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Extension MATTERS

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EXTENDING KNOWLEDGE • CHANGING LIVES



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A photograph of a woman with long, wavy white hair, wearing a teal long-sleeved shirt and a necklace. She is smiling and holding a glass of water in her right hand. The background shows a kitchen with wooden shelves holding various items, including a hat and some containers. The lighting is warm and natural, suggesting a window nearby.

CLEAR, COOL WATER

Well Workshop Gives Peace of Mind

STORY BY KERI COLLINS LEWIS • PHOTOS BY KEVIN HUDSON

Kate Lartigue,
well owner



Not all water is so delicious that people ask for it to be carried across state lines.

“My friends in Slidell, Louisiana, beg me to bring them gallons of my well water because they love it so!” reveals Kate Lartigue of Poplarville.

Lartigue is particularly pleased to share her water after attending a Mississippi

Well Owner Network workshop offered by the Mississippi State University Extension Service and the Private Well Class (www.privatewellclass.org). A mailing from Pearl River County MSU Extension Coordinator Dr. Eddie Smith sparked her curiosity and subsequent attendance.

“I had always been on city water, and, when we bought this place, it had a well,” she explains. “I saw a notice for the course and thought, ‘Uh-oh! Am I supposed to treat the well once a year with chlorine? What do I do?’ So I went to learn about it, hoping for Well Owners for Dummies!”

Lartigue squeezed in with dozens of other learners concerned about water quality.

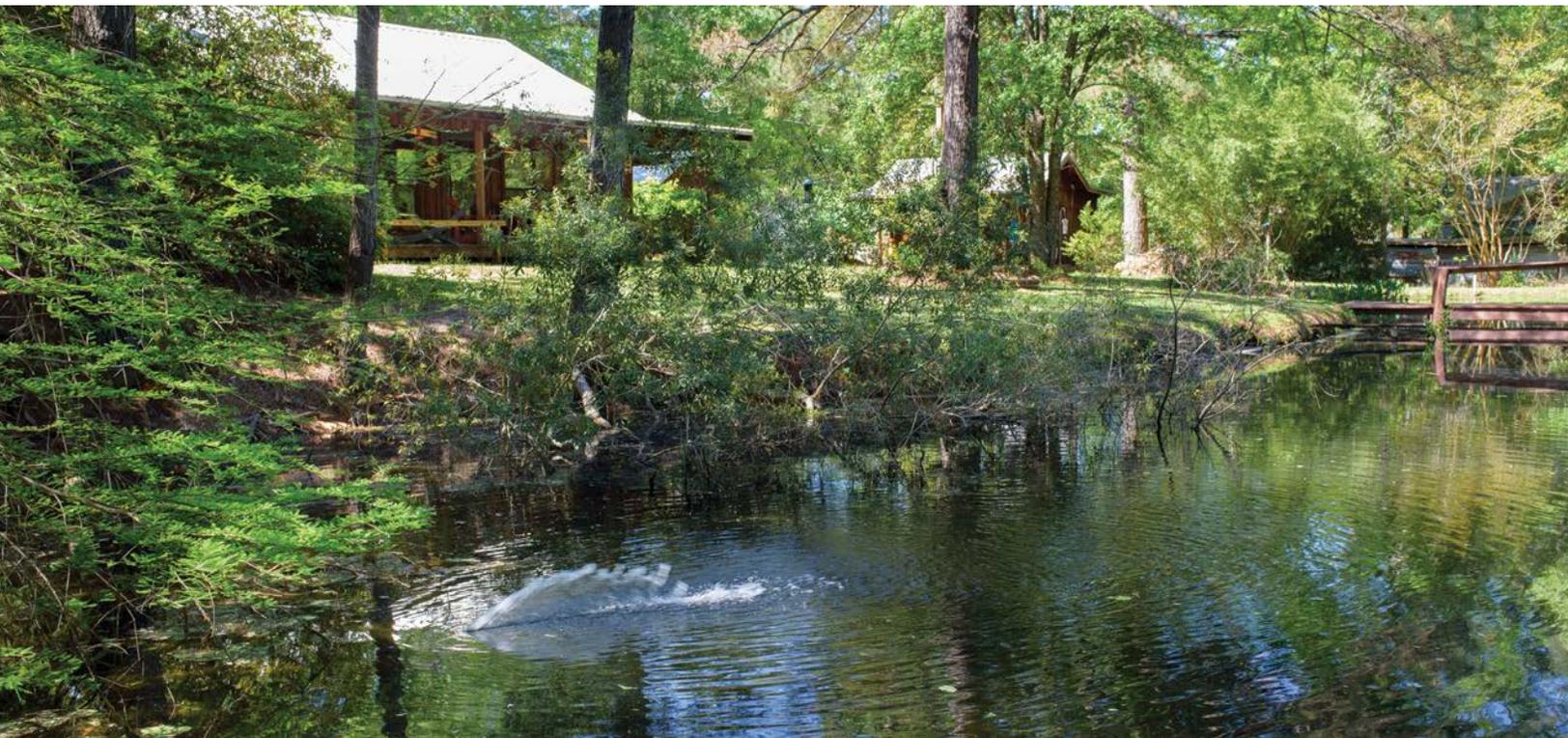
“We had white-haired grandmothers all the way to young people,” she recalls. “Dr. Jason Barrett was very open to

