

A&L

Advancing Georgia's Leaders
in Agriculture and Forestry

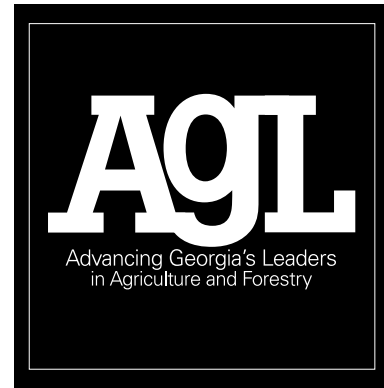
Class of 2019–2021 GRADUATION PROGRAM



UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA

College of Agricultural and
Environmental Sciences

Warnell School of Forestry
and Natural Resources



Advancing Georgia's Leaders in Agriculture and Forestry (AGL) educates, empowers and connects today's professionals in agriculture, forestry, and natural resources and allied sectors to be dynamic industry leaders. Individuals within AGL become more effective spokespeople

for their industries, establish strong allegiances across the state and nation, and further develop their leadership skills. AGL is designed as a two-year cohort program that includes an optional weeklong domestic experience to California. The in-state curriculum takes place in 19 days and is designed with over 100 interactive sessions that include speakers who are experts in their industries, field experiences, personality assessments and soft-skills training.

AGL aims to:

- **Educate** individuals on U.S. and international political, social and economic systems so that they are able to analyze and solve complex issues related to people, technology, agriculture and the environment and to create a basis for lifelong learning.
- **Empower** leaders with the confidence necessary to become more effective advocates to ensure positive actions for Georgia's agriculture and natural resources industries.
- **Connect** diverse groups of leaders across the state and nation to collaborate on issues impacting Georgia's agriculture and natural resources industries directly and indirectly.

Participants build professional capital while enhancing their leadership skills and deepening their understanding of political and agricultural systems along with emerging industry issues and trends. Curriculum and programmatic outlines for the class include a strong network of personal and professional development experiences along with an international component. AGL is a product of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources at the University of Georgia.



**UNIVERSITY OF
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Graduation Ceremony

NOV. 7, 2021

UGA Chapel, 2 p.m.

WELCOME	Keaton Walker, Circle F Farms, AGL '21
INTRODUCTIONS OF SPECIAL GUESTS	Jason Bragg, Georgia EMC, AGL '21
INVOCATION	Daniel Atkins, Weyerhaeuser, AGL '21
DESCRIPTION OF THE AGL PROGRAM	Ben Lancaster, IFCO, AGL '21
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTES, I, II, & III	Toby Bowen, AGCO, AGL '21 TR Clark, F&W Forestry Services, AGL '21 Hillery Culpepper, Georgia FFA Foundation, AGL '21
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTES, IV, V, & VI	Aaron Hemmer, AgGeorgia Farm Credit, AGL '21 Erin Nessmith, Vivayic, AGL '21 Jordan Carter, Leger & Son, AGL '21
LEADERSHIP PROJECTS OVERVIEW	David Martin, Widget Development & Trading Company, AGL '21
RECOGNITION & AWARDS	Lauren L. Griffeth, AGL Program Director Terrance Rudolph, State Conservationist USDA-NRCS, AGL Advisory Board Chair
REFLECTION ON OVERALL CLASS EXPERIENCE	Sam Brown, Fiddleheads Garden Center, AGL '21
PROGRAM ADJOURN	Lauren L. Griffeth, AGL Program Director, UGA

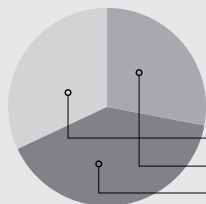
AGL CLASS SNAPSHOT

2019-2021

NAME	EMPLOYER	LOCATION
Daniel Atkins	Weyerhaeuser	Brunswick, GA
Toby Bowen	AGCO	Athens, GA
Jason Bragg	Georgia EMC	Atlanta, GA
Sam Brown	Fiddleheads Garden Center	Dalton, GA
Jordan Carter	Leger & Son	Cordele, GA
TR Clark	F&W Forestry Services	Hogansville, GA
Frances Cotton	Bayer	Albany, GA
Hillery Culpepper	FFA Foundation	Sylvester, GA
Nicole Duvall	Georgia's Mobile Dairy Classroom	Madison, GA
Dusty Engel	Lasseter Tractor Company	Tifton, GA
Chan Flanders	Faircloth Forest Products	Swainsboro, GA
Susan Harrell	Timberland Owner	Culloden, GA
Aaron Hemmer	AgGeorgia Farm Credit	Starr, SC
Matt Hestad	Georgia Forestry Association	Covington, GA
Jessica Jarvholm	Pineywoods Farm	LaGrange, GA
Ben Lancaster	International Forest Company	Moultrie, GA
Jason Little	Forest Resource Consultants	Forsyth, GA
David Martin	Widget Development & Trading Company	Atlanta, GA
Samantha McLeod	Georgia Pecan Growers Association	Chula, GA
Arren Moses	Farmer	Uvalda, GA
Sarah Nerswick	Agricultural Education	Alpharetta, GA
Erin Nessmith	Vivayic	Madison, GA
Blake Poole	State of Georgia Governor Kemp	Buchanan, GA
Eric Simpson	West Georgia Farmers Cooperative	West Point, GA
Keaton Walker	Circle F Farms, Circle F Meats & Woody Folsom Trailers & Feed	Perry, GA

