

A PUBLICATION OF THE SAMUEL ROBERTS NOBLE FOUNDATION

# LEGACY

WINTER 2013

## PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION

Since its inception, the Noble Foundation's philanthropic activities have supported worthy organizations and changed lives



# Farmer is not a job title.

**It's a way of life. A heritage. A calling.**

And for seven decades, the Noble Foundation has stood shoulder to shoulder with farmers and ranchers, assisting them with scientific discoveries, education and personalized consultation. Together, we are taking agriculture into the next generation.

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



The Reuter family, (left to right) Mallie, Andi, Hadley, Orin, Julie and Ryan, pose for a family portrait on a Noble Foundation farm. Ryan Reuter, Ph.D., Noble Foundation assistant professor, comes from a long line of family farmers.

THE SAMUEL ROBERTS  
**NOBLE**  
FOUNDATION

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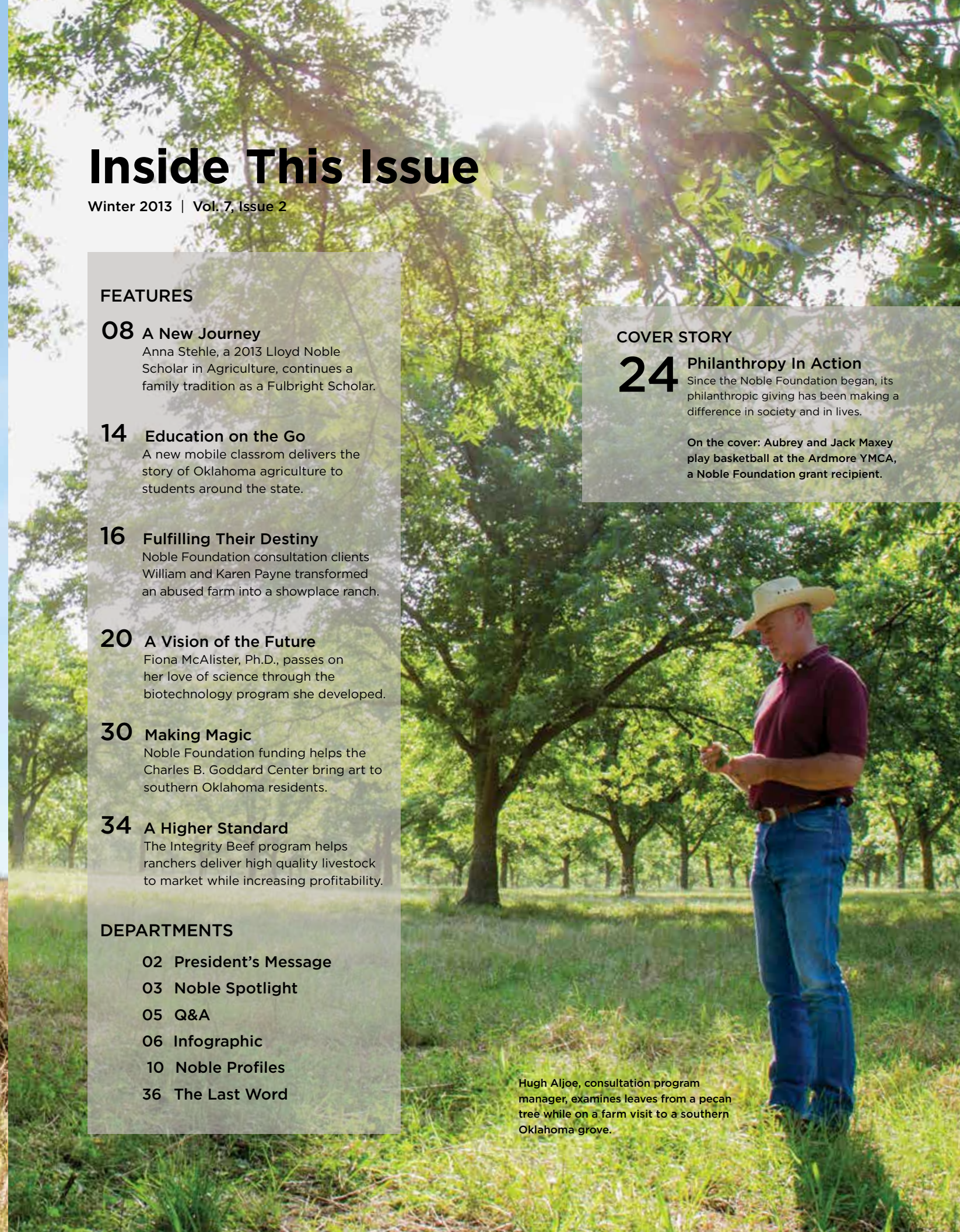
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On the cover: Aubrey and Jack Maxey play basketball at the Ardmore YMCA, a Noble Foundation grant recipient.

Hugh Aljoe, consultation program manager, examines leaves from a pecan tree while on a farm visit to a southern Oklahoma grove.



# The Spirit of Giving



To our readers,

Describing Lloyd Noble in one word inevitably leads to a series of titles – entrepreneur ... conservationist ... visionary. He earned each and every designation through a lifetime of redefining energy production and his later contribution to agriculture and conservation. But if you ask those who knew him, Noble didn't care much for titles; they were grandiose and hollow, not worth the paper they were written on. He remained focused on action, setting the next goal and then achieving it.

Still, I believe – if pressed – the title Noble would have preferred is philanthropist. History undoubtedly demonstrates that his generosity is his truest legacy.

Lloyd Noble was a giver. He believed that philanthropy was not just an act of kindness, but a personal responsibility. He once said, “ ... the only true happiness must come from not only understanding your own needs, but an understanding and willingness to secure the same things for your fellow man.”

Countless stories have surfaced since his death in 1950 about former employees, friends and even strangers who Noble unassumingly assisted. Maybe it was the mysterious arrival of an unexpected gift or the disappearance of burdensome debt; either way, Noble always deflected credit for his giving.


Noble's commitment to giving was evidenced in 1945

when he established The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, dedicating this organization to conservation of the soil, the advancement of agriculture through research and education, and philanthropy.

The Noble Foundation has carefully followed Noble's edicts for almost seven decades, building an identity around the simple concept of giving to others.

Within the pages of this issue of *Legacy* is a glimpse of the breadth of the Noble Foundation's philanthropic activities, which include grants, educational scholarship programs and the organization's own employee population whose charitable activities embody and expand the giving spirit of Lloyd Noble.

Simply put, our philanthropic work changes lives and builds communities because it extends beyond mere distribution of wealth and focuses on targeted endeavors that produce tangible outcomes for society. That is philanthropy in action. That is the spirit of giving. That is the Noble way.

Sincerely,  
  
Bill Buckner, President and Chief Executive Officer

# Noble Spotlight



## STUDENTS DISCOVER THEIR FUTURE THROUGH NOBLE FOUNDATION SCHOLAR PROGRAMS

The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation offers college students the opportunity to discover their future through two separate scholar programs. The Lloyd Noble Scholars in Agriculture program offers students the opportunity to work alongside professional agricultural researchers and consultants while assisting in applied research and demonstration projects. The Noble Summer Research Scholars Program offers students the opportunity to conduct plant science in a real-world laboratory setting with some of the profession's greatest scientists.

For more information, please visit [www.noble.org/summer-scholar](http://www.noble.org/summer-scholar) or [www.noble.org/noble-scholar](http://www.noble.org/noble-scholar). Completed applications for each program must be submitted by Feb. 14, 2014.



## NOBLE FOUNDATION LAUNCHES BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT EFFORT

The Noble Foundation has established a business development position designed to connect the organization's intellectual property and technology with the agricultural marketplace. Diane Pinsker, J.D., will serve as vice president of business development to handle the operational aspects of this process. Pinsker has spent her career in the agriculture industry, including 15 years with Monsanto and almost a decade with Bayer CropScience.

### TIP OF THE DAY

**Winter planning leads to successful spring landscapes**

With the spring growing season rapidly approaching, now is the time to decide on the type of tree or shrub you want to dress up your landscape. To make the selection process easier, consider choosing from a list of plants that represents the best of the best.

University horticulturists, nursery professionals, arboretum and botanical garden representatives, and landscape designers have worked together in Oklahoma and Texas to compile a list of plants that offer both unique horticultural characteristics and adaptation to the region's demanding growing conditions. In Oklahoma, these plants are referred to as Oklahoma Proven. In Texas, they are referred to as Texas Superstars.

These select species include annual and herbaceous perennials as well as trees and shrubs. Some of the elite trees and shrubs recommended for southern Oklahoma and northern Texas include Caddo Sugar Maple, 'Oklahoma' Redbud, 'Prairifire' Crabapple, Bald Cypress, Deciduous Holly, Shantung Maple, Lacey Oak, Chinkapin Oak, Chinese Pistache, Belinda's Dream Rose, 'Knock Out' Rose, Texas Lilac Vitex, 'Monber' Icee Blue® juniper and 'Koreanspice' Viburnum.

For a complete list and description of each plant, visit the Oklahoma Proven website at [oklahomaproven.okstate.edu](http://oklahomaproven.okstate.edu) and the Texas Superstar website at [texassuperstar.com/tips](http://texassuperstar.com/tips).



## PECAN RESEARCH TAPS INTO ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

Scientists recently have begun applying the same genetic and molecular marker technologies used to advance research and plant breeding of agricultural crops to pecan breeding and research. Several institutions, including the Noble Foundation, have started examining the genetic potential of pecans. The use of genetics will help researchers understand how pecan trees function and potentially reveal solutions to production problems. The Noble Foundation plans to use genetic resources to develop pecan cultivars that will be resistant to disease and insects, have more uniform yearly production, and be more efficient.



