Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs

The big picture...

America’s population is becoming increasingly more urban with less than 20% residing in the rural and less than 2% making their living as farmers. Associated economic, social and environmental changes have opened new programs of work as Extension continues its 95 year mission to connect people and communities to university resources through educational outreach programs that value stakeholder input and volunteerism. The rural, agricultural base of Extension has expanded to embrace urban and suburban issues and concerns. The state’s land-grant universities, Alabama A&M (AAMU) and Auburn working cooperatively with Tuskegee, have the responsibility to reach across state lines to extend services to citizens wherever they live. A network of professionals housed in Alabama’s 9 urban based centers, 67 county offices and 7 regional research and Extension centers work cooperatively with the universities and other state and local agencies and organizations to provide research based information in priority program areas. Capitalizing on the delivery and information exchange potential of technology, Extension also has a national web presence through eXtension. Funding and support are provided through local and state government and the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA).

Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs is a mandated focus by order of the 1995 court decree (Knight v. Alabama) giving AAMU the specific charge to provide leadership for all urban, new and nontraditional programs across the state to expand programs of vision and quality to all of the people of Alabama. The Urban Affairs unit offers research based information and technical assistance in the following core content areas:

- Animal Science and Forages
- Family and Child Development
- Economic and Community Development
- Consumer Science and Personal Financial Management
- Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resource Management
- Home Grounds, Gardens and Home Pests
- Human Nutrition, Diet and Health
- 4-H Youth Development and Volunteerism
Framing our work through Extension team projects...

Animal Science Program Priority Area Projects
- Dogs as Companion Animals
- Goat, Sheep and Rabbit Production Systems
- *Master Meat Goat Herdsman Program

Consumer Science and Personal Financial Management Program Priority Team Projects
- Consumers Score with Credit in Check through Responsible Spending
- LifeSmarts

Economic and Community Development Program Priority Team Projects
- *Welcome to the Real World: Career Exploration and Educational Planning
- *Hispanic/Latino Outreach and Programming
- *Smart Home Buying and Foreclosure Prevention

Family and Child Development Program Priority Team Projects
- Grandparents and Relatives as Parents Program (Grand RAPP)
- Successful Aging

Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resource Management Program Priority Team Projects
- Saving Towns through Asset Revitalization (STAR)

4-H and Youth Development Program Priority Team Projects
- Youth Leadership and Community Service Learning Program
- Teens Making Impact (TMI)
- Volunteer in Urban Programs (VIP)

Home Grounds, Gardens and Home Pests Program Priority Team Projects
- Urban Horticulture Initiative
- New Nontraditional Horticulture Enterprises
- *Rainwater Collection, Water Conservation and Irrigation Methods Training

Human Nutrition, Diet and Health Program Priority Team Projects
- Urban Nutrition Education Program (UNEP) and Urban Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
- Community Health Aerobic Motivation Program Initiating Optimal Nutrition (CHAMPION)

*The E-Waste Institute
- A collaboration between AAMU’s School of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System’s Urban Affairs Unit

*New 2009 Extension Team Projects and Program Initiatives
Snapshots and snippets 2008-2009...

**Animal Science and Forages**

Increased health consciousness and changing populations have resulted in a growing demand for information and resources on goat, sheep and rabbit consumption and production. Extension professionals continue to design and refine outreach through workshops, field days, hands-on training seminars, conferences and a Master Meat Goat Herdsman Program (established in 2009) to meet the needs of consumers and producers in the rapidly growing industry of small ruminants. Partnerships and sponsorship agreements have developed and/or expanded with a number of agencies and organizations including Goat and Sheep Producers of Alabama, Tennessee State University, the ALFA Meat Goat and Sheep Commodity Group, and many county based farm groups. Additionally, the Alabama Small Ruminants Program Resource Network was established in 2008-2009 as a collaborative effort of Alabama A&M, Auburn and Tuskegee Universities to support improved sheep and goat production in Alabama. Over the past two years a number of FAMACHA trainings were taught across the state as an effective method to control gastrointestinal parasites in goats - a particular management concern expressed by stakeholders. Educational events and supporting resource publications were developed in areas including reproductive management, nutrition, pasture management and renovation, herd health management, meat quality assurance, carcass merit and fabrication, milk production and quality and manufactured products such as cheese, soap, lotion and shampoo. Programs and services resulted in over 200,000 contacts with more than 60% reporting improved animal health and production.

