

MSU HOSTS INAUGURAL WORLD FOOD PRIZE MISSISSIPPI YOUTH INSTITUTE

By Vanessa Beeson

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS from across the state visited Mississippi State University in March 2017 to discuss how to solve world hunger.

Students conducted research and completed an essay that focused on out-of-the-box solutions for solving global food insecurity to garner an invitation to the inaugural World Food Prize Mississippi Youth Institute. Attendees were officially designated Borlaug Scholars for their participation and are eligible for scholarships to Mississippi State University.

The students presented their research findings in a roundtable discussion moderated by Keegan Kautzky, director of national programs for the World Food Prize. After the roundtable, the students were guests at the Charles E. Lindley Lecture where Kautzky discussed global food security.

Kautzky, who grew up on a farm in Iowa, said a conversation with 1970 Nobel Peace Prize winner Norman Borlaug shaped his life's work. In 1986, Borlaug founded the World Food Prize, the foremost international award recognizing the achievements of individuals who have advanced human development by improving the quality, quantity, or availability of food in the world. In 1994, the World Food Prize Youth Institute was created to increase awareness and involvement of youth in the mission to fight hunger and poverty in a meaningful way.

Kautzky said that the Borlaug Scholars pay tribute to the World Food Prize's



founder, Norman E. Borlaug.

“Dr. Borlaug knew that engaging young people was critical to feeding the world,” Kautzky said. “If you are striving to solve global problems at 16, you’ll likely be doing the same at 60. The goal of this program is to empower passionate and promising youth to see how they might help feed the world.”

Scott Willard, associate dean of MSU’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, hopes the program will grow in coming years.

“This is an excellent opportunity for our state’s youth to engage in a meaningful conversation about global food security,” Willard said. “Additionally, it gives these students a chance to earn scholarships and become involved with the World Food Prize, an international organization focused on feeding the world.”

Participants, along with their teachers, took part in interactive events on the MSU campus to explore research and work currently taking place in Mississippi to address food challenges. The students also engaged with university experts and their peers to discuss solutions to global hunger and poverty.

ABOVE: The newly designated Borlaug Scholars enjoyed a full day at MSU learning about food security, including a chance to meet with MSU President Mark E. Keenum, a longtime proponent of food security. Pictured (left-right) are Scott Willard, associate dean of MSU’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; Nyshedra Jordan, Thomas Shaw, and Angelique Wilson all of Golden Triangle Early College High School; Keenum; Gabe Entrekin of Poplarville High School; Charles Smith, David Burnett, and Christian Williamson of Golden Triangle Early College High School; Mary Lurks of Wingfield High School; and Keegan Kautzky, director of national programs for the World Food Prize. (Photo by Beth Wynn)

RIGHT: Students participated in a round-table discussion on their research topic and potential solutions to global food insecurity issues. (Photo by David Ammon)



KNIGHTS BUILD SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED YOUTH INSTITUTE AT MSU

By Addie Mayfield

A RECENT COMMITMENT from Mississippi State University alumni Barry and Lana Knight of Cordova, Tennessee, is creating an annual fund in support of the World Food Prize Mississippi Youth Institute at MSU.

The Barry and Lana Knight World Food Prize Mississippi Youth Institute

Fund will provide essential support for engaging Mississippi's high school students in the globally recognized program through MSU's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

As the host campus, the first WFP-MSYI was held at Mississippi State in March 2017.

To participate in the WFP-MSYI, ninth through 12th grade students research a global issue and write a three- to five-page paper, under teacher mentor supervision, addressing the challenges and possible solutions. Participants then attend the day-long event, where the top students are competitively selected by the WFP Board of Reviewers to represent Mississippi as delegates at the Global Youth Institute.

In an effort to help increase the

significance of the experience for students and teachers who attend, the Knights' gift will help to defray costs of the institute including brochures, literature, meals, and transportation. Additionally, the fund will provide scholarship support for WFP-MSYI student participants to pursue a college degree in agriculture or other related life sciences, as well as a stipend for a faculty or staff member to oversee the program.

"We are pleased to be the state's host for this incredibly valuable program that engages high school students in real-world problems and prepares them as future leaders," said Scott Willard, associate dean and professor for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and WFP-MSYI state coordinator. "The Knights' generous support for this program is an outstanding demonstration of their investment in our youth and the welfare of people around the world."

After earning a bachelor's degree from Oklahoma State University in 1983, Barry Knight earned a master's in agronomy from MSU in 1988. Recognized as the 2011 MSU Alumni Fellow for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, he serves as senior vice president of commercial operations in North America for Indigo, a Charleston, Massachusetts-based organization that specializes in optimizing agricultural production through plant microbiomes. Prior to his current position, he held progressive senior positions at companies including Cresco Ag LLC, Pinnacle Agriculture, and Jimmy Sanders.

Fellow 1988 MSU graduate Lana Knight earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education. The couple have been avid supporters of their alma mater over time, supporting areas including Bulldog athletics and student scholarships. In 2013, the couple endowed perpetual support through the Barry and Lana Knight endowed scholarships in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Education, furthering their legacy at MSU.

