Direct Line

Two state program leaders plan to retire at or near the end of 2002—quite a holiday gift to themselves and their families. Martha Johnson and Arlie Powell have devoted 72 years to Cooperative Extension with more than 35 years in Alabama. Obviously, we thank these organizational leaders for their dedication and leadership and congratulate them on reaching this exciting milestone in their lives. We’ll schedule activities at a time nearer to their departure to fully recognize and thank them. I know that you will want to participate.

But these changes create quite a challenge for us. It’s important that the transition in program leadership be done as smoothly as possible, since each area holds its own unique set of demands and opportunities. Agriculture will be adjusting to the provisions of the new farm bill, meeting environmental needs and adjusting to a global and urbanizing society while attaining the profitability necessary to stay in business. Families will continue fast-paced adjustment to changing lifestyles.

Martha and Arlie both tell me what a great experience it’s been to work with the state and county staffs to improve the quality of life of the people of Alabama. They both assure me these program areas are well positioned to move forward through continued external funding, the use of technology, and ever-evolving program content focused on the needs of Alabamians.

These transitions and the future direction of programs will be undergirded by our System Strategic Directions that are about to be unveiled. These guideposts, developed by ACES employees over the past few weeks, will help keep us focused as a team on providing effective, relevant, informal educational programs that meet local needs with statewide impact.

These strategic directions set out our future vision, goals and opportunities. They also take note of our values as well as our strengths and weaknesses. Most importantly, they provide immediate term objectives, both programmatic and financial; identify critical issues affecting our ability to achieve these objectives; and outline action plans to address them. All this is in a concise and usable format.

The strategic directions are the basis for our soon-to-be-announced ACES Communication Plan that will raise awareness among our key publics about the “new” ACES—the educational opportunities we offer and our value to our state. The communications initiative will center on a single theme that will:

- Communicate in a voice that is personal, knowledgeable and succinct
- Remain consistent with our strategic vision and directions
- Resonate with our successes
- Endure for as long as we need it

More on these exciting happenings in the near future! Stay alert for announcements and unveilings.

A word or two about the coming fiscal year budget: In developing the budget, the Auburn University administration will use guidelines established by the AU Board of Trustees at their June 3 meeting. The board will meet sometime in August or September to take final action on the 2002-2003 budget. That budget, following approval, will be effective October 1.

Budget priorities developed by AU’s budget advisory committee include a 5 percent increase in funding for faculty and staff salaries. It was recommended that staff receive a 2 percent across-the-board pay increase and a 3 percent pool for merit increases. It was also recommended that the entire 5 percent for faculty be used for merit increases.

The Journal of Extension offers all of us a number of professional development opportunities. First, there are the insights to be gained by...
reading the *Journal* on a regular basis. But it also offers the opportunity as an outlet for our research-based manuscripts. In the last few months, ACES specialists have figured prominently among the authors.

**Dale Monks, Dennis Delaney, Mike Patterson** and **Shannon Norwood**, joined by Malcolm Pegues of the Gulf Coast Regional Research and Experiment Station, wrote the article “A Method for Evaluating Storm-Damaged Cotton for Extension County Agents and Specialists.”

**Joe Hess** and **Mike Eckman** wrote “Biological Training for Poultry Flock Advisors: Training the Trainer.”

It’s great to see ACES folks among the *Journal*’s authors. I encourage each of you to take time to read the *Journal* and also to consider whether you or perhaps an ETP team have something that would be of interest to other readers.

People around the D.C. Beltway have had the chance recently to read the thoughts of several Extension specialists. Thanks to the work of **Jim Langcuster**, both **Jim Hairston** and **Jean Weese** have had commentaries published in several recent Sunday editions of the *Washington Times*. Congratulations to all of them on this national exposure for ACES!

I know we have some of the finest employees around, but it really excites me when others recognize the hard work of ACES employees. Recently, **Ronnie Lane**, Lauderdale County coordinator, shared a letter from the State Department of Public Health. That letter detailed the hard work of Lauderdale County Agent **Mary Andrews** and her efforts to steer young people away from tobacco use. The health department estimates that Mary reached more than 4,000 youth with her efforts. Congratulations, Mary, on the well-deserved recognition!

