

Madison County Quarterly Newsletter

"REACHING OUT TO OUR COMMUNITY"



July 2008 Edition

Message from the County Coordinator



It is with great anticipation that we submit this, our first, newsletter for Madison County. During these days of financial distress it is imperative that Extension remain steadfast in educating the community so that you may stay abreast of any impending life changing events. This is what several of these current articles will address.

There are many ways Extension can assist you, your family, and your business. We are still the Extension of old and the evolved Extension of today. Contact your county agent:

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Gas or Food: Tips on How to Stretch Your Dollars

Submitted By: Theresa Jones, Regional Extension Agent

In our society today, prices of food and gasoline are pressuring many people to re-think how they will be spending their hard earned dollars. The biggest challenge that many men and women face today is "how to survive" on the wages they are making, while making ends meet. They have to make adjustments and lifestyle changes to prevent falling between the cracks due to the increase in the cost of food and gasoline. Stretching the dollar is very vital at this point in time due to our country heading towards recession.

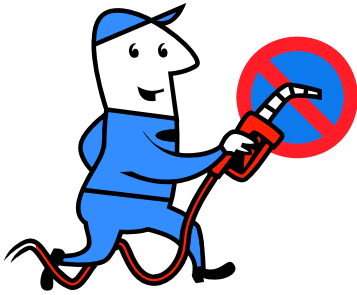


The following suggestions can help you keep a little money in your pocket if you apply them to your daily, weekly, or monthly routine. These suggestions may already be a part of your routine, but if not, they will surely be something to help you stay financially fit during these financially trying times.

Stretching the Dollar...

- **Try to make fewer trips.** This can be accomplished by planning and making a list of the things you need to do and buy before leaving home or work. Make sure your trip is necessary. If the trip is not necessary, it will cost you gasoline, time and money. Making second trips are very costly.
- **Regular maintenance on your car is a must.** It is important to keep your car in good running condition because it will cost you more in the future to repair it.

Want to know where to find the cheapest Gas in Huntsville? Visit the link below.
[Huntsville Gas Prices - Find the Lowest Gas Prices in Huntsville, Alabama](#)



STOP putting all your money in the gas tank! There are other ways to get where you need to go...



Taking advantage of city transportation can save you money on daily travel expenses.



Stretching the Dollar...

- ***Shop for the best rate on your car insurance.*** It can save you a few dollars. Remember the higher the deductible, the lower the insurance payments.
- ***Check your water and oil levels on a regular basis.*** These are two essentials that the motor needs in order to function properly. Just like the body needs oxygen, food and water.
- ***Make sure your tires are properly inflated.*** Improper inflation of the tires will cause you to burn more gasoline. Make sure you are following the recommended air pressure found in the owner's manual.
- ***When possible, take city transportation to work, school, church, the mall etc.*** Taking the city's transportation will reduce gasoline purchases and cut down on the chances of having an accident in your personal car. Being involved in an accident will result in a higher insurance premium.
- ***Carpool with your family or co-workers.*** This will reduce gasoline cost while helping others save by sharing the expense of paying for gasoline.
- ***If everything else fails, walk more and drive less.*** This will save on gasoline costs and improve your health.

Advantages of Carpooling

- 1) Lower your stress - Begin and end your day reading or relaxing, rather than driving through traffic jams or delays.
- 2) Start new personal and professional relationships.
- 3) Reduce traffic congestion.

Rising Food Prices

Tips for making simple lifestyle Changes



The price of food has increased with the increase in the price of gas. Buying groceries is one of the largest monthly expenses for many families. The prices seem to continue to go up on a regular basis while the package contents continue to decrease. In other words, you are paying more for less. The size of your family really does not matter, it is possible to save anywhere from a few cents to a few dollars each time you shop. Many families are forced to make a decision whether to buy gas or to buy food. This is a very unfortunate situation, but hopefully these tips will help you to make better choices when spending money on food expenses. Making simple lifestyle changes will help as well.