The 2nd Annual Dog Expo, along with other pet safety workshops and obedience training camps, resulted in over 92,000 contacts that helped citizens to understand and appreciate the tremendous roles dogs can and do play as companion animals. A little less than 1/3 of program participants agreed that dog ownership has improved their quality of life and increased their security and esteem.

**Consumer Science and Personal Financial Management**

The Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs Unit maintains its partnership with the National Consumer League (NCL) and continues to function as the lead partner for the state of Alabama for involvement in the NCL coordinated LifeSmarts consumer education program. The online computer based program educates youth on savings, credit, financial resource management, insurance, food labels, health and more. A game show format engages youth in local, state and national competitions.
Economic and Community Development

A First Time Home Buyer and Foreclosure Prevention program was launched in 2009 as the result of a program partnership between Alabama Cooperative Extension and the Alabama A&M University Community Development Corporation (CDC). Through this program certified extension agents provide first time home buyer education, and the CDC provides foreclosure prevention/loss mitigation. Nine agents were involved in a two year training institute and have received home ownership counselor certifications. They operate across the state. Additionally, workforce and other career development resources such as Welcome to the Real World helped 600 youth and young adults in 8 metro regions learn career research procedures (40%), checkbook balancing (40%) and how to balance income and expenses (52%). State and regional based seminars and conferences addressed business and cooperative development, and the 2009 Urban-Rural Interface Conference focused on alternative energy sources.

Community programs continue to focus on new audiences. Staff served as members of the state’s Multicultural Team charged with developing an action plan for providing programs to address the informal educational needs of Alabama’s growing Latino and ethnic communities. Members were involved with the southern region’s SERA-37: The New Hispanic South, a group of educators interested in better serving diverse audiences; and assisted with a SERA 2009 web conference, an immersion program plan, and the design of a 500 web-based resource index.

Family and Child Development

In 2009 more than eight major conferences were implemented across the state through the Successful Aging Initiative (SAI). Participants received nontraditional Extension outreach information in the areas of legal education and practical guidance in estate planning, asset management for seniors, and health care literacy including Alzheimer’s disease and dementia. Partnerships with health care providers and organizations such as the state of Alabama’s Bureau of Geriatric Psychiatry, AARP, and the Area Agency on Aging facilitated tremendous savings to participants through free health screenings, and free follow-up legal assistance. More than 1200 of the some 3500 total participants benefited from estimated savings of over $175,000 in maintenance and preventative procedures.

The Extension based Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) continues to serve as a statewide entity that coordinates programming efforts to address issues and concerns of grandparents and relatives parenting children. The primary delivery mode for outreach is through support groups and other supportive services. 2008-2009 program participants benefitted from rest and relaxation retreats, informative seminars on concerns that impact today’s families, grandparent recognitions, family festivals and Alabama Kinship Care sponsored back to school support programs. An annual multi-state Caregivers Conference was conducted in Tennessee with Alabama as a partner.
Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resource Management

Saving Towns through Asset Revitalization (STAR) efforts, faith based gardens and Community Outdoor Programs (COPS) framed the work for urban forestry outreach in 2008-2009. An outdoor learning classroom was dedicated in 2008 in one of the metro centers (Houston County) valued at an estimated $30,000. Nontraditional classrooms such as this one and other novel approaches to getting youth outside including specialty fish ponds, bird monitoring and street games yielded significant differences in the behavior of participating youth. Programs were also conducted with over 6000 youth and adult contacts to reduce litter, conserve water and increase the use of greenspace through revitalization, recreation, and ongoing community efforts to become certified tree cities.

Youth Development

Leadership, personal development, and service learning programs including the Points of Light Leadership Program (PYLI), the Alabama A&M University Service Learning Network, and Teens Making Impact (TMI) provided youth with communication skills, diversity experiences, goal setting challenges, decision making skills, civic and career education, and service learning opportunities. New agents were certified through the PYLI program and 123 youth were engaged in intense developmental activities to prepare for leadership roles. The Birmingham metro region based service learning program (ACTIVE) accumulated over 13,500 hours of service learning activity in 2008 with about 600 participants. And, the TMI program provided outreach to over 3500 direct youth contacts in 2008 and 2009 through educational classes, workshops, and the culminating TMI Teens and Tweens Conferences. Grant funding (Health Rocks!) and pursuits support planned and anticipated expansion in health and science programs in 2009.
Volunteerism

The VIP program, a statewide effort, was established in 2008 to promote and expand the role of volunteers in implementing urban Extension programs. More than 500 participating volunteers were individually recognized by state staff and their urban regional Extension agents at recognition events across the state for their contributions to the organization. Each volunteer was awarded a certificate of appreciation, and those attending the event received a glass star token depicting the theme for their VIP performance. 2008 volunteers garnered an estimated 5,000 hours of service.

