

Leader

A Colonial Farm Credit Member Publication

2023 - Issue 3

A Message From Paul



Paul Franklin
President,
Colonial Farm Credit

As we wrap up 2023 and start the New Year, it is great to see that the harvest went well overall for our customers. I think most operations will consider 2023 to be a good year on the farm. However, the outlook for high operating costs, high interest rates, and volatile markets remains. We are well positioned to help customers as challenges emerge, and our financial performance looks good as we conclude the year. The quality of the loan portfolio remains sound and stable. Your Association's income is running better than budgeted, and we anticipate a good patronage distribution in the spring of 2024.

We had a very busy fall visiting Congress on Capitol Hill, and in the field, to advocate for passage of a new Farm Bill as soon as possible. I want to thank all of the people and organizations involved in these efforts. There is no substitute for meeting face to face with our legislators to discuss 1.) The good work done on the farm to produce food and fiber sustainably and 2.) The challenges our family farms encounter year in and year out.

Two exceptional people that have been very important to our success over many years recently retired:

Cyndi Drust retired after 36 years with our cooperative. Cyndi served in many roles, most recently as an Accountant and Report Manager. Over her tenure, she was known for her attention to detail, speed, and efficiency – quite a combination! With her institutional knowledge and self-developed skills, she contributed greatly to the Association's advancement through the years.

After 48 years of strong and dedicated service, Gene McNabb, Relationship Manager in our Lynchburg office, recently retired. Gene's tireless work ethic and commitment to helping the community set the standard for us over many decades.

Cyndi and Gene, we thank you and wish you the best with retirement!

I also want to thank all of our employees (and our interns, Tanner Wise and Brian Wathen!) for their teamwork, dedication and good judgment, all of which have made this a successful year. We are blessed to have a great team.

We hope you enjoyed a happy and safe Christmas and holiday season. We look forward to working with you in 2024!

Giving Back to the Community

In an effort to assist fellow rural organizations, Colonial Farm Credit was proud to make 2023 donations to the following organizations:

Colonial Agricultural Educational Foundation

Virginia 4-H

Maryland 4-H

Virginia FFA

Maryland FFA

Virginia Ag in the Classroom

Maryland Ag in the Classroom

Virginia Farmers Market Association

Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program

Farmer Veteran Coalition - Virginia Chapter

VA Federation of Food Banks

Virginia Agriculture Leaders Obtaining Results (VALOR)

Virginia Farm Bureau Grain Bin Safety Program

LEAD Maryland Foundation

Maryland Food Bank



Paul Franklin (right) presents William Crutchfield (left) with a donation check to Virginia State University's Small Farm Outreach Program.

Colonial in the Community

Farm Credit Fly In

Colonial Farm Credit was honored to participate in the Farm Credit Council Fly-In event this November, meeting with members of Congress to advocate for the swift approval of the Farm Bill as well as a few additional bills that would improve Farm Credit's ability to serve rural America. Colonial Farm Credit employees and board members were accompanied by Haydon & Andrea Garland of NNK Village Farm Shoppe and Herbert Brown of Browntown Farms.

The team was able to meet with the offices of Rep. Bob Good, Rep. Rob Wittman, Rep. Jen Kiggans, Rep. Jen McClellan, Sen. Mark Warner, and Sen. Tim Kaine. These visits were very productive and all parties were very receptive to the proposed legislation that is meant to serve rural communities.



Following the congressional visits, members of Congress were invited to a marketplace reception hosted on the District Pier at the Wharf. Farm Credit associations from across the country were able to show off the diversity of products that are created with the help of the Farm Credit System. Colonial was proud to bring savory beef sticks from the NNK Village Farm Shoppe in Callao, VA and delicious jams made by Browntown Farms in Warfield, VA. We were grateful to have participated in this year's Farm Credit Fly-In event and can't wait until the next!



Wittman Farm Tours

On November 6th, Congressman Rob Wittman and his team joined employees of Farm Credit and Virginia Farm Bureau for a tour of farms and agribusinesses in the Congressman's district. The farm tour began at Mattapony Reserve in West Point, a thriving winery on the Mattaponi reservation where they also serve delicious bison meat pies. They shared with Congressman Wittman the unique path they have taken due to challenges during covid and the importance of sustainable conservation practices.

