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News Release

Alabama 4-H Centennial Celebration **1909-2009**

4-H in Alabama began with boy's corn clubs in Calhoun and Tuscaloosa counties and three years later, girl's tomato canning clubs.

Youth programs in Alabama can be traced back to the early 1900s boll weevil crop devastation. Seaman Knapp, who would later serve as president of Alabama Polytechnic Institute (now Auburn University) came to Alabama in 1902. He began work as a U.S. Department of Agriculture farm agent, demonstrating improved agriculture methods around the South. By 1904, Knapp was studying the work of legendary scientists Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.

In 1906, Thomas M. Campbell was appointed the first Alabama-based extension agent. He was hired by the USDA Office of Cooperative Demonstration to assist black farmers and used the Jesup Wagon, a movable school of agriculture, to spread the knowledge of better farming and home life to Alabama farmers.

Agents quickly learned that adults were resistant to changes in farming practices but children were more eager. The idea of teaching children, who in turn teach others, was born and is still in existence today as 4-H.

So where is Alabama 4-H today? What about St. Clair County?

More than 58,000 Alabama youth statewide participate in a variety of educational programs to learn belonging, independence, generosity and mastery. The focus of 4-H is using educational programs to encourage youth to become productive citizens with positive character and leadership skills.

The mission of 4-H is to serve all youth, especially those in urban and rural areas who are at a disadvantage because of life's circumstances. At the heart of Alabama 4-H's curricula is the belief that programs must instill life-development skills. No matter the subject, 4-H instructs youth in character values needed to be productive citizens. Alabama 4-H also teaches leadership skills through its commitment to positive youth development.

Fifteen hundred St. Clair County youth participate in 4-H through in-school clubs, volunteer-led special interest clubs and the 4-H Clover Classroom summer workshops. Students learn

everything from gardening, sewing, public speaking, animal science, nutrition, SET (Science, Engineering, & Technology) to citizenship.

What about you? Were you a 4-H member? What is your 4-H story? St. Clair County is planning a 4-H Centennial Celebration on Friday, April 24, 2009 from 2-4 p.m. at the St. Clair County Extension Office. We want to hear your 4-H story. If you have pictures, projects, or your 4-H record book to share, please bring them along. Come by to see St. Clair County 4-H history and enjoy refreshments with us as we celebrate 100 years of Alabama 4-H!

To speak with an agent or for more information please contact the St. Clair County Extension Office at 205-338-9416 or fax your 4-H story to 205-338-9417 or email me at tomlita@aces.edu.