

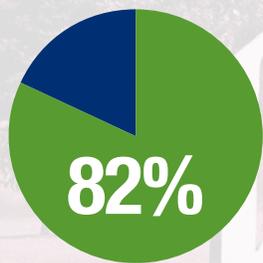


# The Urban Difference: 2021 IMPACTS

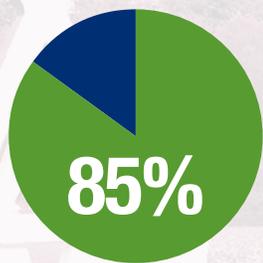
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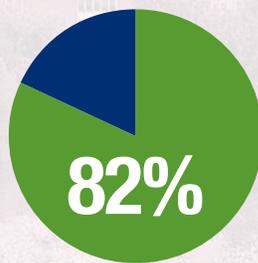
Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
at Alabama A&M University



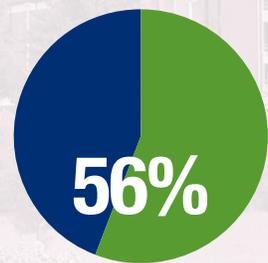
*of youth confident in preventing bullying*



*saw improvement in child's reading ability*



*increased adoption of best gardening practices*



*of youth reduced sugar intake*



Dr. Kimberly Sinclair Holmes, *Assistant Director*;  
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## From the Administrators

This is our favorite time of the year where we highlight the successes of the past year. In 2021, the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at Alabama A&M University (Alabama Extension at AAMU) experienced another year of increased outreach to communities across the state of Alabama, the nation, and around the world. Despite COVID-19, program teams delivered high quality, research-based education, and resources in-person and online.

The benchmark of our work in Alabama Extension is clear by the number of increased partnerships, competitive grant awards, participant evaluation data, and performance excellence awards bestowed upon our staff. These measurable impacts are evidence that we indeed add value to the lives of the people and communities we serve.

The following pages also demonstrate how our specialists and agents exemplified resilience while recovering from the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. In fact, staff throughout Alabama Extension at AAMU went beyond normal. These outstanding individuals demonstrated continued excellence that is the hallmark of Alabama A&M University, where Service is Sovereignty.

## 2021 Impacts

- ▶ Direct Face-to-Face: **58,299**
- ▶ Indirect Program Contacts: **558,552**
- ▶ ACES Total Website Views: **3,607,180**
- ▶ Urban Extension Total Website Views: **130,321**
- ▶ 2021 WJAB (90.9FM) Radio Show Listeners: **92,000**
- ▶ Facebook User Reach: **239,611**
- ▶ Formal MOUs: **13**

## External Funding Comparison

FY 2019/20: **\$10.1 million**

FY 2020/21: **\$10 million**

FY 2021/22: **\$10.1 million**



Alabama Extension at Alabama A&M University

# 2021 IMPACTS



African American Teen Girl Using Smartphone On Sofa At Home. iStock photo by Prostock-Studio.

## Alabama 4-H and Youth Development

► Empowering young people to combat bullying can reduce the adverse effects of bullying later in life, such as mental illness and criminal behavior.

### Combating Bullying in Schools and Communities

The Pew Research reported that 21 percent of youth between the ages of 10 and 18 have experienced cyberbullying. With increased online activity, cyberbullying was even more prevalent among teens during the COVID stay-at-home orders. Bullying behavior, whether in-person or online, can cause mental, emotional, and behavioral difficulties for victims and individuals who conduct bullying behavior.

To combat bullying behavior in schools and throughout communities, Alabama Extension at AAMU implements the

HYPE: Helping Youth Promote Empathy program series in six lessons. In 2021, 492 youth completed HYPE. After completing the program, 93 percent (458) of youth identified cyber, social, verbal, and physical bullying behavior and 82 percent (403) were confident in combating bullying. In addition, youth learned how to understand and manage their behavior and emotions in response to environmental conditions, including bullying behavior.



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

# Animal Sciences and Forages

► Using goats to clear invasive plants protects the environment from harsher alternatives, such as burning or using herbicides.

## Goats: An Eco-Friendly Option for Clearing Brush

Invasive plants like animals can hinder the growth of native plants and impact the diversity of local species to thrive together. In addition to competing for local water sources, they can also deplete soil nutrients. One way to combat these problems is to introduce browsing goats to forest timberland.

