

Names and Faces	Departments Now.....8
<i>Out in Africa</i> 1	ASK.....10
<i>High on Lotus, Learning</i> 1	Research News.....12
<i>The Perfect Fit</i>4	Purely Academic.....14
<i>Making Art from Science</i> 13	New Developments, Old Friends..... 16
<i>First Ladies' Scholarship</i> 19	Recipe.....18
Roosevelt Street Diary.....2	Calendar of Events.....20
Extending the Knowledge.....7	



CALL OF THE WILD—AU alumnae Shivaun Leonard has been working with local experts and authorities in Africa to help establish the Source of the Nile fish farm near Jinja, Uganda.

Out in Africa

College of Ag Alumnae Working in African Aquaculture

By Katie Jackson

Shivaun Leonard has a favorite photograph of one of her beloved, busy little dachshund dogs. It shows a silhouette of the pup—his name is Kojak—as he stares out through a windowpane. On the other side of the glass, huge in comparison to the dog’s outline, is an African elephant looking in.

For those of us accustomed to watching squirrels and red birds through our windows, it is an astounding, exotic image. For Leonard, a College of Ag alumnae, it’s simply a perfect illustration of the beautiful, wild and sometimes intimidating world that she has experienced during the 12-plus years she has lived and worked in Africa.

It’s also part of the reason that she is drawn to the expatriate life, no matter how difficult daily life can be in places such as Uganda, Zimbabwe, Gabon, Chad and the Congo—all places she has worked and all places that pose such daily challenges as no running water and unreliable electricity to rogue cape buffalo, a coup d’etat, refugee camps, spitting cobras, tick typhus and malarial mosquitoes.

Leonard, who earned both her master’s and doctoral degrees from the AU Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures, began globe traipsing at an early age. Born in Dublin, Ireland, she moved with her family to the United States when she was 10 and eventually grew so proud of her adopted country that she became a U.S. citizen when she was 18.

But Leonard also was curious about the big wide world, so after earning her undergraduate degree in biology (with a minor in marine biology) in 1990 from the University of New Hampshire, she joined the Peace Corps. She was sent to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then called Zaire) where she lived in a mud hut with a grass roof and worked with fish farmers and others to build an artesian aquaculture program in the country.

(continued on page 3)



BEARING BLOOMS—AU horticulture doctoral student Warner Orozco-Obando shows off a bloom on one of hundreds of lotus plants at the Paterson Greenhouses that the AU Lotus Project team is studying.

High on Lotus, Learning, Life

Costa Rican Approaches Lotus Research, Life with Gusto

By Jamie Creamer

Warner Orozco-Obando makes his way through dozens of containers holding four-foot-tall plants with velvety leaves as big as dinner plates. He stops beside one and gently cups his hand underneath a spectacular pink flower that rises a foot or more above the leaves.

“The more I learn about lotus, the more I love lotus,” Orozco says.

Orozco was introduced to the ancient aquatic plant in early 2006, when he arrived at Auburn University as a doctoral student in the Department of Horticulture, working under professor Ken Tilt. Tilt was a couple of years into the AU Lotus Project, a multifaceted study to determine whether the lotus could be a viable alternative crop for Alabama farmers, especially a profitable double crop for fish farmers in the Black Belt and across Alabama.

Tilt has been enthused about the Lotus Project since the study was in the planning stages but says that with Orozco on the team, all involved get a daily injection of excitement and energy.

“Warner’s pretty amazing; he has the work ethic of a dairy farmer, and we have a great time together working on our research project,” Tilt says.

“In fact, I think he’s having too much fun. It’s hard for me to keep up.”

You probably can’t attribute all of Orozco’s get-up-and-go to the Lotus Project, however. He seems to take on life in general with an intensity and vitality that, were he to bottle it up and sell it, would make him a very wealthy man.

So what makes this Costa Rica native tick?

If you asked him that question, he might just hand you two single-spaced, 12-point-type pages entitled “The Story of My Life,” by Warner Orozco-Obando. He wrote that 1,200-word piece in 2007, as part of his application—his *successful* application, by the way—for a Horticultural Research Institute scholarship.

From the outline, you’ll know he holds a bachelor’s degree in vegetable crops from the University of California, Davis, and two master’s degrees—one in environmental law from the International University of Andalucía in Spain and the other in horticulture from the University of Georgia.

A Man of Many Talents

And, when not in school, he has earned a living in Costa Rica as a supervisor of pineapple production research for Del Monte, a professional beekeeper, a community college teacher, a horticulture teacher in a high-school class for mentally and physically handicapped students and a natural history/environmental tour guide specializing in tropical plants and crops. Just before coming to Auburn, he worked as a horticulturalist/integrated pest management supervisor with a tree and plant care company in Virginia.

At this point, you may be thinking, “OK, just how old is this Warner guy?”

Well, he was born in 1964, in Costa Rica, and spent his early years living with his grandparents in a suburb of San José, Costa Rica’s capital. His grandfather, whose family was in education, was born and

(continued on page 6)

Roosevelt Street *diary*

Earlier this year the AU Agricultural Alumni Association's board of directors voted to take on a new project that will rejuvenate and preserve part of Auburn's agricultural history while also bringing new levels of activity to Ag Heritage Park. That project will transform the old AU Dairy Barn located off Samford Avenue at the park into a facility that will increase the visibility of Ag Heritage Park, further establish the park's presence on the AU campus and provide a venue for telling the story of agriculture at AU and throughout Alabama.

To help support that effort, I designated funds raised at this year's Ag Classic, which was held in May, to go toward that project. I'm pleased to announce that the 2008 Ag Classic raised \$15,000 that will be used for the Dairy Barn project. That money, along with pledges from Ag Alumni board members, lays the foundation for the project's funding.

The project has also attracted attention and support from others on campus. The College of Architecture, Construction and Design's Design-Build master's program has dedicated a team of students that is diligently developing design ideas for the project and may also donate their labor to some of the renovation work.

The hope is to make the Dairy Barn an entry facility to Ag Heritage Park that will house meeting and office space for the Ag Alumni Association, a welcome center and a retail space where Alabama grown and made products can be sold along with ice cream or other food items.

Estimated cost for the project is \$1.5 million to \$2 million, a cost below earlier projections because of the support of the Design-Build Master's Program students. But more help is needed. The Ag Alumni board of directors has asked that every board member make a gift to the Dairy Barn project and we are also encouraging all College of Agriculture faculty, staff, alumni and friends to contribute to this project either financially or with in-kind materials. You can learn more about the project and how to support it by contacting Chris Gary, development director for the college, at 334-844-1136 or cgary@auburn.edu.

By the way, the spirit of giving is strong not just among our alumni and friends. In a recent on-campus faculty staff campaign, 63.73 percent of our College of Agriculture faculty and staff members made donations, making us third-place among all the AU schools and colleges. The two College of Ag departments with the highest levels of participation were animal sciences and agricultural economics and rural sociology. And among the outlying units of the Alabama Ag Experiment Station, employees at the Ornamental Horticulture Research Center in Mobile and the Wiregrass Research and Extension Center in Headland posted the top participation rates.

This level of giving should be commended and we thank all the faculty and staff who made donations, further proving the level of commitment our employees have to our college and university.



Richard Guthrie
Dean, College of Agriculture
Director, Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station



NEW IDEAS FROM OLD IMAGES—The AU Design-Build Master's Program is using old photos of the dairy barn to create a new space that honors its original design and footprint. One possible option in the proposed plan involves placing outdoor seating spaces where the two silos used to stand.

We want to hear from you!

Send us your opinions, memories or comments. We'd like to include them in our new Letters from the Field section! Send them to Ag Communications and Marketing, Letters from the Field, Room 3 Comer Hall, Auburn, AL 36849; 334-844-5887; or smithcl@auburn.edu.

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(LEONARD, from page 1)

That experience showed Leonard the promise aquaculture presented to humankind as a source of high quality protein for food and a source of income. So, when she was evacuated from Zaire in 1991 due to unrest in the country, Leonard decided to go to graduate school and study in an aquaculture program.

