

# Madison County Quarterly Newsletter

819 Cook Avenue ❖ Huntsville, Alabama 35801

October 2008 Edition



Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities

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## “REACHING OUT TO OUR COMMUNITY”

### Up-Coming Events

#### Commissioner/Advisory Board Luncheon

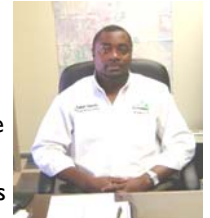
Date: Tues. - December 8, 2008  
 Time: 10:00 a.m.  
 Location: Charles Stone Agriculture Building

#### International Harvest Luncheon

(A yearly event for our community youth. School registration is required)

Date: Thur. - Nov. 20, 2008  
 Time: 10:00 a.m.  
 Location: Madison County Farmers Market

**Greetings**, from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Madison County Office. In this , our **second quarterly newsletter**, I hope you find the information useful and practical. In our last issue we touched on numerous topics that you can use to sustain in this trying economy. I must say, our Agents were very timely in seeing what lies ahead.



Please continue to use the information in our last issue to help you get through these trying economic times. Also, don't forget that the Madison County Extension office has a wealth of free information and assistance to help you, from personal financial planning to growing your own garden, we are available for you. Oh yes ... by the way, did I mention our services are **FREE!!!**

**Would you like to Enhance your Relationship with your Spouse or your Partner?**

**Alabama Cooperative Extension System-Family Life Center**

Is offering a

**Free Weekend Retreat**

November 21-22, 2008

**Loving Couples Loving Children Program**

*(Participants must have at least one child, age eight or younger, to participate in this program.)*

8 Sessions designed to give you the tools to help you make your relationship be the BEST it can be.

**Get all 8 Sessions in one Fun Weekend Plus Your Choice of a Gift Card just for attending and completing the Program.**

Call today for more Information and to sign-up:

**256-536-4779**  
 (space is limited)

## Do you have deadly spare tire?

Scientists believe that Metabolic Syndrome, a condition associated with apple-shaped people with large fat deposits around the waistline, is linked to a nationwide epidemic of chronic conditions such as diabetes and hypertension. An estimated 25 percent of Americans suffer from this problem.

In laboratory studies, doctors have determined that many of the markers associated with chronic diseases such as hypertension, heart disease and diabetes tend to be present in the blood samples of people with large waistlines. These include high levels of cholesterol and triglycerides, low levels of the "good" or protective HDL cholesterol and elevated blood sugar levels.

Even without blood tests, a potbelly should be considered strong evidence of Metabolic Syndrome. Granted, people with excessive abdominal fat may not suffer all of the problems associated with the condition, but there's a strong chance that they do.



*Many people joke about the spare tire around their waist, but actually it can cause more than tight-fitting clothes and embarrassment. It can be life-threatening.*

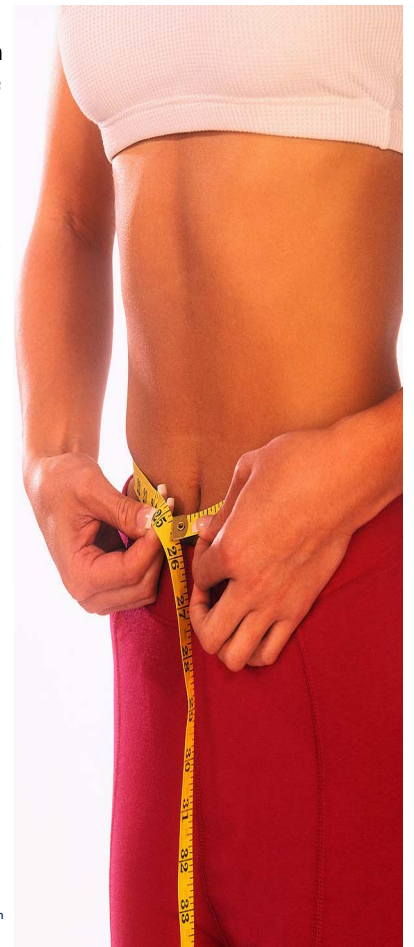
### *How to Change the Spare Tire...*

If your waistline is anywhere near 40 inches (for men) and 35 inches (for women) you should consult your doctor to see if you are already suffering from any of the chronic conditions associated with Metabolic Syndrome. Even if you are not overweight, you may still be at risk if you have a tummy paunch or have excessive fat in the

abdominal area. Also, women who developed gestational diabetes during pregnancy face a higher risk. The second and perhaps most important step is to develop a strategy for reducing abdominal fat through healthy eating and adequate exercise. Even modest weight losses between 5 and 10 pounds can lower blood pressure

and reduce the problems associated with diabetes, such as insulin insensitivity. But the real challenge lies in adopting a healthy lifestyle and sticking to it.

