

ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM  
ALABAMA A&M AND AUBURN UNIVERSITIES

2004 HIGHLIGHTS

**Changing  
and Remaining**

# Changing and Remaining

We've all heard the adage "The more things change, the more they remain the same." This could be said of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's recent changes. While we've undergone possibly the most significant change in our history, we remain the same in our dedication to bringing the knowledge and expertise of our land-grant universities directly to you, the people of Alabama, where you live and work.

In fact, it is our ability to change—to adapt our structure and methods of delivery—that enables us to continue meeting your needs as we move into the future.

In this look back at 2004, a year of transition for our organization, we will share just a few of the literally thousands of ways we have lived up to your trust in us. As we change, we remain fully committed to keeping that trust.

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## The System Administrative Team

### Gaines Smith

*Interim Director*

### Virginia Caples

*1890 Administrator and Provost and  
Vice President for Academic Affairs*

### Samuel Fowler

*Associate Director, Rural and Traditional Programs*

### Chinella Henderson

*Associate Director, Urban Affairs and  
New Nontraditional Programs*

### Barbara Duncan

*Associate Director, Human Resources*

### Thomas Elliott

*Chief Financial Officer*

## Where We've Come From, Where We Are

Extension's roots go back to 1862, when Congress first granted land for each state to create institutions of higher learning in agriculture and the mechanical arts. The first land-grant institution in Alabama was established at what is now Auburn University in 1872, with what is now Alabama A&M University becoming a part of the land-grant system in 1891. With the passage of the Smith-Lever Act in 1914, our Extension history officially began.

In 1995, the Extension programs at Alabama A&M University and Auburn University were combined into the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, to become the first unified state Extension System in the nation. Tuskegee University is a cooperating partner.

Our legacy is one of helping Alabamians improve their quality of life, starting with demonstration agents meeting the needs of rural farm families. Today, Extension relies on highly specialized educators trained to meet the ever-changing needs of twenty-first century families, businesses, and communities.

To accomplish our mission of taking the university to the people, Extension relies on a network of public and private partners with financial support from county, state, and federal governments. Programs are based on a combination of national priorities established through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and input from local advisory boards and priority program teams.

## Changes to Reckon With

Life in Alabama has changed dramatically over the past decade. Our state, once predominantly rural, has grown largely urban.

Our citizens, whether farmer, parent, business-person, or youth, are better educated and more sophisticated users of information. All have specific needs for expert information to enhance their lives and livelihoods.

The changes in how Alabamians live and learn, coupled with funding concerns, signaled the need for significant changes in the way Extension delivers our educational programs to you, our customer.

After careful research and planning, Alabama Extension in 2004 took possibly the greatest step in our history: we reinvented our most visible educator—the county agent.

## Adapting to the Changes

Historically, county agents have been jacks-of-all-trades teaching in a variety of subjects. Our reorganization changed the old concept to a new system of traveling regional agents highly specialized in one of our 15 newly defined priority program areas. These regional agents are able to network with peers across the state through teams that share the latest and best information available.

### Alabama's Regional Extension Agents

- Provide specialized educational programs to more Alabamians
- Work across several counties
- Focus solely on the concerns and issues of their areas of expertise
- Provide better education to Alabamians in rural counties where funding is low
- Increase access to specialized programming in a wider number of subject areas
- Collaborate through priority program teams with their peer regional agents located statewide
- Collaborate with university-based Extension specialists who are on their teams
- In many cases, collaborate with peers across state lines

## The Priority Program Areas

**Agronomic Crops**  
**Animal Science and Forages**  
**Aquaculture and Recreational Pond Management**  
**Poultry**  
**Family and Child Development**  
**Community Resource Development**  
**Consumer Science and Personal Financial Management**  
**Farm Management and Agricultural Enterprise Analysis**  
**Food Safety, Preparation, and Preservation**  
**Forestry, Wildlife, and Natural Resource Management**  
**Commercial Horticulture**  
**Home Grounds, Gardens, and Home Pests**  
**Human Nutrition, Diet, and Health**  
**4-H and Youth Development**  
**EFNEP (Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program)**

Those are the changes. Yet we remain committed to serving our diverse clientele through our six major program areas: 4-H and Youth Development, Agriculture, Forestry and Natural Resources, Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs, Family and Individual Well-being, and Community and Economic Development.

