50 YEARS OF AGRICULTURE

SFA's Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center celebrates half a century of teaching, research and community.
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Dear alumni and friends,

Agriculture education, research and outreach have been an important part of SFA since the university’s establishment in 1923. As time passed, agriculture faculty members continued to excel in agricultural development while enhancing their teaching, research and outreach capacity in the animal and horticultural sciences, agricultural engineering technology and agribusiness.

In 2005, the Department of Agriculture transferred from the James I. Perkins College of Education to the Arthur Temple College of Forestry, complementing the academic and research programs in forestry, environmental science and geospatial science. The Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center was part of that transfer, and we are celebrating 50 years of its existence. This 700-acre farm, located about 10 miles north of campus, is an important part of the transformative experiences our agriculture faculty and staff provide students through hands-on learning and research in animal husbandry and agricultural production.

In November 2018, the center’s beef farm facility was completely destroyed by a fire. We are working with the university administration to replace the facility. With financial assistance from our alumni and partners, we hope to replace it with something bigger and better.

As you will read, our student organizations continue to represent the college and SFA well at regional and national events. The college faculty members deserve a great deal of the credit because of their service as mentors for these organizations.

Our faculty members continue to be recognized at the regional and national levels for their service to the profession. Since I am an Eagle Scout, Dr. David Kulhavy’s achievement of earning the William T. Hornaday Gold Medal Award from the Boy Scouts of America has special meaning. This is the highest individual conservation award a scout can earn, and very few people in the history of scouting have received this recognition.

Finally, student recruiting and retention remains a high priority at SFA. I believe the best student recruiters are our alumni, students, parents and professional partners. Billboards, social media, posters and brochures are important recruiting tools but cannot replace personal testimony of the outstanding learning and living environment offered at SFA. I challenge our alumni and partners to reach out to at least one prospective student interested in agriculture, environmental science, forestry or geospatial science as a career and recommend they consider attending SFA. The message is simple — the job market is strong with near 100% employment for our graduates. With the baby boomer generation retiring and current job growth rates, we need more students to meet the demand. If you need information about our programs, contact our office. We will send you all of the information you will need. If the prospective student would like us to contact them, we will be glad to do so. Enjoy reading about the recent accomplishments of our faculty, staff and students. We wish you all the best.

-Hans Williams
Stephen F. Austin State University and the Lone Star College System announce partnership

A new partnership between Stephen F. Austin State University and the Lone Star College System will enable eligible students to enroll in SFA’s Bachelor of Science in spatial science program upon receiving an Associate of Applied Science in geographic information systems.

“Lone Star College has a strong Associate of Applied Science program in geographic information systems,” said Dr. Hans Williams, dean of SFA’s Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture. “After completing the degree at Lone Star, students can seamlessly transfer to SFA’s Bachelor of Science in spatial science program, further enhancing their technical and professional skills that lead to rewarding careers in geospatial analysis across many disciplines.”

LSC is the largest higher education institution in the Houston area and offers more than 170 programs of study.

SFA’s spatial science program offers two areas of specialization for those who plan to participate in the collaborative program — natural resources and land surveying. A third emphasis area, cultural resources, also will be available at a future date.

According to information provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistic, faster-than-average growth in the occupational group representing key spatial science careers will take place during the next decade.

“We are excited about this SFA partnership, which provides an opportunity for students to further their studies in preparation for specialized careers as foresters and surveying and mapping technicians, to name a few,” said Dr. Kelly Gernhart, dean of arts, humanities and social sciences at the Lone Star CyFair campus.
SFA’s Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture has entered into a partnership with Beihua University, located in China’s Jilin Province, assuring further opportunities for international research and collaboration across the disciplines of environmental science, forestry and spatial science.

“The relationship will be mutually beneficial through study abroad opportunities, graduate student exchanges, faculty interactions and research collaborations,” said Dr. Hans Williams, dean of SFA’s Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture.

This is the second relationship established with an institution of higher education in Jilin Province. In 2018, the college signed a cooperative agreement with Jilin Provincial Academy of Forestry Sciences with similar goals of student exchange and the advancement of forest science. Although separate entities, Beihua University and the Jilin Provincial Academy of Forestry Sciences also engage in collaborative research.

Dr. Yuhui Weng, assistant professor of forest biometrics at SFA, facilitated the establishment of both partnerships through his ongoing research with the institutions.

Pictured standing from left are Dr. Matthew McBroom, associate dean of SFA’s Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture; Dr. Hans Williams, dean of the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture; Dr. Steve Bullard, provost and vice president for academic affairs at SFA; and Dr. Qingfan Meng, dean of Beihua University’s College of Forestry. Seated from left are Dr. Zhan Liping, vice president of Beihua University and Dr. Steve Westbrook, who was serving as SFA’s interim president.
Fire claims SFA Beef Farm facility

Stephen F. Austin State University’s Beef Research Center barn was destroyed in a fire that occurred early on the morning of Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2018.

“The fire caused significant damage to the structure and contents of the building,” said Dr. Hans Williams, dean of SFA’s Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture. “We are very thankful that no people or animals were injured.”

The Beef Farm is a part of SFA’s 726-acre Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center, and it is an integral part of the learning experience for SFA’s agriculture students.

Friends and alumni who wish to donate funds to aid in the recovery of the facility and its contents may contribute in a variety of ways.

To donate online, visit www.sfasu.edu/give. Select “other,” specify “Beef Farm” and follow the designated steps to complete the donation.

Checks made payable to the SFA Office of Development also may be sent to P.O. Box 6092, Nacogdoches, Texas, 75962. Please include a note stating the contribution is for the SFA Beef Farm.

Donors also may call the SFA Office of Development at (936) 468-5406 to make a gift by phone. Once again, please designate the donation is intended for the SFA Beef Farm.

For any inquiries regarding other ways to help, contact Dr. Joey Bray, chair of the SFA Department of Agriculture, at (936) 468-3705 or Dr. Erin Brown, professor of animal science, at (936) 468-3705.

To donate online, visit www.sfasu.edu/give. Select “other,” specify “Beef Farm” and follow the designated steps to complete the donation.

