

# Action

PUBLIC ISSUE INFORMATION FOR ALABAMA CITIZENS

## FROM THE EDITOR

### Community Leadership

Many will agree with Fred Fielder and Martin Chemers (*Improving Leadership Effectiveness*) that more any other factor, the quality of **leadership** will determine the success or failure of an organization. But, just what is leadership? Author Lewis H. Lapham stated, "Leadership consists not in degrees of technique but in traits of character; it requires moral rather than athletic or intellectual effort, and it imposes on both leader and follower alike the burdens of self-restraint." Theodore Roosevelt differentiated between a leader and a boss by stating, "The leader works in the open, and the boss in covert. The leader leads, and the boss drives." Admiral Arleigh A. Burke wrote, "Leadership is understanding people and involving them to help you do a job. That takes all of the good characteristics, like integrity, dedication of purpose, selflessness, knowledge, skill, implacability, as well as determination not to accept failure." Leadership is not just getting something done, it is doing it in an ethical manner.

*Action* is a quarterly publication of the Community Resource Development unit of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. The goal of the CRD unit is to help people solve community problems, take advantage of opportunities and build on their assets. The CRD unit provides educational and technical assistance in economic development, leadership development, strategic planning, environmental education, community health and public policy education. *Action* is one tool we use to link community groups to internal and external resources. This issue represents links between Extension and the Economic Development Institute (AU), Alabama Power Company and Leadership Selma-Dallas County.

Extension's involvement and links to others involved in **community leadership** is the focus of this Fall 2005 issue of *Action*. Willie D. Larkin, Extension organizational development specialist, is the coordinator for this issue. Other contributors are Mike Easterwood (Economic Development Institute), Bob Howard (Alabama Power Company) and Carolyn Saia Powell (Leadership Selma-Dallas County).

The next issue of *Action*, Winter 2006, will highlight **ecotourism**. For more information on these topics or suggestions for additional topics, contact the editor at (334) 844-3517, fax (334) 844-9022, or e-mail [jchesnut@aces.edu](mailto:jchesnut@aces.edu).

J. Thomas Chesnut  
Editor

Extension Tourism Specialist

## Leadership: Bringing a Community Together

A vital element in the success of any community is the quality and quantity of its leadership. Communities that enjoy the presence of numerous dynamic leaders have an advantage in terms of their ability to create and successfully implement development plans. Such communities are better positioned to take advantage of new opportunities and avoid some of the pitfalls that face other communities.

Auburn University has long recognized the importance of identifying, training and supporting strong community leadership in Alabama's communities. Through workshops and programs offered by individual faculty members, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and other units on campus provide a range of assistance to communities interested in developing a cadre of strong local leaders. Auburn faculty and staff have assisted communities throughout the state in establishing long-term leadership development programs at the community and county levels. Most of these programs have adult and youth leadership development components, with the thought that the future success of any community lies in its youth and the ability of the community to capitalize on the youth leadership resources it can develop.

An excellent example of how Auburn University has worked to assist state communities in developing their leadership base can be found in Camp Hill, a small community located about 15 miles from the Auburn campus. Working in partnership with staff from the

Alabama Power Company's Community Development department, Auburn staff from Extension and the Economic Development Institute responded to a request for assistance from Chester Carroll, Camp Hill's mayor. Mayor Carroll took office in October 2004 and was determined to provide a strong sense of direction and new leadership for the community. The focus of his request for assistance was on help in the development of a strategic plan to guide key decisions in Camp Hill for the next five to 10 years. The mayor felt that a key component of the strategic plan should be the creation of a sustainable youth and adult leadership program for the community. His initial thoughts on the importance of leadership development were confirmed as the strategic planning process went forward.

Starting in October 2004, a series of five community planning meetings were conducted over a period of nine months, allowing Camp Hill residents to offer their suggestions and thoughts about what were the most important issues facing the town and what they could do to address those issues. With the assistance of Auburn University and the Alabama Power Company team, residents identified community strengths and weaknesses, as well as threats and opportunities facing Camp Hill. They established an overall vision for the community and identified strategic goals and detailed action steps to help accomplish each goal.

The end product of the nine-month planning process was a written strategic plan for Camp Hill that will serve as a

community road map for the future. While this document is valuable in many ways, perhaps even more valuable was the process that residents involved in developing their plan went through. Each of the five planning sessions was well attended, typically featuring more than 60 community residents. There was a high level of participation and everyone involved contributed to a strong sense of community support and caring. As a result of the highly involved planning process, successfully implementing the plan will be much more likely.

A new group of volunteer community leaders emerged during the strategic planning process, people eager to devote their time and energies to making Camp Hill a better place to live. Each identified strategic issue has a citizen leader that will guide the efforts of a working committee designated to address the action steps for each issue. Mayor Carroll and the city council now

have help in their efforts to lead events in Camp Hill. They have a strong new team of volunteer leaders that can assist them in implementing the recommendations of the strategic plan. In addition, the strategic planning process identified revealed the desire of community residents to establish formal leadership training programs for adults and youth in Camp Hill.

