Direct Line

Early Extension workers relied on one primary tool—the demonstration. While on-farm demonstrations are still highly effective tools for us, we must look for new ways to multiply our effectiveness.

One such way is to continue to expand our use of technologies that enable us to reach more people and often to save money. In these days of tight budgets, saving money is as worthy a goal as reaching more clients.

Recently, a number of Extension professionals have used some high-tech delivery methods for both in-service training and actual program delivery.

Kathy Flanders’ recent in-service on insects and corn using videoconferencing from Auburn brought together experts from four states while agents watched the training at several remote locations. In addition, Mario Lightfoote and Rusty Presley are dividing the streamed conference into logical modules. Interested people will be able to view these modules by accessing them from the Extension home page.

Sam Fowler and Richard Feuerriegel used similar technology to conduct their recent training on the new reporting system for Extension Team Projects and Statewide Major Programs. They combined a satellite uplink with a live on-line demonstration of the new system. It will also be broken into segments and be accessible as streaming video on our Web site.

But videoconferencing and other high-tech tools have applicability in program delivery as well. Wheeler Foshee used videoconferencing recently as part of a pesticide education program for clients and county agents—reaching people in multiple areas of the state at the same time.

We estimate that five recent videoconferences saved the System more than $4,000—primarily in reduced travel expenditures.

In addition to sites on both campuses, Extension has five current remote sites with plans for five more. Rusty is overseeing the project in Auburn, while Oliver Dillard is leading the effort at Alabama A&M.

Folks are seeing the possibilities in a variety of new technologies. We are only limited by our abilities to see these possibilities. For example, Charles Mitchell is always in demand as part of the Master Gardener classes, but he can’t always be there. So he’s converted his talk to a PowerPoint presentation. Multiple copies of that presentation have been burned to CD-ROM disks so agents coordinating Master Gardener classes can use his presentation at any time.

I want to congratulate these and others who are taking the resources available to us and using them to expand Extension’s reach. I challenge all of you to seek out opportunities to use technologies in creative ways. All of us should look for ways to multiply our effectiveness.

High-technology methods can be expensive to acquire and put in place so it’s vital that we make wise selections for their use, but these methods can allow us to reach a much wider audience.

Methods with direct personal contact are key factors in the success this organization has enjoyed over the last 90 years, but in a time of changing resources and greater demands, these methods are self-limiting.

As I have said before in this column and to many of you individually, the ultimate challenge is to find the appropriate balance between high-tech and high-touch delivery methods.

Our value is not determined by our methods but rather by the application of our educational efforts on Alabama’s farms, in Alabama’s homes, and in our local communities.

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Program Highlight: Medicine on the Farm

Farming isn’t easy, and it isn’t always safe. Working long hours in the sun; dealing with heavy, complicated machinery; and handling a variety of animals expose farmers to everything from skin cancer to serious injury from equipment.

All too often, doctors and other medical personnel do not understand the risks and potential hazards associated with farming.

To help farmers prevent accidents and disease and to help deal with them when they occur, Extension is developing an agromedicine program.

For years, Alabama has benefited from the Rural Scholars Program that added farm visits to the rural rotation of medical students from the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

The Rural Scholars Program was started by John Wheat, a professor in the College of Community Health Sciences at the University of Alabama.

Now, Extension and Wheat are working together to take that program a step further.

According to Warren McCord, Extension state program leader, Extension is partnering with Auburn University, the University of Alabama and other agricultural organizations to develop an agromedicine program in the state.

The program pairs medical students with Extension agents and sends them to visit farms where students will “hear the concerns of farmers, see risks that exist in farm production and processing, and observe the Extension agent’s role in the community,” Wheat said.

Sam Wiggins, Pickens County Extension agent, and family physician John Brandon are supplying the community focus for the project in Pickens County. Agents in other counties are also involved in arranging visits around the state.

Other participants in the program include the Alabama Farmers Federation, rural hospitals, Women Involved in Farm Economics, Rural Alabama Health Alliance, the Alabama Chapter of the American Academy of Physicians and the Alabama Education Association.

Wiggins, who has seen firsthand the needs of farmers in Pickens County, says an agromedicine program is greatly needed in this state.

“Sometimes in agriculture you need a scientific third party to look at issues coming along and help rural physicians be familiar with agriculture-related dangers and the many health issues associated with farming,” he said. “Through this program, we set up a lot of farm visits with medical students. A lot of this is education. For instance, farmers need to know about exposure to the sun and its link to skin cancer, about safety shields on equipment and how to operate it accordingly, and about animal handling and safety.”

Wiggins said the program can also assist farmers with some of the misunderstandings that often surround agriculture.

“There are perceived threats — in other words, threats that are probably not there — that this can help with,” he said. “For instance, sometimes the public may be concerned about odors associated with agriculture, such as those from a hog farm. We can do a scientific check and say there’s nothing here, or yes, there is something here.”

Several other states already have successful agromedicine programs, including South Carolina, which has the oldest.

