Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the holiday season and the end of this year, I want to thank each of you for your dedication to and hard work for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Each of you plays a vital and integral part in making ACES successful.

This year has been one of challenges for our organization, our state and our nation. Yet, every member of the ACES team has risen above those challenges and remained focused on our goals of improving the lives of our fellow Alabamians. That personal commitment is truly what makes ACES special.

It would be easy to believe that our organization is facing challenges never faced before. But consider the following holiday message that Director P.O. Davis sent to all Extension workers in December 1940.

"Another Christmas season is at hand. It is as usual a season of peace and goodwill; but peace, we observe, does not prevail among all men, nor for all men who want peace.

"This reminds me of our added duties and our enlarged responsibilities. As trained men and women in high places of leadership, we are expected to think harder, longer and more selflessly than others. We must recognize and accept bigger social obligations to others, to our state and our nation.

"I am happy because of our better preparation and our enlarged ability to render this service. During the year now ending, we have enriched our thinking, perfected our program and improved our organization. In this improvement, each individual has taken part, thereby contributing to the whole improvement. Good work has been done by all. ...

"Our state and our nation face challenging issues. If the people are not to fall prey to dictators, charlatans and fanatics, they must have sound leaders. I know that you have the ability and that you will not fail them."

Director Davis' message rings as true today as it did for those Extension workers in 1940. Like my predecessor, I know that each of you possesses a great ability to serve the people of Alabama and that you will not fail them.

Thank you again for your dedicated efforts to all of your clients this year.

I hope that you will take time this holiday season to rest your body and revitalize your spirit so you will enter 2003 with renewed passion for our work. Take a little time to consider how you can better serve the citizens of our state and improve yourself professionally as well.

Uplifted spirits will help us view with a positive attitude the changes we will be implementing across the System.

But, most of all, take time this holiday season to enjoy time with your family and friends. Life is far too precious to allow work and other demands to consume all of your time.

I wish each of you a joyous holiday season and best wishes for a Happy New Year!