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MANRRS Week Proclamations Drive Animal Health Industry Toward Inclusion

KC Animal Health Corridor partners with the states of Kansas and Missouri to raise awareness of need for greater access to inclusive career opportunities

KANSAS CITY, Mo., Aug. 22, 2021 – The KC Animal Health Corridor announces that Aug. 22-28 has been declared Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) Week by Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly and by Missouri Gov. Mike Parson. The proclamations, which coincide with the Corridor’s Digital Animal Health Summit beginning Aug. 24, help change perceptions of agricultural careers and encourage greater inclusion of minority-represented populations to build a more prosperous, creative and innovative industry.

“The animal health industry needs everyone and MANRRS is for anyone,” says Emily McVey, vice president, KC Animal Health Corridor. “That’s why the Corridor and our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion taskforce are proud to work with state partners who acknowledge MANRRS and the importance of inclusion. Together, we will continue to take steps toward ensuring that diverse populations can find a home and thrive in our industry. While we don’t have all the answers, the MANRRS week proclamations are a strong step forward in raising awareness for continued intentional work and progress.”

MANRRS is a nonprofit organization founded 36 years ago to promote academic and professional advancement by empowering minorities in agriculture, natural resources and related sciences. With active chapters at universities across the nation, including in Kansas and Missouri, MANRRS prepares minority students to enter the workforce as leaders.

One of those leaders is Michael Smith, a senior at Lincoln University in Jefferson City who serves as president of the school’s MANRRS chapter. Smith says MANRRS has taught him there’s much to discover about agriculture, and it’s given him the tools to do just that.

“As an African American kid growing up in Chicago, I didn’t know I wanted to be in agriculture,” Smith says. “But I did know I wanted to impact society. MANRRS amplified my life and how I view myself. It’s taught me how to be a part of the professional world and shown me I can do so much for myself and others by working in agriculture.”

Smith, who's set to graduate in December, plans to pursue an ag-related career that incorporates some element of animal health.

This is just what MANRRS leaders like Zelia Wiley, PhD, hope for. Dr. Wiley is the Kansas State University MANRRS chapter adviser and, since the chapter's inception in 2002, the K-State MANRRS program has impacted over 1,000 students and increased ethnic minority representation in the College of Agriculture by 360 percent.

"By partnering with organizations like the Animal Health Corridor, MANRRS provides underrepresented minorities an awareness of ag-related opportunities that's not typically afforded to them," says Dr. Wiley, assistant dean and director of diversity programs at the K-State College of Agriculture. "I believe in MANRRS. My former students and mentees are now corporate presidents, college deans and leaders at governmental and nongovernmental agencies, and my current students show the same drive to become leaders in the agricultural industry."

Dr. Wiley has been a member of MANRRS for 32 years, chartered two university chapters and remains committed to the organization. Why? Because MANRRS continues to push boundaries to cultivate the next generation of innovators, thinkers and doers in the agriculture and animal health industries.

About the KC Animal Health Corridor

Companies with a business location in the KC Animal Health Corridor account for more than half of the sales generated by the global animal health industry. The Corridor, anchored by Manhattan, Kansas, and Columbia, Missouri, is home to more than 300 animal health companies, representing the largest concentration in the world. For more information, visit www.kcanimalhealth.com.

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