Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities

Pathways To The Future

Winter 2010

4-H Annual Fund Supports Youth Programs

"Alabama without 4-H? To me, it is unthinkable!" Those are the words of Chandler Mulvaney, 17, written this fall to encourage Alabamians to participate in this year's 4-H Annual Fund.

"I think I understand what it might mean if some young person — or many young people — got turned away from 4-H because of the lack of funding for the programs," explained Chandler, currently state 4-H Council president. "I don't have any idea what you might think about giving, but maybe as you think about Alabama without 4-H, some amount will come to mind. I hope you will join me to help 4-H continue to grow and be available to every Alabama young person."

Chandler, of Auburn, joined with many others appealing to 4-H members, alumni, parents, ACES retirees, volunteers and previous donors to help ensure that future 4-H programs will be available to as many prospective Alabama 4-H'ers as possible.

Judy Brown wrote an appeal to ACES retirees. Retiring after 34 years of 4-H service, Brown stressed, "Once a 4-H'er, always a 4-H'er! I am still a 4-H'er. As retirees, we never imagined all the challenges 4-H-age youth are facing today. But it makes us aware 4-H is needed more now than ever before and that our help is needed. I am filled with profound gratitude for all the opportunities 4-H has given me, and those same opportunities must be available to this generation."

Alabama 4-H alumni received a heartfelt message from Jeff Helms, director of communications, public relations and advertising for the Alabama Farmers Federation, recalling what 4-H means to him and urging their support in the Annual Fund. "Little did I know when I memorized the 4-H Pledge that it would become part of my very value system," wrote Helms. "Little did I know when I joined a 4-H club at Skyline, Ala., at age 10 — following in the steps of my older sister — that something very important and positive was set in motion in my life. Won't you join me to help pay back in part that which we have received as 4-H alumni," urged Helms.

"I never get weary of seeing kids smiling and seeing 4-H'ers grow up to be leaders," said Patricia Bryant of Epes, in her appeal letter to 4-H volunteers. "It seems the need for 4-H continues to grow and often the resources to fill those needs are less than they should be." Bryant, the 2010 National 4-H Volunteer of the Year, stressed in her letter, "Your gift to the 4-H Annual Fund makes it possible for Alabama 4-H continue to meet the needs of this generation and be assured the next one will have a 4-H to show them the way."

Janet, Chandler and Don Mulvaney

Judy Brown

Jeff Helms

Don and Janet Mulvaney of Auburn, and parents of three 4-H'ers, wrote to other parents of 4-H members, urging them to consider contributing to the annual fund. The Mulvaneys explained what 4-H has meant to their family, "We both grew up in 4-H, so as parents we knew first-hand the value and impact it would have on our children. Our family became immersed in almost everything that 4-H has to offer, not wanting to miss a single opportunity. Now that our children are nearly raised, we attribute many of the distinctive values, character, leadership skills and personal qualities of our adult children to participation in 4-H. We personally want to make

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sure 4-H is strong and vibrant for the next generation. That is why we are participating in the annual fund and hope many others will join us."

"The response to these appeals," reported Dorman Grace, chairman of the Alabama 4-H Club Foundation, "continue to be encouraging as many folks remember the benefits of 4-H to them personally — to their families and community — and join in supporting 4-H financially to make sure the next generation will have 4-H available to them."

"On behalf of the Alabama 4-H Clubs Foundation, I thank all those who have written letters, sharing their strong feelings about what 4-H has meant to them and for their willingness to encourage others to join them in making a contribution to the annual fund at this time when donations are so needed," concluded Grace.

Alabama 4-H Records Significant Increase in Youth Membership

Alabama 4-H enrollment increased 21 percent this year, adding more than 13,500 youth to its membership statewide. Fall enrollment is currently 78,692 members, making 4-H one of the largest youth development organizations in Alabama.

"Alabama parents and youth are seeing youth development in action through 4-H," said Lamar Nichols, assistant director of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System for 4-H and Youth Development.

"Alabama 4-H offers a variety of programming in every county so a youth is only limited by their interest and passion."

In Alabama, there are more than 1,700 clubs, with 65 percent being in-school, agent-led. Thirty-five percent of all clubs are volunteer-led, which is an increase from 2009.

Alabama 4-H has more than 3,000 volunteers giving more than 106,000 hours of service worth $2.2 million (monetary value of volunteer time is $20.85 per hour as calculated by the Independent Sector).

In hard economic times, 4-H continues to not charge a membership fee and offers no- to low-cost programs and events.

"Alabamians see the value of 4-H programs and know, with the great work of our regional 4-H Extension agents, county staff and volunteer leaders, we are building belonging, independence, generosity and mastery in today's young people," Nichols added.

A national, ongoing study by Tufts University showcases what Alabamians know — that programs like 4-H play a vital role in the lives of young people. The 4-H Study of Positive Youth Development revealed 4-H youth are 25 percent more likely to contribute to their families, themselves and their communities; more likely to see themselves going to college compared to other youth; 41 percent less likely to engage in risky or problem behavior and score high on goal setting and goal management.