From Africa to Auburn

She began to check around for options and recalled that, while doing her Peace Corps training in Mississippi several years earlier, she had visited Auburn's fisheries and aquaculture department and met, among others, AU FAA professor Claude Boyd.

"I remember that I enjoyed his down to earth personality, and was immediately impressed with his practical approach to finding solutions to potentially explosive topics, such as pollution, downstream users, land politics and the like," she says, in her voice which is a mix of English, American, and Zimbabwean accents and generally quite difficult to place.

"I knew I wanted to study water quality, so I contacted Dr. Boyd and, luckily, he had a research assistantship available. That really helped because I was a poor Peace Corps volunteer and had little money for grad school.

"I was not, at that point, aware of his international reputation as an authority on water quality," she adds. "Later, when I learned more about him, I was amazed that he even allowed me into his lab. I can't remember how much glassware I broke in his lab!"

Boyd not only tolerated her broken beakers, he was a kind and supportive major professor as Leonard, from 1991 to 1995, earned her master's and Ph.D. degrees in water quality.

Upon graduation, however, the now-Dr. Leonard still had the do-good and travel bug, so she went back to work as a Peace Corps trainer in South Carolina, and then became a Peace Corps training director for the aquaculture program in the West African nation of Gabon for about five months.

Starting from Scratch

From there she went into a more commercial side of aquaculture, becoming the production director for Lake Harvest Aquaculture in Zimbabwe where she helped Lake Harvest, a United Kingdom-based company that focuses on investing in and managing businesses in the world's poorer countries, establish a fish farm.

"I was sent to Zimbabwe (in 1996) to develop, from scratch, Lake Harvest Aquaculture in an extremely rural area with limited facilities in country," recalls Leonard. Leonard co-developed the company from a start-up operation into the largest tilapia cage culture business in Africa, growing from zero production in 1996 to producing some 8 million pounds of tilapia by 2003.

Leonard was immersed in a new and foreign culture that was not entirely friendly to female bosses, but she read a lot about African history to understand where they are coming from. "I feel that the best way to do that is to learn the history of the country, the tribes and ultimately the culture," she says. "I respect the fact that I am a visitor here."

After eight years in Zimbabwe with Lake Harvest, she had built and trained a production department that was ready to be managed by a host country national.

"Basically, I had worked my way out of a job," she says, "which is what you should do; build a department, train a workforce and then turn it over to them. If you have planned and trained properly, then there is little reason why the people you have trained cannot run the department."

Leonard left Africa in 2004 to work for an upstate New York-based indoor tilapia production company. A year later she relocated to North Carolina, and started an aquacultural and water quality consulting practice.

But the draw of Africa proved too great again, and by the fall of 2007, she was in Jinja, Uganda, where she had rejoined Lake Harvest to help start up Source of the Nile (SON) tilapia farm along the shore of Lake Victoria.

Serving as its general manager, Leonard deals with SON's immediate and long-range issues.

A Day in the Life

"My day can consist of meeting the authorities or farmer groups to handling human resource issues to being the ATM when we have no cash," she says. But the list does not stop there. On any given day she may be buying raw materials to make their fish feed, driving a sick employee to the clinic, getting desks made with a carpenter,

buying first aid box supplies, filleting fish, delivering fish to customers, doing water quality tests on the pond and lake water and writing management accounts and reports.

"No two days are ever the same," she says.

Though Lake Harvest has 12 years of experience working in Africa, working in Uganda has been a new experience, especially getting all the officials and locals to buy into the project.

Leonard has worked hard to get everyone on board and she's also gotten some help from Karen Veverica, an AU employee who is chief of party for FISH (Fisheries Investment for Sustainable Harvest), a 40-month effort begun in 2005 and funded by a \$2.5 million U.S. Agency for International Development grant focusing on enhancing commercial fish production in Uganda.

"Karen has helped introduce us to the government people who you have to know to work through the bureaucracy," Leonard says. "In turn, we have helped her project by doing feed trials with our cages, our fish and our employees."

For Leonard, starting this new venture is exciting, invigorating and, yes, at times frustrating. But it's all in a day's work, and she has a deep appreciation for being able to do a day's work. That's because she came a bit too close to Africa's wild side.

The Reality of the Wild

When working in Zimbabwe with Lake Harvest, Leonard was charged, gored and trampled by a rogue Cape buffalo—a "lone" or "dugga" bull that had a bad at-

"I respect the fact that I am a visitor here."



WILD BUT WONDERFUL—Shivaun Leonard, pictured above at left, has loved her work in Africa, though a close encounter with a cape buffalo (pictured at right) almost led to tragic results and was the most serious of many trials that Leonard has encountered in her 12-plus years working in Africa.

titude because it had been thrown out of its herd by the younger males and had also been injured by lions.

Leonard was walking around the ponds, unaware that the bull had broken through the farm's electric fence seeking protection and hiding in long grass on a part of the farm farthest from Leonard's office (and therefore people) and where there were no trees to climb for a fast escape.

"He just wanted refuge, and here I came, no clue that he was there," she recalls. "As soon as I met his eyes hiding in the long grass, I immediately turned and ran trying to get into the closest pond as he simultaneously charged. He was so fast. He got to me in three paces," she recalls.

The bull gored her through the hips and legs, then flipped her over his back. He then swung around and was trampling her when farm workers saw what was happening and rushed to Leonard's rescue, truly saving her life.

The injuries were severe and, between the wounds and an ensuing infection, Leonard spent three months in London and the U.S. recovering. Leonard knows she is lucky to be alive, much less able to walk, but she did heal and return to Zimbabwe.

When she got back to the farm and talked with her employees about the attack, one employee remarked, "That one (meaning Leonard), she can run fast...but not fast enough."

While that experience is a constant reminder to Leonard that Africa is a genuinely wild place, it has not diminished her affection for Africa or for her work.

Someday, though, she will slow down and return stateside again, perhaps to teach at a university (Auburn would be nice, she says), though she says she will always want to travel.

"It just gets in your blood and you get used to the lifestyle" she says. And her two pups—Kojak and Snoop—might agree. Where else, after all, can you get such great views out your window?



the Perfect Fit

AU Poultry Prof Finds Niche in Poultry Research

By Jamie Creamer



nce upon a time, in a faraway country, Omar Oyarzabal was a veterinarian.

He earned his veterinary medicine degree in 1987, from the National University of Rio Cuarto in his homeland of Argentina, and opened his own clinic in the country's northwestern region.

Day in and day out, people would bring him their dogs, cats and various other small animals and

rely on him to heal the sick, mend the injured and keep all of them up-to-date on vaccinations.

Oyarzabal always had been an animal-lover—"That's why I got a degree in veterinary medicine," he says—and he thoroughly enjoyed doctoring, befriending and interacting with his four-legged patients.

But the two-legged owners of his patients were another story. The owners, he wasn't wild about.

"I would get so frustrated with them, telling them over and over how they needed to take care of their pets in the first place and then they wouldn't get sick and injured, but most of them, they didn't even listen," recalls Oyarzabal. "They didn't value their pets as much as people do here today."

Despite the 10 years or so that he had invested in becoming a veterinarian and then practicing as one, he began to ponder a career change. For some reason, he had developed an interest in food safety, especially regarding poultry products.

Perhaps that was because Oyarzabal and his two older brothers, Emilio and Felix, had grown up on a farm near their home city of Tucumán. Their mother and father, a federal agent, had a poultry farm on the side that their three sons helped run. At the time, most of the country's poultry and egg farms were family operations; the vertical integration that already characterized the U.S. poultry industry had not made its way to Argentina yet.

"Instead of the 20,000 birds you'll have in a chicken house today, we had maybe 2,000 per house," Oyarzabal says.

The Oyarzabals marketed their birds directly to consumers in a variety of ways over the years, even for a time selling roasted and barbecued chickens and other food products at a rotisserie the boys helped their father run.

