

A nighttime photograph of a cityscape, likely Birmingham, Alabama, featuring a large park with a winding path, a fountain, and modern buildings in the background. The text "More In Our Cities" is overlaid in large white font.

# More In Our Cities

## The Urban Difference: REPORT 2020



Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
at Alabama A&M University



UNP-2184



**Today, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System serves 1.4 million people or 1 in 3 Alabama residents.**



Alabama Extension at Alabama A&M University



Dr. Kimberly Sinclair Holmes, Assistant Director;  
Dr. Allen Malone, 1890 Extension Administrator;  
Dr. Celvia Stovall, Associate Director

### From the Administrators

If there is one word to describe 2020, it would be *RESILIENT*. The COVID-19 pandemic touched the lives of every global citizen and for once, we were all on the same playing field. COVID-19 changed the way Cooperative Extension Systems delivered programs, allowing us to be innovative. Like other organizations across the nation, we were resilient in adapting operations and in-person programming to online platforms, such as Zoom, Panopto, Facebook, Nearpod. Of course, this meant that our clients had to move online as well to access programs via digital devices, such as mobile phones, tablets, and computers.

While we are not yet out of the woods where COVID-19 is concerned, we learned that we could adapt and still meet the needs of Alabama citizens. COVID-19 forever changed the way we view life, and it forever changed the way we engage with our audiences. Nevertheless, we remained steadfast-resilient! We are proud of the work we accomplished in 2020, and we are grateful we could continue to serve the people of Alabama and around the world.

### Major Impacts in 2020

Alabama Extension staff at Alabama A&M University rose to the challenge and delivered approximately 1,501 online sessions in nine Urban Centers and published over 100 informational articles, including information on how the public can effectively respond to COVID-19.

### Other impacts include:

- ▶ Direct Face-to-Face Contacts: 40,305
- ▶ Indirect Contacts: 127,938
- ▶ Total Website Visits: 2,694,506 (Unique: 2,180,431)
- ▶ Urban Extension Website Views: 65,492 (Unique: 53,930) – 41.14% of total website views.
- ▶ Facebook User Reach: 135,566
- ▶ Total Annual Listeners for WJAB Monthly Radio Show: 11,050
- ▶ Volunteer Hours: 513
- ▶ Formal MOU Partnerships: 16

### External Funding Comparison

FY 2018/19: **\$8.8 million**

FY 2019/20: **\$8.4 million**

FY 2020/21: **\$9.1 million**



Group of Teens In Park Boy Smoking Electronic Cigarette. iStock photo by Diego\_cervo.

## Alabama 4-H and Youth Development

► Educating young people early about the dangers of smoking (vaping) and illegal drugs can lead to avoidance of harmful substances or cessation later.

### Health Rocks!®: Urging Teens to Reject Harmful Substances

The United Health Foundation listed tobacco use among youth a challenge for the state of Alabama. In 2019, an estimated 26.7 percent of Alabama high school students reported using a tobacco product. When it comes to e-cigarette use, otherwise known as vaping, 19.4 percent of Alabama youth currently vape. Unfortunately, many teens who smoke turn out to be adult smokers.

Health Rocks!® is a 4-H program designed to empower young people with the tools they need to reduce or eliminate tobacco, alcohol, and drug use. In 2020, the Alabama Extension at AAMU's 4-H team concentrated on educating 3,445 youth about vaping. After ten hours of training, 2,618 (76%) of youth felt confident enough to say "no" to vaping and drug use. In addition, 2,894 (84%) understood the dangers of vaping.



[www.aces.edu/go/healthrocks](http://www.aces.edu/go/healthrocks)

## Animal Sciences and Forages

► Using goats to clear understory or overgrowth vegetation can improve animal health, reduce fire hazards in forestland, and restore balance to endangered habitats.

