



# Extension's Outreach to Alabama's Growing Hispanic Communities

## Impact Statement

### **The Problem/Issue:**

Hispanics are the fastest growing minority group in the United States totaling 32.8 million or 12 percent of the US population according to the Census Bureau data of March 2000. Since 1990, the Hispanic community in Alabama has grown 207 percent. Census data reveals that more than 65,000 Hispanics currently live in Alabama. Like all newcomers, Hispanics/Latinos face the challenges of learning a new language and adapting to a new culture.

### **What's Been Done:**

Extension has created the Hispanic/Latino Initiative. One program thrust of the Initiative is a comprehensive Web site linking to a wide array of Spanish-language educational materials. Extension also offers a bilingual newsletter and links to publications written in Spanish for citizens who have not made the transition from Spanish to English.

Extension agents throughout Alabama already are providing these materials to Hispanic/Latino clients who need help assimilating into Alabama's cultural life. Agents are also working with communities to establish diversity councils through Extension projects designed to help citizens manage language and cultural differences.

Extension has employed a bilingual agent to facilitate programming for several counties' rapidly growing Hispanic/Latino populations. One example of her efforts is a food safety class targeting food service workers with limited proficiency in English. The four-hour class, taught by a certified health inspector, was translated into Spanish. It covered a variety of food safety topics, including sanitizing a kitchen, proper food storage and proper handling. All 23 participants passed the required test that had been translated into Spanish.

### **Why We Care:**

Alabama's growing Hispanic/Latino population will make positive and lasting contributions to the state's economic and social life, but like all newcomers, they need help adapting to their new surroundings.

Hispanic/Latino immigrants will play a vital role in Alabama's cultural and economic life. The sooner their integration into mainstream life takes place, the quicker all of us will begin reaping these benefits.