Gearing Up for Grad School

While Oyarzabal had attended vet school in Argentina and had operated a veterinary clinic in his home country, his two brothers had moved to the U.S. and were working on their Ph.D.s. Knowing that the younger Oyarzabal wanted to return to college, one of his brothers started sending out graduate school applications on his behalf to American universities that offered what he was looking for.

Somewhere during this time, the government of Egypt awarded Oyarzabal a fellowship to visit that country for three months to study poultry production in extreme desert conditions.

"On my way back to Argentina from Egypt, I stopped by the U.S.A. and spent two months preparing for and taking the GRE exam to enter graduate school," he says.

Meanwhile, one of those applications his brother had sent for him had made its way to Auburn and wound up on the desk of Don Conner, who at the time was a poultry science professor and director of the poultry science department's Microbiology Lab. Conner wrote Oyarzabal, said he was looking for a graduate student to work on the development of a probiotic that would control *Salmonella* in chickens.

Oyarzabal took the chance and, in the fall of 1992, enrolled in AU's graduate school. Working under Conner's direction, he earned his master's in poultry science/microbiology in 1994 and his Ph.D. in the same in 1997. His research for his doctorate shifted from *Salmonella* to the development of techniques to detect, identify and subtype *Campylobacter* in poultry meat.

TOP-NOTCH SCIENTIST—Poultry science assistant professor Omar Oyarzabal has been directing his department's Microbiology Laboratory for campylobacter research since returning to AU in 2003. He received both his master's and his Ph.D. in poultry science/microbiology from Auburn in 1994 and 1997, respectively.

Campylobacter is the most commonly reported bacterial cause of foodborne infection in the U.S. It usually occurs in the intestinal tracts of poultry. The birds don't get sick, but at slaughter, the bacteria can be transferred from the intestines to the meat and, if the raw chicken isn't handled or stored properly, to the consumer.

Searching for the Right Fit

For the first six years after Auburn awarded him his doctorate, Oyarzabal tried diligently to find his niche.

His first job out of Auburn was in St. Louis, Mo., where he worked as product development manager for Novus International Inc., a leading developer of products and programs for animal health and nutrition.

"It was basically a food-safety job," Oyarzabal says. "I would analyze microbial test data for new products to determine if the treated food products were safe for human consumption."

After a couple of years with Novus, he moved back down South, to Laurel, Miss., to work as quality control and food safety manager for Sanderson Farms Inc. One of his responsibilities was to provide Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point, or HACCP, training for the company's employees.

It was good to get that experience, Oyarzabal says, but it was not the job for him.

So in 2000, he accepted a job as a scientist with the National Food Products Association, now known as the Grocery Manufacturers Association, and moved to Washington, D.C.

"I mainly worked with frozen juices," he says, "to determine how bacteria get in frozen juices, how long bacteria survive in frozen juices and the effect of thawing/freezing on preventing the survival of harmful bacteria."

He enjoyed his work for the association, but when it became obvious that a position he had been promised was not going to materialize, he moved on again, this time to Lansing, Mich., and a job as a senior research microbiologist for Neogen Corporation, working on the validation of food-safety test kits.

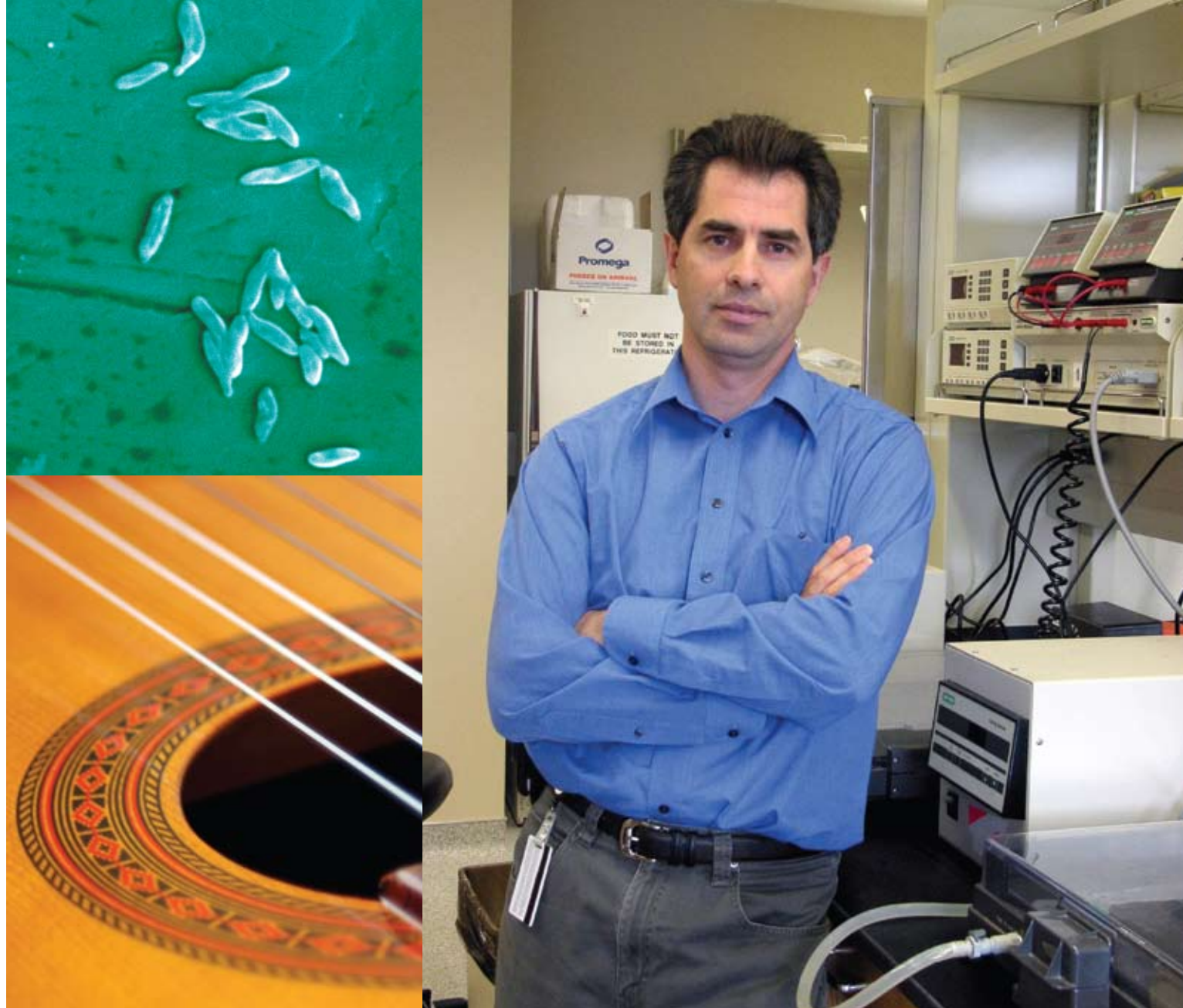
This was actually a job he enjoyed and found rewarding, and he might even still be there had he not learned in 2003 that AU's poultry department had an opening for a microbiologist.

Oyarzabal called Conner and discussed the opportunity of applying for that faculty position at Auburn and taking on the Microbiology Lab.

Back to AU

The AU alum applied for the post, landed it and returned to AU Department of Poultry Science faculty in an 80-percent research/20-percent teaching position. His research focus, once again, was *Campylobacter*.

A couple of years later, Oyarzabal married Nancy Gell, a woman whom the avid tennis player had met one evening in Michigan at the tennis courts where both were getting in a couple of games. The two had quickly hit it off — "she was impressed with my backswing," he says now, as she rolls her eyes — and a spark began to flicker and then flame.



(That he was, and is, an accomplished classical guitarist may have helped fan that flame—probably more than the backswing.)

Gell, a Michigan native, was a physical therapist with a master's degree in public health and was employed as a researcher with the University of Michigan.

When she left her native Michigan to join Oyarzabal at Auburn, she brought that job with her. She makes fairly frequent trips back to Michigan to conduct research then brings the data back to Auburn for analysis.

Ten or so years ago, Gell spent several weeks in Bhutan, doing volunteer work in a hospital there. One of her patients was a bright young wheelchair-bound boy, to whom she became especially attached. Even after she returned home, she kept in close touch with him, and the bond grew even stronger.