As always, let me hear from you about your thoughts and concerns.

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**Program Highlight: Combining Research With Extension and Volunteerism**

**Charles Mitchell**, Extension agronomist, calls it the perfect marriage between Extension and the public—a project that generates valuable research data and fresh produce for the needy.

With the help of Extension and the Master Gardeners, Mitchell is currently directing a research project that explores different garden tillage techniques.

“The results have been fabulous,” he said. The Master Gardeners of Lee and Cullman counties have conducted the research, fulfilling their required volunteer hours. Extension benefited from the research, and local charities reaped a rich bounty of hundreds of pounds of free, fresh produce.

“We couldn’t have done this without the help of the Master Gardeners,” Mitchell said. “This is an excellent way of marrying our research program with our educational program with our local volunteers. It gets our citizens involved with the experiments going on at our research stations and with the Cooperative Extension System.”

The experiments in Cullman are being conducted at the North Alabama Horticultural Research Station. About 15 Cullman Master Gardener volunteers led by **Charles Pinkston**, Cullman County Extension agent, have already donated about 200 volunteer hours on the project this year. They also conducted the experiments last year.

They recently harvested almost 2,000 pounds of sweet corn, almost 300 pounds of broccoli and about 550 pounds of cabbage, most of which they donated to Cullman County schools, St. Vincent DePaul Food Bank, Childhaven Orphanage and Cullman County Caring For Kids.

The Lee County Master Gardeners performed their experiments at the E.V. Smith Research Center in Shorter. Lee County Extension Agent **Chuck Browne** said four Lee County Master Gardeners donated about 24 volunteer hours on the project. They harvested several hundred pounds of beans, squash and corn and donated most of it to the East Alabama Food Bank in Auburn.

“The research proved that when it comes to preparing soil for planting, tilling isn’t always the answer. In fact, those sharp, rapidly spinning tiller blades may be the worst thing you can slice through your soil. Gardeners till to break up
compacted soil,” Mitchell said. “But tilling actually adds to soil compaction, which leads to more tilling and more compaction.”

After years of research, he and Charles Elkins, a retired soil scientist with the USDA Soil Dynamics Lab in Auburn, discovered several alternative tillage techniques that produce a much more effective soil for planting.

Mitchell tested his theory over the past two years by conducting tillage experiments that compared eight different tillage techniques from conventional diskng, rototilling and subsoiling to new techniques such as double-digging, slit tilling and no-till.

The experiments began in 2001 and will continue at least through 2003.

“Most row crop farmers are aware of the consequences of different tillage techniques on soil compaction and root growth,” he said. “This is why conservation tillage and subsoiling have been adopted by many producers.”

The experiments conducted by the Master Gardeners showed that double-digging is actually the best technique.

“It’s very labor-intensive,” Mitchell said. “But it is absolutely great for the soil. Subsoiling with a tractor is the next best method. It doesn’t destroy the soil structure but does break up existing hardpans. But since it does require a tractor, the equipment is usually too expensive for gardeners.”

This is just one example of the many projects that thousands of Alabama Master Gardeners devote time and effort to each year.

HR Facts

Human Resources wants to remind all departments and county offices about the Employment Eligibility Verification, I-9 Form. All employees, U.S. citizens or noncitizens, hired after November 6, 1986, must complete Section 1 of this form. The I-9 form and instructions for completing it can be found at http://web6.duc.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/forms/i9.pdf.

The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1990, which amended the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), includes six conditions that affect the responsibilities of an employer. The conditions that affect an employer are as follows:

1. Employers cannot request more or different documents than are required under the new antidiscrimination provision.

2. Employers cannot knowingly use, attempt to use, obtain, accept or receive any forged, counterfeited, altered or falsely made documents that come under the new fraud conditions.

3. Employers cannot backdate or otherwise falsely make Form I-9 appear as if they are or have been in compliance with the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA).