## LEGENDARY METEOROLOGIST SET TO DISCUSS CAREER, WEATHER

Gary England, Oklahoma's award-winning, top-rated television meteorologist, will open the spring portion of the *Profiles and Perspectives* season. England will present "Friday Night in the Big Town," a both humorous and serious review of life, tornadoes and entertainment, on Tuesday, Jan. 14, 2014. England is an internationally recognized authority on severe weather. He holds the distinction of being the first person to implement Enterprise Electronics, the world's first commercial Doppler radar, in weather forecasting. For more information regarding the *Profiles and Perspectives* season, please visit [www.noble.org/profiles](http://www.noble.org/profiles).

## Legacy

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## Upcoming Event

Texoma Cattlemen's Conference:  
**"Rising Risk – Expanding Opportunities"**

Regional and national industry leaders will identify marketing opportunities, address operational risk management, and provide the market outlook for 2014 and beyond for regional beef producers.

9 a.m.-4 p.m., Feb. 27, 2014  
Ardmore Convention Center  
Registration Fee: \$35,  
includes lunch

# What is your favorite piece of current technology and why?

Mobile computing devices; they are becoming smaller and more powerful. These devices offer a new and better way to communicate with people and give the flexibility to work remotely without worrying about getting behind in our work.

**Kiran Mysore, Ph.D.**  
Professor

The MESA rugged notepad is a handheld device that is waterproof and can tolerate extreme temperatures. It has a scale and scanner we use to collect sample weights in the field. It has made collecting field research data more efficient because we enter data onto datasheets while in the field and transfer them to our computers at the office. The camera and GPS make taking pictures of plots and labeling them in the field much more effective.

**Dusty Pittman**  
Research Associate

Google Drive. It is simple, cheap; it works flawlessly; and it solves a huge problem. My other favorite technologies are the research tools we are developing in the Ag Research Group like GPS cattle collars and forage management tools. They are fun for us to work on, and they have huge potential to help ranchers better manage their resources.

**Ryan Reuter, Ph.D.**  
Assistant Professor

My favorite piece of technology is not tangible in itself; it is a collection of online crowd-sourced science tools that bring the opportunity to every person to feel part of the scientific community. With just a couple of clicks of a mouse, a person can contribute to scientific projects with vast amounts of non-analyzed data, such as the analysis of real-life cancer cells.

**Monica Rojas Triana**  
Research Associate



# THE POWER AND PROBLEMS OF PHOSPHORUS

Most people probably don't think about phosphorus very much during their day. Or at all. But in the next few decades, phosphorus will be on everyone's mind. This chemical element (with the symbol P) is essential for all life as it is part of many biological molecules. P thus plays a vital role in agriculture, supporting the growth of healthy, productive crops. Unfortunately, the world is running out of P resources.

## FACTS:



PHOSPHORUS OFTEN IS A **LIMITING ELEMENT** FOR PLANT GROWTH.

**EROSION, ELUVIATION AND CROP REMOVAL ARE MAJOR WAYS SOIL LOSES PHOSPHORUS.**

### UNABSORBED

PHOSPHORUS REMAINS IN THE SOIL WHERE IT **BECOMES** EITHER **TIGHTLY BOUND** OR USED BY MICROBES, OR THROUGH ELUVIATION AND EROSION ENTERS AND **POLLUTES** RIVERS, LAKES AND SEAS.



PHOSPHORUS IS THE **SIXTH** MOST ABUNDANT ELEMENT IN THE HUMAN BODY.

15

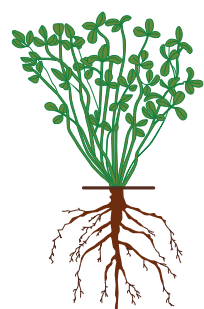
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P

Phosphorus

PHOSPHORUS IS **ESSENTIAL** FOR PLANTS AND ANIMALS AS IT IS PART OF NUCLEIC ACIDS, BIO-MEMBRANES AND CENTRAL METABOLITES OF PROCESSES SUCH AS PHOTOSYNTHESIS, SYNTHESIS AND BREAK-DOWN OF CARBOHYDRATES, AND ENERGY TRANSFER REACTIONS.

PHOSPHORUS IS NOT AVAILABLE IN NATURE ON ITS OWN, BUT IS FOUND IN SEDIMENTARY AND MAGMATIC DEPOSITS, MOSTLY AS MINERAL ROCK PHOSPHATE.



PLANTS **BUILD LARGER** AND MORE **BRANCHED ROOT SYSTEMS** AND STRUCTURES IN LOCATIONS **WHERE** SOIL NUTRIENTS, SUCH AS **PHOSPHORUS, ARE LOW.**



**GUANO AND MANURE** ARE ADDITIONAL, BUT LESS IMPORTANT, SOURCES OF PHOSPHORUS.

**CROPS** ARE NOT ALWAYS EFFICIENT IN UPTAKE; SOMETIMES ONLY **15-20%** OF PHOSPHORUS IS USED BY CROPS.

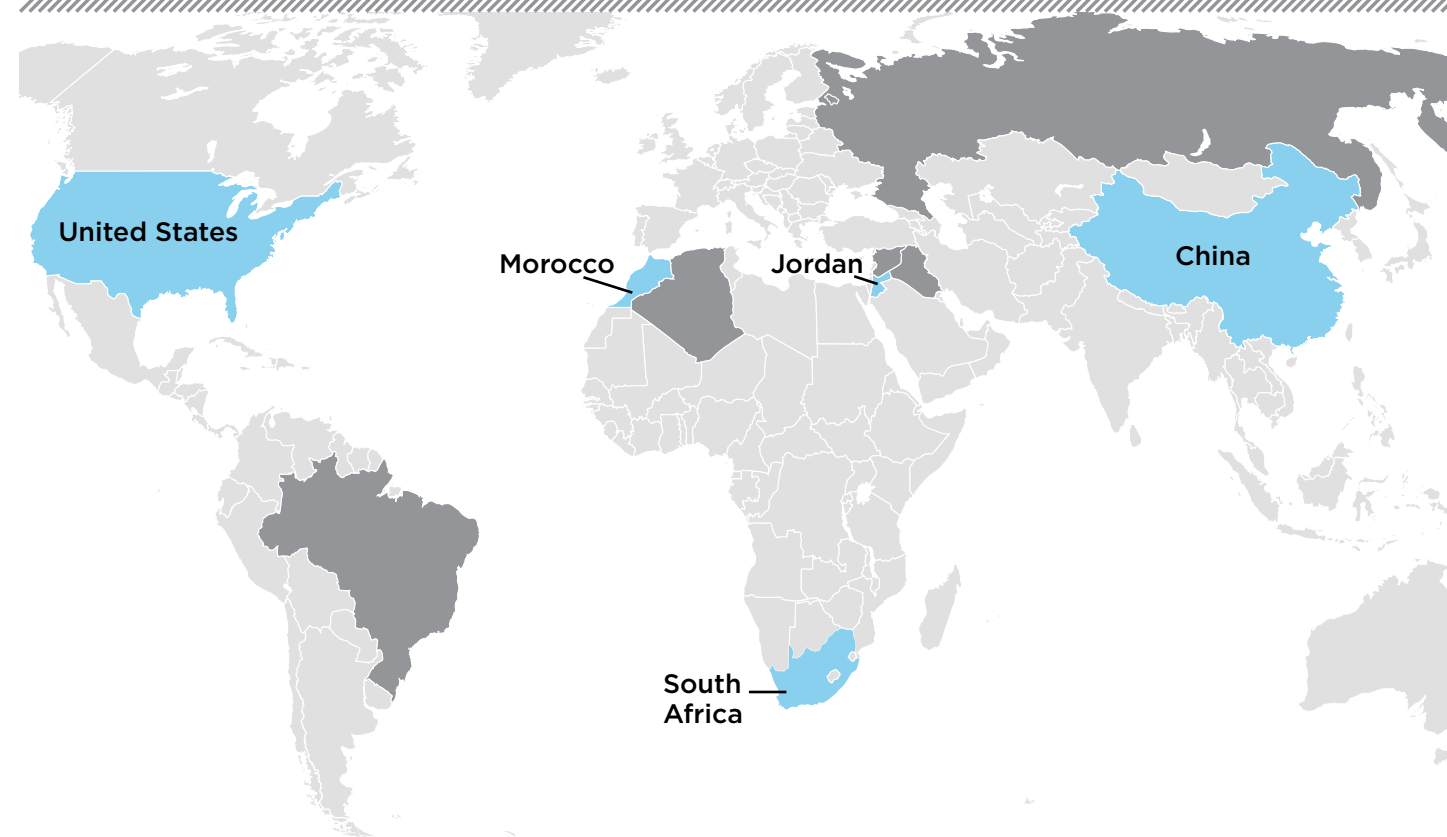
There is only enough minable phosphorus to last the next

**30-40** years.

**PHOSPHORUS MINERALS ARE PREDOMINANTLY USED FOR FERTILIZER PRODUCTION, BUT ARE ALSO NEEDED IN PRODUCTION OF STEEL, PHOSPHOR BRONZE, DETERGENTS AND PESTICIDES.**

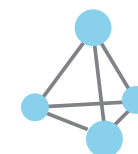
**5** countries control 90 percent of the world's known phosphorus supply.

Also: Iraq, Algeria, Syria, Russia, Brazil



THE UPTAKE OF **PHOSPHORUS** AND **NITROGEN** BY PLANT ROOTS IS STRONGLY CONTROLLED BY THE NUTRIENT STATUS IN THE SHOOT (THE LEAVES), IMPLYING SYSTEMIC CONTROL.

NOBLE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR **WOLF SCHEIBLE**, PH.D., IS EXPLORING THE MOLECULAR BASIS OF HOW PLANTS CAN MORE EFFECTIVELY USE PHOSPHORUS.



