



VETERAN FARMERS

★ ★ ★ CONFERENCE ★ ★ ★

Boots to Roots

November 12, 2020

CONFERENCE AGENDA

- 9:00 am **Presentation of the Flag** - (YouTube Video)
- 9:05 am **Welcome** - William Crutchfield, Director, SFOP & Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, Dean, VSU College of Agriculture
- 9:15 am **Keynote Speaker** - Willie Hines, Chief Operating Officer, Farmer Veteran Coalition
- 9:35 am **General Session - I**
- *USDA Agencies - Farm Service, Rural Development, NASS, NRCS* (Michael Wooden, Moderator)
 - *Veteran Farmers* (Susan Cheek, Moderator)
- 10:30 am **Networking Break**
- 10:45 am **Virtual Farm Tour** - Slade Farms, Surry, VA
- 11:15 am **General Session - II** (Tracy Porter, Moderator)
- *Financial Planning* - Clay Roberts, Colonial Farm Credit
 - *AgrAbility* - Dr. Kim Niewolny, Director, AgrAbility Virginia
 - *Urban Farming for Veterans* - Dr. Leonard Githinji, Urban Ag Specialist, VSU
- 11:45 am **Networking Break**
- 12:00 pm **General Session - III** (William Crutchfield, Moderator)
- Smithfield Foods - Troy Vandenberg, Military Talent Acquisition Manager
- Farmer Stress/Suicide Prevention - Jeremy Daubert, Rockingham County Extension
- Dr. Jewel H. Bronaugh, Commissioner, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)
- 1:00 pm **Conference Ends**
- 1:05 pm **Veteran Farmer's Coalition Meeting**
Virginia Chapter (New members welcome)

Slade Farms



Clifton Slade is a third generation farmer and retired extension agent with Virginia State University. He started growing seed in 2011 as part of his transition into organic farming. Until recently, Clif – like most of his agriculturally-focused neighbors in Surry, VA – was a “big tractor” farmer, cultivating acres of genetically modified corn and soy each year. His “aha” moment came six years ago when he was

great big tractors. I’m blessed to operate out of my pocket. I work just as hard as they do, but I know that what I’m selling, whether seed or produce, is a good, wholesome product.”

Clif feels honored to be cultivating the same land he grew up on. As a child, he remembers his father putting him and his siblings to work planting and harvesting sweet potatoes. The strenuous work turned Clif off, so he vowed that he would never be a farmer. He left the farm and went to college, but his daddy kept trying to convince him to take out a loan, pay the farm off and come back to the land to farm it. Finally, Clif agreed. Days later, Clif’s father suffered a stroke and died. “He was trying to hold out until my values changed,” Clif says.

Now, among other things, he supplies Southern Exposure with sweet potato slips. The heirloom variety he grew up helping his daddy to produce, Virginia Baker, slipped into obscurity between the time Clif left for college and returned to the farm. While he was growing other varieties of slips and searching for Virginia Baker, he said he “would give [his] right arm to find some of those slips again.” When a Mr. Roundtree read that quote in a local paper, he called Clif to refer him to the owners of Orapeake Farms in Corapeake, NC, just South of the Virginia border, who had Virginia Baker sweet potatoes. The loss and recovery of this variety is one of the reasons Clif believes in being a seed saver. He feels that, by keeping old varieties alive, he is part of preserving a legacy for his four children and future grandchildren.

assisting with the extension office’s 20-variety trial on corn and noticed that wildlife completely avoided eating the GMO varieties. “It really woke me up.” he says. “Wildlife is smarter than we are!”

Now, Clif has reduced his operation to two acres of organic produce and heirloom seed plots. He spends a great deal of time caring for those acres, intensively weeding, mulching and fertilizing. This confounds his neighbors. Clif says, “[They] look at me like I’m crazy and ask, “Why’re you pulling weeds when you could use Round-Up Ready corn and soy?” However, he makes the same amount of money on his two acres that they make on 300! “Their profit margins are so close – \$25 to \$30 an acre,” he explains. “They have to borrow money from the bank to pay for the diesel for their



Willie Hines

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER OF FARMER VETERAN COALITION



Willie Hines, Chief Operating Officer, served 8 years in the Navy as a Seal, then 8 more with the Oregon National Guard. He earned his bachelor's degree in mathematics and Post-baccalaureate work in genetics from Oregon State University. During 30+ years, Willie held positions with USDA's Agricultural Research Service, Oregon Department of Ag, UC Davis, North Carolina State University, Pioneer Hi-Bred Seed and Dairyland Seed.