4. Employers must have new employees complete Section 1 of the employment verification Form I-9 at the time of hire by filling in the correct information, signing and dating the form.

5. Employers are responsible for reviewing and ensuring that the employees fully and properly complete Section 1 of the employment verification Form I-9.

6. Employers must examine the original document(s) (the only exception is a certified copy of a birth certificate) presented by the employee and then fully complete Section 2 of the employment verification Form I-9.

Employers must keep the employment verification Form I-9 for three years after the date employment begins or one year after the person’s employment is terminated, whichever is later. The original I-9 forms are sent to the ACES Human Resources office and are maintained there.

County Agricultural Agents and Specialists Association Meets

Members of the Alabama Association of County Agricultural Agents and Specialists met in Dothan June 5-7 for their 54th annual meeting.

At the awards banquet, Gene Ragan received the Friend of Extension Award for his more than 40 years of radio and television work with Extension agents and specialists. Robert Reynolds, retired Geneva County Extension coordinator, was honored with the 2002 Life Member Award.

Officers for the 2002-2003 year were elected and installed at the meeting. New officers are Henry Dorough, president; Ronald Britnell, president-elect; Buck Farrior, secretary; Rickey Hudson, treasurer; Richard Murphy, past president; Charles Pinkston, director I-A; Ricky Colquitt, director I-B; Ed Sikora, director II-A; Tommy Futral, director II-B; Thomas Agee, director III-A; and Kevan Tucker, director III-B.

For minutes of the meeting and complete listing of award winners, see the online version of Extension Connections at http://www.aces.edu/extconnections.
PERSONNEL

Kudos:
• Job well done to the team of Computer Technology and Administrative Services who conducted a recent Quicken training via streaming video.

Resignations:
• Vanessa Hepburn, Montgomery County Extension Agent, May 31
• Lloyd Weatherly, Tuscaloosa County Extension Agent, June 14
• Curtis Williams, Ft. Rucker Agent Assistant III, June 14
• Michelle Graham, Ft. Rucker Agent Assistant I, June 17
• Stacey Miller, Extension Office Associate, Communications, June 21
• Lisa Lightsey, Bibb County NEP Agent, June 24

Transfers:
• Marcalyn Price, Extension Development Coordinator III, June 21

Retirements:
• Patricia Robinson, Lauderdale County Administrative Assistant, July 31

ACES FAMILY HAPPENINGS
• Congratulations to Beth Atkins, Assistant to the Director for Development, on her recent marriage to Jimmy Lawrence, an Auburn University business professor.
• Our sympathy to Shirley Schofield, Crenshaw County Administrative Secretary, whose mother, Mamie Taylor, died June 27.
• Our condolences to Deborah Little, former ACES NEP Subcontract Specialist, whose mother died June 29.
• Congratulations to Chris McClendon, Supervisor, ACES Personnel Office, and her husband, Mark, on the birth of their daughter, Madelyn Ann, July 12. She weighed 7 pounds 2 ounces and is 21 inches long.

Proposals Funded:
• Mathew Smidt, Timber Harvesting and Trans Safety Foundation for Picturing Loading Planning and Safety, $5,000
• Paul Mask, Alabama Space Grant Consortium for Alabama Space Grant Geospatial Extension Program, $15,000
• Laura Booth and Barbara Mobley, USDA for Indoor Air Quality, $2,000
• Warren McCord, USDA Forest Service for Urban and Community Forestry for FY 2002, $554,747
• Sam Fowler, USDA for USDA/Army School Age and Teen Project, $583,337
• Harry Strawn and Susan Roberts, Alabama Department of Health for State Indoor Radon Education, $230,000
• Kathleen Tajeu, Alabama Primary Health Care for Healthy Communities Capacity Building, $47,625