Last year, the Oyarzabals brought that boy—or, at 15 now, that young man—to Auburn and legally adopted him.

His name is Tandin Dorji, and he'll enter the ninth grade at Auburn Junior High this fall. The all-A's-and-B's student says he's adjusted well to school in America, but ask him how he likes it, and he gives the typical American teen answer.

"Boring," he says with a shrug.

Enthusiasm in General

But if he hangs around his adoptive dad much, he's bound to get caught up in Oyarzabal's enthusiasm about, well, about life—at work and at play.

At AU, his outstanding work with *Campylobacter* earned him the 2007 Director's Research Award from the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station. And he gets high marks from students as well.

"Omar has an ease in his actions and speech whenever he communicates with students," poultry science master's student Leslie Speegle says of her major professor. "His attitude about research and life, both striving for the new and exciting, makes him and his lab the best experience for a new graduate student."

He is chairman of the College of Ag's Diversity Committee and worked earlier this year to secure a National Science Foundation grant that has brought 10 undergraduates from underrepresented minorities or from schools with limited research opportunities to Auburn for 10 weeks of hands-on research experience. It is a program he hopes will encourage top-notch students to pursue graduate school—preferably at Auburn—and become the next generation of scientists.

Away from work, you might find Oyarzabal on the tennis courts, on the golf course, playing his 12-string classical guitar, attending a classical guitar concert that the Chattahoochee Guitar Society he co-founded is sponsoring or in the kitchen.

Speegle proclaims him "a fantastic cook, especially homemade pizza." He cooks Italian quite often, preparing many dishes he learned from his mother, an Italian immigrant. Often he and Gell team up in the kitchen to create out-of-this-world cannellonis, lasagna and such. But don't ask them for a recipe, because they don't have any.


"We just make them up as we go," Oyarzabal says. "Whatever vegetables we find lying around, we add them."

Which poses a problem of sorts.

"On my way back to Argentina from Egypt, I stopped by the U.S.A. and spent two months preparing for and taking the GRE exam to enter graduate school," he says.

"When we make something that's really, really good, we can't remember how we did it, so we'll probably never have it again," Gell says.

But back to classical guitar for one moment. Ask Oyarzabal about his music, and he just waves it off and downplays his talent. But search online for Oyarzabal and classical guitar, and you might run across this, from a blog written in 2003 by a knitter/musician in Lansing, Mich.

"I ran out to see the last 15 minutes of Omar Oyarzabal at Altu's restaurant. Omar is an elegant gentleman who is a classically trained guitarist. He plays Spanish, Latin-American and classical guitar, and sometimes sings. I just love being surrounded by such excellent people! I'm a very lucky person." 



AT HOME WITH OMAR—When he isn't in his Poultry Science Building office, lab or classroom, Oyarzabal enjoys playing tennis, golf and classical guitar, cooking and kicking back with his family, including his wife, Nancy Gell, and their adopted son, 15-year-old Tandin Dorji, whom Gell met years ago while working as a volunteer in a Bhutan hospital.



LIVE FROM BEIJING—AU Lotus Project team leader Ken Tilt snapped this shot of Warner Orozco-Obando during one of numerous tours that were part of a lotus conference in Beijing. The conference drew more than 200 lotus researchers and lotus lovers from China, Japan, Thailand and, of course, Auburn.

(OROZCO, from page 1)

reared “a city boy” and thus was perfectly content as a suburbanite. The same could not be said, however, of the grandmother.

“Before they moved to the city, she was a farmer and rancher, and after they moved, she dreamed for many years of one day returning to the country,” Orozco says, noting that that never happened. “She lived in the city, but her heart never left the farm.”

Grandma also was determined to stay connected to the land. “She always planted a garden with all kinds of vegetables and flowers, and I remember being 4 or 5 and helping her, and telling her how I wanted to be a farmer,” Orozco says. “I think it was while I was gardening with her that she sowed the seeds of her passion for plants in me.”

Orozco lived with his grandparents until he finished the sixth grade, the last grade of primary school under Costa Rica’s educational system. At that point, students can choose between either attending a five-year academic high school or enrolling in a six-year program at technical high school.

His high-school days

The decision was made that Orozco would move to his mother’s home in Puntarenas and attend an academic high school near her.

But Orozco detested the academic school’s program, so he moved to the Nicoya Peninsula to live with his father, a regional school superintendent, and attend a nearby technical high school. High-school students in Costa Rica must choose majors as college students do in the U.S., and Orozco chose agriculture.

“At that school, I went from being a regular ‘passing’ student to an A-plus book lover,” he says. “It’s a beautiful feeling to be studying in a field that you love. Even geometry makes sense when you use it to calculate the area required for your corn-field.”

He also kept his gardening skills honed because his dad had a small nursery and paid his son an allowance to keep the trees and old-fashioned fruits and vegetables growing in the nursery healthy and thriving. For Orozco, that was a fine way to earn spending money.

Orozco’s high marks in high school earned him a scholarship to the Institute of Technology of Coast Rica, where he majored in agronomy.

In his freshman year there, he heard about a U.S. Agency for International Development program that allowed young Latinos to go to the United States to learn English and the American culture and to finish their undergraduate degrees. That caught his attention, so he applied.

One day near the end of his junior year, one of the institute’s four public telephones rang and the fellow who answered it started yelling Orozco’s name and telling him he had a call from the American Embassy.

He had been accepted to the program.

“At that school, I went from being a regular ‘passing’ student to an A-plus book lover,” he says. “It’s a beautiful feeling to be studying in a field that you love.”

Settling in the States

He took his first step on American soil in 1988, in Washington, D.C. Soon, he had enrolled in English-as-a-second-language classes at Georgetown University and, in his spare time, applied to undergraduate programs at schools across the country. He got acceptance letters from the University of Hawaii, Tennessee State and UC Davis.

“I had to reassess my future career,” Orozco says. “I loved poultry, pigs, vegetables, bees—I loved everything about agriculture.”

He went with the west coast school and earned his bachelor’s in vegetable crops in 1991. The USAID program he’d come to the U.S. under required that he return to Costa Rica then, for at least two years.

He stayed for 12, and it was in those years that he worked in the aforementioned fields—as a pineapple researcher, an environmental tour guide, a teacher, and, of course, as a beekeeper.

“I really wanted to be a pig farmer, but I didn’t have the money to get started in that, so I went with bees, even with a lot of old-timers whose hives had been wiped out years earlier by Africanized ‘killer’ bees telling me I was making a big mistake.”

But Orozco’s were Africanized hybrid honey bees, which actually were more productive than honey bees common before the African invasion. Soon he had built a steady business, selling honey, pollen and wax as fast as he could harvest it. He didn’t make big bucks in the bee business—the tour guide job was his major source of income—but it helped pay the bills. And, besides, he enjoyed it.

Not far into the new millennium, Orozco left his teaching jobs and began applying for other positions.

Back to School

“Every job I applied for, I was either overqualified or not qualified enough,” he says. “So I decided to go back to school.”

He applied to universities around the world—Australia, Japan, Spain, Holland (for a master’s degree in beekeeping!)—and wound up in Spain, at the University of Andalucía, where he earned an M.S. in environmental law.

Increasingly, though, Orozco was realizing that horticulture was his field, and while in Spain, he applied for an internship at the Mary Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, Fla. On his flight to Sarasota to interview, Orozco spent a night in Atlanta with some friends he had made when he served as their tour guide on their Costa Rica vacation. The Georgia Bulldogs fans told Orozco that if he wanted to study ornamental plants, the University of Georgia was the place to go.

Before his internship at Sarasota began, Orozco spent a week in Athens, Ga., on the UGA campus and applied to Georgia’s graduate program in horticulture. He was accepted to Georgia in 2002, with his research to focus on hydrangeas. When he earned his master’s in horticulture in 2005, he was determined to continue his education “in order to qualify to become a horticulture professor,” he says.

