Helping Students Balance School & Work
By Dr. Delores Price, Professor, Alabama A&M University

Most people have been affected in some way by our recessionary economy. Families with school-aged children have been particularly impacted by rising costs in food, clothing, fuel, and other consumer goods; and even loss of employment. In 2008, the Monthly Labor Review reported roughly 24 percent of youth aged 16-19 as attending school and working. In 2009, school costs such as cafeteria meals, supplies and fees, clothing, textbooks, and tuition may force even more high school and college students to work.

Increased Academic Requirements in High School and College

Along with the changes in the economy, students have more rigorous academic requirements for graduation. High school students need money but also the time to prepare for required classes for admission to college. Even more immediately, they must pass senior exit exams and other graduation requirements. Since the 1980s, more states have increased the number of courses required to graduate high school. Additionally, an increasing number of students are taking advanced courses and placement (AP) exams.

College students must satisfy increased college graduation requirements and state mandated exams as well. The state of Alabama requires that teacher education candidates pass the Praxis II exam before being granted a teacher certification. Young people are also finding that community service is required to receive scholarships and admission to college.

Back-to-School Safety Tips
By Jerry Chenault, Urban Regional Extension Agent

With all the talk about safety at schools these days you would think that violence would be the main cause of concern for parents of school-age children. However, the truth is that school-age kids are nine times more likely to sustain an unintentional injury on the playground or in school than to become a victim of violence. What can you do to make sure your child isn’t counted among the 2.2 million children that are injured at school each year?

To keep your child safe, the National SAFE KID Campaign, the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and the American Academy of Pediatrics offer these safety tips.

Traveling to and from School
- Plan a walking route with your child to get them to and from school and/or the bus stop safely. Be especially mindful of intersections.
- Teach your children to avoid and to identify strangers. Be specific about who is considered to be a stranger.
- Make sure your child does not walk to school alone.
- Make sure your child knows how to obey traffic laws and crossing guards whether they are walking or riding a bike.
- Use a helmet to protect your child’s head if they ride a bike to school. No one ever said that bicycle helmets look “cool,” but they can save your child’s life.
- Teach your child to wait for the bus to fully stop before they enter the road. Also, teach them about a driver’s blind spot.
- Tell your child not to bend down in front of the bus to tie shoes or to pick up objects because the driver may not see them and start to move.
- Help your child to memorize your home phone number and address. They also need to know how to dial 9-1-1 for help. Role-play calling 911.

(continued on page 3)
When was the last time you and your teenager had a face to face conversation? Text messaging has become more prevalent and replaced some formal communication. According to the Nielsen Company, teen mobile subscribers in the United States (US) between the ages of 13-17 now send or receive an average of 1,742 text messages per month in comparison to receiving 231 mobile phone calls. So, what is text messaging?

Text messaging is the way to communicate on your mobile phone by receiving plain text messages. Text messaging is through a communication protocol called SMS that stands for Short Message Service. SMS allows messages to be sent via cell phone with a limitation of 160 characters. Nielsen Company research concluded that about 200 million of the 259 million wireless subscriber lines in the US subscribe to or purchase text-messaging capabilities. Of these, 138 million send text-messages on a regular basis (Covey, 2008). For quick communication, teens are using codes such as LOL (laugh out loud), CU l8r (see you later), and wuz4dina (what’s for dinner). Other popular text terms include:

- **U** - You
- **BRB** - Be right back
- **VBG** - Very big grin
- **B4N** - Bye for now
- **J/K** - Just kidding
- **THK** - Thanks
- **TTYL** - Talk to you later
- **K** - Ok
- **NM** - Not much
- **4U2C** - For you to see
- **POS** - Parents over shoulder
- **GTG** - Got to go
- **NP** - Nosy parents or No problem
- **RBTL** - Read between the lines
- **TYVM** - Thank you very much

(Source: www.netlingo.com)

Parents are encouraged to keep the lines of communication open with your teen and to stress safety when using a cell phone. Even if you do not know how to text, encourage your teen to help you. Teens are more likely to respond to a text message from parents versus a phone call because it is more discreet. So, the next time your teen texts you, “Wuz4dina?” Reply with, “VBG, lftovrs.”

