

1999 ANNUAL REPORT

Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Partnerships for the Future



Alabama A&M and Auburn Universities

Partnerships for the Future

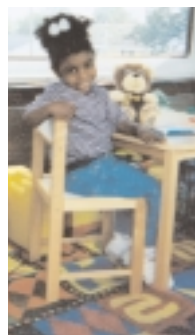


Finally, and with much fanfare, the long-awaited year 2000 has arrived—and, fortunately, without any of the turmoil associated with the Y2K computer glitch. Although 2000 technically marks the end of the second millennium rather than the beginning of the third, it carries enormous symbolic significance. While this report is intended to highlight the accomplishments of 1999, I would be remiss if I didn't reflect for a moment on the challenges we will face in the next century.

The Cooperative Extension concept is an early twentieth century creation, inspired in large measure by the need to reach what was then a financially impoverished farming sector. Even today, as we continue to reach new clientele, one of the most pressing challenges of the new century will be maintaining our long-standing commitment to agriculture.

To underscore that commitment, I convened the **Taskforce on Extension Agriculture** in May 1998 to determine if Extension is adequately serving the needs of Alabama agriculture. Chaired by Alfa's Doug Rigney, one of the state's most respected agricultural leaders, and including many other outstanding leaders, the Taskforce reached a clear conclusion: Extension required major changes in order to serve the needs of agriculture effectively. With the close of 1999, we had implemented and even exceeded many of the recommendations outlined by the Taskforce. These accomplishments include:

- Creating and staffing five **Agricultural Research and Extension Centers** throughout Alabama.
- Introducing a dual-reporting system to ensure a closer working relationship among key Extension agriculture administrators and the Auburn University Dean of the College of Agriculture and Director of the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station.
- Working with the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station to hold a series of listening sessions throughout the state to assess the needs of Alabama agriculture.





In fact, we now have a comprehensive plan for making the System more responsive to the state's vital agricultural sector. Many thanks to Doug Rigney of Alfa; Gaines Smith, Extension Associate Director for Rural and Traditional Programs; and Arlie Powell, Extension State Program Leader for Agriculture, for their valuable contributions to this process.

Another major challenge will be helping Alabamians manage horticultural and forestry resources in our increasingly urban environment. We underscored this commitment in 1999 with the completion of the **C. Beaty Hanna Horticulture and Environmental Center**. Equipped with a diagnostic lab, this new center will provide a vital service to the expanding horticulture industry in metro-Birmingham. New technology will also make it possible for the lab to analyze digital images submitted from remote locations throughout the state. Special thanks to John Floyd, editor of *Southern Living*, for his work soliciting private donations for the center.

Even as we renew our ties with traditional clientele, we must not forget that Alabama now is a heavily urbanized state, with more than two-thirds of our population living in urban locations. In order to reach our growing urban population, Extension has established **Urban Centers** in eight locations: Muscle Shoals, Huntsville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Anniston, Dothan, Mobile, and Decatur. Congratulations to the System's Urban Extension program at Alabama A&M University for planning and implementing this vital outreach effort.

Extension also faces the perennial challenge of serving our clientele with fewer resources. Our **Prioritization and Redirection Plan**, submitted in November 1999, calls for a number of steps to ensure that our System remains responsive. Broadly stated, these will include streamlining our administrative ranks, decentralizing our decision-making process, and forging stronger, more lasting partnerships with other public and private organizations.

As a result, the Extension System of the next century will be leaner, more focused, and better adapted to profit from closer partnerships with other groups. Partnerships, in fact, will be the hallmark of Extension outreach efforts in the next century, and that is why I've chosen **Partnerships for the Future** as the theme of this year's annual report.

I wish all of you a Happy New Millennium and look forward to working with you throughout 2000 and beyond as we build new partnerships to benefit Alabamians. On behalf of Auburn University President William V. Muse, Alabama A&M University President John T. Gibson, and all of my Extension colleagues, many, many thanks for your continued support.

Stephen B. Jones, *Director*



Agriculture

As the twentieth century draws to a close, farmers can reflect on a decade of dramatic economic, technological, and environmental changes. To remain competitive in an age of increased foreign competition, farmers must balance the costs of acquiring new technology against expanding federal and state environmental regulations and rising consumer demands for safe, high-quality food and farm products.

Walking this tightrope has not been easy, and farmers are the first to concede there are no easy solutions. For its part, Extension's support for Alabama farmers and agribusiness professionals remains steadfast. We remain committed to providing producers with the educational and technological tools needed to build healthy, profitable, and environmentally sustainable operations.

Controlling Pests And Safeguarding the Environment

■ Specialists and agents in eight counties have worked closely with the **Alabama Fire Ant Management** program to control the spread of this pest. Agents have provided valuable assistance with demonstration projects, while specialists have prepared two fact sheets to increase public awareness about the pests. A wide range of information was also distributed through magazines, newspapers, and electronic media. An Alabama National Fair information booth operated by Extension personnel and others with the Fire Ant Management program reached hundreds of people.



■ In their larval stage, gypsy moths potentially can defoliate more than 100 different tree species. While only a small number of the moths have been detected in Alabama within the last decade, the Extension System, in cooperation with the USDA Animal, Plant, and Health Inspection Service, has organized a detection system to monitor the pest's spread. Extension agents and volunteers have been instrumental in this effort, setting between 3,000 and 4,000 pheromone traps in the state to detect potential outbreaks of the pest.

■ Extension specialists and agents held a workshop in Calhoun County demonstrating how growers can safely fumigate grain bins. Supported by Alabama Wheat and Feed Grain Check-off funds, the project was a combined effort of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and the Auburn University College of Agriculture in conjunction with the Alabama Farmers Federation, the University of Georgia, and the Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.

