Simmons Foods Gift Honors Company’s Founding Father

FAYETTEVILLE, Ark. – Siloam Springs-based Simmons Foods Inc. has provided a $125,000 gift to support the University of Arkansas Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences.

The M.H. “Bill” Simmons Honors College Academy Scholarships will be created by $120,000 and matched by $120,000 from funds available through the Matching Gift Program to create a $240,000 scholarship endowment. The remaining $5,000 will go to the Department of Poultry Science. The Simmons Honors College Academy Scholarships will benefit highly-qualified students interested in poultry science and agricultural business.

Greg Weidemann, dean of Bumpers College, said: “We are very grateful to Mark and Todd Simmons and Simmons Foods for their support of Bumpers College. This endowed scholarship fund will go a long way toward strengthening our student recruitment efforts and provides an attractive opportunity for outstanding students with an interest in agriculture to attend the University of Arkansas.”

Mark Simmons, chairman, is a second-generation owner of Simmons Foods Inc., which was founded in 1949 by Mark’s father, M.H. “Bill” Simmons. Under Mark Simmons’ direction, Simmons Foods has grown to become one of the nation’s largest privately held broiler processing companies. Mark’s son, Todd, is the president of the company. Simmons Foods produces and distributes fresh and frozen poultry products to grocery stores and restaurants, the company also makes ingredients for livestock feed and pet food, processes more than 3 million broilers a week and operates a feed mill, hatcheries and processing plants. It employs 3,900 people in Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma and has annual sales of approximately $600 million. Simmons products can be found in all 50 states and in more than 40 countries.

Todd Simmons said: “We view the University of Arkansas as a great contributor to the future of Arkansas’ economic development and to the future of our company. We need the best qualified candidates and want to do what we can to support academic excellence and the continued positive direction both Bumpers College and the poultry science department have taken. We are excited about the differences the schools are making for the students, industry and the economy.”

Todd Simmons, a third generation leader of Simmons Foods, earned a degree in entrepreneurship in 1994 from Georgetown University. He’s worked for his family’s company since then in various capacities including heading up the sales and marketing unit and serving as the chief operating officer of the Simmons Foods poultry group. He is a member of the Arkansas Executive Forum, Young Presidents Organization and has served on the boards of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Northwest Arkansas and the Ozark Natural Science Center. (Continued on page 2)
Avian Flu: Tangible Threat or Just for the Birds?

FAYETTEVILLE, ARK. -- When it comes to public health issues, there is a razor-thin line between appropriate caution and overcompensatory alarm. Such is the case with avian influenza, more commonly known as bird flu.

University of Arkansas professor Dustan Clark, a veterinarian, participates in an avian influenza advisory group that meets regularly to assess developments and potential threats, and offers these reminders to those concerned about potential flu pandemics.

“The best thing to remember is that there are public health physicians, veterinarians, and other individuals out there that are keeping up with what is going on with the disease in other involved countries,” explained Clark. “If there was to be a serious problem, the mechanism is in place to do something to handle it very quickly.”

Recent media articles, such as that in The New York Times magazine, have sounded alarms and prompted concerns about the possibility of avian influenza becoming the next pandemic to affect the U.S. and other developed and undeveloped nations, Clark said.

Clark says that in any given year, the wild waterfowl and shorebird populations have various avian influenza viruses. The viruses usually are not a problem in these wild birds, but they can be a problem in domestic poultry.

Worldwide, there are many strains of the avian influenza virus that cause varying degrees of illness in poultry. Most of those viruses are classified as “low pathogen” and cause few, if any, signs of illness in fowl. The problem develops when those viruses mutate into highly pathogenic viruses and cause severe losses in poultry. Typically, avian influenza viruses that affect poultry and other birds do not affect people.

However, in 1997 an avian influenza virus (H5N1) did infect both poultry and a few people in Hong Kong. This was the first known instance of the avian influenza virus being transmitted directly from birds to people and causing severe illness and death. Since 1997 there have been a few other instances of the avian influenza virus causing illness or death in people.

The majority of the human cases have happened with people that were closely associated with affected poultry. Influenza viruses constantly mutate, and epidemiologists are concerned that the avian influenza virus could infect a person who has a human influenza strain, creating a new mutant flu strain to develop that could spread easily from person to person.