questions and encouraged people to talk. It was very interactive and in a comfortable, easy environment.”

Barrett, an assistant professor with Extension’s Center for Government and Community Development, conducts workshops across the state.

“The goal of the Mississippi Well Owner Network program is to educate homeowners about their private wells and the quality of their drinking water,” Barrett explains. “We also offer private well owners a venue to have their drinking water screened for bacteria. The class in Pearl River County was one of the most well-attended we’ve had, and participation was lively. I loved it!”

After Lartigue completed the class, she collected a water sample, turned it in, and hoped for the best.





“They talked about how contamination shows up in the water from certain sources, like feedlots, barns with animals, or pesticides and paints. There’s none of that around here, other than my neighbor with six animals, but they’re downhill from me. I felt reassured.”

Lartigue’s water tests came back clean: no bacteria, no *E. coli*, no high nitrates.

“So now we know our water is pure, clean, and good. We’ll get it tested each year, and, if it comes back positive for bacteria, we know what to do,” she says. “I am now an informed well owner because of this course. I am confident about who to call if there is an issue.”

Lartigue observes that Mississippi is blessed with abundant water resources.

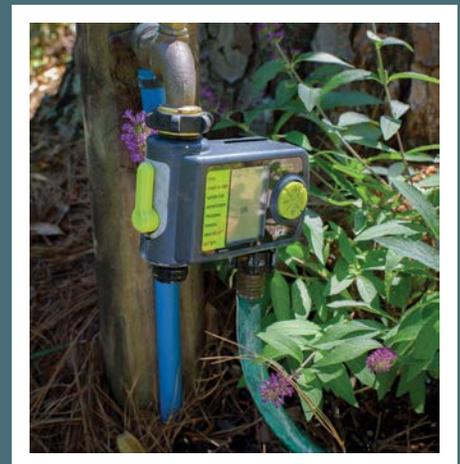
“We are so lucky, and we don’t even know it,” she says. “I don’t think we appreciate it enough.”

Lartigue’s experience with the MSU Extension Service also includes local gardening workshops and trips to the Crosby Arboretum. But her appreciation for Extension began when she was a 4-H’er in West Texas.

“I grew up in the small city of Dell City, and the county agents taught us everything,” she remembers. “So whenever I go to a new state, I always want to check out the county Extension agents. When we got to Mississippi, it was like homecoming, because the agents can tell you everything from what to plant and when to plant it, to what fertilizer to use.”

Extension also helped her learn how to manage her septic tank.

“The septic tank company wanted me to buy their products, and the Extension professionals told me something different,” she says. “It’s hard to find valid information, and the Extension Service provides that. They don’t have a horse in the race. They just want you to understand what works.”