Maintaining A Competitive Edge

■ For cotton producers, drought remained a major cause of low yields. Extension agricultural engineers are helping farmers develop new irrigation and water management techniques. One technique uses an irrigation-scheduling tool known as **Moistcot** to help growers conserve water use while maximizing crop yields. Extension engineers also are developing subsurface drip irrigation (SDI) systems. Results to date indicate that SDI will help optimize yields with minimum water use.

■ Begun in 1999, the **Alabama Grazing School** helps livestock producers develop a better understanding of how grazing practices may improve efficiency, profit, and environmental quality. The program was held at the Black Belt Research and Extension Center in Marion Junction.



■ In 1999, Extension specialists and agents specializing in cotton assisted with cotton insect scouting schools, multi-county cotton tours, training sessions on cotton plant defoliation, and cotton demonstrations. Extension also maintained a pest hotline, published the **Pick Sack Hotline** newsletter between April and October, and provided weekly updates to cotton producers through a satellite news service. In addition, specialists and agents produced four cotton update programs distributed to producers by satellite throughout the growing season.

■ The catfish industry continued to grow and is now worth \$75 million to Alabama producers and \$125 million to Alabama processors. The Alabama Fish Farming Center was involved in the effort of providing safe, wholesome products to consumers through the Alabama Fish Farming Center's **Catfish Quality Assurance** program.

■ An Alabama-initiated Extension producer's guide, **Minimizing Losses In Hay Storage and Feeding**, was recognized by the American Society of Agronomy as one of the best publications of its kind in 1999. One hundred thousand copies of the guide were distributed nationwide in only 18 months. The guide is credited with saving millions of dollars in unnecessary hay losses. Publication costs were financed entirely by the private sector.



■ To remain competitive, Alabama cattle producers must maintain the highest standards of beef quality. The **Alabama Master Cattle Producers** program is Extension's answer to this demand. Forty Extension agents were trained as Certified Extension Beef Cattle Agents. These agents then instructed cattle producers in meetings conducted with Extension specialists. Ten multi-county sessions were held, certifying 400 cattle producers. Beef Quality Assurance coordinators and cattle producers from many other states have expressed interest in the program.

■ The Extension-sponsored **Alabama Pasture-to-Rail** program enables commercial and junior producers of purebred cattle to evaluate the product value of their herds without having to send the entire calf crop to Western feedlots. Producers retain ownership of three or more calves that are delivered to a Western feedlot, placed on customized feeding, and carefully evaluated before sale. With data from these calves, producers have a better advantage in meeting the quality standards established by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

■ The Alabama Beef Cattle Improvement Association's **Bull Testing and Evaluation** program completed its 49th year in 1999, making it one of the longest running programs of its kind in the United States. This program enables purebred beef cattle producers to market the superior genetics of their bulls after first evaluating their growth characteristics on a full-feed or forage-based regimen and to evaluate their breeding programs against those of other producers in the state.



■ The **Master Gardener** program blossomed in the 1990s! In 1999 alone, county Extension agents, specialists, certified Master Gardeners, and other experts provided more than 1,000 hours of instruction to 647 Alabamians in exchange for more than 25,000 hours of volunteer service. This primarily urban outreach has become one of Extension's most requested programs, providing individuals, families, and communities with research-based information about gardening and environmental stewardship. One Alabama Master Gardener, who received the International Master Gardening Conference's coveted Search for Excellence Award, was also recognized by the National Points of Light Foundation.

■ The **Best Management Practices for Container Nurseries** program has gained nationwide recognition, as well as having a major impact on Alabama's billion-dollar landscape industry. The effort was spearheaded by Auburn Horticulture faculty in Extension, research, and teaching. Partners included faculty at 16 other Southern land-grant institutions, the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM), the Alabama Nurserymen's Association, and the Southern Nurserymen's Association.

■ Adequate winter chilling is essential for proper growth and fruiting of deciduous fruit plants such as peach and apple. Extension partnered with commercial peach producers and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station to develop an improved model for monitoring chilling hours and to identify a growth regulator that compensates for a portion of the chilling during mild winters. A state label was obtained that permitted commercial peach producers to use this compound in early 1999, along with the new chilling model. The net result of this effort was the production of an outstanding peach crop statewide in spite of the lowest chilling recorded in 50 years.



■ Dairy producers benefitted from the **Food Safety Initiative**, jointly sponsored by Extension, the Auburn University Colleges of Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine, the Alabama Departments of Agriculture and Industries and Public Health, and the Alabama Farmers Federation. The program's aim is to improve food-safety procedures on dairy farms. Major topics include milk quality assurance, animal health, and milk residue prevention.

■ Extension specialists and Experiment Station researchers set up field-sized demonstrations at the Wiregrass Research and Extension Center to determine what peanut and cotton producers must do to remain competitive on a global scale. Among the findings, the study revealed that peanut producers, to stay competitive, must increase yields. Findings from the study will be made widely available to producers in 2000.

■ An Extension plant pathologist developed a way to include Doppler radar rainfall estimates into AU Peanuts, a software program designed to improve the scheduling of fungicide applications to control leaf spot in peanuts. Incorporating Doppler radar predictions will eliminate the need for rain gauges, which means farmers will spend less time in the field. Experts also believe this added feature will result in fewer fungicide applications and thus reduce operating costs.

