

WORKFORCE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Extension's Urban Unit Workforce and Economic Development programs: 1) explore entrepreneurship opportunities, 2) encourage partnerships, and 3) offer Web-based resources, interactive curricula, and assessments to help develop a skilled and ethical labor force that meets employer demands in a changing work environment.

A series of Youth Career Summits coordinated by agents and specialists in Houston, Madison, and Mobile Counties educated over 1500 young women on nontraditional careers in technical fields. This was the second year of implementation for the summits that are designed to motivate young women to pursue high-wage, high-skilled occupations. Eighty percent of the participants said they had an improved awareness and thought they wanted to pursue a technical career after

attending the summits. The program targets junior and senior high school females who are making decisions about transitioning from school to work. Using the same program model, a career summit was held in Houston County for young men with over 1000 participants.

In Morgan County, Extension agents worked with the Alabama Department of Corrections and Calhoun Community College to initiate a pilot program designed to rehabilitate inmates. Educational training that included a workforce preparation series contributed to an improved recidivism rate from 50% to 5% and substantial savings to the Alabama Penal System.

Economic development in Pike County was stimulated by a "Pioneer Farmers Market" program that linked

seniors and limited resource families to fresh produce while expanding their awareness and use of local farmers markets. Through cooperative efforts of the Extension System and the Alabama Farmers Market Authority, Extension agents helped to organize and educate producers on the mechanics of the Farmers Market Nutrition Program and the procedures for accepting program coupons from families. **Approximately 4,000 families received \$20,000 in coupons and more than 20 farmers were trained and sold produce at local markets.**

In Mobile County, leadership workforce development training seminars were conducted to provide participants with knowledge and skill building information for success in the workplace. Case scenarios and problem-solving exercises allowed participants to set goals for future application. Two hundred and fifty-three participants were involved.

SUBMITTED BY

Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit Specialists
Jannie Carter, State Extension Program Leader;
Specialists Edna Coleman, Donnie Cook, Julio Correa, Dony Gapasin, Mary Hurt,
Jacqueline Johnson, Marilyn Johnson, Grace Kirkman, Rosalie Lane, Wilma Ruffin, Cathy Sabota,
and Bernice Wilson; and other Urban County Extension Agents & Project Participants.

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.



Your Experts for Life

Summary of Accomplishments 2002

Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs

INTRODUCTION

The fact that "Urban" Extension is catching on from the bustling cities of northern America to quieter southern plains should come as no surprise to anyone. Extension has a rich history of serving agricultural communities, rural families, and youth. But that role is changing as land-grant universities create new and nontraditional programs to address the needs of expanding urban populations across the country. Alabama is no exception! The 2000 Census data reveals that seventy percent (70%) of Alabama's population is now urban, compared to just sixty percent (60%) in 1990.

Shifts in population and the associated family, community and environmental concerns are now global issues. Worldwide, urban areas are expected to surpass rural areas in population by 2005, and Alabama's Extension System is prepared! Operating in its fifth year as a fully functioning base program unit of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs entered the year 2002 with a new four-year cycle of goals and objectives. The 2002-2005 Plan of Work was developed in conjunction with priority areas designed to meet the needs of a growing urban population.

2002-2005 Program Goals

1. Focus on **urban youth development** by providing social, economic, health, leadership, citizenship, and volunteerism programs designed to empower urban youth to reach their fullest potential as positive and contributing members of a diverse society.
2. Provide creative programs that offer solutions to bridging the digital divide, **creating expanded access to technology and independent systems of information retrieval** to help all Alabamians succeed in the Information Age.
3. Promote nontraditional agricultural and environmental sciences by providing information to help citizens make informed decisions on how to **manage urban and suburban environments and explore new and alternative markets, niche crops, and diversified products.**
4. Conduct **health and nutrition programs across an individual's lifespan** to improve the general health of Alabamians, focusing on underserved and high-risk audiences.
5. Investigate the **changing definitions and profiles of families and offer solutions to issues** related to resource management, families in transition, parenting, senior lifestyles, domestic violence, legal education, companionship and health care, to promote strong resilient families and communities.
6. Increase the capacity of urban communities to respond to **urban/rural interface** issues through engaged partnerships, community building and diversity councils.
7. Design and implement programs to improve the **workforce preparedness** of unemployed and underemployed citizens.