Checks made payable to the SFA Office of Development also may be sent to P.O. Box 6092, Nacogdoches, Texas, 75962. Please include a note stating the contribution is for the SFA Beef Farm.
The university’s spatial science program now offers a third discipline specialization track, which allows students to explore the broad range of geospatial applications within the field of liberal and applied arts.

“Spatial technologies and spatial analysis can be applied in many fields as long as there is spatial data,” said Dr. I-Kuai Hung, Lacy Hunt professor of geographic information systems and remote sensing for SFA’s Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture.

Spatial science majors pursuing the new cultural resources track select a minor from SFA’s College of Liberal and Applied Arts, allowing them to incorporate their knowledge of spatial science technologies in fields such as anthropology, criminal justice, political science and geography.

The program also offers emphasis areas in natural resources and land surveying. Because the field of spatial science is rapidly growing and utilized in a broad range of disciplines, the college of forestry recognized the need to broaden the program’s scope.

“It opens the program up to different types of students who take advantage of this technology and use it in their discipline,” said Dr. Daniel Unger, Kenneth Nelson distinguished professor of geographic information systems and remote sensing.

SFA’s Department of Agriculture received a $3,000 student recruiting grant from the U.S. Poultry Foundation during the 2018 International Poultry Expo held in Atlanta, Georgia.

The grant will assist the SFA Department of Agriculture in hosting its annual College Experience Day, as well as other recruiting initiatives. The department’s College Experience Day draws hundreds of high school students from across the region to engage in hands-on agricultural activities at the university’s 642-acre Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center. Among the unique initiatives offered during the event is the opportunity for high school students to tour the SFA Broiler Research Center, which works closely with the poultry industry to discover, evaluate and interpret better methods of poultry production.

The foundation awarded recruiting grants totaling $282,500 to 35 colleges and universities across the United States with either a poultry science department or a poultry studies program.
Professor Emeritus earns Distinguished Service Award

Dr. Montague Whiting was named the recipient of the 2019 Distinguished Service Award at the environmental science, forestry and spatial science scholarship banquet held this spring.

Whiting joined the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture in 1972 as an instructor and camp director of the forestry field station, then held in Milam, Texas. In 1979, he was promoted to assistant professor of forest wildlife management, where he served the university for more than two decades before retiring in 2002 as the Henry M. Rockwell chair of forestry. Following retirement, Whiting was named professor emeritus.

“I think it is safe to say that his reputation for being a hard-nosed, demanding professor was always accompanied by caring for his students and seeing that they succeeded in their career and in life,” said Dr. Hans Williams, dean of the college. “He is the embodiment of a student-centered educator.”

Whiting continues to contribute to the college by maintaining and establishing relationships with alumni. He also is actively involved in the Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society and organizes a SFA alumni gathering each year.

Whiting earned a Bachelor of Science in forestry from Auburn University, a Master of Science in forest watershed management from University of Arizona, and a doctoral degree from Texas A&M University.

Department of Agriculture hosts C.A.S.E. Academy

The Department of Agriculture hosted an intensive, eight-day professional development institute focused on the principles of animal science for 14 agriculture educators from across the United States. The institute provided experience in a full year of curriculum written by Curriculum for Agricultural Science Education, an initiative of The National Council for Agricultural Education and managed by the National Association of Agricultural Educators.

“During the institute, participants experience the curriculum from both student and teacher perspectives, and this allows them to understand and how their students will experience the curriculum.” said Dr. Candis Carraway, SFA assistant professor of agriculture and CASE site coordinator. “Teachers really seem to appreciate this workshop design.”

According to its website, CASE is an instructional system seeking to change the culture of agriculture programs in the United States through intense teacher professional development; inquiry-based, student-focused lessons; assessment; and certification. CASE equips teachers to elevate student experiences in the agriscience classroom and prepares students for success in college and careers emphasizing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.
ATCOFA professor presented with Boy Scouts of America’s highest conservation award

Dr. David Kulhavy, Laurence C. Walker professor of forestry at SFA’s Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, has been named the recipient of the prestigious William T. Hornaday Gold Medal Award, recognizing his more than four decades of service and leadership in the conservation field.

The national award, presented by the Boy Scouts of America, is the organization’s highest conservation award presented to adults.

"Dr. Kulhavy has devoted more than half of his life to conservation and has assumed the role of mentor for many young minds, including my own, who are interested in the field of forestry and conservation," said Brian Humphreys, Lufkin Eagle Scout who nominated Kulhavy for the award. "His dedication to the environment and desire to inspire new ways of teaching and thinking about the world around us have touched lives in more ways than one can imagine."

The William T. Hornaday Awards are a series of awards created by the Boy Scouts of America to honor the conservation and scouting legacy of Hornaday, past director of the New York Zoological Park and founder of the National Zoo in Washington, D.C. According to the Boy Scouts of America, Hornaday was an active and outspoken champion of natural resource conservation and a leader in saving the American bison from extinction.

Kulhavy said he feels the award also reflects upon the mission of the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, which is to contribute to academia and conservation.

"Dr. Laurence C. Walker, former dean of SFA's School of Forestry, which would later become the Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, also received the award in 1986," Kulhavy said.

"As an Eagle Scout, I recognize the significance of the William T. Hornaday Gold Medal that Dr. Kulhavy is receiving," said Dr. Hans Williams, dean of the college. "The Hornaday Gold Medal represents Dr. Kulhavy's lifetime of extraordinary commitment and achievement to scouting and conservation."

Kulhavy's contribution to the field of entomology and conservation spans continents with more than 900 insect-based educational programs for children delivered across America and Europe. He also directed an exhibit displayed at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History celebrating the migration of the monarch butterfly, holds the Distinguished Teaching Award in Entomology from the Entomological Society of America and has been recognized multiple times for his contributions to teaching, research and outreach at SFA.
Mehaffey recipient of SFA’s 2019 Teaching Excellence Award

Visitors to SFA’s swine center won’t find Dr. John Mehaffey behind the desk of a typical professorial office space. More likely than not, they will have to pass through multiple doors following the intermingled sounds of student voices and contented pig grunts to locate him.

Although Mehaffey, associate professor of agriculture in SFA’s Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture, didn’t initially plan to pursue a career in academia, it seems, as the adage goes, he has taken to it like a pig to mud.