Next, the group headed over to Riverwatch Farm, a family run operation where they raise adorable Nigerian dwarf goats. The family that runs the farm, the Gholson's, shared with Congressman Wittman the creative ways they have generated revenue streams from their goats, including goat milk, goat yoga, and bottle feeding events.

The tour then went to Gauthier Vineyard in New Kent, which makes it's wines from 100% Virginia grown grapes. The veteran owned family farm is very proud of the facilities they have added to the property, which have made it a very attractive venue for event hosting.

Finally, the tour stopped at Davis Produce in Lanexa where, in addition to talking Virginia Tech football, Congressman Wittman was able to discuss the wide array of conservation methods being employed on the farm, as well as research projects being conducted on the property by land grant universities.

Farm Credit always appreciates that Congressman Wittman is able to take time out of his very busy schedule to sit down with those working in agriculture to hear their concerns and represent those concerns in Washington.



State Fair of Virginia

Colonial Farm Credit, along with Farm Credit of the Virginias and Horizon Farm Credit, once again sponsored Young MacDonald's Farm at the State Fair of Virginia. Farm Credit was also a sponsor of livestock competitions, many of which were held in the Farm Credit pavilion. Several employees and their friends and family were able to get out and enjoy the fair this year!

Colonial in the Community

Farm Financing for Beginning Farmers

Our CEO Paul Franklin and Regional Lending Manager Chris Simms were speakers at the financing education event for new farmers held by VA Secretary of Ag and Forestry Matt Lohr at VSU on October 24th. Chris and Paul discussed the complexities of financing an ag operation and how Farm Credit can help.



Farm Bureau Annual Convention

Farm Credit was happy to sponsor and attend the Virginia Farm Bureau Annual Convention in Virginia Beach in late November. Farm Credit was also a sponsor of the Virginia FAIRS Agricultural and Forestry Innovation Challenge “Bull Pen,” where the winners were announced at the convention. Also at the convention, Virginia Farm Bureau had a grain bin rescue demonstration as part of their Grain Bin Safety Program. Colonial Farm Credit donated funds to assist with safety trainings across the state of Virginia in 2023.



Governor’s Summit on Rural Prosperity

Farm Credit sponsored and attended the 2023 Governor’s Summit on Rural Prosperity, hosted by the Virginia Rural Center, held at Fort Barfoot in Blackstone, VA. Relationship managers Ashley Meadows and Hunter Sanderson attended to represent Farm Credit at the event.



Virginia SWCD Annual Meeting

Farm Credit sponsored, attended, and donated water to the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District Annual Meeting, held the end of November in Norfolk, VA.



Hanover Ag Day

A controlled chaos overtook the Farm Credit Pavilion as 1,251 Hanover County third graders descended upon the Meadow Event Park for the 29th Hanover AgDay on November 17th and 18th. Students learned about various areas of agriculture including soil and water conservation, aquaculture, grains, gardening, vegetables, beekeeping, dairy, forestry, and farm animals. We are grateful to the school district and all of our wonderful volunteers who help us to support agricultural education in our schools!



Previous CAEF Recipient



Piper Pratt St. Mary's, MD

My love for nature started with my grammy and opa. Growing up in St. Mary's County, Maryland, I got to learn so much about crabbing, fishing, oyster spat, identifying birds, sailing, and growing my own garden. Kindergarten through 8th grade, I went to the Chesapeake Public Charter School. We were encouraged to recycle, clean up litter, compost, and study animals through CPCS's interactive, green curriculum. We went on many field trips to learn about and explore our local watershed, native plants and animals, and the importance of protecting endangered species. I quickly began wanting to pursue science and spend more time outdoors. I have teachers like Mrs. Skinner, Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Gilligan, and Mrs. Snyder to thank for igniting this fire in me and teaching us empathy towards the world and appreciating its diverse inhabitants. I will always remember our creative assignments and projects that taught us how to be Earth's caretakers, but also how to be good and kind people.

