It is a great day to celebrate our bountiful harvest with the smell of roasted turkey in the air and side dishes galore. Sometimes we consider our crop harvest in the narrow sense of cotton or corn, but our crop includes another round of winter graduates in the last phase of their final semester, the new grant that allows us opportunities to explore our scientific passion, and that the heat is finally working. Whatever your crop, we hope that it was bountiful and that you take time to celebrate over the Thanksgiving holiday. A big thanks to Jim Lukeman and team for organizing and preparing a great Thanksgiving feast.

A big whoop! to all of our award recipients at the national meetings, the great presentations from our faculty and students and to those that made it all possible. It is always a pleasure to represent and observe the breadth and depth of our department at these meetings. (See articles in newsletter on awards).

Congratulations to Amir Ibrahim and the wheat team for their recent efforts to bring stability to the country of Georgia through their development project on wheat. The Georgia national coverage of the first wheat trials in the country was exciting. This past month we have been working toward renewal of our multi-year agreement with Scotts Miracle Gro, working toward completion of proposals for our Grand Challenges and meeting with corn and peanut commodity boards/executives to plan for the future. We are also coordinating plans with the variety testing advisory group, working toward completion of the transition of our turf research to the new complex, and initiating our communications task force which has helped set the stage for a bright future.

While reflecting on your harvest make sure that you get your metrics in soon so they can be included in the January 15th report to administration. The rest of the annual review documents can come a couple weeks prior to your annual review, but we really need the metrics to prepare the report in early January. I will be starting annual reviews in Amarillo next week and the rest will not be far behind.

Our Academic Program Review is tentatively scheduled for March 6-9, 2016. While this seems a long way off it is time to initiate our strategic planning for the document that will need to be completed in 2014. We are currently in the process of identifying visionary leaders to serve on the review team.
Welcome to Dr. Douglas Smith as our newest adjunct faculty member. Dr. Smith comes to the Temple Research Center following work at the National Soil Erosion Lab. He works on landscape scale nutrient fate and transport.

Thanks to our outgoing FAC members, Dr. Mark McFarland and Dr. Scott Finlayson, and welcome to new representatives, Dr. Richard White and Dr. Paul DeLaune. A special thanks to Dr. Terry Gentry for taking over as chair with Dr. Mark McFarland moving to Associate Department Head.

Dr. Nithya Rajan will be transferring her work to College Station from Vernon and plans to teach our capstone course SCSC 441: Crop Production Systems class in January. Please take the opportunity to welcome her aboard.

We look forward to seeing as many as possible at hour home for our Christmas Open House on December 13th from 4-7pm. Don’t forget that our annual awards faculty/staff meeting will be at 1:30 on January 7th.

David

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**Upcoming Events**

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<td>Departmental Awards</td>
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Please keep the family of Bill Lyles in your thoughts and prayers. Bill passed away on October 29. Mr. Lyles was a research associate for Dr. Rooney’s sorghum breeding program. Checks in his memory may be sent to the Texas A&M Foundation in care of James Lukeman with the memo line: Bill Lyles Memorial.

Those we love can never be more than a thought away... for as long as there’s a memory they live in our hearts to stay.
Awards

Ethel Ashworth-Tsutsui Memorial Award for Research 2014

Congratulations to Amanda Hulse on her selection as the recipient for the Ethel Ashworth-Tsutsui Memorial Award for Research! She was selected out of dozens of high-caliber nominees. This is a testament to the high quality of your research!

Congratulations to Meghyn Meeks who was awarded first place in the graduate student oral competition (Breeding and Genetics) for the C5 (Turfgrass Science) division in Long Beach! This award comes with $500 from the Turfgrass Breeders Association. The title of her talk was “Flow Cytometry and a Thioredoxin-like Gene: Useful Tools to Identify Poa arachnifera x Poa pratensis Interspecific Hybrids.”
Three Minute Thesis Competition

Congratulations to Alexandria Igwe for taking first place in the Master’s Division of Texas A&M’s Three Minute Thesis Competition! She spoke of ways to clean contaminated soil through gardening in a presentation called, “Who Does It Better?”

Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) is a research communication competition developed by The University of Queensland (UQ). Graduate students have three minutes to present a compelling oration on their thesis and its significance. Eight Texas A&M graduate students (3 master’s and 5 doctoral) were selected to compete in the finals from a group of 35 contestants, in a wide variety of disciplines, who participated in a preliminary competition.