McCord said Alabama’s program, when fully developed, will include at least one medical school faculty member and one agricultural or Extension faculty member. Each will devote at least 50 percent effort to agromedicine.

McCord said financial resources to fund the program are now being sought.

“This program is a developing process,” Wiggins said. “We’re already doing farm visits and we already have relationships developing between medical students and farm groups. Through this program, we will expand what is already in place and expose future leaders in our communities to agriculture. It’s great because it’s a joint educational effort between land-grant Auburn and Alabama. People from both schools will spearhead, organize and continue the program.”

Alabama 4-H Leaders to Be Inducted Into National 4-H Hall of Fame

Three former leaders of youth development in Alabama have been selected for the National 4-H Hall of Fame. Ann Barr, Thomas M. Campbell and John Lemly (Lem) Morrison are among those who will be inducted in a ceremony at the National 4-H Conference in Chevy Chase, Md., April 11.

Barr was indeed “the spirit” of Alabama 4-H, but her commitment to 4-H went far beyond the state’s borders. She served the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service (now System) for 43 years, retiring in 1984. Her 33-year tenure as state 4-H leader for girls was crucial in the progress of modern Alabama 4-H, especially in the areas of leadership
development and citizenship. Nationally, she chaired 4-H Congress and contributed significantly to a wide array of programs and activities. For two decades, she was the greatest single motivational force in Alabama 4-H.

Campbell’s name deserves to be written in large letters in the nation’s Extension history. He was the nation’s first Cooperative Extension agent assigned to a land-grant university. Campbell worked tirelessly for Extension from his base at Tuskegee Institute. He served as a leader in “Negro Extension” in seven states, retiring in 1953. A well-known writer and author, Campbell helped lay the groundwork for a modern Extension service that serves all Americans.

Morrison is widely recognized in Alabama 4-H as the guiding force in the development of the Alabama 4-H Youth Development Center. As a noted business and agricultural leader, Morrison worked tirelessly and effectively on behalf of Alabama’s young people to direct the initial $1 million fund drive for the Center, now the premier youth development facility in the state. His 27 years of service on the Alabama 4-H Club Foundation was a period of unparalleled growth and accomplishment.

The purpose of the National 4-H Hall of Fame is to recognize and celebrate those people who have made a significant impact on 4-H and the lives of millions of members for 100 years. The Hall of Fame has been established as part of the 100th anniversary celebration of 4-H. It will exist exclusively in an electronic format accessible on the Internet. The only permanent physical presence of the Hall of Fame will be a kiosk at the National 4-H Center. It is a project of the NAE4-HA Public Relations and Information Committee.

Extension and Auburn University School of Pharmacy Launch Asthma Initiative

Extension and Auburn University’s Harrison School of Pharmacy are developing an educational program to address one of the state’s most serious health problems: asthma.

Alabama ranks sixth in the nation in the number of asthma sufferers – a problem complicated by its 26 percent poverty rate, which is believed to contribute to the condition.

The purpose of the new Extension-Pharmacy alliance is to develop an education program to highlight what people can do to live with this disease.

“Asthma causes more lost school days and more childhood hospitalizations than any other chronic disease,” says Barbara Mobley, Extension program specialist, who is helping coordinate the program. “Our goal is to teach people that, in spite of all the bad things associated with this disease, there is much that can be done about it.”

As a first step, program organizers have developed a pilot project in Tuscaloosa County to provide asthma awareness training to asthma patients.

A major focus will be recruiting local pharmacists to provide on-site asthma education to their clients, such as how to take asthma medication and use asthma-related equipment safely and efficiently.

Local personnel affiliated with the Area Health Education Center and the Harrison School of Pharmacy will provide training for the pharmacists.

The project is also hiring a local program assistant who will work with the Tuscaloosa County Extension office to provide asthma-related education.

Another primary effort will be showing asthma sufferers and their families how asthma triggers can be removed throughout the home.

Two public service announcements suitable for radio broadcast have been developed and are available from a link on the Extension home page. It is hoped that radio stations throughout the state will download these announcements and use them as part of their programming. They were produced in cooperation with the coaching staffs of the University of Alabama and Auburn University, Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy and Extension.

The program is part of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) nationwide “Healthy People, Healthy Communities” initiative.

The new program is also garnering corporate support. Recently, Alabama Power Company donated $20,000 to support the program’s efforts throughout the state.

Gardening Magazine Features Extension Agents

Four county Extension agents with extensive horticulture expertise have a new job. They have added writing for the new magazine, Alabama Gardener, to their list of responsibilities. Ken Creel, Madison County, Vanessa Hepburn, Montgomery County, and Jim Todd, Mobile County, will write the North Alabama, Central
Alabama and South Alabama regional columns. Tom Daugherty, Mobile County, will write a column addressing the needs of Mobile Bay area gardeners.

The Alabama Gardener is published nine times a year by The Team Advertising & Publishing, Inc. of Rushton, La. The company is publishing five gardening magazines, each focusing on an individual state. Alabama Gardener is the newest of the five.