4-H is the youth development mission of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and agents work with youth and train volunteer leaders to provide a wide range of educational programs.

Alabama 4-H is open to youth between the ages of 9 and 18 and offers many types of clubs: in-school, community 4-H clubs and special interest clubs. In addition to clubs, Alabama 4-H'ers can take part in a variety of activities offered by the community, county and state, including workshops, achievement programs, camps, tours and competitive events. There are also national trips for youth who excel in leadership and citizenship skills, including Citizenship Washington Focus, National 4-H Congress and National 4-H Conference.

A 4-H'er explains his wood-work project to judges during the 2010 State Competitive Events Day.

Outstanding Volunteers
Patricia Bryant, second from right, is honored as National Salute to Excellence Outstanding Lifetime Volunteer, along with Nancy Graff, second to left, National Salute to Excellence Volunteer of the Year from Alaska. Pictured with Bryant and Graff are, from left, Don Floyd, president and CEO of National 4-H Council; Lisa Lauxman, director, Families, 4-H and Nutrition with National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA; and Earl McAlexander, president of the National Association of Extension 4-H Agents.

Alabamian Selected National Outstanding Lifetime 4-H Volunteer

Patricia Bryant of Epes (Sumter County) is the recipient of the 2010 National Salute to Excellence Lifetime 4-H Volunteer, the highest honor 4-H bestows on volunteers. The award was made during a fall ceremony at the National 4-H Center in Chevy Chase, Md.

"Patricia is one of those rare individuals who works tirelessly and quietly to better the lives of youth," says Gaines Smith, director of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. "She does it because she has a true passion for youth development, and we are grateful to her."

"Volunteers are the heart and soul of 4-H and Patricia is a wonderful example of selfless dedication," says Lamar Nichols, assistant director for 4-H and Youth Development. "She has dedicated her life to ensure children throughout Alabama receive the best learning opportunities that can be experienced in 4-H."

A passionate 4-H volunteer for 19 years, Bryant engages youth, recruits volunteers and raises funds to support 4-H. In west Alabama, Bryant leads clubs and mentors other adult volunteer leaders. She is the volunteer leader of the Panola 4-H Club and the North Sumter (County) Junior Master Gardener Program. She also uses 4-H programming in a 21st Century Community Learning Center afterschool program in Sumter County for about 75 youth. At the state level, she mentors volunteer leaders and works to promote 4-H across the state with the Alabama 4-H Volunteers Leaders Association, and she works on the planning committee for the Southern Region 4-H Volunteer Forum.

As a volunteer and advocate, Bryant has mentored hundreds of west Alabama youth, working to instill in them a sense of self-worth and responsibility. "I have walked beside 4-H'ers, listened to and traveled with them, raised money to go to camp, joined them on field trips, encouraged them and recruited other volunteers to help them out," she says.

"I have seen them take on their first projects, like building their first bird houses or planting their first garden seeds. Then it dawns on them they have done something on their own — maybe for the first time — and a big smile fills their face.

"My greatest fulfillment as a 4-H volunteer is to see a child who is not smiling and then learn something new and see their smiles," Bryant says. "It is really wonderful to see that.

"You won't see me without a smile on my face. I want the children to see it and have their own smiles. As I see their self-esteem growing, it gives me great joy and more smiles."

Bryant feels strongly that leadership and citizenship are core life skills she learned in 4-H and she works to instill those values in youth. 4-H has been a part of her life since she was 9 years old. "4-H afforded me the opportunity to be creative and innovative," she says. "Becoming a volunteer has allowed me to give back to my home state and community. Each day I feel compelled to do something in my community with 4-H."

Covington County 4-H'ers Receive 2010 Alabama PALS Governor's Award

A statewide anti-litter organization honored Covington County 4-H'ers for the youth's commitment to keeping Alabama litter free and beautiful.

The 4-H youth, led by Extension Agent Assistant Tanya Bales and volunteer leaders Joyce Mitchell and Jill Smith, received the Don't Drop it on Alabama Award, one of two statewide awards presented by People Against A Littered State (PALS) during the 2010 Alabama PALS Governor's Awards program.

The Don't Drop It on Alabama campaign is a spring cleanup available to all Alabama cities, counties and communities. The award is sponsored by Honda Manufacturing of Alabama, LLC.

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Winning 4-H'ers
Back row from left to right: Mark McNally of Honda Manufacturing, LLC, which sponsors the award; 4-H'ers David Baker, Cheyeene Hartin, Kayla Mitchell and Sarah Kate Shiver; and Extension Agent Assistant Tanya Bales. Front row from left to right: Arizona Wiggins, Ryan Mitchell and LillieAnna Russ

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"Each year this annual effort saves the Alabama taxpayers millions of dollars through the cleanup efforts of thousands of dedicated volunteers participating in this event," says PALS executive vice president Spencer Ryan.