The Small Ruminant Program completed its first year of operation in 2021. One objective of this program is to educate producers about goat browsing and controlled soil erosion by using goats to clear invasive plant species. Last year 607 people attended program activities, including an in-person summit and virtual webinars. As a result of these activities, 90 percent (546) of participants gained knowledge about best goat production practices. Another 85 percent (78) of evaluation respondents from the first Alabama Sheep and Goat Summit were persuaded to introduce browsing goats onto their forestland property.



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

Photo 1: Alabama A&M Student assesses the health of a goat. Photo 2: Alabama A&M students pose for a group photo. Photo credit: Shannon Schoeneeweiss.

# Community Resource Development

► Educating entrepreneurs about start-up operations can increase their chances of success and increase local tax revenue.

## Filing for Success

According to a 2021 Harris Poll, 61 percent of Americans had a business idea, yet 39 percent indicated they did not know how to get started. Business startup training is important, especially in choosing the right type of business structure. The Small Business Administration reports that the structure of a business will impact owner liability, business taxes, daily operations, and paperwork that needs to be filed.

Alabama Extension's Filing for Success program educates entrepreneurs about the aspects of legally operating a business in Alabama, including selecting a business structure and filing taxes. During its first year of operation, 80 Alabamians participated in the program. As a result of attending this training, participants gained more knowledge and were more confident in establishing a small business in Alabama. Evaluation scores increased from a 2 to a 4—with 5 being an expert—in terms of business startup knowledge.



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



Photo 1: Woman standing with arms crossed while working at her book shop. Photo credit: iStock image by Drazen Zigic.



# Consumer Sciences and Personal Financial Management

► The awareness of soft skills helps employees to better promote their abilities and fill skill gaps in the job market.

## Edging Out the Competition

Job markets in the United States remain in a state of flux due to the COVID pandemic. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that unemployment rates improved in 2021. Employees explored the job market for better opportunities, preferred to continue working from home, or opted to start their own businesses. Whatever the employment outcome, one factor remained true, employers still look for candidates that possess strong soft skills.

Promoting Readiness for Employment Possibilities educated 595 participants about issues related to employment, including basic job search and the importance of soft skills in 2021. Soft skills may involve the ability to communicate, solve problems, adapt to change, or work independently or on a team. Based on an evaluation of training among 140 respondents, 79 percent (111) increased their knowledge of soft skills. In addition, the post-test evaluation revealed a 34 percent increase in their beliefs and skills related to basic job search skills, such as job searching, interviewing, resume building, and soft skills.



**PREP**

Promoting Readiness  
for Employment Possibilities

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

Photo 1: Employer holding cv having online virtual job interview. Photo credit: iStock image by insta\_photos.

Photo 2: Soft Skills. Photo credit: iStock image by gesrey.

Photo 3: Construction site manager standing with folded arms wearing safety vest and helmet. Photo credit: iStock image by Ridofranz.



Grandparents reading with grandchildren. Photo credit: iStock image by PeopleImages.

## Family and Child Development

► Improving a child's ability to read increases academic success and reduces future school dropout rates.

### Parents Improve Child Literacy

In 2021, Alabama ranked forty-seventh in the nation for child literacy based on the Annie E. Casey Kids Count Data Book. That same year, the Alabama Literacy Act, passed in 2019, went into effect. This law requires educators to test reading levels at the beginning, middle, and end of each school year for children in kindergarten through the third grade. By testing throughout the year, schools, teachers, and parents know when kids need help in reading to strengthen academic success. In fact, the law also encourages parental involvement and empowerment to implement reading strategies at home.

The Parent-Child Reading Enhancement Program is designed to teach parents and guardians skills to improve child literacy in five areas: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency. In 2021, the program reached 455 participants. A post-test evaluation among 92 respondents revealed greater awareness of the five reading components by 139 percent. In addition, a post-test evaluation administered a month later among 87 respondents, indicated that 86 percent (75) were using the five components to improve a child's reading level. Another 85 percent (74) saw an improvement in their child's reading ability, and 76 percent (66) were spending more time helping their children to read better.



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

# Forestry, Wildlife and Natural Resources

► Environmental education for young people prepares the next generation of eco-friendly consumers.

## Next Generation Environmentalists

The Environmental Protection Agency considers environmental education a process that allows people to explore environmental issues, engage in problem-solving, and take action to improve the environment. Environmental education also helps students to engage with nature, use critical thinking skills to solve real-world problems and become environmental stewards.

