**Direct Line**

It’s easy for all of us to get so caught up in the mechanics of our jobs that we don’t notice the impact our efforts have on others.

Each of you is so focused on your programs as well as the necessary paperwork that’s a fact of life with our jobs that you may not stop long enough to see the results of your labors.

Here’s a little bit of a letter a parent recently sent to the Tallapoosa County office.

We want to express our gratitude for you having brought our daughter out of her shell and given her a big boost in self-esteem. I know she is not completely out of that shell but you have many years ahead to work on it. ... Once again, I take my hat off to each of you for what you are doing for the kids of Tallapoosa County and my children.

I want each of you to take some time every day to consider the positive effects you are having on the people you serve. That time can be the bright spot in a day that’s jam-packed with work.

As director, I often hear from folks who have something to say about ACES. Sometimes they’re unhappy about how we do things, but there are many times when folks write or call with a positive message.

Not long ago, I heard from John Henderson. Most of you remember John from his years of service with us as a soybean agronomist. Since he retired from ACES, he’s been busy at the Department of Agriculture and Industries.

Well, John dropped me a note saying how proud he was, as a former Extension worker himself, to see how well our organization works so effectively with other organizations. He concludes, “Thanks to dedicated workers, Extension is alive and well.”

John is right—Extension is alive and well because of each of you. Take time to remember how valuable you are to our organization.

Congratulations to Bob Collins of Shelby County and Blake Hindman of Fayette County. Bob won first place in the automotive contest, and Blake placed second in the lawn tractor contest at the 51st National 4-H Engineering, Science and Leadership Event in West Lafayette, Ind., in early October.

While I have no reason to believe our offices could be a target for bioterrorism, I encourage you to use caution when handling and opening your mail. Follow this link, Safety Tips for Handling Suspicious Mail, to learn more.

Also, be alert to any other suspicious or out-of-place events that might happen. Follow your judgement and that of co-workers, if available, in deciding to call appropriate security officials. Don’t overreact but don’t hesitate if there is real concern.

I just want to remind everyone to sign up for Statewide Major Programs and Extension Team Projects. You’ll find more about this in a separate article, but the deadline is Nov. 16.

Also, a new feature of the online version of Extension Connections is a button above my column. The button “Click Here for Printer Friendly Version” will allow you to print a hard copy of the entire issue. We have heard from several of you that this would be a big help.

As always, let me hear your highlights and your concerns.

[Signature]
Program Highlight: Master Gardeners
Transforming Alabama

The Alabama Master Gardener Volunteer Program could be compared to wisteria. Both are vigorous and hardy growers, and both can transform their surroundings.

The Master Gardener program introduces Cooperative Extension to a segment of the population that has previously had limited contact with or service from Extension. Master Gardener volunteers are partnering with Cooperative Extension and the land-grant universities to improve lives and communities in our state.

Mary Beth Musgrove, Extension horticulturist and state coordinator of Master Gardeners, says the program, which is active in about two-thirds of the state’s counties, develops gardeners into volunteers who are working hard to make their communities better places to live.

“Master Gardener volunteers play an important role in Extension’s mission,” says Musgrove.

As the Alabama landscape changes from predominately rural agriculture to rural-urban interfacing, county Extension agents can be overwhelmed with requests for home gardening and landscaping information.

Master Gardeners are trained and certified in research-based, cutting-edge horticultural practices. They not only become better gardeners and environmental stewards but also help county agents share important gardening information with others in their community.

How big an impact do Master Gardeners have statewide? More than 500 interns receive horticultural training and are certified in Alabama each year. Add to that more than 2,000 previously trained Master Gardeners contributing time, labor and a passion for sharing what they enjoy doing with others in the community, and you begin to see the impact Master Gardeners are making in our state.

Let’s consider the recent annual reports submitted by about half the counties with Master Gardener programs.

If we consider these reports in total for last year, new Master Gardeners worked more than 20,000 hours while veteran Master Gardeners contributed more than 50,000 work hours.

While these volunteers are most visible when at work on landscaping projects, they are making their marks on other areas of the community as well.

