

Action

PUBLIC ISSUE INFORMATION FOR ALABAMA CITIZENS

FROM THE EDITOR

Agri-Tourism in Alabama – Part III

Significant interest in **agri-tourism** is growing among residents and travelers to Alabama. After the tragedies of September 11, 2001, people are still traveling. But they are traveling more often by automobile, and they are taking shorter trips closer to home. Agri-tourism attractions also serve the desires of tourists to learn more from their travels and to rediscover for themselves and their families their rural and agricultural roots.

The Community Resource Development (CRD) unit of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) publishes *Action* once each quarter. The goal of the CRD unit is to help people solve community problems, take advantage of opportunities, and build on their assets. To accomplish this, 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 a tool we use to link community groups to ACES' resources. This issue represents internal linkages within ACES between agriculture and community development.

ACES' involvement and linkages to others in **agri-tourism** are again the focus of this Winter 2003 issue of *Action*. This is the final issue of a three-part series highlighting agri-tourism in Alabama. Arlie Powell, Extension State Program Leader for Agriculture, and J. Thomas Chesnutt, Extension Tourism Specialist, are the coordinators for this issue. Specific, existing agri-tourism attractions are highlighted in this issue.

The next issue of *Action*, Spring 2003, will highlight the **Economic Development Intensive Course**, which is a joint effort between the CRD unit and the Economic Development Institute at Auburn University. For more information on these topics or suggestions for additional topics, contact the editor at (334) 844-3517, or fax him at (334) 844-9022, or e-mail jchesnut@aces.edu.

J. Thomas Chesnutt
Editor

Extension Tourism Specialist

Agri-Tourism Partnership

The Alabama Bureau of Tourism & Travel (ABT&T) and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) are exploring a partnership to develop a statewide Agri-Tourism Trail. Over the past two years, the ABT&T has developed seven themed trails across the state, and they have printed excellent full-color brochures to promote these trails. The specific trails are Black Heritage, Civil War, Fall Color, Garden, Covered Bridges, Native American Heritage, and Birding.

One of the primary drawbacks in developing an agri-tourism trail is the transient nature of these attractions in general. For most individuals involved in agri-tourism, the tourism component is an add-on feature to the primary component: agriculture. For instance, many farmers will vary what they plant or how they market their products. A farmer may have u-pick strawberries this year, but then skip planting them for several years. Or he may use a roadside stand some years to market his product and not use it in other years. Consequently, a brochure developed to highlight agri-tourism attractions would be quickly out of date and not very useful, even frustrating, to tourists.

To overcome this hurdle but still promote the Trail, the partners, ABT&T and ACES, will develop a high-quality, full-color brochure that highlights agri-tourism attractions in general but does not identify specific sites. The brochure will promote a Web site that will be updated regularly to allow tourists to identify

agri-tourism attractions that are currently available to travelers.

The Web site will be compatible with the Agri-Tourism Trail brochure and will identify, by category and location, agri-tourism attractions. The critical feature will be keeping the site up-to-date. The site would be a key component of the ABT&T's Web site, as well as ACES' Web site.

Eight segments follow that highlight specific components of agri-tourism. They are examples of the types of attractions that would be included in the proposed Agri-Tourism Trail.

Arlie Powell
Alabama Cooperative Extension
System
State Program Leader for
Agriculture

J. Thomas Chesnutt
Alabama Cooperative Extension
System
Extension Tourism
Specialist

Wright Dairy Farm Tours Complement On-Farm Store

Wright Dairy Farm Store opened its doors in February 2000, featuring non-homogenized whole milk and butter-milk—produced, pasteurized, bottled, and sold right on David and Leianne Wright's Canebrake Farm near Anniston, Alabama. While customers

Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Wright Dairy Farm Tours (Continued from page 1)

learned firsthand about the old-fashioned quality of these source-verified products, the Wrights realized that the education of customers would play a big part in continuing and expanding their on-farm sales.

One way is through educational farm tours offered to area schools, churches, and civic groups. The 90-minute tour includes a hayride around the pastures where the milking herd grazes, a visit to a dairy-equipment museum, a petting stop in the calf barn, and a real cow-milking demonstration. Along the way, David and Leianne explain about cows, milk, dairy farming practices, and their unique operation, which is one of a kind in Alabama. The tours are scheduled during September, October, April, May, and June by reservation on weekdays. A few Saturday morning "Family Days" each season gives individuals and small groups a chance at the same \$5-per-person tour.