■ With pumpkin acreage within the state expanding six-fold within the last few years, Extension horticulture specialists and agents have been creating a support system for producers. The System helped organize the Alabama Pumpkin Association. Specialists and agents have also assisted with field demonstrations and one-day short courses to acquaint growers with the latest advances in varieties, production methods, insect control, and marketing.



Partnerships Across Borders

Extension continues exploring creative, cost-effective ways to pool resources with partners across state and national boundaries, such as:

- Working closely with USDA personnel at the Crop Production and Pest Control Research unit in West Lafayette, Indiana, to develop a system to monitor the spread of the Hessian fly, a perennial wheat pest.
- Collaborating with counterparts at the University of Georgia and Mississippi State University to release a new pecan cultivar that shows outstanding resistance to several pests, especially pecan scab.
- Maintaining partnerships with counterparts in Hungary, Poland, former East Germany, Vietnam, China, Guatemala, and India through exchange tours and many other outreach opportunities in these countries.
- Providing instructors for the Southern Regional Community Development Institute, a 13-state training program for community developers.
- Participating in the Southern Rural Development Center's Health Activity Group, part of a regional and national Extension effort to improve community health.
- Providing Spanish language publications to Extension agents in Alabama in cooperation with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service.
- Providing the U.S. Commission on 21st Century Agriculture with five years of profit/loss data from cooperating farm businesses—data which will enable the Commission to gain a clearer picture of the challenges facing Alabama's multi-faceted agribusiness sector.
- Cooperating with Tennessee and Kentucky Extension on a food safety system for poultry and meat packers. Hazard Analysis Critical Control Points (HACCP) technical support includes a compressed interactive video as well as on-site training to educate processors, county agents, and state health officials in HACCP systems.

Partnerships in Cyberspace

Extension education uses new technology to help the people of Alabama. Here are just a few examples:

- Through a live satellite broadcast, **Zapping the Millennium Bug in 90 Days**, Extension and other partners helped viewers prepare for Y2K.
- Working with their counterparts in other states, Extension specialists and Experiment Station researchers are using satellite mapping and computer-generated expert systems to help Southern cotton and peanut producers remain competitive in the global economy.
- An Extension plant pathologist has developed a way to incorporate Doppler radar rainfall estimates into a software program designed to improve scheduling of fungicide applications to control leaf spot on peanuts.
- Extension specialists are working with USDA scientists and Alabama Experiment Station researchers to develop spatial technology databases that will alert livestock producers to potential problems with nutrient and waste runoff from their farms.
- Extension's Web site, **www.aces.edu**, is fast becoming a convenient, comprehensive source of on-line educational resources—some of which are updated weekly.
- Extension is a partner in **LifeSmarts**, a computer-based program for high school students that focuses on personal finance, health, the environment, technology, and consumer issues.

Coping with Change

■ An Alabama Extension agricultural economist was appointed by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) to coordinate risk management education for the entire Southern Region in conjunction with USDA's Risk Management Agency. Part of this work involved organizing statewide contacts at land-grant universities, including the private sector in planning and implementing training, and conducting "train the trainer" activities in risk management.



Safeguarding Our Streams

■ Extension specialists from several disciplines maintain a long-standing partnership with their counterparts in federal and state agencies and private organizations in order to help the state's livestock and poultry producers manage animal waste and nutrients safely and efficiently. The partnership has played a valuable role in developing Alabama's Animal Feeding Operation and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (**AFO/CAFO**) animal waste management regulations, which have minimized operating costs for producers while protecting water quality.

■ More than 400 certified animal waste vendors and more than 250 nutrient management specialists have been trained in waste management techniques.

■ Extension poultry and animal scientists are working closely with producers to identify feed additives that make nutrients such as phosphorous more available so they can be better absorbed by the animals rather than passed into surface water.

Forestry and Natural Resources

Alabama is a state rich in natural resources. More than two-thirds of our state is forest covered, and these forests, together with the open land, are watered by up to 60,000 miles of rivers and streams. Extension professionals are committed to helping Alabamians manage these resources wisely.

Urban Forestry

In 1999 Extension entered into a historic partnership with the Alabama Forestry Commission, USDA Forest Service, Auburn University School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, and the Alabama Urban Forestry Association. This partnership defines the roles of each organization and formalizes commitments and responsibilities. It enhances Extension's role in urban and community forestry and identifies Extension as the coordinating partner among these groups.

This partnership brings two new urban forestry positions to Extension, one housed in Montgomery at the Alabama Forestry Commission and the other at the new **C. Beaty Hanna Horticulture and Environmental Center** at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens.

A major component includes a financial assistance program whereby eligible groups compete for cost-share funds to carry out projects meeting an urban forestry program need. This past year more than \$300,000 was available to fund project proposals. An additional Forest Service grant was awarded to Auburn

University through Extension to design a strategy by which urban forests can reduce damage from natural disasters.

Extension continued to educate tree board members on community improvement through urban forestry. Extension also coordinates the National Arbor Day Foundation's **Tree City USA** program. Alabama ranks seventh in the nation with 106 Tree City USA certified communities.



Private Forest Management Team

The Private Forest Management Team is a coordinated effort among Extension, Auburn's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, forest landowners, landowner support organizations, and natural resource management organizations. Additional funding is provided by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee of the Alabama Forestry Association and Alabama River Woodlands.

Current activities include the Technical Forestry Information Web site, technical support for Alabama Treasure Forest Association's **Classroom in the Forest** program, a forest landowner list for Alabama with analyses of ownership patterns and landowner surveys, and **Forest Masters**, a landowner education and recognition program.