(continued from page 1)

**Helping Students Balance School & Work**

**Tips to Help Students Balance School and Work**

- Establish the mindset that school comes first.
- Let your employer know that your work schedule must revolve around school.
- Study as you commute to school whether by school bus, carpool, or public transportation.
- Buy a school organizer planner and use it.
- Stay abreast of assignments and test dates.
- Inform teachers and school officials that you work.
- Link community service to school and church whenever possible.
- Take time to eat, sleep, and relax.
Helping Students Balance School & Work (continued from page 2)

Hours Students May Work
A work schedule of more than 20 hours a week may be a health risk for full-time students. If a student arrives to class or work in a sleep-deprived state, it is not only unproductive but can be dangerous. Students and employers must comply with the hourly restrictions in place during the school year. Youth working in retail, fast food, or commercial enterprises under age 16 cannot work past 7:00 p.m. when school is in session. Youth under age 19 cannot work past 10 p.m. on school nights if enrolled in school. Some studies have shown that students who work 30 hours a week or more are at-risk for dropping out of school.

Ways for Parents to Monitor and Support Working Students
◘ Get a copy of the school handbook with the yearly calendar.
◘ Go online to look at your child’s grades or go to school and review grades.
◘ E-mail or telephone your child’s teachers.
◘ Look at the school website and/or marquee for major dates and events.
◘ Review the homework hotline.
◘ Meet your child’s principal, teachers, and immediate work supervisor.
◘ Keep a current phone number, address, and supervisor’s name with your child’s work schedule.

Rewards for Student Workers
The combination of school and work can be a challenging endeavor. But the work experiences gained in youth employment help develop character and contribute to growth and maturity. Student income also supplements family finances. Motivated students develop organization and good study and work habits. Student employers do allow flexibility in scheduling work hours. Wise employers guide and mentor students for future employment. Consequently, with support from parents, school officials, and employers, students can successfully develop and maintain a healthy balance between school and work.

Back-to-school Safety Tips (continued from page 1)

On the Playground
◘ Check the playground at school for broken, rusted, or dangerous items such as missing bolts, glass, or loose boards. Inform the school if necessary. Also, make sure there is a thick layer of a soft playing surface covering the ground like sand, bark mulch, ground-up rubber pieces, or pea gravel for protection from falls. More than 200,000 kids are injured on playgrounds and treated at emergency rooms as a result of falls.

Keep drawstrings on jacket hoods and sweatshirts short to avoid getting them caught in playground equipment.
◘ Make sure equipment like soccer goals are anchored down to avoid tripping a child.
◘ Teach your child not to push or crowd others since this behavior causes accidents.

Other Safety Tips
◘ Make sure your child’s backpack is not too heavy.
◘ Check window blind cords at home and at school to avoid child entanglement.
◘ Install a permanent tie-down mechanism on vertical blinds, continuous loop systems, or drapery cords rather than cutting looped cords.
◘ Watch for signs of bullying at school. Experts say that 1 in 2 children will be bullied at school or on the way home. More than 160,000 children miss school every day due to fear of physical harm. Also, be sure to help your child develops bully-coping strategies. Try to instill confidence in your child because confident children are less likely to be a bully target.

Benefits of Volunteering in Community Gardens
By Michael McIntyre, Urban Regional Extension Agent

A group of children recently volunteered to establish a community garden in Mobile County, Alabama. At the end of the project they asked about the benefits of their action? This is a question that prompted me to look further into the benefits of being a volunteer, particularly in gardening.

A volunteer is someone who offers their time and talents to helping others with no expectation of pay or other material benefits. In community gardening, once the land has been acquired, there is a need to find a few good community volunteers to start preparing the soil for planting. Since there are challenges in getting volunteers, it is important for first-time volunteers to have a good initial experience. For example, consider
More than 26,000 people of all ages and backgrounds in Alabama are involved in national service projects.