In the next pages, we share a few examples of how each area is both changing and remaining true to our legacy of improving the lives of all Alabamians.

### The Remaining County Agents

Yes, we have changed to regional agents. But in some ways the county agent remains. Each county office still has a coordinator. And, where county or special funding is available, additional agents and agent assistants may still work in a single county. All Extension agents belong to one or more of the 15 teams and have access to the same training and information as their regional counterparts have.



# 4-H and Youth Development

The 4-H and Youth Development program cultivates the life development skills of Alabama's youth. Extension educators, volunteers, and the young people themselves work together in a wide range of hands-on, minds-on experiences that develop each individual's four H's—head, heart, hands, and health.

## The Best Gets Even Better

■ Alabama's 2004 4-H Forestry Judging Team from Clay County won the state's fourteenth first place trophy in the twenty-fifth annual National Forestry Invitational. Teams compete in written exams, tree identification, topographic map reading, forest evaluation, and the Forestry Bowl.

■ Since 1987, six Alabama 4-H Wildlife Teams have won national titles and some 8,000 youth have learned about Alabama's habitats through the wildlife education program that teaches them to conserve and manage natural and wildlife resources and fosters critical thinking, decision-making, and team-building skills.

■ Joshua Young, 16, of Jefferson County was named National 4-H Shooting Teen Ambassador. The shooting sports program promotes natural resource concepts such as responsible use of firearms and archery equipment, sportsmanship, and ethics.

■ Participants at the Natural Resources Rendezvous sponsored by Alabama 4-H and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources met Ward Burton of NASCAR fame, who represented the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation. Events included interactive workshops on archery, shotguns, muzzle loading, rifles, sport fishing, forestry, aquatic ecology, and wildlife.



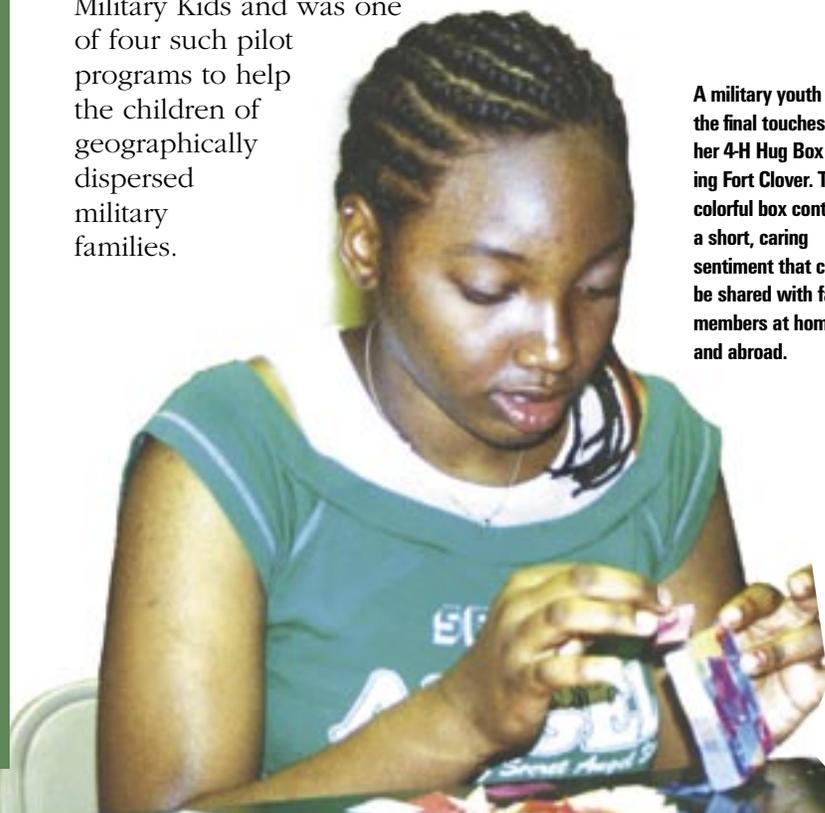
## Supporting Military Families

These are tough times for the children of Alabama's National Guard and Reserve soldiers deployed overseas. Fort Clover, a weekend getaway this past May at the Alabama 4-H Center near Columbiana, gave 100 military youth a chance to learn, relax, and just be kids.