Forest Products Development Center

The Forest Products Development Center, a joint venture between Extension and Auburn's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, participated in conferences, seminars, and workshops pertaining to economic development involving the forest products industry. These included economic development conferences for rural community leaders and developers, presentations to public officials and employees regarding forest industry opportunities and the state's economic development strategy, and presentations to industry trade groups regarding the forest industry in Alabama.





In addition, the center played a major role in locating a \$25 million particle board plant in the city of Auburn. The plant will use recycled wood fiber and will employ approximately 50 people. Also, the center assisted ten companies in evaluating new business opportunities in Alabama. These opportunities ranged from evaluation of new product opportunities in existing operations to assistance in locating major new manufacturing plants in the state. A \$21 million expansion of an engineered wood products operation was announced, further increasing the impact of a project that the center worked to bring to Alabama in 1998.

Other Initiatives

- Forestry specialists with Auburn University's Department of Biosystems Engineering developed a day-long course on irrigation management in forest tree nurseries and presented the course to nursery managers from eight Southern states.
- More than 60 nursery managers attended the annual meeting of the **Southern Forest Nursery Management Cooperative**—a two-day meeting of presentations by Auburn faculty and staff on nursery management and recent research results, with a tour of a nearby forest industry-owned nursery.
- Forestry specialists provided the lead for the state in the **Sustainable Forestry Partnership**. In addition to Auburn University, the partnership includes Pennsylvania State University, Oregon State University, and CSREES.
- Nearly 2,500 loggers have completed the **Professional Logger Manager** course since its inception in 1993.
- Wildlife science specialists conducted a number of county meetings and training sessions on vertebrate pest management including native wildlife and some species of rodents.

- A second **Landowner Seminar** series, involving Extension specialists and other Auburn faculty, was begun in 1999. The series was developed in cooperation with the Alabama Technology Network. It provided seven two-hour programs via compressed video to locations throughout the state.

- A growing concern is how to properly manage the state's water resources for the benefit of all citizens. For example, Lake Eufaula and its lock and dam system are a power source, a navigable waterway, and a recreational attraction. While the U.S. Corps of Engineers is responsible for the management of Lake Eufaula, many others are affected by the Corps' decisions. Extension organized a symposium including the Corps, members of industry, scientists, and representatives of game and fish agencies in Alabama and Georgia.

- Coastal Alabama communities are growing so fast that local economies and quality of life are threatened by the overuse and misuse of the area's natural resources. Extension marine specialists addressed these problems through educational programs aimed at reducing the spread of aquatic nuisance species, reducing nonpoint source pollution, supporting high school marine environment learning experiences, and seeking alternatives to traditional commercial fishing through aquaculture.

- Water quality educational activities have reached several hundred Alabama school children over the past year. Activities focused on the importance of clean water, how forests provide clean water, and what forest land managers can do to protect water quality.



Urban and New Nontraditional Programs

Urban growth and immigration have created an Alabama that is quite different from the state we knew a decade ago. Extension has a responsibility to provide programs that equip Alabama's almost 2.5 million urban citizens with the skills and knowledge they need to build strong families and communities in times of change. With its urban and nontraditional programs, Extension is reaching the hard-to-reach and underserved audiences of the state with education that is changing their lives.

Urban Family Network

■ A close partnership forged among Extension, Alabama A&M University, and the Huntsville Housing Authority has improved delivery of family-related programs throughout the Huntsville area. A **Family Life Center** serves as a hub for educational programs for some 1,600 families who live in the city's public housing.

■ The network held its first annual family conference, **The State of Urban Families in the New Millennium**, in 1999. Local family summits have since been held across the state focusing on lifespan and family well-being issues for urban residents.

■ Through an agreement with the National Coalition for Consumer Education, Extension is a partner in **LifeSmarts**. Through the Internet and face-to-face programs for youth in grades 9-12, LifeSmarts focuses on personal finance, health and safety, environmental technology, and consumer rights and responsibilities.

Workforce Preparation

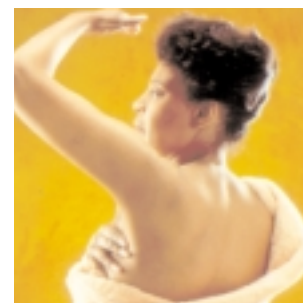
■ Job fairs, training seminars, and media programs helped to prepare more than 10,000 citizens for a changing job market.

■ Working with the North Alabama Skills Center, Extension used an innovative course of study, **Welcome to the Real World**, to reach 850 students in 16 counties enrolled in the center's summer enrichment program. The program's interactive approach introduced students to the challenges of choosing a career and making financial decisions.



Breast Cancer Education

■ Using creative marketing and capitalizing on holiday themes and health awareness events, the Breast Cancer Education project reached more than 25,000 Alabamians. Promotional items stressing the importance of early breast cancer detection were distributed at county meetings, dormitories, campus centers, and churches. In addition, a new collaborative project, **Tell a Friend**, was launched in partnership with the American Cancer Society.



Diversity

■ Audiences across the state were trained through programs such as **Multicultural Diversity Training for Youth Service Professionals**. Through collaborations with the Council on Youth Services and the National Children's Advocacy Center, Extension trained nonprofit agency professionals to work more effectively with diverse clients and multicultural families.

■ More than 3,000 people learned about diversity-related issues at programs such as the **Urban/Rural Interface Conference** held at Alabama A&M University and similar programs in Lowndes and Wilcox counties.

■ Using arts, crafts, videos, and displays, Madison County agents sponsored an imaginary **Trip to the Philippines**, which introduced more than 700 middle school children to another culture and people.