The magazine has a Web site with regional reports from the four Extension agents. You can visit it by pointing your browser to http://www.alabamagardener.com. The regional columns as well as several articles from each issue can be viewed on-line.

The efforts of these agents will provide Extension with excellent visibility with gardeners and others. While many gardeners already know that the county Extension office is a source of outstanding information, others will certainly learn about Extension and its resources through these columns.

Brian Perkins (May 3, 1952–March 16, 2002)

Extension lost one of its most dedicated professionals in March when Brian Perkins, Extension seafood technologist, lost his battle with cancer.

Perkins worked at the Auburn University Marine Extension and Research Center in Mobile for almost 17 years. He assisted the seafood processing industry in coastal Alabama and throughout the state with issues of food safety and quality.

“His expertise, professionalism and abilities will be sorely missed,” said Rick Wallace, Extension marine specialist and Perkins’ longtime colleague.

Perkins’ workshops enabled seafood processors, particularly small, family businesses, to comply with state and federal food safety regulations. He trained more than 700 individuals in six states in Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point procedures.

“Seafood is big business on Alabama’s Gulf Coast. Extension’s training efforts have met a crucial need for seafood processors and Brian was an integral member of our team,” said Gaines Smith, interim ACES director. “He will be missed not only by Extension colleagues but by the thousands of clients he served.”

Perkins came to Alabama in June 1985 from the Georgia Marine Extension Service where he had worked for more than eight years. He earned a bachelor’s degree in biology from Georgia State University and a master’s in food science from Louisiana State University.

He was the author of numerous Extension publications and journal articles. He was a member of the Institute of Food Technologists and Epsilon Sigma Phi.

Memorial contributions can be made to the American Cancer Society. See http://www.cancer.org for donation instructions.

Specialists Promoted at Auburn University

John Pritchett, Auburn University interim provost, recently announced 2002 faculty promotions. Several Extension specialists were among those promoted.

Honorio Carino, Cindy McCall, Ted Tyson and Rick Wallace were all promoted from associate professor to professor. Carino is an Extension forester, based in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

The others are specialists in the College of Agriculture. McCall, working in the Animal and Dairy Sciences Department, directs Extension’s equine efforts. Tyson, who is in Biosystems Engineering, is a key member of the Extension team addressing animal waste management.

Based at the Auburn Marine Extension and Research Center, Wallace spearheads Extension efforts in fisheries and aquaculture along Alabama’s coast.

Congratulations to all!

PERSONNEL

Kudos:

• Congratulations to Jo Ann Dunn, Blount County Extension Office Administrative Assistant, for receiving the Spirit of Excellence Award for February

Appointments:

• Julian Cope, County Extension Agent, Bullock County, March 4
Resignations:

- **Mary Beth Musgrove**, Extension Program Associate, Feb. 28. We will miss Mary Beth's hard work, particularly her leadership of the Master Gardener program.

Retirements:

- **Myra Barton**, Mobile County Extension Agent, will retire April 30 after almost 34 years of service to the people of Mobile County. In addition to her work with families and children, she also served as county coordinator for a time. Best wishes to Myra on her retirement!

- **Peggy Prucnal**, Shelby County Extension Coordinator, will retire April 30. For the last nine years, she has done an outstanding job of leading the Shelby County Extension staff. Peggy began her career with Extension 33 years ago, serving her entire career in Shelby County. Congratulations to Peggy on her retirement!

ACES FAMILY HAPPENINGS

- Get well wishes to the mother of **Steve Martin**, DeKalb County Extension Coordinator. She underwent hip replacement surgery recently and Steve has taken leave until mid-April to help his mother during her recovery.

- Our deepest sympathies to the family of **Brian Perkins**, Extension Seafood Technologist, who died March 16. He was a vital and important part of the Extension family for 17 years. Brian will be greatly missed not only by his colleagues but also by the seafood industry that he worked with for so many years.

Proposals Approved:

- **Rick Wallace**, MASGC for Alabama Seagrant Extension Program, $119,332
- **Wayne Brewer**, USDA/APHIS/PPQ for Gypsy Moth Survey, $48,700
- **Sally Hooker**, MSU 4-H Youth Development for Health Rocks Perry County, $5,300
- **Sandra Coffey**, Elba City Schools for After School Instructional Assistance, $4,861
- **Sally Hooker**, ADPH for Not On Tobacco, $19,005
- **Linda Robinson**, Lawrence County Board of Education for 4-H At-Risk School Enrichment Program, $4,500
- **Brenda Allen** and **Kathryn Flynn**, Urban and Community Forestry Program for Forest Ecosystem Monitoring, $25,200

Proposals Submitted:

- **Emily Kling** and **Tony Cook** to Alabama Space Grant Consortium for GLOBE Training for County Agents, $5,000
- **Mathew Smidt** to Timber Harvesting and Trans Safety Foundation for Picturing Loading Planning and Safety, $3,375
- **Paul Mask** to Alabama Space Grant Consortium for Alabama Space Grant Geospatial Extension Program, $15,000

Gaines Smith, Interim Director