Young people ages 12 to 19 met peers facing the same challenges while they enjoyed outdoor activities including canoeing, swimming, and wall-climbing.

Fort Clover—a pilot program in a long-standing partnership between the U.S. Army and Alabama 4-H—is part of Operation Military Kids and was one of four such pilot programs to help the children of geographically dispersed military families.

A military youth puts the final touches on her 4-H Hug Box during Fort Clover. The colorful box contains a short, caring sentiment that can be shared with family members at home and abroad.



# Agriculture

## Extension's Agriculture program

- Helps Alabama farmers create and maintain healthy, profitable, and environmentally sustainable operations
- Collaborates in providing Research and Extension Centers in the Tennessee Valley, the Black Belt, the Wiregrass, and the Gulf Coast, Sand Mountain, and Chilton areas to meet specific regional needs
- Serves homeowners with gardening solutions
- Enhances metro areas through urban horticulture programs

## Going Biodiesel

The city of Huntsville, Madison County, and some 15 north Alabama farmers are going biodiesel when it's time to fuel diesel operated machinery. Produced from farm-generated renewable resources, such as soybean and corn oils and chicken fat, and used in a 20/80 percent mixture with diesel fuel, this non-

toxic, clean-burning alternative fuel offers few environmental hazards, reduced dependence on foreign oil, and the potential to add millions to Alabama's farm economy.

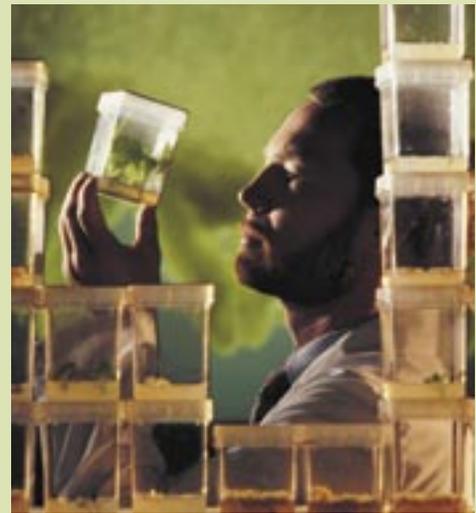


Regional Extension Agent Mark Hall, right, demonstrates how something as basic as vegetable oil can help power the multibillion-dollar U.S. farm economy.

Biodiesel users like Madison County farmer Dennis Bragg and Madison County Commissioner Roger Jones are lauding the uncomplicated change that requires no engine modification. According to Regional Agent Mark Hall, leader of Extension's emerging biodiesel initiative, "There has been zero trouble, and the

comments are all positive. It's just a matter of making the change."

Extension's cutting-edge Alabama biodiesel initiative is funded through grants from the Alabama Soybean Commission and the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs.



## Ag News

■ An aggressive awareness education program is helping contain the spread of destructive Formosan termites now found in 14 Alabama counties. Homeowners and pest control professionals are learning about termiticides to control the pest spread by contaminated ornamental and nursery stock, landscaping timbers, and soil.

■ Preliminary research findings predict that grass-fed cattle may find a profitable niche in the retail beef market for Alabama's beef producers. A consumer survey by Extension specialists found that consumers appreciate the taste and health attributes of grass-fed beef, which have higher levels of heart-healthy omega 3, lower E.coli bacteria, and less susceptibility to bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

■ West Alabama teens are gaining job skills through the aquaponics program that has introduced aquaculture classes into the Hale County School System. Technology brought from the Virgin Islands by Extension Aquaculturist Greg Whitis is teaching the youth to raise fish and vegetables in a single production system using water that recycles itself.