The response has been a two-way avenue—the Wrights have educated the public, and the public has influenced product development at the store. Customers wanted low-fat milk, chocolate milk, homemade ice cream in a variety of flavors, and more Amish products from the Midwest. Word of mouth continues to bring in new tourists and customers, keeping advertising to a minimum. Several schools have made the Wright Dairy Farm Tour one of their annual field trips for students.

More information and directions can be found on the Web site: www.wrightdairy.com.

Susan Wright Manning
Wright Dairy Farm
(Alexandria)
Tour Director

An Apple a Day

Ever wonder what a fresh-picked apple tastes like? Classical Fruits offers you the opportunity to see for yourself while strolling through the rows of trees during an orchard tour. Orchard tours are scheduled Monday through Friday during the month of September.

Included in the tour are discussions about various apple varieties, their origins, and how they were named. You may also find yourself picking a fresh muscadine, jujube or melon berry while here. For school groups, the tour is topped off with an apple sandwich and a juice-filled plastic apple.

Curious as to what variety of apple best suits your taste buds? No problem. Just visit Classical Fruits' Annual Antique and Apple Festival held every fourth weekend of September. Stroll through the pine grove and shop with over 90 antique and craft vendors after sampling over 50 varieties of apples displayed in the apple shed. Tell us your top picks by using our grading sheet, or you may keep it for yourself so you will know what variety to come back for. While you are here, shop inside the store for homemade apple fudge, homemade fried apple pies, apple bread, cider, and more.

If you have a taste for strawberries, do not miss our Annual Antique and Strawberry Festival the first weekend in May. Take home some fresh-picked strawberries after sampling our homemade strawberry bread, fudge, fried strawberry pies, smoothies, and preserves. Do not forget to shop with our over 90 craft and antique vendors before you leave.

Natalie-Ann Adair
Classical Fruits (Moulton)
Co-Owner

Alabama Catfish Festival

The Alabama Catfish Festival is held each year on the third Saturday of September at Lions Park in Greensboro and is sponsored by the West Alabama Catfish Producers Association. This festival has been held for the past 15 years. The Alabama Catfish Festival was first organized by local catfish farmers and other people in the community to promote U.S. farm-raised catfish. In the late 1980s, people were not familiar with the grain-fed, pond-raised catfish. When people thought of catfish, they thought of the musty-tasting river catfish. The catfish industry is now the No. 1 economic resource in Hale County.

This festival offers fried catfish with all the trimmings and samples of other catfish recipes. There is an aquaculture exhibit with catfish ranging from 6-inch baby catfish (called fingerlings) to 1½ to 2-pound catfish, which are ready to be harvested from the pond. There is a tradeshow area where businesses display catfish farming equipment. The tradeshow will have anything from electric paddlewheels (used to increase the oxygen in the pond), floating pellets used for feeding the catfish, and meters used to check the parts of oxygen in a pond. Festival-goers may also tour a catfish farm, watch the Miss Alabama Catfish Pageant, browse the arts and crafts booths, or participate in the many children's activities.

Cheryl Miller
Alabama Catfish Festival
(Greensboro)
Chairperson

A Family Christmas Tradition

As the holidays approach, we invite everyone to take a break from the commercialism of Christmas by visiting Wadsworth Christmas Tree Farm. With the opening of our 23rd year of operation, we feel we have touched many lives and have added smiles and memories to many families during the Christmas season.

Most farmers do not make their living selling Christmas trees; they do it to bring in a little extra money or to help with their children's education. They also do it because they enjoy the Christmas season and being able to give a taste of country life and Christmas tradition to the families in their communities.

Wadsworth Christmas Tree Farm is a choose-and-cut farm, meaning customers select their special tree from the thousands available. Visitors are greeted with fresh, cool country air, filled with smells of cedars and pines. Warm fires are lit on especially chilly days, and tractor rides are usually available to haul everyone to the field.