Family Violence Prevention

■ Extension reached thousands of at-risk families through broadly focused programs to prevent domestic violence. **Trapped by Abuse**, a statewide collaboration, included a public radio campaign and workshops addressing issues of poor health, poverty, and family violence.

■ Teens Obtaining Positive Service (**TOPS**) linked juveniles from the family court system with several Jefferson County community organizations. The teens learned responsible citizenship and provided community service to the Birmingham Humane Society.

Mentoring Education

■ Extension's Fostering Achievement Through Mentoring Education (**FAME**), in cooperation with the Shoals Chamber of Commerce, local schools, hospitals, and agencies, sponsored the Shoals Family Economic Summit to recruit and train mentors to help Shoals residents get off public assistance and gain lasting employment.

Community Action

■ A student volunteer community action program recruited many volunteers from a previously untapped source—university and community college students. With more than 1,900 contacts, the program provided volunteer personnel support to agencies concerned with such issues as strengthening families, helping troubled youth, and improving health care.



Highlighting a Unique Partnership

The unification of the Auburn and Alabama A&M University Extension programs marks the first merger of its kind in land-grant university history.

To study and reflect on this historic change, the newly unified System held a major public policy meeting, the **State Leaders Conference**, in Montgomery in April. Underwritten by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the two-day conference attracted some 400 participants, including System administrators and personnel, Tuskegee University program partners, representatives from 34 other land-grant universities, Kellogg Foundation representatives, and federal, state, and local officials.

Noted speakers presented a number of topics dealing with issues such as legislative support, program outreach, and federal court compliance. The conference also featured exhibits and brochures on each of the System's major program areas, an interactive kiosk with video and Internet capabilities, and a video explaining the mission of the new System.



Other Nontraditional Programs

■ Several programs addressing new issues in youth development, agriculture, and family well-being were promoted through new marketing strategies and targeted to previously underserved clientele. One noteworthy project, the **Madison County Urban Youth Farm Day**, held at the Winfred Thomas Agricultural Research Station on the Alabama A&M campus, introduced more than 500 young people to the growing link between agricultural and urban issues.

■ **Zapping the Millennium Bug in 90 Days**, a live satellite broadcast, was provided to all county Extension offices in collaboration with the American Red Cross, Alabama Emergency Management Agency, and the North Alabama Y2K Community Action Group. Focusing on the needs of the elderly and youth, the broadcast offered preparation advice in case of a Y2K disruption.

■ Health care for small ruminants, intensive rotational grazing, and shiitake mushroom production are among the other programs that support Extension's mission in sustainable and alternative agriculture.



Family and Individual Well-Being

Numerous projects of the Family and Individual Well-Being program addressed health, economic, social, and environmental issues of families, children, and communities.

Welfare to Work

Extension used a number of comprehensive programs to help meet the needs of limited-resource families who are on some type of aid. These programs helped strengthen the ability of families and individuals to find and maintain meaningful employment. More than \$33.5 million entered Alabama's economy last year as a result of the employment of some 9,400 people who have left welfare for work. These new workers brought to their local economies an increased demand for goods and services. Businesses responded by hiring more people to meet these increased demands.

One program emphasized financial independence and sustainability for families and individuals with limited financial resources. It directed most programming to the working poor because most of those who have left welfare have not left poverty. The program provided effective education in financial management that will enable these people to achieve financial independence within one generation and inspire the next generation to follow.

Community Health

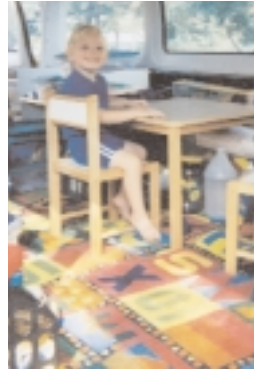
Extension's involvement with health councils and home health services helped thousands of Alabamians learn more about hypertension, breast cancer, welfare reform, and birth defects. Many outreach programs also developed and distributed resource directories.

With a grant from the March of Dimes, Extension developed a low-literacy **Folic Acid Education** program. The program's objective is to increase the folic acid content of the diets of women of childbearing age and women with a family history of heart disease.

Character education programs in Crenshaw County reached more than 2,300 high school students. Funded by a Children's Trust Fund grant, the programs emphasize building character, managing anger, and resolving conflicts.

EFNEP

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (**EFNEP**) helps limited-resource audiences gain the knowledge, skills, and behaviors that will enable them to have nutritionally sound diets. The program's goal is to increase the number of healthy, well-nourished families and children and to decrease the number of low birth-weight babies born to Alabama's low-income mothers. A recent study shows that each \$1 spent on EFNEP defers \$10.64 in health care costs due to reductions in foodborne illness, chronic illness, and low birth-weight babies. This reflects savings in health care costs of more than \$22.5 million in 1999. Through EFNEP's four programs—Today's Mom, 4-H Diet's Our Thing, Mom's Helper, and Basic EFNEP—more than 9,000 Alabamians were reached in 1999.



