Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs
Making a Difference in Alabama

Featuring 2008 Program Highlights
Alabama Cooperative Extension System
This report highlights 2008 programming efforts by Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs staff and partners implemented across the state of Alabama, and the difference we are making in the lives of the people we serve. The information was taken from Extension team project reports, success stories, and other resources.

Annual contacts include direct (in-person) and indirect contacts through various forms of media such as newspapers, television, the Internet, and publications.

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Alabama Cooperative Extension System
November 2009
Alabama A&M University has a rich history of providing Extension programs and services to the people of Alabama. We simply picked up the ball and headed in a new direction with Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs to capture new and nontraditional audiences. However, our goal remains the same… to bring the best research-based programming efforts to the people we serve in Alabama’s urban communities, particularly those who may not otherwise have the necessary resources to improve their quality of life and the lives of those they love.

This report highlights some of our 2008 programming efforts that are evolving as the people we serve evolve. At the end of each year we go back to the drawing board to make a change here and to make a change there based on the feedback we obtain from people like you. Only then can we continue to make invaluable impacts that affect Alabama residents, businesses, and the communities in which we live. In fact, we hope that our impacts will have a rippling affect that is felt around the world.

What we are most proud of is how much we have managed to achieve, but like other organizations, we can always use more resources for new and innovative growth opportunities. In 2009, we will assess where we stand as a unit of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. That means evaluating our weaknesses and building upon our strengths.

We hope you will drop us a line and let us know about our successes and yes, where we may have failed. We hope you will even consider partnering with us on any of our endeavors and vice versa. We promise to listen and to change our way of doing things if it means serving you better.

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Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs

In 1995, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Extension) made history by becoming the first Extension program in the United States to unify an 1862 (Auburn University) and an 1890 land-grant institution (Alabama A&M University) into one organization. The landmark decision John F. Knight, Jr., et al. v. State of Alabama issued by United States District Judge Harold Murphy, allowed Alabama A&M University to focus on new and nontraditional Extension programs, as well as growing urban and diverse populations through Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs. As its name implies, Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs focuses on creating new and nontraditional Extension programs for underserved populations in 8 of Extension’s 14 Priority Program Areas (PPAs) highlighted below:

- Animal Science and Forages
- Family and Child Development
- Economic & Community Development
- Consumer Science & Personal Financial Management
- Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resource Management
- Home Grounds, Gardens and Home Pests
- Human Nutrition, Diet and Health
- 4-H and Youth Development

These PPAs are designed to enhance the lives of Alabama citizens living in and around Alabama’s Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) and Combined Statistical Areas (CSAs), including Anniston-Oxford, Birmingham (Hoover-Cullman), Columbus-Auburn-Opelika, Dothan-Enterprise-Ozark, Florence-Muscle Shoals, Gadsden, Huntsville-Decatur, Montgomery-Alexander City, Mobile-Daphne-Fairhope, and Tuscaloosa.

Snapshot of Alabama Residents We Serve

- Total population: 4,661,900
- Combined MSA Population: 3,273,860
- African-Americans: 25.5%
- Hispanics/Latino: 2.7%
- White non-Hispanic: 68.6%
- Persons 65 and older: 625,756
- Median household income: $40,596
- Average household size: 2.48
- Average family size: 3.04
- Grandparents Raising Grandchildren: 111,591
- Persons below poverty: 16.6%
- Families below poverty: 12.9%

(Figures based on 2007-2008 US census estimates)
Animal Science & Forages

- **Dogs as Companion Animals**
  According to the American Society for the Cruelty to Animals, 63 percent of American households have pets, including 75 million dogs and 85 million cats. Dogs, like cats, continue to be one of man’s best friends!

**2008 Highlights**
In 2008, the Dogs as Companion Animals made 92,531 contacts with other dog lovers during activities such as the North Alabama Dog Expo, the Dog Obedience Training Camp, and the Pet Safety Workshop. Program participants learned about dog nutrition, health, breeding, and obedience training.

