

## **Summary of Accomplishments 2004**

to support start-up funds for small businesses for youth such as the beekeeping business organized by a local fifth grader. The student submitted a business plan that started with two colonies. UREAs at the Houston County Urban Extension Center provided six weeks of training that taught beekeeping management, marketing, record keeping, budgeting, planning, scheduling, selling, and other necessary skills. Extension supported the youth's participation in the State of Alabama Beekeepers Conference that taught him how to make soap, lip balm, and hand lotion from the honey and wax. The student sold honey, but soon realized that other products made him more money. Products were placed in several local stores and sells have exceeded \$100 per month. Product demand was so great the student began purchasing additional wax from a commercial beekeeper in Florida.

Urban Extension agents in Houston County partnered with project RIO (Re-integration of Offenders) started in 2002, a state funded pilot program through ADECA, to help implement a proactive employment assistance service that targets offenders during incarceration and after their release. The goal of this multi-agency effort is to reach 200 offenders per year assisting them in becoming more productive members of the community. Other community partners include the Alabama Career Center System/Dothan, Alfred Saliba Family Services Center, Houston County Community Corrections Services, Wiregrass Rehabilitation Center, Wallace Community College, Department of Human Resources, and Department of Mental Health. Urban regional Extension agents provided money management classes for offenders in preparation for their new lifestyle and employment. Due to positive directions and volunteer mentors, 80 percent of offenders that attend the RIO program have lead productive lives.

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# Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs

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### INTRODUCTION:

Diversification is a term often used in business environments to denote management techniques designed to reduce investment risks. This term is also extended to agricultural ventures that offer opportunities to create new wealth through under utilized and untapped production and management resources. In the broadest sense of the word, there are many other positive implications as we explore new approaches to responding to the needs of a changing world. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System's (Extension) Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit has embraced the concept of diversification and the many implications for programs, audiences, products, and delivery of Extension outreach. From that perspective, Extension activities for the Unit during 2004 developed around objectives that focused on:

- **Urban youth development**
- **Expanding access to technology**
- **Promoting nontraditional agricultural and environmental sciences**
- **Health and nutrition programs across the life span**
- **Promoting strong resilient families and communities**
- **Responding to urban/rural-interface issues**
- **Improving the workforce preparedness of unemployed and underemployed citizens**

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### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

#### Urban Youth Development



Educators who are in tune with today's youth can reach beyond that old cliché, "today's youth are tomorrow's leaders." They already know the leadership potential many youth now possess. Across the state of Alabama, youth are stepping up to the plate to change his/her communities and the world. In 2004, Extension's Urban Affairs Unit offered a number of youth leadership and personal development programs to encourage young people to explore their leadership potential. Service learning, career development, community awareness, and other Urban Youth Initiatives provided resources and information to educate Alabama's youth on relevant issues that impacted their lives and provided insight on how to respond appropriately.

Youth programs and activities were conducted based on various educational resources including the Teen Leadership Connection (TLC) curriculum and the Youth Leadership in Action: A Community Focus/Planning Guide. Leadership potential was further explored through involvement in the Youth Leadership Conference held in conjunction with the annual State 4-H Congress. The combined events provided a forum for an excess of 400

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youth from across the state to engage in leadership workshops and showcase community service projects that had been conducted as teams under the Youth Leadership community service model. TLC groups were particularly active in Colbert County with the "Farm-City Fair" and in Mobile County with "Jump Rope for Health."

The Madison County Urban Youth Farm Day is one of the largest youth programs held across the state with more than 800 youth participating in workshops, seminars, and tours educating youngsters on the production of food from farm to table and the importance of healthy eating. This is an annual awareness program designed to expand the knowledge of urban youth on agricultural concepts. City schools are the community partners in this effort.

The Fame Mentor Project supported volunteer training for the newly developed "Lend an Ear" program of the Family Drug Court of Madison County. The ultimate goal of the program is to reunify families where parental rights have been suspended by building life skills, and providing resources and adult mentors.



Sponsored in partnership with the Lawrence County Schools' Indian Education Program, the Third Annual Youth Fishing Rodeo involved more than 1500 youth and parents in environmental science education and family strengthening activities that included multi-cultural awareness and families and communities in partnership.

Extension specialists at the Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (AAMU) coordinated the Students Promoting Action/Community Education (SPACE) program in collaboration with AAMU's Service-Learning Network (SLN). The SLN/SPACE initiatives trained more than 400 student volunteers and partnered with 100 agencies, generating 17,546 community service hours and reaching a total of 38,690 citizens in Madison County. Additionally, SPACE volunteerism programs were ongoing in three other metropolitan areas including Lauderdale, Mobile, and Jefferson Counties as well as Talladega County under the leadership of county Extension agents and volunteer SPACE coordinators at secondary and post-secondary institutions. Tutorial, career development, health education, and intergenerational outreach services provided through SPACE volunteers in these counties reached over 6,000 citizens.