## Natural Solutions

■ Alabama communities are turning to pervious concrete, rain gardens, and similar environmentally friendly technologies to solve storm water runoff woes. Fairhope, Alexander City, and Brantley are experimenting with pervious concrete sidewalks and drainage-friendly landscaping plans to redirect storm water runoff.

■ An additional 61 loggers joined the ranks of Alabama's almost 2,400 certified loggers when they completed the Professional Logging Manager Training Program teaching safety, water quality, stream protection, first aid, and business and forest management.

■ The farm pond management program supports the almost 50,000 private pond owners in Alabama through testing and aquatic vegetation identification and specialized instruction ranging from control to fish stocking to alternative pond uses.

■ Wildlife scientists, after finding feral pigs in each of Alabama's 67 counties, have begun educating the public on the extensive environmental and wildlife damage caused by these pigs that are becoming attractive trophies for hunters across the state.

# Forestry and Natural Resources

**This program helps to safeguard and develop the forestry, water, fisheries, and wildlife resources that bring billions of dollars into the state's economy and enhance our quality of life.**

## Bringing Nature to Town

Communities across Alabama have a friend in Neil Letson, coordinator of Extension's Urban and Community Forestry Financial Assistance Program, who has made a mission of improving our state's urban forestry resources. Under his leadership, some 150 cities and towns have tapped into more than \$3.2 million to fund 325 forestry-related community projects. Funding for 2004 alone totaled \$429,000.

These funds, usually dispersed in grants of \$10,000, allow communities to enhance their economic appeal and become unique and attractive for tourism. Some cities are using \$20,000 grants to hire full-time foresters, as has Birmingham, which now claims one of the Southeast's premier urban forestry programs. Eufaula's forester established an educational arboretum.

Funds may also be used for tree assessments, master tree planting plans, citizen workshops, and urban forestry demonstrations.



**Neil Letson, second from right, studies planting plans for various communities in Randolph County with mayors and tree board representatives.**

# Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs

Urban and nontraditional programs target the two-thirds of Alabamians who live in urban areas. Programs include the urban family network and workforce preparation, domestic violence prevention, teen leadership, health issues programming, and nontraditional agricultural education conducted from nine urban centers and two satellite offices in metro areas.

## Families on the Move

Through a comprehensive web network, A Look at Alabama Families, Extension's family specialists located at Alabama A&M University are providing current information on the state of Alabama's fundamental social group, the family.



Information concerning the dynamics and issues of today's changing families is easily accessible to those living in either the traditional or nontraditional home.

Alabamians can tap into articles, publications, news of events, and links to other sites designed to help them strengthen their families while constructively resolving the issues that affect them. Topics covered

include consumer education and personal finance, divorce, domestic violence, families and law, grandparents raising grandchildren, homeland security, nutrition, and health.

Check the web site at [www.aces.edu/urban/FamilyWebsite](http://www.aces.edu/urban/FamilyWebsite).



## Living Better in Alabama's Cities

■ After winning the state title, a LifeSmarts team from Decatur's Austin High School participated in the national LifeSmarts competition in Chicago. This educational game-show style competition teaches young people about consumer issues including credit, contracts, refunds, charitable contributions, food labels, and food production and consumption.

■ The Alabama Securities Commission has turned to Extension's urban unit to help end the financial literacy crisis in Alabama through grants funding personal finance and investor education for youth, seniors, and minority groups. Funding of \$15,000 was made available through fines and settlements in the securities industry.

■ The Successful Aging Initiative provides information and services to support aging gracefully. The initiative represents a partnership between Extension's Urban Affairs unit and Alabama's Bureau of Geriatric Psychiatry. Educational summits and outreach serve the aging population with legal, health, and financial information through collaboration.

■ The Urban Nutrition Education Program (UNEP) was piloted in 2002 through a USDA grant to service food stamp recipients in three metro centers. UNEP has expanded to all of the state's metropolitan areas, providing counseling and nutrition education to more than 6,700 household contacts in 2004.



## Family Matters

■ A study of fourth and fifth graders in three Black Belt counties proved childhood obesity is more complex than calorie consumption and exercise. Food and nutrition scientists are following the lives of almost 700 children to seek effective intervention methods.

