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UT Extension to hold registered judging school for fairs and festivals

It takes blue-ribbon judges to recognize blue-ribbon fair entries, whether those items are food products or fine arts.

That's why University of Tennessee Extension agents in family and consumer sciences in Middle Tennessee collaborated to create the Tennessee Registered Judging School for fairs and festivals. It will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesday, May 22, at the UT-TSU Extension office in Rutherford County, located at 315 John R. Rice Blvd. in Murfreesboro.

The cost of the workshop is \$20, and that will include lunch and a judging manual for each participant to take home. To pre-register, which is required, visit your local Extension office at 1331 McArthur Street, Manchester.

"County fairs have a rich tradition of celebrating the best agriculture, livestock, food, and creative arts produced by members of a community," said Shelly Barnes, FCS agent in Wilson County who helped organize the workshop.

To the casual observer, winning ribbons at the county fair simply may represent the prettiest quilt or the most intricate needlework, she said, but to the critically trained eyes of the best fair judges, every detail of every entry is evaluated.

"It takes experience to be able to identify the cream of the crop. This workshop covers how to be a judge, dos and don'ts, judge etiquette, and features break-out sessions for in-depth learning," Barnes said.

Of the six in-depth sessions that will be presented at the 2019 judging school, participants will choose three. Sessions will include:

- Baked goods
- Canning, drying, and fermenting
- Crafts
- Fine arts
- Needlework
- Sewing

This is a unique opportunity for individuals interested in learning more about judging competitive exhibits at local fairs and festivals who also collaborated on the effort.

Judging typically takes place before the fair opens to the general public, with live judging an exception, she explained. Fair staff and volunteers secure experts in specific areas to provide their professional opinion for each entry.

The Tennessee Registered Judging School is just one way the University of Tennessee, Institute of Agriculture is touching lives through its mission of research, teaching, and extension. With an office in every county, UT Extension delivers educational programs and research-based information to citizens throughout the state. In cooperation with Tennessee State University, UT Extension works with farmers, families, youth, and communities to improve lives by addressing problems and issues at the local, state, and national levels to provide “Real. Life. Solutions.” Visit ag.tennessee.edu to learn more.