Yes, changing the spare tire from fat into lean muscle may pose a minor inconvenience at first, but the possible alternatives - heart disease, diabetes, and hypertension are far worse.



### *Walking...*

#### *a low-impact exercise with numerous health benefits*

Walking for fitness can help you achieve a number of important health benefits. For example, you can:

- ◆ Reduce your risk of a heart attack.
- ◆ Manage your blood pressure.
- ◆ Manage your diabetes and reduce your risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- ◆ Manage your weight.
- ◆ Manage stress and boost your spirits.
- ◆ Stay strong and active.



### Tip

*Walking is one of your body's most natural forms of exercise. It's safe, simple, doesn't require practice, and the health benefits are many.*

## Managing Weight

Many Americans are fighting the battle of weight control. Most people are able to make small changes without becoming overwhelmed with the idea of the total amount of weight they need to lose. For example, eating only 100 calories MORE per day than the body needs can result in a weight gain of about ten pounds per year if physical activity is not increased to offset the calories. Here are some examples of foods containing 100 calories:

- ½ of a 16-ounce non-diet soft drink
- 1 tablespoon of butter or margarine
- 1 tablespoon regular mayonnaise
- 1 ½ tablespoons of regular salad dressing
- 2/3 small package (1 ounce) snack chips
- 1/3 to ½ of a 2 ounce candy bar
- 1 to 2 cookies, depending on type

Consider this process in reverse to see that it is possible to LOSE ten pounds in a year by eating 100 calories LESS per day. It may take only one small daily food change to make a difference that can help with weight loss, or at least maintenance of one's current weight. Reducing calorie intake by 100 calories per day can result in a weight loss of ten pounds in a year. Small changes can make a big difference.

**Weight Management Articles Submitted By: Shirley Whitten, Regional Extension Agent  
Serving Counties in North East Alabama**

**BODYWORKS**  
A Toolkit for Healthy Girls & Strong Women

**BodyWorks** is a program designed to help parents and caregivers of young adolescent girls (ages 9 to 13) improve family eating and activity habits. A toolkit provided to participants includes information on nutrition, physical activity and goal setting. The guides also have quizzes, games and interviews with girls, moms, and providers. There is also a food and fitness journal that allows families to better understand current eating and activity habits by recording meals, snacks and physical activity. A DVD titled "Let's Shop, Cook, and Eat Together" gives families menu planning tips as well as healthy grocery shopping and cooking strategies.



On August 8<sup>th</sup>, five people became trained in the program at Girls, Inc. located at the Richard Showers Center. The six hour Train-The-Trainer program included the opportunity to learn about development of the program, and to actually use some of the curriculum in various scenarios. The BodyWorks curriculum is a ten session program that has session topics as diverse as healthy eating, to shopping for meals, to the role the media plays in body image and food choices.

There was also the opportunity to talk about health issues in the community. Trainees included representatives from Girl's Inc., the Gadsden Public Library and REA-HNDH Shirley Whitten. For more information about BodyWorks, contact **Donna Shanklin** or **Shirley Whitten**. We would be glad to provide more information about the Train-The-Trainer program, or a Parents and Caregivers ten session program.

**Article Submitted By: Donna Shanklin, Regional Extension Agent  
Serving Counties in North Alabama**



**Milk and milk products provide a wealth of nutrition benefits. But raw milk can harbor dangerous microorganisms that can pose serious health risks to you and your family.**

<http://www.foodsafety.gov/~dms/rawmilk.html>

*“Don’t hesitate to ask your grocer or store clerk whether milk or cream has been pasteurized, especially milk or milk products sold in refrigerated cases at grocery or health food stores.”*



If you are pregnant, consuming raw milk - or foods made from raw milk, such as Mexican-style cheese like Queso Blanco or Queso Fresco - can harm your baby even if you don't feel sick.

