

Leaders in conservation gathered at the Area 3 Meeting of the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts held in Afton on Oct. 29. The theme of this year's meeting was "Resilient Land, Resilient People." Ottawa County Conservation District hosted the meeting, sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts (OACD) and cosponsored by the Oklahoma Conservation Commission (OCC) in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). More than 130 people attended. Justin Miller, OACD Area 3 Representative opened the Area Meeting along with Natalie Gibson, Freshman, Afton High School, sang the National Anthem and Denny Beard provided the morning invocation. The opening session was titled "Commitment, Collaboration, and Conservation." Kim I. OACD Board President, Jamey Wood, NRCS Assistant State Conservationist and Lisa Knauf-Owen, Oklahoma Conservation Commission Interim Executive Director discussed the changes of conservation in 2014 and the exciting projects that the conservation partnership will be undertaking in 2015. The panel discussed and highlighted the changing leadership of the organizations, the make-up of the state legislature, as well as, the soil health initiative, and suppression of invasive species. Steve Alspach, NRCS Soil Scientist, and Greg Scott, OCC Soil Scientist along with local agriculture producer Jay Franklin discussed how implementing conservation tillage practices, crop rotations, and incorporating cover crops can greatly benefit the soil's ability to store moisture and increase microbial content. The panel also discussed the challenges and opportunities of converting a traditional agriculture operation to an operation that focuses on soil conservation practices. Following the panel, attendees were able to view first-hand demonstrations about how residue management can greatly increase the ability of soil to store moisture and keep topsoil and nutrients anchored in the soil profile. Scott Engelbrecht, Growing Operations Manager from J-M Farms, Inc., was the guest speaker, enlightening the group through a power point presentation on the complex process to turn other farmers by-products (wheat straw, cottonseed, and poultry litter to name a few) into rich compost that is the key to success in growing mushrooms. Area winners of the OACD Conservation Awards were awarded to Caney Valley Conservation District for Outstanding Conservation District, sponsored by Chesapeake Energy; and Waymon Montgomery, for Outstanding District Director, sponsored by the Samuel

Roberts Noble Foundation; and Grant Victor for Outstanding Landowner/Cooperator, sponsored by the Nature Conservancy of Oklahoma. The state winner will be recognized at the OACD State Meeting February 24th, 2015, at the Reed Center in Midwest City. Directors and staff of the Wagoner County Conservation District attended the meeting Area 3 Meeting. District directors who attended included George Stunkard, J. W. Edwards and Janet Froeb; Conservation District staff members attending included Paula Templeton, Programs Coordinator. The OACD Area Meetings include contests co-sponsored by the Oklahoma Association of Conservation District Employees (OACDE) for youth in categories of speeches, essays and posters. Oklahoma Farmers Royalty Company sponsors awards for the OACD/OACDE Awards. First place winners in the essay and poster contests, as well as first and second place winners in the speech contest, are eligible to compete at the state level during OACD's Annual State Meeting. Poster Contest Winners for Wagoner County were: Division II (2nd Grade) Second Place Easton Bobbitt - Porter Schools Division VI (6th Grade) Second Place Hailee Fletcher - Porter Schools Division VII (7th Grade) Second Place Payton Taylor - Porter Schools Division VIII (8th Grade) First Place Wyatt Wilson - Porter Schools Division IX (9th Grade) First Place Reagan Bookout - Porter Schools Division X (10th Grade) First Place Stacie Robertson - Porter Schools Division XI (11th Grade) First Place Mariah Marshall - Porter Schools Division XII (12th Grade) First Place Hallie Barnes - Porter Schools Kim Farber, OACD president; and Shirley Hudson, OACDE Area 3 director; presented each contestant, with a medal recognizing them among the winners of the Area 3 poster contest. First place winners are now eligible to compete in the state contest, scheduled for February 21-24, 2015 in Oklahoma City, representing the Wagoner County Conservation District.