Jeremy Daubert

**UNIT COORDINATOR AND EXTENSION AGENT,
AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES - DAIRY SCIENCE EDUCATION**



Jeremy Daubert was raised on a Brown Swiss dairy farm in Pennsylvania. He attended Virginia Tech and obtained a B.S. degree in Dairy Science and a Master of Natural Resources.

Upon graduation, Jeremy was a herdsman for several large dairy farms. He and his wife, Becky, owned and operated STOX Dairy Farm, where they managed 250 cows, a 4-robot milking facility and methane digester.

In 2013, Jeremy moved to Dayton, VA with his family and began working for Virginia Cooperative Extension as a dairy science extension agent. In his position as extension agent, he provides educational support to dairy producers in Virginia.

Troy Vandenberg

MILITARY TALENT ACQUISITION MANAGER FOR SMITHFIELD FOODS



Troy Vandenberg graduated with his Bachelor of Science degree in Chemical Engineering from Michigan Technological University in 2003. Upon graduation, he accepted a commission as a U.S. Naval Officer where he spent 10 years working in nuclear propulsion and submarine maintenance projects. While in the Navy he obtained his Master of Science in Systems Engineering from Naval Postgraduate School in 2010.

Upon transitioning from active duty in 2012, Troy worked as a consultant for a national military placement agency consulting companies in ways to hire transitioning military veterans and then was an area manager for a national staffing agency. He's been in his current role as the Military Talent Acquisition Manager for Smithfield Foods since May of 2017, where he heads the military recruitment and outreach efforts for the organization.

In his personal life, Troy lives in Smithfield, Virginia with his wife, Sarah, and their two kids, Brayden and Elliot.

SPEAKER BIOS

Dr. Jewel H. Bronaugh

VDACS COMMISSIONER



In April 2018, Governor Ralph S. Northam appointed Dr. Jewel H. Bronaugh as the 16th Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Dr. Bronaugh most recently served as the Executive Director of the Center for Agriculture Research, Engagement and Outreach (CAREO) at Virginia State University. In her leadership of CAREO, she assisted in expanding the impact of the 1890 Land Grant mission of VSU. She previously served as the Virginia State Executive Director for the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), where she was appointed by Governor Terry McAuliffe and the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in July 2015. The FSA State Executive Director is the highest ranking full-time FSA program administrator in the state. In her role with FSA, she provided oversight for critical production stabilization, price support, compliance, farm loan, conservation, environmental and

emergency assistance programs in Virginia. She was responsible for the supervision of 41 field offices and the State FSA Office, comprising 186 employees. Dr. Bronaugh is the first African American female in the nation to serve in this capacity.

Prior to being appointed to FSA, she served as the Dean of the College of Agriculture at Virginia State University (VSU) for five years, where she led the strategic vision for the Extension and Research divisions and the academic departments of Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences and Hospitality Management. In her earlier career at VSU, she was the Associate Administrator of Cooperative Extension and a 4-H Youth Development Specialist, where she developed and delivered programs that addressed issues of bullying among today's youth.

Thank you for your support!

Corporate Sponsors and Partners:



Funding provided by USDA's Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement



virginia lottery



Get Connected!

Join the conversation and follow us on our **Facebook** or **YouTube** page (VSU College of Agriculture) or on **Twitter** or **Instagram** (@VSU_AG). You can also sign up on our homepage (ext.vsu.edu) for our weekly eNewsletter and for email notifications of upcoming programming for Virginia small farmers.

Extension is a joint program of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and state and local governments. Virginia Cooperative Extension programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, veteran status, or any other basis protected by law. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer. Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Virginia State University, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Edwin J. Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg; M. Ray McKinnie, Administrator, 1890 Extension Program, Virginia State University, Petersburg.

If you are a person with a disability and desire any assistive devices, services or other accommodations to participate in this activity, please contact the Small Farm Outreach Program office at (804) 524-3292 / TDD (800) 828-1120 during business hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to discuss accommodations a minimum of 10 days prior to the event.