“My favorite part of teaching is the students,” Mehaffey said. “You get to see a lot of different perspectives on life, and each student has something to offer to our program, to me as an individual and to my family.”

Mehaffey joined SFA in 2012 following a career in research and development in the meat industry. He believes this experience in the private sector provides him with valuable insight to share with students.

Students in Mehaffey’s classes obtain direct and extensive experience in swine, goat and sheep production — from reproduction and health to sales.

“I almost see my classroom as an experiment,” he said. “The swine center is a constantly evolving process.”

Mehaffey explained that because there is not a large market for commercial swine in Texas, the center focuses its efforts on providing quality livestock for 4-H and FFA students to show across the state.

In addition to managing the sheep, goat and swine centers, Mehaffey serves as the faculty advisor for the Alpha Gamma Rho fraternity and the SFA Livestock Judging Team.

Mehaffey’s dedication to students, as well as the hands-on nature of his classes, earned him a 2019 Teaching Excellence Award. The award, presented annually to one faculty member in each of SFA’s six colleges and a seventh Faculty Senate awardee, is based on knowledge of subject matter, quality of lectures and assignments, and enthusiasm for teaching.

The award also recognizes faculty members’ commitment to continuous improvement, contribution to the quality of teaching at SFA by assisting and encouraging other faculty members, and interest in and availability to students.
Jessica Glasscock

Jessica Glasscock joined the college as a lecturer in forest wildlife management this fall. She brings a wealth of field, classroom and outreach experience to the position, including tenure as the education coordinator and interim executive director of the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute in Fort Davis.

Prior to joining SFA, Glasscock taught principles of wildlife management at Texas A&M University - Kingsville. She is a Texas Chapter of the Wildlife Society committee chair and held the Welder Wildlife Foundation Fellowship as a doctoral student at Texas A&M University - Kingsville.

She holds both a Bachelor and Master of Science from Sul Ross University, and she is expected to graduate with a doctoral degree in wildlife science from Texas A&M - Kingsville.

Cobey Hendry

As the SFA Beef Farm supervisor, Cobey Hendry is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the farm, which includes more than 200 head of Beefmaster, Angus, and crossbred cattle. In addition to daily operations, Hendry also maintains and fosters relationships with cattle producers throughout the region, assists with Department of Agriculture labs held at the farm and plays an integral role in the Beef Farm’s heifer and bull development programs.

“I am excited to be a team member here at SFA, and I hope my work helps continue growth for the future of such a beautiful facility,” Hendry said.

Prior to joining SFA, Hendry worked at Louisiana State University’s Reproductive Biology Center. He holds a Bachelor of Science in animal sciences from LSU.
Graduate students win top honors at statewide research symposium

Agriculture graduate students Garret Ashabranner and Ian Brock received top honors at the Ninth Annual Agricultural Consortium of Texas Research Symposium hosted by Texas A&M University.

Ashabranner’s research investigating a composting poultry litter system compared to a conventional poultry litter system and its effects on the performance of broiler chickens was named top research poster, while Brock’s research evaluating the water consumption of broilers reared on different water treatment programs placed second.

Fellow students Kennedi Achilles and Shania Simons also presented in the graduate research competition, while Carly Wright competed in the undergraduate portion.

Annual Agricultural Consortium of Texas Research Symposium comprises all universities in Texas who offer courses in agriculture.

Student chapter of The Wildlife Society wins statewide quiz bowl

The SFA student chapter of The Wildlife Society defeated universities from across the state to claim victory during the quiz bowl held during The Wildlife Society meeting in Montgomery.

“This statewide meeting provides the largest stage on which our students can showcase their knowledge,” said Dr. Daniel Scognamillo, SFA associate professor of wildlife and faculty advisor for the student chapter of The Wildlife Society. “The students seized the opportunity and put their chapter and the SFA forest wildlife management program in the spotlight by winning the quiz bowl.”

The quiz bowl is a friendly competition challenging participants representing student chapters from across the state with rounds of questions related to the broad range of wildlife biology, management and research.

“This win is a huge success for the chapter,” said Jake Hill, freshman forest wildlife management major. “We’re excited about preparing for next year and carrying on the winning tradition.”

In addition to the quiz bowl, SFA students presented a range of research findings through posters and oral presentations.

The Texas Chapter of The Wildlife Society is the nation’s largest chapter and holds a meeting every February in varying locations across Texas. Hundreds of wildlife and conservation professionals representing state and federal agencies, nonprofits, the private sector and academia attend the meeting to network and learn about the latest wildlife-related research.
Carly Wright named top scholar

Agriculture senior Carly Wright was named Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture’s top scholar at the 2019 SFA Undergraduate Research Conference.

Her research titled “Fertilizer type and rate influence on Erysimum growth and development,” evaluated the response of Erysimum, commonly known as wallflowers, to Peter’s 15-5-15, a water-soluble fertilizer, and Osmocote 18-6-12, a controlled-release fertilizer. The eight-week experiment found that Peter’s 15-5-15 fertilizer applied weekly at 200 parts per million nitrogen produced the best results for plant growth and flowering. She also found that Osmocote use at medium, high and very high levels is a waste of resources, as the plants did not respond to the excess nutrition.

As top scholar, Wright presented her research and findings at the Undergraduate Research Symposium in April. Dr. Michael Maurer, assistant chair of the Department of Agriculture, served as faculty advisor for the project.