## Pasteurized Milk Under Attack

Milk and milk products provide a wealth of nutritional benefits. A rich source of vitamins and minerals, available in several levels of fat content, including fat-free, fluid milk has recently cost less than gasoline in some parts of the country. Its nutrients, great taste, and functional properties in recipes make it a staple of our diet. But logically, what is good for us is also good for harmful bacteria and milk provides a perfect environment for the growth of bacteria that cause listeriosis, typhoid fever, tuberculosis, diphtheria, and brucellosis. And so, routinely in the United States, milk is *pasteurized*, heated to at least 170°F for 15 seconds to kill disease causing microorganisms. In the early twentieth century, before laws requiring pasteurization, 97 out of every 1000 children died before they reached the age of five years. With passage of many state and city laws requiring pasteurization, the death rate of children under five dropped dramatically, and bovine tuberculosis in humans was virtually wiped out. Presently, the sale of raw, unpasteurized, milk has been banned in about half the states and in 1987, the FDA banned the interstate distribution of unpasteurized milk and milk products in final package form for human consumption. The agency rejected the idea of merely ordering a warning label because the danger of raw milk is not related to misuse and the only step a consumer can take to reduce the risk is not to consume raw milk products.

Almost unbelievably, milk pasteurization is currently under attack by certain interest groups and demand for raw milk is growing among consumers. Health faddists insist that pasteurization destroys the major proportion of vitamins, enzymes and minerals, creates contaminants, and does not maintain the biological antibodies and enzymes present in raw milk. Overwhelmingly though, scientific research shows no meaningful difference in the nutritional values of pasteurized and unpasteurized milk. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 800 people in the United States have become sick from drinking raw milk or eating cheese made from raw milk since 1998. Some people continue to believe that pasteurization harms milk and that raw milk is a safe, healthier alternative.

Here are some common myths and the proven facts about milk and pasteurization:

- ◆ Pasteurizing milk DOES NOT cause lactose intolerance and allergic reactions. Both raw milk and pasteurized milk can cause allergic reactions in people sensitive to milk proteins.
- ◆ Raw milk DOES NOT kill dangerous pathogens by itself.
- ◆ Pasteurization DOES NOT reduce milk's nutritional value.
- ◆ Pasteurization DOES NOT mean that it is safe to leave milk out of the refrigerator for an extended time, particularly after it has been opened.
- ◆ Pasteurization DOES kill harmful bacteria.
- ◆ Pasteurization DOES save lives.

While most healthy people will recover from an illness caused by harmful bacteria in raw milk or in foods made with raw milk within a short period of time, some can develop symptoms that are chronic, severe, or even life-threatening. Pregnant women run a serious risk of becoming ill from the bacteria *Listeria*, which can cause miscarriage, fetal death, illness or death of a newborn. If you are pregnant, consuming raw milk - or foods made from raw milk, such as Mexican-style cheese like Queso Blanco or Queso Fresco can harm your baby even if you don't feel sick.

Although most milk and milk products sold in the U.S. are pasteurized, milk and products made from unpasteurized milk are sold. Taking a few moments to make sure the products you buy are pasteurized can save much grief. Read the label. Safe milk will have the word "pasteurized" on the label. If the word "pasteurized" does not appear on a product's label, it may contain raw milk. Don't hesitate to ask your grocer or store clerk whether milk or cream has been pasteurized, especially milk or milk products sold in refrigerated cases at grocery or health food stores. Don't buy milk or milk products at farm stands or farmers' markets unless you can confirm that it has been pasteurized.

**Article Submitted By: Emily Russell Campbell, Regional Extension Agent for Food Safety, Preparation, Preservation and Entrepreneurship - Serving Counties in North East Alabama**



## Assisting In Middle School Transition

**TMI**  
Teens Making Impact

Transition to middle school is marked by several changes in educational expectations and practices. In most elementary schools, children are taught in self-contained classrooms with a familiar set of peers and one or two teachers. Once students reach middle schools, however, they must interact with more peers, more teachers, and with intensified expectations for both performance and individual responsibility. Social, developmental, and academic experiences are affected, requiring them to adjust to what they see as new settings, structures, and expectations. According to the Journal of Education research, this is the point at which children begin to make pivotal decisions regarding their academic and career choices. Their decisions are compromised by academic achievement, performance motivation, and self-perceptions.

### Objectives:

- ◆ To provide quality leadership and learning experiences for youth.
- ◆ To provide opportunities for youth to gain knowledge about college life and career choices.
- ◆ To provide opportunities for youth to develop self-esteem and social skills.
- ◆ To recognize and reward youth for their participation in the TMI program.

Madison County Extension Office was contacted by Circle Project, a teacher/parent organization, to conduct a series of youth development lessons for elementary students to assist them in their transition to middle school.

TMI (Teens Making Impact) Curriculum was implemented at Morris Elementary School. TMI is design to address emerging topics to prepare teens and preteens with information to support the development of skills for making sound career decisions, engaging in effective communication, pursuing healthier lifestyles, and to better understand government issues.