- **Use coupons.** Using coupons have been one way of saving a few dollars for many generations. A lot of people don't want to take the time to clip coupons. For the ones who are not currently using coupons, this is one sure way for them to cut expenses. Remember, most coupons can be found in the Sunday paper.
- **Take advantage of the store's club saving cards and purchase items on sale.** This helps to save on special products that are sold at a discounted price. Keep in mind that you can also save on store value name brand products when you purchase these items instead of brand name products.
- **Purchase smaller quantities of perishable items.** Make sure you have the proper storage space before purchasing large quantities because perishable items have a very short shelf life. This will prevent double purchases.
- **Purchase items in bulk** mainly non-perishable items, if you are not required to use them right away. One advantage is- **the shelf life is longer.** Items are normally cheaper by volume when you purchase the large size of the product. However, since this is not always true, it is to your advantage to calculate and determine if you are saving by buying the larger size.
- **Make sure you check the expiration dates on the food products you purchase.** Check several of the same items to make sure you get the one with the longest shelf life.
- **Eat out less.** The old brown bag lunch method has never failed. Brown bagging your lunch can save you several dollars on food each day. Plan ahead what days you are going to eat out and what days you are going to take a brown bag lunch. This will help you to avoid making irrational decisions at the spur of the moment.
- **Choose foods that can improve your health instead of destroying your body.** Most foods that are not good for your health require you to eat more of them to satisfy your hunger. Food effects how you feel, both physically and mentally. Remember, if you don't eat right, you may spend more time and dollars at the doctor's office.
- **Food for thought: Keep in mind that you are responsible for how you handle your money.** No one can tell you how to spend it. I hope you will make choices that will benefit you and your family as a whole. It's simply up to you.



10 Things you can do to Romance your partner on A Budget

Submitted by: Donna Gullatte, Urban Regional Extension Agent

During the courtship process, romantic feelings are usually very strong and partners go out of their way to reveal their feelings to each other. However, as time passes, these romantic feelings can fade. These tips are designed to offer a few ideas for couples wishing to reignite the romance.

Before we get into the romance stuff there are, often times, two common barriers to reigniting romance that you should keep in mind. TIME, is a major barrier for most couples. Sit down and compare schedules and mark dates on your calendar. Another barrier is child care. If you don't have family, find a friend (maybe a friend with children) so that you can swap services. Now let's get close...



This information was taken from National Healthy Marriage Resource Center and the Alabama Healthy Marriage Initiative.

1. **Write what you feel**...Take a moment to reflect on things you really like or appreciate about your partner but often neglect to say and write it on a decorative note card and share with the one you love.
2. **Go out to eat together**...Make your home a romantic restaurant. Add a decorative presentation or play some soft music. Have a great meal or if cooking is not your thing order take out-at least you will be saving the gas.
3. **Catch a Flick-Go to the movies**.
4. **Go hear some music**-Many communities offer free concerts in the park. Check your local paper or get on the web.
5. **Phone in your feelings**-Text your partner romantic messages...It can be a pleasant surprise during the day and can generate intimate moments later on!
6. **Break a Sweat Together**-exercise! Get physically fit together.
7. **Take a Hike**-There is a lot to be said for the simple act of walking. Try a walk during lunch.
8. **Get "Board"**-Play board games together.
9. **Dream out loud**-Set goals for your future together...in other word communicate!
10. **Expand your circle**-Join other couples groups and activities.

Family Life Center offers pre-Marriage/Relationship Education classes at no cost and great incentives are provided after completion of the course.

Contact: Family Life Center at 256-536-4779 for more information.

Spice It Up Without Salt

Submitted by: Sylvia Oakes, Urban Regional Extension Agent



Too much salt (also called sodium) causes high blood pressure in some people. High blood pressure is bad for your heart. Most of the salt that Americans eat comes from the salt that is added to processed and restaurant foods. To keep your heart healthy and your blood pressure normal, use the following tips.

1. Check food labels for salt or sodium.

- ❖ One level teaspoon of salt is about 2300 milligrams of sodium. Try not to go over this amount with ALL your foods, in one day - that means the salt already in processed foods as well as the salt you add to food that you cook.
- ❖ Look for foods that have less than 300 milligrams of sodium in a serving.
- ❖ A food is pretty HIGH in salt if a serving has over 400 milligrams of sodium.
- ❖ Look for foods that say no salt added or low or reduced sodium.



2. Watch out for salty foods.

- ❖ Boxed dinners (like macaroni & cheese or Hamburger Helper®), canned soups and vegetables, frozen vegetables with sauces, and cheese sauces are often HIGH in salt (sodium). Look for foods that have less sodium.
- ❖ If you eat frozen dinners, buy low salt or low sodium meals or have regular frozen dinners no more than once a week. Better still, make your own frozen dinners - cook larger amounts of food and freeze the extra in containers to reheat later. (You'll save money too!)
- ❖ Go easy on hot dogs, lunchmeats, and cured meats like bacon, ham sausage, and beef sticks.
- ❖ Don't overdo fast foods and salty chips and snacks (these may also have a lot of trans fats).
- ❖ Choose carefully at restaurants - even "healthy" menu items often have lots of salt.