Volunteerism: Service-Learning for Socially Conscious Teens
By Karen Nanton, Graduate Assistant

The American legacy of volunteerism has taken a front row seat since former Illinois Senator Barack Obama became the forty-fourth president of the United States. President Obama caught the interest of adolescents, adults, and the young at heart during his presidential campaign that included a call for community involvement. As recently as March 31, 2009, the President commemorated the legacy of Cesar Chavez’s work as an educator, environmentalist, and a civil rights leader who struggled for fair treatment and wages for American workers. However, the term volunteerism has evolved among groups of volunteer and service programs into the revelation of a profound measure of community service preferably termed service-learning that is intertwined with social justice activities.

Volunteerism is the willingness of people to work on behalf of others without being motivated by financial or material gain. According to volunteer expert John Wilson (2000), “Volunteering is any activity in which time is given freely to benefit another person, group or cause. Volunteering is part of a cluster of helping behaviors, entailing more commitment than spontaneous assistance but narrower in scope than the care provided to family and friends.”

Although developed independently, the study of volunteerism and the study of social activism have much in common: they are easily incorporated with currently used forms of social justice and public involvement called service-learning. Service-learning is a highly acceptable form of social justice education.

Service-learning and social justice education evolved during the civil rights era when according to Butin, “Both were committed to engaged empowerment; both cognizant of unequal distributions of power, privilege, and knowledge.”

These two forms of community involvement spotlight what teens across the nation are learning about volunteerism in their classrooms and the communities they serve. As a result, service-learning and social justice education are linked to major federal funding through programs like Learn and Serve America funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS). Learn and Serve America recruits American children and youth by integrating community service projects with classroom learning. These programs and methods of service-learning education introduce teens to the world around them. It teaches young people to be active and to make a decision to serve others from the mind set of providing social justice.

In the state of Alabama, the CNCS provides 14,000 Alabama students with grants through schools and non-profit organizations to facilitate community services, incorporated with academic achievement and the development of civic skills through this type of service-learning. The CNCS has reported that more than 26,000 people of all ages and backgrounds in Alabama are involved in 88 national service projects in Alabama from tutoring and mentoring students to building homes, restoring the environment, or responding to natural or man-made disasters.

Finally, researchers Hollander and Burack (2009) have noted that, “Understanding the process of civic engagement includes understanding the effect that poverty, race, and school environments have on civic organizing and the development of a young person’s civic identity.”

The association between educational attainment and civic engagement is clear and positive: education is associated with higher levels of civic participation. There seems to be general agreement among educators that being engaged civicly is a ‘good thing’ and an important part of our democracy.
Benefits of Volunteering in Community Gardens

providing water and snacks. Secondly, make the volunteer process more fun than work oriented. Thirdly, inform community members about why the garden is being established. The word will spread and eventually, more people will get involved in the effort.

A volunteer is someone who offers their time and talents to helping others with no expectation of pay or other material benefits. In community gardening, once the land has been acquired, there is a need to find a few good community volunteers to start preparing the soil for planting. Since there are challenges in getting volunteers, it is important for first-time volunteers to have a good initial experience. For example, consider providing water and snacks. Secondly, make the volunteer process more fun than work oriented. Thirdly, inform community members about why the garden is being established. The word will spread and eventually, more people will get involved in the effort.

There are numerous benefits that can be attained from community gardening. Volunteers exercise while gardening, thus promote healthy lifestyles. A study funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health (1991) found that volunteering can improve self-esteem, reduce high blood pressure, combat social isolation, reduce the impact of stress, and change the body's immune system. Implied is a small farm, the tendency generally is to start small.

The learning opportunities in volunteering are also tremendous because people with diverse skills come together and share their experiences. For instance, someone who is skilled in carpentry may teach another volunteer how to nail the timber together, while a volunteer that is knowledgeable about plants can share his or her expertise with the carpenter.

The National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating found that 76 percent of volunteer respondents reported an improvement in interpersonal skills. An additional 66 percent said they improved their communication skills, and 64 percent said they increased their knowledge about issues relating to health, women, the environment, and politics when volunteering.