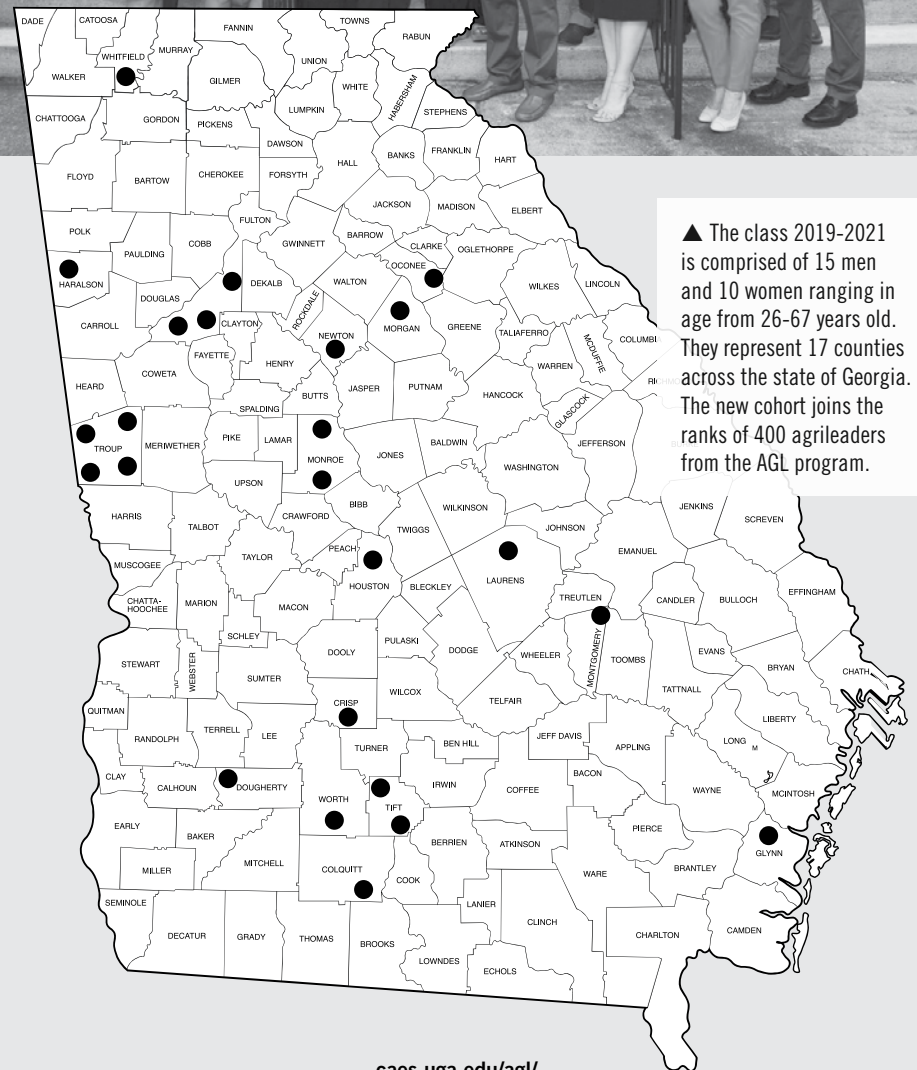
TOP 3 PARTICIPANT STRENGTHS

Achiever
Belief
Relator



The Class of 2019-2021 represents three major sectors of the agriculture industry.

- FORESTRY 28%
- ALLIED SECTORS 32%
- AGRICULTURE 40%



▲ The class 2019-2021 is comprised of 15 men and 10 women ranging in age from 26-67 years old. They represent 17 counties across the state of Georgia. The new cohort joins the ranks of 400 agrileaders from the AGL program.



Daniel Atkins

Area Marketing Manager, Weyerhaeuser
Brunswick, GA

Pastor Search – Marshes of Glynn Baptist Church

As the designated chair of the Pastor Search Team, the goal was to build the appropriate team and lead the corporate search for a new pastor for our church.

Marshes of Glynn Baptist Church is a small family-oriented church whose congregation had dwindled over the last decade. After the retirement of a longtime pastor, a search team was formed, and a new pastor hired. Unfortunately, over the course of the next year, it became obvious that the desires of the church body and the new pastor did not align. Through the recent changes, and much of the prior leadership walking away, I assumed the role of chairman of the church council. Holding that position, I also took on the role of ‘chairman’ of the pastor search team. As chairman, my first task was to build a team that fairly represented the congregation and understood and aligned with the direction and future growth of the church. As of November of 2020, when our new pastor started, our average worship service attendance increased from an average of 32 to 67. Sunday school attendance went up from 22 to 43 on average. A total of 4 baptisms have been scheduled, the church outreach program is flourishing, and the overall demeanor of our congregation has made a 180-degree turn. The learnings I have taken away from our AGL program played an integral role in the successes seen throughout this entire process. Understanding how to build a successful team, communicate effectively, align across personality types and recognizing and refining my personal leadership traits all played an integral role in the success of this process. Of course, I chalk it all up to divine intervention, and I am forever grateful.



Toby Bowen

Account Manager, AGCO
Athens, GA

Athens Y Camps Improvement and Alumni Development Project

The project goal is to improve Camp facilities at Boys and Girls camp, repairing storm damage, renovating buildings, removing fallen trees and landscaping. In addition, a goal for Alumni development was defined as an opportunity as well.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on the Athens Y Camps. The non-profit receives the majority of its annual operating budget from off-season retreat revenue from schools, churches, and business that rent the facility to host retreats throughout the year when Summer Camp is not in session. The COVID-19 lockdowns and restrictions stopped all retreat activities and reduced capacity for summer camp, causing Y Camp great financial strain. The decision was made to shut down the Girls Camp property entirely and run a co-ed camp at the Boys side during 2020. This caused many maintenance issues upon startup for summer 2021. In reviewing the repairs and work needed, it was evident the Y Camp staff would not be able to complete these tasks alone. Help was needed, and financial and labor assistance was going to be required to complete the project list. Over the four weekends, we had about 100 alumni show up to help, donating a day and a half of labor and many financial and material donations were also accepted. In addition, as a secondary goal it was defined the Alumni database and recruitment effort needed to be improved. Most of Y Camp’s financial givers are aging, and the alumni base is growing less and less engaged. A plan was developed to re-engage Alumni in three age groups: 25–35 year olds, 35–50 year olds, and 50+ year olds. Overall, the project succeeded. Nearly 1,200 volunteer hours accumulated during the work weekends. Over \$10,000 in materials and cash was donated. We had alumni who had not been to Y Camp in over 25 years show up to help, we have seen growth and giving activity increase, and the alumni base strengthen as a result of these two projects. Alumni Day was held Sunday, July 18 and many tall tale stories were told and friendships reunited.