BY **IDENTIFYING THE SIGNALING COMPONENTS** INVOLVED, SCIENTISTS MIGHT BE ABLE TO **DEVELOP PLANTS** WITH **ROOT SYSTEMS** THAT ARE **MORE EFFICIENT** IN UPTAKING PHOSPHORUS AND NITROGEN.

MORE **EFFICIENT ROOT SYSTEMS** THAT UPTAKE NUTRIENTS BETTER **MIGHT LOWER FERTILIZER COSTS** AND PRESERVE CROP PRODUCTION FOR THE **FUTURE.**



# A New Journey

by Jessica Willingham

Anna Stehle wasn't ready to leave yet. It was too soon. So she picked up the phone in Argentina and called home to Denver, nearly 6,000 miles away.

"I can't come home. I need more time," she told her parents. Stehle, a student at the University of Washington, was studying abroad and had scheduled to return to the United States in a matter of days. Yet she wanted more time immersed in Argentina, improving her Spanish skills. So instead of returning to the United States, she postponed her flight for five months, moved out of her host family's home, rented an apartment with a couple of students from Buenos Aires and washed dishes at a local café to pay rent. Eventually she picked up a second job teaching English to locals.

Her mom understood because she knew her daughter – who doesn't live life, she absorbs it.

Stehle returned to the United States in January 2012, forever changed by her international experience. She applied for a teaching assistantship through the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs Fulbright Program, hoping for a chance to learn more on the international stage.

Robin Chang is associate director at the Office of Merit, Scholarships, Fellowships and Awards at the University of Washington Center for Experiential Learning and Diversity. Chang assisted Stehle with her application to the Fulbright Program.

"Students from more than 140 countries compete for one of the 1,900 annual grants provided by Fulbright," said Chang. "It's a highly competitive national selection process. Anna's demonstration of previous international experience and a strong ability in teaching and cultural exchange made her a strong applicant."

Stehle would wait almost a year to know whether or not she was accepted into the program. In the meantime, she was

putting a more domestic plan into action.

## A NOBLE EXPERIENCE

Like most Americans, Stehle is only a couple of generations removed from production agriculture. Growing up, she spent weekends and summers on her grandparents' ranch in Meeker, Colo.

"For me, that's where it all got started," she said. "Agriculture has always been present in my life, and I wanted to explore it as a profession."

Stehle applied for and earned a place as a 2013 Lloyd Noble Scholar in Agriculture at The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation in Ardmore, Okla. More than 100 applicants compete for this opportunity to spend a summer working, learning and researching alongside some of the nation's foremost agricultural experts. Each scholar is treated as a colleague, not an intern, and works closely with a mentor on individual research projects tailored to their interests.

"Being a Lloyd Noble Scholar in Agriculture is not just another summer internship," Stehle said. "You conduct research, work in the field, assist in the consultation program. You experience it all. It will change your perspective on agriculture in profound ways."

As an economics major, Stehle worked with Noble economists on everything from marketing budgets to cost and benefit values for various agricultural operations. She also developed a strong relationship with her mentors. From Noble, Stehle was gaining knowledge and resources that would prepare her for an even greater journey.

## FINDING FAMILY

Stehle's grandfather passed away on a sunny Monday in the spring of 2013. He was a Fulbright Scholar who had studied physics in Austria. The following morning, Stehle received the news – she had earned a coveted invitation from the Fulbright

Program. She would follow in her grandfather's footsteps.

Stehle graduated from the University of Washington in June 2013, then spent the summer at the Noble Foundation, where she met Steve Swigert, agricultural economist. Swigert, who has been traveling to Uganda to provide agricultural consultation to Watoto Childcare Ministries, offered Stehle a chance to visit the agricultural projects happening in Africa. She jumped at the chance.

Today, Stehle is preparing to spend 2014 in Brazil. Call it coincidence or just plain luck, but she believes it was family who made her next great journey possible. "My biological family has been in the wings looking out for me," she said. "Now I have the Noble family as well. I look to them for guidance as I move forward with new experiences and opportunities in Brazil and graduate school."

Everyone from agricultural consultants to Noble Foundation President Bill Buckner assisted in preparing Stehle for her time in Brazil, including developing contacts at agricultural universities.

"The Noble Foundation allowed Anna to make a deeper connection with Brazil," Chang said. "Noble influenced her initial thoughts and connections with the country."

In Brazil, Stehle will teach English to university level students for 20 hours a week and give presentations on American culture as an ambassador for the U.S. She will also develop a research or community involvement project. While she is unsure of her location in Brazil or what her project will be, she is determined to involve agriculture.

"Noble completed my vision for the future," Stehle said. "My reason for working with Noble and Brazil is the motivation to learn. Because of the relationships I developed at Noble, Brazil will be an even greater experience." ■

# Chuck Coffey

by Baxter Stewart

Every game day in Stillwater, Okla., a man wearing an Oklahoma State University shirt and Texas A&M cap graces the famous tailgating scene.

A Texas Aggie at heart, Chuck Coffey puts aside his A&M ties – if only for a few hours – to support his three children (Aaron, Seth and Sarah), all of who attend OSU.

Coffey’s dual school dedication parallels a personal narrative that spans both sides of the Red River.

A fifth-generation rancher, Coffey traveled to College Station and earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees in range science from Texas A&M – finishing his education in 1985. He then taught agriculture at Murray State College in Tishomingo,

Okla., eventually chairing the department, before joining the Noble Foundation in 1993 as a pasture and range consultant.

Twenty years later, Coffey continues to invest his talents and skills in advancing agriculture and supporting his beloved family – even if it means wearing a little OSU orange every once in a while. Below, he details growing up in ag, his passion for supporting regional producers and his coworkers, and how one fateful horse ride changed his entire world.

## Who inspired you to pursue a career in agriculture?

I grew up on a ranch in the hill country of Harper, Texas. I was pushed by my high

school agriculture teacher, Clayton Massey. He was a hard-nosed man who made sure you were prepared for college. And, of course, agriculture was what he wanted us to pursue.

## So you were involved in ag in high school?

At our high school, the judging team was more prestigious than the football team. I enjoyed the competition, and it turned out I was pretty good at it. I earned second high individual at the state competition in College Station my senior year. I was so close to winning that it still haunts me sometimes. (He laughs.)

## Where did you meet your wife?

While in the Range Club at Texas A&M, my roommate needed a dominoes partner. My competition for the night would include my future wife, Ruth. We exchanged numbers, and the rest is history. We’ve been married for 27 years. We still play dominoes from time to time. To think I almost didn’t go.

## Did you always want to be a scientist?

I wanted to be so many things growing up – first a flight attendant, then a vet, then a social worker. Then I didn’t have a clue, but I did enjoy my chemistry class. To me, a scientist was a person in a lab coat, geeky glasses and a funny haircut. I couldn’t have been more wrong. Science is a dynamic career with dynamic people. I love what I do. I’m excited to see results and figure out what they mean, even if they don’t always fit my hypothesis.

## Now you’re a father of three college students. How do you stay close?

I try to know when my kids are coming home from college so I can schedule “family activities” for them to do with me out on the ranch. The kids have gotten pretty smart and will show up unannounced to avoid the chores (he

chuckles). I love spending time with them and accomplishing things together. When the work is done, we relax and cook-out under a shade tree.

## What advice would you give those entering the agriculture field?

Go into it with eyes wide open. Follow your heart, and don’t listen to those who say there is no money in it. Look for opportunities, and you will find them. I’ve heard people all my life say that it’s a hard life and you will never finish. I’ve learned that staying busy keeps you young.

## What is it like being a consultant?

A lot of people depend on the information that we give them, and I take that responsibility seriously. When it comes to doing my job, I don’t have to know all the answers. I just have to know someone who does. My coworkers possess such a wealth of knowledge, and we work together to change lives.

## What is your favorite part of being a consultant?

I love building lifelong relationships with our agricultural producers and watching them grow and succeed. And it’s amazing

to be able to offer our services to area farmers and ranchers, and not leave behind a bill. We do this because it’s our mission.

## What does it mean to you to work at the Noble Foundation?

This is a completely unique place where it is hard to separate your friends from your coworkers. The passion for agriculture truly flows from the top down, and it rubs off on everyone.

## What happened two summers ago?

I had a serious horseback riding accident. I was bucked so violently that it sheared my pelvis from my spine. I should be paralyzed. I went through several surgeries and numerous months of rehabilitation.

## How did your coworkers respond to the accident?

I’ve never felt more loved than after that accident. While I went through a painful recovery process, my Noble Foundation coworkers just surrounded me with care. They did everything. They brought me food. They helped out at the ranch. A team constructed a ramp for my wheelchair and even built a deck for me to sit out on the porch. I have the best job in the world with the best people in the world. ■



# Elison Blancaflor, Ph.D.

by Baxter Stewart

Defining Elison Blancaflor is a bit of a challenge. Family man? Yes. Scientist? Check. Athlete? Absolutely. Musician? A little bit. Yes, Blancaflor, Ph.D., is as multi-faceted as the cells he studies every day in his laboratory as a principal investigator at the Noble Foundation.

Growing up in Manila, capital of the Philippines, Blancaflor was intrigued by many fields of study, eventually graduating from the University of the Philippines at Los Banos (UPLB) with a Bachelor of Science in agriculture.

His agricultural expertise soon led to him serving as an agricultural supervisor in the pineapple fields for the Del Monte Corporation. After meeting his wife, Corazon, on the job, Blancaflor became enamored with the inner workings of plants. His scientific curiosity placed him on a career journey that would take him to Louisiana, Pennsylvania, the Noble Foundation and then space. Below, Blancaflor discusses his amazing journey from the Philippines to the stars.

## What was it like growing up in the Philippines?

The Philippines has such beautiful scenery. I fondly remember road trips with my family, exploring the tropical countryside. My uncles would tell me fascinating tales of werewolves, vampires and other mythological creatures that people in rural Philippines firmly believed existed.