Selecting a Christmas tree here is meant to be a family affair. Children and grandparents are encouraged to come.

(Continued on page 3)

A Family Christmas Tradition (Continued from page 2)

Grandparents, as well as parents, get a warm feeling in their hearts as they watch the children turned loose to run among the trees, searching for that "perfect" tree for their family's home. The species of trees growing on the farm are the Leyland Cypress, Arizona Cypress, Eastern Red Cedar, and Virginia Pine. Precut Fraser Fir trees are also available.

Wadsworth Christmas Tree Farm is a place where memories are made and cherished for a lifetime. The farm is located just north of Wetumpka, Alabama. For more information call 334-567-6308.

Frank Wadsworth
Wadsworth Christmas Tree Farm
(Wetumpka)
Owner

Durbin Farms Market: A Feast for the Senses

From the window boxes spilling over with bright blooms to the colorful, hanging baskets swinging gently in the breeze, vibrant flowers greet customers as they approach the open-air market.

Once inside, visitors are embraced by fragrant scents. In spring, the smell of freshly picked strawberries wafts

through the air. From mid-May through mid-September, the unmistakable scent of tree-ripened peaches fills the market, intermingling with the smells of blueberries, blackberries, and an assortment of fresh vegetables.

Displays of produce tantalize shoppers into hands-on shopping. Not content to just look at the fresh selections, shoppers squeeze tomatoes, stroke peaches, and thump melons, as they fill their bags and buggies.

After stocking up on produce, customers can head into the ice-cream shop where they are greeted by the alluring aromas of freshly baked cookies and fried peach pies. But the real star of the show is the homemade peach ice cream! One taste of the rich, creamy, peach-filled treat and most customers swear off other ice cream for life!

Once a visitor has an ice-cream cone in one hand and a fried pie in the other, it is time to head outside to the garden section. Featuring an interesting selection of herbs, fruit trees, and berry bushes, as well as garden accessories, seeds, and garden furniture, the garden offers a great opportunity for eating and browsing. Here, the chirping of birds and buzzing of bees surround visitors as they stroll among the plants, checking out scented geraniums, hearty basil, and flavorful mints.

Visitors leave Durbin Farms Market having refreshed all of their senses—and counting the minutes until they can return.

Christy and Andy Millard
Durbin Farms Market (Clanton)
Owners

Creekstand Catfish Farm

Creekstand Catfish Farm is a family owned and operated fishout. We have been up and running since 1988. We originally opened with 10 ponds and now have 26. We are open year-round Wednesday through Saturday, and our hours are from one hour after daylight until one hour before dark. A one-dollar entry fee is required for all those over age 7. We charge \$1.50 per pound and \$0.35 per pound for cleaning. We ask our customers to keep what they catch so the fish are not harmed. We have a variety of snacks, drinks, bait, pole rental, and souvenir T-shirts. Also there

is a pavilion available for rent for those who would like to have a fish fry, family gathering, company outing, and the like. Rental fee is \$25 for a half day and \$50 for the whole day.

For those not wanting to fish, we accept call-in orders for live or dressed fish upon request. Pertaining to the size of the order, give us a couple days' notice so that we may get them up on time. We provide great tasting, grain-fed, farm-raised catfish for a healthy high protein, low cholesterol diet. Hope to see you soon. For more information, call (334) 749-1036.

Clifford Hopson
Creekstand Catfish Farm (Salem)
Owner

McGee Farm: The Real Pumpkin Patch

School children, groups, and families enjoy taking a tractor-drawn hayride to the real pumpkin patch to pluck a pumpkin fresh from its own vine. Customers visiting McGee Farm can select from all the fall decorations imaginable: pumpkins, straw, corn stalks, ornamental gourds, winter squash, and Indian corn. We also cultivate our own fall chrysanthemums. We have over 40 varieties of mums in 2-gallon pots all grown right on our farm. Children enjoy our "cotton pickin' patch" where they can pick a little sack of Alabama cotton. Adults are fond of the nostalgia of it, too. Our most recent additions have been activities for children: a pumpkin painting station, scarecrow building, and a hay maze. Just the peaceful country atmosphere with autumn colors, kind compliments of nature, is worth the short drive out to the farm.