3. Break the salt shaker habit.

- ❖ ALL the salt you have in one day should fit in one level teaspoon. Remember that most of your salt is in the foods already, so only add a very small amount.
- ❖ Taste your food first, before adding salt.
- ❖ If a recipe calls for salt, add less than half the amount.
- ❖ Keep the salt shaker away from where you cook and eat.

4. Try herbs and spices.

- ❖ Try herbs and spices to bring out the flavor in your foods without adding salt.
- ❖ For beef: use sage, garlic, thyme, pepper, or turmeric.
- ❖ For chicken: Use paprika, rosemary, curry, or garlic or onion powder.
- ❖ For pork: use thyme, basil, sage, pepper, curry, garlic or onion powder.
- ❖ For fish use lemon or lime juice, dill, or garlic or onion powder.
- ❖ Try Mrs. Dash® or make your own herb and spice mixture. Keep it in a shaker and use when cooking or at the table. *Be careful!* Some seasonings and sauces have lots of salt: Garlic and onion salts, poultry seasonings, soy sauce, barbecue sauce, ketchup, some hot sauces, and spaghetti and tomato sauces.



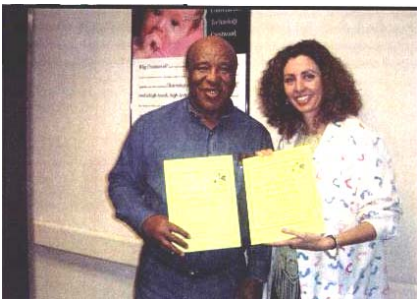
Madison County's Radon Education Program

Submitted by: Walter Rodgers, Urban Regional Extension Agent

Radon, known as the silent killer, is the leading cause of lung cancer among non-smokers, causing an estimated 21,000 lung cancer deaths a year. Nearly one out of every 15 homes in the United States is estimated to have elevated radon levels however, in Madison County, nearly one out of every three homes have been found to have high levels of radon.

As part of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's Radon Education Program, endeavors to educate the citizens of Madison County about this silent killer are on-going. In partnership with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the U.S. EPA, the Madison County's program objectives are:

- To understand what radon is.
- To educate the citizens about the deadly gas in their homes, schools and offices – and to inform persons on how to test for radon and the importance of fixing their homes if elevated levels of radon are found.
- To educate the home building industry about building radon-ready homes and testing homes in the real estate markets.
- To work with health care professionals in creating radon awareness.
- To encourage builders to install in new homes a passive in radon system, to make a home "radon ready." A fan can be added to the system at a later date if high radon levels are detected.



<http://video.aol.com/video-detail/radon-the-silent-killer/2621618113>.

The following activities have been implemented in Madison County to accomplish these objectives.

- Secured a booth at the north Alabama Home Show, taking advantage of the opportunity to educate participants about the radon program. Over 15,000 attended the show and over 356 radon test kits were sold.
- Conducted numerous radon presentations throughout the year to inform seniors and other adults about the dangers of radon.
- Conducts radon presentations to youth in the Huntsville City Schools, the Boys & Girls Club of Madison County, and Extended Day Programs.
- Placed radon exhibits in local banks, public libraries and medical offices.
- Distributed radon educational material to (2) two local hospitals in support of their newborn program. 100 free test kits were given to participants.
- Disseminated information and test kits through various seminars and other events.
- Submitted a press release for Radon Action Month in January 2008.
- Submitted public service announcements on a continuous basis to local TV and Radio stations.

2nd Annual North Alabama Dog Expo

Submitted by: Tyrone Smith, Urban Regional Extension Agent

As society has moved from small rural communities to increasingly large metropolitan areas, the dog's role has changed. The available data shows that the major reason for having a dog is companionship.

Dogs as companion animals cannot be matched in their loyalty, devotion and friendship to humankind. However, the decision to own a dog comes with responsibility and a long-term commitment. Someone with unrealistic expectations of the time, effort, and money required to sustain a lifelong relationship with their dog will aggravate the problem of unwanted pets.

To increase the chance that both dog and owner will remain together for the rest of the natural life of the dog, people must be prepared to provide the dog with a home for that duration. This means making sure that the dog is properly nourished, in good health, and well behaved. The latter is of ought most importance to prevent the dog from becoming a nuisance or a menace to the community. Besides, a well-behaved dog makes a much more pleasant companion, and can be more easily a part of the family life.

