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COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES  
**AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY**  
VIRGINIA TECH.

## NEWSLETTER

Summer 2018

### Agricultural Technology Outstanding Alumni Award



Left to right Alan Grant (Dean), Courtney Umbarger, Dixie Dalton (President, CALS Alumni Organization), Pavli Mykerezzi (Director, Agricultural Technology)

It was my pleasure to nominate Courtney Umbarger as the Outstanding Recent Undergraduate Alumni for the Agricultural Technology Program. Courtney is a 2008 graduate of our Program and is currently an owner/operator of Laurel Springs Farm, with her husband Seth Umbarger, in Marion, VA. Laurel Springs Farm raises all natural, grass fed, grain finished beef to sell in their on-farm store, two farmers markets, and to wholesale customers. They also ship beef to customers both in VA and out of state. Courtney manages all bookkeeping and marketing aspects of their business, as well as the operation of their on-farm store and 'pick your own' organic garden. In service to her community, she purchases only local and

### Greetings Alumni and Friends!

I welcome you to the Ag Tech newsletter for summer 2018! We have many accomplishments to share with you. As we approach the end of the school year, I will highlight some of our successes with you.

Our academic year is going well. We had a group of 64 new students in the program with 112 in total for the school year 2017-18. We began the year with success stories: another faculty member in the Ag Tech program was promoted to Senior Instructor, so there are now five members of the faculty who have been promoted to Senior Instructor teaching in the program. We are continuing our tradition of high quality teaching and we really enjoy working with our students. Faculty apply experiential learning methods and provide all of our students with opportunities to "learn by doing". These approaches enhance the learning process and help the students to apply the knowledge and skills they are acquiring to real agricultural and green industry problems. The collaboration with industry and stakeholders has a large potential for future experiential learning opportunities for our students. Industry is helping us on teaching with the most updated technology in several areas such as precision agriculture, modern dairy industry techniques, drones, and more. Ag Tech students are participating in research projects sponsored by Pratt Senior Research Scholars, Ag Tech students were part of the team participating at PLANET week, and the program is contributing internationally in the innoVATE project for presenting good educational programs at the associate degree level.

Outside of the classroom, our faculty participated in scholarship of teaching and learning activities including presenting research papers at national and international conferences.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your interest in, and support of the program. If you plan to be in campus, we would be delighted to see you visiting us.



Thank you,  
Pavli Mykerezzi

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(Agricultural Technology Outstanding alumni award cont.) regional items to stock in their store, hosts the Farm to Table fundraising event for the Marion Farmers Market, hosts field trips for local elementary schools, and participates in the Agriculture Literacy program of the Smyth County Farm Bureau Women's Committee, by reading to elementary students. Courtney and Seth have hosted the Beef and Sheep Management students from the Agricultural Technology Program on several occasions, to provide the opportunity for them to learn about their type of operation. They are also interested in hosting an intern in the future. She is currently a participant in the Farm Credit of the Virginias Ag Biz Planner course, recently completed a Beef Breakdown Butcher class, and is a recipient of the Smyth County Small Business Boot Camp. The farm has received the Virginia Farm Development Program Grant and the Clean Water Farm award from the Evergreen Soil and Water Conservation District.



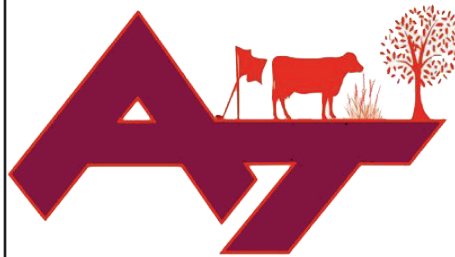
**Horse Management class visits Ardmore Equestrian Center** (Pictured left to right - front) Chris Lower, Jenna Prater, Kate Lawrence -Botetourt County extension agent, Brandy Harris, Tracy Nininger - owner and head trainer of Ardmore Equestrian Center, Jordan Alexander, and Rachel Kohl- Senior Instructor in Agricultural Technology. (Back-left to right ) A.J. Sheets and Randall Gray

We are proud of all of Courtney's accomplishments and thankful for her service to the Agricultural Technology Program. We look forward to working with her and Seth in the future as hosts to interns!



Photo: Courtney Umbarger with son

Story submitted by: **Rachel D. Kohl**  
Senior Instructor/Advisor



## Congratulations to all of the Agricultural Technology students on the Deans List for Fall 2017

Robert B. Armstrong  
Mark A. Botkin  
Kurt R. Bulgrin  
Logan B. Carter  
Bradley A. Cole  
Ethan R. Cundiff  
Christopher R. Dolieslager  
Brody C. Ellis  
Jarod T. Faris  
Riki A. Farmer  
Thomas D. Faron  
Randall W. Gray  
Zachary C. Gray  
Blake H. Haislip

Aleksandro Halili  
Dakota T. Hall  
Jacob L. Harvanek  
Michael F. Herrity  
William T. Lannon  
Alan D. Lerch  
Justin R. Light  
Wyatt C. Lotts  
Christopher J. Lower  
Ricardo S. Luck  
Brian K. Price  
Jeremy F. Stevens  
Matthew L. Tribble



## Congratulations to Benjamin Woods, Distinguished Alumnus

Benjamin is currently the manager of the Agricultural Land Lab in Giles County, VA while also raising commercial vegetable crops and livestock on his own farm.