Having only been in the pumpkin operation for about seven years, we feel relatively new to the business. We have tried to add something new every year to keep people interested in coming to McGee Farm. This, and having a consistent supply for our customers, has made a fall visit to McGee Farm a tradition for many families in our area. We are far from being the largest of our type operation, but we enjoy keeping everything personal. Our customers seem to enjoy that, and so do we.

(Continued on page 4)

Action
Alabama
Communities
in Transition

Editor

J. Thomas Chesnutt
Extension Tourism Specialist



Action is published once each quarter by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

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.

McGee Farm
(Continued from page 3)

McGee Farm is located just north of Florence, Alabama. Call 256.766.2725 for our info line, or visit us at www.mcgeefarm.com.

Lenis & Amy McGee
McGee Farm (Florence)
Owners

Oak Hollow Farm

We would like to introduce Oak Hollow Farm as a fresh new way of hosting corporate functions. We can provide the space, food, and entertainment to add a little variety to those necessary and important meetings. It is a great idea for team building; combine the atmosphere of country charm with your professional leadership to inspire teamwork. We have a large rustic barn complete with a stage and retractable screen for special presentations; for eating a delicious, fully catered meal; or for providing a night of entertainment. For the fun-loving and talented, or not so talented, we can provide a fun night of karaoke or line dancing.

For those yearly corporate picnics or holiday functions that are important to the morale of a company, we host a variety of activities to include all members of the family. For relaxation, we offer nature trails for horseback riding

or walking and scenic buggy rides in our 1893 horse-drawn school bus. We have a playground for the kids, pony rides, and hayrides. There is a seasonal corn maze and fishing pond for the adventurous. And for the more competitive spirit, we have volleyball, horseshoes, and softball, which could be sponsored as a tournament.

Oak Hollow Farm is located on 300 acres of scenic farmland about 8 miles south of Fairhope in Baldwin County. We are family owned and operated, and we will cater to your specific needs and requests, if possible. A variety of foods ranging from appetizers to country whole hog barbeque and from hamburgers and hot dogs to pork tenderloin or steak are available. A special menu of your own can be provided with sufficient notice.

Please contact us for more information or to schedule a tour of our facilities (251-928-4840).

Boyd Little
Oak Hollow Farm (Fairhope)
Owner

Circle W Hunting Preserve & Sporting Clays

If you love the outdoors and are serious about hunting and sport shooting, Circle W Hunting Preserve & Sporting Clays is the place to visit. We are located

at the foot of beautiful Ross Mountain, along the banks of the Tallapoosa River.

At Circle W Hunting Preserve & Sporting Clays you can

- experience the essence of quail, turkey, and deer hunting in the South;
- walk or ride in field transportation behind fleet-footed pointers and graceful setters on game-rich lands;
- heat up a shotgun and shoot four boxes of shells on a half-day hunt;
- laugh and enjoy fellowship with friends, family, and business associates; enjoy a 100-shot sporting clays course spread over fields, ponds, low brush, and woodlands, offering all the speeds and angles of quail, dove, ducks, and rabbits.

You will find the good ole days are now! If your company needs an enjoyable activity to discuss business with prospective clients, let us customize an event to suit your needs.

For more information please contact Danny White at (256) 463-7846 evening or (205) 966-5665 day or e-mail dwcirclew@aol.com.

Danny White
Circle W Hunting Preserve & Sporting Clays (Heflin)
Owner

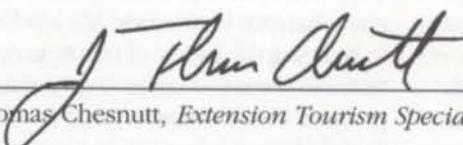
Visit the Community Resource Development home page at www.aces.edu/department/crd/

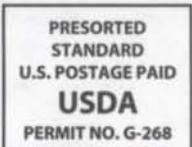
For information on Alabama 4-H programs and activities, contact your county Alabama Cooperative Extension System office.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
STATE HEADQUARTERS
AUBURN UNIVERSITY, ALABAMA 36849-5631

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE


J. Thomas Chesnutt, *Extension Tourism Specialist*



Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

© 2002 by Alabama Cooperative Extension System. All rights reserved