A Statewide Sampler of Family Programs

- The Begin Education Early (**BEE**) program is helping parents prepare their children for school in five West Alabama counties—Choctaw, Marengo, Pickens, Tuscaloosa, and Wilcox. The program provides parents with instruction and support to help them become a more positive influence in their children's development. The BEE program is a partnership of public and private agencies and organizations, business and industry groups, and child advocacy organizations at local and state levels.
- In Butler County, Extension partnered with the Health Department and a private home health agency to provide education sessions following diabetes screening.
- In Franklin County, more than 2,000 people received cancer education through various Extension programs.
- Teams of Extension volunteers in Blount County reached more than 600 middle school students with the Crossroads sexual abstinence program and a Character education program.
- **Extension Money Management Centers** in Florence, Anniston, Montgomery, and Huntsville provided educational programs on site, at workplaces, and at public facilities. Topics included debt reduction, budgeting, record keeping, job readiness, GED preparation, and moving from welfare to work. Extension networked with other community organizations to teach resource management, affordable housing, and child care.
- The **Women's Financial Information** program in Montgomery County taught participants to take charge of their finances. Clients ranged in age from 21 to 92 years and represented a diverse population.
- A money management curriculum was developed for sixth graders in Chilton County and included lessons on topics such as buying decisions, wants versus needs, comparison shopping, allowances, saving, and credit.
- In Cullman County, **The First Years Count** program was geared to parents of young children. Funding for the program was provided through a grant from the Children's Trust Fund of Alabama. Another program, KidsCope, educated parents and children affected by divorce.
- Extension agents in Crenshaw County offered parenting classes to the public through the schools. A trained agent assistant visited at-risk parents referred by the Department of Human Resources and taught the classes.



NEP

The Nutrition Education Program (NEP) helps food stamp recipients and those eligible for food stamps to have healthier lifestyles by making better food choices with limited budgets. Fifty county Extension offices employed NEP agents and NEP program assistants, reaching more than 200,000 individuals. Additionally, nutrition networks at the grassroots level resulted in community nutrition education projects reaching more than 19,000 people. A rigorous evaluation system is used to assess knowledge and behavior changes. The NEP program in Alabama is co-sponsored by Extension and the Food Stamp Program of the Alabama Department of Human Resources.

Food Safety

- In cooperation with many state agencies, Extension provided food safety programs and educational materials to clients throughout Alabama and in other states.
- Through provisions in the 1999 Farm Bill, Extension partnered with many federal agencies on food safety issues. One result was a \$100,000 grant to fund a food preservation and safety training project.

Principles of Parenting

- Extension parenting programs emphasize child guidance, positive discipline, adult influence on child development, and the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional needs of children. Outstanding programs are held in every county.



Partnerships with the Army

Since its inception in 1914, Extension has been recognized as a leader in youth development and education—a fact appreciated by the U.S. Army, which looks to Extension for assistance with programs for children of military personnel.

Extension provides technical assistance to the Army's Community and Family Support Center through a wide array of services. These include on-site meetings, teleconference calls with installation staff, and on-line computer technical advice. This assistance helps the Army address all of its youth-related objectives dealing with health, personal and social competence, intellectual competence, work preparation, and citizenship.

In addition, Extension operates an office at Ft. Rucker in cooperation with Army Community Services to provide educational programs to military families and youth.

Community and Economic Development

Extension's Community and Economic Development programs bring interdisciplinary resources together to reach communities, businesses, and individuals for four main purposes:

- Economic development
- Leadership development
- Environmental quality and community health
- Public policy and strategic planning

Economic Development

Extension programs promote economic conditions that bring employment, productivity, economic diversification, and industrial expansion to rural and urban communities.

■ The **Intensive Economic Development Course** is a collaborative effort of Extension, Auburn University's Economic Development Institute, Alabama Power Company, Alabama Gas Company, Alabama Rural Electric Cooperatives, and BellSouth. Each year, the two-week course trains economic developers who return to their communities with the goal of increasing employment by implementing the economic strategies they have learned.

■ The future of Alabama's \$5.4 billion tourism industry will depend on its success in attracting more retirees and promoting large areas of tourism. With this in mind, Extension maintains partnerships with a number of regional tourism organizations promoting retiree location and regional marketing: Alabama Sunrise Region, Lower Alabama Tourism and Retiree Association (LATARA), Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourism Association, Tenn-Tom Tourism Council, and Historic Chattahoochee Commission, which operates in Alabama and Georgia.

■ Extension's tourism development program is considered one of the best in the nation. Our membership on the **Alabama Tourism Partnership** board gives communities a voice in how the state's strategic tourism plan is carried out.

■ **Workforce Preparation, A Collaborative Approach for Rural America** is an Extension-sponsored program made possible by a National 4-H Council grant. Still in its infancy, the program is designed to bring youth as full partners into ongoing efforts to improve America's economy and workforce. Its goal is to train local, county, and state teams to organize and participate in local coalitions devoted to workforce preparation.

Leadership Development

Extension programs strengthen communities by enhancing the leadership capacities of local leaders. In 1999 Extension:

- Helped communities organize self-sustaining adult leadership programs.
- Provided instructors for the **Southern Regional Community Development Institute**, a 13-state training program for local community developers.
- Provided leadership training for local groups and organizations to equip community leaders to make decisions, set policies, and help create jobs.
- Provided instructors for the **Intensive Economic Development Course**.
- Provided a statewide youth leadership forum for more than 130 4-H'ers during the 1999 **State 4-H Congress**.
- Conducted workshops on leadership, conflict, and diversity in the workplace for the Alabama Department of Transportation.



Environmental Quality and Community Health

Extension programs help communities create safer and healthier environments as well as adequate health care systems.

- Extension worked with the Experiment Station to provide mentors for graduate students in rural sociology. Using the nurse practitioner's survey of perceived health issues in rural counties, these students worked with the University of Alabama School of Medicine to assess the needs of health planning and consumer health education.

- Alabama Extension contributed to regional and national Extension efforts to improve community health by participating in a health activity initiative of the **Southern Rural Development Center**. This group is involved in ongoing efforts to provide intensive, week-long community health training to selected county agents throughout the South. An Alabama Extension program leader coordinates a national initiative known as **Healthy People, Healthy Communities**, while an Extension educator serves with the **National Network for Health**, a program affiliated with Children, Youth, and Families at Risk.