Forty-three 5th graders participated in the following sessions: life choices, health/physical fitness, etiquette, career focus and civic education. Pre/post test were given to assess student's current knowledge and to determine knowledge gain.

### The following data was compiled from 2008 TMI Pre/Post Test:

- 30% increased knowledge concerning location of bread plate at table setting
- 5% increased knowledge on the importance of daily exercise
- 6% increased knowledge correct amount of recommended vegetable serving
- 5% increased knowledge of good character
- 62% stated "suit" is proper dress for job interview
- 7% increased knowledge on how stripes are placed on the U.S. flag

**This data is based on the scientific research standard P= 5%.**



**Article Submitted By: Tyrone Smith, Urban Regional Extension Agent  
Serving Madison and Limestone Counties**

## EPA invites Americans to Bring their Green to Work

To take a tour of Energy Star @ Work, go to: <http://www.energystar.gov/work>

In September, the Environmental Protection Agency revealed a new online tool, Energy Star @ Work, to provide Americans with tips and information on how to save energy and protect the environment in the workplace. Energy use in commercial buildings and manufacturing plants accounts for nearly half of U.S. greenhouse gas

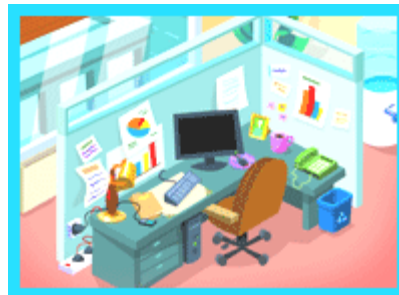
emissions and nearly 50 percent of energy consumption nationwide. With the average American worker spending almost 8 hours a day at their place of employment, the workplace offers a unique opportunity for people to make a significant impact in the fight against climate change. Millions of Americans are already doing their part to

save energy by being more energy efficient at home, but they may not necessarily think of conserving energy at work. In fact, we can also take many of the same energy efficient steps in the workplace.



**Bring Your GREEN  
TO WORK**

*“Spread the word at work...to encourage others to join you in saving energy and protecting the environment.”*



**Start In Your Workplace**

*“Create a Green Team with your co-workers to save energy and reduce office waste.”*

Energy Star @ Work is an animated image of a typical office work space with tips and links to valuable information employees can use on a daily basis - from starting a Green Team in the office to simply changing a desk lamp bulb. Simple actions by employees can make a big difference in the overall energy performance of a building. Some of the tips included in the Energy Star @ Work tool include:

- ◆ Replace the bulbs in desk lamps with Energy Star qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs. These light bulbs use about 75 percent less energy than incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer. Energy Star qualified lamps and light fixtures also are available for even more energy savings.
- ◆ Use a power strip as a central "turn off" point when you are done using office equipment to completely disconnect the power supply. Even when turned off, electronic and IT equipment often use a small amount of electricity when plugged in.
- ◆ Remember to turn off your lights when leaving conference rooms and your work space, especially at the end of the day.
- ◆ Use Energy Star qualified battery chargers or power adapters which, on average, use 30-35 percent less energy than conventional models. Don't forget to unplug battery chargers or power adapters when equipment is fully charged or disconnected from the charger.
- ◆ Get involved! Create a Green Team with your co-workers, help reduce office waste, and set a goal to earn the Energy Star label for your building.

**EPA Article Submitted By: Shirley Whitten, Regional Extension Agent  
Serving North East Alabama Counties.**

4-H



Make a World of Difference



Volunteers are the basis of 4-H programs. 4-H Clubs are lead by interested caring volunteer leaders willing to work with youth. 4-H Volunteer Leaders assist young people to become the best they can be. A 4-H club can be a general club or can focus on interest topics, such as environment, pets, computers or other 4-H subject areas. 4-H is open to youth ages 9-19 and there are no membership dues associated with 4-H. If you have a skill or trade and would like to share it with youth, we invite you to consider becoming a 4-H volunteer.

The 4-H in Madison County is off to a great start! The volunteers are ready to take on another 4-H club year. The volunteers have began club meetings and have some educational programming lined up for the 4-Hers. Volunteer Leader, Betty Duncan is working with her 4-H club on a quilting project. It is a sticky job but the 4-Hers are enjoying the class.

The 4-H Northeast Regional Council participated in the Madison County Cattleman's Association Rodeo and used this opportunity to recruit and spread awareness of 4-H in their community.

They also handed out gifts and literature on 4-H to persons attending the Rodeo.