ATCOFA Top Scholar Finalists

Garret Ashabranner and Ian Brock
“A Comparative Analysis of a Built-up Composting Poultry Litter System Compared to a Conventional Poultry Litter System and Their Effects on the Performance of Broiler Chickens”
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Joey Bray

Crystal Alexander, Connor S. Adams, Kathryn R. Kidd and Christopher Schalk
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Kathryn R. Kidd

Jack DiFrank, Ashley Broadhurst, Deanna Alpert, Leenell Colon and Tyler Kysiak
“Examining the Impacts of Lead Regulations on the Levels Found in Soil Along Local Highways in Nacogdoches”
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Sheryll B. Jerez

Emily Ivester, Hollyn Grizzaffi, Nicklaus Langlois and Augusto Conde De Frankenberg
“Using Macroinvertebrates to Test the Water Quality of Lake Nacogdoches”
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Sheryll B. Jerez

Emily Ruth Lozano
“LaNana Creek Historical Trial: Blazing a Path Through the Oldest Town in Texas”
Faculty Sponsors: Drs. David Kulhavy, I-Kuai Hung and Dan Unger

Nina M. McCallum and Nicky A. Vermeersch
“Concentrations of Copper, Zinc and Escherichia coli Bacteria in East Texas Ponds as Affected by Source of Stormwater Runoff”
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Kenneth Farrish

Reid Viegut and Schaeffer Shockley
“Using Unmanned Aircraft Systems to Quantify Mistletoe in Urban Environments”
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. David Kulhavy

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Graduate student aims to bring state parks to the public through virtual reality

The Oklahoma State Park system encompasses diverse landscapes ranging from subterranean caverns to rolling mountains. However, of the more than 55,000 acres that comprise the state park system, some of the most spectacular, scenic vistas are not accessible to those with health or mobility limitations.

SFA graduate student Kyle Thoreson is hoping to remedy this utilizing the rapidly evolving technology of virtual reality.

Thoreson, pursuing a Master of Science in resource communications at SFA, serves as a park ranger at Osage Hills State Park, located within the Osage Nation Reservation in northeastern Oklahoma.

When contemplating topics for his final nonthesis project, Thoreson said he researched the growing popularity of 360 videos and how this technology can be utilized to share Oklahoma’s state parks with everyone.

“For example, to get to the best vantage point of the falls at Natural Falls State Park, you have to go down to the very bottom so you’re looking up at the falls,” Thoreson said. “We have sort of a skyway that goes out and gives you a view from part of the way down, but it’s just not the same as being below the falls.”

By capturing 360 video and audio from this position, Thoreson said people unable to make the hike down will still have the opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the experience of the 77-foot waterfall.

Thoreson presented his idea to regional managers within the Oklahoma State Park system, and he is currently collecting 360 video at select parks.

“We have to determine what things different demographics want to see and ensure it is speaking to their emotional health.”

This focus on improving mental health through virtual immersion in nature is of great significance, especially considering the growing body of research indicating that time in or exposure to nature can improve emotional health and well-being.

While 360 video is available on platforms such as YouTube and other social media sites, Thoreson hopes to expand this initiative by using more immersive virtual reality suites that are equipped with multiple viewers, phones and a server to allow large numbers of people to experience the footage together.

Thoreson said tools like this allow parks to expand their reach and impact by taking the footage directly to those physically unable to visit the park due to health, economic or transportation limitations.

“They can put on a viewer in the comfort of home to experience the park,” Thoreson said. “It’s a driving interest of mine — to be sure I can take the parks to the people.”
SFA’s Landscape Competition Team won multiple awards at the 2019 National Collegiate Landscaping Competition held in Fort Collins, Colorado, during spring break.

Anna Clair Cunningham, a junior horticulture major, was named top student and overall winner of the event’s school social media competition.

“I posted 153 photos to Instagram in three days,” Cunningham said. “The point was to promote the event, support other teams and raise awareness of the competition.”

For her efforts, Cunningham received $1,000, and the SFA landscape competition team received $1,000 worth of landscaping equipment.

Dr. Jared Barnes, assistant professor of horticulture and faculty advisor for the team, won the faculty social media competition for his coverage of the event and also received $1,000.

“When you have a student and faculty member who win a social media competition, I think it shows we also are teaching the concept that you have to share what you do and what you love,” Barnes said. “I think that is something we as an industry haven’t done enough.”

Junior horticulture major Jevon Richeson placed in the top 25 among 90 competitors in the interior plant identification competition and said his work growing plants with the SFA horticulture program provided him with valuable experience.

“Every student competed with the best intentions,” Barnes said. “They were enthusiastic and really put their best foot forward in competing at a national level.”

More than 800 students from 60 universities across the U.S. and Canada attended the three-day event that hosts nearly 30 different competitions, as well as a career fair and student workshops.

While the event focuses on the horticulture, landscaping and tree care industries, Barnes said there are numerous other opportunities for students who have other skills related to business, sales and heavy equipment operation.

For more information about this event, as well as the SFA landscape competition team, contact Barnes at barnesj@sfasu.edu.
Kasen McCall finishes 11th in nation at College National Finals Rodeo

Kasen McCall, SFA freshman agribusiness major, and his roping partner, Clayton Lowry of Panola College, finished 11th in the nation in team roping at the 2019 College National Finals Rodeo held June 9 through 15 in Casper, Wyoming.

McCall, a Lufkin native, has been involved in rodeo since the age of 9 and is currently a member of the SFA Rodeo Team. He and his roping partner competed alongside more than 400 students from across the United States, as well as Canada, Brazil and Australia, for individual event championship titles that included cash prizes, scholarships and championship hardware comprising buckles, rings and plaques.

“I am ecstatic for him and extremely happy for our university,” said Rachel Clark, SFA coordinator of student publications and SFA Rodeo Club advisor and team coach. “This is a monumental moment where we were able to showcase our university on yet another national stage.”

To qualify for the College National Finals Rodeo, McCall and Lowry competed in 10 rodeos across Texas and Louisiana, earning enough points in the National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association’s Southern Region to receive a national bid.

McCall said he and his partner practiced as much as they could utilizing arenas owned by family members and friends, as well as the arena located at SFA’s Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center.

During the team roping event, a steer is released from a chute into the arena. After the steer reaches a certain point in the arena, the two team members pursue the animal on horseback from their respective chutes. One team member, known as the header, ropes the steer’s horns or neck while turning the animal to the left, enabling the heeler to rope the steer’s back feet.

The ropers’ horses are equally important members of the team, responding to their rider’s cues to tighten the ropes and secure the steer on the ground in the fastest time possible.

“The horses learn you, you learn them, and then you just combine to get the job done,” McCall said.

Clark said the SFA Rodeo Club was established in the 1960s, and since that time only two other team members qualified for the College National Finals.

The rodeo finals were live-streamed on ESPN 3, and future broadcasts will air on ESPN U.