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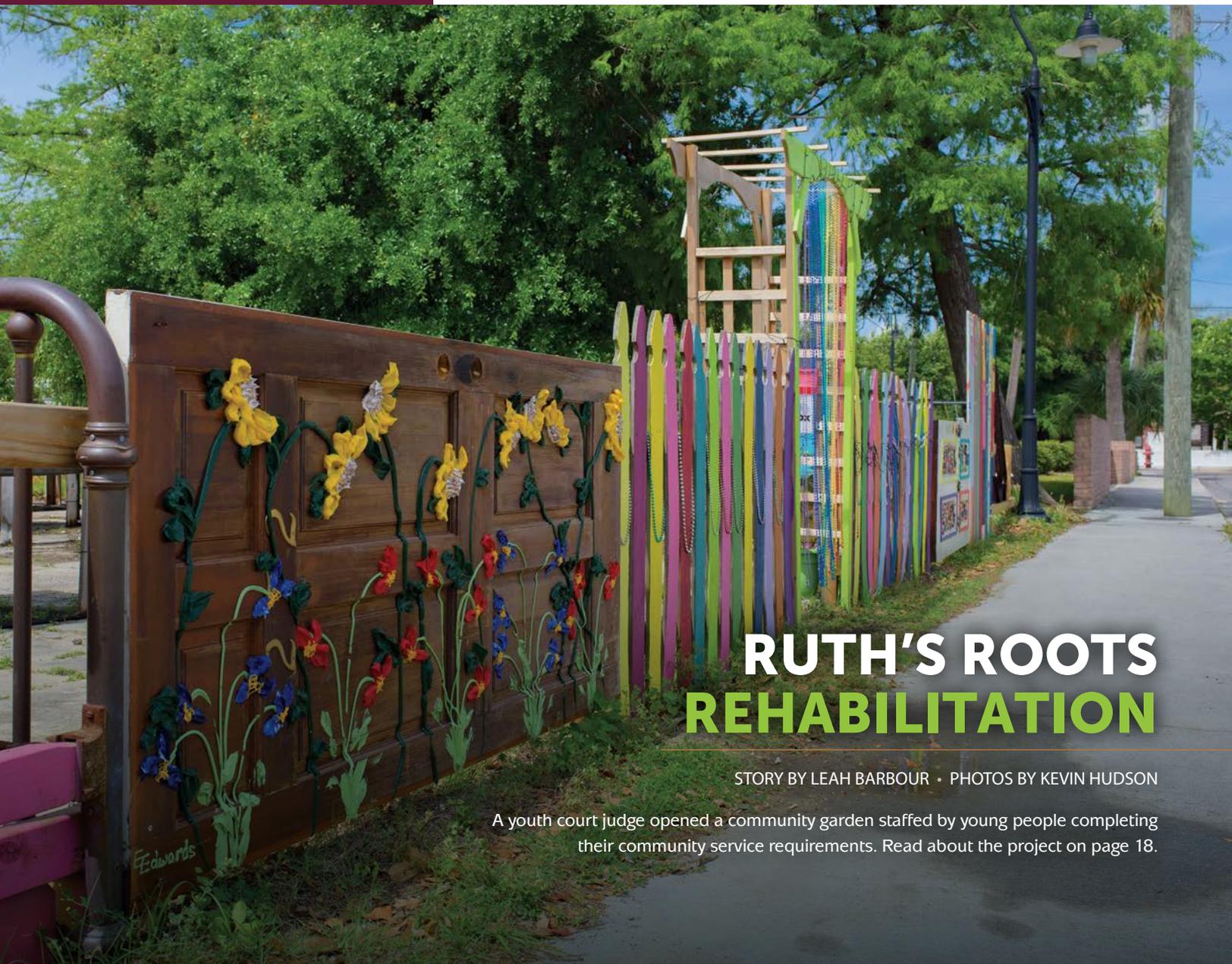
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RUTH'S ROOTS REHABILITATION

STORY BY LEAH BARBOUR • PHOTOS BY KEVIN HUDSON

A youth court judge opened a community garden staffed by young people completing their community service requirements. Read about the project on page 18.