Mr. Bill Lindstrom, Volunteer Leader with the 4-H Livestock Club, worked the Rodeo which was sponsored by the Madison Cattleman's Association. Mr. Lindstrom assisted his club members with a fund raiser at this event. The 4-H Livestock Club worked the parking lot to raise funds to assist with their travel to the livestock show in Kentucky.

Mr. Eric Sexton and Mrs. Michelle Bowie, Volunteer Leaders with the Madison County At-Large Club, met recently with the 4-Horse Club. They elected officers and voted on a name change. The Madison County At-Large Horse Club's new name is the Tennessee Valley Horse Club. The club's next meeting will include a special speaker. A local Veterinarian will speak to the group on "How To Care For Your Horse."

We would like to welcome new volunteer Mrs. Kristen Russell of Russell Alpaca Farms. Mrs. Russell recently began an Alpaca 4-H Club.

The Alpaca 4-H Club will focus on the care and training of the Alpacas on obstacle courses. Mrs. Russell has cared for and trained Alpacas since 2005. Mrs. Russell entered her 4-H club in the Alpaca and Llama Heart of Dixie Show in September. The 4-Hers won two ribbons each in the obstacle course and one 4-Her won in showmanship.

Mr. Maynard Dalton, Volunteer Leader with the Honeybee 4-H Club, is having a great year with harvesting honey from the hives. The youth are enthusiastic and very attentive to Mr. Dalton's lessons on how to harvest and to prepare the hives.

If you are interested in becoming a 4-H Volunteer Leader, we encourage you to contact your local county Extension Office. For more information on the Madison County 4-H Volunteer Program, contact Wanda Pharris, 4-H Regional Extension Agent at (256) 532-1578 ext. 30.

**Article Submitted By: Wanda Pharris, Regional Extension Agent  
Serving Madison and Jackson Counties**

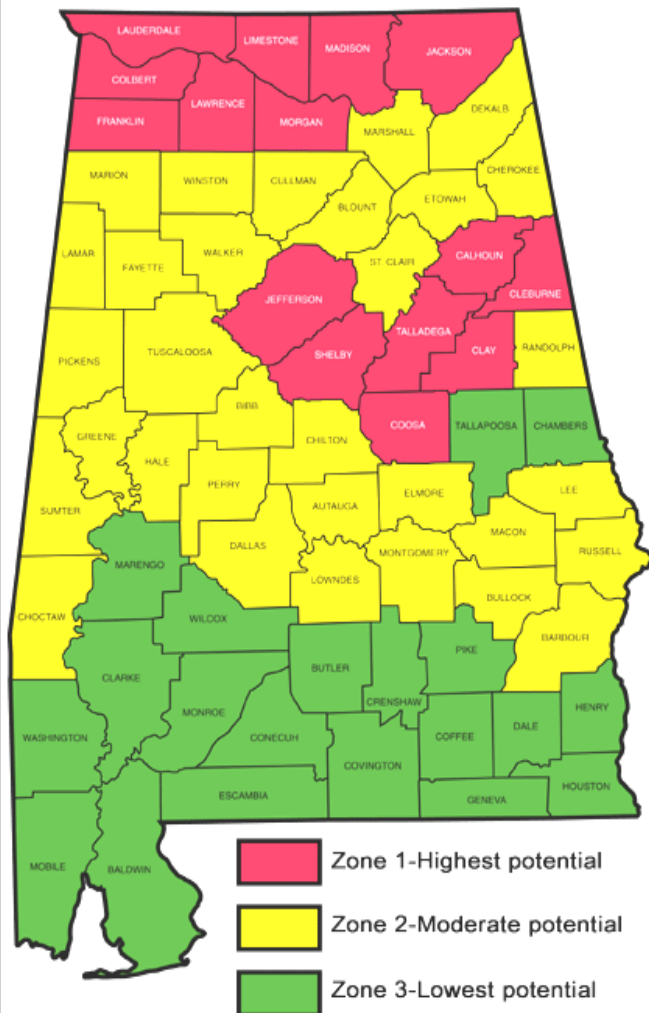
## RADON...The Silent Killer

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.