While the Rodeo Club is open to all students, those who are a part of the SFA Rodeo Team typically have a strong foundation in agriculture and are required to provide their own horses and gear to compete.
The SFA timbersports team, the Sylans, claimed its third consecutive victory at the 62nd annual Association of Southern Forestry Clubs Conclave hosted by Louisiana State University in March.

“This was the most talented and dedicated team I’ve seen since becoming the faculty advisor in 2012,” said Dr. Jeremy Stovall, associate professor of forestry.

The team competed in a series of challenging academic and physical events against 13 other universities from across the South, including Clemson, Virginia Tech and Auburn.

Although physical events, such as crosscut sawing, axe throwing and log birling, an event in which two competitors run on a floating log with the goal of pitching an opponent into the water, take center stage, excelling in the academic events is a key point of pride for the Sylans.

“The win in the academic competition really speaks to the strengths of our forestry program and the quality of our undergraduate students,” Stovall said. “This win is coming in the same year our student chapter of the Society of American Foresters won the national quiz bowl and our student chapter of The Wildlife Society won the state quiz bowl.”

As if placing first in both academic and physical events wasn’t enough, two SFA students sealed their positions in Southern Forestry Conclave history by setting records in two physical events.

For the first time in the 62-year history of the Southern Forestry Conclave, Tyler Jones, a junior urban forestry major, threw a perfect score of 15 by hitting five consecutive bullseyes in the axe-throwing event.

“The axe-throw competition was a lot of fun, and my throws went by like a blur,” Jones said. “Breaking the record at my first conclave was such a surprise.”

Senior forest wildlife management major Ian Erickson then broke a 26-year record in the men’s bowsaw event by cutting an 8-inch-square cant in 6.56 seconds.

The Sylans also were awarded the Sportsmanship Award for the team’s efforts in assisting Louisiana State University in executing the event, as well as for overall professionalism and support of other teams.

While the Sylans primarily comprise forestry students, all majors are welcome to join. For more information on the Sylans, contact Stovall at stovalljp@sfasu.edu.
Animal science junior Julia Watson completed a three-month internship with Rockin’ R Whitetails, a white-tailed deer breeding operation located the Hill Country town of Mountain Home.

Watson’s duties revolved around ensuring the health of the ranch’s deer, as well as daily operations, such as feeding and tagging new fawns.

“I really wanted a job this summer that would benefit my future in some way — not just make money,” Watson said. “Working with deer really opens a lot of doors for many other jobs.”

Watson learned about the internship opportunity after viewing a posting located in the Agriculture Building. Although she applied for four other internships, Watson said she chose Rockin’ R Whitetails after meeting the staff members and learning more about the company.


Richeson said his duties as an intern were quite broad, and he had the opportunity to work in multiple departments throughout his time at the nursery.

“I feel like this experience will benefit me in my undergraduate career by giving me the opportunity to see what it is like to work at a large nursery and really understand what it takes to run a business,” Richeson said.

Richeson learned about the internship opportunity through Dr. Jared Barnes, assistant professor of horticulture.

“I am really looking forward to broadening my knowledge of ornamental grasses and the nursery business, as well as experiencing the different plants that are grown in North Carolina,” Richeson said.

Forest management junior Will Alders spent three months working for the Texas A&M Forest Service’s forest inventory and analysis branch in Hudson.

Alders said this position primarily focused on data collection, and tree and forest health assessment, as well as locating study plots across East Texas.

“Working underneath the FIA branch of the Texas A&M Forest Service has taught me a lot about forest management from a state agency perspective,” Alders said. “Further, I have gained a better understanding of the research side of forestry, with the data collection, inventory and analysis we performed on a daily basis.”

Alders learned about the internship opportunity through Dr. Matthew McBroom, associate dean, and encourages students to actively communicate with professors about opportunities and career advice.

“The faculty members in the college make time to help their students,” Alders said. “As a recipient of their benevolent generosity, I can confidently say that they’re highly invested in each student and desire success for each of them.”
Spatial science senior Keaton Ford spent his summer with Halff Associates Inc., an engineering and architecture firm with offices located across the Southeastern U.S.

Ford first interned with the company in 2017 as part of the field crew conducting traverses, level loops and collecting data. This summer, he served as a survey technician for the company’s Midland office.

“Working with Half Associates has benefited my undergraduate career because I now have actual experience in my profession,” Ford said. “Use your breaks to start getting experience working in the field that you want to go into at the end of college.”

Environmental science senior Kayla Curtis completed a 13-week internship with Georgia-Pacific at the company’s plywood-lumber complex in Camden. During this time, Curtis assisted in data collection and entry, as well as a host of other responsibilities, including generating department assessments and the development of a bark management plan.

“This experience has benefited my undergraduate career because it ties a lot of courses together,” Curtis said. “I don’t just do water sampling for three hours, then move to a safety-based task and then move to assessment — it all intertwines and interacts to create a functional, productive workday.”

Curtis said the experience taught her to incorporate all of the knowledge she has gained as an environmental science student while also exposing her to the dynamics of a workplace environment.

“My favorite part about the internship was relationship building and exposure,” Curtis said. “The inclusion I felt allowed me to become exposed to various people, departments and events that happen at the mill.”

Curtis learned about the internship opportunity from two environmental science alumni who also interned with the company and emphasized how much it assisted them in professional development. She also highly encourages students to attend the career fairs held at the college to form professional relationships early on.

If you have news or images you would like to share, email Sarah Fuller, outreach coordinator, at fullersa@sfasu.edu.
Garret Ashabranner

As a poultry science undergraduate, Garret Ashabranner transformed his passion for holistic agriculture into a valuable research experience expanding upon trials conducted in the 1940s and ‘50s at the Ohio Agricultural Research Station.

“I did a comparative analysis between the built-up, composting litter method, also known as the deep litter method, and a conventional litter system,” Ashabranner said.

Ashabranner explained that a conventional litter system is a carbon-neutral litter system in which no or minimal additional layers of bedding material are added during the poultry production cycle. Conversely, the deep-litter method adds an additional layer of bedding, such as pine shavings, with every additional layer of manure produced by the chickens.

“(The deep-litter method) is a very carbon positive system that mimics the carbon-nitrogen ratio of a healthy compost pile,” Ashabranner said.

His findings indicate that chickens raised using the deep litter method have an improved feed conversion ratio, a higher body weight, and also maintain better paw scores, indicating paw health.