Alabama Extension's UESEP: Urban Environmental Science Education Program explored other avenues to engage students during the COVID pandemic. The Lend-an-Ear series focused on environmental awareness through reading for kids in grades 3 to 5. More than 25 books were shared with over 2,200 children. As a result of this program, 79 percent (1738) of youth wanted to read more, 80 percent (1760) believed the program increased their knowledge of natural resources, and 76 percent (1672) agreed that the program encouraged them to protect the environment. Lend-an-Ear was also delivered to Spanish-speaking audiences.



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



Two children reading outside. iStock photo by chingyunsong.



Boy interacts with online lesson. iStock photo by Tomwang112.



Community garden in the city. Photo credit: iStock image by lena\_volo.

## Home Grounds, Gardens and Home Pests

► Gardening can provide therapeutic and economic benefits for individuals and families.

### Gardening Offers COVID Relief

The American Psychological Association described the COVID pandemic as an “epidemiological and psychological crisis.” During the initial stay-at-home orders and thereafter, many people were isolated, suffered great losses, and experienced economic hardship. In addition, the United States Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service estimated that 11 percent of American households were food insecure. During this time, many people rediscovered gardening to alleviate these stressful conditions.

Under work-from-home orders, the home grounds team offered hybrid learning opportunities for youth and adults focusing on Alabama’s gardening potential, irrigation practices, rainwater harvesting, composting, and raised bed and container gardening. As a result, the total program reach for urban agricultural food systems was 9,194. Eighty-five (7814) percent of participants agreed the training encouraged them to install a raised bed or container garden and adopt composting practices. On average, 82 percent (7538) of participants increased their adoption of best management gardening practices.

**Home  
Grounds**



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



Woman Cutting Fresh Vegetables In Her Kitchen. Photo credit: iStock image by Fernanda Reyes.

## Human Nutrition, Diet and Health

► Eating a healthy diet supports the immune system and reduces the likelihood of diet-related diseases.

### Reducing Obesity Rates in Alabama

Obesity remains a chronic health problem in Alabama. The COVID pandemic made the problem worse due to a change in eating habits, less physical activity, more stress and anxiety, and food insecurity. According to a 2021 Harris Poll, 42 percent of adults gained an average of 29 pounds while weight gain for youth averaged 12 to 14 pounds. The pandemic and other socioeconomic factors presented challenges to nutrition educators across the nation.

Despite these challenges, Urban SNAP-Ed educators delivered programs in-person and virtually, reaching 2,939 youth and adults. After 6-10 lessons, participants learned to eat nutritious food, be physically active, shop wisely for food, and practice food safety. Among the 377 adults that



Grocery shopping with a list. Photo credit: iStock image by Wavebreakmedia.

completed pre-, post-, and post-delayed assessments, 28 percent (106) increased physical activity, 37 percent (139) used coupons when shopping, and 33 percent (124) ate a variety of vegetables daily. Among 1,425 youth that completed pre-, post-, and post-delayed surveys, 25 percent (356) ate a variety of fruit, 45 percent (641) ate a variety of vegetables, and 38 percent (542) increased physical activity.





Kid riding a bike. iStock photo by Wavebreakmedia.



Kids eating a healthy snack. iStock photo by monkeybusinessimages.

## Human Nutrition, Diet and Health

► Educating children early about eating healthy and exercising, will reduce the onset of chronic diseases and medical debt as they grow older.

### Preparing Youth to be Health Conscious

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that childhood obesity can lead to serious mental and physical health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, depression, and low self-esteem. Educating youth to eat healthier and to exercise can help them to avoid the onset of chronic diseases later in life. It can also improve academic studies by positively impacting cognitive skills and behavior, helping them to perform better in school.

Programs like TEEN: Technology Enhancing Exercise and Nutrition and the Urban Youth STEAM Academy were designed to educate young people about eating more fruits and vegetables, reducing sugar intake, and increasing

physical activity. In 2021, 607 children aged 8-12 completed curriculum-based lessons and engaged in an exergaming program to increase physical activity for 30-60 minutes. As a result, the youth logged 823,142 steps burning an average of 480 calories. Additionally, data collected among 584 youth indicated that an average of 40 percent (234) ate more fruits and vegetables, and 56 percent (327) reduced their intake of sugar.



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