Congratulations to Dr. Muthu Bagavathiannan on being named as an outstanding reviewer for the WSSA Journals!
Congratulations to **Dr. Frank Hons** for receiving the ASA Agronomic Education Award at the American Society of Agronomy National Meetings in Long Beach, CA!

Congratulations to **Partson Mubvumba** who received second place in the Soil Science Society of America Soil and Water Management and Conservation Division Graduate Student Poster Competition in Long Beach, CA. The poster title was ‘Impact of Warm-Season Cover Crops on Dual-purpose Wheat Systems”. Partson is a PhD student in Soil Science co-chaired by Drs. Paul DeLaune and Frank Hons.

Congratulations to Soil and Crop undergraduate student, **Brianne Haegelin** on her first place finish in the Undergraduate Research Poster Competition at the American Society of Agronomy National Meetings in Long Beach, CA. The poster title was “Greenhouse Gas Fluxes Affected by Urea Fertilizer, Nitrification Inhibitor, and Biomass Residue Application to Soil”. Drs. Joe Storlien and Frank Hons are her mentors.
Aggie Turf Club Trip to NRG Stadium and Minute Maid Park
Scientists and students with Texas A&M University’s Department of Soil and Crop Sciences and Texas A&M AgriLife Research were recognized for their outstanding research during the annual meeting of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America and Soil Science Society of America.

The societies will recognize the individuals at special awards ceremonies Nov. 2-5 in Long Beach, California.

Dr. David Baltensperger, Texas A&M Soil and Crop Sciences Department head and president of the Crop Science Society of America this year, said, “It is so great to see so many from Texas A&M AgriLife recognized.”

Dr. Seth C. Murray, an associate professor and AgriLife Research corn breeder in College Station, will be receiving the 2014 Crop Science Society of America Young Scientist Award.

Murray directs a research program focused on both quantitative genetic discovery and applied corn breeding for Texas and the southern U.S. Breeding trait research in his program includes improved aflatoxin resistance, drought tolerance and nutrient-use efficiency in yellow corn, and incorporation of novel genetic diversity for perennial, blue and quality protein maize. He has developed statistical techniques for improved genetic mapping of natural variation and to increase understanding of crop improvement processes.

Murray earned a bachelor’s degree from Michigan State University and his doctorate at Cornell University. He has previously been recognized with the National Association of Plant Breeders Early Career Award in 2013 and the Barbara McClintock Graduate Student Award by Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 2007.

Dr. Frank Hons, professor and AgriLife Research Faculty Fellow, received the American Society of Agronomy Agronomic Resident Education Award for 2014.

Hons is internationally recognized for his research involving soil biogeochemistry, carbon sequestration and nitrogen dynamics, and has authored 115 peer-reviewed publications. He has taught agronomy and soil science classes for 36 years and has mentored 42 graduate students.

Hons earned his bachelor’s degree in chemistry from the University of Dallas and master’s and doctorate degrees in soil chemistry and soil science, respectively, from Texas A&M University.

Hons is a Fellow of both the American Society of Agronomy and the Soil Science Society of America.
Adam Mahan was presented with the Gerald O. Mott Scholarship for Meritorious Graduate Students in Crop Science. Mahan is a doctoral student in plant breeding and works in Murray’s corn breeding program. His dissertation focuses on mapping recombination rate and blue aleurone in maize crosses differing in parent number and generations of intermating.

The Crop Science Society of America also awarded the Fellow title, its highest honor, to Dr. Jim Muir, a grassland ecologist at the Texas A&M AgriLife Research Center at Stephenville and Tarleton State University. Muir’s team studies plant and animal interactions in natural and cultivated grasslands with particular focus on legume condensed tannins.

The CSSA Presidential Award was presented to Dr. James Beard, professor emeritus of the AgriLife Research turfgrass science program. According to his nomination, Beard’s research pioneered the environmental stress physiology of turfgrasses that resulted in reduced resource inputs. He has had a unique impact through his innovative research, leadership, former students and nine books.

Colton Beall, a junior pursuing two bachelor’s degrees in bioenvironmental sciences and plant and environmental soil science, received the Cross-Cultural Experience Program Scholarship from the American Society of Agronomy.

In addition, three students were recognized as Golden Opportunity Scholars. The Golden Opportunity Scholars Institute matches undergraduates with scientist-mentors and encourages them to pursue careers in the agronomic, crop and soil sciences.