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## Technology and Information Retrieval

As resources diminish and shift, Extension educators must pursue efficient and effective program delivery modes that correspond with clientele needs and state-of-the-art technology. During the intense restructuring of programs within Extension in 2004, Urban Affairs continued to assess its potential to reach more citizens in metropolitan areas, rural and suburban pockets, and culturally diverse audiences. The Urban Affairs Unit maintained its communications laboratory housed at AAMU to support efforts to deliver quality programs and resources across the state and around the world.

In February 2004, the Unit launched a new website. A Look at Alabama Families ([www.aces.edu/urban/FamilyWebsite](http://www.aces.edu/urban/FamilyWebsite)) does just that...takes an in-depth look at the issues affecting families today. The objectives of this site are to expand Extension's outreach through technology-based programs and increase public access to information that strengthens family-centered communities. Program specialists, communications staff, and contractors provide research-based information under such topics as:



- **Consumer education and personal finance**
- **Divorce**
- **Domestic violence**
- **Employment**
- **Families and nature**
- **Families and the law**
- **Grandparents raising grandchildren,**
- **Homeland security**
- **Nutrition and health**
- **Pet Care**
- **Youth**

This site is a great resource for individuals seeking information on nontraditional families in particular.

Extension educators in Urban Affairs have continued to maintain and upgrade the Unit's Spanish-only website. The Programación en Español site ([www.aces.edu/urban/spanishindex.html](http://www.aces.edu/urban/spanishindex.html)) has logged more than 105,000 visits with a remarkable average of more than eight minutes per visit. The site currently links to more than 2,000 research-based Spanish publications.

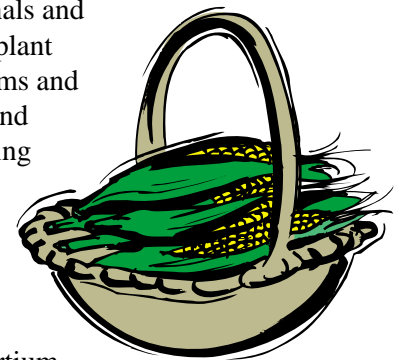
Written in English and Spanish, Metro News is now in its fifth year of publication. The 2004 anniversary issue highlighted American families and included the Annual Family Conference program. The online quarterly newsletter can be accessed by the 3000 plus reviewers directly from Extension's website and is available in html or as a PDF file.

Extension's WEKAN4U website has logged more than 8000 hits on its Web pages. Designed through a multi-state agreement between Alabama and West Virginia, the website provides 24-hour access to employment information and personal money management strategies. Citizens visiting the site can save in travel expenses and job search time by accessing this online resource.

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## **Nontraditional Agriculture**

The concept of nontraditional agriculture is taking on new meaning as professionals and consumers embrace biotechnology research applications, alternative animal and plant production, and other sustainable animal and plant science best practices. Programs and activities implemented under this program area are designed to empower urban and nontraditional farmers, small farmers, and micro-enterprises to succeed in changing agricultural environments, particularly where urban and rural environs interface. Programs encourage safe and secure food and animal products and agricultural careers through new methods, new products, and new markets.



Urban regional Extension agents (UREAs) in Lauderdale and Morgan Counties involved Extension clients in research pilots with the Southern Agbiotech Consortium for Underserved Communities (SACUC). To promote understanding of the benefits of agbiotech, small producers compared agbiotech varieties of corn that had naturally occurring insect destroying bacteria with conventional varieties. The results showed measurable reductions in production costs for the agbiotech variety saving participants an average \$100 per application on insecticide costs.

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UREAs in Morgan County were also involved in the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) Farmers Market Nutrition Program. Agents trained growers to participate in this program and as a result, participating growers were able to accept coupons from WIC recipients and low-income seniors at the Decatur Farmers Market. Over \$100,000 worth of coupons were processed in Morgan County, resulting in an increased interest in fruit and vegetable production in the county. Moreover, limited resource families were able to access hundreds of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables for their families that may otherwise have not been affordable on regular food budgets.

Pond managers' workshops conducted by UREAs in Houston County educated owners on how to avoid costly fish kills. Approximately 50 farmers learned about aquatic weed control, water quality, feeding and nutrition, stocking rates, pond building, and fish diseases. Subsequent to training, participants reported improvements to his/her ponds such as adjusting the alkalinity of the water and soil, starting a fertilization schedule, keeping fish more healthy with a regular feeding program, and by controlling better aquatic weeds without the use of chemical herbicides.