Now, I am over halfway through completing my B.S. in Coastal Resilience and Environmental Sustainability at Coastal Carolina University. I have made so many connections and been given amazing opportunities that couldn't have been done without my awarded financial aid from the Colonial Agricultural Educational Foundation. I have been so thankful to have received aid every year while pursuing my degree! My mother is a single-mom and hardworking emergency department nurse that has always wanted me to go to school for my Bachelors, and here we are in my third year, having gotten lots of help from the Foundation so that I may continue to follow my dreams and make a difference in this world!

I am on my way to working in conservation, as I am passionate about both marine and terrestrial degradation and am earning my PADI Advanced Certification in South Africa this Christmas as part of a marine ecology and reef conservation internship. I am also shadowing at an aquaculture facility to possibly pursue a career in reef culture and regeneration after.



Employee News

New Employees

Please join us in welcoming these new employees to Colonial Farm Credit!



Ebony Manigo

Ebony Manigo began employment on September 25, 2023, as a Loan Specialist in our Hughesville office. She has more than eight years of credit union experience that include positions as a mortgage processor and a mortgage officer. Ebony currently resides in Waldorf, Maryland.

Austin Shoop

On October 30, 2023, Austin Shoop began employment as the Accountant and Data Report Writer in the Finance Department. Austin holds a Bachelor of Music degree from James Madison University and recently completed his Accounting Career Studies Certificate through J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College. He has experience working in financial services with Capital One and as a logistics and fulfillment expert for Target, and currently resides in Henrico, Virginia.



Abby Wilmot

Abby Wilmot launched her career as Human Resources Assistant on November 13, 2023. Abby has applicable human resources experiences, included but not limited to Oracle HCM, payroll, and benefits administration with the Administrative Office of the Courts, New Mexico Judicial Branch Human Resources Division. She earned a Bachelor's degree in criminal justice from the University of Indianapolis and previously served as a police dispatcher in Indianapolis, Indiana. Abby recently relocated to the Richmond area from New Mexico in order to be closer to her family in rural Pennsylvania.

Retirements

Please join us in wishing Cyndi and Gene all the best in retirement!



Cyndi Drust

Congratulations to Cyndi Drust, Accountant and Report Manager, on her retirement effective August 1, 2023, after nearly 36 years with Farm Credit. Cyndi began her career with the Waverly Association (prior to the merger into Colonial Farm Credit) in August 1987 as a bookkeeper trainee in the Administrative office. Over her tenure she was known for her accuracy, attention to detail, and efficiency. She managed existing reports and created custom reports to meet the Association's needs. Her institutional knowledge combined with her self-developed skills in SQL and Excel contributed greatly to the Association's advancement through the years.

Gene McNabb

After a career of 48 years, Gene McNabb, Relationship Manager in our Lynchburg office, retired effective December 1, 2023. Gene's deep understanding of the business, the territory, and his customers have comprised a tremendous Farm Credit career. We thank Gene for all of his work and dedicated service over the years!



Employee News

Summer Intern

Colonial Farm Credit was excited to have two summer interns join the team for their summer. Last issue, we featured Brian Wathen. Here, we feature Tanner Wise who was a credit intern in the Farmville office.



Tanner Wise

I worked for Colonial Farm Credit this summer as a Loan Officer Intern, learning how Colonial best serves its customers through rural finance. Before my internship, I was unaware of the extent of services that Colonial provided to the public, but I was aware of what Farm Credit was in general. Growing up on a fifth-generation family farm that consists of beef cattle, dairy cattle, sheep, goats, laying hens, meat broilers, and guardian dogs in Buckingham County, Virginia, allowed me to be exposed to the Farm Credit name for years. Since I was eligible until college, I have shown livestock and saw Farm Credit sponsoring livestock shows and other agricultural events. I became familiar with some services Farm Credit provides to the public through employees I've networked with and became friends with over the years, but I honestly did not know much more than the basics about Farm Credit. Becoming a Loan Officer Intern allowed me to appreciate the extent of Farm Credit's services to the public and their contributions to the success of rural communities and agribusinesses.

