



# Helping People Develop Career Skills

## Impact Statement

### The Problem/Issue:

With Alabama's unemployment statistics fluctuating just under the national jobless rate of 6 percent, youth and adult populations are seeking workforce preparation guidance. In an attempt to move ahead, many Alabamians are polishing their resumes, retooling and gearing up for new careers. But preparing for a rewarding and productive career in the 21st century workplace can be challenging as job trends continue to change. Employment as we know it with a full-time job, healthy benefits and a nice retirement package, is becoming more uncommon. On average, fewer jobs are full time or permanent. Roughly 3 out of 4 jobs are temporary. Statistics indicate that most people will change jobs at least twice in their lifetimes.

### What's Been Done:

Alabama Extension's Urban Unit has developed a number of workforce and economic development programs. These programs explore entrepreneurship opportunities, encourage partnerships and offer Web-based resources, interactive curricula and assessments to help develop a skilled and ethical labor force that meets employer demands in a changing work environment.

The Franchise Entrepreneurship Workshop, conducted in Houston County, was designed to encourage minorities to pursue their own businesses. The program was supported by a \$25,000 grant sponsorship from the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce. Two hundred African Americans attended the training. Additionally, a follow-up class was conducted to educate participants on how to start their own businesses. A \$5,000 sponsorship grant from Troy State Business Center supported the training which was a collaborative effort of the Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce, Troy State Business Center and Extension. Twenty-five participants completed the training.

A series of leadership workshops was conducted in the Mobile metropolitan area with a number of job search, job placement, volunteer and personnel board agencies and organizations to help participants address various licensing, professional and workforce development or client service concerns. Programs are provided primarily in responses to requests from participating agencies including organizations such as the Mobile Personnel Board, Volunteer Mobile and Mobile Works.

During 2003, seven agencies and organizations participated in 27 training sessions on topics such as team management, diversity, stress management, dealing with difficult people, conflict management, organizational assessment, toxic relationships and others.

Extension educators in Lowndes County have been actively involved in community development efforts to promote industry and small farm production of alternative farm products including fish and goats.

## **Why We Care:**

In Houston County, Extension saw the following results from this community development effort:

- Ten percent of the participants started their own businesses.
- Five attendees will open their franchise businesses in the spring of 2004.
- One attendee acquired a business contract with Wal-Mart to promote his greeting cards.
- One attendee is establishing his own telephone service.

In Mobile, approximately 278 citizens benefited from training designed to improve job search skills, improve success on the job, enhance leadership skills, increase knowledge of team building skills and increase involvement in leadership roles. Follow-up reports from collaborating agencies indicate a 75 percent of the clients were hired for jobs and/or placed in leadership roles.

In Lowndes County, Extension's involvement on the local county industrial board has helped bring two Hyundai Plants, two general stores and a mini business plaza into the county creating jobs and a stronger county tax base. These are examples of the results to be gained through community capacity building and partnerships.

Also in Lowndes County, the Extension staff assisted five pond owners in building tilapia cages, purchasing fingerlings and designing a feeding program. Lowndes County has one commercial tilapia grower. The commercial grower markets his fish for \$1.50 a pound and the small growers market their fish on the pond for \$2.00 a pound. This commodity provides added income for small pond owners and the commercial grower.