Jason Bragg

Vice President, Government Relations, Georgia EMC
Atlanta, GA

The Digital Divide: Communicating to the Realities of the Digital Divide to Urban Georgians

The project goal was to explore, develop, and create better and more effective ways to communicate the realities that many of our state's citizens face due to the lack of a quality high speed internet.

We live in a rapidly changing world that is more and more becoming defined by one's connectivity to the outside world. Whether, a Zoom call with customers/clients around the world, online education for students forced home by a pandemic, a telemedicine visit for a mother sick with the flu, or simply a family sitting down together to enjoy the latest Pixar movie, access to quality high-speed broadband is a necessity in today's world. While rapid technological advancements have provided us access to the world unseen in human history, a large portion of our state's population and communities, particularly those in rural areas, are at a high risk of being left behind. While our state and country have made a number of significant steps at tackling this pressing problem, a lot is left to be done. This project aims to more effectively communicate the reality of these challenges to our state's urban/suburban populations through earned media, digital communications, and advocacy.



Sam Brown

Owner/CEO, Fiddleheads Garden Center
Dalton, GA

Beautify Dalton Through Partnerships

The goal is to transform the two main business districts of Dalton to be more inviting and attract more shoppers, diners, and visitors while improving the local economy and community. The second aspect of the goal is to connect different community groups and introduce some local residents to the love of gardening.

Fiddleheads Garden Center has been partnering with local community groups and schools in beautifying the city of Dalton, Georgia. The areas in focus will be 15 square blocks of downtown Dalton as well as the Walnut Avenue corridor from Interstate 75 to 200 yards passed Dug Gap Road. We have already begun working with local garden clubs and have planted 14 self-watering hanging baskets and 2 self-watering containers. Another green addition to downtown is the fourteen 20 feet tall red maples and hundreds of shrubs in the new Burr Performing Arts Park to aid in providing shade for visitors for generations to come. In addition to the containers, trees, and shrubs, we have worked with a local garden club in the last three years on providing a Christmas tree for the city in Burr Park. We have seen these goals begin to come to fruition as more new businesses join downtown each month and fill up vacant properties. Fiddleheads has had more and more groups seek our assistance and connections have happened over and over.



Jordan Carter

Director of Sales and Marketing, Leer & Son
Cordele, GA

Modernizing the Watermelon Standards and Update the Official USDA Visual Aids Library

In order to stay present with current factors affecting the watermelon industry, quality control receivers must have accurate information to make informed decisions when grading and receiving product.

We, the NWA, were prompted to do this project in 2019. We were seeing increased rejections. To us, the rejections weren't matching the issue. QC inspectors at retail were not scoring "accurately" and it was because our grades and standards for watermelon were so outdated. The last update was in 2006. A lot has changed in 15 years. At our annual board meeting, the executive committee of the NWA decided to create a subcommittee and I was chosen as the chair. From there, we began working with USDA to modernize the standards and visual library. In the time that we began, COVID came along and slowed us down but we continued to work on what we could. Good news came in March of this year that the Federal Register had reopened. The Watermelon Proposed Notice was published on March 11th. There was a 60-day period to submit comments. After the submission period closed, there were enough comments to support the revisions. A Watermelon Final Notice was sent to the Federal Register. We have made so much progress but there is still more to do. This is an ongoing project.



T.R. Clark

Regional Manager, F&W Forestry
Hogansville, GA

Teachers-in-Service Forestry Workshop

To initiate and coordinate direct teacher and forestry professional interaction through a workshop to give first hand exposure to educators about an industry that is so important to our community and state.

I've read the textbooks my children brought home from school. From what I can gather, the forest industry is given not much more than a "blurb" and the primary focus was the "deforestation & destruction" of tropical forest. I did not see any representation of what we do locally. At heart, foresters are indeed environmentally conscious and are conservationist. If we are to sustain our profession, we also have to practice sustainable management of our forests. We do this – but the general public is generally unaware and see us through a lens that paints us as a "timber beast". This perception is not correct. Working with the local school system we created a workshop. It may mimic some of the state level teacher conservation workshops, but we wanted to impact our local system. Our objective was to initiate and coordinate direct teacher and forestry professional interaction through a workshop to give firsthand exposure to educators about an industry that is so important to our community and state. The local school board sent us 15 teachers for the day. I arranged for folks from our profession to assist, these included employees of the Alabama Forestry Commission, consulting foresters, timber buyers, loggers, forestry service contractors, mill operators, and those from academia. We can only hope that this workshop will have long term effects once it reaches the classroom. We have had requests to use some of our material in classrooms – and have gotten invites to "occupation" days.



Francie Cotton

Southwest Georgia Field Sales Representative, Bayer
Albany, GA

Appreciation Towards Those Behind the Scenes in the Workplace

Our goal was to show our appreciation to the Crop Protection Customer Service Team and keep their spirits up during this difficult year.

There is no denying that 2021 has presented many challenges. Right now, in the chemical industry, those challenges revolve around product supply and delivery. This year it seems like every time we turn around, we run into a new problem. A Chemical Sales Representative's day-to-day job today is spent tracking down PO numbers and finding lost/ delayed orders. This is a new challenging task for use Sales Reps and it is very time consuming. However, it is our Customer Service Teammates who help us either solve these challenges or not. We are at their mercy to help us find these orders and get the problems resolved. Sadly, the Sales Reps and the Customer Service Team have only talked/ interacted via phone call or email and each time it is with an issue. We have no relationship. This is depressing and can pull the optimism out of the most positive person. My teammate Riley Stewart and I decided it was time to do something to nourish this relationship and put a smile on our service member's faces, so we ordered a gift for each individual (there were nine individuals total). We individually mailed gifts with a signed letter from the Southeast GA sales team. The letter stated our appreciation and a 2021 team goal. I cannot change product supply or logistics but I can go out of my way to say thank you and give someone a gift for a job well done in hopes that it will brighten their day! We simply wanted to show them our appreciation and let them know that we recognize their job and hard work.



