

CO-OP CONNECTIONS



Virginia
Cooperative Council

Quarterly newsletter of the Virginia Cooperative Council

Summer 2024



Georgia Cooperative Council leadership camp attendees (back row, from left): VCC President Adam Shiflett, Clay Shantz, Cameron Crews, Luke Shiflett, Emory Seal, Franco Abud and Chaperone David Maitland. Front row, from left: Audrey Garrison, VCC Executive Secretary Mary Howell, Zoey Berezansky and Danika Landreth. Thirty-five students attended this event, held July 8-12.

Mark your calendars!

- Oct. 1 Co-op Month Breakfast & Awards at SVEC headquarters in Rockingham to feature panel discussion with four of Virginia's newest cooperatives
- March 4, 2025 Annual Meeting hosted by the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation in Richmond
- March 21-23, 2025 Virginia Institute on Cooperative Education at Graves Mtn. Lodge

GA camp develops future leaders

Eight top participants from the Virginia Institute on Cooperative Education (VICE) traveled to the Georgia FFA Center in Covington earlier this month for the Georgia Cooperative Council's leadership camp. Nearly 30 students who were sponsored by co-ops across GA also took part in the five-day camp, which included team-building activities, tours and a wide variety of presenters.

"This was one of our best trips yet!" said Adam Shiflett with Fam Credit of the Virginias, who served as a chaperone with Culpeper public school teacher David Maitland and VCC Executive Secretary Mary Howell. "The students all bonded quickly, and each team did an excellent job developing the business model for their proposed cooperative business," he added.

Howell led an activity called Developing the Leader Within, while Shiflett conducted a "board stumpers" exercise that had students take on the roles of co-op board members to discuss and provide proposed solutions to real-life scenarios faced by a co-op business.

The action-packed agenda included field trips to Dairy Farmers of America member Godfrey Dairy, Walton EMC, and outdoor activities that included a climbing wall and mud run that all developed camaraderie and team spirit. Click [HERE](#) for event photos.

VCC seeks member input

The Virginia Cooperative Council invites our members to share news from your co-op for publication in upcoming issues of our newsletter. Email information and photos to mary.howell@sscoop.com.

The Council Awards Committee also welcomes nominations for Career Cooperative Leadership Award and Young Cooperator Award, presented as part of our Co-op Month breakfast each fall. Email mary.howell@sscoop.com.

Meet our 2024 Scroggs-Raper Scholarship recipients

A record number of students applied for Scroggs-Raper Scholarships, awarded since 2013 to students at land grant universities and community colleges studying agriculture-related topics. This year's 16 recipients include 14 at Virginia Tech, one from Virginia State University and one from Southside Virginia Community College. Profiles of 10 follow; we'll feature the remainder in our next issue.



Iniyah Atkins

Both valedictorian and student body president at her high school, **Iniyah Atkins** is pursuing an agribusiness degree at Southside Virginia Community College. She grew up on her family's farm, and plans to build a sustainable farm of her own, growing quality produce and training working dogs, such as Border collies and Australian shepherds, contributing to the local economy.

"In addition to connecting our town and rural communities, the South Boston Farmers Market serves as a venue for numerous charity events, where members of our community all come together for the greater good," she writes.

Elizabeth Bates of Culpeper is majoring in agribusiness management and political science minor at Virginia Tech, after serving as 2022-23 FFA state vice president. Her parents are Rappahannock Electric Cooperative members, and she profiled Southern States Cooperative for the 2023 Virginia Institute on Cooperative Education.

"I thoroughly enjoyed Dr. Dixie Watts-Dalton's class, *Cooperatives and Their Impacts*," she writes, explaining that she was interested to learn the difference between "old wave" and "new wave" cooperatives. After graduation, she hopes to work for a cooperative.



Elizabeth Bates



Kayla Dao

Kayla Dao is studying food and health systems economics at Virginia Tech.

"Prior to this scholarship opportunity, I was unaware of cooperatives and how they work together to meet economic and social needs, prioritizing the community over profit," Dao wrote. "As a first-generation American whose family members are from Vietnam, I've seen the devastation of unsanitary and impoverished living due to the lack of education and resources in developing countries."

Kayla's family lives in Vienna, Va., and her goal after college is to continue research on disease control, such as working for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Robert Hall is majoring in agribusiness at Virginia Tech. "In the class I took about cooperatives, I learned that one in three Americans are co-op members and agricultural cooperatives have a 28% stake in processing and marketing of agricultural production. After graduation, Hall explains, "I'll work at my family's horse food manufacturing business in Lexington, Ky. My 93-year old grandfather started Hallway Feeds in 1964 and is still president, while my father is vice president. I'm also pursuing a double major in sports media and analytics to gain experience at a sports-related job."