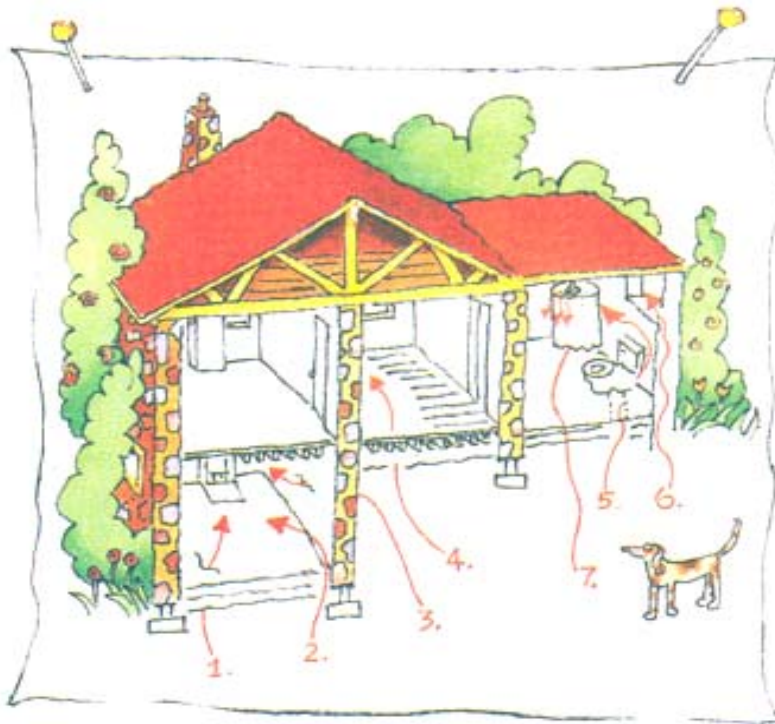
In partnership with the Alabama Department of Public Health and the U.S. EPA, the Madison County’s program objectives are:

- 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.”



Alabama has **15 counties** that have been identified as having among the highest levels of radon in the country. Madison and Colbert counties have the greatest problems. Other counties identified with problems include: **Calhoun, Clay, Cleburne, Coosa, Franklin, Jackson, Jefferson, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Limestone, Morgan, Shelby and Talladega.** Marshall County is included in the Radon Program even though it is a Zone 2 county. County agents located at the County Extension System offices listed below have more information.

- Clay - (256) 354-5976
- Cleburne & Calhoun - (256) 463-2620
- Colbert - (256) 386-8572
- Lauderdale - (256) 766-4846
- Franklin - (256) 332-8880
- Jackson - (256) 574-2143
- Jefferson - (205) 325-5342
- Lawrence - (256) 974-2464
- Limestone - (256) 232-5510
- Madison (256) 532-1578
- Morgan - (256) 773-2549
- Shelby - (205) 669-6763



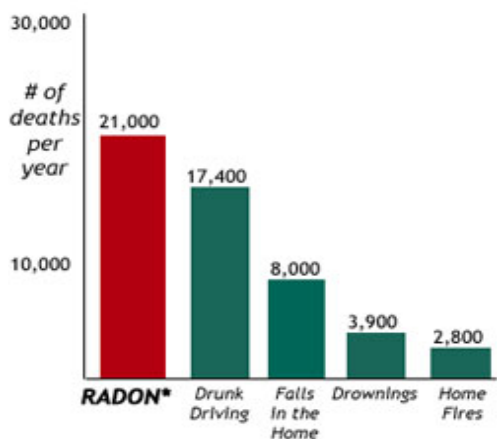
**RADON GETS IN THROUGH**

1. Cracks in solid floors
2. Construction joints
3. Cracks in walls
4. Gaps in suspended floors
5. Gaps around service pipes
6. Cavities inside walls
7. The Water supply

**EPA Recommends**

- Test your home for radon -- it's easy and inexpensive.
- Fix your home if your radon level is 4 picoCuries per liter (pCi/L) or higher.
- Radon levels less than 4 pCi/L still pose a risk, and in many cases may be reduced.

**Radon is estimated to cause thousands of lung cancer deaths in the U.S. each year.**



Walter Rodgers, Radon Agent for Madison County has contacted Mr. Kevin Youngkin, Director of Integrated Marketing for five (5) radio stations in the Huntsville and Madison County area. Mr. Youngkin has agreed to market the Radon Education Program on all of the following stations.

- ♦ WDRM 102.1 (Listeners 200,000)
- ♦ WTAK 106.1 (Listeners 88,600)
- ♦ WQRV 100.3 (Listeners 276,262)
- ♦ WBHP /WHOS AM (Listeners 154,442)
- ♦ WAY FM 88.1 (Listeners 46-47,000)

Radon information is also listed on the radio websites.

Mr. Rodgers sends the Radon Newsletter to more than 4,000 people monthly.