Hillery Culpepper

Assistant Director of Development, FFA Foundation
Sylvester, GA

Honoring Those That Wore the Blue and Gold

The goal was to create an in-person event where we celebrate, honor, and highlight twenty outstanding Georgia FFA members that wore the Blue and Gold Jacket in 2020.

The hardest thing I have ever done throughout my career with the Georgia FFA Foundation was being a part of the conversation and decision where we informed members, teachers, parents, and supporters that we would not have an in-person Georgia FFA State Convention in April of 2020 and to move it to a virtual format. I received emails, text messages, and phone calls from several individuals that were disappointed, disheartened, frustrated, and mad that we could not come together to celebrate. Before, COVID-19 hit and we made the decision to move our State Convention to a virtual format, the Georgia FFA Foundation had received \$7,500 in sponsorship money from Georgia EMC and the Farm Credit Associations of Georgia to use to support the efforts of the Georgia FFA State Convention. After much thought and planning, I was able to create, from start to finish, the Blue & Gold Honor's Night. This in-person event was held on Friday, November 13th, 2020 at Camp John Hope in Fort Valley, Georgia. The event was 100% sponsored by using the funds generously donated by Georgia EMC and the Farm Credit Associations of Georgia and we had over 80 people in attendance. While this was not our "normal" Georgia FFA State Convention, it was special to those twenty deserving Georgia FFA members that already missed out on so much during their senior year. It gave them one last chance to wear their FFA Jacket and to be celebrated the way that they deserved to be celebrated. Our sponsors were pleased and excited to see their funds be redirected in a way to still celebrate our members. Everyone that attended said how much they enjoyed this event and how special it was to all be together again celebrating the Blue and Gold.



Nicole Duvall

Program Coordinator, Georgia's Mobile Dairy Classroom
Madison, GA

Moo-Cuterie Fundraiser for Milk Truck Driver Mr. Steve Smith

Mr. Steve hauled milk for over 25 years and recently retired and was diagnosed with brain cancer. I wanted to honor him by showing support and help pay for expenses. I organized a fund raiser for the week of Thanksgiving 2020 to make and sell charcuterie boards in the community. I bought all the supplies, and 3 friends graciously volunteered their time to help assemble the cheese boards the night before the sale. We sold 45 boxes and raised \$2750.00 for Mr. Steve.



Dusty Engel

Corporate Precision Ag Manager, LASSETER Tractor Company
Tifton, GA

Anxiety Awareness in the Workplace

My goal is to generate anxiety awareness and self-evaluation practices within our company.

“While only 9% of Americans have been diagnosed with anxiety disorder, 40% of people report experiencing stress or anxiety in their daily lives” (Moran, 2016). Many people experiencing signs of elevated anxiety seem to think they are just not feeling well, out of shape, did not sleep well, or just over worked. If we can take 10 minutes out of an hour-long meeting to discuss this topic, without getting touchy feeling with our hardened staff, I believe we can help some individuals directly and indirectly cope with issues they may be experiencing. The end goal is avoiding complete shut down and possible loss of an employee due to unresolved issues. It is my goal to help our employees acknowledge and understand that they may have low key anxiety issues and help them get past it. Then hopefully they can pass that knowledge to their friends and family as they see other having issues of their own.



Chan Flanders

Procurement Manager, Faircloth Forest Products
Dublin, GA

Who Do We Have Here?

Creation of a rapid-fire response tool that will identify characteristics of the participants.

I have developed a rapid-fire questionnaire designed to quickly recognize characteristics of individuals who I need to connect with and understand with limited time. This started as something I threw together for a series of interviews I had one day with 30 minute segments, however has the ability to serve as an ice breaker, interview tool, or team builder. It is also setup to stimulate discussion and mentally prepare individuals for specific relevant questioning. Flexibility should exist for various “this or that” choices and final questions.



Susan Harrell

Timberland Owner, Timberland Owner
Culloden, GA

How to be Aesthetically Interesting and Educational in Culloden

The goal of this project is to enhance downtown Culloden by having local artists paint a mural that will depict Culloden's history.

This project will involve the citizens of Culloden as well as others in the community. Interviews with elders, local historians, and city officials will help determine the history that will be included in the mural. Wall preparation will be completed by volunteer/voluntold citizens. The art teacher at Mary Persons High School will create the design, and oversee the painting of the mural. The mural will be an educational experience for those involved, and those that visit. We will embrace and creatively show Culloden's history. Hopefully, local citizens will be inspired to revitalize Culloden.



Aaron Hemmer

Regional Lending Manager, AgGeorgia Farm Credit
Starr, SC

Providing a Career Road Map for Future Georgia Ag Leaders

The project goal is to present agriculture as a field of employment to students not only in traditional schools (Warnell/CAES), but other schools such as the Scheller Business School at Georgia Tech and the Terry Business School at UGA, via in class presentations of employment opportunities within Georgia's community of agricultural businesses.

The Project will include in-person presentations of the diverse opportunities available to college students in hopes of enlightening them to the areas of employment that may not have been previously apparent. Georgia's agricultural community consists of some of the greatest minds from IT, finance, lawyers, engineers, logistic specialists, etc. With the constant and growing demand for skilled labor, there is a need for talented young people to join the State's thriving agricultural community. The impact will (hopefully) lead to a steady pipeline of talent to Georgia's agricultural base in hopes of keeping the state among the nation's leaders in agriculture production.