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### Health and Nutrition

Americans are facing epidemic levels of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. Researchers are looking at correlations between diet, health, and exercise to encourage lifestyle changes that can put us back on course for better health. While life expectancy figures have increased and predictions are for extended independent living among senior citizens, statistics indicate that one in four elderly Alabamians live in poverty and some 40 percent of seniors admitted to Alabama hospitals are malnourished. So, there is still cause for concern among some sub-groups. More minorities are also in fair or poor health and at greater risk for selected chronic conditions.

The Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit offers health and wellness programs to underserved audiences. Programs target senior citizens, limited resource families in inner city areas, and multicultural groups at risk for nutritional deficiency and high-risk diseases. These programs provide training that encourages improved health through lifestyle changes.

UREAS and outreach educators of the North Alabama Breast and Cervical Cancer Project (NABCCP) presented more than 53 cancer awareness programs. The Alabama Department of Public Health funded the project designed to create awareness, teach self-care strategies, and increase the number of women getting clinical examinations and mammograms. Extension personnel made over 10,000 direct contacts through seminars, workshops, health fairs, breast self-examinations, and Tell-A-Friend programs. Four hundred and ninety-three (493) persons received medical care. As a result of these efforts, four women reported being diagnosed with cancer and are currently receiving medical treatment.



Extension's Urban Nutrition Education Program (UNEP), funded through United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), serviced over 72,000 through direct contacts. Over one million non face-to-face contacts were made through newsletters, newspaper articles, brochures, and TV and radio broadcasts. Classes geared to limited resource adults, youth, and seniors targeting after school programs, public housing communities, churches, senior centers, group homes, and family shelters. Impacts based on pre- and post-test assessments revealed a 33 percent increase in the use of the USDA's Dietary Guidelines. In addition, participants also follow food safety procedures and use a food-spending plan.

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Jump Rope for Health was presented at elementary school health fairs in Mobile County. The 350 exhibit visitors received information on exercise and nutrition across the life span. The exhibit helps to increase public dialogue about exercising, the importance of eating breakfast, and drinking water. Follow-up surveys were returned from 50 percent of the participants indicating they had started a regular exercise routine with his/her families and/or friends.

To respond to health needs in the metro areas of Colbert and Lauderdale Counties, Extension agents provided a series of cooking schools and educational awareness classes. Of the 57 youth and adults participating, 100 percent reported changing his/her poor eating habits. Ninety percent had begun some form of walking exercise compared to 75 percent at the initial pre-assessment.

In Houston County, over 400 seniors participated in a "Diabetes Health Fair" designed to provide community awareness of diabetes and to make participants aware of services available to assist them with living healthy with diabetes. UREAs distributed more than 1800 recipes and signed over 100 seniors who expressed interest in attending the diabetic cooking school planned for 2005.

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### Families and Communities

The Successful Aging Initiative, initiated in 2002, is a component of the Urban Affairs Unit's comprehensive legal education program in partnership with the Alabama Bureau of Geriatric Psychiatry and



community sponsors. Associated "senior expos" are held in collaboration with the north Alabama faith-based community. Over 300 senior citizens participated in the expo held at Union Chapel Missionary Baptist Church, Huntsville. The partnership aims to educate and provide resources to seniors on issues related to aging, elder law, health and wellness and finance. Participants in the 2004 program received resources, referrals, health screenings and services valued at over \$20,000. As a multi-state activity, this program and its potential in other states and regions was shared at the 2004 National Priester Health Conference in St. Louis, Missouri.

The Unit's 2004 Annual Family Conference featured the Former Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher as the keynote speaker. Dr. Satcher is a strong promoter of the United States Department of Health and Human Services' national agenda Healthy People 2010. Post conference assessments indicated more than 90 percent of the 200 conference participants expressed having acquired an enhanced knowledge of the importance of healthy lifestyles. To address the concerns of quality childcare providers, educators in Morgan County through a multi-state effort, hosted the Better Kid Care satellite training from Penn State. A series of lessons were telecasted that allowed 84 providers to earn 168 training hours of credit toward state requirements.

Weekly parenting classes were offered to ten single mothers in Lauderdale County. A follow-up post assessment of behavioral changes indicated a minimum of 85 percent affirmation of changes in punishment styles, communication, listening, and general parenting skills, as well as an increased focus on quality time.

The Saving Towns Thru Asset Revitalization (STAR) program is a statewide asset-based community initiative designed to support "smart growth" responses from resource-limited and at-risk neighborhoods and municipalities. Many of these tradition-rich areas have geographic, heritage, and recreational amenities and assets that can be utilized for family-centered community building. STAR partners worked with residents of Lisman, Alabama to facilitate Tree City USA status. A tree board, tree care ordinance, and Arbor Day celebration was planned and

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implemented with municipal officials, civic stakeholders, and business people. More than 15 residents and community leaders were involved in the development of this project. All of the prerequisites for Tree City, USA status have been accomplished. Presentations and demonstrations on the human dimensions of green space development, asset revitalization, and image recasting were also delivered at the Alabama Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials statewide gathering in Birmingham, the League of Municipalities statewide conference in Birmingham, the national workshop on Housing and Urban Development issues in Washington, DC, and the Alabama Mayors Cooperative for Economic, Cultural, and Educational Development in Montgomery.