2002 PRIORITY PROGRAM AREAS

THE URBAN YOUTH INITIATIVE

Whether in urban cities or rural towns, youth need guidance and socialization to help them make wise decisions and develop a correlation between what they do today and the consequences that could face them tomorrow. Interactive, intervention and prevention programs were designed to build skills, provide motivation and create opportunities for youth to develop their potential as contributing citizens. Over 25,000 youth contacts were made under this initiative in addition to program activities implemented under more specific project areas, including teen leadership and volunteerism.

In Houston County, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System collaborated with the Dothan Juvenile Court Services and the Dothan Police Department to sponsor a seven-week program for 28 at-risk teen girls in local detention homes.

Participants learned to deter negative behavior through training sessions that addressed anger management, self-esteem, and setting career goals. Over 200 family and friends attended the culminating ball and banquet. Since the program's inception, no

delinquent behavior has been reported from the participants.

Thirty-five at-risk females in Mobile County were trained on the importance of personal health. Record keeping models and training focused on educating teens on the importance of regular doctor's examinations and maintenance of a medical history for tracking family illnesses. Teens were educated on the value of understanding and making associations between family records and health risk factors. Follow-up assessments indicated that a small percentage used the personal medical history resources to establish a documented history of their individual and family health. The program has statewide potential as proactive training to break negative health patterns for at-risk youth.

Over 4682 youth in Lauderdale County participated in a "Traveling Health Fair" program to discourage tobacco usage. Approximately, 80 percent of the students participating in the program signed a pledge to remain tobacco free. Follow-up contacts in 2003 will further assess the impact of the program.

The "Distinguished Gentlemen" program helped 150 fifth graders in Madison County to build their self-esteem and leadership skills. The program targets impressionable young boys to train them on character education, decision-making skills, self-image, and social graces. Youth must conform to standards for dress and academic performance during the year. Teacher assessments indicated improved behavior for all youth involved.

"We Treasure All Earth Resources" was the theme for the 2002 Groundwater Education Day in Houston County where over 1200 youth received hands-on training on ways to conserve and protect our water sources. Supporting organizations included the City of Dothan, Natural Resource Conservation Services (NRCS), water authorities, Alabama Department of Environmental Management, and local school boards.

Research on the benefits of youth service consistently reveals that well designed service learning promotes academic achievement, competence and self-esteem. **The TLC program engaged youth through service programs they assessed, designed and managed as outreach teams. More than 300 participants improved their leadership skills**

through hands-on community service activities.

The SPACE program operates in Madison, Lawrence, Montgomery, and Talladega Counties, and

targets high school and college student volunteers. During 2002 the program orbited to Mobile and Jefferson Counties to establish new sites for the student volunteer program. **SPACE**

students have accrued more than 16,000 hours and have made over 48,000 client contacts through local community agencies since the program's inception in 1992.

FUTURING, TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS AND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

In-keeping with the vision of E-Extension to remove barriers to information access for many, resources such as Metro News, the WECAN4U job assistance network, the PARA NUESTRO AMIGOS LATINOS website and the Urban Resource Center Inventory Catalog provided electronic links to Extension's research-based information. These resources facilitated the delivery of urban and nontraditional programs and information to the larger community and helped to address objectives aimed at identifying best practices in program design and delivery.