Matt Hestad

Vice President of Engagement
Georgia Forestry Association
Covington, GA

Know Your Vote: Addressing the Issue of Uninformed Voters in Newton County, Georgia

My leadership project will be focused on providing Newton County voters with greater access to the election process and information on candidates and issues that they will vote for in the 2022 election. The project will be centered around the development of a website and communications campaign to ensure the deepest level of engagement in the community. The approach will include:

- Development of a coalition of likeminded Newton County leaders
- Communications campaign branding and messaging development
- Design of a website that addresses core issues with misinformation
 - Uses exact ballot design interface
 - Provides opportunity for candidates to provide a 2-3 minute video and a link to their campaign website
 - Pools articles from news sources on the candidate
- Identifying funding for project expansion and longevity



Jessica Jarvholm

Executive Director, Pineywoods Farm
LaGrange, GA

The Davis Discovery Center at Piney Woods Farm

The primary goal of the Discovery Center is to have a welcoming and noncompetitive space where the community can gather and learn together about agriculture methods used at Piney Woods Farm, and hands on processing of different types of agricultural products. To reconnect the community to the agriculture that produces the foods they eat, clothes they wear, and art from nature.

The Discovery Center is a 2,000 sq. ft. facility that has a commercial kitchen, classroom spaces, wet room, and ADA compliant facilities. The building is specifically built for fiber projects, crafts, culinary arts, educational uses and general farm related community purposes. Experts in the community and other areas will be invited to teach at the Discovery Center. This can potentially provide an income to our community and participants. Piney Woods wants to ensure the skills and knowledge of heritage practices will not be lost to future generations. Some specific types of presentations will be:

- Methods of: composting, extracts & teas, regenerative organic farming techniques, mushrooms, honeybees, growing lavender in GA
- Fiber classes: shearing, processing, dying, knitting, weaving, crocheting, felting
- Craft classes: soap making, lavender wreathes & wands, basketry, gourd decorating
- Culinary: cooking demonstrations, canning & preserving, jams & jellies, farm to table dinners and menu preparation



Ben Lancaster

Director of Sales and Marketing, International Forest Company
Moultrie, GA

Fathers in the Field

The goal of my leadership project was to organize and spearhead a group of men and women who will make an intentional commitment into the life of fatherless boys and their mothers. I specifically wanted to do this through my local church in partnership with a national non-profit organization called Fathers in the Field.

I have long felt the Lord calling me to serve in this capacity and help stand in the gap for the fatherless. As a father of two beautiful boys I can now more fully see how important the father/son relationship truly is. Unfortunately, this isn't true for many boys today.

The specific step I took was to introduce our church to the Fathers in the Field ministry and seek approval to lead and assemble a team. I worked to assemble a team of individuals (Church Champions) who would serve in various roles to meet the needs of the ministry.

Our Church Champion team enrolled our first fatherless boy on June 30, 2021. His name is Riley and I have the privilege of serving as his mentor father. As his mentor father my responsibility is to make an intentional commitment into his life to show him the love of his Heavenly Father. The ministry is setup for the mentor father to make four intentional commitments to the boy on a monthly basis. Those commitments include the mentor father picking up the fatherless boy two Sundays per month and bringing him to church, one day per month where the boy and the mentor father perform a service project for a widow within the community, and one day per month where the mentor father teaches the boy a new skill such as fishing. The overall commitment period between the mentor father and the boy is three years, with the commitment being renewed on an annual basis. Our church, with the assistance of Fathers in the Field, works to achieve three important goals. First, is to demonstrate to the boys that they have a Father in Heaven who created, loves and cares for them, and will never forsake them. Secondly, to demonstrate fatherly love and commitment, to repair broken spirits and prepare the foundation for future fatherhood. Lastly, to share the need for boys to forgive the failings of their earthly fathers, as our Heavenly Father forgives His children in Christ. (www.fathersinthefield.com)



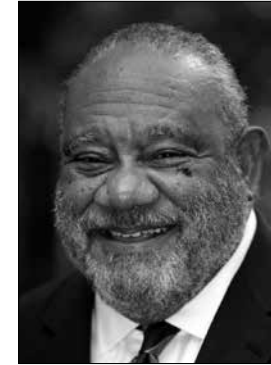
Jason Little

Director of Valuation Services, Forest Resource Consultants
Forsyth, GA

Technical Forester Certification

Explore the feasibility of developing a technical forester training program within in the Technical College System of Georgia. (<https://www.tcsg.edu>) – 22 colleges/88 campuses.

Currently, Georgia does not have two-year degreed forester program. ABAC had one for many years but have recently transitioned to a four-year program. Forest industry and consultants are finding it more and more difficult to fill base level technical positions. Four-year graduates are typically overqualified and have very limited interest in these positions. It is a major issue. The demand for these positions is strong and will continue indefinitely. Technical foresters complete a number of tasks in the field that are imperative to forest management and the forest industry. For example, they inventory forest stands for timber harvesting, land management, etc. Can we develop a technical training program that targets high school students and adults that do not have a strong interest in college and have limited employment opportunities in rural Georgia? The program could be patterned after technical programs for welders, electricians, plumbers, etc.



David Martin

President/CEO, Widget Development and Trading Company
Atlanta, GA

The Widget Business Training Company

The goal is to Establish a Non-Profit, 501(C)3 organization to provide training to Limited Resource Farmers, Ranchers and Veterans.

The organization was created to provide “training and business development assistance” to small and limited resources farmers and ranchers with a primary emphasis on agricultural programs and practices offered by the USDA. Widget Business Training will also assist farmers with business formations, tax structuring, and understanding insurance and food safety requirements. Widget Business will write and submit grants to the USDA, as well as oversee administration, logistics, and compliance of the grants to provide assistance to small and limited resource farmers. We have developed programs and a workshop series for institutional, non-profit, and for-profit clients that want to assist farmers and ranchers understand USDA Programs and Practices.



Samantha McLeod

Executive Director, Georgia Pecan Growers Association
Chula, GA

All Things Georgia Pecans

After several years of hardships, the Georgia Pecan Growers need encouragement and support to let them know they are important. My goal is to provide that support and encouragement through their participation in promotional activities promoting their products and ultimately increasing overall sales and demand for Georgia pecans.