Radon Information obtained from <http://www.epa.gov/radon/pubs/citguide.html>

**Radon Articles Submitted By: Walter Rodgers, Regional Extension Agent  
Serving Madison County**

The 150+ **Master Gardeners of North Alabama** have had a busy spring and summer working throughout the county. Here's a snapshot of some of their activities in two main focus areas for these hardworking gardeners:

**Educating...**

- ◆ Taught Homeowner Education Workshops on trees, shrubs and lawns; vegetable gardening; and annuals and perennials for Habitat for Humanity homeowners and potential homeowners. Also landscaped Habitat for Humanity houses.
- ◆ On-going demonstration of composting by building a three bin welded fence wire compost system as a demonstration model at the Botanical Gardens and making ACES brochures on composting available through a mailbox which they also erected.
- ◆ On-going demonstration of vegetable gardening and companion planting by answering the public's questions at the Demonstration Vegetable Gardens throughout the summer at the HBG as well as working to plant, maintain and harvest.



**Working ...**

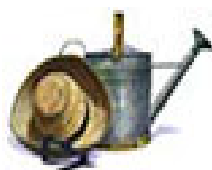
- ◆ On-going help in the Madison County extension office by manning the phones and answering the public's horticulture and plant questions on both the local and regional hot lines.
- ◆ Helped the Blossomwood Jr. Master Gardeners install a pond and stock it with plants and fish for Earth Day.
- ◆ Helped the Adult Day Care program at the Senior Center by building a new raised bed and filling it with dirt and beautiful plants in addition to maintaining and planting two other beds.
- ◆ Established a MGNA/Habitat for Humanity nursery at the HfH headquarters, aided by the baseball team at Catholic High School.
- ◆ Helped the Huntsville Botanical Gardens by raising \$259,000+ through the spring plant sale and did 139 pH soil tests.



**Article Submitted By: Gean Nelson, Master Gardener Intern  
Master Gardeners of North Alabama**

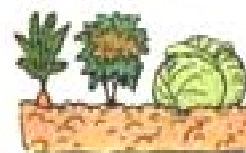


### I'm A REAL Master Gardener! A Day In The Life of a Master Gardener...



It wasn't until I pulled into the parking lot that I realized how nervous and excited I had become. This was it, my first volunteer job since beginning my Master Gardening Classes. Hoping to meet some friendly folks, I donned my well worn gardening gloves and grabbed my shovel. My nervousness eased as I rounded the corner and saw Anne Bole's smiling face. Anne is the coordinator for the Lilies of the Valley Garden Project.

We entered a plot which would soon be the Lilies of the Valley Garden of Life and Remembrance. A place to find peace, quiet your mind, nourish your soul and celebrate life. Anxious to get started, I knelt and began helping to weed an area. Anne walked over and introduced me to the other volunteers as a "Master Gardener". I lifted my head and replied, "Well, I'm not REAL yet, I'm just an intern." The wide brimmed hat directly in front of me quickly lifted and underneath was another warm smile. I locked eyes with the lady under the hat and she assertively said, "You are here in the dirt early on a Saturday morning. You are a REAL Master Gardener." I introduced myself to the lady under the hat, Carol Umstaedter, a REAL Master Gardener. She became my mentor for the day.



Carol showed me the proper way to throw a mattock to maximize tillage and minimize back strain. Once I mastered this technique, she showed me how to dig a proper hole for boxwood shrubs. I also learned that the weight of ball & burlap boxwoods increases with the number of holes you dig.



There also seems to be a correlation between the mattock's weight and the position of the sun. It became more difficult to swing the mattock as the sun got higher in the sky. This is a phenomenon that I decided not to study further.

I left the garden with new friends, a feeling of accomplishment, admiration for the cancer survivors that were digging along side me and a sense that maybe I am a REAL Master Gardener.

**Article Submitted By: Tammie Scudamore, Master Gardener Intern  
Lilies of the Valley Garden of Life and Remembrance Project**

## Strawberry Cultivation

**Strawberries** have been an important horticultural crop for Alabama farmers. Fall is the time when commercial strawberries are planted. Two cultivars, **CHANDLER** and **CAMEROSA**, continue to be the most widely planted due to their adaptability to our growing conditions. Commercial strawberries are grown on black plastic mulch with irrigation. Plants that are set in October will bear fruit the following spring. By June, the season is over and farmers typically kill the old strawberry plants and plant tomatoes, cantaloupes or some other vegetable on the plastic.