### Small Ruminant Program: Goats in the City & Forestlands

In 2020, there were approximately 40,000 goats in Alabama. Goats provide meat, milk, fiber, and extra income for producers. As browsers, goats are also used to clear overgrown plants, including trees, shrubs, pesky weeds, and invasive plant species that are harmful to natural habitats. Alabama Extension at AAMU's Small Ruminant Program encourages landowners to consider owning goats for that specific reason.

Over the past year, a research demonstration site was established at Alabama A&M University's Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station in Hazel Green to educate landowners and small ruminant producers about the benefits of integrating goat production with forestland management or to clear understory and overgrown vegetation in urban areas where fire burning is not allowed. Three webinars and a virtual field tour were conducted. Participants were surveyed after each session, revealing that among 169 participants, 135 (80%) were influenced to raise goats on their property, and 152 (90%) indicated their willingness to implement goat and forestland practices.



[www.aces.edu/go/smallruminantprogram](http://www.aces.edu/go/smallruminantprogram)

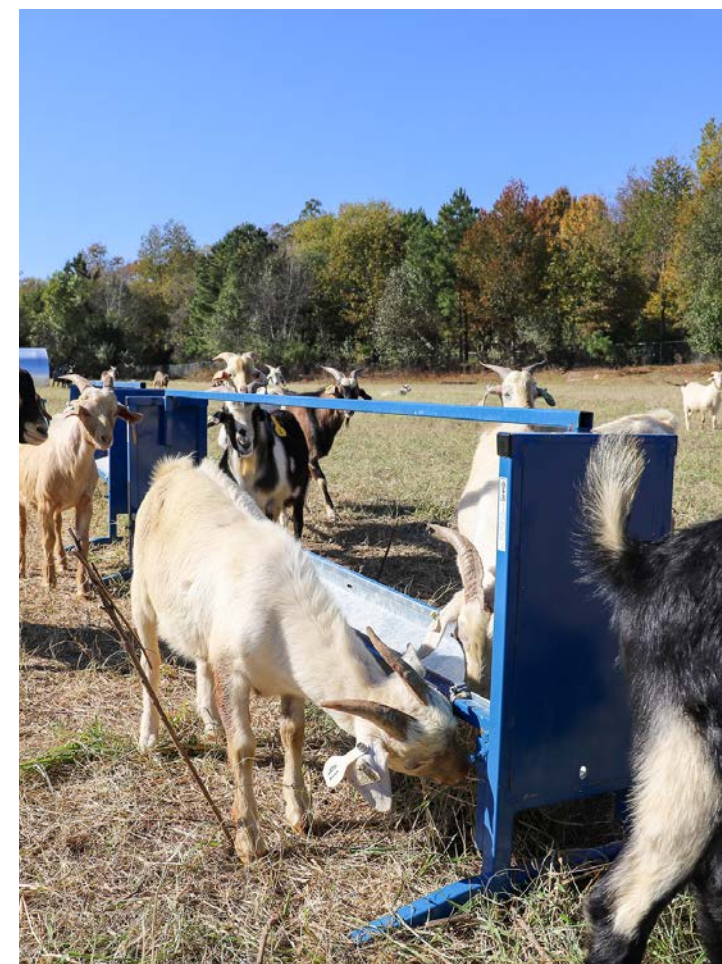


Photo 1: Animal Sciences Specialist Valens Niyigena and Darren Beachem, operations technician, at AAMU's Agribition Center. Photo 2: Goats at AAMU's Agribition Center. Photo credit: Shannon Schoeneweiss.

## Community Resource Development

► College and career readiness programs prepare students for academic and employment success.

### Career Countdown: Alabama Youth are College & Career Ready

As indicated in the Alabama College and Career Strategic Plan (2020), the state aspires to make every student college and career ready. College and career ready means that students graduate from high school prepared to enter college or a career with the knowledge, skills, and the mindset to succeed.

Programs like Career Countdown is an effective college and career readiness program. Participants engage in real-life simulations based on career choices and lifestyles and learn how to create an education and a career plan. Educational plans may involve undergoing vocational training or attending a two-year or four-year college or university to ultimately achieve their career goals.