**Making a Difference...**
The Florence County Extension Office held a Doggie Day Camp to help 4-H youth improve their relationship with their dogs. Young dog owners often acquire a companion animal without appreciation for the need to develop a relationship that results in mutual respect. Such efforts are relatively easy with a little bit of quality time between owner and pet, and direction from a dog behavior specialist. By the end of the Doggie Day Camp, each student was able to make their dogs sit, walk on a leash, lie down, and come when called.

- **Goat, Sheep, and Rabbit Production Systems**
  According to the 2007 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) census, the total sales of sheep, goats, and other products in Alabama were more than $3,126,000. Alabama farmers have tremendous potential to expand and meet the rising demand for dairy, rabbit, lamb, and goat meat, and other products.

**2008 Highlights**
In 2006, Extension and AAMU researchers surveyed goat producers in Alabama and have been working diligently ever since to expand and strengthen small ruminant programs in Alabama. That tradition continued in 2008 as the Animal Science and Forages team completed more than 217,885 contacts through the Annual Risk Management & Community Outreach Conference, the Annual Spring Small Symposium Annual Conference on Small Ruminants, hands-on parasite training, and other sheep and goat workshops.

In addition, during April 2008, Urban Affairs staff worked with a group of rabbit producers in northern Haiti as part of the Farmer to Farmer Program that is funded by the United States Agency for International Development.

**Making a Difference...**
Nearly 1000 goat and sheep producers attended small ruminant activities throughout the year. Although 5 percent reported a profit margin reduction as a result of drought, 59 percent reported improvements in herd health and production efficiency, and 36 percent reported increases in profitability ranging from 6 to 16 percent.
Family & Child Development

- **Grand RAPP: Grandparents & Relatives as Parents Program**
- **Parenting in Nontraditional & Under Served Urban Families Program**

Undoubtedly, American families have changed in the last decade. According to the United States Census Bureau, families with children will steadily decrease by 2010; 1 in 5 households will be considered a traditional family with a mother, father, and children under 18; and single female-headed households will increase from 8 to 9 million, while single male-headed households are expected to increase from 1.5 to 1.9 million.

**2008 Highlights**

Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs continues to make tremendous strides in strengthening traditional and nontraditional families. In 2008, our staff reached more than 422,888 individuals and families through workshops, community resource fairs, support groups, conferences, and other community events.

Nontraditional families have benefitted from programs like Parenting Apart: Long-distance Sharing and Connecting: Families in Alabama that serve to strengthen the parenting and relationship-building skills of culturally diverse singles, unmarried couples, or families that may be apart as a result of divorce, incarceration, homelessness, or other reasons.

**Making a Difference...**

RAPP support groups continue to be a favorite among relatives that need invaluable resources or a sounding board. These groups enable grandparents, for example, to cope with issues that arise when grandchildren are left in their care due to incarceration, death, teen pregnancy, abuse, abandonment, drugs or alcohol, or illness. Extension prides itself as being among the primary organizations that addresses grandparent issues.

- **Successful Aging Initiative**

By 2030, individuals aged 65 and older will nearly double to 71 million older adults that make up 1 out of every 5 Americans. That’s why it’s important to create programs that serve this growing population.

The Successful Aging Initiative (SAI) provides older adults and their caregivers with valuable information to help them make informed decisions about health, finances, and other life needs in later life.

In 2008, Extension along with local and statewide partners implemented seven SAI conferences that reached approximately 3100 people. An additional 500 adults received practical information at one of Extension’s nine Urban Centers on expiration dates, self-defense strategies, and financial matters such as identity fraud.

**Making a Difference...**

More than 1,225 SAI attendees underwent health screenings such as blood glucose, bone density, and memory screenings provided by Pfizer, Inc. and the Alzheimer’s Disease Center, University of Alabama at Birmingham. The screenings yielded a combined savings of $183,750 or $150 per screening.
Small businesses continue to drive employment growth in America. In 2006, the United States had 26.8 million small businesses that comprised 99 percent of the nation’s employers and more than 50 percent of employment in the private sector. In a time of economic uncertainty, it’s important to adequately prepare America’s workforce and small businesses to be self-sustaining and competitive in the twenty-first century.