Leenell Colon

With a team of fellow environmental science students, Leenell Colon examined how the Environmental Protection Agency’s regulation banning leaded gasoline has affected the quality of soil bodies adjacent to major road ways.

“Students in Dr. Jerez’s ENV 210 class were given free range to establish their own research project, as long as it was relevant to the Nacogdoches area and analyzed either water, air or soil quality,” Colon said. “My research team opted for this project because we were particularly interested in the area’s soil quality and how one would go about reversing the damage done to it.”

The team collected and analyzed soil samples from points along State Highway 7, State Highway 21 and Loop 224.

“Based on the assumption that soil along older roadways would have been more susceptible to lead exposure from gasoline runoff, the research team measured the lead levels in soil bodies adjacent to two roadways built before the regulation was put into effect and one roadway that was built after,” Colon said.

The team determined that the roadway built after the EPA rule was implemented did in fact contain lower lead levels than those built before the regulation was put into effect.

Colon said that Dr. Sheryll Jerez, associate professor of environmental science, and Dr. Kenneth Farrish, director of the SFA Division of Environmental Science, continually offered guidance and support to the students throughout the project.
Forestry

Sally Shroyer

Forestry senior Sally Shroyer is working under the guidance of Dr. Rebecca Kidd, assistant professor of forestry, to investigate the manners in which climate change has affected the growth of six target tree species located in Boggy Slough Conservation Area and the Angelina National Forest.

“The original scope of this project included upland and bottomland species,” Shroyer said. “However, due to a wet spring, standing water has halted all efforts to core bottomland species.”

Shroyer explained that two core samples, as well as diameter at breast height measurement, are taken from 25 trees per species at each study site. Once collected, the core samples are taken to the lab, mounted on boards, sanded, aged, and yearly growth is measured using a computer program. Afterward, a second program quantifies the average annual growth of each species.

“As climate change occurs, timber stands are at a greater risk from flooding, drought and invasive insects,” Shroyer said. “This project will help forest managers better understand the forests of today, their regeneration ability, carbon storage and forest productivity.”

Spatial Science

Joseph Gerland

Bachelor of Science student Joseph Gerland is utilizing different unmanned aerial system flight techniques to establish best practices for creating accurate 3D models of objects from unmanned aerial systems photography.

“Taking images from a flight and creating a 3D model of the photographed objects is called photogrammetry,” Gerland said. “Essentially, computer software takes all the images, finds match points between the photos and then recreates the 3D space from the x,y,z positions of all these points and the position of the camera in real-world space at the time each photo was taken.”

Gerland compared his orbital flight methods to standard nadir double-grid flight, and found that the orbital flight method produced much more accurate and high resolution data.

Gerland’s research holds special significance as the subject of his UAS modeling was a replica of a traditional Caddo grass house that was once located at Caddo Mounds State Historic site.

“I collected the imagery the day before the terrible tornado strike that swept through Alto and the site, destroying the visitor center and the grass house,” Gerland said.

Gerlands imagery was used to produce a 3D printed model of the structure.

Copies of the model were then presented to survivors of the tornado, as well as members of the Caddo Nation.

“I have enjoyed having the opportunity to try an idea that I felt interesting and challenging,” Gerland said. This experience has broadened my horizons.”
In ongoing research to improve the health and welfare of chickens utilized in the poultry industry, Ian Brock conducted a trial study analyzing how a variety of supplements added to water might benefit the animals.

“Water is one of the most important nutrients for broilers during production,” Brock said. “A good water source will improve digestion and metabolism, overall bird health and welfare, and reduce stress.”

Brock’s study analyzed how a unique blend of herbal essential oils, yucca extract, vitamins and electrolytes affected the birds’ growth, water consumption and response to heat stress.

Results of the study indicate that the combination of essential oils, plant extract, vitamins and electrolytes led to a heavier body weight and lower feed conversion ratio than those in the control group.

“We found that the combination will help combat the negative effects of chronic heat stress, higher stocking densities and help increase performance parameters,” Brock said.

Through the utilization of geographic information systems integrated with multi-criteria decision making, Robert Milecz is identifying suitable areas for wind turbine applications in Texas.

Milecz said that during the past several decades wind power has gained much attention as an alternative to traditional electric power generation methods, such as coal and oil-fired generating plants. However, like traditional plants, many elements must be considered when planning their location.

According to Milecz, factors such as proximity to urban areas, terrain and wildlife management areas are all taken into consideration when assessing the viability of such a project.

“The most critical criterion is the wind power density defined by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, which integrates abundance and quality of wind, the complexity of the terrain, and the geographical variability of the resource,” Milecz said.

Milecz’s interest in renewable energy, as well as GIS, led him to pursue the research.
**Forestry**

**Christoph Tomford**

Through the analysis of rain events and seasonal precipitation data, Christoph Tomford is contributing to the ongoing efforts to protect and restore the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker.

Tomford explained that the woodpeckers typically do not fly during rain events, conserving their energy until the precipitation ceases. This prevents the species from foraging for food, which could have dire consequence.

“Using red-cockaded woodpecker nesting data from Texas and Louisiana and historical precipitation from adjacent remote automatic weather stations, we will determine whether or not precipitation events can lead to fledgling mortality,” Tomford said. “Results from this study could modify policies of translocating helper birds from one cluster to another, while identifying a previously undetermined stressor that could be mitigated, thus improving the overall success of red-cockaded woodpecker fledgling survival.”

**Resource Communications**

**Danielle Bradley**

Danielle Bradley, regional interpretive specialist with the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department, is investigating how introduction to the practice of roving interpretation among site staff members shifts the perception of their role in visitor interpretation.

“So often, employees think they can’t engage in interpretation because it’s not in their job title,” Bradley said. “My goal is to show them that not only can they engage in interpretive conversations, but they’re likely already doing it without realizing.”

Bradley explained that she will measure the perceptions of Texas state park employees pre and post-interpretive training, as well as three months afterward across at least 12 parks throughout the state. Additionally, monthly interpretive reports will be analyzed to determine if a statistically significant change in roving interpretation occurs post training.

“It’s simply a matter of making those employees aware of the process and comfortable engaging in these interpretive conversations.

