

KACAA

Recognition and Awards Committee

Search for Excellence

Jessica Bessin

Search for Excellence Chair

Mercer County Extension Agent for Horticulture

What is Search for Excellence?

- Recognizes an NACAA member who has developed and carried out an outstanding extension educational program in one of the following categories:
 - 4-H & Youth Development
 - Agriculture Awareness & Appreciation
 - Commercial & Consumer Horticulture
 - Crop Production
 - Environmental Quality, Forestry, & Natural Resources
 - Farm & Ranch Business Management
 - Livestock Production
 - Sustainable Agriculture
 - Young, Beginning, or Small Farmers/ Ranchers

Requirements

- Only NACAA members in good standing with their state associations are eligible.
- Team entries are permitted.
 - All team members need not be current members of NACAA. However, only NACAA members will receive award recognition.
 - Indicate the members of the team that are non NACAA Members.
 - The team member who is listed as the first author is the one who will be the point of contact for the entry.
- Submission must reflect programming within the **past three years.**

Requirements

Abstract

- Abstract are required with application. They should be written in single paragraph format and not exceed 350 words. If team entry, team member names on the abstract must be the same as on the application form.

Narrative

- Narrative should not exceed over 1200 words. The narrative should be organized and is evaluated on the following: Educational Objectives, Program Activities, Teaching Methods, Results, Impact Statement, and Evaluation. The abstract does not count in the 1200 words.

Supporting Documents

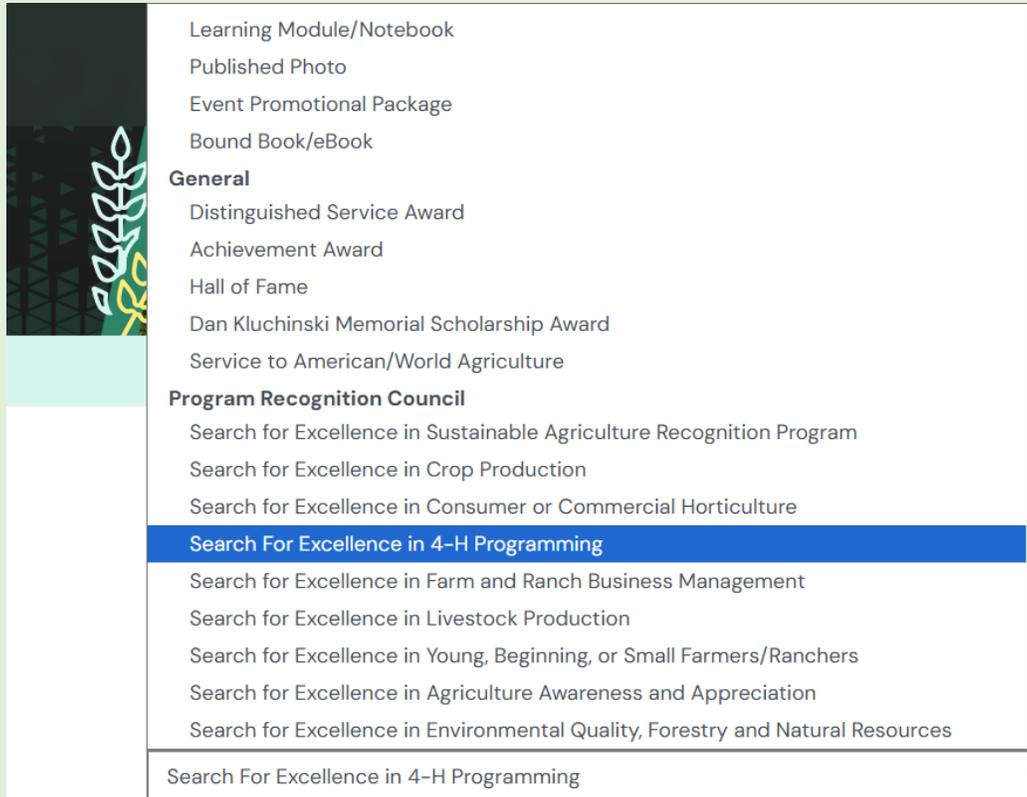
- **Attach no more than three(3) supporting documents.** Examples: flyers, photos, evaluations, PowerPoint (saved as PDFs), links to video, Facebook post, etc.
- **Submit by March 15th on the NACAA website.**

START A NEW AWARD NOMINATION OR APPLICATION ///

• Indicates a required field.