Volunteering in gardening definitely helps youth to become involved in community service and to stay away from drugs and other adverse activities. When students are involved in volunteer work, they are less likely to engage in risky behavior such as using drugs or skipping school.

So, whenever you are called upon to serve your community, consider investing your time and energy in creating and maintaining a community garden. Contact Michael McIntyre at 334-259-1265 or mmm0001@aces.edu if you would like to volunteer for a community garden in the Mobile area.

Good Table Manners: Who Cares?

By Judy Edmond, Urban Regional Extension Agent

Today, it seems that society has strayed from the courtesies that show we are caring human beings. Good manners are not just rules of etiquette, but also involve socially acceptable behavior. Etiquette is rules of behavior that can be memorized, and they are an expression of how you treat others when you care about their feelings.

Good manners create a sense of poise and grace. Knowing the how, what, where, when, and why of social graces can give us a sense of security. In other words, manners are not just tools for social success or special activities. They incorporate behavior that should be practiced in our daily lives until they become routine. For example, good table manners instill confidence and if dining with a potential boss, could be a factor in obtaining the job you desire.

(continued on page 7)
Managing Electronic Waste with a Little R, R, & R: Reducing, Reusing and Recycling
By Dr. Jannie Carter, Extension Assistant Director

E-Waste is defined as discarded, broken, or surplus electronic products that no longer function or have approached the end of their usefulness. The average life for electronic gadgets is rapidly decreasing as technology continues to advance and new products are introduced. Consumers purchase electronics such as cell phones, computers, DVD players, televisions, and other devices regularly to keep up with the latest trends and to stay connected with computer-based services. The result of this behavior is a massive stockpile of equipment that’s left for disposal. Broad estimates by researchers predict that by 2010 there will be more than 700 million new computers in use, more than tripling estimates from five years ago. Globally, millions of tons of old and obsolete electronics are discarded annually and the United States is one of the largest producers of e-waste.

So what’s a consumer to do to help manage this growing waste issue? Organizations that promote electronic product management are encouraging us to reduce, reuse, and recycle. Reducing waste starts with making good initial purchases. Consumers can help tremendously to minimize or reduce waste by seeking out responsible manufacturers that produce high quality, low maintenance electronic products that are environmentally friendly. Items that are no longer useful for an intended purchase, but are still in good condition can often be refurbished for other uses and be donated. And for those items that are no longer useful, there are organizations within Alabama, in the Southern region, and across the nation, such as the Environmental Protection Agency and E-Cycling Central that can assist with recycling or discarding procedures.

Disposing of electronic devices is not as simple as one might think since disposal and recycling laws continue to evolve. Some electronic components contain harmful chemicals that if improperly disposed of can create serious health hazards. Mercury, lead, cadmium, brominated flame retardants, and hexavalent chromium are among the toxins commonly found in e-waste. Breathing or coming in physical contact with these chemical elements that may be exposed at unsafe levels through spillage or broken electronic devices can cause adverse health effects. Moreover, there is the risk of soil and water contamination from improper disposal in waste processing facilities and landfills.

Learning about these hazardous substances and how they contaminate our environment and our food and water supplies will help prepare us to recycle and properly dispose of these products. For more information on e-waste, see the online version of this article at http://www.aces.edu/urban/metronews.

E-waste Fact
The United States is one of the largest producers of e-waste.
Internet Shopping: What About Warranties
By Dr. Bernice Wilson, Extension Resource Management Specialist

Internet shopping has been growing by leaps and bounds in recent years. It is often referred to as electronic commerce or e-commerce, and it can be done 24 hours a day, seven days a week with the proper computer capabilities. But whether you are shopping online or in person, as a consumer you are protected by certain laws. These laws are referred to as the legal rights of consumers.