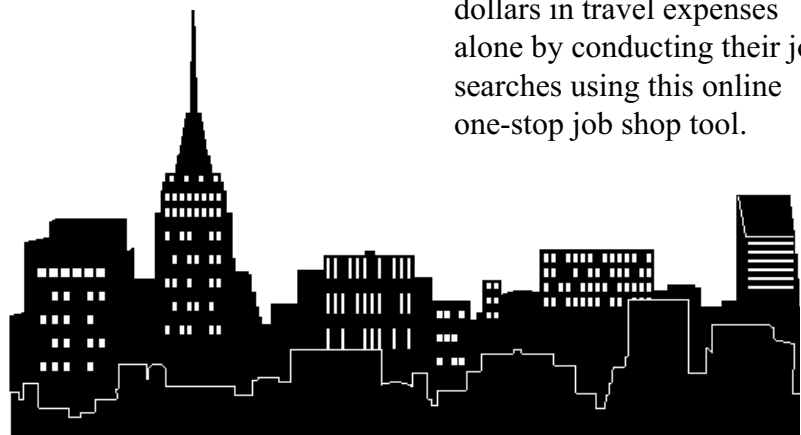
Editorial staff for Metro News celebrated one year of service in October 2002.

The bilingual (English/Spanish) online quarterly newsletter can be accessed by the 3000 plus reviewers via the System's "News" page or directly at www.aces.edu/urban/metronews. Metro News is available in html or as a PDF file. There is an online subscriber list, and the hardcopy is distributed to Extension administrators and other constituents.

PARA NUESTROS AMIGOS LATINOS is the first Spanish-only website of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, and it extended Extension's reach to Spanish-speaking families and communities across the country. The user-friendly website offers a wide variety of research-based information to the state's growing Hispanic population. During 2002 specialists who designed the site traveled to national conferences to share the concept with other outreach professionals at the National Extension Technology Conference at Pennsylvania State University and the Latinos in the South conference in Atlanta, Georgia.

The Urban Resource Center Inventory Catalog is available through the System's website. It was designed to provide easily accessible online resources to educators for implementing programs to targeted urban audiences. Through technological delivery, the resource facilitates communication and collaborations among Extension professionals.

The System's **WECAN4U** website has had over 3700 accesses. Designed through a multistate agreement between Alabama and West Virginia, the site provides 24-hour access to employment information and personal money management strategies. Citizens saved thousands of dollars in travel expenses alone by conducting their job searches using this online one-stop job shop tool.



Making Extension Connections

NONTRADITIONAL AGRICULTURE

Diversified farming has taken on real meaning as twenty-first century producers look for new and improved ways to produce new niche crops and explore new markets. Programs were designed to respond to production needs and consumer demands of small and nontraditional farmers through alternative production systems, market niches, greater diversity of farm products, biotechnology research applications, alternative animal and plant production, and other nontraditional animal and plant science research.

Gardening in the city on community plots is a nontraditional approach that has taught residents in inner cities how to turn abandoned lots into a source of food, hope and pride. The Birmingham Urban Garden Society (BUGS) program and "Plant an Extra Row" are models of the potential of community gardens and second harvest programs in two metropolitan cities. **Fifteen community gardens and 20 school learning gardens have been initiated in Jefferson County during the 2002 program year through the BUGS program.** Extension staff helped to build the alliance that promotes gardening as a tool to foster relationships, teach leadership/entrepreneurship and

life/academic lessons, promote good nutrition, provide food, and beautify vacant areas.

The "Plant an Extra Row" program in Tuscaloosa County encourages gardeners to plant extra produce to donate at harvest time. Since April 2002, approximately 500 pounds of vegetables and fruits have been donated to the local Salvation Army and Community Soup Bowl.



The "Trees are My Friends" program was conducted in Montgomery County with over 150 youth participants, including youth from Montgomery's inner city public housing communities. The program was done in partnership with the Eagle Eye Institute of Somerville, Massachusetts to encourage urban dwellers to participate in tree care and planting activities in their communities. The program reached several thousand through the public service announcement campaign that was also

conducted in Madison County through Alabama A&M University's WJAB radio station in conjunction with a project that looks at the relationship between tree environments and family well-being.