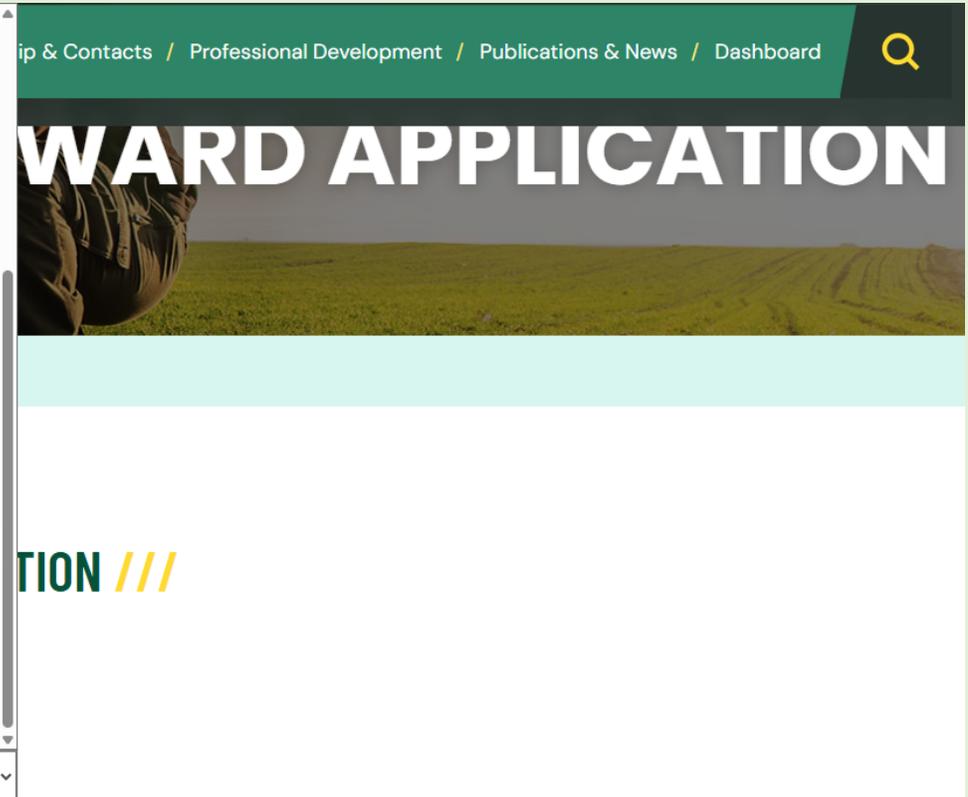
Award *

Nominee *



A dropdown menu for award selection. The menu is open, showing a list of award categories and specific award names. The 'Search For Excellence in 4-H Programming' option is highlighted in blue. The menu is positioned over a background image of a field with a person's arm visible.

- Learning Module/Notebook
- Published Photo
- Event Promotional Package
- Bound Book/eBook
- General**
 - Distinguished Service Award
 - Achievement Award
 - Hall of Fame
 - Dan Kluchinski Memorial Scholarship Award
 - Service to American/World Agriculture
- Program Recognition Council**
 - Search for Excellence in Sustainable Agriculture Recognition Program
 - Search for Excellence in Crop Production
 - Search for Excellence in Consumer or Commercial Horticulture
 - Search For Excellence in 4-H Programming**
 - Search for Excellence in Farm and Ranch Business Management
 - Search for Excellence in Livestock Production
 - Search for Excellence in Young, Beginning, or Small Farmers/Ranchers
 - Search for Excellence in Agriculture Awareness and Appreciation
 - Search for Excellence in Environmental Quality, Forestry and Natural Resources



Header section of the award application page. It features a green navigation bar with links: 'ip & Contacts / Professional Development / Publications & News / Dashboard'. A search icon is visible on the right. Below the navigation bar is a large banner image of a field with a person's arm, and the text 'WARD APPLICATION' is overlaid in large white letters. Below the banner is a light blue horizontal bar.