To address inequities in career readiness, Alabama Extension at AAMU provided 77 Career Countdown sessions to 1,670 Alabamians, and 1,019 (61%) were high school students. Post-delayed survey data among 446 respondents denoted that 54 percent of participants completed a career plan. In addition, post-survey data among 1,464 participants revealed the following:

- 1,362 (93%) participants indicated they conducted research on career interests.
- 1,244 (85%) students indicated the need to spend more time studying.
- 1,083 (74%) participants expressed interest in more programming on career interests.



[www.aces.edu/careercountdown](http://www.aces.edu/careercountdown)



Photo 1: A group of people raising their arms during a lecture. Photo credit: iStock image by Drazen Zigic.



Photo 2: Group of people converse. Photo credit: iStock image by Drazen Zigic.



## Consumer Sciences and Personal Financial Management

► Teaching consumers good money management practices inspires them to reach financial goals.

### FLIP: Overcoming Financial Hardship

The financial impact of COVID-19 will be felt for a long time to come. According to a Pew Research Center survey conducted in January 2021, lower-income adults, minorities, and adults under 30 were more likely to experience job loss or a pay cut in 2020. The survey further reported that 61 percent of working individuals indicated that COVID made reaching their financial goals even harder. Many individuals accumulated more debt and delayed paying monthly bills just to make up for loss income.

FLIP: Financial Literacy in Progress can help individuals and families to find their way back from financial hardship. In 2020, 1,663 completed the five-lesson series on managing debt, developing a spending plan, maintaining good credit, and avoiding fraud and scams. A comparison between the pre-test and post-test survey of 60 participants revealed increased knowledge of financial management strategies, such as how to create and use a spending plan and track expenditures, how to reduce impulsive spending, and a greater understanding of how interest compounds on credit cards.



[www.aces.edu/go/FLIP](http://www.aces.edu/go/FLIP)

Photo 1: Unemployment benefits claim. Photo credit: iStock image by designer491.  
Photo 2: Financial problems. Photo credit: iStock image by Prostock-Studio.



Older adults sit together video chatting. Photo credit: iStock image by monkeybusinessimages.

## Family and Child Development

► Video chats can reduce social isolation and loneliness among seniors with limited mobility.

### SAI: Seniors Close Digital Gap

A national survey by AARP reported that 51 percent of older adults purchased a new digital device prior to the COVID pandemic. Only one in six, however, used these devices to video chat on platforms, such as Skype and Zoom. Last year with social distancing and “stay-at-home” policies in place, those figures changed dramatically. Older adults not only purchased new digital devices, such as smartphones, tablets, and smart TVs, but they used these devices in their daily lives. Alabama Extension at AAMU was also there to help them to communicate with loved ones via Zoom.

In 2020, 232 older adults were trained to participate in Zoom meetings. Specifically, they learned how to host meetings, launch polls, share screens, create registrations, and

utilize breakout rooms. As a result, participants engaged in activities, such as religious studies, family gatherings, voter registrations, and other personal and business affairs.



[www.aces.edu/go/successfulaging](http://www.aces.edu/go/successfulaging)

## Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resources

► E-waste drives enable consumers to reduce e-waste and reclaim raw materials from public landfills.

### EMEP: Reclaiming Raw Materials

According to The Global E-waste Monitor 2020, as global economics thrive, so does the use of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE). Each year EEE consumption is expected to increase by 2.5 metric tons, making it a necessity to properly discard electronic waste (e-waste) around the world. In the United States, for example, approximately 7 million tons of e-waste or about 46 pounds per person was generated in 2019. Only 15 percent, however, of e-waste was recycled, which means that Americans discarded nearly 7.5 million dollars in raw materials that could be used again.