Bradley’s passion for roving interpretation actually led her to develop her own set of seven key principles used when training others. These principles ultimately led her to pursue roving interpretation as the subject of her research.

“Roving interpretation is something I feel very strongly about. I feel like any employee in our state park system is capable of creating meaningful, interpretive connections to the natural and cultural resources of our parks for their visitors,” Bradley said.
Although this year marks the 50th anniversary of SFA’s Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center, the legacy of agricultural research at SFA extends back to the very origin of the university’s founding in 1923.

Walking through the modern SFA campus, the last thing one might expect to hear is the lowing of cattle and clucking of chickens, but in 1932 these pastoral vocalizations were simply the melodies that defined the northeast section of campus.

“One of the best kept secrets is why the Ag Pond is called the Ag Pond,” said Dr. Dale Perritt, referring to the pond located next to Homer Bryce Stadium. “That’s where the dairy and beef cattle came and watered.”

Perritt, SFA professor emeritus of agriculture, explained that Wilson Drive actually ended in a gate that opened to pastureland and farm facilities encompassing 163 acres devoted to beef cattle and poultry, as well as fruit and vegetable production.

In a 1932 report to the Board of Regents, SFA President Dr. Alton Birdwell noted, “The farm is in a splendid state of cultivation, and the agriculture department thinks that it will be self-supporting, and that it will furnish laboratory equipment for the students of that subject.”

A second 203-acre farm was located on Highway 21 East, and according to a 1950 SFA Department of Agriculture bulletin, it housed the department’s dairy, swine, pasture plots and field crops.

The facilities, technology and research have undoubtedly evolved during the past 96 years, but the importance of students gaining real-world experience at a fully functioning farm has remained the same.

“That’s our biggest advantage of the farm,” said Dr. Joey Bray, chair of the SFA Department of Agriculture. “Our students get to actually put their hands on animals, work with the animals and apply their knowledge.”

As enrollment at SFA grew, so did the need for more land to accommodate the expanding campus. Thus, the decision was made to move the on-campus farm to an off-campus location.

SFA’s Agriculture Research Center began in 1969 when roughly 274 acres was purchased approximately 10 miles north of campus on Highway 59. The 1980s saw the expansion of farm acreage, as well as the construction of the swine and poultry research centers.

In 1999, the farm was named the Walter C. Todd Beef Farm. Todd, an SFA agriculture alumnus, served on the SFA Board of Regents for more than a decade and was named a Distinguished Alumnus in 1986. In 2004, the name of the farm was changed to the Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center to incorporate all of the farm facilities and exhibit the department’s ongoing commitment to research.

“He would be very humbled and grateful to know that he was honored in that way,” said Cliff Todd, SFA agriculture alumnus and son of the late Walter C. Todd. “He loved SFA.”

Currently, the 726-acre farm comprises six centers focused on beef, broiler, equine, poultry, sheep, goat and swine research and
Bray said that over time the department has worked to develop a strong relationship with local producers and the community, and the facilities at the research center play an integral role.

Through the research center, the department offers equine boarding, as well as heifer and bull development programs. The swine and goat center provides livestock to local 4H participants, and each year the community is welcomed to the facility for Breakfast on the Farm, a family-friendly, educational event. Additionally, hundreds of high school students from across the region descend upon the research center for the department’s annual College Experience Day.

Last year, the research center was dealt a blow when a fire destroyed the beef center. Looking forward, Bray said that rebuilding the beef center and updating the other facilities is a primary focus. Other long-term goals include expanding the research center’s acreage.

“More acreage would allow us to do more specific types of production on different parts of the farm,” Bray said.

The agricultural research center also facilitates valuable research collaboration among other programs within SFA’s Arthur Temple College of Forestry and Agriculture. For example, SFA’s Division of Environmental Science has conducted a number of studies with the goal of reducing farming’s environmental impacts, and the forestry program is currently developing a silvopasture research plot to build upon the growing body of research regarding the production of timber and livestock in an intensively managed and ecologically beneficial system.

“I am a big supporter of what the faculty are accomplishing out at the farm,” said Todd. “It makes us proud to know that our future agricultural students will be benefiting from the facility for years to come.”

For more information on the Walter C. Todd Agricultural Research Center, as well as programs offered by the SFA Department of Agriculture, visit ag.sfasu.edu.
Alumni Spotlight

Alumnus receives conservation leadership award

Dr. Roel Lopez, director of the Texas A&M Natural Resources Institute, received the 2019 Texas Wildlife Association Sam Beason Conservation Leader Award recognizing his outstanding contribution to the conservation of Texas wildlife and shared philosophies of the Texas Wildlife Association.

“I believe that participation equals conservation,” Lopez said. “One of the things I admire most is the Texas Wildlife Association’s hands-on approach to providing solutions that benefit Texas’ natural resources and wildlife.”

As director of the Natural Resources Institute, Lopez works with internal and external stakeholders to develop institute priorities for research and extension programs that benefit Texas’ natural resources and wildlife. He also works to develop and lead interdisciplinary teams that address these natural resource challenges.

Before joining the institute in 2009, Lopez was a professor in the Department of Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences at Texas A&M University, where he continues to maintain a split academic appointment with the department.

Lopez received his Bachelor of Science in Forestry from SFA, and his master’s and doctoral degrees in wildlife and fisheries sciences from Texas A&M University.

Alumnus receives prestigious Fellowship

Dr. Lauris Hollis was one of 10 individuals named a 2019 Science Policy Fellow with The National Academies of Sciences Gulf Research Program.

According to the National Academy of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine, the highly sought-after fellowship program places scientists at the intersection of science and policy as they dedicate one year to a federal, state, local, or nongovernmental agency within the natural resources, oil and gas, or public health field within the Gulf of Mexico region.

Hollis, who holds a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Science in environmental science from SFA, will be working with the Texas General Land office as the lead in drafting the monitoring, adaptive management and mitigation plans for the Texas Coastal Resiliency Master Plan.

“This fellowship is a dream come true because I will have the opportunity to work directly on coastal issues that I have known about for years,” Hollis said. “In fact, I left my GIS career and went back to school specifically to get involved with working on and solving many of the environmental issues on the Texas coast.”