Also a winner was Alabama 4-H'er Kayla Ryan, who won third place in the 2010 Poster Contest. This year's theme was "How Can We Make 'Being Green' A Way of Life?".

Join the Alabama 4-H E-mail List

Keep up with what's happening in Alabama 4-H and learn about special programs and events. E-mail us at Alabama4h@aces.edu and join the e-mail list. Or, go online to www.Alabama4H.com and click on the "Join Our E-Mail List" button.

Cold Temperatures Didn't Dampen 4-H'ers Enthusiasm to Fish with Professional Anglers

A group of Alabama 4-H'ers learned lessons in persistence as they braved freezing temperatures and fished along side of some professional anglers Nov. 6.

Youth participated in a Fishing Rodeo at Lake Guntersville on the final day of the Toyota Tundra Bassmaster National Championship. Youth were paired with professional anglers who mentored them with advice during the tournament.

"We were glad to have Alabama 4-H be a part of our tournament and had a good time with the youth who participated," says John Glenn, business development director for the American Bass Anglers. "These 4-H youth out here fishing today are our future and what they are learning today will stay with them for life."

Amy Burgess, 4-H Regional Extension Agent, coordinated the tournament and was proud of the youth who braved the temperatures to fish and spend time with professional anglers.

"Our youth had a great time and experienced something that few get to do — spend time with professional anglers and learn some valuable tips about fishing and competing," she says. "They had a great time and we appreciate the American Bass Anglers tournament including 4-H youth in their weekend."

The day's top prize in the Youth Fishing Rodeo went to Matthew Masters of Crossville, who caught a 2.5-pound fish in the freezing temperatures. Second place went to Jesse Pursell, also of Crossville.

Professional angler Rick Tilson, who competed during the three-day tournament but didn't make the cut for the final day of competition, says most of his colleagues wished they could have caught a fish that size. "That's a great fish and you should be proud," he told Matthew.

Weigh In
4-H'er Jesse Pursell has his fish weighed by angler Rick Tilson, center, and John Glenn, left.

Matthew Masters and his winning catch

Pathways To The Future

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Alabama 4-H Center Adds Bald Eagle to Educational Program

Woodward, a 10-year-old male bald eagle, has found a new home at the Alabama 4-H Center on Lay Lake and an opportunity to teach Alabama youngsters about conservation and birds of prey.

Becky Collier, environmental education coordinator at the 4-H Center in Shelby County, says Woodward is a special addition to the mission of the Raptor Trek program — to educate Alabama youth about the care and protection of wildlife, especially animals found in Alabama.

"Birds of prey can teach us many lessons and Woodward, in particular, is such a majestic animal," she says. "Animals play an important role in Alabama's natural resources, and the Raptor Trek program and the Coosa River Science School is proud to educate youth about their importance.

"Watching a bird fly and being able to learn about it while you are seeing it up close provides an opportunity many people may never experience," she says. "While our programs are directed to youth, adults learn just as much and our programs are a good opportunity for all Alabamians to learn about conservation.

"It is a special experience to be able to see these birds of prey up close, learn how animals like these live in the wild and be educated about the many issues that affect wildlife."

Last year, more than 5,000 youth attended environmental education programming through the Coosa River Science School at the Alabama 4-H Center. In addition, Collier traveled with the Raptor Trek program to more than 100 schools, libraries and public events this year.

Woodward is just one of 11 birds of prey Collier uses to teach Alabama youth conservation and wildlife education. Center staff utilizes Woodward and the other birds of prey in educational programs at the Alabama 4-H Center and across the state at invited program and events.

The 10-year-old male eagle previously lived in Georgia and the Alabama 4-H Center recently received a permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to care for and house the animal. The center built special mews for Woodward and the other birds of prey to ensure they are properly cared for.

Woodward cannot live in the wild because he was born with a beak defect, which renders him unable to tear food.

For more information about the Alabama 4-H Center, go to www.Alabama4HCenter.org; for the Coosa River Science School and Raptor Trek programs, click on the link.

Becky Collier works with Woodward.

Have a Story Idea?

Do you have a story idea for Pathways? Do you know a 4-H'er who has achieved an honor and want others across Alabama to know about it?

The Alabama 4-H Club Foundation, Inc. is the nonprofit fund-raising arm of Alabama 4-H. The Foundation seeks to recognize youth for their achievements. Send your story ideas to Janet McCoy, Extension Program Coordinator III, at mccoyjl@aces.edu, or call (334) 844-7690.

Support Alabama 4-H Now!

Show your commitment to Alabama 4-H by supporting Alabama youth today. To learn more about how you can support Alabama 4-H, contact Nancy Alexander, (334) 844-2219; e-mail: alexana@aces.edu.

By giving to Alabama 4-H's Annual Fund, you help *To Make the Best Better!*

To meet the needs of Alabama 4-H, enclosed is my gift:

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