Direct Line

This month I want to bring you up to date on two exciting efforts currently under way in Extension.

First, I want to share with you the results of the first phase of our Communication Plan. I am pleased with our progress. We now have valuable public opinion statistics to help us effectively reach the citizens of Alabama as well as new promotional materials and training that will help us deliver our message.

As a result of the data collected through the telephone opinion poll conducted in February, we now understand the beliefs and perceptions that Alabamians have about Extension. With this information, we will be able to more effectively tailor and deliver our promotional messages for more positive results. The data also can be used to help us more effectively design Extension programming.

We, as employees of Extension, are critical to the success of our Communication Plan. It is essential that we be consistent in the way we identify our work and our System to avoid public misconceptions about Alabama Extension. Soon each of you will receive a copy of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System Identity Guide, A Resource for Communicating Extension to Alabama. This identity guide details new, system-wide identification procedures as well as ways to develop and maintain sound media relations. A one-hour satellite conference slated for 9 a.m., Tuesday, June 3 will serve as training on this manual.

Also in the development stage are the Experts Guide to be distributed to the media and a series of radio public service announcements that will begin to take the Extension message to our public.

As many of you know, Beth Lawrence has been spearheading a development drive to enhance funding for Alabama 4-H. The Capital Campaign for Alabama 4-H is still in the silent phase. A capital campaign’s silent phase is the work that happens before the campaign is announced to the general public.

You can make your pledge to Alabama’s youth as Extension continues with the employee phase of the Capital Campaign. Field staff solicitations are being completed. Other ACES employees, such as those on the Auburn and Alabama A&M campuses as well as Extension retirees, will be receiving more information about the Campaign very soon.

I know you are aware of the importance of 4-H programs to Alabama’s young people, and I want to thank you for the work you do every day in Extension that goes into making 4-H one of the most successful youth development programs offered today.

You can download the pledge form from the front page of the ACES intranet. Click on Extension Employee 4-H Campaign Pledge Form. Download, print and mail the completed form to Beth A. Lawrence, Assistant to the Director, Development, 117 Duncan Hall, Auburn University, AL 36849-5613.

Our financial support of Alabama 4-H is important to the success of the campaign as it moves toward financial support from corporate, private and individual donors. The percentage that the Extension family has contributed will be an important factor to those considering making gifts. And, you can designate your gift to any program you choose, including your local county or district.
Program Highlight: Urban Nutrition Education Program

Certain groups in urban areas are at a higher risk of nutritional deficiency. They are usually poor, elderly, homeless, underemployed or suffering from chronic diseases. Researchers paint a rather grim picture for Alabama’s aging population. One in every four of the state’s elderly live in poverty. Alabama’s malnutrition death rate is higher than the national average.

Urban program specialists and Urban county Extension are tackling these issues with the Urban Nutrition Education Program.

“This program targets senior citizens and limited-resource families in inner-city areas,” said Donnie Cook, Extension health and nutrition specialist.

Supported by a USDA Food and Nutrition Service grant, UNEP was launched in 2002 in four counties to expand nutrition education services to these traditionally underserved populations. The initial counties involved were Calhoun, Lauderdale, Madison and Morgan.

Agent assistants, working under the direction of the county’s urban Extension agent, helped more than 3,000 citizens improve their awareness of nutrition education in food selection, preparation and storage.

Participating seniors have reported that they are making wiser food group choices because of dietary guideline training they have received in this program. Pre- and post-assessment reports from clientele showed significant improvements in dietary intake with clientele indicating they are eating more vegetables and fruits and decreasing the fat in their diet.

“We are just so pleased with the results of the UNEP program,” said Jannie Carter, Extension assistant director for Urban Affairs and New Nontraditional Programs. “It’s what Extension does best — touch people’s lives and help improve those lives.”

Cook noted that four more counties have joined the UNEP program in 2003: Houston, Jefferson, Mobile and Montgomery.

“We are continuing to fine tune the curriculum and refine delivery methods,” says Cook. “We plan to expand the program into Tuscaloosa County in 2004.”

Applications Sought for National Extension Leadership Development Program

The National Extension Leadership Development Program is a two-year leadership experience for Extension personnel in mid-level management with the potential for higher administrative leadership. It is designed for applicants with demonstrated leadership potential who are midcareer or relatively new to leadership positions.

The program, offered through Tennessee State University, is currently seeking applicants for NELD Class VIII, which begins in October 2003.

For more information and application materials, go to http://www.tnstate.edu/cep. Anyone interested in becoming an intern in the program should complete the application and supporting documents found at that site and submit them to the ACES director’s office by June 10. The Extension Administrative Team will review the materials and select up to two applications to be forwarded to Tennessee State for their review/selection process.

PERSONNEL

Kudos:
• Congratulations to Mario Lightfoote, Extension Specialist IV—Communications, on his election to the Auburn University Faculty Senate.

Appointments
• Kerry Parker Smith, Agriculture Program Assistant I, Horticulture, March 1
• Kristin Woods, County Extension Agent, Clarke County, May 1
• Jonathan Copeland, County Extension Agent, Etowah County, May 1
• Regina Moorer, Agent Assistant I, Montgomery County, May 5
• Janet Johnson, Extension Food Safety Specialist, May 12

ACES FAMILY HAPPENINGS
• Our thoughts are with Shirley Whitten, Walker County Extension Coordinator. She was in an automobile accident recently and is recuperating at home.
• Our thoughts are also with Willie Datcher, Greene County Extension Agent. Willie is recovering from an automobile accident.
Proposals Funded:

- **Chuck Hill** and **Molly Gregg**, National 4-H Council for Alabama Professional and Volunteer Development, $25,000
- **Charles Mitchell** and **Charles Pinkston**, Core4 Conservation Alliance for Core4 Conservation, $2,500

Proposals Submitted:

- **Barbara Struempler** to Alabama Department of Public Health for Nutrition Education Program, $6,558,298
- **Eve Brantley** and **Jim Hairston** to USDA for Developing Community Based Stream Restoration Programs, $159,697
- **Denise Shirley** and **Elaine Alberson** to Alabama Department of Public Health for Alabama Community Abstinence Education Program, $35,000
- **Denise Shirley** and **Elaine Alberson** to Alabama Department of Public Health for 4-H TGIF, $126,753
- **Helen Jones** to Bibb County Board of Education for Bibb County 4-H After School Program, $5,833
- **Matthew Smidt, Brenda Allen** and **Brian Waldrop** to Alabama Forest Forever Foundation for Woodscaping for Urban Alabama, $9,500
- **Xing Ping Hu** to Legacy for “We Can Take Control of Termites,” $9,950
- **Kathryn Flynn** to Alabama Forest Forever Foundation for “Forestland Education For Women, By Women,” $15,000
- **Jim Novak** to University of Georgia for Risk Management Under the New Farm bill, $6,799
- **Mark Dubois** to Alabama Forest Forever Foundation for “Voices in the Forest – A Documentary,” $15,000
- **James Armstrong** to Alabama Forest Forever Foundation for Economic Impact of the White-Tailed Deer and Beaver on Forests in Alabama, $15,000
- **Rick Wallace** to Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Consortium for Mississippi-Alabama Sea Grant Program, $288,444

Gaines Smith, Interim Director