The U.S. grappled during the fall with a shortage of vaccines for human influenza.
When it comes to poultry, however, vaccination is the remedy of last resort. Regarding avian influenza, the best method of prevention is what is known as biosecurity, or monitoring and controlling disease in the poultry population before it becomes dangerous to humans.

Clark, a veterinarian, says that while a human flu vaccine might help prevent avian flu, the best preventative is caution. People who travel abroad and visit poultry and livestock herds should take cautionary measures such as avoiding close contact with the animals and destroying or sanitizing clothing worn on the visits.

“Most diseases don’t cross species,” said Clark. “In the human population, the best preventative for disease is good sanitation and biosecurity. It’s a matter of risk assessment. The greater percentage of the population that practices biosecurity, or that receives a human flu vaccine, the less chance we have of avian influenza infecting a person that has human influenza. Thus there is a reduction in the threat of a new influenza mutant developing from a combination of the avian and human types and subsequently developing into a pandemic.”

There have been three pandemics in the 20th century, the worst of which was the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-19. In recent years, however, a handful of people have died from avian flu in developing countries such as Vietnam and Thailand. Clark reiterates, however, that the current risk to the human population is very small.

“Historically, we have not had documentation of the flu spreading from birds to people. That changed a few years ago with the 1997 outbreak in Hong Kong that later proved to be a form of AI that mutated and spread to cause human disease,” he said.

The last known human avian influenza infection was in Vietnam in March 2004, but the number of new human infections sputtered and then appeared to have ceased. Now, medical and veterinary experts believe for a true new pandemic to develop, it would take an entirely new human influenza subtype to emerge, one to which people have never been exposed and to which they would not have immunity. While this remains a frightening possibility, most experts believe avian influenza in humans is not a serious threat.

“Still, if there is any suspicion of avian flu in a poultry flock in this country, the flock would be quickly destroyed, and we believe that would almost always control the threat of spread to humans,” Clark said. “The problem is that this is not always what has happened in developing countries.”

For the general population, Clark advises logical preventative measures after potential exposure. “There is no need for alarm or panic in the general population,” said Clark. “Numerous health professionals are monitoring influenza; and, training, surveillance and education efforts continue. Plans for dealing with an influenza emergency have been developed and are continually updated so that the best control efforts available could be implemented should the need arise.”

Poultry Extension Specialist Jerry Wooley, pictured above, received the Specialist Performance Award in January 2005.

Jerry Wooley, a U of A Cooperative Extension Service (CES) specialist received the “Specialist of the Year Award” at the Galaxy Conference in January 2005.

This award is given by the Arkansas Association of Cooperative Extension Specialists for recognition of outstanding performance in a single, difficult assignment and is not presented every year, but when it is merited by a member.

Wooley is in charge of the youth poultry programs for the State of Arkansas.

He and his wife live in Vilonia with their two sons.
How an Agriculture College Prepares a Student to Research Human Cancers

FAYETTEVILLE — Rupali Ugrankar, a masters student at the University of Arkansas in Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences, recently had to make a major decision. It was time to decide which university she would attend for her doctoral program and she just couldn’t make up her mind between Yale and Northwestern.

“I never dreamed I would be deciding between two world-class universities to do my Ph.D. program,” said Ugrankar. “Last Friday I finally made up my mind, it’s going to be Northwestern.”

Ugrankar’s background is not unlike many international students. Originally from Bombay, India, she came to the U of A through an International Student Scholarship. “That scholarship made it possible for me to attend college in the U.S., without it, I would not have been able to come.”

Once here, Ugrankar immediately went to work in laboratories on campus in order to help defray living expenses. “I usually worked around 20 hours per week in various laboratories on campus. I have worked solidly for the past six years; first, while getting my B.S. in Environmental, Soil and Water Sciences and then while completing my masters in Cell and Molecular Biology,” said Ugrankar.

Although Ugrankar carried a full load throughout her six years at the U of A -- she always maintained a perfect 4.0 grade point average, which helped her secure other scholarships along the way.

“Bumpers College has been so generous to me. I appreciate the numerous scholarships they offer to their students. I also thank the people who have pledged their finances in order to make financial aid for students possible,” said Ugrankar.