Orozco applied to the doctoral program at Georgia and was told he was a shooin, but then problems arose.

“My visa was expiring and the only way to get an extension was if I was in school,” Orozco says. “My professor at Georgia kept telling me to just sit tight, to sit tight, but in the end, the funding never came.”

Fortunately, as he was playing the waiting game with UGA, he began applying to other universities with doctoral horticulture programs, including North Carolina State, Clemson University, Florida State University and Auburn.

In September 2005, as he waited for some kind of answers from schools, Orozco landed a job as a horticulturist and integrated pest management coordinator with a Virginia-based tree and plant care company.

A few months later, Auburn’s Ken Tilt invited Orozco to AU and after talking with him and reviewing his resume, decided the man would make a great addition to the Lotus Project research team. Orozco was as good as in, if a lotus research grant Tilt had submitted was funded.

And it was, so when fall semester 2006 began, Orozco was a doctoral student at Auburn University. He hit the ground running and hasn’t slowed down yet. Tilt says it’s a pleasure to have Orozco as a student and fellow researcher.

“As a graduate student, you always hope your work will contribute to society,”

Tilt says.

“Warner’s effort and dedication will definitely make a difference.”



News from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System—“Your Experts for Life.” For more information on these or other Extension-related stories and projects, visit www.aces.edu.



Extension Speakers Bureau Great Source of Programs

Finding and scheduling speakers for local civic group appearances is hard work, even for seasoned veterans. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System can make this task a little easier by providing clubs and groups with Extension experts and speakers on a wide range of subjects.

In addition to providing top-notch speakers, Extension communicators can also work with local media to publicize the appearance in advance.

The speakers bureau is comprised of educators whose training and expertise reflect Extension’s highly diverse programs, which encompass agriculture, forestry, natural resources, urban and nontraditional programs, health and nutrition, and individual and family well-being.

For information on the speakers available and how to schedule one for your group, call 334-844-5686 or e-mail langjc@auburn.edu.

Tree Amigos Program Makes Positive Effect on Youth and Economy

When child care supervisor Mike Rollins partnered with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and 4-H to set up the Tree Amigos Youth Development program at the Coosa Valley Youth Services Attention Home, a facility for at-risk youth in Anniston, he knew 4-H programs would have a positive effect on the youths. But he had no idea it would make such a positive influence on the region’s economy.

What started as a horticulture therapy program at CVYS in 1994 has now become a comprehensive career training program that teaches youths valuable life, social and job skills they can use as they transition from CVYS back to school or to the workforce. Through the years, David West, Extension coordinator for Calhoun County, received a series of grants that enabled the facility to expand into a four-acre project equipped with a greenhouse, a storage shed, tree nursery and part-time educator and several adult volunteers.

“In 2005, the Extension program at CVYS was restructured and expanded. A number of Extension agents and Master Gardener volunteers provide regular training in 12-week cycles,” says West. Topics taught include various aspects of money management, food safety, nutrition, etiquette, public speaking, entomology, plant pathology, farm and job safety, care and maintenance of landscape plants, resume writing and interviewing.

The program serves about 200 youths each year.

Last year, West received a Rural Alabama Initiative grant to evaluate the effect of the program on youths and the community. The report shows that the program has made a significant economic effect on Calhoun County. It is estimated 102 CVYS graduates annually receive jobs in the area. Those graduates generate a combined annual income of \$1.01 million their first year out of the program.

In the first 12 years, the aggregated economic impact of programs at the attention home and boot camp is estimated to have exceeded \$4 million in first-year income for graduates.

“The CVYS/4-H alumni contribute to the productivity of the region and make a significant economic impact through their jobs,” Rollins says.

“The skills learned in the 4-H program aid the youths in their job interviews and makes them more productive on the job. Most of all, having a job and understanding the importance of keeping it, helps keep the youths out of trouble,” West adds.

The demographic data gathered showed that more than 70 percent of the alumni surveyed are back in school or are seeking a General Equivalency Degree (GED). Seventeen percent of those in school are participating in agricultural programs such as 4-H and/or FFA.

Thirty-four percent of program graduates currently have jobs. Some are in service jobs such as restaurants, lawn care and retail sales, with an hourly wage between \$5 and \$9.99. Other alumni work in manufacturing, making \$10 to \$15 per hour.

Extension and Coosa Valley Youth Services took a risk and made a commitment to work with each other more than a decade ago. Little did they know their partnership would provide such substantial economic impacts. The program fully utilizes the collaborative educational programming efforts from rural and urban units of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Putting Rain to Use

It’s been another hot, dry summer and many communities are dealing with water restrictions that are leaving people wondering how to water their plants.

Eve Brantley, an Alabama Cooperative Extension System associate specializing in water resources and quality, suggests using rain barrels to harvest and store rainwater, which can then be used to water container plants and landscapes.

“It is fairly simple to modify existing gutter downspouts to divert water to rain barrels,” she says. “If a home doesn’t have gutters, people can install themselves or hire a professional.”

Brantley says many people have no idea how much water pours off their homes during even the briefest shower.

“If you have about 1,000 square feet of roof, more than 600 gallons of water streams off it during a rainfall of just an inch.”

Brantley says to utilize the harvested rainwater, rain barrels must have a spout near the bottom to attach garden hoses or to fill a gardening can.

“If you raise the rain barrel several feet, it is even possible to run a low pressure irrigation system.”



RAIN RETENTION—Rain barrels such as these can be an easy way to collect rainwater for irrigating around homes and in gardens.

Rain barrels can be purchased, but they also are a fairly easy do-it-yourself project.

“Sixty to 80 gallon plastic barrels are a good size and are widely available,” she says. “If you use a barrel you already own, make sure it is sturdy enough to withstand holding water and has never held anything toxic, and wash it thoroughly.”

Brantley says the barrel needs some type of screen lid to keep mosquitoes and trash out.

“The most difficult part of building a rain barrel is probably drilling the hole and installing the faucet.”

For more information on rain barrels and on rain gardens, visit www.aces.edu/waterquality/nemo/ldres.htm.



WORKING CATTLE—Johnny Gladney, a regional Extension System animal science and forage agent in Alabama’s Black Belt region, is pictured helping Black Belt beef producers tag cattle. He and Brenda Glover, also a regional animal science and forage Extension agent, were honored by Ala. Gov. Bob Riley for their work in west Alabama.

Governor Honors Cooperative Effort Targeting Black Belt Cattle Operations

Governor Bob Riley and his Black Belt Action Commission honored professionals with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System recently for their work with Black Belt Cattle producers. Regional Extension agents Johnny Gladney and Brenda Glover were recognized for their cooperative project with Tuskegee University’s Extension agents.

Gladney and Glover received individual awards from the governor, commending them for their and Extension’s commitment to the citizens of the Black Belt.

Gladney says the program’s goal was to enhance the value of calves bound for sale.

“We wanted to provide them with management techniques that were fairly straightforward but would translate into additional money in the producer’s pockets,” he says.

Helping the Black Belt’s agricultural sector is why the project won the support of Bob Wilson of Pine Grove Ranch. He is the agriculture committee chairman of the Black Belt Action Committee.

“Farming, mainly catfish and cattle, is the most important segment of the Black Belt’s economy,” says Wilson. “This program should improve farmers’ total income through better production methods and stronger sale prices.”