He has served on the Giles County Board of Supervisors for over ten years as a Public Works Supervisor

and now as the manager of the Land Lab.

He was instrumental in the implementation of a Pratt Undergraduate Research project on the Giles County Land Lab.

Benjamin continues to be a great mentor to the four students from Virginia Tech who have been involved in livestock nutrition and forage management research at the Land Lab.



Left to right: Alan Grant (Dean), Benjamin Woods, Dixie Dalton (President, CALS Alumni Organization), Pavli Mykerezzi (Director, Agricultural Technology)

## Congratulations to Joe Guthrie! He was recently promoted to senior instructor.

Joe has been teaching business, communications, and leadership for the program since 2007. He advises students in the Applied Agricultural Management option who have a primary interest in agricultural business management.



## Outstanding Graduating Senior



Riki Farmer of Hillsville, VA was selected as the outstanding senior for the Agricultural Technology Program.

Riki is obtaining her landscaping and turfgrass management degree from the Agricultural Technology Program. The experiences she has had at Virginia Tech, including the support she received from professors, have aided her in reaching her goals, helped her gain practical career skills, and strengthened her passion for horticulture.

In addition to maintaining a near-perfect GPA with dean's list recognition each semester, Riki has excelled outside of the classroom as an Ag Tech Ambassador and a member of the Carroll County Virginia Young Farmers, where she educates young people about various agriculture issues. Her service to the community includes participation in The Big Event and contributing a landscape design for the Pulaski Community Youth Center.

After graduation, Riki plans to pursue a career in the green industry where her goal is to establish a greenhouse production or landscape business.



# Alumni Spotlight

**Agricultural Technology Alumnus and Virginia Tech Board of Visitors Member Robert Mills Jr. Recognized as 2017 Farmer of the Year**



In October 2017 Robert Mills was named the winner of the Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year award at the Sunbelt Expo farm show in Moultrie, Georgia.

The Farmer of the Year Award recognizes excellence in agricultural production and farm management, along with leadership in farm and community organizations. The award also honors family contributions in producing safe and abundant supplies of food, fiber, and shelter products.

Robert is a first-generation farmer. He bought his first farm in 1998 which is the same year he received his associate degree in agricultural technology.

Since then he has received many awards in agriculture. His farm also received a clean water award by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation due to his environmentally sustainable farming practices.

**Congratulations Robert!**

**Agricultural Technology Alumnus part of a group called TEAM Haiti that traveled to Haiti in Fall 2017**



*Team HAITI and with Haitian locals*

Junior Beauvais, a 2016 graduate from the Agricultural Technology program who is currently pursuing his Masters Degree in the Department of Agricultural, Leadership, and Community Education was part of a team of

Virginia Tech Faculty and graduate students who went to test a development model that may bring sustainable change to Haiti's rural communities.

The model is based on Virginia Tech's TEAM Malawi's community development model with components of Technology, Education, Advocacy and Medicine.

Beauvais who is from Fondwa, Haiti played an important role on the team by arranging meetings and logistics. He also provided insight to the team about the Haitian culture.

The team saw identified many needs and are in the process of refining recommendations and working to obtain funding for a Virginia Tech TEAM Haiti project.

*Original story by Dana Cruikshank - 10/5/17*

## A Huge THANK YOU To Jenna Sudol for making an Agricultural Technology Program Video



Jenna Sudol, a 2017 VT graduate who served as a teaching assistant for the Ag Tech Communications Skills course in 2016 is currently enrolled in Radford University's Strategic Communication program. She created this video as part of a class project and graciously shared the final project with us. It is featured on the bottom of our homepage [www.cals.vt.edu/agtech](http://www.cals.vt.edu/agtech). Check it out!



# When we say we are HANDS ON... We Mean It!



In the fall students from the AT Grain Crop Management class went on a 2 day trip to Essex and Dinwiddie Counties to learn about precision agriculture and high-value crops. On the first day of the trip students attended James River Equipment's Integrated Solutions Field Day, held at Montague Farms in Center Cross, VA.

While at the field day students learned about innovations in precision agriculture. Some of the technologies featured were new variable rate sprayers, grain combines that can adjust themselves to reduce harvest loss, and advanced soil mapping tools. Students were able to meet industry leaders and take some of the featured equipment on test-drives.



On the 2nd day students met with Mike Parrish Dinwiddie County Extension Agent and AT alumni from the class of 1989. Mike took them to visit three farms where they were able to see several high-value crops of great significance to southeast VA. Students not only got to walk tobacco, peanut, and cotton fields, but also had the opportunity to watch all three crops being harvested. This is an extremely unique experience for students because none of these crops are grown in close proximity to VT's campus and it's a rare occurrence to see all three being harvested in the same day. Many thanks to the team at James River Equipment and Mike Parrish for providing our students a truly unique experience.

Equine Management Class enjoyed many hands on experiences and field trips



The students in the Equine Management class show off their vacutainers. On the day of this photo students got to deworm, give an IM shot of saline, and to draw blood from the jugular.



The students in the Equine Management class spend the afternoon with Jason Rutledge from Healing Harvest Forest Foundation. Healing Harvest Forest Foundation is a Non-Profit Public Charity dedicated to the practice or Restorative Improvement forestry through the use of worst first single tree selection and modern animal powered techniques. They conduct public educational events to educate individuals about the science and skills of Restorative Forestry.

[www.healingharvestforestfoundation.org](http://www.healingharvestforestfoundation.org)