Some of the scholarships that Ugrankar has received over the years include the Fontaine Earle Crop Science Scholarship, the John Rust Foundation Scholarship, the R.P. and Mildred Bartholomew Memorial Scholarship, the Hinkle Scholarship and the C. Roy Adair Scholarship.

“I received wonderful counseling and advising during my entire college career. Dr. John Kirby, my major professor and Director of the Cell and Molecular Biology Program, is the reason I applied and was accepted at these world-class institutions. Had he not encour-

---

John Kirby wins Outstanding Faculty Award

Dr. John Kirby, a U of A poultry science professor received the Outstanding Faculty Award from the Student Alumni Board and the Associated Student Government at the 6th Annual Faculty Appreciation Banquet.

Nicole Mitchell, one of the Ph.D. students in the Cell and Molecular Biology Program, of which Kirby is the director, nominated him.

“I have been so impressed with Dr. Kirby’s dedication to his students and the program in general that I just had to nominate him for this award. He is truly an invaluable part of this university and deserves to be recognized for his efforts,” said Mitchell.

Rupali Ugrankar, pictured above, will attend Northwestern University in the fall to research human cancers.
Human Cancers continued

aged me to do so, I would have never thought it possible for me to attend an Ivy League school, and I would have never turned in an application to places like Northwestern or Yale,” said Ugrankar.

When asked why she finally chose Northwestern, Ugrankar smiled and said, “I’m a big city girl at heart. I’ve truly enjoyed living in Northwest Arkansas and the opportunities provided to me at the U of A, but I’m ready to experience big-city life again. When I went to visit their campus, I fell in love with Chicago!”

Another major reason Ugrankar chose Northwestern was their “umbrella” research program. At Northwestern, they have combined nine departments that are closely related together under an interdisciplinary umbrella, a move that is very intriguing to Ugrankar. “Their research is so diverse. I am very interested in human cancer research, but there are students in their program studying pharmacology, neurological diseases and birth defects. It’s a wide range of options, but it makes sense to me to have them combined together in order to achieve the very best research results.”

Ugrankar’s recent research work involves the vasotocin receptor in chickens and how it is associated with overall stress and the stress response in the birds. This type of research has required Ugrankar to use molecular biology, endocrinology and cell culture techniques. In order to accomplish this, Ugrankar has spent numerous research hours using specialized equipment in the various labs located in the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science.

“I have been working with molecular genetics in animals for many years, and during this time, I have learned and perfected scientific protocols and techniques that will be needed as I expand my research interests in the area of human cancers at Northwestern,” said Ugrankar. “It takes time to learn these new protocols and perfect your techniques. I’m thankful for the preparation the U of A has awarded me.”

From left, Gary Warren of Hubbard Farms ISA, presents a $2,000 check to Dr. Walter Bottje, poultry science department head. The check is for the Oliver J. Hubbard Memorial Scholarship and is designated for award to a deserving undergraduate poultry science student. Hubbard ISA has donated $56,200 towards the UA Poultry Science department since 1974.

Dr. Park Waldroup, above left, welcomes Dr. Jiabao Yang from the Sichuan Animal Science Academy in Chengdu, Sichuan Province, China. Dr. Yang will be conducting research in the area of protein nutrition for the next 10 months at the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science.

Congratulations to Neil Pumford, Carol Ojano-Dirain, Walter Bottje and Yanbin Li who received notice that their project “A biodetector for rapid on-site screening of breeder chickens with high efficiency” received funding from the USDA SBIR.

Their proposal was rated #1 out of the 100 proposals reviewed for funding in their section. The project will begin on May 1, 2005.
Gisela Erf named Jack G. Justus Award Recipient

Dr. Gisela Erf, pictured above, received the 2005 Jack G. Justus Endowment for Teaching Excellence at the Bumpers College Honors Convocation on April 21. Erf is a poultry science professor at the U of A.

Dr. Gisela Erf, immunologist in the Department of Poultry Science, was awarded the Jack G. Justus Endowment for Teaching Excellence for 2005, from Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences. The award was presented at the College’s Honors Convocation April 21st.

The recipient receives a monetary award to conduct teaching programs at the U of A and gives a college-wide seminar related to teaching.

Congratulations to Dr. Erf for winning this prestigious award from the College.

