com](mailto:zanetta_augustine@suagcenter.com).



# HEALTH FAIR

Delta Interfaith organization, in Lake Providence, La contact SU Ag Center for assistance at Health Fair.

On November 3, 2021 the SU Ag Center's Mobile Unit participates in the Delta Interfaith Organization's Health Fair.

The event also included a Drug Take-Back Day with NEDHSA, as well as outreach to promote participation in other Delta Interfaith initiatives, especially their health survey and the Delta Interfaith- and LPHI-sponsored Digital Navigators program.

During the event, the mobile unit provided wireless internet for the participants and sponsors. Information about the SU Ag Center's Enhancing Capacity of Louisiana's Small Farms and Businesses Certification Program (ECP) was discussed and brochures were given to visitors who visited the unit.

"This is one of the ways we reach out to recruit and promote our Certification Programs, which allow us to provide service across the state of Louisiana," said William Augustine, ECP Project Coordinator.

For more information about the Enhancing Capacity of Louisiana's Small Farms and Businesses' upcoming certification programs, visit [www.suagcertify.com](http://www.suagcertify.com).

SU Ag Center's Mobile Unit shared information with Jonesville residents during the Healthy Jonesville Pop-up Event

The Southern University Ag Center's Mobile Technology Unit participated in the Town of Jonesville's Healthy Pop-Up event on November 8, 2021.

The Unit provided internet access and information on programs and services offered by the SU Ag Center.

The event, which was held at the town's football stadium, provided participants with information on tobacco-free living and educating residents (especially high school youth) on the dangers of vaping and other tobacco products. Other organizations including the Catahoula Health Unit, Jonesville Police Department, LaSalle Community Action, Catahoula Workforce office and Little River Baptist Association also participated in the Pop-up event.

For additional information about the Ag Center's Mobile Unit, contact William Augustine at [william\\_augustine@suagcenter.com](mailto:william_augustine@suagcenter.com).





# THE FUTURE OF FARMING

The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the Southern University Baton Rouge (SUBR) Mechanical Engineering Department have embarked on a new initiative to create new and needed technologies that will enhance the production of small farms in Louisiana. This partnership is a perfect marriage of outreach and design to help disadvantaged farmers achieve increased profitability efficiency, greater yields, and better manage resources on their farms.

There is a need to create products that will increase productivity for the small, disadvantaged farmer. Innovations have become more important in modern agriculture, especially after COVID and the world supply of goods such as agricultural products have suffered from supply chain issues worldwide. Along with the world supply chain issues, the population is expected to increase to 7.949 billion by 2030, and the small farmer's success is vital to feeding them (Population Division, 2015). This initiative will seek out gaps in farming operations and attempt to solve these ills through technology.

This is great for the SU Ag Center's Cooperative Extension Program in that we solve a need for the small, disadvantaged farmer. Students from the SU Department of Mechanical Engineering (ME) will get the opportunity to work on real-life problems and create solutions to improve farm operations. We have already begun an irrigation project that will save small farmers time and money.

"This project started as a conversation with small farmers at a field day," said Dr. Brian Phillips, SU Ag Center Associate Agricultural Specialist. "I asked a farmer how I can help improve their day-to-day processes and increase productivity. The farmer expressed that the man-hours needed to do certain tasks take up his small margins of profits. After that conversation, we began brainstorming solutions," added Phillips.

The next step was partnering with the ME Department at Southern University, where Dr. Dwayne Jerro took over and assigned a team of brilliant fourth-year students to help solve this problem. This project will serve as the students' Capstone Design Project and provide them an opportunity to openly demonstrate their skills, engineering training, creativity, and business abilities.

"I am excited about this collaboration and can see that it will provide "fertile soil" for future work to prepare our students to solve local and global problems," stated Dr. Jerro.

This process of collaboration will take approximately a year, but there should be a prototype at the finish line.

For additional information about this project contact Dr. Brian Phillips at [brian\\_phillips@suagcenter.com](mailto:brian_phillips@suagcenter.com).

*Resources: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2015). Population 2030: Demographic challenges and opportunities*



# Kristen WILLIAMS

story by Hope Damato

IST grad student intern applies data science skills in construction industry

Kristen Williams is a graduate of the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences. She earned a B.S. degree in Agricultural Sciences with a concentration in Plant and Soil Sciences in the Spring of 2020. This article appeared on Penn State University's Information Sciences and Technology webpage and is the ninth in a series of stories highlighting College of Information Sciences and Technology students and their summer internships.

As a Penn State College of Information Sciences and Technology student pursuing a master's degree in informatics, Kristen Williams had the opportunity this past summer to apply what she's learned through her concentration in data science in a summer internship in the construction manufacturing industry. She worked as a data scientist at Carlisle Construction Materials, assisting the quality service team in developing various statistical process control (SPC) charts.

"I was familiar with most of the software the company used," she said. "I was able to apply to real-life challenges during this internship based off of what I've learned from Penn State so far."

Some of her tasks included creating a multivariate analysis composed of large datasets from various plants of the company, creating data visualization charts in Tableau and predictive models in Minitab, and constructing different charts in Thingworx — all things that she gained experience with at the College of IST.



**PennState**  
College of Information  
Sciences and Technology

“I think I was chosen for this position based on the material and skills that I learned and developed during the first year of my master's program,” she said.

Williams’ research focus is on the adoption of technology in agriculture, specifically focusing on hydroponic farming practice. In the future, she would like to explore government contracting in the information technology space as a career path.

“This internship experience will make me a more well-rounded candidate when it's time for full-time positions based on what I learned and the additional strong technical skills I gained,” she said. “I’ve also learned how important data science is within a manufacturing setting; how it is still fairly new, and it will continue to be a driving factor for many manufacturers.”

At Penn State, Williams is a member of the Penn State Black Graduate Student Association and Women of IST (WIST) to build community. Being far away from her home in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and holding a bachelor’s degree from a smaller university, it was important to Williams

to surround herself with like-minded individuals and to be challenged both in and out of the classroom.

“Being able to collaborate with diverse minds is important to any type of success,” she said. “I received my undergraduate studies in agricultural science at Southern University and A&M College, and being able to come into this program to pursue something new — and be successful at it — is very exciting. There is truly a seat for everybody at IST, no matter what background you are coming from.”



# Safety, Prosperity & Blessings to you and your family!



#GROW  
JAGS!

P.O. Box 10010  
Baton Rouge, LA 70813



(225) 771-2242



suagcenter.com

@f @SUAGCENTER @f @SUACOLLEGEFAG



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