## How did such scary stories impact you?

These stories permeate the culture. They scared me a bit. But more importantly, they piqued my inquiring mind. I recently took my family back there for the first time since we left for the United States in 1991. I deeply enjoyed sharing our heritage with my daughter, Saleah.

## How did you go from agriculture to biological science?

Working in the pineapple fields, I was naturally curious about how the plants worked. I asked a lot of questions, but my lack of understanding seemed to stifle me, so I started to pursue more education.

## Who helped you during this time?

After writing to many graduate programs, Dr. Karl Hasenstein, a biology professor at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, took an interest in me. He was a major inspiration. He introduced me to a more analytical way of thinking. I went on to earn a master's and a doctorate in biology.

## What was his primary lesson for you?

He taught me that in order to be successful in science, I would have to be persistent and ask the right questions.

## Was the move from the Philippines to the United States difficult?

Corazon and I left stable jobs for me to take the graduate position at the University of Louisiana in 1991. We were newlyweds. We did not have a car. And, on top of that, she was pregnant. It was tough for a while, but she supported me in everything.

## What was it like becoming a dad?

One day in my cell biology class, I received an urgent phone call from Corazon that she was in labor. Thankfully, a good friend of mine gave us a ride to the hospital. We made it at 11:30 a.m. and our daughter was born 20 minutes later. Despite the close call, there are no words for the joy of seeing your child for the first time.

## What drew you to the Noble Foundation?

It was 1999, and the Noble Foundation had just purchased its first laser scanning confocal microscope and was looking for someone with experience to use this new system for plant biology research. I had worked with similar microscopes during my postdoctoral fellowship at Penn State, and my Ph.D. research was directly related.

## What do you do at the Noble Foundation?

I manage a research program that seeks to further understand how plants grow and develop, and how they respond to environmental signals. Hopefully what we learn can be translated into producing better crop plants that will benefit agriculture.

## Explain your NASA experiment.

We have received two grants from NASA in three years. The goal is to understand how minimal gravity in the space environment can affect plant growth and development. It has been interesting to see how genes can change their expression when gravity is reduced. Plant growth in space could be vital to support life in future deep space exploration, and this is why NASA is funding this research through these grants. Understanding plant growth and development in the harsh space environment also has implications for agriculture here on earth.

## What sparked your love of music?

My family always had a great appreciation and talent for music. My mother was a music teacher, and my brother is a professional musician in the Philippines. I may not be the musician in the family, but I take my keyboard and guitar out every chance I get.

## Who are your favorite musicians?

I love artists like Simon and Garfunkel, the Beatles and Jim Brickman. Their styles are soothing to me.

## But you also like to play sports, correct?

I enjoy playing all kinds of sports, especially the ones I'm not supposed to play because of my small stature. (Blancaflor stands 5'1.") Whether it is tennis or basketball, I just try to have fun. Sports are always a good place to make new friends.

## What words of wisdom would you give to young scientists?

Science can be quite stressful. There are always deadlines for grants and papers. I now know, those aspects of the job are not as important as I thought. These pressures can be managed better, and one can get similar, if not better results, if one puts things in perspective. I wish early on I had managed my stress levels better and spent more time with my family. I try hard every day now to focus more on what I have than on what I lack. ■

# Education on the Go



Ardmore, Okla., schoolchildren watch videos about agricultural production at the *Grown For You* educational trailer.



## With knowledge about agriculture waning, three Oklahoma organizations step up to provide a unique (and mobile) solution

by Robyn Peterson

Agriculture education has never been more important. And now, thanks to a trio of Oklahoma institutions, it has never been more mobile either.

The Noble Foundation's youth education and outreach program - Noble Academy - Oklahoma Farm Bureau, and the Oklahoma Farming and Ranching Foundation launched a new mobile education trailer called the *Grown For You* mobile classroom to provide students a fun, fast and factual look at Oklahoma agriculture.

"This trailer provides an interactive look into agriculture and its importance to society and our state's economy," said Frank Hardin, Noble Foundation's educational outreach manager. "Our goal is to make the connection between agriculture and our food supply. It is important that our audiences understand that the food on our tables is grown for us by families like ours all over Oklahoma and the country." The mobile classroom also explains the role of research in agriculture and demonstrates the enormous variety of career opportunities in this sector.

The idea for the *Grown For You* trailer started rolling more than a year ago when representatives from the three organizations began brainstorming about

interactive ways to engage students across the entire state, servicing multiple schools and communities. The group landed on a single conclusion: the solution clearly needed wheels. The team sought inspiration and insight from several other states who were a little farther down the road on similar projects. They reviewed other mobile exhibits and trailers before sitting down at the design table.

"The key to the trailer's design is being able to engage multiple groups at once," said Holly Carroll, vice president of field services and leadership development for Oklahoma Farm Bureau. "It is great for county fairs, trade shows and school groups. Instead of just a small group going through a trailer, we use all sides of the trailer to communicate our messages and connect observers to interactive, educational games. It allows for more viewing and more learning opportunities."

Instead of static displays, the *Grown For You* trailer uses videos, presentations and interactive games presented on four 47-inch outdoor TVs. Short videos focus on various commodity crops grown in Oklahoma, while demonstrations bring a hands-on element to audiences.

A packed picnic basket teaches students about the obvious - and not so

obvious - agricultural origins of items typically found on a picnic, from the beef in a hamburger to the ink on a bag of chips.

*My American Farm* educational video games, provided by the American Farm Bureau and projected on the trailer's TVs, offer audiences a chance to understand and learn more about agriculture.

"Today's youth are the future - not just for agriculture, but they are future consumers, legislators and professionals," Hardin said. "Educating the youth at an early age about the importance of agriculture is vital to future sustainability."

Carroll echoed Hardin's sentiment. "Every day that we miss an opportunity to promote and educate, we miss out on a future supporter of agriculture," she said.

The *Grown For You* mobile classroom officially debuted at the Oklahoma Farm Bureau convention on Nov. 15 in Norman, Okla., and will be ready to visit schools and communities after Jan. 1, 2014. The mobile classroom will be scheduled and operated through Oklahoma Farm Bureau, with updates and support provided by the Noble Foundation. Anyone interested in having the trailer visit their area can call now to get on the schedule. For more information or to schedule a visit, contact Carroll at 405.523.2307. ■

# Fulfilling Their Destiny

**Noble Foundation helps couple achieve their lifelong dream**

*by Baxter Stewart*

Looking out on the pastureland on their ranch near St. Louis, Okla., William and Karen Payne believe they selected the perfect name for their home – Destiny Ranch.

After decades of starts and stops, the couple have realized their dream of owning a self-sustaining ranch, a dream that began when they were both children. Karen grew up on a farm in Beaver County that her grandparents homesteaded during the Oklahoma Land Run. William was raised in the mountains of Colorado and Wyoming, and spent the summers working on cattle ranches.

The couple met in 1968 as sophomores in high school after his family moved from Colorado to the Oklahoma Panhandle. In March 1971, the Paynes married and left the farm for San Diego for William's stint in the Navy, but the couple returned to Balco, Okla., in 1974 and began building their own stocker cattle and wheat operation. The dream was stifled after three years of a poor economy and severe drought forced the Paynes from the farm. William began work in town as a diesel mechanic. A few promotions within the company eventually led the couple to the Colorado region in 1985 where they once again began working toward their ranching dream. For a time, the ranch seemed to prosper, but again drought – this time an eight-year span – ravaged their land.

"Our grass died, and black nubs were all that remained," William said. "We tried to hold off for a while, but experts had forecast that the drought could last another eight to 10 years. We had to make a move if we were going to continue our goal and this lifestyle."

After 20 years, the Paynes decided in 2006 that they would leave Colorado.

The decision on where to relocate

became a family affair. Of their three daughters – Shelly, Sherry and Shanna – two (Sherry and Shanna) had made their homes in Oklahoma while Shelly lived in Omaha, Neb. William and Karen set out to find a parcel of land centrally located to their daughters, soon narrowing their search to the Sooner State.

## FINDING THEIR DESTINY

During their search, the couple heard about a ranch that had been for sale for a few years near St. Louis, Okla., about an hour southeast of Oklahoma City. The land sounded almost too good to be true, and – as it turns out – it was.

When the Paynes arrived, they could have simply seen the 900-acre ranch as it was: overgrazed and thick with Eastern red-cedars. Instead, they saw a place full of potential with nice rolling hills, a workable house and two solid barns. "It didn't look quite like the owner made it sound on the phone," said William, adding that the previous owner had not set foot on the land in more than 15 years. "I couldn't even see across the property, but something about the place called to us."

The Paynes returned to the land three more times and walked it for several miles. They consulted with the NRCS about the unfamiliar grasses. In July 2006, the Paynes made an offer for the ranch. At the same time, the couple reached out to the Noble Foundation for possible assistance.

"We had heard about the Noble Foundation. We had even sent in soil samples for them to test," Karen said. "But we had never lived close enough to use their in-person consultation services. Now we had a chance to see them in action."

After several phone conversations, Consultation Program Manager Hugh Aljoe

and a team of consultants arrived to give Destiny Ranch a once-over. "I thought it was one of the three most overgrazed places I had ever seen," said Eddie Funderburg, Ed.D., soils and crops consultant.

Aljoe agreed. He, too, saw pastures that had unfortunately been abused for a long time. There was not enough grass residue left to even identify the species that were present, so he advised the Paynes not to plan to stock the pastures until the next spring.

The Paynes took possession of the ranch in September 2006. While they waited for the grasses to rebound, they cleared almost 125 acres of trees and brush from what looked to be the most productive areas for grass.

The Paynes made good use of the expertise of the Noble consultants. Mike Porter helped the couple develop a wildlife management program; Deke Alkire, Ph.D., assisted in developing feed rations for the native grass pastures; and Funderburg identified soil types and directed them on fertilizer usage for different species of grass. "And the list goes on and on," said Karen, recalling all the advice the consultants provided. "They were wonderful teachers with an amazing amount of knowledge. We were eager to learn. They were eager to teach."

