

Summary of Accomplishments 2003

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Your Experts for Life

Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs

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INTRODUCTION:

The initiation of restructuring activities in the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Extension) prompted county and state level changes that will impact how we implement programs in the next five-year program cycle. But as the 2003 year unfolded, Extension's Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs unit remained focused on the vision of meeting the needs of urban and nontraditional audiences with an emphasis on limited resource families, underserved audiences, individuals, and small enterprises. Educational training and services were planned and delivered based on assessed needs outlined in the 2002-2005 Plan of Work. Priority program areas included urban youth initiatives, expanded access to information and resources, health and nutrition across the lifespan, families and consumers, the urban/rural interface, nontraditional agriculture, and workforce preparedness.

SPECIFIC UNIT GOALS FOR 2003 WERE TO:

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 and **increased access to technology and independent information retrieval systems** 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 with a focus 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.



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PROGRAMS AND SERVICES PROVIDED TO ADDRESS 2003 STATE GOALS

Urban Youth Development and Forefronting Youth Initiative (FYI)

Perhaps the most valuable skills we can pass on to youth are those that generate leadership and service. Leadership builds confidence and increases productivity. Contributions made by competent youth and adult leaders can produce strong and progressive communities that are the guiding forces behind Extension outreach.

During the 2003 program year, a number of approaches were used to engage youth. In Alabama's central cities and adjoining communities, leadership and personal development training targeted inner city youth, potential youth leaders, troubled teens, and community-minded volunteers. Resources such as the Teen Leadership Connection, Character Counts, Tackling Tough Skills, and Yes I Can! programs were used to **help youth acquire information and build skills to enhance their social development.**

Youth program highlights for 2003:

- In the area of volunteer service, the Alabama A&M University (AAMU) Service-Learning Network and Students Promoting Action/Community Education (SPACE) **program had a total of 69 collaborative partnerships with various community-based agencies. At least 18 volunteer programs were implemented generating 15 site managers, 71 volunteer leaders, 27,529 volunteer hours, and 41,752 customer contacts.** The program was facilitated at Bishop State College (Mobile County), Talladega College (Talladega County), University of North Alabama (Lauderdale County), AAMU (Madison County), and at Ramsay High School (Jefferson County).
- With an annual attendance of more than **1500, the family-oriented Youth Fishing Rodeo in Lawrence County** is an innovative collaboration to get students more involved in service and the environment. Extension staff uses the rodeo to coordinate educational outreach efforts such as gun safety, snake education, and taxidermy while promoting community service.
- Colbert County 4-H teen leaders assisted the Shoals Diversity Council in a **citywide clean-up campaign** in observance of World Environment Day.
- National Tree Trust funding supported a "growing and nurturing" program partnership between the Coosa Valley Youth Services and Extension in Calhoun County. **In 45 Alabama communities over 200 youth participated in planting, and maintaining trees** attributing to environmental and aesthetic betterment.
- The **Dothan Chamber of Commerce supported an Extension youth entrepreneurship program** that has inspired a number of successful youth operated business ventures in the Houston County area that included Web page design, beekeeping, bread-making, lawn care, photography, and computer hardware repair.
- **An urban youth development program in Tuscaloosa helped to significantly improve the in-school behavior of 600 youth** in an inner city alternative learning center.
- **Extension educators collaborated with the Madison County Juvenile Court System on the PHOENIX program to assist first-time offenders in their efforts to avoid further delinquency.** Seventy-six youth graduated from the program in 2003. Program statistics indicate a 70 percent success rate for non-repeat offenders.
- **Thirty-one teen leaders involved in the Prudential Youth Leadership Institute in Morgan County** received training in setting goals, team building, decision-making, and other leadership skills.
- City council representatives, community leaders, and the faith-based community helped "**Youth Walking to Make a Difference**" in **Mobile County** carry the message of violence prevention to a high crime area.
- **Youth in Cullman County put in action the research-based theories behind the social/psychological benefits of "Dogs as Companions."** Extension educators used a 4-H pet show to encourage members of 4-H

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clubs to participate in public speaking activities. In addition, companion animals encouraged youth with severe disabilities such as autism, blindness, and hearing problems in special education classes in Tuscaloosa County.