2008 Highlights
Extension takes a hands-on approach in teaching Alabama youth and adults how to be responsible citizens in the employment arena and in their personal lives by providing job hunting tips and real-life skills through programs like Welcome to the Real World, the WECAN4U website, and the Works for Me curriculum. Other small business, community, and economic training sessions are available in large and small group settings.

Young female high school students continue to benefit from statewide Youth Career Summits that encourage them to pursue nontraditional careers in science and technology. However, in 2008, the Boys to Men Summit was held in Houston County to provide mentors and life skills training to at-risk males. This program included workforce preparation training and information on how to attain additional education or training at vocational institutions or two-year and four-year colleges and universities.

Residents in Mobile and Prichard counties completed the Cooperative Development Initiative training that not only provided information on the purpose and value of cooperatives, but how to establish a cooperative in their communities.

The Economic and Community Development team made approximately 92,531 contacts in 2008 to help Alabama stay economically sound.
Consumer Science & Personal Financial Management

- **Consumers Score with Credit In Check through Responsible Spending**
- **LifeSmarts**

According to the credit reporting agency Experian, the average American has a total of $16,600 in debt from credit cards, auto loans, and other fixed payments. Nearly half that debt comes from credit cards. A family’s financial practices have significant impacts on long- and short-term goals, self-sufficiency, and family stability.

**2008 Highlights**
Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs focuses on responsible management of financial resources. Programs like the Investor’s University and Financial Security in Later Life are designed to help consumers avoid financial risks, indebtedness, and bankruptcy. Consumers learn how to budget, manage their credit, save, and invest their hard earned dollars wisely. Participants gained the greatest knowledge in the areas of making personal investments and preparing for retirement.

The Consumer Science & Personal Financial Management team made approximately 22,228 contacts last year.

In addition, the LifeSmarts online educational program enables teens in grades 9 to 12 to increase consumer, financial, and marketplace skills. Students ultimately have an opportunity to demonstrate their skills through state and national game-show style competitions.

**Making a Difference...**
As a result of programs like LifeSmarts, Alabama youth become savvy consumers that are less likely to become victims of identity theft, predatory lending, and other financial scams. On average, more than 70 percent of youth used the knowledge they gained as program participants when comparing prices on products and services and more importantly, when monitoring personal expenditures.
Saving Towns thru Asset Revitalization
STAR: Faith Gardens
STAR: Community Outdoor Programs

Ever notice how spending time outdoors lifts your spirits? Research has proven that spending time in green spaces can improve your mental and physical health. Saving Towns thru Asset Revitalization (STAR) incorporates an asset-based community development approach in conjunction with Alabama’s Five-Year Urban and Community Forestry Plan to develop community outreach programs that help humans to return to nature.

2008 Highlights
STAR uses aquatic awareness, bee keeping, emergency preparedness, faith gardens, Tree City USA certifications, natural wildlife, street games, and outdoor classrooms to create opportunities for humans to enjoy the great outdoors. The goals of these programs are to improve social, emotional, and physical well-being.

Eastern Bluebird Recovery trails were non-existent in Montgomery city and county parks. However, thanks to STAR nest boxes have been placed in all parks operated by the city and county of Montgomery. As a result, resource-limited individuals are more knowledgeable about the benefits of bird habitats and population restoration, as well as environmental stewardship. Also on the rise are requests for outdoor street game activities, as well as how to establish faith gardens. Plans were also made to establish a faith garden among the aging.

A joint effort with the Madison/Jackson Multi-county American Red Cross resulted in a 100 percent increase in fire expo outreach and information through the use the a local mall in Huntsville, Alabama.

During 2008, the Forestry, Wildlife & Natural Resource Management team made 211,584 contacts across the state of Alabama.

Making a Difference...
The STAR partnership with the Alabama Black Elected Officials Association has resulted in four Tree City USA certifications.