Dog owners and potential owners need the opportunity to gain knowledge on dog nutrition, behavior and health, and become skilled at obedience training. Consequently, under the leadership of Tyrone D. Smith, Urban Regional Extension Agent in Madison County, Robert D. Spencer, Area Extension Specialist, and Eddie J. Wheeler, Urban Regional

The following data was compiled from the 2008 Alabama Dog Expo Participants' Survey.

- Eighty-four percent (84%) of participants were adults and sixteen percent (16%) were youth.
- Seventy-one percent (71%) of participants lived in urban areas.
- One hundred percent (100%) of participants owned 1 to 3 dogs.
- Thirty-three percent (33%) of participants indicated that owning a dog increased their recreational activities.
- Twenty-nine percent (29%) of participants indicated that owning a dog increased their self-esteem.
- Thirty-eight percent (38%) of participants indicated that owning a dog increased their sense of security.
- Ninety-two percent (92%) of participants indicated that owning a dog improved their quality of life.
- Ninety-six percent (96%) of participants indicated that the Expo was educational.
- One hundred percent (100%) of participants indicated that the information distributed was useful.
- Forty-eight percent (48%) of participants wanted to learn more about dog-assisted therapy.
- Twenty-six percent (26%) of participants wanted to learn more about dog agility and obedience training.



The Expo, which was held on Saturday, June 7, 2008 at Alabama A&M University's Agrigibition Center in Huntsville, provided a platform for the general public to ask questions and obtain research-based information to assist them in making informed decisions about dog ownership. It also introduced a paradigm shift in dog ownership. The thought process was getting the general public to consider dogs as companions and not as just a pet. This transformation was fostered through dog agility demonstrations and obedience training and dog-assisted therapy seminars.

Community partners setup displays and provided free consultations. Agencies and organizations included: Huntsville Obedience Training Club, North Alabama Canine Cruisers Agility Club, Therapy Partners, Inc., Kind Hearts, Valley Animal Hospital and Resort, Huntsville Animal Control Services, and Greater Huntsville Humane Society.



More than 100 attendants received packets containing UANNP publications on dog nutrition, reproduction, health, and obedience training.



Madison County 4-H

Submitted by: Grace Buell, 4-H Agent Assistant

Alabama's Mountains Rivers, and Valleys Resource Conservation and Development Council approved a grant for 4-H summer educational programs:



The focus of the first week of the summer educational program was natural resources. Twenty-five 4-Hers and 5 adult volunteers participated. The week began with a visit to the Wheeler Wildlife Management Refuge. The Conservation Education Specialist for the Alabama Wildlife Federation led us on a tour of the refuge. We observed various birds at the Wildlife Observation Building, learned about Bald Cypress trees, and understood the meaning of wetland metaphors. At the end of the day, all 4-Hers received their Junior Refuge Ranger certificate.

On the second day 4-H'ers travelled to Desoto Caverns. We learned about Desoto's arrival in the area and the many uses of Desoto Caverns over the years. We also learned about the different types of rock formations in the caverns, stalactites and stalagmites, the use for calcium nitrite, and the enormity of the "big room" as long as a football field and 12 stories high! Participants also "panned" for gems, conquered the lost trail maze and wall climbed.

Finally 4-H'ers completed a walking tour of the Hays Nature Preserve. Soos Weber taught participants about edible weeds, snakes, owls, the Flint River, types of waterfowl in the area and management of the preserve. Four-H'ers also learned about the history of the land. Participants returned to the cool Madison County Extension office auditorium to make our Natural Resource (newspaper) hats. A quiz on what was learned, earning a 4-H token. Thank you notes were also written to the RC& D council. We

The second week of the program was Pre-Alabama History Week. Twenty 4-Hers and 5 adult volunteers learned about Native American History. It began with a trip to Moulton to see the Oakville Indian Mounds. Lessons in the tour included: time period importance; the difference between burial and ceremonial mounds; foods and animals available to these Native Americans and how they were used. A tour of the Jesse Owens Museum and birth place was also scheduled. Four-Hers learned how Jesse Owens became a hero and a continuing motivator for people to overcome different types of adversity.

Next was a visit to Moundville, Alabama to see the 22 mounds of the Mississippian period Native Americans. We were not able to tour the museum due to remodeling but we had a tour of the largest mound of the leader of all the tribes in this location. Participants climbed 86 steps and were able to look down upon the other mounds of tribal leaders of "lesser" importance. All the mounds were in exact position facing North and South. There were dioramas that described and showed the different types of work that were required of the inhabitants. Lastly, observations were made of the University of Alabama students and a professor conducting an anthropological dig at the front of the museum complex. A fascinating look into how they study in centimeters and the delicate workmanship of sifting through a small shovel of dirt.



