

Alabama 4-H History Highlights



In 1892, the boll weevil moved out of Mexico into Texas and began the overthrow of King Cotton. By 1903, its devastating results were felt in Alabama: one farm reported a drop from 20 bales of cotton per acre in 1901 to only three bales of cotton because of the weevil's damage. The failure of cotton set the stage for the agricultural diversification program that became the Cooperative Extension Service.



In 1902, Seaman Knapp, convinced of the folly of one-crop agriculture, began work as a United States Department of Agriculture farm agent, demonstrating improved agriculture methods all around the south.



In 1904, Knapp came to Tuskegee to study the work of Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver.



In 1906, Thomas A. Campbell was appointed the first extension agent hired by the USDA Office of Cooperative Demonstration to assist black farmers. The Jesup Wagon, a movable school of agriculture developed by Morris K. Jesup, was used to spread the knowledge of better farming and home life.



In 1908, O.B. Martin of the USDA was appointed to lay the ground work with Alabama superintendents of education in Anniston and Tuscaloosa to organize boys' corn clubs.




H.P. Parsons of Anniston and Perry B. Hughes of Tuscaloosa started the Boy's Corn Club work in Calhoun and Tuscaloosa counties. Corn was picked because it could be profitably produced in most sections of the United States.





July 16, 1909, Seaman Knapp appointed Luther Noble Duncan the nation's first state club agent at Alabama Polytechnic Institution (now Auburn University) with a joint appointment with the USDA.





By the end of 1909, Alabama had more than 2,000 corn club members. Boys were required to grown one acre of corn according to recommendations. The young man that harvested the most bushels won \$25.


 In 1911, home demonstration work in Alabama began with the organization of girls' tomato clubs in Pike and Walker counties. Annie Sartain in Walker and Sarah Luther in Pike were part-time agents.


 In 1911, the three-leaf clover became the symbol of club work.


 Two-hundred forty girls were enrolled in the project and were required to grow one-tenth acre of tomatoes and then can what they grew.


 In 1912, 157 women with home economics experience or teaching were hired to run girls' clubs in gardening, canning and poultry.


 In 1912, a report form for club work was adopted. It had three parts: planning and preparation, cultivation and final report after harvest.


 In 1913, the Negro Extension was firmly established with 33 Negro agents enrolling more than 3,500 farmers in demonstration work. Youth clubs for Negro boys and girls were the heart of the organization's work.


 In 1914, demonstrations in bread baking and butter making began.


 In 1914, the Smith Lever Act established the Cooperative Extension Service and corn and canning clubs became part of Extension's efforts. This act formally tied club work to the land-grant college at Auburn, API.


 Between 1914 and 1918, there was great expansion of boys' and girls' clubs, which helped the war effort by increasing production of foodstuff and collecting fruit pits and nut shells used in the manufacture of gas masks. Club work expanded to urban areas as a part of total community involvement.


 There were 10,957 emergency members – boys who were enrolled as a WWI emergency measure to grow whatever food they could even though they did not have the land or animals to be regular members.


 In 1915, P.C. Parks was assigned to Normal, Alabama to work with black youth in north Alabama.


 In January 1916, the first Extension Circular #1, authored by Luther Noble Duncan and I. B. Kerlin, told how to organize a Boys' Corn Club.


 In 1918, boys' clubs statewide enrollment was: The Pig Club – 6,924; Corn Club – 3,315; Peanut Club – 1,482; and Calf Club – 689; totaling 12,350 members. Barbour County led the state with 1,016 members. There were five state club men, including two pig agents and three assistant boys' club agents.

 In 1918, girls' canning clubs statewide enrollment was 4,100. Clubs were in all 67 counties. Emergency members brought the number to 11,917.


 In 1919, the first boy's clubs for black were called "Farm Makers" clubs. C.M. Kynette was appointed the state 4-H club leader for African American boys. He was replaced by V.C. Turner in 1945.


 In the 1920s, L.N. Duncan became director of the Cooperative Extension Service. T.A. "Dad" Sims was named the state 4-H leader


 In 1922, the first national Boys' and Girls' Club Congress was held in Chicago under the direction of the National Committee on Boys' and Girls' Club work, the link between USDA and the private sector.

 In June 1926, the first State Short Course for girls was held at API. Sixty-five girls from 31 counties attended. Those attending had health checks and specialized courses in clothing, home management, food preparation, picnics and recreation.

 In 1924, 4-H became the official name of the youth organization.


 In 1927, the first National Club Conference was held in Washington, DC. Four boys and girls from each state were housed in tents on the grounds of the USDA. Alabama participants were Lizzie Mae Davis and Betty Raoul from Montgomery County, Clifton Kirkpatrick from Dallas County and Elton Garrett from Chambers County.


 By 1930, 62 Alabama counties had county agents and 42 counties had home demonstration agents. There were 18,513 club members.


 In 1931, the first County 4-H Councils were formed to help plan programs.


 In 1938, the first annual State Boys' and Girls' Leadership Camp was held.


 In 1948, Hanchey Logue was state 4-H leader.