During winter of the first year, the Paynes also worked on cutting lanes through the trees to install electric fencing, hoping to sustain 200 to 300 head of stocker cattle on the ranch year-round, while keeping costs down.

Their ranching dream took hold the next year when they started with 290 steer calves. Feed costs totaled a staggering \$40,000 the first year, but the ranch became more efficient with the help of ►

William and Karen Payne pose on the front porch of their home at Destiny Ranch near St. Louis, Okla.



Noble's consultants. By 2011, feed costs had been cut to under \$10,000; and Destiny Ranch was running 1,000 head of stocker cattle.

#### RISE OF THE CATTLE BARONESS

Today, the Paynes maintain 300 stockers year-round with annual marketing of about 1,000 head. Cattle stay on the ranch for 90-100 days to gain 200 pounds and are sold directly to feedlots in uniform lots.

"During the first five years, we had many learning curves. Everything from the amount of rain we received to the types of grasses and grazing methods," William said. "In our second year, we attended the Noble Foundation grazing seminar for three days. This was one of the events which changed the direction of our ranch."

At the urging of Aljoe, the Paynes set up a strict rotational grazing system, changing from 5- to 10-acre paddocks to 1- to 3-acre paddocks by using about 30 miles of electric fence. Key to this process is the need to move the cattle daily instead of every five days. According to William Payne, the constant moves are not simply a rotation to new grass, but are moves onto the grass where protein and nutrients are best for animal performance.

The system requires dedication by the landowners. Karen quickly saw the opportunity to interact more with the cattle. Soon, William nicknamed her "The Cattle Baroness" because of all the time she spends walking the ranch with the cattle, observing their changes. Karen laughs at the nickname, but is quick to give credit for the success to her team of consultants at the Noble Foundation.

"The bottom line is that the Noble Foundation was instrumental in assisting us with our grazing and gave us a better understanding of how to get maximum gains with our herds," she said. "From the consultants like Hugh Aljoe and Eddie Funderburg to Noble's forage sample program, we had all the important tools necessary to be successful."

#### A TRUE GEM

Conservationists at heart, the Paynes treasure the land and their quiet way of life. They fence off their ponds, do not allow cattle to graze the ravines and work to keep wildlife on the ranch at all times.

"The Payne family has been exceptional to work with," Aljoe said. "They take in every educational event possible and are always looking to acquire new knowledge

to apply to their ranch. What really sets them apart is how carefully they plan their operation. When you look at the surrounding area, their property is truly a gem."

Funderburg echoed Aljoe's comments: "Through a combination of intelligence and hard work, they have used planting, weed control, fertilizer use and rotational grazing to turn the place completely around."

The Paynes' "wow" moment came in September 2011 when they hosted a Noble Foundation grazing workshop on their ranch. Dozens of ranchers facing similar obstacles visited Destiny Ranch to learn from the Paynes' experiences on a variety of topics that included range management and planning for land renovation.

"When Hugh asked us to host the seminar, we couldn't believe it," William said. "This was truly one of the most special moments of our lives. You can't appreciate the ranch now if you hadn't seen it before. It's 500 percent different. There were times when we probably would have quit, but the team from the Noble Foundation saw us through every challenge. What we have is a working ranch that can last, and we are proud of the direction we are going. It's like we found our destiny." ■



William Payne shares a laugh with Eddie Funderburg, Ed.D., Noble Foundation senior soils and crops consultant.



Fiona McAlister, Ph.D., built the Southern Oklahoma Technology Center's Biotechnology Academy program from scratch.

# A vision of the future

**An energetic Aussie professor brings biotechnology to life for southern Oklahoma students with a little help from the Noble Foundation**

*by Caitlin Powers*

**A**sk Fiona McAlister, Ph.D., her philosophy on teaching and the answer is simple and direct – “Students learn best by doing.”

So for the past seven years, McAlister's students at the Southern Oklahoma Technology Center's (SOTC) Biotechnology Academy have been doing more than just listening; they are experiencing biotechnology.

The pamphlet description of the two-year academy is simple – high school juniors and seniors learn theoretical and practical skills surrounding various fields of biotechnology. However, the reality is that the program takes concepts and skills from the book to application. Lectures are accompanied by actual laboratory experiments that relate to real-world situations, changing the students' view of the curriculum.

“Suddenly these seemingly simple concepts have a purpose,” McAlister said. “Students are not learning just because they are told to, but because there is now a purpose behind it. All of the labs have something to do with their life. It makes a big difference because they see the reality behind it.”

## **BUILDING FROM SCRATCH**

McAlister built the biotechnology program from scratch. As a former Noble Foundation postdoctoral fellow, she had

extensive biotechnology training and experience, but her passion for teaching led her away from pure research and into the classroom.

After six years at a local high school, SOTC came calling with an interesting proposal – build a biotechnology program to train laboratory technicians and research assistants. SOTC is part of a state-wide network of career and technology education centers that focus on translating education into practical skills – but had nothing in the area of biotechnology.

McAlister jumped at the chance, but she wanted more than just a training platform, as did the high school administrators who were also worried that such a class would only be available to the brightest students. McAlister intended her offering to be both technical and academic, as well as a college preparation course, open to any student, no matter their GPA.

So she developed a hybrid program which tied in high school academic courses, such as advanced placement biology and environmental science, and practical skills training. Students could earn high school credit and possibly college credit. This combination of traditional career tech training with academic underpinnings made the program the first of its kind in Oklahoma.

“I wanted a program that offered them more – academically and personally,” she

said. “I wanted students to fall in love with research, to see how it could change the world and their lives.”

The SOTC Biotechnology Academy opened in the spring of 2006 with just 12 students. But word of mouth about this Australian teacher and hands-on experiments started to spread. The following fall, McAlister was able to have a morning and afternoon class with 24 students. Then it happened. The program exploded, and students were clamoring to get in. A waiting list began to lengthen, and SOTC administrators moved to expand.

In 2008, SOTC constructed a 4,000-square-foot laboratory and classroom space. The Noble Foundation helped support almost half of the \$800,000 cost. “We would have never reached this level of success without Noble,” McAlister said. “More than providing financial support, Noble has been a partner in so many ways from the very beginning.”

Through this partnership, McAlister has contributed to the development of the Noble Foundation's educational and outreach program, Noble Academy, which takes science into the classroom of area middle and high schools. In addition to sharing practical classroom techniques, McAlister and Frank Hardin, Ph.D., Noble's educational outreach manager, collaborate to reach McAlister's next generation of students through the introduction of ►



hands-on science in the students' own classrooms.

#### A NOBLE CAUSE

As part of SOTC's Biotechnology Academy, first-year students learn fundamental knowledge and concepts with a heavy dose of technical laboratory skills, such as how to properly use a pipette, a common laboratory tool. These skills advance the students' work in the classroom, and, through the relationship with the Noble Foundation, students see how these same skills are used in the real world.

Students also visit the Noble Foundation campus (which is adjacent to SOTC) for tours, workshops and educational internships. For McAlister, this is a chance to show students the various scientific disciplines and occupations required to produce quality research.

"We love to show the students that science is not just this little thing," McAlister said. "What we are doing is demonstrating how you can incorporate all these different disciplines, and the Noble Foundation is a perfect example of that."

Noble Foundation professor Alison Blancaflor, Ph.D., offers a microscopy workshop where students use some of

today's most advanced microscopes to learn about cell biology. Professor Lloyd Sumner, Ph.D., also leads a workshop – a Science Carnival – where students participate in multiple experiments throughout a fast-paced day.

"For some students, the Biotechnology Academy is reshaping their entire view of science and even education," Sumner said. "We want to continue to foster that perspective shift. These students are future scientists, and we want them to walk away knowing the importance of research and the passion we have for our work."

For certain second-year students, their immersion in science can include conducting meaningful research. As part of their curriculum, they spend time in Noble Foundation laboratories working side-by-side with Noble researchers. These students spend as many as three hours a day, three days a week, for four to eight weeks working in the laboratory as though they were a laboratory member.

Depending on the laboratory, students will be assigned a specific project or will work with a different mentor every week. Students' activities range from making media in the lab to collecting data in the field. Some have even had the opportunity

to transition their semester's work into a longer summer internship.

The laboratory time has given students advanced technical training that some postdoctoral fellows do not even get until after receiving their Ph.D. "It is a confidence builder for them when they walk into a lab, see all the equipment, and realize 'I know how to do this,'" McAlister said.

A not totally unexpected outcome of the academy has been the increase in science scores on the students' ACTs – a standardized college assessment test and an important gateway to college. McAlister says some students have raised their scores as much as 7 points.

Together, all the experiences at the SOTC Biotechnology Academy leave students changed in countless ways. "They have this realization that they have abilities, they have potential, and they have a future," McAlister said. "This gives them a vision of where their future might go." ■

**Top left:** McAlister shows students how to properly prepare a laboratory DNA sample.  
**Bottom left:** Students learn how to avoid contamination of a crime scene.  
**Above:** A Biotechnology Academy student prepares a tissue sample for lab analysis.



# PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION



Davin Miles (left) helps Gavin Atwell with his homework as part of the Cities in Schools program, a Noble Foundation grant recipient.

## Since its inception, the Noble Foundation's philanthropic activities have supported worthy organizations and changed lives

by J. Adam Calaway

**T**om Riley is talking, but his words aren't really audible.

The bass-thumping, sitar-laced techno music from the adjacent aerobics class gobbles up any sound the second it leaves the mouth of the Ardmore YMCA's executive director.

After 12 years of sharing a wall with high-decibel workouts, Riley doesn't realize he's become an unknowing mime until his eyes fix on his visitor's puzzled face.

