Direct Line

Since our last Extension Connections, I have had the opportunity to visit with a number of our retired Extension professionals. This dynamic group continues to support our educational efforts. Most of these folks haven’t slowed down just because they have retired.

I thanked them for the solid foundations of effective programs that they provided us and the citizens of the state. I promised them that these traditions would be a key element as we design viable, sustainable Extension program efforts for the future.

Many Extension retirees continue to work with our programs as volunteers, providing much needed expertise. For example, Tony Dozier and Shelton Hawsey, both retired 4-H specialists, are critical members of the team that ensures the State Forestry Judging contest goes smoothly each year.

Another retiree who continued to work with Extension and young people was Joe Ann Arthur, the former Clarke County Extension coordinator. Her sudden death recently shocked and saddened us all. She will be missed by her family and the entire Extension family.

Hearty congratulations to Jim Hairston, John Beck and the rest of the Extension team that helped make the recent Water Quality Conference a success! Almost 200 water quality professionals attended the eighth biennial Southern Region Water Quality Conference Oct. 28 to 31 in Gulf Shores.

The conference is an outgrowth of the Southern Region Extension Water Quality Coordinators Planning Committee. The committee’s aim is to strengthen the effectiveness of Extension educational programs relating to water quality, waste management and natural resource programs.

Some of you may have noticed the link to the Hispanic/Latino Initiative on the System home page. Diego Gimenez in Animal and Dairy Science and John Hartley in Computer Technology put a lot of effort into developing the Initiative Web site. It looks great and has garnered praise from Spanish language broadcast professionals with Extension at the University of California.

Also, we now have a Property Exchange System available on the Web thanks to the hard work of Richard Feuerriegel in Computer Technology. You reach the PE System via the ACES Intranet link on the home page.

We have had some traveling folks recently. Gary Murray and a group of county agents and Master Gardeners from the northeast side of the state toured Gulfport, Miss., and Mobile and Baldwin counties. Mississippi Extension professionals and Master Gardeners started a Horticulture Hotline similar to the Northeast Alabama Hotline after a visit to Etowah County. Also, Tom Daugherty and Jim Todd have set up a hotline for Mobile and Baldwin counties as well based on the Northeast Alabama Hotline. That hotline, which is manned by Master Gardener volunteers, serves eight counties and answered more than 2,300 calls this growing season.

These hotlines are an excellent way of expanding our program reach by using volunteers. As Gary told me, it frees up agents to work with farmers and commercial producers. I understand that several other counties are considering beginning similar efforts. My hat is off to all those folks who currently work with the Horticulture Hotlines and those who are planning to start their own!

As the holiday season fast approaches, I offer my thanks for all of your hard work and dedication to the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. I know that the important work of Extension could not be accomplished without each of you. Thank you again for your commitment to this organization, its ideals and its programs.

I offer my best wishes to each of you and to your families as you celebrate this holiday season. The holidays should refresh all of our spirits and enable us to tackle the challenges of 2002 with renewed vigor.

Happy Holidays!
Program Highlight: Urban Programs Touching Lives

All too often, young people, particularly young women, cannot visualize themselves in a highly technical field or even a well-paying job. These teens need access to adults who can open their eyes to the scope of careers available. The question is How do we bring the two groups together?

Rosalind James, Houston County urban Extension agent, saw the potential in some type of career fair. From that idea, the Youth Career Summits were born.

“The summits were created in response to a shortage of women in technical careers, especially aviation, information technology and allied health,” says James. “The key objectives of the summits are to provide students education on well-paying careers, to identify careers where jobs are available, and to give students practical career information.”

The first summit held in September 2000 reached more than 500 students. When Jannie Carter, Extension state program leader for urban programs, saw the success of that summit, she encouraged other urban county Extension agents to initiate summits in their counties.

This fall Youth Career Summits were held in Houston, Madison and Mobile counties. They brought together young people and adults working in fields such as health and medicine, aviation and aerospace, and engineering. More than 1,000 young women attended the three summits.

“These enriched educational forums were designed to give female students, especially those who have little or no future career plans, insight into technical career opportunities and training programs,” says Edna Coleman, Extension youth specialist.