- Extension is represented on several advisory committees, including the University of Alabama at Birmingham Center for Injury Prevention and Research, the Alabama Partnership for Cancer Control in the Underserved, and Project Reach 2010, as well as four statewide coalitions encompassing arthritis, tobacco control, diabetes, and cardiovascular health.

- Extension conducts a nationally recognized EPA-funded **Radon Awareness Program** aimed at alerting every citizen to the threats associated with radon. Some 3.5 million contacts have been made through radio, television, newspapers, newsletters, and exhibits. Extension seminars have directly reached an additional 42,000. In addition, 24 proclamations were signed, including one by Alabama Governor Don Siegelman, who proclaimed October 17-23, 1999, as Alabama Radon Action Week. In this effort Extension collaborates with the Alabama Department of Public Health, EPA, Alabama Lung Association, and the Southern Regional Training Center at Auburn University. Focus is primarily directed at the 15-county area in North Alabama where the radon risk is highest.

Since the beginning of the program, more than 2,000 homes have been tested, with more than one-fifth showing a need for remediation.

Public Policy and Strategic Planning

- Extension has helped many limited-resource communities design strategic plans. Broad-based strategic plans involve all segments of the community, from elected officials and department heads to individual citizens.

- Extension agents continue working with Chambers of Commerce, economic development boards and authorities, and other public and private partners to enhance the local community's ability both to recruit and retain new industry and to expand existing industry.



4-H and Youth Development

Alabama 4-H is primed and ready for the twenty-first century. Leaders of the nation's oldest and largest publicly funded youth organization have revitalized the 4-H mission and vision to reflect the changing needs of Alabama's young people.

In 1999, 4-H initiatives touched the lives of some 80,000 young Alabamians. From public speaking to character education to forestry judging, 4-H programs continue to provide valuable opportunities for growth in the areas represented by the 4-H clover—head, hands, heart, and health.

As part of the ongoing efforts to revitalize Alabama 4-H, an Advisory Team was convened last year to help chart the organization's direction for the next five years. The 4-H strategic plan calls for:

- Assessing programs to determine their relevance to current needs.
- Involving more volunteers, especially older youths, in 4-H program delivery.
- Increasing private funding.

Animal Science

The 4-H Animal Science program provided some 3,500 young people with opportunities to enhance their knowledge of agriculture and animal science. Activities such as judging and livestock evaluation, quiz bowls, skills events, and livestock shows encompassing six different species enabled young people to develop skills in leadership, oral and written communication and other creative expression, goal setting, problem solving and decision making, record keeping, character building, and personal responsibility.



■ Alabama 4-H members continue to compete and win top honors at regional and national livestock, dairy, meats, horse, and poultry and egg competitions.

■ The 26th annual **Southern Regional 4-H Horse Show Championships**, hosted by Alabama, included more than 500 4-H'ers from 13 states.

■ A Tuscaloosa County 4-H'er placed third in the **National 4-H Meats Judging** contest in Kansas City, Missouri.

■ **International Harvest Luncheons** afforded fifth grade 4-H'ers an interactive lesson on the importance of agriculture and how food comes from the field to the table.

■ Numerous partnerships benefitted 4-H Animal Science programs, including the Auburn University Animal and Dairy Sciences Department, Alabama Cattlemen's and Cattlewomen's Associations, the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries, Alabama Farmers Cooperative, Alabama Future Farmers of America, Alabama Horse Council, Alabama Farmers Federation, Alabama Meat Goat Association, Alabama National Fair, Alabama Pork Producers, Alabama Poultry and Egg Association, Greater Alabama Fair and Festival, A.C. Legg Company, Macedon Angus Farm, Southeastern Livestock Expo and Rodeo, Southeastern United Dairy Industry Association, and R.L. Ziegler Company.

Environmental Stewardship

In a state that is blessed with lakes, rivers, and forests, 4-H Environmental Stewardship teaches young people to understand their link to the natural environment and their responsibility to conserve and manage natural resources. Young people in urban, suburban, and rural areas are learning the need for environmental stewardship.

■ More than 25,000 Alabama young people participated in 4-H Environmental Stewardship programs, projects, conferences, and competitions last year. On the national level, Alabama has become the “state to beat” in forestry and wildlife judging contests, having won outright or placed in the top three in all but two years since 1984.

■ The **Alabama Forestry Judging Invitational** continues to attract new participants. The program is a collaborative effort of the Alabama Forestry Commission, Alabama Forest Owners, Alabama Forestry Association, Alabama River Woodlands, Birmingham-based Joe Brady Trust, private industry, and individuals. The Alabama champion team placed third in national competition.



■ The Lee County 4-H Wildlife Judging Team won top honors at the **Alabama Wildlife Habitat Evaluation** contest and placed fourth in national competition in Manhattan, Kansas. One team member was recognized as the top-scoring individual in the nation.

■ An Alabama Extension specialist served as National Committee Chairperson for the 4-H Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Program as well as the project director for national training workshops.

■ The **Alabama 4-H Shooting Sports State Rendezvous** attracted youngsters from 12 counties. In some cases, parents and siblings attended, making this a family activity.





Horizons

Alabama 4-H programs expand the social and cultural horizons of many young people.