I was ecstatic when I learned that Brian Wathen, the other Colonial Farm Credit Loan Officer Intern I worked alongside, and I would be traveling to Columbia, South Carolina, to the Farm Credit Basics for Interns conference, a prime networking and learning opportunity. This conference was led by Ronnie Hucks, the AgFirst District Learning Liaison, who discussed vital details about the lending process, as well as the mission and goals of the AgFirst Farm Credit Bank. Learning more about AgFirst helped me better understand the relationship between the district banks and associations, a complicated concept to grasp when I started my internship. Networking with other Farm Credit interns and AgFirst employees allowed me to understand their backgrounds better and what they desired to obtain from their experiences as Farm Credit employees. Everyone's backgrounds and previous experiences were quite divergent from each other and my own. Networking allowed me to understand that you don't necessarily have to have agricultural knowledge to work and contribute to Farm Credit's missions and goals. When talking with folks about why they wanted to intern or work for Farm Credit, they all shared the same mission of wanting to help farmers and rural communities to the best of their abilities, allowing me to understand that we are all on the same team even though we don't necessarily see each other face-to-face all that often. As this conference continued and ended, coworkers became professional and personal friends I would most likely meet again no matter what kind of agricultural job I would end up in.

Additionally, I am grateful to have worked alongside the other Loan Officer Intern, Brian Wathen, and attended other events, such as the Agricultural Exposition in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Attending the Virginia

Agricultural Exposition allowed me to understand better how truly diverse Virginia agriculture is and how we need these businesses to best contribute to the success of agriculture from around the state. At my home branch in Farmville, I had the opportunity to learn about local "concepts" such as the areas served, the most popular types of services to offer in certain areas, and understanding the specific demographics and backgrounds of certain areas we serve. An example of this was the large number of Mennonite and Amish communities that use Colonial's services to also contribute to agriculture on a local, state, and national scale. I also attended local events, such as the Central Virginia Crops Expo. I helped run the Colonial Farm Credit booth and interacted with local folks about current agriculture topics and their backgrounds in agriculture. Understanding these concepts has better prepared me if I wanted to enter any type of financial field, especially an agricultural finance field, to help farmers and agricultural enterprise owners on an economic spectrum.

My experiences working with Colonial Farm Credit alongside Brian Wathen, Rachel Shupe, Ronnie Gill, Paul Franklin, and many others was an excellent learning experience full of positivity. During my time with Colonial, not once did I hear how Colonial wanted to increase customer numbers just to display results on a graph, but they truly wanted to aid in helping folks best run their agricultural enterprises and become successful through using their services. They always mentioned that, ultimately, making a positive impact through agriculture and aiding in its success was their priority. Colonial also allows customers to obtain patronage refunds and communicate with customers constantly to ensure their services contribute to their personal and business successes. Unlike other financial institutions, Farm Credit is the only financial institution I have seen that is 100 percent transparent to the general public on their mission and how they constantly desire folk's opinions to improve their services and better serve new and existing customers.

I am beginning my senior year at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, also known as Virginia Tech, continuing my studies of receiving a Bachelor's Degree in Animal and Poultry Sciences. I would like to thank the Farm Credit System for allowing me to broaden my knowledge of a more-silenced and less-known agriculture sector-agricultural finance. This experience renewed my optimism and allowed me to understand that I have a voice in agriculture and can fulfill my dream of working in the agricultural field. After graduating from Virginia Tech, I desire to work for an agricultural enterprise and then create my own agribusiness later. I would also like to thank Colonial Farm Credit for the opportunities provided to me and for supporting my professional and personal growth/development! Finally, I would like to thank Rachel Shupe, Ronnie Gill, Paul Franklin, and other Farm Credit employees for their patience, understanding, effort, and knowledge provided to Brian and me. We both appreciate everything Farm Credit has done for us through events, knowledge, and other opportunities!



Colonial Farm Credit
7104 Mechanicsville Tnpk
Mechanicsville, VA 23111

PRSRT STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
COLUMBIA SC
PERMIT 1160

Colonial Agricultural Educational Foundation

The application for 2024 scholarships are available on our website at www.colonialfarmcredit.com/scholarships. If you know anyone who will be pursuing higher education in the fall of 2024, please encourage them to apply! The deadline to submit applications is end of the day on March 1, 2024.