During the summits, students attended career clusters where they met with successful individuals working in that career area. These role models discussed their careers, needed skills and training and answered questions.

“Career summits like these encourage young people to dream and see the possibilities within themselves,” says Rosalie Lane, Extension educator, housing and urban community resource development. “Sometimes, young people just need a little encouragement from successful adults to realize they can be successful as well.”

In addition to panel discussions where students engaged professionals in dialogues, students visited with college and technical program representatives for information on applications and financial aid.

Amanda Outlaw, Mobile County urban Extension agent, says program evaluations indicate the summits were highly successful.

All of the Youth Career Summits enjoyed wide support within their individual communities. Partnerships with a diverse group of organizations, both public and private, helped ensure the success of the summits.

Additional summits are planned for the future. A summit targeting teenage boys has already been slated for February 2002 in Houston County.

Annual Family Conference Successful Again

More than 150 professionals who work with families and children attended the Third Annual Family Conference held this fall on the Alabama A&M University campus.

“Attendance has grown every year, and I think people have a growing awareness of the Urban Family Network,” says Wilma Ruffin, Extension family and human development specialist. “While we have enhanced our marketing, recommendations from people who have attended in the past have boosted attendance as well. You know you’re doing something right when your audience is encouraging others to attend.”

The conference’s goal is to provide the latest educational content on issues impacting children and families.

“Families are in crisis and need all the resources possible,” says Bernice Wilson, Extension urban specialist in resource management. “This conference puts research-based materials in the hands of those who will be assisting these families.”

Wilson also adds she has seen a change in attitudes among the professionals attending about the type of educational materials made available.

“Early on, some did not see the value of particular materials—consumer education, for example,” says Wilson. “But we have helped the professionals realize that so much impacts a family’s quality of life that apparently diverse resource materials can be extremely helpful.”
Wilson believes that by enhancing the available resources, the Family Conference has a real and positive effect on the lives of many citizens.

**Auburn University Now Offering Tuition Break**

Dependents and spouses of Auburn University faculty and staff will be able to attend Auburn for half price when spring semester starts Jan. 8. The tuition benefit also applies to ACES employees who are Auburn-affiliated.

The benefit will amount to $815 per semester for eligible dependents and spouses taking 10 to 15 hours. Those who receive scholarships administered by the Office of Student Financial Aid will see the university’s match for tuition reduced by the amount of the scholarship.

The Office of Student Financial Aid will certify eligibility. To establish eligibility, the office will ask each applying faculty or staff member to produce a birth certificate for each dependent student or a marriage license for a spouse. Other documents may be requested in some circumstances, such as adoption. In most cases, the office will use the same requirements used to determine eligibility of dependents and spouses for the AU health insurance plan.

Application forms are available at the Office of Student Financial Aid in Martin Hall and at the office’s web site.

The Bursar’s Office has issued bills to students for the first installment on the spring semester tuition. AU Bursar Fred Bobo said persons anticipating the tuition waiver should pay the full amount of the first installment by the Dec. 14 due date. The adjustment will show up on the December bill, when most of the eligible students will owe little or nothing.

Students will need to apply only once for the benefit. After that, they are recorded in the system, and future adjustments will be automatic. In addition, future bills will reflect the tuition discount when they are mailed.

For further information, contact Bobo or Nina Goodman in the Bursar’s Office or Mike Reynolds in Financial Aid.

**System Extramural Funding Awards**

Contracts and grants play a growing role in program funding within Extension. But winning any type of extramural funding requires additional work on the part of Extension professionals.

The System Extramural Funding Awards were created to recognize the work and initiative of these people. A dozen $1,000 cash awards are given yearly to staff who generate new and continued funding. Four of these awards are designated for on-campus recipients while the remaining eight awards go to off-campus recipients.

On-campus winners are Ellen Abell, Human Development and Family Studies; Wheeler Foshee, Entomology; Kathleen Tajeu, Community Resource Development; and Jean Weese, Nutrition and Food Science.