Robert Hall



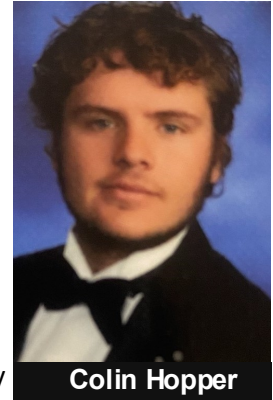
Grayson Haskins

Grayson Haskins is a junior at Virginia Tech, majoring in agribusiness with a minor in dairy science. He explains how his participation in team sports helps him learn how to manage disappointment and uncertainty, while developing resilience and mental toughness.

"My final project for the *Entrepreneurship in Animal Agriculture* class was developing a business plan for a fictional business. It involved formulation of A2-A2 milk and led me to learn about the Virginia State Dairymen's Association," he detailed. In another class, he learned that only 30% of farms survive to a second generation, 12% to a third generation, and 4% to a fourth generation. Having interned at a Chatham, Va. law firm, Haskins plans to become an agricultural attorney, dedicated to assisting and protecting farmers.

Scroggs-Raper scholarship recipients, continued

Starting his sophomore year at Virginia Tech, Eastern Shore native **Colin Hopper** plans to major in agriculture technologies. An avid hunter and baseball player, he's had jobs doing excavating and site work, as well as operating tractors at Tri-S Farms to grow and harvest grain and vegetables. "For three generations, my family has worked in corporate agriculture, and my dream is to own and operate my own farm in the most efficient way possible, to be part of the small group of people who feed America," he writes.



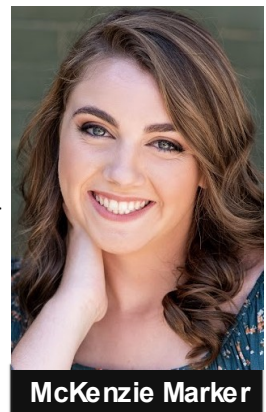
Colin Hopper



Joey Johnson

Madison County native **Joey Johnson** has always been active in 4-H and FFA, and for a decade has worked on his ninth-generation family farm, Johnson Cattle Co. His family belongs to five different cooperatives, and after earning his degree in agribusiness, he intends to return to help run the family farm. "I plan to continue raising stocker cattle and diversify into other areas of agriculture, potentially expanding into agritourism," he writes.

McKenzie Marker is from Mechanicsville, Va., where she's worked at her family's perennial nursery, Sandy's Plants, since 2018. After graduating from Virginia Tech with a degree in agribusiness and horticulture, she plans to take over the family business, working to expand their sales to garden centers and landscapers. "Our family belongs to Colonial Farm Credit, who has provided funding to help expand our business as well as supply a financial buffer during the off-season," she writes.



McKenzie Marker



Joshua McIntosh

Joshua McIntosh is a senior at Virginia State University majoring in agriculture with a concentration in business. Active in VSU's entrepreneurship club as well as JROTC and track and field, he has helped introduce younger generations to 4-H programs, as well as install an irrigation system in a 30-acre field.

"After college, I want to make difference by building a business that will help agribusiness owners flourish by helping them develop business plans, as well as working to give low-income communities access to better food choices."

"I don't come from an agricultural background," writes **Michele Mickelwait**, who says that until her freshman year of high school she lived in the suburbs of Washington, D.C. "After my family moved to the Shenandoah Valley, I found a true passion and love for agriculture." Currently majoring in agribusiness and strategic communications at Virginia Tech, she has excelled at FFA-sponsored agricultural communications competitions. Mickelwait's goal after graduation is to work in agricultural communications or as a cooperative extension agent to help other like herself learn more about agriculture while supporting farmers and the industry.



Michele Mickelwait

Applications for 2025 Scroggs-Raper Scholarships will be posted at virginia.coop by Dec. 15, 2024, and are due by February 23, 2025. New requirement for 2025: Applicants must have completed at least 15 credit hours at either a two-year or four-year college; prior recipients are welcome to apply each year until graduation.

Executive Secretary's Message: Celebrate Co-op Month by hearing from our newest co-ops!

Shenandoah Valley Electric Cooperative will be hosting this year's Co-op Month Breakfast on Tuesday, Oct. 1, at its headquarters, 180 Oakwood Drive in Rockingham.

Samuel T. Gray, Esq., an attorney specializing in cooperative business development, will moderate a panel discussion with founding members of Virginia's four newest cooperatives:



Fredericksburg Food Cooperative
Lovettsville Cooperative Market
Central Virginia Poultry Cooperative
MindfulMaker Co (no period!)



Please mark your calendars and help spread the word about this event! We'll also recognize this year's Young Cooperator and Cooperative Leadership Award recipients. Coffee and breakfast biscuits will be available at 7:30 a.m., and our program will conclude by 10 a.m. The cost is \$15 per person in advance or \$20 at the door, with RSVPs requested by Sept. 25 via email to mary.howell@sscoop.com.

We look forward to seeing you there!

- Mary Howell

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