"You get used to it," he said, increasing his volume. "Sometimes it's quite enjoyable. I'll be on the phone and dance along a little."

The 68-year-old Riley starts to wiggle and jive in his chair, chuckling at his own anemic moves. Soon Riley is up to lead an impromptu tour of the facility. He winds through (somewhat) quieter halls, basketball courts, yoga studios and weight rooms, detailing a schedule of activities that would make an Olympic organizer faint.

Ardmore's YMCA hosts the city's entire schedule of Little League baseball and basketball, an indoor soccer team, flag football, youth day camps, 66 aerobics classes per month, and a swim team, along with free child care and the usual slew of workout options. All told, more than 11,000 people benefit from the local recreational facility.

Despite his earlier joking and dancing, Riley carries the same burden most nonprofit leaders shoulder – finding resources to help his organization survive in an ever-evolving economic climate. The task is certainly daunting.

"It takes a lot to keep this place open," he said. "There is always a financial struggle to keep going and keep growing. However, we don't turn anyone away from a membership or activity because of inability to pay. We offer scholarships so everyone can participate. That's where the Noble Foundation comes in."

Beginning in 1969, the Noble Foundation has provided more than \$1.3 million for the Ardmore YMCA, including \$25,000 for operating expenses in 2013, funds that keep the scholarship program available.

The Noble Foundation has offered charitable grants to worthy nonprofit

organizations since 1946 when it made a small grant to the University of Oklahoma for scientific instrumentation. Since then, Oklahoma's largest, private, nonprofit foundation has issued more than \$317 million in grants and scholarships to local, state and national organizations mainly focused on health research and delivery systems, capital funding for higher education, and social services projects.

The Noble Foundation's grantmaking activities, however, branch from a larger philanthropic platform that includes a deep commitment to the local community, two scholarship programs and employee volunteer activities.

No matter the activity, all Noble Foundation philanthropy is rooted in the legacy of founder Lloyd Noble, who said, "that the only true happiness must come from not only understanding your own needs, but an understanding and willingness to secure the same things for your fellow man."

Bottom line: Noble wanted philanthropy in action.

### WORDS OF WISDOM

Sitting in her office on the second floor of the Noble Foundation's Administration Building, Mary Kate Wilson is the model of professionalism – organized, efficient and kind.

Few know more about regional philanthropy than Wilson (though if one made that statement in her presence, she'd wave off the notion). She has spent 16 years at the Noble Foundation, earning four advancements before finally taking the reins of the department in January 2010. Her portfolio expanded yet again this year, and today she serves as director of philanthropy, engagement and project management.

Wilson acts as the liaison between the countless grant seekers and the Noble Foundation's Board of Trustees who closely direct the organization's grantmaking, following a simple philosophy – be good stewards of the resources entrusted by Lloyd Noble.

Of course, Noble set up a unique

"foundation" that comes with additional challenges. In lieu of only a traditional granting program, he established an organization that conducts a no-cost consultation program, educational activities, and plant science and agricultural research. The scale of this dual research-granting institution does not exist anywhere else in the United States.

"People are often surprised by the scope of our operations," Wilson said. "We are completely unique in terms of a private foundation."

That uniqueness of operating an agricultural and research institution comes with financial obligations that sometimes impact grants. However, this year Noble leadership established a spending policy to better ensure the availability of a granting budget.

"The spending policy will allow us to maintain consistency in our grantmaking by providing a baseline," Wilson said. "The most difficult aspect of granting moratoriums is the irregularity of funding for entities that have historically received consistent support."

Even with a steady granting stream, Wilson knows the number is never enough to satisfy an ever-growing need. With such great demand, the process of securing any grant from any institution becomes a gauntlet of competition and expectations.

Wilson has experienced the ebbs and flows of the industry, and offered a few words of wisdom (see sidebar for full details) for grant seekers, beginning with diversification. Gone are the days when nonprofits could depend solely on a few large donors for decades on end.

"Diversification is essential as markets fluctuate, as board members change, as wealth transitions generations, as priorities shift," she said. "There are so many variables that donors consider, and those often change."

Equal to diversification is demonstrating impact. *The Giving USA 2013 Report*, the annual state-of-the-union for philanthropy, showed that donors increasingly require recipients to have a plan with specific objectives and tangible outcomes. ►

“Everyone is taking a more critical look,” Wilson said. “You want to place your dollars where they will have the most impact.”

Wilson sees this trend continuing to grow as generations shift on governing boards across the country. “The generation coming up wants to effect change more quickly,” she said. “They have grown up with information at their fingertips, and they’re adept at responding quickly. I anticipate they expect a quick, tangible return on their philanthropic dollars.”

Granting officers like Wilson have responded to the challenges of the granting process by going beyond facilitation and becoming counselors and intermediaries. Wilson has often provided introductions between other organizations and donors, facilitating the building of new revenue or knowledge sources.

Likewise, the Noble Foundation and other grant makers are helping connect groups with similar missions or overlapping commonalities. This process of nonprofit partnering is a growing (and highly successful) trend. “Donors are always looking at a group’s outcome for a community or the problem it is trying to address,” Wilson said “Finding organizations with similar focuses, but different constituencies, then bringing them together makes the overall effort stronger.”

And strengthening communities is the overall goal of the Noble Foundation’s philanthropy. Through almost seven decades and hundreds of millions of dollars, the Noble Foundation’s impact radiates from Ardmore, Okla., then spreads through its home state and across the nation.

Right to Father Mark’s doorstep.

**A LEGACY OF SUPPORT**

Resting on 147 acres of tranquil Chesapeake Bay shoreline is Ashley (Father Martin’s Ashley), a private, nonprofit, inpatient alcohol and drug addiction treatment center that incorporates multiple disciplines (medical, psychiatric, psychological, scientific and spiritual) into a comprehensive program.

“Our philosophy of treatment differentiates us from everyone else,” said Father Mark Hushen, who has served as president and CEO for seven years. “We focus on the dignity of the human person and supporting the family unit. We’re a treatment center with a soul.”

The Noble Foundation and Ashley have built a legacy of interaction, dating back more than 30 years. Longtime Board of Trustee member Sam Noble (son of Lloyd Noble) met Ashley’s cofounders Father Joseph Martin and May Abraham during the pair’s initial effort to found the treatment center in 1979. Martin and Abraham sought Noble’s expertise in business and development. The relationship grew, and the Noble Foundation provided seed money for Ashley.

Through the decades, Sam Noble, Mary Jane Noble (Sam’s wife) and Rusty Noble (their son) have all served as board members. “There is a true relationship here,” Father Mark said. “The Noble family has shared their knowledge, wisdom, time and resources with us for generations. The Noble Foundation and the family care about people, and they are committed to assisting us as we help people heal.”

Ashley joins several health research and delivery organizations, such as Dean McGee Eye Institute, Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation (OMRF) and the OU Cancer Center, as premier medical institutes able to expand their physical campuses and services as the result of one or more Noble grants.

The Noble Foundation has provided more than \$2.6 million in support to Ashley through the decades, including \$150,000 this year for a capital campaign to construct a new 42,000-square-foot building that will house patient rooms, admissions, a wellness center and a chronic pain management program. The new facility will expand the institution’s reach, which has already helped 37,000 patients and 12,000 family members.

“Noble made an investment in us, and 30 years later there is a huge return,” Father Mark said. “There is a deep level of gratitude for that support. The legacy of the Noble Foundation and Ashley is tied together. We’re guardians of that legacy.”

**EDUCATION IN ACTION**

Beyond the capital campaigns of health organizations, the Noble Foundation’s philanthropic focus lies mainly within the educational arena. A portion of the annual granting budget is dedicated each year to advance educational programs, such as Oklahoma State University’s Oklahoma Ag Leadership Program, and provide life-changing scholarships.

The Professional Oklahoma Educators Foundation works to support education by providing Oklahoma teachers’ educational training and services. The organization conducts an annual Leadership Training Conference, as well as workshops and seminars on everything from “reading your pay stub” to professionalism. The organization also recognizes outstanding educators through its Excellence in Education Awards Banquet.

“Those who are honored have said it is the highlight of their career,” said Ginger Tinney, executive director. “That’s our goal: recognize the best educators, support all our teachers and provide world-class education for all Oklahoma students.”

The Professional Oklahoma Educators Foundation is one of a handful of entities who receives a grant for general operating expenses. For this educational foundation, the \$20,000 (which is not used for administrative costs) is essential.

“It’s life,” Tinney said. “If you do not have this type of support, you don’t know from one year to the next if you’re going to make it. I don’t want to cry ...,” she paused, holding back tears. “But we would not be in business without the Noble Foundation. I will be forever indebted and grateful to the Noble Foundation.”

Tinney said there was an additional bonus to receiving a Noble Foundation grant. Other grantors see the Noble name on donor lists and it provides instant credibility. “People understand that Noble only associates with excellence and vets organizations thoroughly,” she said. “It is like a stamp of approval.”

The Noble Foundation’s pursuit of educational philanthropy extends beyond granting and into two scholarship programs. The Noble Educational Fund provides \$200,000 annually for children of employees working at Noble-related companies, and the Sam Noble Scholarship Program provides \$150,000 for scholarships for Oklahoma students studying agriculture and technology. Since 1999, the Noble Foundation has awarded more than \$2.1 million in Sam Noble Scholarships to almost 170 students.

“Lloyd Noble always believed education was the key to improving one’s life,” Wilson said. “His desire to provide these life-changing scholarships has continued through his family and our Board of Trustees. Because of this belief, hundreds of

students have jump-started their careers and set their life course.”

**TEAM NOBLE**

While the Noble Foundation’s philanthropy funds state and national projects, the organization remains dedicated to its hometown and south-central Oklahoma neighbors. Each year, community grants support organizations like the local Boy Scout Council, nonprofit medical and family services clinics, and child care centers. As witnessed at Riley’s YMCA, these grants serve as the lifeblood.