Eight county agents are also being recognized for their grantsmanship. They are Mary Baltikauksi, Geneva County; Willie Durr, Covington County; Jeannie Hollinger, Clarke County; Sally Lide-Hooker, Perry County; Helen Herndon-Jones, Bibb County; Elaine Shields, Choctaw County; Marilee Tankersley, Elmore County; and Gail White, Crenshaw County.

Congratulations to all, and thank you for your efforts in securing additional monies to support important Extension programs.

**Extension Assists Hispanic/Latino Population**

By Jim Langcuster

Just like other immigrants, Alabama’s emerging Hispanic/Latino population will make positive and lasting contributions to the state’s economic and social life, but like all newcomers, they will need help adapting to their new surroundings, says one expert.

“Hispanic/Latino immigrants will play a vital role in Alabama’s cultural and economic life – in fact, they already are,” says Diego Gimenez, Extension animal scientist who also serves as Extension’s Hispanic/Latino coordinator. “But the faster their integration into mainstream life takes place, the quicker all of us will begin reaping these benefits.”

Like all newcomers, Hispanics/Latinos face the usual challenges of learning a new language and adapting to a new culture.

This, Gimenez says, explains why public agencies such as the Cooperative Extension System are redoubling efforts to help Hispanics/Latinos assimilate into the mainstream.
For their part, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and other Extension offices around the country are providing a wide array of Spanish-language educational materials dealing with issues such as how to obtain proper medical care, how to shop wisely and how to care for many of life’s basic needs.

Many of these publications can be accessed through the Alabama Cooperative Extension System’s Web site at www.aces.edu. The Urban Affairs link also offers a bilingual newsletter and links to publications written in Spanish for citizens who have not made the transition from Spanish to the English language. These publications can be accessed directly at www.aces.edu/urban. The Alabama Extension site also links to other Spanish-language publications developed by other state Extension offices throughout the country.

Extension agents throughout Alabama already are providing these materials to Hispanic/Latino clients who need help assimilating into Alabama’s cultural life. Agents are also working with communities to establish diversity councils through System projects designed to help citizens manage language and cultural differences. Dony Gapasin, lead specialist for Extension’s Valuing Differences and Managing Diversity project, says “It’s important that we remember the strength of diversity and try to eliminate barriers that will inhibit citizens from reaching their potential.”

Working with the Governor’s Office on National and Community Service and the Alabama Latin-American Association, Extension and other agencies are focusing more attention on the expanding roles Hispanics/Latinos play in the state’s social and economic life.

Recently, Alabama Gov. Don Siegelman signed a proclamation recognizing November 2001 as Hispanic Community Recognition Month to “celebrate the contributions and rich culture of the Hispanic community.”

“Without these partnerships and the governor’s close cooperation, a focused, coordinated effort toward assisting Hispanic assimilation into Alabama’s cultural and economic life would have been far more difficult,” Gimenez says.

Since 1990 the Hispanic community in Alabama has grown 207 percent. An estimated 15,166 families of Hispanic origin represent more than 23 different countries.

Search for Associate Director Continues

The search process is under way for the associate director for rural and traditional programs. This position provides critical leadership for Extension programs targeted to rural and traditional audiences.

The search committee met three times and after thorough deliberation and discussion, narrowed the field to four candidates who will be invited to interview in January.

Candidates, interview dates and locations will be announced when details are finalized.

The search committee, chaired by Barbara Duncan, Extension associate director for human resources, will make their recommendations in late January or early February. Other committee members are Beth Atkins, assistant director for development; Valerie Conner, Autauga County Extension coordinator; Julio Correa, Extension animal scientist; Tommy Elliott, Extension chief financial officer; Richard Feuerriegel, Extension information technology master specialist; Wayne Ford, Tuscaloosa County Extension coordinator; Diego Gimenez, Extension animal scientist; George Tabb, Montgomery County Extension agent; Kathleen Tajeu, Extension community health specialist; and Mazie Wilson, multicounty Extension agent, EFNEP.

PERSONNEL

Kudos:

- Congratulations to Judy Manley, Lee County Administrative Secretary, who received the Auburn University Employee of the Month Award for October.

- Congratulations to Danny Cain, Walker County Extension Agent. He has been selected to participate in Class VIII of the National Extension Leadership Development program.