Nominee Name: Jessica Bessin

Nominated By:

Printed Name to Appear on Award *

Jessica Bessin

Phonetic Spelling of Name:

Bess-in

Name to Appear in Abstract:

Bessin, J.

Horticulture - Universtiy of Kentucky

Harrodsburg, KY, 40330

Program Title * ?

Insect Quest

Abstract (350 words maximum): *

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Styles Normal 🔄 ?

Insects are all around us, whether you like them or not! Insects play a major role in our lives when it comes to food production and the environment. The Mercer County Extension Agent for Horticulture started a new summer day camp called Insect Quest. This day camp was designed to teach youth about the importance of insects while at the same time gaining the skills to properly identify insects for entomology projects for the county and state fair. The camp was two full days with a month between each, which allowed student's time to collect insects between camp days.

Multiple children completed their collections and submitted them in county fair. The real success of this day camp was not only the collections submitted, but that this program led to the creation of a new 4H club. The horticulture agent now leads a monthly insect club. The club is dedicated to teaching the members the importance of insects in our environment, giving them the skills to work on entomology fair projects, and sparking their interest to have a career in an environmental or entomology field.

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Educational Objectives:

Insects are all around us, whether you like them or not! Insects play a major role in our lives when it comes to food production and the environment. The Mercer County Extension Agent for Horticulture started a new summer day camp called Insect Quest. This day camp was designed to teach youth about the importance of insects while at the same time gaining the skills to properly identify insects for entomology projects for the county and state fair. The camp was two full days with a month between each.

Program Activities & Teaching Methods:

On the first full day of camp, students were taught the basics of insect identification through different games, puzzles, and activities. Students were taught "what makes an insect an insect" through various topics like insect mouth parts, insect body parts, and metamorphosis. The students enjoyed learning about insect mouth parts as they mimicked the different chewing, siphoning, and sponging mouthparts while having a snack each student built their own insects. After learning about insect anatomy, Mercer County NEP assistant reinforced this lesson at lunch time. Students created their own anatomically correct insects using fruits and vegetables. After lunch, students were taught how to catch insects, store them properly, and label them for identification. Each student was given an insect collecting kit that included a kill jar, hand lens, identification booklet, and information on how to collect insects. The afternoon portion of the camp was spent visiting Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill's nature preserve to sweep for insects. The students were taught how to properly sweep for insects using a net and how to set their own traps for catching insects. Students were given the task of collecting as many insects as possible prior to the next camp date the following month.

Exactly one month later, students returned to the Extension Office with the insects they had captured.

The second day of camp was dedicated to learning how to identify insects to order, how to pin insects, label, and prepare a collection for entry for county and state fair. Insect collections from the University of Kentucky were borrowed to allow students hands-on experience with labeling insects to the correct order. Our NEP assistant joined us again for an insect-themed lunch, where we shared information on why pollinators are so important to our food system. The afternoon was solely dedicated to identifying, labeling, and pinning insects. Each student was provided with their own standard insect box, insect pins, and other materials to help them identify their insects. Many of the students worked together in teams as they prepared their collections. Each student was given information on how to enter their collections at the fair and the rules for how they can compete in the State Fair. Multiple students completed their collections and submitted them in county fair. One advanced to the state fair and received a blue ribbon for her 1st year collection. As the day camp came to an end students started asking the Horticulture agent if they were going to meet the following month. It was suggested by the students that they start their own 4-H insect club.

Results:

The Horticulture Agent now leads a monthly insect club. Each month the "bug club" dives deeper into different entomology topics. When learning about metamorphosis, students were given a mealworm to take home and tend. They were to observe their mealworm and record the changes it goes through as it becomes an adult beetle. Another popular lesson with the students is insect pheromones and how insects communicate. Each student is provided with a clear jar with a cotton ball that has a single drop of an essential oil on it (ex: peppermint, cinnamon, lemongrass oils). Each student has a matching scented cotton ball in the room. One at a time the student goes and smells the other students' jars to try to find their match. This is a great way to compare how moths and other insects use scent as a form of communication.

