Direct Line

Spring is here. For many of us, it’s one of the busiest times of our year. Farmers are preparing to plant. Gardeners are working in their yards. 4-H’ers are starting to prepare for competitions. The list could go on for quite awhile.

Extension Communications is a busy place right now, too. In addition to the regular work they do, staff members are preparing for the nine in-service training sessions planned for the next few months. Many of you will be taking their three-part class, “Communicating With Confidence.” The goal of this training is to help employees more effectively communicate and promote Alabama Extension. It will strengthen skills through a focus on writing, visuals and media relations.

In addition, Extension Communications is hard at work on materials and training programs for our Communication Plan. We will soon have the results of a statewide awareness poll conducted in February that will reveal what the Alabama public presently knows about our organization as well as the strengths and weaknesses in the way we communicate our mission and programming to them.

As part of the Communication Plan we unveiled last October, two publications are now in production. All Extension personnel will receive a copy of the “Identity Guide” designed to create consistency in the ways we identify and promote our System. An “Experts Guide” is also being developed to provide contacts from Alabama Extension to media outlets around the state.

All Extension personnel will receive “Identity Guide” training in a videoconference on Tuesday, June 3. Beginning at 9 a.m., Extension Communications and Stephen Bradley and Associates will lead us through the guidelines in this new, internal publication. Our “Experts Guide” experts will also receive more intensive training in how to work with the news media.

Best wishes for a happy retirement to Ethel McDaniel, an EFNEP program assistant in the Jefferson County office! She has committed the last 33 years to helping people lead healthier lives. While the System has had many employees who retired with more than 30 years of service, most began their ACES careers earlier than Ms. Daniel did. She joined ACES when she was 50 and is finally deciding to take it a little easier now that she is 83.

Congratulations to Willie Larkin, Extension Community Development specialist, on his election as chair-elect of the Auburn University Faculty Senate. Also, thanks to Barbara Struempler, Extension nutritionist, who has just completed her term as chair of the Faculty Senate.

My thanks to all of the specialists, county agents and volunteers who made the many spring youth livestock events run so smoothly! Your team effort ensured the success of these events.
PERSONNEL

Appointments:
• **Rebecca Persons**, Walker County, County Agent, March 1
• **Nereida Brooks**, Ft. Rucker, Agent Assistant, March 3

Resignations:
• **Audrey Stovall Brown**, State Headquarters, Extension Communications Editor, Feb. 28
• **Jennifer Russell**, St. Clair County, Agent, ACENEP, March 4
• **Sheila Mock**, Ft. Rucker, Agent Assistant, March 7

Retirements:
• **Peggy Gunter**, State Headquarters, Subcontract Specialist, ACENEP, March 31
• **Anne Carpenter**, Lee County, County Agent, March 31

ACES FAMILY HAPPENINGS
• Our condolences to **Pat Blackwell**, Walker County Agent Assistant, whose father, Ray Hill, passed away Feb. 14.
• Our sympathy to **Robert Thornton**, retired Walker County Extension Agent, whose wife, Julia, died Feb. 23.
• Our condolences to **James L. McGhee**, retired Barbour County Extension Agent, whose father, Henry L. McGhee, died March 2.
• Our sympathy to the family of **Percy White**, retired Jefferson County Extension Agent, who passed away March 9. He served the residents of Jefferson County for more than 31 years.
• Our condolences to the family of **Christine Huber**, retired Madison County Extension Agent, who died March 11. She had more than 31 years with Extension, working in Madison, Franklin and Marshall counties.
• Our sympathy to the family of **Maxine Ford**, retired Tallapoosa County Extension office secretary, who passed away March 15.
• Our condolences to **Demetrius Scott**, Butler County ACENEP Agent Assistant, whose father, Carl Simpson, died March 15.

Proposals Funded:
• **Rick Wallace**, ADCNR for Bon Secour Watershed Management Plan Project, $20,000
• **Sandra Coffey**, Alabama Department of Public Health for Statewide Skin Cancer Awareness program, $60,404
• **Rick Wallace**, MASGC for Sea Grant Extension Program, $125,526

Proposals Submitted:
• **Wendy Padgett** to Alabama State Department of Education for Wilcox County Determining Realistic Expectations, $142,023
• **Carl Hughes** to Alabama State Department of Education for The Helping Hand Community Learning Center, $140,330
• **Tammy Powell** to Alabama State Department of Education for Performing Arts Camp Community Learning Center, $103,204
• **Helen Saffold** to Alabama State Department of Education for Crenshaw County Math and Science Enrichment Community Learning Center, $130,993
• **Jimmy Smitherman** and **Shannon Andress** to Alabama State Department of Education for Seven Bridges Community Learning Center, $124,375
• **Rick Wallace** to Mississippi/Alabama Sea Grant for Strategies to Engage the Asian Constituency, $16,884

Gaines Smith, Interim Director