The final activity was a tour of Early Works and Constitution Village in downtown Huntsville. There was a wonderful Native American lecture at Early Works that included the different weapons used for hunting and the types of animals Indian hunted. The 5 tribes of Alabama: Seminole, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Cherokee were discussed. The afternoon lesson focused on the first European inhabitants in Alabama. This included: the writing of the Alabama Constitution; the challenges of determining where the capitol of the territory and state would be; and the different types of professions in Huntsville in the early 1800s. Upon returning to the Madison County office, 4-H'ers was, again, quizzed on knowledge gained during the week. A good time was had by all! Four-H'ers and volunteers definitely learned a lot from these activities and followed our motto of, **"To Make the Best Better!"**

4-H Volunteer Leaders' Corner

Submitted by: Wanda Pharris, Regional Extension Agent

Volunteer leaders sponsored an end of the school year 4-H awards program and party for their clubs. Mrs. Betty Duncan with ASFL honored her 4-Her's with a luncheon where she presented certificates and ribbons to award winners.

Grace Lutheran volunteer leaders, Mrs. Emmerson and Mrs. Poffenderger honored their 4-H club with presentation of ribbons and an ice cream social. The volunteers at Grace Lutheran presented the 4-H club members with a wide range of programs this year from hosting a photography program to Therapy Partners (dogs that visit the sick and elderly).

The Southern Stars volunteer, Mrs. Keller, along with Grace Lutheran volunteers, presented a program to their clubs on pet rabbits. Both clubs met at the Madison County Extension Office to have a hands-on learning experience from Regional Extension Agent Robert Spencer. Mr. Spencer gave the 4-Her's a lesson on the different breeds of rabbits, explaining to the 4-Her's which breeds make good pets.



Mr. Maynard Dalton, the volunteer with the newly formed Honeybee 4-H Club, is probably one that definitely demands your attention and respect. Mr. Dalton's 4-H Club constructed the hive body for the bees. The highlight of one of Mr. Dalton's meetings was that everyone had the opportunity to sample the honey that had been extracted just minutes before the 4-H club meeting.

The volunteer leader with Redstone Arsenal, Mrs. Carolyn Taylor, organized a workshop on Energy Education for 4-Hers to learn about energy conservation. David Self, Energy Educator, working with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, informed the group of many ways to conserve energy around the home, school, and other public buildings.

The State Horse Show was held in Montgomery the first of July. The volunteers from Madison County were among the highest number of 4-Her's. A special thanks goes to volunteers Mr. Eric Sexton, Mrs. Michelle Bowie, and Mrs. Shanda Smith for preparing the 4-Hers for this competition. Madison County will have several 4-Her's to attend the Southern Regional Horse Show.

Mrs. Beth Bowman, leader of the R-2 4-H Club will sponsor an Energy Awareness Campaign at Lowe's in Madison, Alabama, on August 2, 2008. Mrs. Bowman will use information provided in the Energy Kit presented by the Energy Educator, David Self.



If you have questions about becoming a 4-H volunteer, or are interested in volunteering with 4-H in Madison County, contact:

Wanda Pharris, Regional Extension Agent
(256) 532-1578 ext. 30
wjp0005@aces.edu

About Madison County

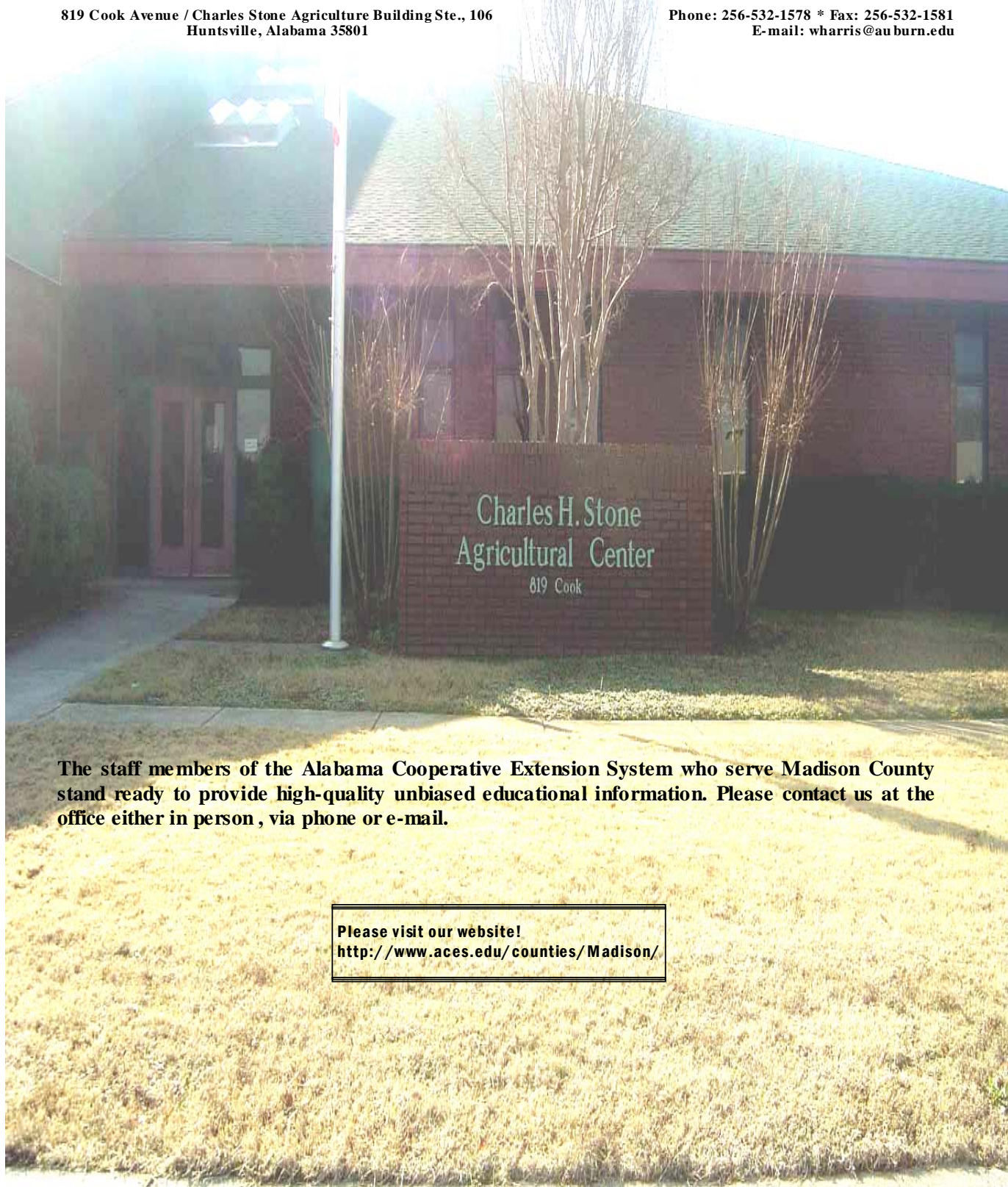
Madison County is Alabama's third most populated county with a per capita income second only to Shelby County, Alabama. The county covers 806 square miles. Demographic information is as follows:

Total population	304,307
5 to 9 years <i>(target 4-H audience)</i>	21,292
10 to 14 years <i>(target 4-H audience)</i>	20,148
15 to 19 years <i>(target 4-H audience)</i>	22,665
64,105 youth eligible to participate 4-H programs	
White	216,682
Black or African American	71,811
American Indian and Alaska Native	1,135
Cherokee tribal grouping	N
Chippewa tribal grouping	N
Navajo tribal grouping	N
Sioux tribal grouping	N
Asian	6,649
Asian Indian	1,949
Chinese	1,016
Filipino	339
Japanese	192
Korean	1,375
Vietnamese	1,659
Other Asian	119
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	0
Native Hawaiian	N
Guamanian or Chamorro	N
Samoan	N
Other Pacific Islander	N
Some other race	2,800
Two or more races	5,230
White and Black or African American	767
White and American Indian and Alaska Native	2,211
White and Asian	750
Black or African American and American Indian and Alaska Native	231
Median household income (in 2006 inflation-adjusted dollars)	51,359
Per capita income (in 2006 inflation-adjusted dollars)	27,065
Families below poverty level	7.6%
Individuals below poverty level	11.3%
Total housing units	134,731

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The staff members of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System who serve Madison County stand ready to provide high-quality unbiased educational information. Please contact us at the office either in person , via phone or e-mail.

**Please visit our website!
<http://www.aces.edu/counties/Madison/>**