Impact Statement:

This club has become so much more than preparation for county and state fair projects. It has opened the eyes of many of the students who started coming (just because they liked insects) to making them realize they could potentially have a career in an environmental field someday. One student shared "Because of insect club I want a degree in biology and hope to be a forester someday, a forester that helps with insect issues". As the club continues to grow the Horticultural Agent hopes to plant more "bugs" in the minds of these students as they look to their futures.

Narrative

Description or title of this file

Choose File No file chosen

ADD ANOTHER FILE



CAMP IQ:
Insect Quest
June 7
9:00am — 4:00pm

Come learn all about how insects are an important part of our ecosystem. The good, the bad, and the ones that aren't really bothering anyone! Lunch and snacks provided.

Ages 9—12

- Learn about insects & their activities. Identify & label insects.
- Start your own insect collection.
- Instruction on collections and projects for county/state fair.

Limited to 12 participants. Call **859-734-4378** to register. RSVP by June 1

Mercer County Extension Office
1007 Lexington Road—Harrodsburg, KY



INSECT QUEST

Jessica Bessin
Mercer County Extension Agent for Horticulture

INSECT QUEST

- Mercer County Horticulture Agent wanted to share her love of insects and the environment with youth.
- In the summer of 2021, she planned to achieve this goal by offering an insect themed camp "Insect Quest" to 9–12-year-olds.
- The initial goal of this camp was to teach youth how to prepare and enter an insect collection in the county and state fair.



INSECT QUEST DAY 1

- At the end of the day every student was given instructions on what they needed for an official insect collection that would qualify for their local county and state fair.
- Students were tasked with the challenge to collect as many insects as possible before the next camp date in July.

Previous National Finalist

Empowering Kentucky Farmers to Thrive in the Cut Flower Industry

Educational Objectives:

The educational objectives for the KY Cut Flower Initiative aim to empower farmers with the knowledge and skills necessary for successful commercial cut flower farming. Over the course of seasonal webinars and the dedicated KY Cut Flower Promotional Campaign held in July, which has been ongoing since 2020, the following objectives were emphasized:

- 1. Enhance Farming Techniques:** Provide KY farmers with insights to improve cut flower cultivation, including planting, pest control, and irrigation.
- 2. Diversification of Crop Portfolio:** Encourage farmers to diversify by growing cut flowers, expanding revenue streams, and reducing reliance on single crops.
- 3. Market Access and Branding:** Educate farmers to understand market trends, consumer preferences, and branding strategies to promote their cut flower products and increase profitability.
- 4. Sustainable Practices:** Promote sustainable farming practices focusing on soil health, water conservation, and biodiversity conservation for long-term viability.
- 5. Financial Management:** Equip farmers with the financial management skills needed for successful commercial cut flower farming, including budgeting, cost analysis, pricing strategies, and accessing economic resources.
- 6. Networking and Collaboration:** Encourage collaboration, knowledge sharing, and peer support among cutflower farmers by facilitating networking opportunities for collective learning and growth.
- 7. Continued Learning:** Provide webinars, videos, and commercial cut flower farming classes to support participants' continuous learning and development.

By achieving these educational objectives, the KY Cut Flower Initiative aims to empower farmers across the state to thrive in the cut flower industry, fostering economic growth, sustainability, and resilience within the agricultural sector.



Empowering Kentucky Farmers to Thrive in the Cut Flower Industry

Program Activities:

- Four commercial cut flower short courses are held yearly over Zoom.
- One day, in-person classes were held during the KY Fruit & Vegetable Conference. Topics covered production and marketing issues identified by industry stakeholders.
- July was designated Kentucky Cut Flower Month. The Kentucky Horticulture Council launched a promotional campaign with assistance from agents to promote different flower farms in Kentucky each day through social media to raise awareness and boost business for farms across the state. The Kentucky Department of Agriculture also helped to magnify this campaign in its press release to the general public.
- An interactive state map was created where the public can access flower farms in their area.