They provide a faster means of horticultural assistance to the general public. Master Gardener volunteers are now staffing Horticulture Hotline offices from March to October in two major areas of the state—an eight county area in northeast Alabama and Baldwin and Mobile counties in the Gulf Coast. This allows Extension agents greater time and flexibility to respond to commercial agricultural clientele.

Master Gardeners across the state work on projects to beautify highly visible civic landscapes that are worthy of their time. Master Gardeners also conduct civic club presentations, work at botanical gardens, and provide information at plant clinics, demonstration gardens, home and garden shows and community fairs. They write news articles and make visits to help home gardeners learn how to solve gardening problems. You will find them working with young people at schools and conducting horticultural therapy projects with the elderly, handicapped and first-time offender youths.

Master Gardeners Susie and Curtis Franklin from Calhoun County were awarded the Search for Excellence Award at the 2001 International Master Gardener Conference in Orlando, Fla. for their work with delinquent youth at the Coosa Valley Youth Services and Detention Center. David West, Calhoun County Extension coordinator, and Hayes Jackson, Calhoun County Extension agent, have worked with Master Gardeners on a grant to start a tree nursery where juveniles living at the boot camp have the opportunity to nurture tree seedlings that will be sold by the nursery to support the project. The Franklins admit, “At first, it was hard work to get these young people interested in growing trees and to learn respect for those in authority over them.” Now they say, a project once thought to simply help youngsters learn to grow trees, grew into a more valuable experience—the opportunity to mold lives as well.

In addition, the success of the program is highlighted by the development of similar programs in different subject areas including the Master Cattleman, the Master Tree Farmer and the Master Environmental Educator.
Commitment to Diversity Key to Continued Extension Success

Cooperative Extension has always been a trendsetter. In the earliest days, Extension took the research findings of universities and translated them into program efforts accessible to citizens of the state.

The landmark WorkForce 2000 study challenges the ability of public and private entities to compete unless they successfully employ “productive workers in a labor market characterized by ... demographic diversity.”

Successful delivery of educational programs and accountability to communities and citizens demand the Cooperative Extension System become a more diverse, inclusive organization.

Recognizing these basic facts, Extension is once again setting the pace with an expanded commitment to diversity and pluralism.

Diversity is defined as differences among people with respect to age, class, ethnicity, gender, physical and mental ability, race, sexual orientation, spiritual practices and other human differences.

Pluralism is defined as an organizational culture that incorporates mutual respect, acceptance, teamwork and productivity among people who are diverse in the dimensions of human differences listed above as diversity.

Since the Sub-Committee on Extension Diversity was established in 1990, it has led the way for the Cooperative Extension System’s movement toward achieving diversity and pluralism.

LaVerne Blount, Extension staff development and community programs educator, currently serves on this USDA committee.

You can learn more about the committee’s recommendations and diversity/pluralism issues by visiting the Web site at www.reeusda.gov/ecs/divers.htm.

2001 Superior and Length of Service Awards Luncheon Dec. 7

The System’s 2001 Superior and Length of Service Awards Luncheon is slated for 11 a.m., Dec. 7, at the State 4-H Center in Columbiana. Winners in five categories of the Superior Service Award will be announced as well as individuals recognized for their dedicated years to Extension.

Award recipients will be authorized travel expenses to attend the luncheon and may bring a guest. Extension employees not directly involved in the awards event may attend on official time, but travel will be at their own expense.

This is the second year for the Superior Service Awards. Winners within each of the four categories will receive $500. The Distinguished Career award is $700.

Sign Up for Statewide Major Programs and Extension Team Projects Online

The time has rolled around again to sign up for Extension Team Projects (ETP) and Statewide Major Programs (SMP). All employees of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System are required to sign up for SMPs and ETPs. The deadline for completing the online sign-up process is Friday, Nov. 16.

Like last year, sign-up will be an online process. The sign-up program for 2002 is accessible now from the ACES Intranet page. Click on the “ETP, SMP & IST Information” link on the right side of the page. This will take you to the ETP, SMP & IST Information page.

