By Chris Martin

During the seventh and final general session of the 85th Tennessee FFA State Convention held last month, a committee composed of FFA members and supporters announced that UTM students Rachel Ralston of Rockvale and Jeff Rogers of Munford would serve on the 2013-2014 state FFA officer team. Ralston will serve as the State Sentinel and Rogers will serve as the West Tennessee State Vice-President.

“I underwent a huge moment of disbelief when my name was called! All I heard was my chapter name being called and at first I thought to myself that someone else from my chapter must have been running, because that surely was not my name being called,” said Ralston, while explaining the moment her name was called. “The candidates beside me, who are both my teammates now, had to push me out into the aisle for me to realize that I was going on stage. Overall, it was an incredible feeling.”

Both Ralston and Rogers will travel the State of Tennessee visiting with high school agriculture students, business and industry leaders, policy makers, and other stakeholders while carrying out the mission of the National FFA Organization: to promote premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agriculture education.

“I am most excited about meeting members across the state and finding out what makes each individual tick. It fascinates me that every member comes from different backgrounds and different experiences, but yet we all have one collective fondness for FFA. I most look forward in getting to know the backbone of our organization, and also serving them!” stated Ralston.

Serving on the team with Ralston and Rogers are, President Sarah Best, East Tennessee Vice-President Rebekah Wright, Middle Tennessee Vice-President Scott Bohannon, Secretary Melinda Perkins, Treasurer Colton McClanahan, and Reporter Samantha Beard.
Fifteen Fashion Merchandising Students had a once-in-a-life-time experience by participating in the Atlanta Fashion Travel Study Tour this Spring.

The tour gave them an opportunity to hear from executives at Saks Fifth Avenue from Talent Managers, Department Managers, Buyers, and Visual Directors. They learned about the various experiences of these individuals, what they do and how to prepare for a job in the fashion industry.

The students also visited the AmericasMart during the Fall Fashion Buying Market where they viewed a Fall 2013 Fashion Show and gained first-hand knowledge of the fashion buying process.

At the Atlanta History Center they participated in the Sheep to Shawl Celebration and viewed costumes from the 1800’s.

One of the highlights of the tour was a visit to CNN Studios where they learned how studio equipment works, the process of developing news story from start to broadcast and new technology when broadcasting the news.

Shannon Fisher, Fashion Merchandising Student stated: “The trip was exciting and educational. It reinvigorated my love for fashion and I learned about all the different career possibilities available in the fashion industry.”

“Through Fashion Travel Study Programs, students learn so much more than they would ever learn in the classroom and make contacts with professionals in the fashion industry,” stated Dr. Sue Byrd, Professor of Fashion Merchandising and Program Leader.

“These experiences lead students to dynamic careers and dream fulfilling futures.”

The College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences would like to congratulate the equestrian team on a great season! We are proud of you!
Writing grants allowed Sharon Wenz to be instrumental in helping educate about children and family life.

Wenz grew up as the oldest of five children. Before she was a senior in high school, she had lived in Kansas, Texas, Montana, Nebraska, and Michigan. When she attended Western Michigan University, she changed her major from social work to home economics. Wenz credits one of her teachers for inspiring her to pursue a career in family education.

Wenz and her husband met in the sixth grade in Michigan. She could look out her back window and see his house.

“We played together in middle school, and worked together in the fish ponds in high school. He was also my debate partner in high school,” she said.

The two began dating in high school, but “a lot more” when he moved back to Western Michigan University.

She moved here with her soon to be husband in 1968 to teach home economics classes at Milan High School. After marrying and moving to Martin a year later, she taught in the small community school at Palmersville. She taught there until she became pregnant with the first of their three children.

Wenz became full-time at UTM in 1981, as the director for infant stimulation. She wrote grants for programs for children with development disabilities.

Programs such as the Infant Stimulation Program, Parents Education and Children’s Health, Abusive Prevention Program, and Lending Library all educated parents and children. Her programs helped train daycare facilities to spot developmental delays from birth to three years of age. While she was in charge of Lending Library, they created over 150 resources for daycare centers to use as learning tools.

“I looked for sustainable grant programs. I wanted something that would last. I wanted to train people who would stay after they were trained,” she said.

When Wenz retired in 2007, she had worked with every state department except one to secure grants for learning programs. She credits colleagues, Cook, Fannin, and Armstrong, for being great friends and mentors.

“They were instrumental in the grant programs,” she said.

While at UTM, Wenz said there were several things she loved about the campus. She noticed the students were not sloppy, and most were involved in an organization that gave back to the community.

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She also liked that teachers provided one-on-one help with the students. She also remembers having excellent chancellors while she worked at UTM.

“I don’t remember a bad chancellor at UTM. They were all so helpful in the grant process,” she said.

She also remembers UTM campus being beautiful. Wenz said that when she first came to campus, the grounds were beautiful and that legacy has continued.

“My goal in college was to find a university that I really liked and teach there. Of course, I was naive at the time,” she laughed. “But I was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time with UTM.”

Wenz continues to live in Martin, in the same home of 40 years. She lives with her husband, four dogs, and 22 cats, along with her numerous collections.

Wenz enjoys collecting raku pottery, China, stained glass, music boxes, Steinbach nutcrackers, and cobalt blue glass, among other things.

The College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences would like to congratulate Dr. Jason Roberts for receiving the 2013 Outstanding Advisor Award.