Direct Line

Happy New Year! Welcome to 2004 — a year of adjustments, changes and opportunities.

Our first adjustment is to learn how to operate without our 69 coworkers who separated from Extension last year. It’s important that our constituents know of our continued commitment to provide effective, viable Extension programs that help people help themselves.

The new programming structure is almost ready for release. We expect to put it online for everyone to review in the very near future. It will make us more accountable for the resources we receive to serve Alabama citizens, and our program teams will be able to very effectively determine priorities, design programs to address them and deliver them with impact. Program teams will feature area specialized agents, county agents, agent and program assistants, specialists, and other program professionals as needs and resources allow.

We are moving ahead with the organization reshaping. The first group of county Extension coordinator positions has been announced and the selection process is under way. Interviews by the selection committee and regional supervisors are set for early February. As soon as these appointments are completed, the remaining county coordinator positions will be announced and filled. Our goal is to have the coordinator assignments made by April 30.

Immediately following the completion of the coordinator assignments, program teams will be established in each of these areas:

1. Agronomic Crops
2. Animal Science
3. Aquaculture and Recreational Ponds
4. Children, Youth and Families
5. Community and Economic Development (CECs)
6. Consumer Science and Resource Management
7. Farm Risk Management
8. Food Safety
9. Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resources
10. Horticulture: Commercial
11. Horticulture: Homeowner
12. Nutrition, Diet and Health
13. 4-H and Youth Development

Teams are expected to be established by late spring or early summer, and training will begin soon thereafter. Approximately 160 core positions funded by state and federal appropriations are available to staff the county coordinator and area specialized agent positions for both rural and urban programs. Additional staffing for specific programs and activities will continue from extramural grant and contract funds.

By June, we hope to know what our state budget for 2005 will be. That will allow us to know if we can begin to fill a limited number of high-priority positions. If the budget is favorable, we will use some of the new funds and those recouped from the 2004 separations to staff our programs. If the budget is not favorable, recouped funds from the separations will be used to cover the shortfall in the 2005 budget.

Right now, 2005 prospects look cautiously optimistic for the state’s Education Trust Fund. First quarter growth for this budget year, Oct. 1 through Dec. 31, averaged 10.7 percent. Time will tell if this holds into the future.

Term employment agreements are being used in high-priority program areas where staffing shortages are critical. These temporary arrangements will help get us through the period of uncertainty until we get a better understanding of the stability of our core funding from state and federal appropriations.

Extension and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station are working together to
develop agricultural and economic development initiatives tailored to the needs and opportunities in seven regions of the state. Funding for these initiatives will be sought from multiple sources. More information on these efforts as they begin to take shape.

Obviously, 2004 is to be a year of transition with substantial change. If you get excited about the new and different, this is your year. If you are bothered by change, hang on; it’s coming. Either way, I challenge all of us to continue to work toward providing viable educational programs to Alabama citizens.

As we work the changes, keep our organizational goals in mind. Review them from 2003. They will be updated for 2004 through slight modifications, but they will not be substantially changed. Share your thoughts on updating them with me.

We have made strong progress with our goal of increasing the use of technology to support our programs. From March through December 2003, our Cooperative Extension Web site received more than 2 million visits (almost 15 million hits) from almost 1.3 million unique visitors. The average visit lasted 5 minutes and 34 seconds. For more details on our Web activity go to http://www.acesag.auburn.edu/ctu and click Web Development and then Web Traffic Analysis. This page provides detailed information about the profiles, a glossary of terms, and instructions on how to navigate the reports. Proceed to the reports by clicking on the WebTrends logo.

We had a successful 2003 serving our clients. Highlights of that work are featured in the 2003 Annual Report now available. I hope you will share this with your county leaders and stakeholders.

I look forward to an exciting 2004 as we work together to provide the state’s citizens with quality Extension programming.

Final Phase of Germ City to Reach Small Farmers

This year marks the final phase of the three-year multistate grant “Clean Hands, Healthy People.” In 2001, Alabama Extension Health and Nutrition Specialist Donnie Cook and other Extension specialists from Hawaii, Idaho, Washington and West Virginia were awarded a $500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. A feature of the grant is Germ City, an interactive, science-based program that visually demonstrates the importance of proper hand washing.

In the final year of the Alabama A&M University federally funded project, the primary focus will be on small farmers who grow fruits and vegetables and on selected communities statewide. The goal is to teach not only the benefits of proper hand washing but also about food safety.

Hand washing is considered the most effective way to prevent the spread of foodborne illnesses. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 76 million people in the United States become ill annually as a result of food-related diseases, and approximately 5,000 people die. Poor hygiene, including improperly washed hands, is the greatest contributor to food-related illness outbreaks.

Germ City works by first teaching users good hand-washing techniques and the benefits of proper hand washing. Following an introduction, participants apply a specially formulated, ultraviolet “pretend germ” lotion to their hands and then travel through Germ City — an exciting tunnel filled with glow-in-the-dark murals and ultraviolet lights. After traveling through the city, participants are then asked to wash their hands with an antibacterial soap and venture through the tunnel again. Under ultraviolet lights, participants can see if traces of lotion remain on their hands and, thus, determine the effectiveness of their hand washing techniques.

Originally spearheaded by Cook and Alabama A&M graduate assistant Andrea Morris, Germ City has been used at schools, expos and other activities, such as health, county and state fairs. Extension agents and staff in 32 Alabama counties have participated in the project. Since the program was implemented, approximately 26,000 individuals ranging in age from 3 to 90 have been taught with immediate results the effectiveness of good hand washing. In schools, 87 percent of the teachers reported that after participating in Germ City, more children requested to wash their hands.