A right is having a benefit, a choice, or a claim to something with the expectancy of being treated in a certain way. Economist E. T. Garman (2006) wrote that the rights of consumers are important because they empower people to protect themselves in the economic marketplace. He stated that consumers have three types of legal rights: (1) implied warranties made in the sale of a product whether expressed in writing or orally, (2) express warranties that are contractual in that the product is assured and states under what condition a product is to be returned, replaced, or repaired, and (3) statutory rights provided in the details of written laws and regulations. Many consumer product warranties are governed under the federal Magnusson-Moss Warranty Act enacted in 1975.

In a past study on in-store shopping, researchers Lwin and Williams (2006) suggested that warranties are an excellent way to reduce a customer's perceived risk. Warranties can also make a positive difference for reputable online retailers in respect to a consumer's "perceived risk, perceived product quality, and purchase intentions." They believe it is necessary to understand how Internet businesses portray quality to Internet shoppers about their online products. Internet shoppers can then use this information to make wise shopping decisions since online shopping does not allow consumers to examine merchandise prior to purchase.

According to the Computerworld article E-commerce sales to boom for next 5 years by Linda Rosencrance (2008), online retail sales in the United States are expected to grow about $20-30 billion annually over the next five years, and reach $215 to $335 billion by 2012.

"When consumers make buying decisions, they adopt different risk reduction strategies, which impact their actual buying behavior. Thus, consumers are less likely to shop on the Internet if they are unable to adopt an effective means of reducing perceived risk," stated Lwin and Williams (2006). Risk relievers depend on the brand name, a retailer's reputation, and the website warranty information. However, online shoppers do not necessarily consider website warranties to be an important factor when purchasing brand name items.

While warranties are viewed as a risk reliever and one that public policy makers have embraced for non-Internet environments, additional legislation is needed to put consumers at ease as electronic commerce continues to grow (Lwin and Williams, 2006). Therefore, until such legislation has been put in place to provide further protection, consumers should exercise caution when shopping online. In the event a product does not perform satisfactory or meet their expectation, they may have to seek other remedies to obtain customer satisfaction.

Good Table Manners: Who Cares?
(continued from page 5)

Here are some general rules and manners to remember when dining out.

- Place your napkin on your lap as soon as everyone is seated. If the napkin is large, fold and place the open edge facing you.
- Utensils are used from the outside in, and any utensils above your plate are for dessert.
- Food is passed or served by the person at the head of the table. Food is passed in a counterclockwise movement around the table. Solid foods go on your left and liquids go on your right.
- Do not reach across someone to get what you like. Ask the person nearest the item to "please" pass it to you, and say "thank you" after you receive it.
- When serving yourself, take modest portions of food.
- Adding sauces and spices to food can be ill-mannered.
- Cut your meat one piece at a time (no more than three).
- Eat quietly with your mouth closed.
- Don't eat too fast. Don't wash your food down.
- Use your utensils properly and don't stab your food.
- Rest your knife on the rim of the plate of the plate while you are eating. the place setting.
- Never wad the napkin and place it on the table.

Visit http://www.aces.edu for more information on social manners.
Savannah Low Fat Stewed Chicken & Rice

1 tsp salt
1/2 tsp salt or salt substitute
1 stalk of celery
1 full onion
3 sprigs of green onions (scallions)
1 boneless chicken parts or 4 chicken breasts
1/2 tsp pepper
1/2 tsp oil
1/4 cup of garlic powder
2 cups of water
1 cup of brown rice

Clean the chicken thoroughly. Take skin off chicken and cut up into stew-size pieces. Place chicken in large bowl and cover with water. Sprinkle a tsp of salt over chicken and let stand for 15 minutes. Pour water off chicken and rinse. Remove and discard fat and other parts you don’t like. Pat chicken dry with paper towel. Mix chicken, salt, garlic powder, and pepper in a bowl. Cut up small pieces of onion and scallions (green onion) and place in separate container. Cut celery on a slant about ½ inches and place in another small container.