In Montgomery County the "2002 Water Festival" attracted over 1800 teachers and students. The festival targets fourth graders. The material taught during the festival meets the objectives included in their course of study and SAT requirements. Activities included information on aquifers, filtration, pollution and hydrologic cycles.

Through integrated approaches to nontraditional agriculture, **program activities were designed to educate sheep and goat producers on production, marketing and parasite control strategies.** Assessments from workshops and mini-clinics show a significant increase in producers' knowledge of preventive health strategies and parasite identification. Several organizations have collaborated with ACES in stimulating interest and marketing these programs including the Alabama Federation of Sheep and Meat Goat Producers, the Small Farmers Outreach Program and Alabama A&M University.

NUTRITION AND HEALTH FOR UNDER-SERVED AUDIENCES

Statistics show that there are targeted groups within the Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) who are at higher risk for nutritional deficiency. They are usually poor, elderly, homeless, underemployed or suffering from chronic diseases (*Health Status of Rural Alabamians, Alabama Rural Health Association*, January 1998). In fact, researchers paint a rather grim picture for Alabama's aging population. One in every four of the state's elderly live in poverty, and on average, more people die in Alabama due to malnutrition than in the nation as a whole (*Future Grim for Many Elderly*, M. Sznajderman, Birmingham News, January 7, 2002).

Supported by a USDA Food and Nutrition Service grant, the **Urban Nutrition Education Program (UNEP) was launched in 2002 in Morgan, Lauderdale, Madison, and Calhoun Counties** to expand nutrition education services to seniors and limited resource inner-city families in Alabama. Since April 2002, the program has serviced 2592 citizens creating greater awareness of nutrition education in food selection, preparation, and storage. Participating seniors self reported that they are making wiser choices based on training received on dietary guidelines. Pre and

post assessments showed significant improvements in dietary intake with clientele indicating that they are eating more vegetables and fruits and decreasing the fat in their diet. Jefferson, Mobile Montgomery, and Houston Counties will become active with UNEP in 2003.

Programs such as the **Food and Nutrition Summer Institute (FNSI)** brought well-known professionals and experts to Extension and the community. Former Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher was keynote speaker for the Institute held at Alabama A&M University in June 2002. This marked the first time the event was hosted at a historically black university or college. The "Community Day" event kicked off the 2002 FNSI activities, with over 200 community residents visiting the Winfred Thomas Research Farm to obtain information on the benefits of urban gardening and second harvest programs.

To raise the awareness level of seniors relative to financial exploitation, health and nutrition, Extension agents in Calhoun County offered a "Senior Summit" that attracted more than 200 citizens. Seniors were educated on how to avoid exploitation and what to do if it happened to them. Referrals were made to

cooperating agencies for health and financial management resources.

Over 50 professional childcare givers attended an asthma workshop in Montgomery County where they obtained information to minimize the environmental health risks for children. Pre- and post-test assessments showed increased knowledge for all participants, including school nurses, social workers and daycare providers. The proclamation signed by Governor Siegelman proclaiming October 21, 2002 as "Children's Environmental Health Day" for the state was a significant outcome.

In Mobile County, Extension agents educated 52 food service workers, food staff coordinators and parents involved in a local childcare program on ways to improve the nutrition of meals for young children while reducing fat and sodium.

USDA-CSREES funding received through a multistate agreement grant supported a three-year "Germ City" project involving Alabama, Hawaii, Idaho, Washington, and West Virginia. The interactive hand-washing program targets youth and emphasizes the importance of proper

hand washing to promote good health and safety. The model city features glow lights in a tunnel. When participants pass through the tunnel, germs on improperly washed hands are illuminated. More than 7000 participated in the program in 14 counties across the state. An estimated 80% of the participants learned proper hand-washing techniques. Teachers revealed a change in attitudes toward hand washing techniques among the youth.