Proposals Submitted:
• Brenda Allen to Urban and Community Forestry Program for Urban Forestry Internship, $26,000
• Ed Sikora to RME Cooperative Agreement Program for Comprehensive Risk Management Education, $57,475
• Helen Herndon-Jones to Alabama Department of Public Health for Bibb County Capacity Building Program, $40,000
• Wayne Brewer to USDA/APHIS/PPQ for Gypsy Moth Survey, $48,700
• Elaine Alberson and Denise Shirley to Alabama Department of Public Health for 4-H TGIF, $126,753
• Elaine Alberson and Denise Shirley to Alabama Department of Public Health for Alabama Community Abstinence Education, $36,000
• Barbara Mobley and Laura Booth to USDA for Alabama Energy Star, $2,000
• Jim Hairston and Eve Brantley to ADEM for Plan of Work for ADEM, FY 99, $34,000
• Jim Hairston and Eve Brantley to ADEM for Plan of Work for ADEM, FY 01, $40,000
• Vickie Fussell to ADECA for Tiger Rally, $40,000
• Rodie Ruffin to Monroe County Schools for Monroe County At-Risk Program, $11,500
• Rodie Ruffin to Monroe County Schools for Frisco City At-Risk Program, $4,000

Gaines Smith, Interim Director
The Alabama Association of County Agricultural Agents and Specialists met in Dothan June 5-7, 2002, for their 54th annual meeting. The annual meeting was well attended with 201 participants.

The meeting provided an opportunity for professional development and a time to renew old acquaintances. Emphasis continues to focus on families as agents, spouses, retirees and children enjoyed the meals, entertainment, tours, meetings and recreational activities.

New officers elected for 2002 are Henry Dorough – President; Ronald Britnell - President-Elect; Buck Farrior – Secretary; Rickey Hudson – Treasurer; Richard Murphy - Past President; Charles Pinkston – Director I-A; Rickey Colquit - Director I-B; Ed Sikora - Director II-A; Tommy Futral - Director II-B; Thomas Agee - Director III-A; and Kevan Tucker - Director III-B.

Gene Ragan received the Friend of Extension Award for his 40 plus years of radio and television work with Extension agents and specialists. Robert Reynolds, retired County Extension Coordinator of Geneva County, was the 2002 Life Member Award recipient.

The communication award winners were Jeff Clary - Published Photograph & Caption; Mike Reeves - Slide Set, Transparencies, or Computer Presentation; Tommy Futral - Direct Mail Piece; Rick Beauchamp - Personal Column; Curtis Grissom - Feature Story; Shane Harris - Newsletter by an Individual; Tommy Futral - Video/Television Presentation; David West - Factsheet; Ed Sikora – Publication; Shane Harris - Web Page; Charles Mitchell - Learning Module or Notebook; Tommy Futral - Robert R. Chestnut Top Communicator Award; Jay Conway - District I 4-H Certificate of Achievement; Stan Roark - District II 4-H Certificate of Achievement; Thomas Agee - District III 4-H Certificate of Achievement; Stan Windham - Search for Excellence in Livestock Production; Tim Reed - Search for Excellence in Crop Production; Stephen Brown, Holt Hardin, Bob Lisec, Hal Pepper, Jerry Pierce and George Young - Search for Excellence in Farm & Ranch Management; Tinsley Gregg - Search for Excellence in Environment Protection Through the Responsible Use of Pesticides (Rural); Mike Henshaw - Search for Excellence in Remote Sensing and Precision Agriculture; and Jeff Clary - Pride Award.

AACAAS presented five $1,000.00 scholarships to children of active and life members. The recipients were Josh Britnell, Cami Clark, Jennifer Derrick, Nicholas Vester and James R. (Jimmy) Williams Jr. The Annual AACAAS Scholarship Auction raised $3,700.

The Achievement Award winners are Jonathan Gladney and Shane Harris. The Distinguished Service Award winners are Barry Freeman, Jimmy Smitherman and James R. (Ronny) Williams. These individuals will receive special recognition at the national meeting in Savannah, Georgia, July 28 - August 2, 2002.

Four former members of AACAAS passed away since our June 2001 meeting. Memorials were held for L.C. Alsobrook, Cullen Barefield, M.H. Huggins and Ronny Williams.

Next year’s annual meeting is scheduled for June 4-6, 2003, in Oxford.