Hollis holds a doctoral degree in oceanography and coastal sciences from Louisiana State University. In 2018, he was awarded the Outstanding Dissertation Award by the Louisiana State University College of the Coast and Environment and the LSU Ted Ford Memorial Scholarship for Outstanding Graduate Student Research.
Alumni Spotlight

Dr. Natasha Bell

As an undergraduate student, Dr. Natasha Bell loved studying animal nutrition, but she found some concepts presented within her courses to be extremely difficult to understand.

“So, I decided if I could find a new way to teach it that would make it less complicated, others may enjoy it as much as I do,” said Bell, assistant professor within Texas A&M University-Kingville’s Department of Animal Science and Veterinary Medicine. “This would allow me to share the information I am so passionate about with a whole new generation.”

Bell followed through on that conviction, and now teaches and conducts research in animal nutrition with a specific focus on cattle nutrition and grazing management.

Before earning her Master of Science in agriculture from SFA in 2012, Bell taught junior high and high school agriculture science for seven years.

“I liked knowing I had such a big impact on my students,” Bell said. “I was shaping their futures and helping them determine what colleges to go to and what subjects to study. This experience solidified my goals for becoming a university professor.”

Bell’s student-focused philosophy easily transitioned into the baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate realm, where she still measures her own achievement by the successes of her undergraduate and graduate students.

“I would have to say that my biggest career achievement thus far was graduating my first graduate student,” Bell said. “Watching him grow from an undergraduate researcher into a graduate student, and then graduate and get offered his dream job — I felt accomplished after that.”

Bell said she has watched several students travel the same path since then, but the rush of pride and accomplishment as she watches them receive their graduate degree remains.

In addition her academic career, this year Bell celebrates 16 years of service in the U.S. Air Force Reserve. Through her service, she earned an Associate in Applied Science in aviation. Although this degree is unrelated to her career in agriculture, Bell said she is still passionate about the aviation field.
Alumni Spotlight

Marife Anunciado

After graduating with a Master of Science in environmental science from SFA in 2016, Marife Anunciado was accepted into the doctoral program at the University of Tennesee, where she is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in plant, soil and environmental sciences.

Anunciado is part of a research team focused on the performance and adoptability for biodegradable plastic mulch. Specifically, Anunciado is investigating the effects of environmental weathering on biodegradation of biodegradable mulch.

According to a 2019 U.S. Department of Agriculture report, unlike conventional polyethylene mulches, biodegradable plastic mulches are designed to be inexpensively plowed into the soil following a crop harvest, where it will decompose into carbon dioxide, water and cell biomass.

Anunciado said her concern regarding the increasing amount of land resources that are often converted to landfills led her to pursue this research.

“Most of the things we use in our daily lives ends up as waste and accumulates in the landfill, and with increasing demand from consumers, we produce more of this waste,” Anunciado said. “It is important to deal with waste properly and to find an alternative solution to minimize waste generation.”

In the future, Anunciado plans to pursue a research-based career focused on the composting of waste or the transport and behavior of plastics in either the soil or marine environment.

Brian King

Brian King serves as the assistant division manager of the Sabine River Authority’s Lake Fork Division in Quitman. In this position, King oversees operation of the Lake Fork Dam and Reservoir, budgeting and public relations.

He said he first became interested in water-related issues while working on the Alto Watershed Project with the ATCOFA, as well as the summer he worked for the Angelina/Neches River Authority.

He holds a Bachelor and Master of Science in Forestry from SFA.
Kyle Palmer

Kyle Palmer serves as the scanning/LiDAR department manager for Jones/Carter, a full-service engineering and surveying firm located in Houston.

In addition to collecting and supervising the collection of survey-grade LiDAR data from terrestrial laser scanners, Palmer trains and supervises staff members for field data collection and data processing.

Palmer’s knowledge of laser technology allows him to create custom solutions for data collection where conventional survey methods aren’t feasible, such as in refineries, hospitals and towering skyscrapers in downtown Dallas.

“We laser scanned a highly dangerous alkalization unit at a Texas City Refinery,” Palmer said. “The lengthy safety permitting process and dangerous nature of the unit made physically entering this unit unfeasible. Laser scanning was used to capture the necessary information from a safe distance without having to enter the unit.”

Emma Wilson

Emma Wilson earned a Bachelor of Science in Forestry in 2016, and she is now serving as an environmental conservation volunteer with the U.S. Peace Corps in Paraguay.

“As a volunteer in the environmental conservation sector, my duties include integrating with a local community to implement environmental activities, such as organic gardening, soil conservation, agroforestry and tree planting, recycling and reduction of waste, and environmental education with an emphasis on empowering local youth,” Wilson said.

Wilson said she joined the Peace Corps to experience life outside of the U.S. and inspire the next generation of conservationists. She also credits Dr. Pat Stephens-Williams, professor of forestry, and Dr. Shelby Gull Laird, former SFA assistant professor of forestry, with inspiring her and pushing her to succeed.

“My whole job is to make a positive environmental impact in my Paraguayan community, but it’s more than that,” Wilson said. “I am living in this community and sharing my stories and dreams with the people here. In turn, I am learning a new culture and will be able to share the attitudes and strengths of this country with people back home.”

Following her two-year service, Wilson said she plans to return to the U.S. and pursue a Master of Science in resource communications from SFA.
More than $307,000 in scholarships awarded for the 2019 academic year

More than $1.8 million in grants awarded to the college during the 2019 fiscal year
ATCOFA at a glance

**Outreach**

More than 6,000 National FFA and 4H Club members visited and participated in agriculture competitions and leadership development events during the 2018-19 academic year.

**Land Management**

$72,000 in undergraduate scholarships generated through timber management in 2018 and 2019.

**586,000 tons** of carbon dioxide (CO$_2$) sequestered in 2018 by STMicroelectronics forestland managed by the ATCOFA.

**3,449 acres** of forest managed in perpetuity as part of the Lumberjack Legacy program, with substantial increase of acreage expected in the coming years.

**12,624** community members reached through SFA Garden’s special programming for adults and children during 2018.

more than **125** Girl Scouts from Houston and the surrounding area received tree badges and outdoor education through ATCOFA during summer 2019.
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