Programs like EMEP: E-waste Management Education Program make it possible to reclaim raw materials. Each year EMEP works with local partners to hold e-waste drives that allow consumers to properly dispose of unused or unwanted electronic products. Due to the COVID epidemic, only one e-waste recycling drive was held in Decatur in partnership with the Better Business Bureau

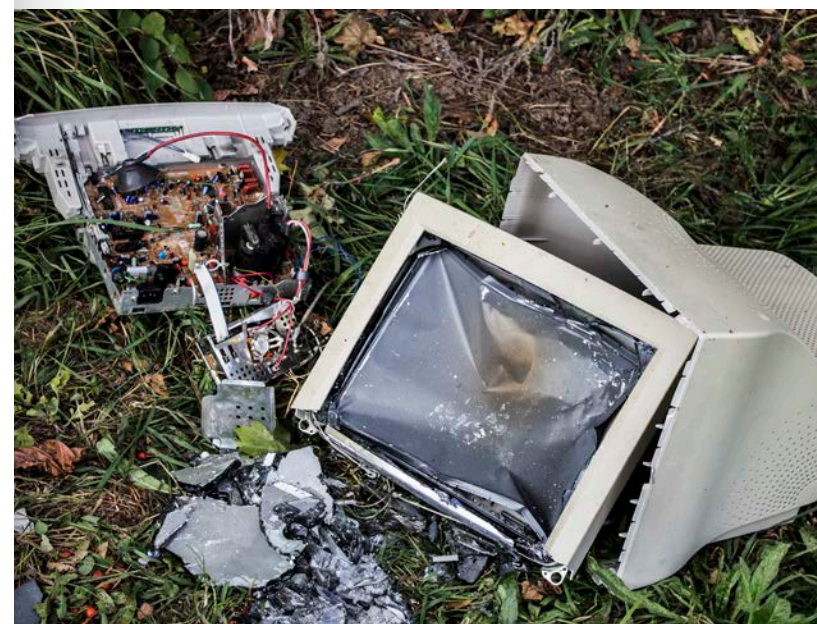
of North Alabama. A total of 112 cars were dropped off, generating 3,000 pounds or 1.5 tons of e-waste. This waste represented a 150 percent increase from the event held in 2019.

The e-Stewards eco-impact estimations for the 3,000 pounds of e-waste are as follows:

- 82 pounds of toxic metals were diverted from city landfills or disposal.
- 84 pounds of lead, 2 pounds of arsenic, 133 pounds of copper, .08 pound(s) of gold, 61 pounds of aluminum, and 819 pounds of steel were recovered.



[www.aces.edu/go/EMEP](http://www.aces.edu/go/EMEP)



Broken computer on the grass. iStock photo by DarkMediaMotion.



Recycle electronics. iStock photo by juststock.



from  
**Seed**

to

**Supper**

Live Online Class



## Home Grounds, Gardens and Home Pests

► Gardening can foster greater interest in STEM subjects and careers among youth.

### Urban Green: Let's Grow a MEAL

Gardening provides young people with a full understanding of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects. For example, children can study science through plants, insects, nutrition, and environmental issues. They learn about the impact of technology through tools used for farming or gardening. They learn engineering by the careful design of gardens, and mathematics by learning how to make a profit from harvesting the plants they grow and possibly sell. Gardening can also improve nutrition, reduce childhood obesity, and increase physical activity and interactive learning.

In 2020, Alabama Extension at AAMU partnered with Alabama State University's TRIO program, Elmore County Public Schools, Head Start, the Montgomery City-County Public Library System, and Tri-County 4-H to offer a youth home container gardening series. Unlike traditional gardening, the Let's Grow a MEAL (Montgomery, Elmore, Autauga, and Lowndes counties) was delivered virtually and provided 115 youth with hands-on learning activities.

For example, students learned about soil and water basics and watering and irrigation strategies, as well as how to seed and breed plants for small space gardening. In addition, students were introduced to the four Rs of green living: reduce, reuse, recycle, and repurpose.

As a result of training, students reused and repurposed toilet and paper towel rolls to start and plant seedlings, reducing the number of paper rolls ending up in public landfills. Students were also encouraged to repurpose plastic soda bottles and other containers around the house for planters to grow their favorite vegetables on a small scale.