Gordon, Alabama is one of the 3,310 communities in the United States that was granted Tree City USA status by the Arbor Day Foundation. In 2008, the city experienced a 50 percent litter reduction; an 18 percent increase in green space project participation with city residents; a 62 percent increase in the use of the city’s green spaces; and a 37 percent effort to cooperate with the town’s tree ordinance. Gordon is up for Tree City USA recertification in 2009.

Other Tree City USA certifications were awarded to the towns of Prichard, Lisman, and Triana, Alabama.
Home Grounds, Gardens & Home Pests

- **New and Nontraditional Horticulture Enterprises**
- **Urban Horticulture Initiative**

Horticulture has changed in Alabama over the years and Extension has been at the forefront of those changes. Urban horticulture not only involves raising crops and animals within or near cities, but it involves developing programs that are environmentally sound and enable people to give something back to their communities.

**2008 Highlights**
Horticulture experts at Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs recorded more than 712,366 contacts in 2008. These experts not only helped budding entrepreneurs to develop horticulture enterprises, but they also taught residents and organizations how to install rainwater catchment systems to make better use of one of our greatest natural resources.

Since the 1980s and the onslaught of parasites and diseases on both wild populations of honeybees as well as domesticated honeybees, the number of hives available for pollinating crops has continued to decline. Extension agents have been instrumental in establishing more than 20 new beekeepers and a local education association.

The exotic mushroom and rainwater collection projects were established to provide urban and other producers with wooded areas with another option for production and crop irrigation. More than 1,000 shiitake mushroom logs have been inoculated for 20 potential producers.

Making a Difference...
Horticulture therapy programs implemented by Extension staff helped youth and adults to improve their personal attitudes by 55 percent, their self-esteem by 45 percent, and their sense of responsibility by 61 percent.

Plant sales from these therapy programs generated $9,499.00, which allowed the programs to be self-sustaining.
It’s no secret that Alabama now ranks number two in the nation for obesity. Thirty-one percent of adults and 36.1 percent of youth 10-17 are obese in the state. That is why Extension is working alongside other community organizations like the American Diabetes Association to offset chronic diseases like obesity, diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.

2008 Highlights

Programs like the Urban Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, the Urban Nutrition Education Program, and the Community Health, Aerobic, and Motivational Program Initiating Optimal Nutrition, better known as CHAMPION, use various resources to help children, youth, and adults to make better food choices, to prepare nutritional meals, and to increase daily physical activities that are essential in developing a healthy lifestyle.

The BETF Camp offers girls between the ages of 10-12 an opportunity to learn more about good health and nutrition. The program has been instrumental in helping girls to make wiser food choices when eating out at local family and fast food restaurants.

In 2008, the Human Nutrition, Diet and Health team made approximately 34,489 contacts among youth and adults, which includes Alabama’s growing Hispanic population.

Making a Difference...

Among program participants in the Urban Nutrition Education Program, there was a 31 percent increase in the number of participants engaging in some form of physical activity; a 39 percent increase in participants that used a spending plan; a 35 percent increase in proper handling of leftovers; and 32-35 percent increase in the number of participants that now follow the My Pyramid recommendations and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
4H & Youth Development & Other Programs

- **Teens Making Impact**

American youth are faced with numerous distractions and any one of them can lead them down the wrong path. Programs like Teens Making Impact helps youth to make sound decisions, engage in effective communication, pursue healthier lifestyles, and to better understand government issues and their role as productive citizens.

**2008 Highlights**
In 2008, the 4H & Youth Development team reached more than 530,518 youth and adults.

*Making a Difference...*
More than 400 youth completed TMI training sessions. Based on program evaluations, 90 percent improved their decision-making skills; 71 percent improved their public speaking capabilities; 72 improved their interviewing skills; and 92 percent learned the difference between acceptable and unacceptable social behavior.

- **Youth Leadership & Community Service Learning**

The Points of Light Youth Leadership Institute and other youth development programs are designed to teach leadership, community service, and positive social skills such as problem solving, goal setting, and teamwork to middle and high school students. Young people participating in these programs learn to “think outside the box.”