Poultry Science Graduate Students Win Awards at National Meeting

From left, poultry science graduate students Carol Ojano-Dirain and Krishna Hamal show off the awards they won at the Southern Poultry Science Society’s Annual Meeting in Atlanta.

ATLANTA—Two graduate students from the Department of Poultry Science at the University of Arkansas competed and won at the Southern Poultry Science Society Annual Meeting held in Atlanta Jan. 24-25.

Carol Ojano-Dirain, a Ph.D. student from Pamplona in Cagayan, Philippines, received the Alltech Student Manuscript Award for her paper “Determiniation of Mitochondrial Function and Site-specific Defects in Electron Transport in Duodenal Mitochondria in Broilers with Low and High Feed Efficiency.” Her paper was co-authored by her major professor Walter Bottje, research assistant professors Muhammad Iqbal and Neil Pumford, and two Cobb-Vantress, Inc., employees Mark Cooper and Terry Wing. Only one Alltech award is given out each year and the candidate must have won previously in their respective section in order to be considered.

Master’s student Krishna Hamal from Nepal, won an Outstanding Research Presentation Award for his paper “Maternal antibody transfer from dams to their egg-yolk, egg-white and offspring in two meat lines of chickens.” His paper was presented in the pathology section of the presentation competition. Co-authors on Hamal’s paper were his major professor Gisela Erf and I. Pevzner, an employee of Cobb-Vantress, Inc.

“I am extremely proud of these graduate students and the awards they have received. Our students continue to excel in their respective areas of research. I look forward to seeing where” said Walter Bottje, department head for poultry science.

PSGA Graduate Symposium Winners

Three poultry science/CEMB grad students, Farrah Madison (far left) Preety Sharma (second from left) and Padma Pillai, (far right) display travel awards of $150 each provided by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Sullivan (center) for their winning presentations during the PSGA Symposium.
UA Student wins Poultry Science “Student of the Year” Award from U.S. Poultry & Egg at Expo

ATLANTA - Drew Parker, senior poultry science major, was named the Poultry Science “Student of the Year” by the U.S. Poultry & Egg organization at the International Poultry Exposition in Atlanta Jan. 26.

Parker, son of Suzette and Gary Elmore of Lonoke, is a 2001 graduate of Lonoke High School and is currently serving as president of the U of A’s Poultry Science Club. He has been the recipient of a Randal Tyson memorial Scholarship, a Talmadge Nelson Scholarship and a University Scholarship. Parker has also been on the Dean’s list of Bumpers College.

“The U of A Poultry Science Club nominated me for this award and I am truly honored by their recognition,” Parker said. “In order to be considered, I had to submit my resume, a transcript, two letters of recommendation, a list of previous honors and write an essay on my future aspirations in the poultry industry.

“The competition for this award is extremely tough. I am proud of Drew and his prior accomplishments that led to his winning this award,” said Dr. Walter Bottje, poultry science department head.

Graduate Students Win during Gamma Sigma Delta Competition

FAYETTEVILLE - Carol Ojano-Dirain, Ph.d. student of Walter Bottje, took first place for her presentation, “Gene Expression in Duodenum and Breast Muscle of Broilers with Low and High Feed Efficiency” during the Gamma Sigma Delta oral and poster competition.

Pragya Sharma, also a Ph.d student of Walter Bottje’s and graduate student in the Cell and Molecular Biology Program of which John Kirby is the Director, took second place for her poster, “Multiple Alleles of the Uncoupling Protein Gene Identified in a Commercial Broiler Line.”

Kentu Lassiter, a master’s student of Walter Bottje’s and also a graduate student in the CEMB program, took third place for his poster, “Differential Expression of Mitochondrial and Extra-mitochondrial Proteins in Lymphocytes of Low and High Feed Efficient Broilers Within A Single Male Line.” Congratulations to these students.

Extension Poultry Economist named Co-chair of North American Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Extension Poultry Economist H.L. Goodwin, Jr., was named the academic co-chair of the Food Safety and Animal Health Working Group for Farm Foundations’ Future of Animal Agriculture in North America project.

In this position, Goodwin will have the primary responsibility for organizing and writing the Working Group report and coordinating that report with the other working groups in the project. With this appointment, Goodwin will be helping create policies that may affect the food on America’s dining room tables for years to come.