URBAN-RURAL INTERFACE

Through urban-rural interface programming, Extension acknowledges the changing face of Alabama and recognizes the value of diverse programming to meet the needs of a multi-cultural society. Interface programs such as the Urban-Rural Interface Conference (URIC) provide links to agriculture, environmental sciences, family programs, and community issues that engage all of Alabama's citizens in meaningful exchanges and learning partnerships.

The 2002 Urban Rural Interface Conference was held in April on the campus of Alabama A&M University. **The URI Conference has been recognized as very timely at regional and national levels in docu-**

ments such as the *Vision for the 21st Century, National Directions, NASULGC Kellogg Report.*

The 2002 conference had over 125 participants. Those responding to assessments have consistently indicated that the conference has helped them to better understand urban-rural issues and provided them with resources to help them take appropriate actions. Approximately 20% of the 2002 participants indicated they have used information obtained at previous conferences at work and at home to respond to biotechnology, urbanization, economic empowerment and energy utilization concerns.

Community-based programs were well received by diverse

audiences in the state's metro centers. **A multi-state agreement between the Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs unit and New Mexico State University lead to the planning and implementation of an "Education Fiesta" in the Morgan County metro area.** Extension agents in Morgan and Lawrence Counties worked with supporting agencies and organizations to provide vital information and resources to more than 500 Latino/Hispanic residents. Extension educators have initiated similar programs in partnership with local diversity councils across north Alabama, particularly in Marshall County where there is a high percentage of Spanish-speaking residents.

URBAN FAMILY NETWORK

The Urban Family Network offers a comprehensive program and an annual Family Conference to advance families economically, socially, and physically in the twenty-first century. Establishing partnerships, networks, and support groups to strengthen the resiliency of families in urban communities are primary objectives.

A Successful Aging Initiative grew out of a partnership agreement between the state Bureau of Geriatric Psychiatry and the Urban Affairs unit. Programs educated over 250 seniors in the Madison County (and surrounding areas) faith-based communities on resource management, elder law, and health issues. Health screenings provided through senior seminars saved participants thousands of dollars in health costs.

The **Annual Family Conference** has become an important avenue for addressing major issues of public concern such as domestic violence, parenting, workforce preparation, nutrition and health. Representing the fourth year of implementation, the 2002 conference featured Arkansas Extension Family Life Specialist Dr. Wallace Goddard as the keynote speaker. Participants receive continuing education credits and professional

development units, while learning first-hand techniques that will aid them in helping today's urban families.

The **Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP)** provided support groups to grandparents raising grandchildren in north Alabama. The program has received funding through the Brookdale Foundation to expand services in 2003.

The **Mobile County Domestic Violence Task Force** partnered with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System to host the conference, "Domestic Violence, Not in My Home-Not in My Town." Four hundred and fifty participants from four states were in attendance to hear domestic violence experts discuss the impact of violence on individuals and communities.

"Dogs as Companion Animals" reached thousands with information on training and care. Through the program, youth and adults are learning about the therapeutic, social and psychological benefits of dogs. Some pets have even participated in pet assisted therapy in Tuscaloosa County.

A revitalization project in Madison County improved the recreational assets in the small township of



Triana, Alabama. Community growth and development had declined since DDT contamination of the Wheeler Reservoir in the late 70's. Through work partially supported under a grant received from the Alabama Urban & Community Forestry Financial Assistance Program, the town's neighborhood park was refurbished with trees and shrubs and new playground equipment. The project was designed to promote the importance of green space to family well-being. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System collaborated with residents in setting up a tree city board to guide the revitalization efforts and manage a culminating Arbor Day celebration.

LifeSmarts, an Internet-based program provided consumer education for teens in grades 9-12. LifeSmarts was conducted in partnership with the National Consumers League (NCL). The program was introduced into the state in 2000 and has involved fourteen teams with 71 teens in local, state and national activities to significantly improve their marketplace skills. Data revealed that participant's consumer knowledge increased 12.5% between 2001-2002.