The final phase of “Clean Hands, Healthy People” will involve collecting additional data from previous users to determine how effective the program has been in reducing the spread of diseases and whether good hand washing techniques were sustained.
PERSONNEL

Kudos:
- **Henry Dorough**, Talladega County Extension Agent, has been selected to complete the term of Southern Region Director for the National Agriculture County Agents Association. The position was vacated by **Paul Mask**.

Appointments:
- **Amy Hardin**, Marion County Extension Administrative Secretary, Jan. 12.

Resignations:
- **Patricia Williams**, Jefferson County Administrative Secretary, Jan. 5.

ACES FAMILY HAPPENINGS

- Our sympathies to **Joyce Staudt**, retired Baldwin County Extension Agent, whose husband, John, died Nov. 24.
- Our condolences to **Florence Owens**, retired Pike County Extension Agent on the death of her husband, Jim, Nov. 28.
- Our sympathy to **Paulette Stimmel**, retired Administrative Assistant at the Tennessee Valley Regional Research and Extension Center, on the death of her husband, Jim, Dec. 1.
- Our condolences to **Willie Lampley**, Interim Sumter County Extension Coordinator, on the death of his brother Bobby Calhoun Dec. 4.
- Our sympathies to **Larry Craft**, Montgomery County Extension Agent, whose mother, Margaret Craft, died Dec. 16.
- Our condolences to **Peggy Harris**, retired Cullman County Extension Agent, whose mother, Marguerite Murphy, died Dec. 16.
- Our sympathies to **Charles L. Maddox**, retired Assistant Director, and his family on the death of his wife, Wilma, Dec. 19.
- Our condolences to the family of **Charlie Vickery**, long-time Mobile County Extension Coordinator, who died Dec. 19.
- Congratulations to **Jay Conway**, Cullman County Extension Agent, and his wife, Jennifer, on the birth of their son, Andrew Judson, Jan. 2.
- Our sympathies to the family of **Pam Satterfield**, Madison County Administrative Secretary, who died Jan. 4.
- Our condolences to **Linda Glass**, Cherokee County Extension Coordinator, whose stepfather, Horace Taylor, died Jan. 10.

Proposals Funded:
- **Chuck Hill** and **Molly Gregg**, USDA/National 4-H for Military 4-H Program Development, $4,000
- **Karen Thompson**, Byrd Center for Rural Health for Franklin County Diabetes Control Project, $10,000
- **Helen Jones**, Corporate Foundation for Children for 2004 FACTS Training Enhancement, $2,390
- **Helen Jones**, Centerville Elementary School for CES 4-H After School Program, $2,786

Proposals Submitted in December:
- **Ellen Abell**, **Francesca Adler-Baeder** and **Kathleen Tajeu** to USDA for Beginning Education Early and Healthy, $28,515
- **David Cline** to SARE for Recirculating Production Pond Inflows to Increase production, $14,145
- **David Cline** to SARE for Alternate Species and Aquaponics for Small Scale Fish Farmers, $8,514
- **Leonard Kuykendall** to SARE for Central Alabama Cotton Enhancement with Conservation Tillage, $4,976
- **Mark Hall** to SARE for Introducing Renewable Energy to North Alabama Farmers, $15,000
- **David Cline** to Texas A&M for Building a Classroom Recirculating System, $2,000
- **Evelyn Crayton** and **Laura Booth** to USDA/EPA for Healthy Homes, Southern Region, Asthma, $9,999
- **Gloria Musson** to Monroe County BOE for Monroe County 4-H Program, $13,500
- **Katrina Mitchell** to Corporate Foundation for Children for FACRS Elmore County, $648
- **Kathleen Tajeu** to University of Kentucky for CIS Partnership, $309,611

Gaines Smith, Interim Director
Epsilon Sigma Phi Annual Conference

Dr. Lee Shakleford, professor at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, was the opening speaker at the annual conference for Epsilon Sigma Phi held at the 4-H Center last fall. He spoke on the topic “Challenges of Predicting Future Trends.”

During the annual business meeting, members voted to require a $125 donation for each employee whose name is placed on the plaque wall at the Extension Memorial Chapel at the 4-H Center. This decision was made due to an increase in the cost of the bronze plaques from $60 to $100 at the time of the last memorial service. The next memorial service will be postponed until 2005 to allow time for an extension to the plaque wall.

Members were encouraged to make their own donations and write information to be included in the book of memories and send it to Karen Crews. Donations may be made payable to the Alabama 4-H Foundation and earmarked for the Memorial Chapel. This donation can be made as a part of the capital campaign, but 4-H Chapel must be specified on the donation.

The following awards were presented by Betty Moore, awards committee chair, at the banquet:
- Distinguished Service Award, County Staff – Betty Gottler
- Distinguished Service Award, State and District Staff – James Hairston
- Visionary Leadership Award – Jackie M. Ramsey
- Team Award – Gary Murray and Jonathan Copeland, Etowah County Horticulture Team
- Retiree Service Award – Victoria Coffee

The Friend of Extension Award was presented to the Troy Broadcasting Corporation. Vice-president Jim Roling accepted the award.

Auctioneer Gary Murray, with assistance from Montine Hardin, conducted the live auction that raised $785.

Gaines Smith gave the Extension Update Friday morning, and new officers were installed.

President – Rebecca Dollman
Vice-President – Parico Osby
Secretary – Carol Reid
Treasurer – Suanne Frobish
District I Director – Montine Hardin
District II Director – Tammy Powell
District III Director – Margaret Odom
State Staff Director – Emily Kling
Retiree Director – Betty Moore

The new president announced the following committee chairs: Molly Gregg, awards, and Ray Rice, membership. Dollman announced that plans are being made for Epsilon Sigma Phi and the Alabama Association of Extension 4-H Agents to hold annual conferences jointly on Sept. 8 – 10, 2004, at the Beachcomber in Gulf Shores.