This community dedication extends beyond the organizational commitment. Noble Foundation employees embody the giving spirit of their founder through an annual schedule of events dedicated to building a stronger community.

The Noble Foundation’s Employee Team launched a program called “Noble in the Community,” whereby employees volunteer time, money and energy toward worthy activities. One weekend, employees may help clean the shoreline of a nearby lake or teach children about agriculture; the next, they may be serving their local school district or operating a water stop for a regional marathon that supports cancer treatment.

“We’re proud to be a part of Team Noble and support our neighbors in whatever way we can,” said Lori Heman, chair of the Employee Team. “We are a reflection of the organization, and it is a reflection of us. What better way to live than to serve others.”

Each year, Noble employees donate almost \$350,000 for educational matching grants and various campaigns, such as the United Way, March of Dimes and Toys for Tots. These efforts are supported by the Noble Foundation, which matches every donation dollar-for-dollar.

From traditional grantmaking to employee volunteering, the Noble Foundation’s philanthropic endeavors have impacted countless individuals and families, providing necessary resources and offering hope, and built stronger communities.

“Most people will never know how much the Noble Foundation and its employees give,” Wilson said. “I’m confident, though, that lives have been forever changed and that’s what Lloyd Noble wanted – philanthropy in action.” ■



Mary Kate Wilson, director of philanthropy for the Noble Foundation, reads to children at Cities in Schools.

**Mary Kate Wilson**, director of philanthropy, engagement and project management, offered some helpful insights and tips to aid potential grant seekers.

- Have realistic expectations. Donors have to say “no” much more often than they say “yes.”
- The Noble Foundation Board of Trustees sees value in partnering with other donors to support major projects. Requests for 75 or 100 percent of a project are less likely to be successful.
- Grant seekers should bring priorities for funding. The worst thing a grant seeker can do, whether with the Noble Foundation or another donor, is to create a project that they think matches the donor’s priorities or mission, but does not align with the organization’s core purpose.
- Don’t be scared to talk about the negatives. Be honest and forthright. It helps the entire process.
- Most granters want to see that 100 percent of the recipient’s governing board gives – in some way – to its own organization.

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark striped shirt, painting on a canvas. In the foreground, a hand in a red sweater holds a paintbrush, applying red and yellow paint to a canvas. The background is slightly blurred, showing other art supplies and a gallery setting.

# Making Magic

## Noble Foundation philanthropic efforts promote creative, cultural change in southern Oklahoma

by Jessica Willingham

There isn't an occupied seat in the audience, but the Charles B. Goddard Center for the Visual and Performing Arts is bustling with activity. A crew with the Ardmore Little Theater works to transform the empty main stage into the iconic setting of *August: Osage County*. The whirring sounds of construction fill the auditorium as a director weaves among stagehands, guiding them as to how soft the stage lights need to be as the curtains open for Act One.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the building, a resident artist assists senior citizens with creating their first watercolor; a dance teacher instructs five little ballerinas in how to plié; and a classroom of students walk their parents through an art gallery, proudly displaying their works.

Like a Jackson Pollack painting, the Goddard Center has a lot going on. But, if a person takes a step back and views the image as a whole, one will find that each component works in sync to form a living masterpiece.

### THE DREAM

It was Charles B. Goddard's wife, Ethel, who dreamed of a center for the arts in her community. She was the librarian for Ardmore High School, and her best friend, Lil Williams, was an actor, director and key player in Ardmore's community theater. Like their friendship, Ethel believed the arts and the classroom worked beautifully together. She set out to make it happen. The center broke ground for construction in Ardmore, Okla., in 1969. Ethel chose to name it the Charles B. Goddard Center for the Visual and Performing Arts in honor of her late husband, a man she described as the most generous person she had ever known.

A photo capturing the groundbreaking ceremony hangs in the Goddard Center's administrative office. The black-and-white image of Ethel can be seen smiling proudly while surrounded by her many supporters.

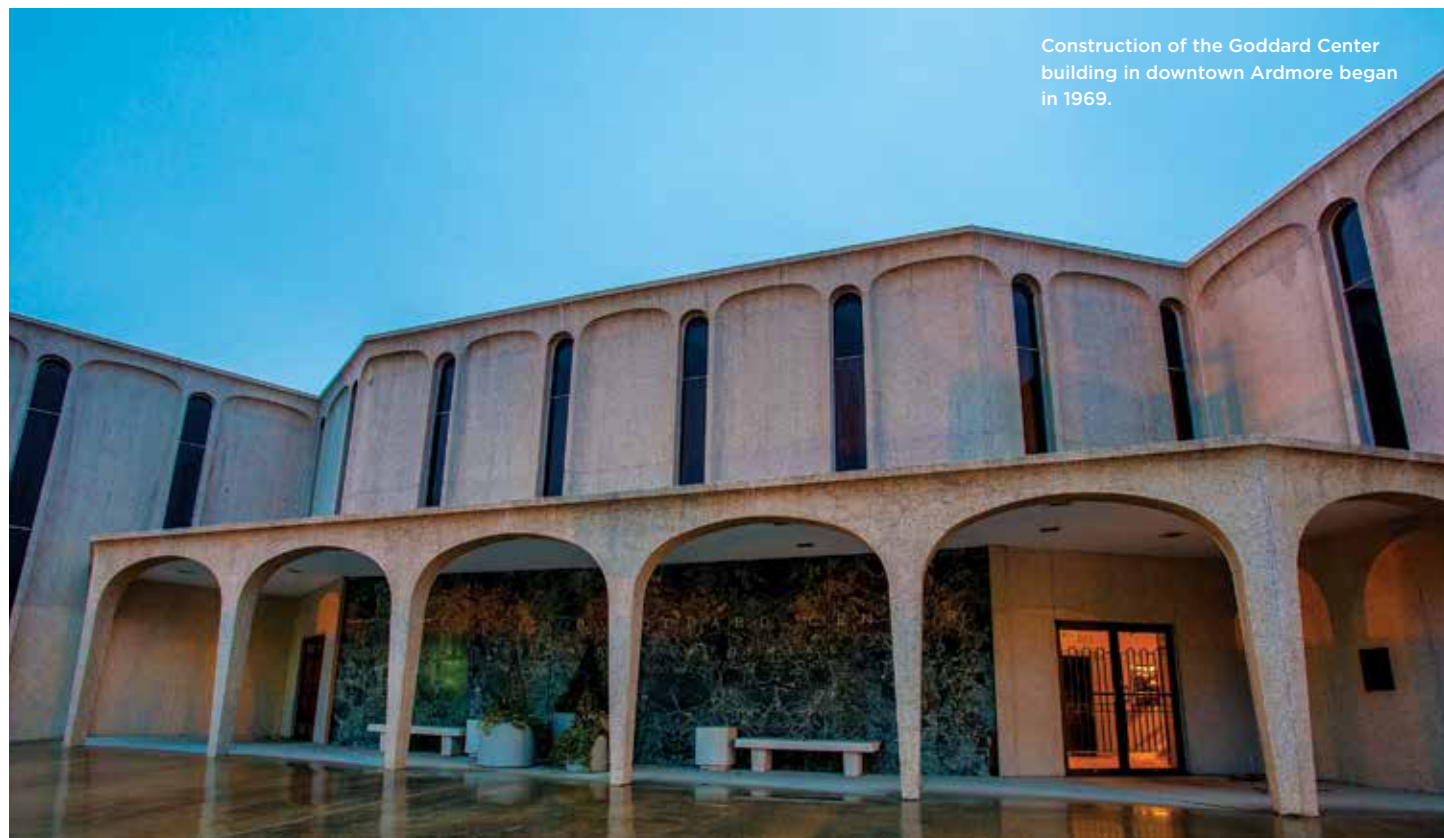
One of those supporters was, and still is, The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation. Since the groundbreaking, the Noble

Foundation has provided more than \$1 million in grants. In 2013, the organization continued its tradition of support with an additional \$30,000 for operational funds and outreach programs.

"The Goddard Center provides social programs and community projects that improve the quality of life in southern Oklahoma," said Mary Kate Wilson, director of philanthropy, engagement and project management at the Noble Foundation. "We are proud to assist in continuing that legacy of service."

The kinship between the two organizations came naturally. The Goddard Center and the Noble Foundation share similar roots – ones that have grown deeper and more entwined through the decades. Both Charles B. Goddard and the Noble Foundation's founder, Lloyd Noble, were Oklahoma wildcatters, accomplished entrepreneurs and dedicated philanthropists. The Goddard Center and the Noble Foundation both call Ardmore home. And each generation of respective leaders has ►

Painting classes are just one way the Goddard Center brings art appreciation to southern Oklahoma residents.



Construction of the Goddard Center building in downtown Ardmore began in 1969.



Actors in an Ardmore Little Theater group perform *Les Misérables* on the Goddard Center stage.

Photo Credit: Robert Smartt

“The world is chaotic and besieged,” Turrentine said. “But when people see beauty, they become more beautiful in their behavior and expectations. To walk into the Goddard Center and see all the beauty happening here – it’s magic.”

joined in supporting each other’s organization by serving on boards, as trustees, members and volunteers.

“I think the relationship between the center and the Foundation speaks volumes for both organizations,” said Leila Lenore, executive director at the Goddard Center. “The impact of the grant monies we receive from the Noble Foundation cannot be overstated. The educational, economic and social dividends provided by the performing and visual arts are important to both the vitality and viability of southern Oklahoma.”

#### REACHING OUT

Ethel Goddard passed away before the Goddard Center opened its doors to the public, but her passion for joining culture with community continues. Today, hundreds of children, adults and senior citizens attend any of the 12 art classes and workshops available each semester. Classes range from pottery, drawing and painting to granite sculpting, which is taught by 2008 National Medal of Arts recipient Jesús Morales. The center is also home to the Ardmore Little Theatre, a nonprofit performing arts organization.