Georgia leads the nation in pecan production and has always paved the path for greatness for the pecan industry as a whole and my project is a layered process to ensure Georgia pecan growers receive the recognition they deserve, and that Georgia continues to pave the path forward.

1. Make the pecan Georgia's Official State Nut

- Started running the bill in February 2020 – but got delayed due to Covid-19
- Re-ran the bill at beginning of 2021 and got it passed!
- Governor Kemp signed the bill at a special, ceremonial bill signing at a pecan farm on April 7, 2021.
- Impact: Raised awareness with state and local media putting Georgia pecans in the limelight. Plan to continue utilizing the recognition and designation in other marketing and promotional efforts both domestic and internationally.

2. Establish an annual Georgia Pecan Farm Tour

- Applied for Specialty Crop Block Grant funding to help with start-up costs for first tour in 2021.
- Received approval for funding from Georgia Department of Agriculture on June 2, 2021!

- Plan to kick off the first tour in the fall of 2022
- Impact: To raise awareness and drive demand/sales for Georgia pecans within the food and restaurant/chef sector of the food chain. Help establish connections for chefs to buy/source direct from the growers.

3. Establish an annual Georgia Pecan Day at the State Capitol

- Have a full day of Georgia pecan celebration at the Capitol while in session.
- Invite all Georgia pecan retail suppliers to attend as 'vendors', providing samples of their products and to network with their representatives.
- Supply health benefit information and other marketing items to promote Georgia pecans and encourage all to support local.
- Impact: Continue to raise awareness of Georgia pecans and continue to maintain relationships with our legislators, keeping rural Georgia as top-of-mind priority.



Arren Moses

Farmer, Edward Moses Farms
Uvalda, GA

Ag Day Improved

The project goal is to increase the impact of local school ag days.

Our local school Ag Day program has been extremely beneficial to exposing school age children to agriculture and to Agribusiness in general. While we live in an agricultural community, for many this is their first exposure to agriculture directly. While they may see it riding by in a car, unfortunately that is all they know. Our intent is to make Ag Day more interesting and engaging than it has been in the past and at the same time improve the agricultural content. In recent years local participation and outreach for the community has sometimes been limited to as few as the Farm Bureau and Altamaha EMC. While those are key participants, our intent is to increase the exposure to actual agriculture in the experience. We are trying to include equipment from local farmers and dealers and actual farmers too. Also experiences like Nicole has suggested with the mobile Dairy Classroom would be wonderful to add to the experience. Unfortunately, due to constant administrative changes for the school system and the extension office our success has been limited. The new administration in both places seems to see the value and we are slowly moving forward.



Sarah Nerswick

Agriculture Education Teacher, Brunswick High School
Rockville, MD

Green & Growing Virtual Coffee

The goal is to unite with ag teacher regularly to teach and assist in real-life problems.

Since March 2020, teachers have been thrown into virtual teaching with little to no support, creating a serious need for a space for connection, community, and conversation. Green & Growing Education, a professional development platform that connects agriculture teachers, has been able to provide that space once a month for an hour-long virtual coffee hour. Through a one hour Zoom call, 75-100 teachers around the country hear from specialist teachers from diverse backgrounds and experiences, hear predetermined questions based on themes, and experience a space for development and growth. Teachers have access to the Virtual Coffees in a podcast format, and will gain access to free digital resources on Teachable. Through this, we are growing the confidence within our community of agriculture education teachers.



Erin Nessmith

Project Owner, Vivayic
Madison, GA

After a dinner conversation with my son, Brantley, we recognized a big need for kids in our local community. COVID-19 impacted every family, and as the holiday season quickly approached, the stress of COVID's impact was evident, even in our kids. Brainstorming with my friend, Abby, from church, we realized the impact that could be made by providing a retail store for our community, filled with new and (very) gently used items at nominal prices (.25-\$1). We understood the power of purchase for a parent/guardian- what it means to give a gift to someone during Christmas. For five weeks, we partnered with other churches and the local newspaper, and called upon our community to donate items. More than 4,500 items were donated (not inclusive of clothing!). Additionally, we had community members donate cash and wrapping supplies for our complimentary gift-wrapping area. Donations included children's toys, basketball net, flat screen TV, diamond jewelry, Christmas trees, board games, clothing, and books. 400 community members came through the store, 112 bibles gifted, 355 hours of volunteer hours donated, \$3,200 raised and donated, and 36 families won Christmas dinner gift cards.



Blake Poole

Middle Georgia Field Representative,
State of Georgia Governor Kemp
Buchanan, GA

Impact Policy Through Storytelling

During my time participating in AGL, I have realized how important sharing a common goal is, whether it be within a smaller group such as our current class or within an entire industry. With over \$74 billion in economic impact every year, agribusiness is Georgia's leading industry, and I have the unique opportunity to highlight this industry firsthand within the halls of Georgia's Capitol. I felt there was an opportunity to educate the individuals who walk those halls each day, and I have acted as a change agent using my voice and experiences to influence and shape public policy. In this important period of change, effectively telling the story of those involved in Georgia agriculture remains critically important to retaining and expanding support among key politicians. I have been able to communicate more confidently with key stakeholders about the value agriculture brings to Georgia. Throughout this project, I worked diligently to articulate the impact of agriculture with positive and engaging stories, and effectively combat criticisms. It's a way to help you tell your story, in your own words. When we participate in these conversations, there's a real opportunity for education. We have a chance to show legislators how we help those in Georgia and how we serve a unique and vital role in agriculture.



