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Long-Time Texas Cooperative Extension Leader Retires

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AMARILLO – When Dr. Bob Robinson retires in August, Texas Cooperative Extension in the High Plains and South Plains will lose one of its pillars, his many supporters say. Robinson, regional program director of agriculture and natural resources in Extension’s 66-county North Region, announced he will retire Aug. 31, ending a 37-year career.

Dr. Ed Smith, director of Extension, said Robinson lives and breathes Extension and the economy of the North Region.

“He’s not only a pillar for the Panhandle, but a model for the state,” Smith said. “He’s been an invaluable part of our leadership group and Extension team from the time he was an agent to especially his time as a regional program director.

“Bob’s one of the folks I look to, to line out where Extension is going,” Smith said. “He’s truly committed to looking at the future of our agency and all of the groups that work together as a team to leverage the benefits of the land grant system that come to the High Plains and South Plains regions of Texas.”

From his involvement with stakeholders to his participation in the Cooperative Research, Education and Extension Team, Robinson’s commitment and personal sacrifice for Extension are legendary, Smith said.

Dr. Jim Clark, dean of agriculture, science and engineering at West Texas A&M University, agreed. Robinson has done a tremendous job of working with CREET and the Consortium for Cattle Feeding and Environmental Sciences, both regional partnerships formed among area universities, state and federal agencies, and commodity organizations.

“He’s primarily been the glue that held all that together,” Clark said. “He makes sure that we have all the elements working in a coordinated effort.”

A native of Happy, Robinson earned a doctorate from Texas Tech University, a master’s degree from Texas A&M University and a bachelor’s degree from West Texas A&M University, all in the field of animal science.

He began his Extension career in 1970 as the assistant agriculture agent in Potter County, served as Randall County agriculture agent from 1976 to 1985, and was district director for agricultural programs in the South Plains during the next 10 years. In 1995, he took the district director position in the Panhandle region and became the regional program director in 2003. He also has served as a professor of animal science at West Texas A&M University since 1998.

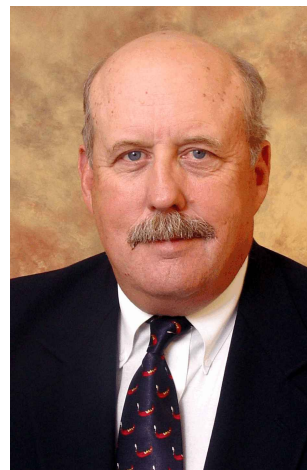
State Rep. David Swinford said his first recollection of “Dr. Bob” was when he judged the Moore County stock shows when Swinford’s children were participants.

“Our paths continued to cross, and in the last 15 or 16 years, he’s been my go-to guy when I was working on legislative issues,” Swinford said. “He and Dr. (John) Sweeten and the CREET group out there have been such a great team.”

Swinford said Robinson was a strong advocate for integrated pest management and that might be an area where he had the greatest impact.

“I’d say he is sort of the godfather of IPM in Texas,” Swinford said. “It got very large in the Lubbock region with the cotton farmers, and we continue to secure money for IPM because it is the best way to handle pests. I don’t know how many millions of gallons of chemicals haven’t been used because of the IPM system – Bob made a great difference in that.”

Swinford said since being elected to the



Dr. Bob Robinson

legislature, there's never been a year when he didn't have a round-table with Robinson and the CREET team.

"The thing I like about our team up here is we all work together," Swinford said. "Bob was sort of the ring leader that called me about things. He will be hard to follow. But we want to wish him the best, and we'll miss him."

Robinson has touched almost every aspect of Extension through statewide committees, serving on the following: State 4-H Center; Texas Cooperative Extension Organizational Excellence; Rural Economic Development; Horse, Swine, Beef, Cotton, Corn, Wheat, Plains Regional Council; Texas A&M/Tech Steering Committee; Extension Professional Development in Water, Agriculture Chemical, Training and Curriculum; USDA National Resource and Environmental Management, Visioning and Resource Mobilization; and Volunteerism.

He has been honored for his leadership in the Texas Agri-Partners Program, which supplies research to farms in the Panhandle and South Plains, and recognized for his advocacy and commitment to volunteer development by the

Texas 4-H Volunteer Leader's Association.

This year, Robinson will receive the Epsilon Sigma Phi's Southern Region Visionary Leadership Award. He has received the State Award for Visionary Leadership from the National Honorary Extension Fraternity.

Some of his other honors include the Regents Fellow award from Texas A&M; three Texas A&M University System Vice Chancellor's Award in Excellence; and six Extension Superior Service Awards.

He also has received the Texas Tech University Distinguished Alumni award, Graduate of Distinction award, and Animal Science Hall of Fame; the Texas Pork Producer's Order of the Golden Pig award; two Epsilon Sigma Phi State Team Awards; West Texas A&M University Distinguished Alumni; two USDA Technology Transfer Awards; the Professional Agriculture Workers of Texas Extension Leadership Award and the Texas Governor's Award in Environmental Excellence.