The Urban Affairs Unit serves as the lead agency for the Alabama Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) in collaboration with the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) (Kinship Care Program), and the Alabama Department of Senior Services (Alabama Cares Program). The primary objectives of RAPP are to provide technical assistance for establishing and facilitating support groups to provide information, resources and referrals to grandparents and other relatives who have taken on the responsibility of surrogate parenting. During 2004, an inter-system "Steering Committee" of state agencies was organized, three new support groups were established; and three support groups were provided incentive grants. The Alabama chapter of AARP sponsored the regional conference held in Florence, Alabama.

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### Urban/Rural Interface



The 2004 Urban-Rural Interface Conference was held on April 22, 2004 on the campus of Alabama A&M University in conjunction with the University's annual Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Week observation. Building on the theme "How Safe is our Water?", conference presenters included Anne Hoos, US Geological Survey, Nashville, Tennessee; Bill Deutsch, Alabama Water Watch, Auburn University; and Lynn Sisk, Water Division, Alabama Department of Environmental Management. More than 100 Extension and other local educators, community leaders, community organizations, university faculty, staff, students, service providers and consumers received information on state water sources, surface water quality issues, and information on water quality standards and state and local requirements.

Cultural diversity training provided by Urban Extension educators for Alabama police officers educated members of the Alabama Police Academy on positive non-adversarial interaction between law enforcement offices and diverse populations. Collaborative work with the Regional Counterdrug Training Academy provided intensive training to Alabama police officers on "Survival Spanish for Uniformed Interdiction" in Fort Payne, Alabama, one of Alabama's highly populated Spanish-speaking communities.

Extension educators partnered with the Partnership for a Drug Free Community to provide educational outreach to combat incidences of the manufacture and abuse of methamphetamine. A series of educational forums were offered to increase public awareness of the dangers of the use of this drug and to educate on clues associated with the manufacture of methamphetamine. Post measures reflect a 38 percent increase in awareness of associated dangers.

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Extension's Urban Center and the Multi-Racial Relations Group of Dothan sponsored the annual "Celebration of Diversity Awards Program" in Houston County. The program honored citizens who have rendered outstanding service and contributions on behalf of racial harmony. Awards are offered in five categories. The school award went to the Dothan High School Multicultural Club for their effort in gathering 2000 pounds of food for hurricane victims.

Diversity councils nurturing racial and cultural harmony continue to function across the state. New councils were organized in Madison and Limestone Counties under the leadership of Urban Unit specialists and community partners. Additionally, the Tennessee Valley Council on Diversity was organized in Morgan County through efforts of UREAs.

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### Workforce Preparedness

Groundhog Job Shadow Day was a cooperative effort of the Mobile County Urban Extension Center, Junior Achievement, and the Mobile County School System's Career Tech Department. Fifty-one workplace mentors were paired with 875 middle and high school students in Mobile and Baldwin Counties. Participating students were identified through an application process, and had never participated in a job-shadowing program. Extension educators oriented workplace mentors. Workplace personnel reported that they were pleased with the students' behavior and their ability to ask questions related to job responsibilities and educational requirements. Twenty-five percent of the students that participated in the one-day event were hired for summer employment at the work sites he/she shadowed.

Agents in Mobile County report an increased drop-out rate for at-risk youth beginning in the eighth grade. To reach eighth graders with life skills needed for successful entry into high school, UREAs partnered with Junior Achievement to offer training on "The Economics of Staying in School" and the "Yes I Can" curriculum during a six-week period. Eighteen hundred students from ten middle schools (an average of 30 students per class) participated in the program. Pre- and post-test evaluations were given to students to determine his/her understanding of the importance of education. Post evaluations indicated students were better able to identify the cost benefits of learning new skills through advance education to achieve success in his/her future career choices. Eighty percent of the students completing the evaluation stated he/she would attend college or enroll in a technical/vocational training program.



To support economic growth in Lowndes County, Extension agents began working as members of the Lowndes County Industrial Board and the local town council in 2003 to get Hyundai plants located in the County. Facilities were completed in 2004, and the two plants will provide more than 300 jobs for citizens and an increased tax base. Anticipated industrial growth in adjacent metropolitan Montgomery County will create large-scale economic growth for neighboring Lowndes County in the next decade.

Houston County UREAs implemented youth focused entrepreneurship programs to prepare youth for future responsibilities as forward thinking and well-equipped business leaders. The Dothan Area Chamber of Commerce awarded Houston County agents a grant to fund School-to-Career (STC) activities. The grant provided resources