Grants Received:

Grants are listed in order of receipt...

Jason Emmert and Casey Owens
USDA CSREES IREECGP............ $305,015

Annie Donoghue
USDA ARS...................................... $20,556

Park Waldroup
Pfizer, Inc........................................ $12,500

Keith Bramwell
Cobb-Vantress, Inc........................... $9,300

Yanbin Li
BioDetection Instruments, Inc. ........ $20,000*

Brian Haggard and M. Matlock
Pawnee Nation............................... $4,000*

Yanbin Li
USDA FAS....................................... $25,000*

Brian Haggard and M. Matlock
US EPA (Prime)............................... $4,000*

Brian Haggard
USDA ARS...................................... $47,425*

Philip Moore, Jr.
USDA ARS...................................... $75,439*

And Congratulations to an Undergraduate who received a Research Grant from Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences

Ashley Swaffar
Bumpers College................................ $900

* Credit was given to another department for these amounts.

BE WATCHING THE NEXT PARTNERS FOR NEWS ABOUT THE POULTRY SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIP GOLF TOURNAMENT TAKING PLACE ON TUESDAY, APRIL 26TH AT VALLEY VIEW GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB. PROCEEDS FROM THE TOURNAMENT WILL GO TO THE POULTRY SCIENCE SCHOLARSHIP FUND.
**FACULTY NOTABLES**

**Dr. David Chapman** was an invited speaker at the Atlantic Poultry Conference in Nova Scotia, Canada on February 18th.

**Dr. Keith Bramwell** is giving a talk on egg cooling during the breeder session at the Annual Spring Symposium hosted by the Poultry Federation at the Northwest Arkansas Convention Center in Springdale April 26-27.

**Dr. Dan Donoghue** coordinated an invited presentation by Dr. J. Stan Bailey of the USDA/ARS on “Current Issues with Salmonella in Poultry,” March 14th at the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science.

**Dr. Gisela Erf** was named the Section Editor for the Immunology/Health and Disease Sections for the Poultry Science Journal by the Poultry Science Association. This is a three-year appointment.

**Karen Eskew and Aaron Bartlett** were given the Silver Award in the interactive media category from the Association for Communication Excellence (ACE) for their recruitment CD “Center of Excellence for Poultry Science Interactive Tour.”

**Dr. William Huff** was invited to The International Debate Conference for the Feed & Food Chain, “Antimicrobial Growth Promoters: Worldwide Ban on the Horizon,” on Jan. 31 – Feb. 1, Noordwijk aan Zee, the Netherlands. He presented a paper titled, “Bacteriophage: A Safe and Natural Alternative to Antimicrobial Growth Promoters.”

**Dr. Narayan Rath** invited to present seminar on “Avian growth plate development” for the Department of Zoology, Benaras Hindu University, India, Feb. 1-4. He also attended the annual meeting of the Society for Reproductive Biology and Comparative Endocrinology, Santiniketan, India, Feb. 6-9. Gave talk entitled, “Regulation of avian growth plate development.” Rath was also invited to present a talk titled, “Ovotransferrin, an avian acute phase protein and its immunomodulatory potential” in the 5th International Conference on Acute Phase proteins, in Dublin, Ireland, in March.

**Dr. Memo Tellez**, a research professor in the Center of Excellence for Poultry Science, was notified that he will receive the highest recognition in Mexico for his career research work during the last 15 years from the Mexican national poultry science association (ANECA) in June of this year. We will provide a more detailed report of this award in the next edition of Partners.

**Dr. Susan Watkins** is coordinating the program in conjunction with the Poultry Federation for the upcoming Annual Spring Symposium, which is held at the Northwest Arkansas Convention Center in Springdale April 26 and 27. Watkins is also speaking during the turkey session on “Three simple tools for optimizing your summer ventilation program.”

**STUDENT NOTABLES:**

Two poultry science students **Savannah Henderson** of Ninnekah, Oklahoma, and **Ashley Swaffar** of Farmington, Ark., were invited to attend the Aviagen Short Course in Talledega, Alabama, this summer. This is a nationally competitive short course and students must apply and be accepted in order to attend. **Swaffar** was also the recent recipient of a Bumpers College Undergraduate Research Grant in the amount of $900.