Human Nutrition, Diet and Health

Extension’s CHAMPION program continues to set an example for youth and adults emphasizing healthy lifestyles through wise eating and exercise. Over 8500 program contacts with youth and adults showed significant positive changes in weight reduction, nutritious food consumption, exercise and chronic disease intervention. The BET Girls Camp partnership was implemented for the third year in 2009 with the Black Entertainment Television (BET) Foundation. Realizing the potential health risks for type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and emotional stress, the initiative educates young girls on the importance of adopting a healthy lifestyle.

Nutrition Education Programs (NEP) and Expanded Nutrition Education Programs (EFNEP) funded through USDA in 2008 and 2009 supported additional staff and program expansion with bilingual expertise to better serve limited resource seniors and Latino families with young children. Some 25,000 direct contacts through this program resulted in improved attention to dietary guidelines, safer handling of foods, increased physical activity and better management of the food dollar for participants.
The Urban Horticulture Initiatives Program conducted meetings, classes, field days, and conferences with over 600 clienteles in 2008. Similar outreach efforts have continued in 2009. Services include discussions and/or demonstrations on various aspects of community gardening, ornamental gardening, environmental landscaping, and rainwater collection. Publications on horticulture topics have been distributed to an estimated 1,000 plus consumers through program year 2009. Newspaper articles, radio and TV horticulture programs reach a viewing audience of 2,070,000. In 2008 records show clientele spent 36.4 hours viewing web-based horticulture publications, and agents recruited over 4,500 volunteer hours valued at an estimated $80,000. Four grants were received to support program implementation and Extension staff conducted program sustaining plant sales with profits of an estimated $10,000.

The Horticulture Enterprises Program provides educational horticulture programs and demonstrations for small, limited income and urban commercial producers. 2008-09 programs include organic production, beekeeping, small fruits, shiitake mushrooms, rainwater collection, farmers’ markets and high tunnels. In 2008 organization meetings resulted in $75,000 in state and local funds to support a new farmers’ market that was established in Lawrence County. Success stories predict even bigger and better outcomes for fruit and vegetable growers in Alabama’s metro regions in 2009.
Mission Statement

The mission of Alabama Cooperative Extension System's Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs unit is to provide learning opportunities to meet the needs of all urban and nontraditional audiences with a specific focus on limited resource families, under-served audiences, individuals, and small enterprises.

Program Goals 2005 - 2009

1. Improve the general health of Alabama's urban population by conducting food safety, health, and nutrition programs to empower high-risk families, individuals, and underserved audiences to pursue healthy lifestyles and select, prepare, and consume a safe and healthy diet.
2. Implement an urban youth initiative to promote urban youth development by providing personal development, leadership, and service-learning programs designed to empower youth to reach their fullest potential as positive and contributing members of an economically and socially diverse society.
3. Examine the state of Alabama’s new and nontraditional families and provide programs and information that promote the social, economic, and cultural growth and development of families and individuals across the lifecycle.
4. Strengthen family-centered communities through capacity building efforts that target communities and organizations engaged in revitalization, workforce and economic development, and community building through diverse populations.
5. Strengthen the capacity of adults, youth, and seniors to establish consumer goals, maintain economic security, and become engaged proactively in public policy decisions related to consumer and personal money management issues.
6. Promote urban and nontraditional horticulture and animal and environmental sciences by helping citizens to make informed decisions, to explore new and alternative production systems and services, and to manage agricultural and environmental issues where urban/rural communities interface.
7. Capitalize on the value-added benefits of technology integration to expand the capability to address diverse educational needs, offer enhanced access to educational resources, and respond to issues related to the digital divide.
8. Design and implement a marketing plan to increase the visibility of Extension's urban programs and Urban Centers as viable outreach efforts that target urban, new, and nontraditional audiences.

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