The three students are: Ian Sprouse, an undergraduate double major in agricultural education and agronomy with a crops emphasis; Shelby Redgate, a senior plant and environmental soil science and bioenvironmental sciences double major; and Julieta Collazo, a research assistant at Texas A&M University.
Turfgrass Management Plays a Major Role On and Off the Field

Chase Brister, a senior agronomy major with an emphasis in turfgrass science, said that he applies the knowledge he’s learned in the turfgrass science program in the real world. Brister is a student employee at Kyle Field and said that his position there since 2012 has allowed him to get internships and gain valuable work experience. “I was able to intern for the Round Rock Express which is the Triple-A affiliate for the Texas Rangers this past summer,” Brister said. “I know exactly what I’m doing because of the experience that I’ve gained at Texas A&M.”

Graduate student Dan Hargey said that the main reason he came to Texas A&M University to pursue a master of science in turfgrass ecology was to make himself a better turfgrass manager by learning more about the agronomic aspects of turf. “I have a background in baseball,” Hargey said. “Before I came here for graduate school, I was head groundskeeper for the Visalia Rawhide in California, and my ultimate career goal after graduation is to get back into baseball.”

Hargey now serves as a teaching assistant and helps undergraduate students find internships and part-time jobs within the turf industry. “There will always be more to learn, but I can say with confidence that even if I left today I would be much better off in the turf industry then before,” Hargey said. “Not only have the classes been beneficial but teaching as a graduate assistant in the undergraduate program has been just as vital.”

Hargey said that the faculty within his program are top-notch. “As beneficial as the classes have been, my daily interactions with Dr. Reynolds, Dr. Richard White and Dr. Ben Wherley have been just as valuable,” Hargey said. “I have undying respect for my advisors. They have helped me academically and professionally and once I get back into sports field management after graduation, I will not hesitate to contact them if

Whether it’s a football field, a golf course, a city park, or a homeowner’s lawn, turfgrass science plays a key role in keeping players, citizens and the environment safe and happy. Because of the major role that turf plays in our world, it is no wonder that the turfgrass program within the department of soil and crop sciences is a rising star.

Assistant professor and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Turfgrass Specialist Dr. Casey Reynolds said that as the global population increases and the shift from rural to urban growth continues, there will be an increase of people who appreciate students who come to Texas A&M University and similar programs across the country to pursue degrees in anything related to agriculture, food production, soil and water management, and turfgrass science.

“Degrees in Plant and Environmental Soil Science and/or Turfgrass Science are great places to study within the various agricultural degrees,” said Dr. Reynolds. “Turfgrass students have the opportunity to learn many of the same disciplines that soil and crop science students learn including plant physiology, water, nutrients, soil science, and so on. All of these things that are so important in the agricultural field tie perfectly into athletic fields and turfgrass management.”
I need some help. They make graduate school more enjoyable, and there aren’t too many days that I don’t share a couple laughs with at least one of them.”

At the 2014 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences 4th annual “College Tailgate” held last month, the turfgrass program was on display where they engaged visitors and students on all things turf, including painting a miniature replica of Kyle Field.

“It’s neat working in turfgrass management because people always seem interested,” Dr. Reynolds said. “The mini-football field we created was nothing major, yet people really enjoyed it. I even threw a few touchdown passes myself on it!”

One of Dr. Reynolds’ duties as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension specialist is to ensure that people are implementing turfgrass management practices in the most sustainable manner. Each year, he speaks at various events throughout Texas as well as hosts a week-long training course in turfgrass management that’s open to anyone who’s interested.

“As a Land Grant University, it is our responsibility to serve the citizens of the state,” Dr. Reynolds said. “Our job is to educate people in the applied sciences, and with approximately 26 million people in Texas who have over 1.6 million acres of lawns and landscapes, what better fit than turfgrass management?”

Turfgrasses are something that we all deal with every day whether we know it or not. “One of the things we enjoy is that we do provide value to the citizens of Texas,” said Dr. Reynolds. “Whether people like to go out and play golf on the weekends or have kids that like to play flag football, soccer, or baseball, they usually just show up and the field is ready to go. There are a lot of behind the scenes efforts that go into making it seem that simple, and field managers all over the state and country take great pride in that.”
Soil & Crop Sciences Christmas Open House

You and your guest are invited to the home of

Dr. & Mrs. Baltensperger

4707 Scrimshaw Lane, College Station, TX

Saturday, December 13, 2014

Hors d’oeuvres and desserts will be served from 4 to 7 p.m.
RSVP Appreciated  845-3041

*New Address*