■ The Healthy Couples/Healthy Children program has used grants totaling \$155,000 to train community organizations to support and educate families that healthy adult relationships foster healthy childhood development.

■ The Sun Safe Kids program informed preschoolers and teachers in 20 Alabama counties on the dangers and prevention of skin cancer.

■ The federally mandated Nutrition Education Program (NEP) has begun to provide nutrition education to adult food stamp recipients in the food stamp offices, changing from the previous program instructing lower income children through the schools.

**Gaines Smith, left, Extension interim director, and Sam Fowler, Extension associate director, present an award of excellence to Eguel Belk from Marion County for working with the EFNEP program since its inception. Also pictured are Jeanne Priester, retired national EFNEP leader and Alabama pilot leader, Mary J. Coleman, retired state program leader, and Evelyn Crayton, Extension assistant director, family and community programs.**

# Family and Individual Well-Being

## Family programs in Extension

- Improve the quality of life for Alabama families and individuals through food safety, proper nutrition, family and child development, family financial management, and community health education
- Provide nutrition education through two major programs—the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), begun in Alabama more than 40 years ago and since adopted by all other states, plus the federally mandated Nutrition Education Program (NEP) for food stamp recipients

## Forty and Counting—Really Counting

Alabama's flagship Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) observed its fortieth birthday in 2004, recognizing the many national, state, and local officials instrumental in transforming the nation's first such program into today's successful venture that still leads the way in EFNEP nationwide.

EFNEP began in Alabama in the early 1960s as a pilot project designed to teach young homemakers in low-income rural areas homemaking skills. Today, EFNEP reaches limited-income citizens with education to foster healthy families through nutritionally sound diets. Programs include Today's Mom, 4-H's Diet's Our Thing, Mom's Helper, and Basic EFNEP programs.

In 2004, almost \$2 million allowed the 55 EFNEP educators to reach some 8,000 families. In the past decade, EFNEP has reached more than 97,000 families, most living below the poverty level.



# Community and Economic Development

Extension's Community and Economic Development program leads the way toward revitalizing Alabama communities where declining farm populations have led to lost revenue bases and youth flight. Programs involve economic and leadership development, environmental quality and community health, and public policy and strategic planning.

## Uncovering Hidden Treasure

The Lockhart community in south Alabama is a historic treasure with huge potential for economic revival and development, according to Covington County Extension Coordinator Charles Simon.

With the aid of the Alabama Historical Commission and Extension's urban forestry program, Simon taught the residents to recreate the town's beauty and honor its historical significance. A long-term tree management program will preserve its stately oaks, and local legislators have funded a park built by local volunteers.

Simon believes Alabama is full of such treasure communities and advises their residents to "take these resources that are seldom ever thought about and turn them into assets."



Covington County Extension Coordinator Charles Simon has always believed there is more to community economic development than the size of a town's industrial park. Also important is a town's understanding of where it has been, where it is going, and, perhaps most important, what makes it unique.



## Community Kudos

■ Extension led the creation of Alabama's new AgriTourism Trail, which partners public and private groups to promote tourism through agricultural sites. A new web site, [www.alabamaagritourism.com](http://www.alabamaagritourism.com), details the sites now open to public tours and school field trips.

■ The annual Intensive Economic Development Course reaches community leaders from small communities throughout Alabama, training them in all phases of industrial development including taxation, venture capital and bond financing, community analysis, and site selection.

■ Real estate professionals trained about the dangers of radon in homes have built and are marketing more than 280 new north Alabama homes built with radon-resistant construction techniques.

■ Extension is working with Congressman Artur Davis to help development efforts in the Sprott community of Perry County by providing enhanced public facilities to increase water capabilities for the fire department, job readiness training, and materials for a proposed learning resource center.

■ Gov. Bob Riley has named Extension Tourism Specialist Tom Chesnutt to the Alabama Scenic Byways Program Advisory Board. He will chair the marketing committee promoting Alabama's three national and four state scenic byways.

# Extension Development

The Office of Extension Development supports the mission of Extension by raising awareness of the organization's needs and developing friends to ensure that Extension will continue to provide programs statewide.