News and information from the College of Agriculture's academic departments. More information on the departments and their activities is available from the contacts listed below:

Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology
Curtis Jolly, Chair
334-844-4800
www.ag.auburn.edu/agec

Agronomy & Soils
Joe Touchton, Head
334-844-4100
www.ag.auburn.edu/agrn

Animal Sciences
Wayne Greene, Head
334-844-4160
www.ag.auburn.edu/ansec

Biosystems Engineering
Steve Taylor, Head
334-844-4180
www.eng.auburn.edu/programs/bsen

Entomology & Plant Pathology
Art Appel, Chair
334-844-5006
www.ag.auburn.edu/enpl

Fisheries & Allied Aquacultures
David Rouse, Head
334-844-4786
www.ag.auburn.edu/fish/

Horticulture
Joe Eakes, Acting Head
334-844-4862
www.ag.auburn.edu/hort

Poultry Science
Don Conner, Head
334-844-4133
www.ag.auburn.edu/poul

Faculty and Staff Accomplishments

Several College of Ag faculty have gained promotion, tenure or both this year. **Diane Hite**, agricultural economics and rural sociology, and **Joe Kemble** and **Raymond Kessler**, horticulture, are now professors. **Wheeler Foshee**, horticulture; **Omar Oyarzabal**, poultry science; **Jeff Terhune**, fisheries and allied aquacultures; and **Norbert Wilson**, agricultural economics and rural sociology received tenure and promotion to associate professor. Those gaining tenure include **Bill Daniels**, fisheries and allied aquacultures, and **Gobena Huluka**, agronomy and soils. Congratulations to all.

Bill Hardy, professor of agricultural economics and rural sociology, was one of four Auburn University faculty members recently initiated into the AU chapter of Phi Kappa Phi honor society. Though the vast majority of Phi Kappa Phi members are inducted as college seniors, juniors or graduate students on the basis of superior scholastic achievement and a concern for the promotion of excellence, faculty members and alumni who have achieved scholarly distinction also may be elected to membership, in limited numbers.

Pat Curtis, professor of poultry science, has been selected for the Food Systems Leadership Institute, a two-year program that offers leadership development to upper-level leaders in higher education, government and industry to prepare them to meet the leadership challenges and opportunities of the future. College of Ag Dean **Richard Guthrie** nominated Curtis for the program. For more on the institute, go to <http://www.fsl.org>. Curtis also has been named as director of the new National Egg Processing Center located at Auburn.

Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures professor **Dennis DeVries** has been named secretary-elect of the Auburn University Faculty Senate. In that position, he fills in for the current secretary, Sue Barry, in her absence and serves as a member of the Rules and Steering committees. He will become secretary when Barry's term expires. The University Senate serves in an advisory capacity to the AU president, particularly regarding general academic policies at Auburn.

Accelgrow Technologies Inc. presented its first-ever Research Scientist of the Year award to horticulture professor **Joe Kemble** in recognition of his research on progressive crop practices and his efforts to educate farmers that use such practices. Accelgrow is a West Point, Ga.-based company that specializes in fertilizer supplements. Kemble's expertise is in vegetable production.

Wes Wood, professor of agronomy and soils will participate in a joint effort by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resource Conservation, Agricultural Research and Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension services to develop a synthesis of the scientific literature related to the effects of conservation practices on pasture and forage lands. Wood will take the lead on developing the chapter on nutrient management for pasture and forage lands.



Dennis DeVries



The E.V. Smith Research Center recently celebrated the retirement of three employees. Sammy Williams retired after 32 years of service to the Farm Services unit, Bill Gregory left after 21 years of experience at the Beef unit and Gene Whatley retired after 42 years of work also with the Farm Services unit. They were each presented with bronze eagles that indicated their respective years of service at Auburn. Greg Pate also was recently named director of EVSRC.

Two new committees, both chaired by agronomy and soils associate professor **Gobena Huluka**, have been established to serve in advisory capacities to the AU Soil and Forage Testing laboratories. Members of the Forage Testing Advisory Committee are **Mary Goodman** and **Charles Mitchell**, agronomy and soils; **Darrell Rankins**, animal sciences; Mike Davis, retired animal scientist; **Don Ball**, Rickey Hudson and Gerry Thompson, all with Extension; Perry Mobley, beef division director, Alabama Farmers Federation; **Julia Zhu** and **Hamp Bryant**, AU Soil Testing Lab; and **Jonathan Davis**, director of the College of Ag/Alabama Cooperative Extension System's information technology division.

Serving on the Soil Testing Advisory Committee are **Jim Hairston**, **Dave Han**, **Julie Howe** and **Charles Mitchell**, all in agronomy and soils; **Joe Kemble** and **Glenn Fain**, horticulture; Mike Davis; Allen Tolbert, USDA; Bobby Boozer, Chuck Browne, Leonard Kuykendall, **Dale Monks**, **Dennis Delaney**, Amy Winstead, Shannon Norwood and Timothy Reed, all with Extension; and **Julia Zhu** and **Hamp Bryant** with the Soil Testing Lab. Two to three producers who utilize the lab's soil and forage testing services also will be added to each committee. The committees will review the lab's soil testing and animal forage analysis services and make recommendations to ensure that the services are timely and relevant to researchers and producers who use the services.

Wayne Greene, head of the Department of Animal Sciences, and **Frank Owsley**, associate professor of animal sciences, participated in an international beef cattle congress in Costa Rica in April. Participants of the congress included a delegation of scientists and beef and dairy cattle producers from the United States, Mexico, Costa Rica and Colombia. During the four-day event, Greene and Owsley participated on dairy cattle and beef cattle tours to study beef and dairy production in Costa Rica and provided counsel to local farmers on the environmental and nutritional aspects of beef and dairy production. At the international congress, Owsley gave a lecture on nutrition, management, health and feeding of beef cattle, while Greene provided a lecture on beef cattle feeding management to improve production efficiency in feedlot cattle. While at the congress, Greene made initial contacts with faculty at the University of Costa Rica for the possible development of a joint student exchange program between the faculty of Agronomy-Animal Science in Costa Rica and the AU Department of Animal Sciences.

David Bransby, energy and forage crops professor in agronomy and soils, was one of five energy generation, efficiency and research and development experts who served on a panel that headlined Energy Summit 2008 in April in Tuscaloosa. The summit was hosted by U.S. Rep. Artur Davis, D-Ala., as a forum for discussing Alabama's energy future.

Eight faculty and staff members have been appointed to the College of Agriculture's Diversity Committee. **Omar Oyarzabal**, assistant professor of poultry science, is chairing the group. Members include fisheries and allied aquacultures associate professor **Yolanda Brady**, horticulture academic program administrator **Cynthia Channell-Butcher**, biosystems engineering assistant professor **Mark Dougherty**, entomology and plant pathology associate professors **Henry Fadamiro** and **Xing Ping Hu**, college information technologist **Sandy Pouncey** and student services director **Deborah Solie**.



RANCH STYLE—Participants in an international beef cattle congress in Costa Rica in April toured ranches as part of their visit.

Student Accomplishments

The Auburn equestrian team won the national championship in the hunt seat division at the 2008 Varsity Equestrian National Championships in Waco, Texas, in April. Seventeen of the team's members are College of Ag students including animal sciences/pre-vet majors **Kimberly Tidwell**, **Jennifer Jordan**, **Jessica Jones**, **Rebecca Rifkin**, **Amy Bohan**, **Mary Casey**, **Bailey Dymond** and **Shannon Hinton**. Others include **Sarah Whitaker**, an animal sciences' equine program major; agricultural economics majors **Ashley Milton**, **Jessica Braswell**, **Chelsea Anheuser**, **Jennifer Barbero**, **Andrea Loar**, **Mary-Elsye Winchester**, and **Avery Sams**; and **Kimberly Pope**, an agronomy and soils major.

Jordan Towns of Birmingham received the 2008 Comer Medal for Excellence in Agricultural Sciences. The Comer Medal was established in 1923 when B.B. Comer, a former Alabama governor, addressed the graduating class and presented the first Comer Medal to one outstanding member of the class. Today, three Comer Medals for excellence are given each year to outstanding seniors in biological, physical and agricultural sciences who have excelled academically and professionally. Towns graduated in May with an animal sciences/pre-vet degree and will return to Auburn fall semester to enter the College of Veterinary Medicine.



Jordan Towns, Comer award recipient, with College of Ag interim associate dean Dave Williams.

Superior academic performance and involvement in activities on and off of campus during his four years at Auburn earned agronomy and soils major **Mark Doroh** the 2008 President's Award for the College of Agriculture and the distinction of serving as the college's graduation marshal during spring '08 commencement ceremonies held in May. Doroh, a native of Florence, has made the Dean's List every semester at AU and was named Phi Kappa Phi's outstanding student his freshman and sophomore years. He will return to Auburn this fall to begin graduate studies in turfgrass/weed science under the direction of agronomy and soils alumni professor **Beth Guertel** and assistant professor **Scott McElroy**.