The quality and frequency of new performances, exhibits and classes held at the Goddard Center is dependent on grants, donations, sponsorships and revenue generated from the center’s 500 memberships. An average of eight performances and six traveling exhibits are hosted each year, featuring regional and professional artists. In the 2013-2014 season, the center will host American cultural performances, Made in Oklahoma exhibits and the Oklahoma Arts Conference. Even Metropolitan Opera performances will be live-streamed from New York City directly into the center’s theater which features a large two-story screen.

Yet the center’s mission isn’t confined to its own walls. Outreach programs,

funded by donors like the Noble Foundation, take art out of the gallery and into the community. These programs provide scholarships for summer art camps and art classes; free performances for local school groups and gallery tours; and free dance and movement lessons at preschools. The Goddard Center has also launched an integrated arts program as part of their outreach efforts, beginning with Jefferson Elementary School in Ardmore.

“I think teaching is so strict and focused on meeting certain standards that we’ve lost some creativity in the classroom,” said Robyn Spriggs, a music teacher at Jefferson Elementary. “Art allows our students to open their minds and see things in a different light.”

The program enabled the school to hire an art instructor to work with teachers to integrate art into everyday lessons. Students learned to associate movement with vocabulary and incorporated cultural art into history courses. This style of learning offered a different and effective way for students to retain information while gaining confidence. Soon after the program began, students’ speaking and presentation skills improved.

“Since bringing art into the classroom, we have watched our students’ self-esteem skyrocket,” Spriggs said. “That self-esteem translates into other areas. Our test scores have improved significantly, and we have been able to steadily maintain higher scores.”

Following the success of Jefferson Elementary, the Goddard Center has moved their program to Ardmore’s Lincoln Elementary School. The Goddard Center continues to use these art programs as a tool for educational reform, social change and economic activity in southern Oklahoma.

#### BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

While Ethel’s passion for education is still

at the forefront of the Goddard Center’s outreach efforts, serving the community through art doesn’t stop with the students. The Goddard Center believes art is for everyone, especially underserved citizens. In that spirit, the center provides free concert opportunities to senior citizen centers, veterans, and people with mental, physical or developmental disabilities. Watching a child discover her passion for dance or a stroke victim regain the use of his hands through a pottery class has made the center’s efforts worthwhile to everyone who has donated their time or money to the mission.

“At its core, art transcends languages, cultures, disabilities and age,” Lenore said. “It is the great equalizer in a multicultural community that can be enjoyed, no matter your background or socioeconomic status.”

According to Regina Turrentine, a volunteer, the center has become a home for many. While organizations designed for the arts can sometimes be viewed as a place for a select few, the Goddard Center is a bustling and welcoming place for everyone and every artistic taste, she said.

A growing interest in the arts has recently fueled more diversity in musical performances at the Goddard Center – like Junior Brown, John Fullbright, and The Black Lilies – in addition to classical genres.

In Turrentine’s nearly 40 years as a volunteer, she has seen the center’s work return to it 10-fold. Volunteer and membership numbers have increased, community involvement has been sparked, and the arts have gone from sparse to alive and well in southern Oklahoma. Turrentine believes art has changed Ardmore, then art can change the world.

“The world is chaotic and besieged,” Turrentine said. “But when people see beauty, they become more beautiful in their behavior and expectations. To walk into the Goddard Center and see all the beauty happening here – it’s magic.” ■



Buyers place their bids during the annual Integrity Beef cattle auction at OKC West Livestock Market in El Reno, Okla.

# A Higher Standard

## The Integrity Beef Alliance demonstrates a new level of excellence in cattle production

By Caitlin Powers

Robert Wells and Mike Campsey stand near a holding pen on a bright December morning, watching thousands of cattle chew feed from bunks.

Today is a big day for both the men and the cattle they're surveying. It's sale day for the Integrity Beef Alliance at OKC West Livestock Market in El Reno, Okla.

Wells, Ph.D., the executive director of Integrity Beef and a Noble Foundation livestock consultant, and Campsey, a founding member of the alliance, chat as they survey the sea of smoke- and black-colored calves.

"Do you hear that?" Wells stops and says to Campsey.

"Hear what?" Campsey asks.

"We are talking without yelling," Wells said.

Both men smile.

On most sale days, it would be impossible to hold a conversation by the feed pens without yelling. The bellowing of thousands of cattle would easily drown out any words.

Today, however, the usual ruckus of such a sizable herd has been replaced with only a few scattered bawls from the back pens. The cattle closest to the front are content to eat, because these cattle are different. These are Integrity Beef cattle.

### A HIGHER STANDARD

Integrity Beef is a preconditioning cattle program for cow-calf producers who seek to send the best quality product into the marketplace. Through uniform and elevated standard practices, Integrity Beef producers' cattle far surpass industry standards for health, performance and behavior.

"When Integrity Beef cattle leave the ranch, they are in good health and know

how to eat from a feed bunk, preparing them for a productive term in a stocker operation or feedlot," Wells said. "We can honestly tell the buyers that every one of these animals that goes through the sale maintained integrity and upheld all the standards of our stringent program."

Integrity Beef was established in 2000 by a group of Noble Foundation agricultural consultants and is a culmination of all the best management practices recommended on a daily basis to the 1,500 agricultural producers who participate in the Noble Foundation's no-cost consultation program.

Integrity Beef began small with a handful of select producers. Success brought interest and more participants, but membership has been reserved for dedicated ranchers like Campsey. "Integrity Beef has been heavily guarded to ensure it was about quality and not quantity," Wells said.

To ensure this focus, the Noble Foundation agricultural consultants formed a producer panel from Integrity Beef producer members to receive input for the direction of the program. The panel has now evolved into a board of directors who are the primary decision makers for the alliance.

Over the past 11 years, the program has grown steadily, and Integrity Beef became its own nonprofit organization this fall.

The program is also now more widely available to those who meet a set of standards and receive approval by the board of directors. Current requirements include specific calf, cow and bull criteria; following the Integrity Beef herd health program; and being an active participant in the Noble Foundation consultation program. "The board believes that one of

the biggest advantages of being in the program is the affiliation with the Noble Foundation and the consultation process they get out of it," Wells said. "It constantly challenges them to think about new things and new ways of looking at the industry."

### PAYING DIVIDENDS

The higher standards and extensive preconditioning equate to higher levels of profitability.

Producers in Integrity Beef can participate in a commingled calf sale at OKC West Livestock Market each year. As part of the sale process, all Integrity Beef cattle are first simultaneously delivered to the sale facility, separated by sex and breed type, divided into weight groups, and then formed - commingled - into uniform drafts.

Buyers request the most uniform drafts to take to feedlots and stocker operations. The Integrity Beef program has been able to provide just that.

Before Integrity Beef, Campsey could easily spot his cattle at auction. On this day, he sat with Wells in the stands watching a draft that contained some of his cattle.

Wells leaned over and asked Campsey, "Can you spot your cattle?"

"Yes," he said. "But only because of that blue ear tag. Otherwise, I'd have no idea."

Both men smiled because they know premium uniformity means a world of difference.

The 2012 Integrity Beef Alliance sale averaged 14 percent higher sale values than commodity cattle sold in the same weight class at the same sale.

"The program is a benefit for both the producer's bottom line and the integrity of the cattle industry," Wells said. "Integrity Beef truly lives up to its name." ■

# Giving thanks

by J. Adam Calaway



I don't believe in Santa. Never have. Nope. Not even as a kid.

My earliest Christmas recollections never included the jolly, present-wielding elf. That guy lived in department stores and – in my hypercritical child mind – was guilty of an annual breaking-and-entering spree of global proportions.

For me, Christmas focused entirely on family. PJs. Fireplaces. Laughing. Games. Old traditions and new memories. We spent the season together – thankful for our little corner of the world and, most of all, thankful for each other. As I've aged, Christmas ushers in a season of true gratitude. I am blessed beyond measure with family and friends, with health and love, and with a workplace rich with people I respect and enjoy.

So on this – the last page of the last Noble Foundation publication for 2013 – I want to thank some special members of my Noble family.

Thank you to our environmental services crew. I still don't know how 10 people keep 500,000 square feet of research and administration space spotless, but you manage to make this place shine. Every visitor to the Noble Foundation comments on our cleanliness.

Thank you to the landscape crew who trims, mows and edges our campus into a haven of horticultural perfection.

Thank you to all the facility, maintenance and utility services teams, who keep this place together and humming. You do your work quietly and with a smile. Simply put, you are the backbone

of the organization.

Thank you to the ladies in the cafeteria, who cook more than 50,000 meals every year and – don't tell my momma this – bake the best cookies.

Thank you to our construction team – who can build anything (and I mean anything), even a cotton gin (for the new *Grown For You* mobile classroom) and a Las Vegas sign (what happens at the Noble Christmas party stays at the Noble Christmas party).

Thank you to the research associates, assistants and technicians, as well as the lab assistants. You all keep the science moving. The principal investigators would be sunk without you.

Thank you to the ag service technicians and the ag research technicians who brave Oklahoma's blistering summers and bone-chilling winters to manage our field work.

Thank you to our computing services team who not only have the daunting task of explaining Windows 7 to 350 people, but manage a computing network that would make Bill Gates cry.

This list could go on and on, but I'll stop and just say "thank you" to all the men and women who dedicate their lives and their energy to the Noble Foundation. You make a difference every day to this world and to me.

If there was a Santa, you'd all definitely be on the nice list. Merry Christmas. ■



Mrs. Bert Powers displays her Ardmore, Okla., garden in 1949. The Noble Foundation sponsored garden contests during the 1940s.

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A pivot irrigation system moves slowly over an autumn pasture at the Noble Foundation's Red River Ranch in Love County, Okla.