From there, you can click on the link entitled “ACES Employees Required to Sign Up for 2002 ETPs” to see an alphabetical listing showing the number of days that each ACES-System employee is required to sign up for in 2002. These days are based on the portion of each employee’s salary that is paid by ACES. After viewing this data, you can click on the browser “back” key to return to the ETP, SMP & IST Information page.

From the ETP SMP & IST Information page, you may also click on the link labeled “2002 Online Sign-up and Reporting” to get to the actual 2002 sign-up program.

Sam Fowler, Extension specialist, program planning, evaluation, reporting and accountability, says people should find this new version to be very intuitive and user friendly.

“I would encourage everyone to begin looking at the SMPs, ETPs and In-Service Trainings that will be offered in 2002 and to begin making a decision about which ones you will participate in,” says Fowler. “It is expected that each ACES employee will discuss his/her planned sign-up with their immediate supervisor and get their approval about the mix of SMPs, ETPs and ISTs selected.”

A link titled “2002 ACES Program Planning, Reporting, Evaluation and Accountability
Guidelines” is on the ETP SMP & IST Information Page. This document, which can be printed out, explains almost everything about the new process for 2002. It also explains the specific responsibilities of ACES employees in the process. Everyone is encouraged to read this document.

Novak Receives Distinguished Program Award

James Novak, an Extension agricultural economist, has received the 2001 Distinguished Extension Program Group Award from the American Agricultural Economics Association.

As Southeast coordinator for risk management education, Novak was one of six agricultural economists across the nation to receive the award. He and the other award recipients were recognized for the critical role they played in establishing the National Risk Management Education program.

The program, aimed at providing farmers and ranchers throughout the United States with risk management education, was made possible by a $1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Novak and other team members helped secure $5,000 grants for each participating land-grant university so they could provide risk-management training in their states. Their efforts are credited with helping land-grant universities throughout the nation provide more than 1,250 risk-management conferences and workshops on behalf of agricultural producers and their families.

Between 1998 and 1999, the team’s educational outreach efforts involved more than 40,000 agricultural leaders and producers nationwide.

American Red Cross Contribution

The System’s Human Resources office led a fund-raising effort at state headquarters in the wake of the September 11 tragedies.

Barbara Duncan, Extension associate director for human resources, says she felt helpless about the tremendous losses suffered as a nation and as individuals.

“By being actively involved in helping those in need, we are beginning the healing process for them and for ourselves,” she added. “I would encourage your continued prayers for those who have lost their loved ones.”

The total contributed by individual Cooperative Extension employees is $1,212.90. In addition, Village Christian Church donated $135.

PERSONNEL

Kudos:

- Congratulations to Gwen Lewis, Montgomery County Extension Agent, who recently completed the certified arborist examination administered through the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) and the local chapter of the ISA.
- Congratulations to Bob Drakeford, Extension Specialist—Volunteer Programs, and Suzette Jelinek, Extension Specialist—Network and Marketing. They have been selected to participate in Class VIII of the National Extension Leadership Development program.

Appointments:

- Angela Rye, County Extension Office Administrative Secretary, Marion County, Oct. 8
- Dean Moore, Army School-Age and Teen Project, Extension Specialist, Oct. 9
- James Wong, Army School-Age and Teen Project, Extension Specialist, Oct. 9
- Tom Bradley, Groundskeeper II, 4H Center, Oct. 15
- Joshua M. McDaniel, Assistant Professor/Extension Specialist Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, Oct. 15

Retirements:

- Mary J. Hall, Hale County, Program Assistant III, effective Oct. 31. She served the EFNEP program in Hale County for more than 29 years.
- Lavaughn Johnson, Department Head—Agriculture Economics and Rural Sociology and Extension Economist, effective Oct. 31. Lavaughn came to ACES in 1978 from the Georgia Extension Service as an Economist — Farm Management. While he became the department head in 1989, his ties to ACES continued as well through a joint appointment.

