**DIRECT LINE**

As we promised, 2004 is a transitional year for Alabama Cooperative Extension System’s new direction. The implementation of the restructuring plan is falling into place on schedule. Here are a few highlights:

- Twenty-seven new county Extension coordinators are on the job. The three remaining unassigned positions will be addressed later this year. Check another section of *Extension Connections* to see who these folks are.
- All county coordinators completed a week of intensive training on their duties as first-time local program managers and supervisors. Response to the training was enthusiastically positive. Thanks to the trainers.
- Seventy-two core-funded Extension agents are being reassigned to multicounty regions. Assistant directors and district coordinators will meet with Chinella Henderson and Sam Fowler in early June to make these reassignments. Every effort is being made to place each individual in the assignment of his or her choice.
- The 14 priority program teams will be formed this summer and are expected to begin work quickly after the regional assignments are made.
- All specialist assignments are being reviewed with the respective deans, department heads and assistant directors with the emphasis on shifting responsibilities and funding to support the program priority teams.
- Improved communication equipment and technology that will provide quick and effective contact with the regional agents and other members of the priority program teams are being acquired.
- Preparations are under way to announce and fill a limited number of critical positions on the priority program teams and program support units that support the PPTs.

- Some county Extension coordinators are redirecting county funds to employ county level agents, agent assistants, program assistants and support staff to enhance the programs in their counties.

Obviously, a lot of changes are happening. I’m excited about them and appreciative of everyone’s commitment and positive approach to the changes.

We’re also moving ahead on other fronts. Through the direct involvement of Dr. Ed Richardson, interim president of Auburn University, the state legislature provided funding to Extension through AU and AAMU for new program initiatives. Teams are formed and are developing a strategy to implement these new initiatives: one on transforming poultry waste into economic resources and another on inland marine resource development. Formal announcements with details will be made later this summer.

A 3.03 percent increase in the general operating budget to Extension will be taken up mostly by increased operating costs such as insurance and retirement. Budget guidelines that will make the 2004 lump sum payment a part of our base salaries are being developed for submission to the board of trustees. We’ll share details when they are finalized.

The leadership of AU and AAMU are working with the Cooperative Extension System leadership to develop proposed legislation that will carry the unified structure of Cooperative Extension beyond August 2005 when the initial federal order expires. The legislation, which will be sought in the 2005 legislative session, is designed to make very little change in how the System is currently structured. Operational details, which will be in our "Operational Policies and Procedures Manual," are currently being finalized.

Another change is the major restructuring of the Nutrition Education Program. USDA requirements are changing in FY05 and FY06 and will mandate a redirection of the program. We will work with
the 120 or so employees affected by this termination to seek other employment. Details of the personnel changes and effects on local programs are being shared with those affected and their supervisors as rapidly as we can determine them.

Each of us was shocked and saddened by the recent accidental death of one of our coworkers, **Rita Dillow**, Information Technology Specialist III at the Southwest Regional Extension Office. Rita was killed in a traffic accident following a training session in the North Alabama Extension District. We offer our heartfelt sympathies to her family as they deal with this tragedy.

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**PERSONNEL**

**Kudos:**
- **Chris McClendon**, Human Resources Specialist III, has been elected director-at-large for membership for the Southern Region Board of Directors of the College and University Professional Association for Human Resources.

**Appointments:**
- **Kerri Branson**, Extension Agent, Ft. Rucker, March 15
- **Tanya Havekost**, Madison County Administrative Secretary, March 15
- **Catherine Miller**, Extension Agent, Ft. Rucker, March 15
- **Claire Bosire**, Agent Assistant, St. Clair County, March 15
- **Carolyn Kennedy Jones**, Agent Assistant, Wilcox County, March 22
- **Angie Johnson**, Coordinator ACES Programs, Escambia County, March 29
- **Becky Flowers**, Agent Assistant, Escambia County, April 5
- **Rieta Williams**, Agent Assistant, Perry County, April 19

**Resignations:**
- **Rita Dauber**, Extension Program Office Assistant, April 13
- **Judy Wilkes**, Extension Program Office Associate, April 18
- **Brenda Moor**, Cook II, 4-H and Youth Development Center, April 23

**ACES FAMILY HAPPENINGS**
- Our condolences to the family of **Olive Cadenhead**, retired Butler County Secretary, who died Feb. 6.
Our sympathies to the family of James R. Danion, retired Animal Scientist-Swine Specialist, who died April 2.

Our sympathies to Annette Mehurg Wardrup, retired DeKalb County Extension Agent, whose sister, Anita Malone, died April 2.

Our condolences to Perry Mobley, former Autauga County Extension Agent, whose son, Barrett Mobley, died April 8.

Our sympathies to Rene Ballard, Madison County ACENEP Agent, whose brother, Ronnie Houston, died April 11.

Our condolences to Cary Hughes, Tuscaloosa County Extension Agent, whose grandfather died April 12.

Our sympathies to Susan Thompson, Choctaw County ACENEP Agent, whose mother-in-law, Jean Thompson, died April 13.

Our condolences to Roger Vines, Coosa County Extension Coordinator, whose mother, Mavis Vines, died April 15.

Our condolences to the family of Ben Hagler, retired Extension Horticulturist and former Department Head, who died April 16.

Our sympathies to Nancy Graves, Blount County Extension Agent, whose father-in-law, Gary Graves, died April 16.

Our condolences to Willie Lampley, Sumter County Extension Coordinator, whose father, Hurie D. Lampley, died April 21.

Our sympathies to Linda Glass, Cherokee County Extension Coordinator, whose father, Fred Vines, died April 24.

Our condolences to the family of Virginia Kilgore, retired Walker County Extension Secretary, who died May 5.

Our sympathies to the family of Rita Dillow, Information Technology Specialist with the Computer Technology Unit, who died May 5.

Our condolences to Clarene Teague-Johnson, Huntsville District Extension Coordinator, whose mother, Corine Teague, died May 14.

Best wishes for a speedy recovery to Wilma Ruffin, Extension Family and Human Development Specialist, who had minor surgery recently.

Proposals Funded:

- Ellen Abell, Francesca Adler-Baeder and Kathleen Tajeu to USDA for Beginning Education Early and Healthy, $135,000

Proposals Submitted:

- Elaine Alberson and Denise Shirley to Alabama Department of Public Health for Alabama Community Abstinence Education Program, $27,000
- Jim Hairston to USDA for Southern Region Water Quality Coordination Project, $120,834
- Walter Prevatt to Clemson University for Southeastern Beef Cattle Marketing Schools, $8,250
- Jim Hairston to University of Georgia for Southern Watershed Education Network: Watershed Professional Sub-Committee, $6,600
- Evelyn Crayton to Alabama State Department of Education for Diabetes and Childhood Obesity, $21,000
- Elaine Alberson and Denise Shirley to ADPH for 4-H T.G.I.F., $106,752
- Geni Payne to Alabama Forest Forever Foundation for Bringing Forestry, Wildlife and Environmental Education back to Calhoun CES, $6,500
- Patty Presley-Fuller to Children’s Trust Fund for BEE, $7,991
- Denise Shirley to Children’s Trust Fund for BEE, $8,370
- Paul Mask to USDA Forest Service for Urban and Community Forestry, 2004, $529,300
- Rick Beauchamp to Children’s Trust Fund for First Years Count, $6,000

Gaines Smith, Interim Director