Add oil and chicken to large deep skillet or pot with a lid. Cook on medium heat until chicken browns on both sides. Remove chicken from skillet and place on a plate, then sauté onions and scallions in skillet. After two minutes, place celery and chicken in the pot on top of the onions. Slowly add two cups of water to the pot and let boil for three minutes while you stir, removing any onions from the bottom of the skillet. Place lid on pot or skillet, turn down heat, and let simmer for 45 minutes. If you require more liquid after 20 minutes, add clear low-sodium chicken broth or water and season to taste.

Cook brown rice according to package instructions. Let dish cool for 3 minutes, then place chicken on plate of brown rice and serve.

Savannah Ambrosia Salad

1 lb of low fat small curd cottage cheese
1 8 oz container of sugar-free whip cream
1 3-oz box of gelatin mix
1/2 carrot (optional)
1 11-oz can of mandarin oranges
1 can of pineapple chunks
1 cup of chopped walnuts

Dissolve gelatin mix in boiling water and chill. Drain oranges and pineapple chunks. Combine cottage cheese, fruit, carrots, walnuts, and whip cream in large bowl. Chill for 1 hour. Serve cold.
Census 2010: Be Counted in Your Community
By Wendi Williams, Editor & Extension Communications Specialist

Census 2010 is just right around the corner and I imagine that many Americans have mixed feelings about completing this document. For some people, it has served as a link to finding an ancestor, while others may view it as a painful reminder about how much a household can change in a decade. Nonetheless, every person living in this country must be counted every ten years as mandated by the United States Constitution regardless of citizenship status.

April 1, 2010, is Census Day! The United States Census Bureau plans to send every residence a questionnaire in the mail by March 2010, but this one will be different for several reasons.

- The 2010 survey only contains 10 questions, making it the shortest census since the process first began in 1790.
- The average time to complete the document is estimated at 10 minutes. However, the truth is that fewer people in the household means less time in completing the survey since every person must be counted that is living in your household on April 1.
- This document will be available in both English and Spanish for the first time. Individuals can also request a copy in Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and the Russian languages as well.

Why is the census important?

- More than $400 billion in federal funds are paid to states based on the information you provide in the census. State funds then trickle down to local governments.
- Census data is important in planning for, and improving the nation’s infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, schools, or other public service systems.
- Many social service organizations like the Alabama Cooperative Extension System rely on census data to determine the needs of its audiences and the number of clients it has to serve, particularly in helping underserved or low-income populations.

The census actually controls how many representatives a state can send to Congress.

So, the next time you moan and groan about completing another census questionnaire, just remember your community is counting on you. Besides, it’s the law! For more information, visit http://2010.census.gov/2010census/.

Contributors
Jannie Carter, PhD, Extension Assistant Director, Alabama A&M University
Jerry Chenault, Urban Regional Extension Agent, Lawrence County Extension Office
Judy Edmond, Urban Regional Extension Agent, Madison County Extension Office
Michael McIntyre, Urban Regional Extension Agent, Mobile County Extension Office
Karen Nanton, Graduate Assistant, Alabama A&M University
Kimberly Burgess-Neloms, Extension Youth Development & Volunteerism Specialist, Alabama A&M University
Delores Price, PhD, Professor, Alabama A&M University
Rosalie Lane, Retired Extension Specialist
Wendi Williams, Editor & Extension Communications Specialist, Alabama A&M University
Bernice Wilson, PhD, Extension Resource Management Specialist, Alabama A&M University

Metro News Editorial Team - Alabama A&M University
Jannie Carter, PhD, Extension Assistant Director, Urban Affairs
Julio Correa, PhD, Associate Professor & Extension Animal Scientist
Jean Dwyer, MS, Extension Communications Specialist (Website Design)
Carol Parham, MS, Event Planner
Catherine Sabota, PhD, Professor & Extension Horticulturalist
Wendi Williams, MS, Editor & Extension Communications Specialist (Newsletter Design)

Metro News is a quarterly newsletter published by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System’s Urban Affairs & New Nontraditional Programs unit at Alabama A&M University. Please visit us online at www.aces.edu/urban/metronews. The online HTML version of this publication contains a complete listing of article references. For inquiries, please contact the editor at 256-372-4953 or williw1@aces.edu.