- Congratulations to Wayne Ford, Tuscaloosa County Extension Coordinator. He recently received the 2001 Tuscaloosa County Father of the Year Award at a banquet sponsored by the Tuscaloosa County Cattlewomen’s Association.
Appointments:

- **Mark Otto**, Extension Specialist, Army School Age and Teen Project, Nov. 1
- **Charlotte Countryman**, Extension Office Administrative Secretary, Wiregrass Regional Research and Extension Center, Nov. 5
- **Christina Kirkland**, Extension Agent - NEP-Nutrition Education Program, Nov. 15
- **Fronda Bridgman**, County Extension Office Assistant, Jefferson County, Nov. 19

Retirements:

- **LaVerne Blount**, Extension Specialist Staff Community Development, effective Dec. 31. LaVerne leaves Extension after a career of more than 31 years. She worked as a home agent both in urban counties such as Tuscaloosa and Jefferson as well as in rural Clarke County. In 1991, she became the Mobile District agent, and for the last three years, she has worked at state headquarters in her current capacity.
- **Reafield Vester**, Houston County Extension Coordinator, effective Dec. 31. Almost 36 years ago, Reafield came to Houston County to work as a farm agent. He has served the citizens of Houston County faithfully since his appointment in 1966. For the last 15 years, he has guided the office by serving as county Extension coordinator.

ACES FAMILY HAPPENINGS

- Our condolences to **Aaron Biggers**, a work-study student who works for **Evelyn Crayton**. His father died Oct. 22. Aaron also worked in Communications for two years.
- Our sympathies to **Rene’ Ballard**, NEP Agent Assistant—Madison County. Her husband passed away Oct. 23.
- Congratulations to Jim and **Rachel Gray**, Secretary to Arlie Powell. They are the proud parents of Hunter Avery, born Nov. 5.
- Our condolences to the family of **Joe Ann Arthur**, retired Clarke County Extension Coordinator. She died Nov. 7. Joe Ann, who retired in 1999, served her entire 32-year Extension career in Clarke County.
- Our sympathies to the family of **Aaron Ashley** who died in November. He worked with Extension as a Post Doctorate Fellow in Animal Science during the 1990s and had earlier served as a Tuskegee Extension county agent in Lowndes County.
- Our sympathies to **Linda Sanford**, Administrative Assistant—Jefferson County, who lost her husband in November.

- Our thoughts are with **Wayne Robinson**, Lamar County Extension Agent, and his family. Wayne’s mother passed away Nov. 15.
- Our condolences to the family of **Lawrence Comer Alsobrook, Sr.**, who died Nov. 23. Alsobrook retired in 1978 after a 36-year career in Dallas County. During the last 13 years, he served as Dallas County Extension Coordinator.

Grants Awarded:

- **Martha Johnson**, USDA for Sustainability for the HPHC Initiative, $119,815
- **Mary Baltikauski**, Geneva City Board of Education for 4-H STEP-UP, $10,449
- **Melinda Luker**, Coosa County Board of Education for Coosa County Community Learning Center, $16,332
- **Elaine Alberson** and **Denise Shirley**, Alabama Department of Public Health for Alabama Community Abstinence Program, $36,000

Proposals Submitted:

- **Wanda Jurriaanns**, Appalachian Regional Commission for Master Entrepreneur Program for Talladega and Clay Counties, $11,368
- **Laura Booth** and **Barbara Mobley**, EPA for Alabama Asthma Education Training, $24,550
- **Mary Remenschneider** and **Jim Todd**, EPA for Eliminating Home Asthma Triggers, $149,975
- **Rick Wallace**, MASGC for Alabama Sea Grant Extension Program, $119,332
- **Wayne Brewer**, USDA/APHIS/PPQ for Gypsy Moth Survey, $48,700
- **Jeannie Hollinger** and **Carl Hughes**, Wilcox County Board of Education for Strong Youth Today/Strong Citizens Tomorrow, $15,000
- **Ronnie Lane** and **Melanie Allen**, Florence City Schools for After School Programming, $6,015

Gaines Smith, Interim Director