Eric Simpson

Farmer/Coop Org, West Georgia Farmers Cooperative
West Point, GA

Community Incubator Kitchen (C.I.Kstart)

C.I.K.(start) is a community shared-kitchen start-up enterprise. The project is an initiative of This Old Farmhouse Georgia and supported by West Georgia Farmers' Cooperative and the LaGrange Housing Authority. These organizations are women-led and owned. Recently released Georgia Department of Health data reveals that the No. 1 cause of death for Georgians of all ages is Ischemic Heart and Vascular Disease (41,443 deaths in 2014-2018). In Troup County, the same is true regarding the leading cause of death among African Americans. The fourth leading cause of death for the African American community in Troup County, is All Other Endocrine, Nutrition, and Metabolic Diseases for age group 25-34; Hypertension, Renal, and Heart Disease for ages 35-44, and the number two cause of death for age 45-54. Diabetes was listed as the seventh cause of death in the African American community of Troup County. Medical beliefs have long held that diet and nutrition contribute significantly to these maladies. In an effort to address these and various other identified issues and comport with the mission and values of LDEI Atlanta Chapter, this project will achieve the following objectives: Maintaining Local/Sustainable Agriculture, Community Health/Culinary Education/Nutrition, and Incubate Women and Culinary Entrepreneurs. C.I.K.(start) project will provide the following:

- ServSafe certification classes for established but uncertified food entrepreneurs. These classes/trainings will be offered free of charge for aspiring single mother food entrepreneurs that receive public assistance (housing, EBT/SNAP, etc.).
- Monthly cooking classes the focus on cooking basics, healthier alternatives, access and affordability. Cuisines will include American traditional, southern, healthy "soul food," vegan, vegetarian, healthy options, some wild game, Oldways African Heritage, and Food as Medicine.
- Homestead Economics (This Old Farmhouse Georgia): Families will be taught a mix of traditional and modern homesteading practices to include: gardening, small livestock management, cooking, and food preservation.



Keaton Walker

Chief Marketing and PR Director, Circle F Farms, Circle F Meats, Woody Folsom Trailers and Feed
Perry, GA

Creating Leaders In and Out of the Spotlight

Georgia National Fairgrounds Livestock Ambassador Program

Through this program it was my desire to create a new generation of up and coming leaders in the agricultural industry. In addition to this goal, I also wanted to create a sense of community outreach to broaden the scope of the Georgia National Fairgrounds & Agricenter within the State of Georgia.

In 2018 I developed the Georgia National Livestock Ambassador Program as a way for the Georgia National Fairgrounds to showcase the youth in our livestock arenas. When designing the Georgia National Livestock Ambassador Program, I knew I wanted the best of the best. The best youth livestock exhibitors to serve as the face of the youth livestock program for the great State of Georgia. What I didn't realize was that I would be gaining 40 new teachers, mentors, friends, young adults that challenged me and encouraged me to see things in a new light. Part of the program required Ambassadors to design their own event from beginning to end. During this event they had to serve as event coordinators, marketing experts, facilitators, and even the cleanup crew. Each year they hosted a Christmas Party and donated all gifts to a local organization to help those in need. All teams were tasked with meeting and informing sponsors, guest and the general public about the youth livestock program and what it truly is and how they have grown and benefitted from it throughout their show career. They truly are "the face" of the Georgia National Fairgrounds Youth Livestock program and future Georgia agriculture leaders. Each member who completed the Georgia National Livestock Ambassador program were offered the opportunity to network with outstanding executives in the agricultural industry, political leaders and livestock industry partners.



OUTSTANDING ALUMNI IN AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY AWARD WINNER

Zippy Duvall

Zippy Duvall has served as president of the American Farm Bureau Federation since 2016. He is a third-generation farmer from Georgia. He owns a beef cow herd, raises broiler chickens and grows his own hay, all while continuing to restore the land he inherited.

Duvall is a 1996 graduate of the Georgia AgriLeaders Foundation Forum and served on the Advisory Board of Advancing Georgia's Leaders in Agriculture and Forestry from 2012 - 2016.

Through his leadership as AFBF president, Duvall has helped to shape a new farm bill, defeat misguided regulations, shepherd new trade agreements and ensure farmers and ranchers are supported through natural disasters and the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2017, Duvall was honored by the National 4-H Council as a founding luminary, a group of influential 4-H alumni. Prior to being elected AFBF president, he was president of the Georgia Farm Bureau and served on the AFBF board of directors. Duvall and his late wife, Bonnie, were married for more than 40 years, raised four children and welcomed five grandchildren. They were honored with the national Young Farmer and Rancher Award in 1982.



▲ The inaugural Agri-leaders class of 1991-1993.

The History of Agriculturally Based Leadership Development Programs in Georgia

Because of the unique challenges facing the agricultural community in the late 1980s, over 300 agricultural leaders in Georgia were surveyed to assess their interest in developing a broad-based and formalized approach to leadership development. Representatives from this group held a two-day retreat in Macon in March 1990 to debate, conceptualize and draft a plan for initiating a statewide leadership program.

The founding members of “Georgia Agri-Leaders Forum Foundation, Inc.” aspired to create a program that fulfilled the mission of “developing individual leaders skilled in communications, educated in local, national and world affairs, familiar with the changing needs of our society, and prepared to meet the present and future challenges” of our times.

With the first cohort graduating in 1993, 17 classes followed with over 300 participants completing the requirements of graduation for Georgia Agri-leaders. Due to a need for increased infrastructure and financial support, in 2012, the University of Georgia began operating a rebranded version of the program

called, “Advancing Georgia’s Leaders in Agriculture and Forestry (AGL),” with the first cohort graduating in 2014. The program now exists as a partnership between the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences and the Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources with an 18 member Advisory Board of comprised of diverse agricultural leaders in concert with a program director.

Today’s graduating cohort is comprised of 25 high-potential, high-performing industry professionals who completed six in-state institutes, a national institute in Washington DC. Their culminating projects are individual leadership projects detailed in this program book. The current curriculum is designed based on the research-based principles of leadership development in concert with the Advisory Board.

Former directors of Georgia Agri-leaders and AGL include: Ms. Lynne Kernaghan, Mrs. Ester B. England, Mr. and Mrs. Jimmy and Gail Hill, and Dr. Rochelle Sapp. Please see the following page for a list of the names of the Agri-leaders program founders and founding directors.