The program was renamed From Seed to Supper and will be offered to youth across the state.



[www.aces.edu/go/HomeGrounds](http://www.aces.edu/go/HomeGrounds)

Healthy eating. Photo credit: iStock image by Lisovskaya.

## Human Nutrition, Diet and Health

► Educating teens about eating a nutritious diet can reduce their intake of unhealthy foods.

### Urban EFNEP: Teens Beat the Binge

The isolation of COVID-19 caused many teens to spend more time online and to binge on unhealthy food. The National Eating Disorders Association reported that calls to their hotline rose 40 percent. Although Americans spent more time at home, teens and some parents were still more likely to order food outside the home. Also, fully stocked home pantries made food more accessible to teens.

Alabama Extension's nutrition education courses enable youth and families to develop healthy eating habits. In 2020, The Urban EFNEP (Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program) reached 231 Hispanic youth and adults. Participants learned about basic nutrition, how to plan and make healthier meals and snacks, and how to apply food safety skills and smart shopping decisions when purchasing food.



[www.aces.edu/go/UrbanEFNEP](http://www.aces.edu/go/UrbanEFNEP)



Fresh vegetables. Photo credit: iStock image by Margouillatphotos.

### As a result of this training:

- 147 (79%) youth in grades 3-12 ate more fruit each day.
- 132 (71%) youth in grades 3-12 ate more vegetables each day.
- 52 (28%) youth also used food safety practices.
- 41 (22%) youth increased physical activity.

One interesting fact is the consumption rate of fruits and vegetables was higher among middle and high school students.

# Shaping Your Health

Live Online Series



## Human Nutrition, Diet and Health

► Health literacy empowers people to make informed health decisions.

### CHAMPION: Shaping Your Health - Making Health Literacy Equitable

In Healthy People 2030, the national 10-year health objectives for America, the United States Department of Health and Human Services defines health literacy as personal and organizational. When it involves people, health literacy is the extent that people locate, comprehend, and use information and services to make informed health decisions for themselves and other people. Organizational health literacy is how organizations make finding, understanding, and using health information and services equitable for all people. Unfortunately, health literacy is not equal across health systems, just as there are health disparities that exist among certain population segments.

Funded by a USDA 1890 Capacity Building grant, the CHAMPION: Shaping Youth Health series is a health literacy program that empowers teens and adults to take charge of their health. Participants learn to obtain valuable information from health professionals and health systems that enables them to make informed health decisions.

In 2020, the program's five peer-reviewed lessons were implemented via Zoom and Facebook Live reaching 224 face-to-face and 23,101 virtual adult participants. Approximately 129 participants submitted post surveys with results as follows:

- 41 (32%) indicated their primary physician provides easy-to-understand health instructions.
- 61 (47%) indicated they understood how to take medication prescribed by a doctor.
- 54 (42%) stated their doctor listens and thoroughly explains health condition(s).
- 40 (31%) never tracked health information through a patient portal compared to 48 (37%) that tracked their health information through a patient portal.
- 46 (36%) agreed they understand medical terminology sometimes.
- 102 (79%) visited their doctor once a year.
- 54 (42%) never used telehealth services for doctor appointments compared to 46 (36%) that indicated they used telehealth services for appointments.



[www.aces.edu/CHAMPION](http://www.aces.edu/CHAMPION)

## 2020 References

In addition to specialist reports, the following references were used.

AARP. "Tech Usage Among Older Adults Skyrockets During Pandemic." April 21, 2021. <https://press.aarp.org/2021-4-21-Tech-Usage-Among-Older-Adults-Skyrockets-During-Pandemic>

Brittne Kakulla. "Personal Tech and the Pandemic: Older Adults Are Upgrading for a Better Online Experience." April 2021. <https://www.aarp.org/research/topics/technology/info-2021/2021-technology-trends-older-americans.html-CMP=RDRCT-PRI-TECH-040721/?cmp=RDRCT-907b618d-20210416>.