Three ag graduates were recognized as Dean's Award for Academic and Professional Excellence winners during the College's graduation breakfast held in May. They were **Whitney Boozer**, agronomy; **Whitney Griffin**, horticulture; and **Bart Smith**, ag economics. Boozer, Griffin and six other ag seniors—**Mark Doroh**, agronomy; **Kim Cline**, **Amy Klinner**, **Robin Pumphrey** and **Jordan Towns**, animal sciences/pre-vet; and **Adam Sleeper**, horticulture—graduated as members of the Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi.

Ag on iTunes

Want to learn how to boil peanuts, take a tour of Venice or check out the Virtual Chicken? You can do all that and more at iTunes U, a special site just for Auburn University that has been up and running since late last fall.

Poultry science IT specialist **Marcia Kloepper** has already filled her department's site with more than 50 podcasts. **Leigh Hinton**, editor in the Office of Ag Communications and Marketing, and **Deborah Solie** and **Megan Ross** in the student services office as well as faculty and staff in other departments have also loaded content.

Check out what's there by visiting <http://itunes.auburn.edu>, clicking on the "Open AU iTunes" button and following the links to the College of Ag or AAES sites. (Note: You must install iTunes on your PC before visiting the site. You can download it from <http://www.apple.com/itunes/download/>.) For more information on iTunes, contact the College of Ag/AAES iTunes Team at itunes-team@acesag.auburn.edu.



Spring Semester 2008 Dean's List Announced

Sixty-seven students made the spring 2008 Dean's List in the College of Agriculture. The following list include the students and the departments in which they are working on a degree.

Shelby E. Agnew	Animal Sciences	Audrey L. Johnson	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology
Kendall L. Aycock	Poultry Science	Bradley A. Johnson	Poultry Science
Dusty R. Bagents	Animal Sciences	Elizabeth A. Jones	Animal Sciences
Jennifer L. Barbero	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology	Megan J. Kendrick	Animal Sciences
Joel G. Beason	Agronomy and Soils	John C. Lee	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology
Zachary E. Benson	Ag Communications	Megan E. McClosky	Animal Sciences
Whitney E. Boozer	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology	Leah R. Mitchell	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology
Jordan A. Brantley	Ag Communications	Caitlin R. O'Neal	Horticulture
Victoria L. Bray	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology	Caleb J. Palmer	Poultry Science
Lindsay Z. Buchanan	Animal Sciences	Matthew C. Parkinson	Poultry Science
Blake S. Bush	Animal Sciences	Tyson B. Raper	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology
Tiffany A. Cable	Poultry Science	Ashley C. Reid	Animal Sciences
Laura L. Calhoun	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology	Josiah T. Roberts	Poultry Science
Jared K. Carpenter	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology	Alicia D. Roman	Animal Sciences
Jessica M. Chapman	Animal Sciences	John N. Sexton	Animal Sciences
Adam W. Cooner	Animal Sciences	Renee N. Shoup	Animal Sciences
Jeffrey A. DeFoor	Animal Sciences	Clint J. Shumate	Poultry Science
Ashleigh T. DeMoll	Animal Sciences	Cody D. Smith	Agronomy and Soils
Mark C. Doroh	Agronomy and Soils	Lana A. Smith	Animal Sciences
Jonathan T. Duke	Horticulture	Martin D. Smith	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology
Samantha N. Essick	Animal Sciences	Brantley E. Snipes	Horticulture
Ginger A. Gaines	Animal Sciences	Timothy M. Tatum	Agronomy and Soils
Olivia A. Glover	Animal Sciences	Timothy Z. Thompson	Poultry Science
Meaghan K. Gonsalves	Animal Sciences	Taylor J. Towns	Animal Sciences
Cole E. Goracke	Animal Sciences	John D. Vanderford	Horticulture
Sarah M. Graham	Animal Sciences	Savannah K. Warren	Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures
Brett W. Hampf	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology	Brian E. Watkins	Animal Sciences
Kaitlin R. Harrison	Poultry Science	Sarah E. Whitaker	Animal Sciences
Bethany B. Heck	Horticulture	John H. Williams	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology
Zachary D. Hester	Horticulture	Katherine J. Williams	Ag Communications
Shannon M. Hinton	Animal Sciences	Kathryn L. Williams	Horticulture
Adam S. Hodel	Ag Econ and Rural Sociology	Jessica H. Willis	Animal Sciences
Ross M. Hornsby	Horticulture	Charles D. Wine	Agronomy and Soils
Lauren M. Jernigan	Animal Sciences		



ON LOCATION—Alan Brazzell, left, the videographer and producer of two new College of Ag videos, works on location at Wiregrass Research and Extension Center in Headland shooting peanut harvesting with Wiregrass Director Larry Wells.

Lights. Camera. Action!

After a year in the making, two amazing and informative videos about the College of Agriculture are now available to show to general audiences and to potential new students.

One video, titled "Meeting the Challenges," focuses on the breadth of our college programs—from keeping our water and food supplies safe to offering our students, faculty and the world a truly international perspective.

This video was developed to provide alums, donors, civic groups and parents a taste of the current challenges that our college is meeting. A companion Web site, (ag.auburn.edu/challenges/) where viewers will learn how they can help us continue to meet the world's challenges, is being developed to complement the video.

A second video was designed specifically as a student recruitment tool. This shorter, more rapid-fire video is already being used by our student services office to show potential new students the many exciting opportunities available through our college.

You can view both videos at www.ag.auburn.edu/about/.

We send a sincere thank you to all who starred in the videos as well as those who produced it. A special thanks goes to the videographer and film editor, Alan Brazzell, who brought these ideas to life.

News from the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station's affiliated school and colleges.

College of Human Sciences

June Henton, Dean
334-844-4790
www.humsci.auburn.edu

Alabama Healthy Marriage Initiative Featured at White House Conference

Auburn University's Alabama Community Healthy Marriage Initiative was one of five innovative projects featured at the recent White House Compassion in Action Conference highlighting effective policies, new research and successful public-private partnerships that help to promote and strengthen stable marriages and families. The roundtable was held in April and hosted by the Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives.

Francesca Adler-Baeder, AU associate professor of human development and family studies and state Extension specialist, outlined the ACHMI model noting that the initiative works with multiple partners including the Alabama Children's Trust Fund, Alabama Department of Child Abuse and Neglect, eight family resource centers, two mental health centers and the Montgomery chapter of 100 Black Men, a service organization focused on strengthening youth and families. Ed Brown, president of 100 Black Men, was also an invited guest for the roundtable.

The nationally recognized Alabama Community Healthy Marriage Initiative is funded by a multi-million dollar five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Family Assistance. Adler-Baeder, ACHMI's principal investigator states, "We are proud to be building an effective model through a network of individuals and organizations from around the state that both benefits Alabama citizens and communities and serves as a model for best practices for other state institutions, land-grant universities and organizations to follow."

Now in its second year, ACHMI's goal is to strengthen Alabama families by raising public awareness of the importance of healthy marriages for children, family and community well-being; increasing access to healthy marriage resources; and training community members and professionals in research-based educational programs that strengthen relationships and marriages.

Hunger Campaign Goes to Guatemala

In May, College of Human Sciences dean June Henton and CHS External Affairs director Harriet Giles traveled to Guatemala with Lauren Bush and Ellen Gustafson, co-founders of the FEED Projects, to visit selected World Food Programme feeding sites.

Guatemala is the largest country in Central America, with a population of approximately 13 million. Almost 50 percent of Guatemalan children under the age of 5 suffer from chronic under nutrition, the fourth highest rate in the world and the highest in Latin America. WFP's targeted goal in Guatemala is to assist children suffering from malnutrition, pregnant and lactating women, small-scale and landless farmers and children and families exposed to recurrent crises.