We are proud to celebrate the twenty-eighth year of agriculturally based leadership development in Georgia with twenty-five exceptional graduates in 2021!

A SPECIAL THANKS TO

Agri-leaders’ founders and founding directors

James Lee Adams, Jr.	Jim Loftis	Doris Smith
Roger Austin	Dr. Harold Loyd	Glenn Smith
Gary Black	Dr. Lyvia Lynch	Jimmy Smith
Bill Brim	F. Abit Massey	Larry Snipes
Dr. Fred Davison	Laura Meadows	Oscar Strickland
Robert Dickey	Dr. Lee Myers	Harry Stanley
Wayne Dollar	Steve Newton	Garland Thompson
Tom Dyer	J. Randolph Nichols	Dr. Dale Threadgill
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James Ford	Charles Norman	Dr. Melvin Walker, Jr.
Don Giles	C. Randall Nuckolls	Terrell Weeks
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AGL

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Terrance Rudolph
State Conservationist
Natural Resources
Conservation Service



Andres Villegas
President
Georgia Forestry Association

AGL

BY THE NUMBERS

2019–2021



140

hours spent learning
educational content



105

Total Sessions



19

Days of learning



107

Expert Guest
Speakers

AGL CLASS OF 2019-2021 PARTICIPANTS EXPERIENCED:

Education on Foundational Leadership Competencies

Advocacy, Conflict Resolution, Leading
& Managing Change, Interpersonal
Skills, & Team Dynamics

7 Personality and Behavioral Assessments

CliftonStrengths, DiSC, 5 Dysfunctions
of a Team, MBTI, Thomas-Kilmann
Conflict Indicator, Emergenetics,
and the Change Style Indicator



4

Georgia-based
Institutes



1

Virtual Institute



1

National Policy
Institute in
Washington D.C.



1

optional domestic
trip to California
to be completed
Spring 2022

EXPRESSIONS OF GRATITUDE

Supporters bolster Ag Leadership

We owe great gratitude to the following donors for their generous contributions to enhancing Georgia's leaders. It is hard to put into words the lasting impact these donations have on the individuals they touch, both directly and indirectly. The 25 graduates sitting here today bear a personal and professional testament to your benevolence. Your donations work to keep Georgia's leadership strong. Thank you so much for donating to the 2019–2021 cohort experience!

AGL endowment fund donors

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Farm Credit Associations of Georgia
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CAES Alumni Association



AGRILEADERS & ALUMNI

1993–2021

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 Mr. Jason Bragg
 Mr. Sam Brown
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 Mr. TR Clark
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 Mr. Eric Simpson
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AGL PROGRAM STAFF

Educate. Empower. Connect.



AGL

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Director, AGL Program

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University of Georgia

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Meet the AGL Director Dr. Lauren Ledbetter Griffeth Extension Leadership Specialist

Growing up in Cochran, Georgia, Lauren Ledbetter Griffeth has always had a heart for agriculture. As a youth, she grew up bottle-feeding goats and taking care of her Grandmother Mimi's Garden. An active Bleckley County 4-Her, Lauren became a two-time Master and was Vice President of the 2001 Georgia State Board of Directors. Her involvement led her to the 4-H Day Football Game where she fell in love with all things red and black.

At the University, Lauren majored in Agricultural Communications and completed the requirements for the Interdisciplinary Certificate of Leadership and Service. Lauren participated in cheerleading and represented UGA Athletics at the Governor Sonny Perdue's Forum on Leadership. She was the first student member of the GA 4-H Foundation Board of Trustees.

In 2005, Lauren began serving as Grant Coordinator for Georgia 4-H and Cooperative

Extension and then held a variety of fundraising roles at the UGA Foundation and Athens Regional Medical Center. In her ten-year development career, Lauren collaborated to raise nearly \$7 Million for education and healthcare initiatives. Lauren graduated with her Masters in Educational Administration and Policy and a Ph.D. in Adult Education, both from the University, with Certificates in Interdisciplinary Certificate in Qualitative Studies and Human Resources and Organizational Development. Lauren's research interests include women's leadership in the context of agriculture and leadership development. She is a columnist for Pink Tractor Magazine and has been published in the Harvard Business Review for her research on sponsorship.

Lauren and her sister, Chelsea, own and operate Loved designs by Lolo and Coco, that provides inspirational gifts to help people feel supported through difficult circumstances such as cancer, grief or just every-day living in a pandemic.

Lauren is married to Tim Griffeth, an agricultural educator. They have two children Tanner (9 yrs) and Lillian (5 yrs). The Griffeths reside in Oconee County and enjoy showing sheep.



How can I participate in the next class of AGL?

Nominations for the next class are open for potential AGL participants February 1 - March 1, 2022.

Participants will be selected through a nomination, application, and interview process. Anyone can serve as a nominator and can submit their contact information, along with the contact information of the nominee with a written statement of support on our website.

Prospective candidates should be actively involved in Georgia's agriculture, forestry, natural resources and/or supporting industries and have demonstrated leadership potential. While there is no minimum education requirement, participants should be able to demonstrate leadership experience, work experience, and a high level of maturity. Nominees will be invited to apply with no more than 40 finalists invited to interview for the class.

Each class will have up to 25 individuals diverse in age, gender, ethnicity, geographic location, professional background, and level of experience.

Tuition for the upcoming class will be \$4,000 and the curriculum similar to last cohort with an optional domestic trip offered close to the time of graduation.

How can I help?

Let us know if you have personal expertise, or access to additional education materials that would be beneficial to AGL class members. In addition, your tax-deductible gift or sponsorship will be an investment in Georgia's future agriculture and natural resource industries. If you have additional questions or interest in the program, please contact us at agl@uga.edu.





314 Hoke Smith Building | Athens, GA 30602
agl.caes.uga.edu | agl@uga.edu

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