- **Approximately 350 youth participated in the Youth Leadership Conference held on the campus of AAMU.** The conference provided opportunities for youth to showcase leadership skills acquired through involvement in various leadership and community service activities in their respective counties. **Showcased programs included a countywide teen weekend at the Mobile Civic Center in conjunction with the Mayor's Youth Leadership Team, A Community Teen Pregnancy Prevention Workshop in Jefferson County, a youth sponsored program called "All for the Children" in Calhoun County, and a "Relay for Life: Shoals Cancer Society" partnership youth led fundraiser.**

Access to Technology and Information Retrieval

In keeping with the vision of e-Extension to remove public access barriers to information, resources such as *Metro News* (unit newsletter), the WECAN4U job assistance website, the Programacion en Espanol website, and the Urban Resource Center Inventory Catalog provide electronic links to Extension's research-based information. These resources facilitate the delivery of urban and nontraditional programs to the larger community and help to address objectives aimed at identifying best practices in program design and delivery.

A communications laboratory housed at AAMU supports the unit's efforts to deliver quality programs and resources across the state, nation and the world. During 2003 the laboratory support staff, technicians, and unit specialists helped the public or end-users to access ongoing programs and activities such as a Hispanic Web site (www.aces.edu/urban), trainings, an online resource directory, Web-based publications, and Web-based curricula.

Extension educators in the unit have continued to maintain and upgrade the unit's Spanish-only website. **The Programacion en Espanol site has had over 114,000 visits, and represents one of Extension's most frequently visited links.** The user-friendly site services youth and adults offering a wide variety of research-based information to the state's growing Hispanic population. The site currently links to more than 1,200 research-based Spanish publications from a variety of professional and education sources including links to the consulates and embassies for Spanish speaking countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean. **Extension educators presented a workshop on the Web site at the National Urban Extension Conference held in Chicago, IL in May of 2003.** This conference is one of the largest gatherings of Extension and urban professionals in the country.

***Metro News*, the unit's online quarterly newsletter written in English and Spanish** observed its second anniversary in 2003. The bilingual newsletter can be accessed by the 3000 plus reviewers directly from Extension's website at www.aces.edu/urban.metronews.

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

Extension's WECAN4U website (www.wecan4u.net) **has had over 5700 hits (visits).** Designed through a multi-state agreement between Alabama and West Virginia, the site provides 24-hour access to employment information and personal money management strategies. **The WECAN4U website designers received the "Innovative National Program Award" at the Association of Extension Administrators meeting held in Atlanta, Georgia in June of 2003.**

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Exploring Urban and Nontraditional Agricultural Concepts

Nontraditional agricultural programs are designed to respond to production needs and consumer demands of small, 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, plant, and environmental sciences research.



A horticulture information phone line and service in Mobile and Baldwin Counties was developed in response to the tremendous need for home horticulture support in central cities. The line utilizes volunteers to respond to questions about specific horticulture issues. During 2003, the information line handled 1,234 diagnoses. The service represented 206 total days of operations, accounting for 2,472 volunteer hours.

In Houston County Extension educators conducted seminars, workshops, and residential and commercial building assessments to educate citizens on the problems of mold, lead, and asbestos. **Providing critical assessment information to appropriate home insurance providers helped one family with an extensive mold problem to obtain a new mobile home.**



In collaboration with Alabama Water Watch, the 2003 Houston County Groundwater Education Day was implemented at Wallace Community College with approximately 1200 students participating. Participants were involved in hands-on activities focusing on what groundwater is; the water cycle; the interdependence of plants, trees, wildlife, soil and water; water conservation and the need for responsible action to protect our groundwater. **Results from this program include an ongoing community-monitoring program where volunteer citizens are educated on how to test water conditions at troubled sites.** Presently, monitoring is being done at four major creeks and a river. Additional sites will be added as volunteers increase.