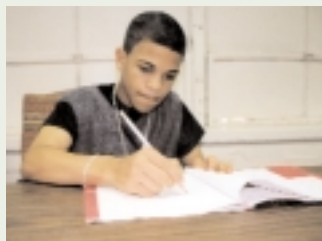
■ The 1999 **Performing Arts Camp** attracted record attendance. In only one week, in the course of completing their own production of *Lil' Abner*, 4-H'ers learned about all the areas involved in musical theater, including singing, acting, dancing, lights and sound, set design, and costuming.

■ The second annual **Youth Entrepreneurial Summit**, held in conjunction with the sixth annual **African American Entrepreneurial Summit**, attracted 400 potential young entrepreneurs from across Alabama. This was the second largest entrepreneurial youth gathering in the country in 1999.

■ Teens Getting Involved for the Future (**TGIF**) received increased funding in 1999. Statewide, the program attracted roughly 3,700 sixth graders, teen leaders, and adults. Two Alabama teen leaders were selected to serve on the Youth Leadership Team of the **National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy**.

■ The **School Enrichment Program** reached more than 10,000 young people in 1999—a significant increase from past years.

■ The annual retreat of the **Alabama Adult Volunteers Association** drew more than 100 people who were introduced to new ways of supporting the Extension System and county 4-H chapters. The organization's first female president was elected at the 1999 retreat.



Leadership

Alabama 4-H offers young people a wide range of opportunities to gain the skills and confidence to become tomorrow's leaders.

- Five 4-H'ers represented Alabama at the **National 4-H Conference** in Washington, D.C., and one was elected to serve on the **National 4-H Technology Corps**.
- Twenty-four 4-H'ers attended the **National 4-H Congress** in Atlanta, and two held leadership roles.
- The 1999 **State 4-H Congress**, held at Alabama A&M University, had the theme of **Preparing Alabama's Youth for the Millennium**. More than 500 young people, parents, and volunteers attended. The Congress included competitive events, motivational speakers, and educational activities on various themes reflecting the 4-H mission.
- The **Alabama Civil Justice Leadership Institute**, jointly sponsored by Extension and the Alabama Civil Justice Foundation, was held in conjunction with the Alabama 4-H Congress. The institute's theme, **Soaring on the Wings of 4-H Pride**, focused on developing young people to become our state's future leaders.



■ **Legislative Days**, an annual event for 4-H Council members throughout the state, was held in Montgomery. Hosted by the Alabama Commissioner of Agriculture and Industries, Legislative Days is sponsored by the Extension System, Alabama Farmers Federation, the Alabama Cattlemen's Association, the Montgomery County Extension Office, and the Alabama Rural Electric Association office in Montgomery.

■ A visit to Japan by a Tuskegee 4-H'er as part of the **Japanese Exchange Program** was sponsored by 4-H and Japan's LABO Institute.

The **Midwinter Teen Retreat** held in February had 250 in attendance.

■ **Citizenship Washington Focus**, a program providing increased visibility for 4-H'ers, attracted 57 participants—the most in two decades. Young people traveled to Washington, D.C., where they met their Legislators, many of whom are former 4-H'ers themselves.

■ Alabama 4-H'ers and agents—along with their counterparts from 14 other states—attended the **National Youth Leadership Conference** in Madison, Wisconsin.



Science and Technology

Four-H is committed to developing literacy in science and technology to prepare young people for the challenges of life in the twenty-first century.

■ A new internet domain name for Alabama 4-H, **al4h.org**, will make 4-H information easier to access and will allow youngsters to participate in virtual 4-H Clubs. Young people from all over the world can access Alabama 4-H information and chat with other 4-H'ers.

■ Some 400 young people took part in **4-H Missions in Space** camps at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville.

■ A team of Extension agents trained during the 1998 National Science and Technology Symposium shared what they learned with more than 50 co-workers and 4-H leaders.

■ Alabama 4-H'ers participating in the **4-H Science Academy** benefitted from study at the Challenger Learning Center for Space Science and the Southern Museum of Flight.

■ Several hundred 4-H'ers built and launched rockets as part of 4-H Science and Technology instruction.

■ An Alabama 4-H team participated in the **National 4-H Engineering Science and Leadership** event at Purdue, where two Alabama youngsters placed in the electrical energy and bicycle safety competitions.

4-H Youth Development Center

The **4-H Youth Development Center** served throughout the year as the meeting place for many 4-H activities. Today, the center is developing into a comprehensive, full-service environmental camp and conference center offering many Alabama young people a remarkably beautiful setting in which to learn, study, and play.

■ In 1999, more than 5,600 young people enjoyed the center and its beautiful, natural surroundings. Almost half of these were third graders who participated in three-day **Environmental Education Camps**.



Partnerships for the Future

As any Extension professional will tell you, this report merely skims the surface of what we are doing. Sometimes we amaze ourselves! But we could never be doing all these things without our partners.

The word “cooperative” may have had one meaning to those who framed Smith-Lever, the 1914 Act that established the federal-state-local partnership of Cooperative Extension. It now means far more. Our cooperators include an abundance of people and groups—from the individual 4-H volunteer leader, Master Cattle Producer, or homemaker who advises a neighbor to “call the county agent,” to our partners in hundreds of agencies, industries and businesses, organizations and governments across the state and around the world.

One of our principal goals in 2000 and beyond is to increase the effectiveness of our partnerships. We eagerly anticipate meeting this challenge, and we invite you to help us do it. As partners, we will make Alabama’s future bright.

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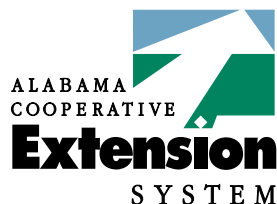


Photo of Cahaba lilies (p. 1) courtesy of the Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel.

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