*Making a Difference...*
Since 2005, 150 students have participated in the Urban Teen Leadership Academy. Eighty percent went on to graduate from high school, while the other students sought alternate counseling and eventually passed the Alabama High School exam. Ten students from the Academy went on to attend Alabama colleges and universities.
• Volunteer in Urban Programs
• Service Learning Network

The United States Department of Labor reported that close to 62 million people volunteered in their communities between 2007 and 2008. This figure accounts for more than a quarter of the adult population. Imagine what communities would be like without them?

The Volunteer in Urban Programs (VIP) is a fairly new Extension program that is designed to recruit, enroll, and train community volunteers. This structured program captures the quantitative and qualitative value of volunteer services provided to Extension’s Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs.

VIP also includes Alabama A&M University’s Service Learning Network that is managed by Extension staff and incorporates all student service and volunteer activities on and off the campus. The Service Learning Network is designed to meet the changing educational, emotional, social, and intellectual needs of nearby communities, as well as underserved and hard-to-reach populations.

2008 Highlights
In 2008, more than 106,411 contacts were made involving service learning and other volunteer work.

Making a Difference...
More than 500 individuals provided 5100 hours of volunteer services to Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs for a total value of nearly $100,000.
• **Family Conference**

The Family Conference is an activity of the Family & Child Development team designed to foster partnerships and to obtain current information and resources on how to strengthen families and family-centered communities. This event is an excellent professional development tool for family service providers as they help families positively respond to societal demands that impact their lives, such as a changing economy, physical stress, changing familial roles, managing work and family, divorce, and aging.

Past speakers have included Dr. David Satcher, Judge Glenda Hatchett, Dr. Ian Smith, and Wally “Famous” Amos, and Dr. M. Jocelyn Elders.

**2008 Highlights**

On October 16, 2008, more than 325 people learned how to prepare for survival or recovery from chronic health issues and financial insecurities that could be detrimental to sustaining healthy and strong family-centered communities. By nature, most people wait until a crisis hits home before jumping into action, but in light of the pending job losses, home foreclosures, identity theft, rapidly climbing obesity rates, and other epidemics, the conference provided valuable resources that helped to prepare individuals, families, and communities to meet life’s challenges.

• **Urban-Rural Interface Conference**

As rural farmlands give way to urban environs, events like the Urban-Rural Interface Conference provide a platform to educate citizens on issues where these geographic areas and populations overlap or share common boundaries.

**2008 Highlights**

More than 125 people attended the 2008 Urban-Rural Interface Conference. Approximately 58 percent of participants gained greater awareness on how to better serve Hispanic or Latino audiences in the areas of health, education, and community relations.
Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs is proud of the diversity of partners that helps Extension fulfil its mission as follows:

“The Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the primary outreach organization for the land-grant mission of Alabama A&M University and Auburn University, delivers research-based educational programs that enable people to improve their quality of life and economic well-being.”

AARP Alabama
Alabama Botanical Gardens
Alabama Areas on Aging
Alabama City, County, & State Governments
Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries
Alabama Department of Education/School Systems
Alabama Department of Human Resources
Alabama Department of Public Health
Alabama Farmer’s Markets
Alabama Music Hall of Fame
Alabama Public Housing
American Diabetes Association
Assisted Living Facilities
AquaDome Recreation Center
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
Circle Community Project
Decatur Youth Services Center
Hannah Home
Harriman Community Center
Jefferson County Committee for Economic Opportunity
Kroger, Incorporated
Madison County District 6 Commissioner National Senior Corporation
Northwest Community Learning Center
Pathway Women’s Shelter
Pfizer, Incorporated
Rural Senior Services, Incorporated
St. John AME Church in Huntsville
Save-A-Life Pregnancy Center
Senior Centers Alabama
The Links, Incorporated-Greater Huntsville Chapter
Top Group
UAB Alzheimer’s Disease Center
United States Department of Agriculture
United Way in Alabama
United States Department of Housing & Urban Development
WIC Offices
Women’s Christian Job Core

Note: This is a partial listing of community partners.
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