 Girls Club leaders were Bess Fleming, then Elizabeth Deloney, then Mary Dell McCain. Ann Barr became the state 4-H leader for girls in 1950. She was the last to carry that title.

 From 1948 to 1960, projects, programs and activities started and developed were frozen foods, leadership, automotive, safety, recreation, entomology, beautification of home grounds, district and state beef cattle programs, boys agriculture, dairy cattle showmanship, cotton, state talent program, dairy maid, dairy tours, State 4-H Council, Sunday Observance, tractor operator's or driver's program, dairy foods awards, cooperative essay and public speaking programs, district forestry awards, special peanut awards, poultry fact finding awards, wildlife camp, electric demonstration and better records programs.


 Alabama 4-H enrollment in 1960 was 132,000 members with most being in school 4-H clubs.


 In 1956, Alabama 4-H Club Foundation, Inc., was chartered to provide financial support to the 4-H program. In 1961, the foundation launched a drive that raised \$1 million.


 In 1960, almost 400 4-H demonstration and informational publications were available.


 In 1958, Alabama 4-H joined other southern states for 4-H Friend Ship. This effort provided hogs, chickens, goats, dairy animals, corn, pencils and paper to help in reconstruction of South Korea after the Korean War. Tipper Garrison, a Walker County 4-H member, was selected to travel on the ship to look after the livestock.


 In 1971, Cecil Mayfield became state 4-H leader.


 With the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Negro branch of Cooperative Extension Service and the Auburn University Cooperative Extension Service merged.

 In 1965, Bob Whittenburg was hired to develop the 4-H livestock program.


 State 4-H Conference was one day in 1967. In the early 1970s, it became a two-day conference. It was renamed State 4-H Congress in 1975 with projects including livestock judging, public speaking, clothing and food competitions, a talent show and election of state 4-H officers.


 In 1971, the 4-H horse program began.

 In 1977, the Caldwell Delegate program was initiated. This brought two 4-H members from each county to State 4-H Congress to attend educational leadership sessions. Sessions dealt with careers, international relations, money management, teens and dating, decision-making and leadership.


 In 1976, the 4-H Meats program was introduced by Bill Jones.


 In 1977, the first state market hog show was conducted.

 In 1973, the 4-H Urban program was piloted in cities with 50,000+ population. This was coordinated by Bertha Jones. Counties included Jefferson, Mobile, Madison, Montgomery and Etowah. Up to 5000 youth in each of those counties were reached annually.


 In 1973, the 4-H Community Resource Development program was started. Tony Dozier was employed to provide leadership to this program.


 In 1977, the Citizenship Washington Focus program was initiated by Ann Barr.


 4-H DOT (Diet's Our Thing) began in 1970. This was the youth phase of the nutrition education program for low-income families launched in 1962.


 In 1971, the 4-H volunteer leader program was begun by James Smith.


 In 1976, a nutrition TV series “Mulligan’s Stew” was aired to promote 4-H and its education programs. Barbara Cherellia coordinated this project.


 In 1979, the Alabama Association of Extension 4-H Agents was chartered.


 By 1979, more than 350 girls were competing in food projects including breads and dairy foods, egg and meats. In 1983, Joe Adams of Etowah County was the first male to win a state food event in meats demonstration.


 In 1980, the Alabama 4-H Youth Development Center opened in Shelby County. Terrell Gurthie was manger.

 In 1980, the North Alabama Resource Conference began with youth from 22 north Alabama counties attending.


 In 1984, 115,000 youth ages 9 to 19 belonged to 4-H. They chose from more than 40 project areas. Most were enrolled in 4-H clubs in schools.

 In the 1990’s several held the position of State 4-H Leader. Following Mayfield’s retirement in 1989, Tony Dozier was interim leader until his retirement. Greg Hutchins was appointed in 1992. Wilma Ruffin was appointed in 1995. Warren McCord was appointed in 1999 and served until retirement.

 The Alabama 4-H Volunteer Leaders Association linked volunteers across the state with programs and support.

 From 1990 to 2008, national recognition in shooting sports, wildlife judging, meats and livestock competition was received by Alabama teams.

 In 2003, Lamar Nichols was appointed Assistant Director for 4-H and Youth Development.

 In 2004, The Alabama 4-H Program began the transition to regional based staff, a change throughout the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. School-based programming by county staff continues to provide awareness and

opportunities for Alabama youth. Volunteer led community clubs establish in-depth project work and service opportunities. Regional Extension Agents serve multiple counties throughout Alabama.



In the five years since the regional concept was introduced, the Essential Elements of Youth Development – mastery, belonging, independence and generosity – provide the programming emphasis. Just Move Alabama has received national acclaim. Maximum Power, Skins and Skulls, Performing and Creative Arts activities are delivered in educational kits for check-out for use by volunteers, staff and community.



In 2007, the Environmental Science Education Center was dedicated at the Alabama 4-H Center.



The National 4-H Hall of Fame recognized six Alabama representatives: Anna Barr, Thomas M. Campbell Sr, George Washington Carver, Bertha M. Jones, Cecil Mayfield and John (Lem) Morrison.



The Alabama 4-H Wall of Fame was established in 2008 with 24 inducted in the first ceremony.