At no time was that more evident than in 2004, when Extension Development continued the largest ever Capital Campaign for Alabama 4-H. During 2004, Extension Development along with the Alabama 4-H Club Foundation Board of Directors raised \$4 million in pledges and gifts. The goal is \$8 million: \$6 million to build an Environmental Education Center at the 4-H Youth Development Center on Lay Lake in Columbiana and \$2 million to endow 4-H programs.

We could not have achieved our goal to this point without generous donations from Alabama's corporations, foundations and individuals. That goes especially for our Extension family, most of whom generously gave gifts and pledges to support 4-H.



**Alfa Farmers President Jerry Newby, back right, presents 4-H'ers and Alabama 4-H Club Foundation Chairman Jack Odle with a donation to support youth programs in Alabama. Montgomery County 4-H club members on hand were, from left, Abby Whittington, Mitchell Henry, and Amber Whittington.**



Alabama Power Vice President Willard Bowers, second from the left, shakes hands with Jack Odle, chair of the Alabama 4-H Club Foundation Board of Directors, during a recent visit to announce a substantial gift by the power company to 4-H. Also on hand were Luke Brymer, left, a 4-H'er from Jefferson County who serves on the State 4-H Council, and William Johnson, right, president of the Alabama Power Foundation.

## Among the campaign's notable achievements are the following:

■ 2004 marked the first year 4-H was included in the state's Income Tax Check-off program on Alabama's tax returns.

■ Alabama Power and the Alabama Power Foundation have pledged gifts totaling \$450,000 over five years to ensure that the 4-H programs will continue to teach the fundamental concepts of citizenship, leadership, and character development. A portion of the gift is designated for the new Environmental Education Center.

■ Alfa Insurance and the Alabama Farmers Federation have pledged \$250,000 to support 4-H leadership and environmental educational programs, including construction of the Environmental Education Center.

■ Funds raised through the Progressive Farmer Idea House located in Oneonta were donated to Alabama 4-H. The idea house was open for tours to give newcomers and long-time rural residents innovative ideas on ways to get the most from living in the country.

These and many other gifts help to ensure that 4-H, as it has for so many years, will continue to build strong citizens and leaders for the future of Alabama and the world.

# Reaching New Audiences

**Information 24 hours a day** – Visit our web site at [www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu) for Extension articles and publications written by our specialists and researchers, with links to additional information on topics ranging from agricultural and environmental issues to home and family issues. Whether you are looking for quick answers or want to order our publications and video materials, [www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu) puts the best of Extension information at your fingertips 24 hours a day.

**Blogging enthusiasts** – Tens of thousands of information seekers are depending on Extension for the latest information from our specialists and researchers via our news web log located at [www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu). You will benefit from the very information now used by major web search engines and linked to by state and commodity group web sites representing the interests of the Alabama Forestry Commission, the Alabama Pecan Growers Association, and forest owners.

**Information in times of crisis** – Hurricane Ivan is a perfect example of how people from all walks of life turn to Extension for information to help them through times of crisis. As the hurricane approached Alabama, specialists and regional agents were busy getting information to you via our web site and news media outlets across the state and nation. As soon as Ivan left its mark, those same Extension professionals were working side by side, providing homeowners, farmers, property owners, and state and local officials solutions to recover from the destruction.

**Reaching the Hispanic community** – Extension is providing outreach to the fastest-growing minority group in the state. The Extension web site at [www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu) contains special areas translated for Hispanic web surfers as well as resources for Extension agents and other educators.

**Education close to home** – Extension professionals work from county offices located in each of Alabama's 67 counties to bring you the latest in university research in our areas of expertise. See the county office listing on the inside of the back cover to contact agents in your area.

## How to Reach Us

For information about programs, to volunteer, or just to ask a question, call or go by your county Extension office (see inside of the back cover).

To reach state headquarters, call 334-844-4444 (Auburn University) or 256-372-5710 (Alabama A&M University).

For information about charitable contributions, call Beth Lawrence, assistant to the director, development, at 334-844-2247.

To place orders for publications or videos, call 334-844-1592.

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