During 2003, urban agriculture mini grants supported community gardening programs that targeted urban, new, and nontraditional audiences. Projects were initiated in Tuscaloosa, Montgomery, Mobile, and Houston County metro areas. **The "Plant an Extra Row" program in Tuscaloosa County was started to help homeless and limited resource families.** Home gardeners plant extra rows of crops and give that produce to local food banks. This venture provides a way for participants to have food access and food security throughout the year. **The program generated over 1500 pounds of produce in 2003 valued at about \$3K.**



The City of Prattville in Autauga County has provided land to develop a non-traditional community garden to serve limited-resource families and senior citizens. With an eye toward maintaining the heritage of the community, the garden is located in an economic redevelopment area near the downtown riverfront. The garden design accommodates diverse populations who otherwise would not be able to participate in the production of foodstuffs. **Raised planting beds and paved pathways will accommodate wheelchairs and semi-ambulatory citizens.** The city of Prattville also provided an area for the development of a fragrance garden for sight-impaired citizens. **In June of 2003 this garden was on the local "Parade of Ponds."**



Health and Nutrition Across the Lifespan

Health and wellness are important to individual and family well-being, but good health doesn't just happen. It comes with practicing learned habits of eating right, making healthy choices, and being physically active. In order to grow and develop properly, children and adults need to eat a variety of nutritious foods as outlined by the United States Department of Agriculture's dietary guidelines. Nutrition and health programs for underserved audiences in 2003 targeted youth, senior citizens, limited resource families in inner city areas, and multicultural groups at risk for nutritional deficiency and high-risk diseases.

Alabama's Urban Nutrition Education Program (UNEP) targets senior citizens and families and individuals that dwell in public housing communities. Launched at four Urban Centers in 2002, the program expanded to three additional Urban Centers in 2003. The program now services all but two of the state's metropolitan areas. The program's overall purpose is to empower families and individuals to make wise food choices, to select and prepare safe foods, and to consume a nutrient dense diet of healthy foods. The 5,575 participants improved dietary quality, financial management, and safety behavior in selecting, preparing and consuming foods.

During 2003 more than 18,000 youth, and adults participated statewide in the Clean Hands Healthy People-Germ City project. Germ City is a multi-state funded interactive hand-washing program designed to educate the public on the importance of washing hands to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Since the start-up of the program in 2002, 32 counties and over 27,000 participants have experienced Germ City. Follow-up surveys indicated that 87 percent of the participants had improved attitudes regarding hand washing and children desired to wash their hands more often.

Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Project educators in Colbert, Franklin, Lauderdale, Madison, Morgan, and Marion Counties partnered with the media, human resource agencies, the American Cancer Society, and state and local health, and community organizations to **educate 6,384 women about breast and cervical cancer and screening referrals. Two hundred sixty-four women received screening services that may help to save their lives.**

To increase awareness of breast and cervical cancer, Escambia County Extension educators targeted women between the ages of 40-64, including Native Americans. **An educational campaign launched by a coalition of agencies and individuals resulted in 7 percent of the 1019 at risk women (68) participating in screening. Of the 110 Native Americans participating, 45 percent received screening or cervical exams.**

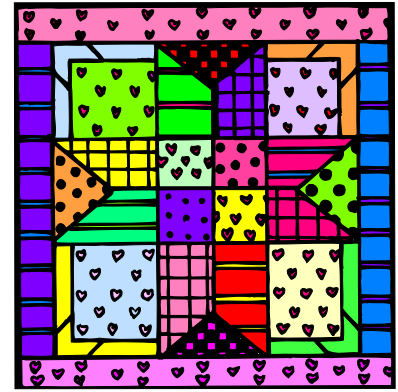
Families and Consumers

Statistics present a complex definition of Alabama's families for the twenty-first century. Today's family exists in a variety of forms. In fact, nontraditional families are currently more the norm and new forms of nontraditional families continue to evolve as social service agencies and kinship groups seek to ensure supportive and nurturing environments for parents and "displaced" children. 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.

The Fifth Annual Family Conference was planned around the theme "Strengthening Family Centered Communities." **Dr. Lonnie Edwards, educator and motivational speaker, delivered the keynote address on "Reaching Beyond Boundaries." His book titled A Teacher's Touch: Reaching Beyond Boundaries is well read in the Southeast.**

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Other presenters included Mr. Resmaa Menakem, director of holistic programs for the Tubman Family Alliance in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Dr. Galo Torres, regional migrant health and dental consultant with the Human Resources and Services Administration in Atlanta, Georgia; and Dr. Virginia Caples, AAMU's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. **The Conference Expo featured 43 family development agency representatives and community-wide exhibitors including one of the famous Gee's Bend quilts with quilter Mrs. Mary Lee Bendolph.**