**Article Submitted by: Doug Chapman, Regional Extension Agent - Commercial Horticulture  
Serving Counties in North East Alabama**

## The Holiday Season Is Fast Approaching!

### *Here are a few Holiday Dining Tips*

A good party doesn't just happen, not even for the hostess who is regarded as having an inborn flair for entertaining. The successful party is the result of careful planning of the food to be offered, as well as an awareness of just what makes an occasion memorable.



So often in organizing our entertaining, we tend to forget why we're doing it. We're so busy with the mechanics of the affair, we overlook the real purpose of entertaining - the pleasure of dispensing hospitality.

If entertaining is to be done with confidence and pleasure or if it is to be done at all, much of the food should be prepared ahead of time, allowing for catastrophes and recovery.

Hospitality, a synonym for the South, comes from the heart. Hospitality is a gift: it is the giving of oneself, the opening of one's home to create a warm and welcoming spot where friends or near strangers may be completely at ease. Then a guest leaves feeling he brought joy to his hostess and happiness to the household, he himself has received hospitality.

The secret to great entertainment is preparation: do as much work ahead as possible. Do something unusual: decorate the house and the table to the mood of the party. Even a flickering candle may softly announce a warm welcome. The simplest extra touch tells guests that they are special and that the hours ahead will be too.

Entertaining is easy and always fun when you approach it with interest and individuality. And it is our goal to guide and give ideas that may help you entertain in a manner suited perfectly to you.

### **Types of Holiday Entertaining**

#### **Brunch (10:30 a.m.—1:00 p.m.)**

A brunch starts the day in a relaxed festive way. It's a time to appreciate an especially good morning, whether it's just the family on a lazy Saturday or a crowd before the ball game.

The time is as flexible as the feeling, and the host is left to choose the hour best suited for both the host and guests, and the activities that follow. As the noon hour approaches, the dishes move from the egg and bacon sphere to luncheon fare. But for those who can not fathom a brunch without eggs, there are several variations on the ever-popular fluffy scrambled ones.



A brunch suggests a hearty meal, as it is intended to take the place of breakfast and lunch. The heartiness depends on the function. You may serve several meats, a variety of eggs and breads, grits and stewed tomatoes. But after a morning wedding, a brunch would most likely resemble a light but elegant luncheon.

For a start, those who really haven't had breakfast appreciate something refreshing, a juice or fruit perhaps. And to add a bit of the unexpected, serve unusual bread, salad, or your own special creation.

## Holiday Dining (Cont.d)

### Luncheon (12:30 or 1:00 p.m. - last for about 1-1/2 to 2 hrs.)

Luncheons will most like bring to mind fine linen, glimmering silver, and rainbow casting crystal and a meal that is elegant, appetizing, and light. This would be a formal luncheon given perhaps in honor of an out of town guest, for an engagement, or just because that is the way you like to entertain. But a luncheon may also be informal perhaps a terrace setting with bandanna napkins and denim place mats given for a child's birthday or an after-tennis foursome. And, weekend luncheons allow couples to gather to enjoy a companionable Saturday afternoon.



### Dinner Parties (6:30, 7:00 or 8:00 p.m.)

A seated dinner party provides an evening to relax and relish each course and to enjoy the surrounding company, carefully chosen for compatibility.

From six to eight is a perfect number, large enough for interest, small enough for intimacy. Among friends, a foursome can be perfection.

Table settings or arrangements will enhance an evening, whether formal damask covers the table or a monk's cloth, for a Mexican meal. And the soft glimmer of candles create a pleasant atmosphere, bathing guests and food in a becoming light.

The hostess/host even without help should effortlessly serve the meal. If three courses present a problem, it is better to omit the first course or serve it as an hors d'oeuvre beforehand. And in planning a menu, keep in mind the need for a balance of texture, color and variety of flavors.

### Cocktail Party

The Cocktail Party is possible the easiest and most misunderstood way to entertain a large group of people. The party may begin anywhere from 5 o'clock on, and the invitation may or may not state the hour. If the guest list is large, groups may be invited for a two-hour period, but don't be surprised if a few guests have such a good time that they stay through the first list and mingle with the second group of guest.



Guest are given a choice of good foods. The hors d'oeuvres may be placed on one table, or at several vantage points for better serving of guests. Since guests usually have to stand at cocktail parties, pick-up foods are served. It's wise to have a choice of these tidbits, and be sure to have plenty of each kind.

## 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:

<b>Total population</b>	<b>304,307</b>
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
<b>64,105 youth eligible to participate 4-H programs</b>	
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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Please visit our website!  
<http://www.aces.edu/counties/Madison/>



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