

Thankful Thoughts

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As things are winding down for 2015, I started thinking about all that's happened this year and then began wondering what 2016 would bring. I thought I'd share a few thoughts.

Production meetings are a big part of the winter and early spring in Extension, and 2015 was no different. We started off with 5 different production meetings, attended by over 200 producers. Our Extension specialists in Georgia are the best in the country at what they do, and they care about every farmer, agribusiness, homeowner, and everybody else that produces, processes, wears, or eats the products our farmers produce. The United States, Georgia, and Webster and Stewart Counties have the best farmers in the entire world, producing enough food and fiber for 155 other people. That allows everybody else to do what they like to do, such as be an accountant, a psychiatrist, or even a professional football player, instead of having to grow their own food. We have access to the safest, most abundant food supply in the world. I am thankful for them every time I walk into the grocery store or sit down to my favorite steak dinner.

4-H is another big part of Extension. We work with youth "to make the best better", teaching life skills and promoting elements such as mastery, generosity, belonging, and independence. Sometimes I hear comments from people questioning where the future of this country is going with the young people of today, and sometimes I might even wonder that myself. But then I have the opportunity to work with a young 5th grader on her demonstration and feel a sense of pride when watching her stand up in front of her peers and give that speech. Or to look at the number of community service projects or leadership teams these youth complete, I am in awe of their drive, dedication, and sometimes their fearlessness. The sky is really the limit for these 4-H'ers. I am thankful I get to work with such wonderful youth, not to say they don't wear me out at camp sometimes. But our country is in great hands.

On a personal note, 2015 has been an adjustment with my mom getting married back in May. She's happier than I've seen her in years, so I'm happy for her. As a side benefit I now have 3 more brothers, who aggravate me as bad as my brother still does. My brother Jamie has had a rough 2015 physically, being diagnosed with diabetes and having a stent put in his heart at 40 years old. I'm thankful every day that he went to the doctor to find out what was wrong instead of ignoring the signs. He probably would not be alive now if he hadn't. So please take care of yourselves; it's never too early to look for the signs. We'll all be thankful you're still here.

Now that the Christmas and New Year's holidays are here, I'm taking time to visit all my family, both in South Carolina and Texas, and hope you take time for your family and friends as well. We're going to give thanks for a great 2015 and look forward to an even better 2016. Both Lori and I wish everybody a great holiday season and can't wait to see you in 2016.