The Camp Hill project illustrates how Auburn University can play a significant role in assisting Alabama communities recognize the importance of leadership development and provide direct assistance to communities in establishing and conducting leadership training programs. Auburn recognizes that great communities cannot exist without great leaders.

**Mike Easterwood**  
Senior Outreach Associate  
Economic Development Institute,  
Auburn University

Recently, extensive discussions have taken place with representatives of the Band of Poarch Creek Indians to work with them on creating a major strategic plan to address issues related to community, leadership, economic and educational development. Staff from Auburn University with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and the Economic Development Institute have partnered with the Poarch Creek Indian community to write a major grant. Although the approval of the grant is pending, the intention is to work together regardless of whether funding is awarded. There are highly relevant and common issues for all of us to explore. This is another example of the broad possibilities for leadership in the state.

Over the years, as we have worked in the area of leadership and organizational development, we have learned that we all share a commitment to expanding possibilities of educating leaders through resources that promote creativity and forward thinking. One of the key ingredients to spreading leadership throughout Alabama is to not be selfish or overly concerned about who gets the credit. I can honestly say that I have not worked

## Repositioning Extension to Provide Leadership for Alabama Communities and Organizations

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System has undergone enormous changes over the past few years. In addition to losing lots of key personnel, Extension has gone through major reorganization and structural changes as well. Yet, leadership training remains a stable and constant offering of the organization, despite talk about a new agricultural initiative to revamp the College of Agriculture, the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension. Although these uncertainties exist, there continues to be an avalanche of requests for assistance in leadership empowerment training from Extension professionals, as well as individual citizens throughout the state. In addition to calls to support existing leadership programs, the Community Resource Development unit at Auburn University continues to receive daily inquiries about how to start new leadership initiatives.

I believe that leadership continues to emerge as a top priority because of the increased survival demands being placed on communities, local organizations and even state agencies. Society has changed

drastically and the pressure on Alabama communities to be even more self-sufficient and empowered is evident. For decades, Extension has reached out to communities and assisted them with strategic planning, economic development, tourism, training governmental officials and a host of other initiatives that have had a tremendous effect on Alabama communities to make them stronger and self-sustaining.

Because we are inundated by leadership requests from throughout Alabama, the CRD unit will undergo a series of systemic changes to address the varied leadership challenges before it. The new plan will involve the creation of a "Leadership Alliance" between Extension and select partners. Although nothing has been finalized, discussion has begun between Extension and a number of suitable partners to address the massive leadership needs in the state. Today, we have worked closely with a number of reputable agencies in the state that have similar goals and objectives as does Extension. The key is to marry similar programs to make sure the efforts of all parties are maximized.

**Action**

Alabama  
Communities  
in Transition

**Editor**

J. Thomas Chesnutt

*Extension Tourism Specialist*



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We would like you to share success stories in your community for inclusion in future issues of *Action*. Send to: J. Thomas Chesnutt, 218 Extension Hall, Auburn University, Alabama 36849.

with as many devoted professionals as I have with people like Artie Menefee, Mike Easterwood, Bob Howard, Nisa Maranda, Sondra Donnaway, Joyce Brooks, Marietta Williams, Lamar Smith and a host of other loyal professionals serving Alabama citizens and communities. We realize that none of us can do it all alone and that the problems confronting Alabama are so enormous, there is enough to go around. Actually, we provide each other with fuel and play off each other's commitment to excellence. Our success as a collective body comes from challenging each other to bring our best to the table at all times. Our motto is to discover the "best practices" and share them with others.

Finally, there is a bond that has been developed among those of us who are members of the team of "Leadership Circuit Riders." Our goal is to change Alabama for a sustainable journey into the future, and leadership is the key!

**Willie D. Larkin**  
**Leadership and Organizational**  
**Development Specialist**  
**Alabama Cooperative Extension System**

## **Leaving No Leadership Stone Unturned: A Passion to Serve Alabama**

Every community possesses elements that might appeal to a potential prospect. The more the community "product" is developed, the more elements the community has to promote. Product development enables the community to be more competitive in the global marketplace. The process of product development ensures that the basic elements for a sustainable and marketable community are in place and accessible.

Leadership is the prime force that makes things happen in a community. Without strong leadership, the success of the community is limited. Strong leaders are needed to develop direction, foster consensus and provide motivation. Strong leaders represent fairly the interests of the community and work aggressively to push the economic development process forward.

The best way to begin is to assemble a leadership team. Leaders come from the private sector, public sector and from the volunteer community. Successful communities encourage, develop and welcome new leaders from all areas. Having a broad leadership base is one element of a successful economic and community development.

The leadership in the community, with input from local citizens, must then determine a vision for the community. The vision is the ultimate dream and desire for the community's future. Where would you like to see the community five, 10 or 20 years from today? As the old saying goes, "If you don't know where you would like to go, any road will take you there."