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids. The Toll of Tobacco in Alabama. Last updated May 18, 2021. <https://www.tobaccofreekids.org/problem/toll-us/alabama>.

Carlos Alberto Nogueira-de-Almeida, Luiz A. Del Ciampo, Ivan S. Ferraz, R.L. Del Ciampo, Andrea A. Contini, and Fábio da V. Uedc. "COVID-19 and obesity in childhood and adolescence: a clinical review." <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7402231/pdf/main.pdf>.

County Health Rankings and Roadmaps. 2021. "School fruit & vegetable gardens." <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/school-fruit-vegetable-gardens>.

Hartman Group. "COVID-19's Impact on Eating." 2020. <https://www.hartman-group.com/documents/888213358?r=929148420>.

Juliana M. Horowitz, Anna Brown, and Rachel Minkin. A Year Into the Pandemic, Long-Term Financial Impact Weighs Heavily on Many Americans. March 5, 2021. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2021/03/05/a-year-into-the-pandemic-long-term-financial-impact-weighs-heavily-on-many-americans/>.

Carolyn Jones. "Eating disorders among teens surging during the pandemic." March 11, 2021. <https://edsource.org/2021/eating-disorders-among-teens-surging-during-the-pandemic/650882>.

Kaplan Early Learning Program. "Using Gardening to Promote STEM." 2021. <https://www.kaplanco.com/ii/gardening-to-promote-stem>.

Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. 2021. "Teen smoking: How to help your teen quit." <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/teen-and-teen-health/in-depth/teen-smoking/art-20046474>.

UnitedHealth Group. "Improving Health Literacy Could Prevent Nearly 1 Million Hospital Visits and Save Over \$25 Billion a Year." October 2020. <https://www.unitedhealthgroup.com/content/dam/UHG/PDF/About/Health-Literacy-Brief.pdf>.

United Health Foundation. America's Health Rankings. August 17, 2021. [https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/youth\\_tobacco/state/AL](https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/health-of-women-and-children/measure/youth_tobacco/state/AL).

United States Department of Agriculture. Southern Region News Release Goat Inventory. January 29, 2021. [https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics\\_by\\_State/Regional\\_Office/Southern/includes/Publications/Livestock\\_Releases/Goat\\_Inventory/Goats2021.pdf](https://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Regional_Office/Southern/includes/Publications/Livestock_Releases/Goat_Inventory/Goats2021.pdf).

United States Department of Health and Human Services. Revised August 2, 2021. "Health Literacy in Healthy People 2030." <https://health.gov/our-work/healthy-people/healthy-people-2030/health-literacy-healthy-people-2030>.

Vanessa Forti, Cornelis Peter Baldé, Ruediger Kuehr, & Garam Bel. 2020. "The Global E-waste Monitor 2020: Quantities, flows and the circular economy potential." [http://ewastemonitor.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/GEM\\_2020\\_def\\_dec\\_2020-1.pdf](http://ewastemonitor.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/GEM_2020_def_dec_2020-1.pdf).

Whitetail Properties. May 1, 2018. "How Owning Goats Can Be Beneficial." <https://www.ranchandfarmproperties.com/blog/how-owning-goats-can-be-beneficial>.



► Special thanks to program partners, participants, Alabama Extension staff, and other valuable stakeholders who make our work possible.



[www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu)

Author & Editor, **Wendi Williams**, *Communications & Marketing Coordinator*, Alabama A&M University. Design/layout, **Shannon Schoeneweiss**, *Technology Media Coordinator*, Alabama A&M University.

**For more information**, contact your county Extension office. Visit [www.aces.edu/directory](http://www.aces.edu/directory).

Trade and brand names used in this publication are given for information purposes only. No guarantee, endorsement, or discrimination among comparable products is intended or implied by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator and employer. Everyone is welcome! Please let us know if you have accessibility needs.

This work is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**New November 2021 UNP-2184**  
© 2021 by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. All rights reserved.