Extension's Urban Affairs unit serves as the lead agency in collaboration with the Alabama Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the Alabama Department of Senior Service-Alabama Cares Program to implement the Alabama Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP). **The focus of RAPP is to create or expand educational services and outreach to grandparents and other relatives who have taken on the responsibility of surrogate parenting. During 2003 outreach programs, regional workshops and support groups provided outreach services to over 1200 grandparents and relatives as parents helping them to cope with stress, financial, legal, and parenting responsibilities.**

SUCCESSFUL *Aging* **INITIATIVE**

During 2003, Urban Affairs continued the partnership with the Alabama Bureau of Geriatrics and Psychiatry to deliver legal, health, and resource management information to Alabama's aging population. Through coordinated efforts under this

"Successful Aging Initiative," summits in Madison, Jefferson and Jackson Counties reached more than 700 seniors. Dr. Richard Powell, director of the Alabama Bureau of Geriatrics and Psychiatry, served as the keynote speaker for both the Jefferson and Madison County summits. Onsite screenings and referrals saved participants an estimated \$35K in medical and legal costs. The program has been well received by community partners as indicated by in-kind services from professional speakers, partners and supporters including the Area Agency on Aging, the Alabama Department of Senior Services, and the Jefferson County Fire Department.

In the area of consumer education, the Alabama LifeSmarts state competitions were held on the campus of AAMU in the spring of 2003. The winning team, Austin High School, from Decatur represented Alabama in Orlando, Florida at the National LifeSmarts competition. LifeSmarts is an online consumer education program designed by the National Consumer League to enhance the consumer knowledge of students in grades 9-12.



Habitat for Humanity partnered with Urban Extension agents in Anniston, Alabama to provide educational training for Habitat clients. Prior to moving into their new homes, recipients were required to attend and complete resource management classes provided through Extension. Thirty-six families underwent training with a 100 percent completion rate for the required sessions.

Taking a nontraditional approach to strengthening families, **funding from an Alabama Forestry grant supported demonstration projects that investigated people-plant interactions.** Youth in grades 4-5 in three north Alabama schools and residents in a north Alabama community were involved in the installation of arboretums, tree education classes and arbor day celebrations focusing on the positive impact of trees on well being, general behavior and performance.

Urban /Rural Interface

Urban/Rural Interface programs take an integrated approach to helping Alabama citizens define and address family, community and agricultural issues that impact those who live on the fringe or borders where urban and rural development merge.

The 2003 Urban/Rural Interface Conference (URI) featured keynote speaker Michael Mullen, director of the Center for Environmental Research and Service at Troy State University. He spoke on the theme "Research and Education Respond to Current Community Issues." Other speakers provided practical information on community gardening, the safety and risks of genetically modified foods, and water and air quality. Presenters included Extension agents, the director for the Harvest Program with the Madison County Commission, director of CASA Community Gardens, and the deputy director for the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Management in Huntsville. There were over 100 educators and community leaders in attendance.



Workforce Preparedness

With Alabama's unemployment statistics fluctuating just under the national jobless rate of 6 percent, youth and adult populations are seeking workforce preparation guidance. During 2003, Extension Workforce and Economic Development programs explored entrepreneurship opportunities, encouraged partnerships and offered interactive curricula and Web-based resources to help develop a skilled and ethical labor force to meet employer demands in a changing work environment.



Youth Career Summits (YCS) designed to educate high school juniors and seniors on nontraditional career options have **serviced over 8,000 participating youth in Houston, Mobile, and Madison Counties since their year 2000 inception.** During 2003 over 2,225 students participated in YCS activities.

"Next Level" training in franchise entrepreneurship educated over 200 attendees on the benefits of owning your own business. **The Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce in Houston County supported the training to encourage minorities to pursue business.**

A series of **leadership workshops in Mobile County** in conjunction with job search, job placement, and personnel board agencies and organizations was designed to **help address various licensing, professional and workforce development or client service concerns.** Sessions such as team management, diversity, and organizational assessment were presented to **278 participants to improve job search skills and on the job success, enhance leadership skills, and improve team-building skills.** Follow-up data indicates that 75 percent of the clients were hired or placed in leadership roles.