Teaching Methods:

- The four seasonal courses were offered via webinar during the evening to reach more growers state-wide.
- All courses were recorded live and later posted to the YouTube channel of the Center for Crop Diversification.
- A full day of in-person courses was held during the Kentucky Fruit & Vegetable Conference.
- Agents created instructional videos on harvesting, post-harvest care, designing and focusing farms, and starting transplants.

Cut Flower Short Course

January 4th, 2024 Bowling Green, KY
@ KY Fruit & Vegetable Conference

(10) CUT FLOWER SHORT COURSE	(16) SPECIALTY CUT FLOWER SHORT COURSE
Meeting Rooms 1&2 Alexis Sheffield, Presiding	Meeting Rooms 1 & 2 Kristin Hildabrand, Presiding
8:30 a.m. Blooming Opportunities: Digging Up Opportunities for Your Business — Angella Watson	1:30 p.m. Tips and Tricks for High Tunnel Growing — Alexis Sheffield
9:00 a.m. Who's That Bug: ID and Scouting Tips — Jonathan Larson	2:00 p.m. Kentucky Cut Flower Wholesale Collectives — SOKY Floral Exchange and Kentucky Flower Market
9:30 a.m. Maximizing Cut Flower Profits Through the Inclusion Of Dual-Purpose Vegetable Varieties — Eva Bogue and Anna Claire Griggs	2:30 p.m. Making the Workshop Work for You — Savannah Columbia
10:00 a.m. Cider/Coffee Break and Visit Exhibits — Foyer Areas and Ballroom D	3:10 p.m. Inviting the Public to Your Farm: What You Need to Know — Michelle Wheeler
10:40 a.m. Are Hardy Annuals Hard to Grow? — Tara Watkins	
11:10 a.m. It's a Bug Eat Bug World: Biological Control Basics — Jonathan Larson	

KENTUCKY CUT FLOWER MONTH 2023

More info: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/kygrowcutflowerpromo>

Judging

These descriptions are meant to improve the clarity of each criterion. A perfect score is 100. Judges – be particular in scoring so that the final score reflects a fair and accurate judgment. Please provide written comments on the score sheet as feedback to the member submitting the entry.

20 points – Educational Objectives, (what did you want the participants to learn or what did you want them to change?).

10 points – Program Activities, (workshops, field days, home study courses, tours, etc.)

10 points – Teaching Methods, (how was the information disseminated (workshops, field days, home study materials, hands on learning, etc)

20 points – Results, (number of participants, collaborations that resulted from the program, number of people who have changed production practices, acres converted to preferred crop, tillage method, etc.)

20 points – Impact Statement (knowledge gained, monetary gain, positive environmental results, attitude change,

20 points – Evaluation – method (how did you measure the impact? Surveys, testimonials, statistical results, etc) and what did you learn that will help you conduct more effective programs in the future?

After Judging

- Winners will receive an email if they are a state winner.
 - Those that are not winners will also be notified.
 - All entries will receive their score sheets.
- Winners will receive recognition at the annual state KACAA meeting.
- Winners will be notified if their entry moves on to be a regional or national finalist.

National Finalist

- Register and attend NACAA AM/PIC. Tickets will be required for Brown Bag Luncheon (if offered). Inquire for tickets at registration.
- If you cannot attend the national meeting your entry will be disqualified.
 - The executive committee will review request if participant is unable to attend.
- For team entries the first author listed must attend and present or entry will be disqualified.
- National finalist will have 5 minutes to present their program during the NACAA AM/PIC luncheon.
- National winner will have 15 minutes maximum to present their program during the NACAA AM/PIC luncheon.
- If adequate donor funds are secured, the National Winner will receive up to \$500 and three National Finalists up to \$250. These cash awards are not cumulative. The Executive Program Committee reserves the right to adjust awards based on the availability of donor funds.

If you have any questions, please contact me and I'll
be happy to help!

Jessica Bessin

Jessica.Bessin@uky.edu

859-734-4378