Once the leadership is in place and the community has determined what they would like to become in the future, a strategic plan can be developed. The strategy is the blueprint, the plan of action, a map to the future. The strategy encompasses the community's vision, mission and goals. It clearly lays out the steps to realize the vision. A strategic plan is the road map for positive growth.

During this step of the process, it is to the community's advantage to identify and build partnerships. Partnerships are established over a period of time to assist the community in becoming all it can be. Partnerships can be developed with state and local government, colleges and universities, the faith-based community, non-profit agencies, retirees and volunteers.

Alabama Power provides assistance to communities in both the community development and economic development areas. The staff is experienced, knowledgeable and ready to help the community with any of the steps in the development process. Trained advisers, facilitators and project managers can assist your community in areas such as leadership development workshops or seminars, community assessments and marketing, strategic planning and industrial recruitment. We love working with individuals and communities in Alabama—that's what keeps us getting up bright and early every morning.

**Bob Howard**  
**Manager of Community Development**  
**Alabama Power Company**

## **A Model for Success: Leading the Way**

Leadership Selma-Dallas County is a community development program that was established to address the need to prepare committed individuals for growth and development opportunities, both personally and professionally. This 10-month, experiential community development and leadership training program introduces diverse, intelligent and driven people to learn characteristics and aspects of themselves and the community they serve. Quality of life issues in the community are shown through a series of site visits and presentations by corporate leaders, business leaders, political leaders, educators and healthcare professionals, among others. Anyone can make a difference and this program empowers people to put their thoughts into action. Group projects are decided upon collectively and these projects prepare students to translate their ideals into action for improving their own communities.

Sixty-five students, 25 adults and 40 youth are chosen annually through a highly competitive selection process. They represent a range of ages, interests, academic and work experience, racial, religious and economic backgrounds, but all are committed to excellence for Dallas County. The adult and youth programs run on separate days but the format is similar. Both programs expose participants to a diverse cross section of the county.

At the Cahaba Mental Health and Mental Retardation Center when you see the faces of the consumers working in a greenhouse, doing ceramics or taking pride in just making a bed it moves you in a way that words cannot capture. Going to the United Methodist Children's Home and seeing the positive environment for children brings tears to your eyes as well as listening to a story at SABRA Sanctuary from a former victim of domestic violence. Listening and interacting with the City of Selma's mayor and Dallas County probate judge gives new perspectives for the county rather than misleading assumptions. Listening to Sheriff Harris Huffman at the county jail and seeing prisoners and sometimes speaking with prisoners gives leadership students a real life experience that is

memorable – some call it our “scared-straight program for teens.”

Leadership Selma-Dallas County is the community development arm for economic development (EDA). At the Centre for Commerce, Wayne Vardaman, CEO for the EDA, Chamber of Commerce, Leadership and Tourism believes in a collective team approach where communication and knowledge are the keys to success. Through his leadership, Team Selma, comprised of the senator, mayor and probate judge as well as other key leaders, including Vardaman, has devised a model for success that leadership students can experience and see first hand the results of how a collaborative process can serve for the betterment of a community.

The guide for how to set up a youth program for teens is not rocket science even though the McWane Center has a Challenger program for team building that involves rocket mission assignments. This personal development program as well as the Ropes Course at the 4-H Center and Ropes at the YMCA is interactive. The Alabama Cooperative

Extension System’s True Colors program teaches personality traits and tolerance in working with others who process information in different ways. The Financial Literacy program sponsored by AmSouth, Peoples Bank & Trust, South Trust and Regions Bank teaches students about money matters. The Stephen Covey program, Seven Habits for Highly Effective Teens, as well as Etiquette 101 enhance personal growth. The Capitol City Club sponsors Etiquette, teaching manners, common courtesies, dining skills, how to dress for success and how to speak in a job interview. Session days at Vaughan Hospital, International Paper, The Innovation Centre, Wallace Community College, Concordia College, Bush Hog, Inc., and Henry Brick Company show participants opportunities that exist locally for quality careers. Be all that you can be and serve your community!

The primary focus for leadership programs is community development – learning more about community so that a spirit of volunteerism will be instilled. Through this process, personal development components are merged so that

the experience is one of self-growth and development. After graduation, alumni activities provide opportunities for continued participation – youth leaders can be youth mentors coming back and leading groups as they participate in activities and devise projects. Of note last year, one youth alum started a support group for teens who were experiencing grief and loss along with another youth alumni member. Currently they have 22 members in this organization.

Leadership Selma-Dallas County has had a number of projects that have made a difference: Christmas Parade, American Cancer Society-Relay for Life, American Red Cross, Career Days at all seven high schools, Crime stoppers (developed and organized by class members and alumni), beautification projects, nursing home projects, and Feed the Children project. This last project organized and distributed food to 400 needy families in Dallas County.

It is a model for success. Step up or step out of the way!

**Carolyn Saia Powell**  
Director  
Leadership Selma-Dallas County

Visit the Community Resource Development home page at [www.aces.edu/department/crd/](http://www.aces.edu/department/crd/)



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