ACES FAMILY HAPPENINGS

- Our condolences to Parico Osby, Montgomery County Extension Agent, whose mother, Rosetta Green, passed away Oct. 3.
• Our sympathies to the family of Virginia White, retired head of Extension Foods and Nutrition Department. She died Oct. 16.

Grants Awarded:
• Xing Hu, ADAI for Implementing School and Community IPM in Mobile County, $37,890
• Wheeler Foshee, USDA/APHIS for Cooperative Agricultural Pest Survey, $26,000
• Harry Strawn, the Alabama Department of Public Health for the State Indoor Radon Program, $205,000
• Dena Barnes, Alabama Department of Public Health for Breast and Cervical Cancer Program in Pike County, $1,200
• Gayle White, Alabama Department of Public Health for Breast and Cervical Cancer Program in Crenshaw County, $1,575
• Katanga Mants, Alabama Department of Public Health for Breast and Cervical Cancer Program in Hale County, $6,052
• Jean Weese and Evelyn Crayton, USDA for Diet Quality and Its Relationship to Obesity in Rural African-American Children, $149,670
• Vickie Fussell, Children’s Trust Fund: The Learning Center, $43,380
• Sam Fowler, to USDA for the Army School-Age and Teen Project, $1,543,603
• David West, Centers for Disease Control for Education and Outreach in West Anniston, $21,304

• Marilee Tankersley, Elmore County School Board for 4-H At-Risk School Enrichment Program, $73,006
• Martha Johnson, U.S. Army for Fort Rucker Programs, $226,106
• Mary Baltikauski, Geneva County Board of Education for 4-H STEP-UP program, $26,725
• Tom Chesnutt, City of Eufaula, for Strategic Planning, $5,000

Proposals Submitted:
• Jackie Robinson, ADECA for Jump Start, $126,983
• Jim Todd, Mobile County Schools for 4-H Enrichment After School, $13,467
• Jim Todd, Mobile County Schools for 4-H Enrichment In School, $26,047
• Warren Griffith, Fayette County Board of Education for CHARACTER COUNTS!, $11,230
• Mary Baltikauski, Geneva City Board of Education for 4-H STEP-UP, $10,449

Gaines Smith, Interim Director
The 23rd Annual Meeting of the Alabama Association of Extension 4-H Agents was held in Mobile, Aug. 29-31. “Get Energized With 4-H” was the theme of the meeting. John Bell, a Birmingham, Alabama native was the keynote speaker for the opening session. He spoke on “How to Become the Energized Guys.”

Agents received recognition for outstanding accomplishments at the award banquet. Awards presented were Distinguished Service Award: Helen H. Jones, Bibb County, and Linda Sartain, Geneva County; 25-Year Service Award: Rebecca Dollman, NAREO, Marsha Moorehead, Clay County, and Linda Sartain, Geneva County; and the Achievement In Service Award: Kim Wilkins, Chambers County. The ALAE4-HA Community Award winners were Educational Package (Individual): Annette Waldrup, Dekalb County; Feature Story: Sally Lide Hooker, Perry County; Periodical Publication (Individual): Callie Nelson, Chilton County; Promotional Piece (Individual): Marjorie Day, Mobile County; Promotional Piece (Team): Nancy Graves and JoAnn Dunn, Blount County; Educational Piece (Individual): Callie Nelson, Chilton County; News Story: Callie Nelson, Chilton County and Promotional Package (Individual): Nancy Graves Blount County.

At the business meeting Friday morning, Elaine Alberson, Past President, installed officers for the coming year. They are President Mac Washington, President-Elect Willie Williams, Vice President Kim Earwood, Secretary Melinda Luker, Treasurer Kim Wilkins, District I Directors Donna Dickerson and Jerry Chenault, District II Directors Chip East and Stan Roark, District III Directors Helen Herndon-Jones and Jim Todd, and State Staff Directors Tony Cook and Emily Kling.

Convention Co-Chair for the ALAE4-HA Annual Meeting were Marjorie Day, Mobile County, Donna Dickinson, St. Clair County, and Willie Williams, Butler County. Many association members served on various committees to assist the co-chairs with the planning and preparation for the annual meeting.