The FEED Projects was founded in 2007 to help feed hungry children throughout the world. The reversible organic cotton and burlap FEED bag, designed by Lauren Bush, is modeled after the bags WFP uses to distribute food. Each bag sold feeds one school child in the developing world for an entire year. In 2008, FEED's various partnerships are projected to provide over \$4 million for WFP school feeding programs.



CLASS PHOTO—CHS Dean June Henton, seated at far left, and CHS external affairs director Harriet Giles, seated at far right, joined the co-founders of the FEED program on a recent trip to Guatemala. The whole entourage is pictured here at a Guatemalan day care center in the Cantel village of Quetzaltenango Province. During the brief three-day trip, the group visited one additional day care center, two primary schools and one mother-child supplementary feeding center.

College of Sciences and Mathematics

Stewart W. Schneller, Dean
334-844-5737
www.auburn.edu/cosam

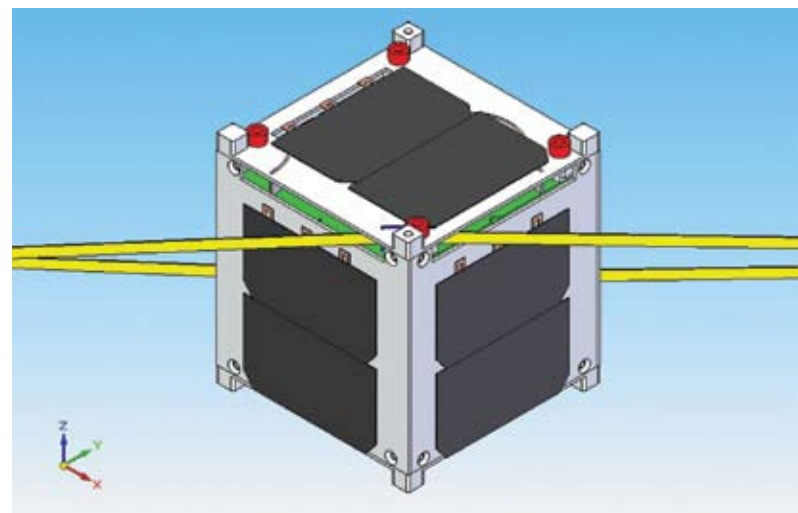
Program Takes AU Students to the Edge of Space and Beyond

The College of Sciences and Mathematics' Auburn University Student Space Program is out of this world.

The program was designed to provide AU students an opportunity to design, build and operate their own spacecraft. In 2002, J-M Wersinger of COSAM's physics department established AUSSP with support from AU and from the Alabama Space Grant Consortium that has been funding it continuously for over six years now. AUSSP students have launched nine payloads on high-altitude balloons to the edge of space and are building a small satellite called a CubeSat that should be ready for launch on a Russian converted ICBM in 2009.

AUSSP participants are presently building the first student satellite in Alabama, a four-inch, 2.2-pound aluminum-alloy cube covered with solar cells that power the spacecraft. It is named AubieSat-1 and will proudly represent AU in space. AubieSat-1 will transmit images of Earth from space and measure the Earth's magnetic field. The data from the satellite will be transmitted to a ground station located in the physics department. In addition to Wersinger, several engineering professors mentor AUSSP students: David Beale of mechanical engineering, Richard Chapman of computer science and software engineering and Lloyd Riggs and Victor Nelson of electrical and computer engineering department.

AubieSat-1 is the first step in building a student-operated satellite capability on campus. It puts Auburn on the map, as there are few universities involved in such projects, and it gives AU students an edge when it comes to finding good employment in high-tech companies or government programs such as NASA. It is truly a unique opportunity for COSAM students to learn science and engineering working in teams and solving practical problems, which will help shape them to be Auburn men and women of the future.



AUBIE IN THE AIR—Students in the AU College of Sciences and Mathematics have developed a small satellite, dubbed the AubieSat-1, that should be launched in 2009.

College of Veterinary Medicine

Tim Boosinger, Dean
334-844-4546
www.vetmed.auburn.edu

Musical Artist Donates Proceeds to Raptor Center

The new album "Let My Peoples Dance" by Rev. Bubba D Liverance and The Cornhole Prophets is primarily a Rock 'n Soul record, but since Bubba is an Auburn fan, he included a tribute to the eagle's flight at Auburn's home games.

Bubba is generously donating the proceeds from the single to the Raptor Center. A preview of the tune is available on Youtube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SSI65Qock0s> and the song can be downloaded from iTunes at <http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewAlbum?id=274839902&cs=143441>

AU Is Top Dog in Canine Detection Training, Research

Auburn University's College of Veterinary Medicine is leading the way in canine detection research and training through its Canine and Detection Research Institute. Dogs that have graduated from AU's program work for impressive organizations all over the world, including the Department of Energy, the U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Secret Service Technical Services, Australian Customs Service, MARTA and Federal Protective Services. In fact, AU is the only trainer of FPS teams, with 60 teams now in service.

At AU, the Canine Detection Research Institute and Canine Detection Training Center apply science to the craft of canine detection. Veterinary sciences, expert trainers and technology work in a continuous "research-test-apply-enhance" loop, so knowledge gleaned from research is quickly applied to solve real world threats.

The well-trained dog and its human handler comprise the most capable and widely available tool for the detection of explosives, illicit drugs, and many other

hazardous substances. Auburn's detection-dog research, development, and training programs are enhancing and expanding the use of dogs for the detection of hazardous materials. Our guiding principles are a commitment to scientific understanding, quality and responsiveness to the detector-dog community's technological needs.

To learn more visit <http://www.auburn.edu/research/vpr/cdri/>.



School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences

Richard Brinker, Dean
334-844-1007
www.sfw.s.auburn.edu



DIXON DORMS COMMEMORATED—New dormitories at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center near Andalusia were recently dedicated. Several dignitaries were on hand for the event. Pictured from left, seated, are Martha Dixon, a Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation board member, and Doris Tyler, president of the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation board. Pictured in the back row, from left, are Jimmy Rane, AU board of trustee member; Trippy McGuire, also a Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation board member; SFWS Dean Dick Brinker; AU President Jay Gogue; and Phillip Jones, another Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation board member

Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center Dedicates Dorms

Auburn University's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences dedicated new dormitories at the Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center near Andalusia in May. Of the \$1.2 million cost of building the dormitories, \$950,000 was provided by the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation.

SFWS Dean Richard Brinker presided over the ceremony and AU President Jay Gogue expressed appreciation to the foundation for its generous contribution. Jimmy Rane of Abbeville, representing Auburn University and its board of trustees, also made comments on the importance of this gift to Auburn University and the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences.

The dormitories include five four-room cottages that will accommodate eight students each. With this increased capacity, the curriculum for the wildlife science major can be expanded to include a 10-week practicum that will provide students with a hands-on experience.

For the past 29 years, Solon and Martha Dixon and their foundation have given more than \$3 million to AU's School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences as well as the 5,300 acres on which the center is built.

The facilities will also be used for adult continuing education programs sponsored by Auburn University and for in-service training for employees of state and federal natural resource agencies.

The School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is very grateful to the Solon and Martha Dixon Foundation Board of Directors for their continuing generous support. With help from private donors, the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences is able to continue as a distinguished leader in forestry education throughout the region.

SFWS Students Win Awards

Several School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences graduate students were honored this spring during an SFWS ceremony.

Chelsea Nagy, a master's student in forestry, and Wei Ren, a Ph.D. candidate also in forestry, both received Drummond Company Awards. Both were also nominated by the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences to the AU Graduate School as the SFWS outstanding graduate students. Ren also was named the SFWS Outstanding International Student this year.

Bin Zheng, a master's student in forestry, and Li Meng, a Ph.D. candidate in forest/economics, both received the John Miller Bradley III award. George Matusick, a doctoral student in forestry, received the James Floyd Goggans Graduate Fellowship. John "Clint" McCoy, a master's student in wildlife sciences received the George C. Moore Fellowship.



Bin Zheng and Li Meng

**No Fish Tale
Dignitaries from Uganda Visit AU**



Top photo: College of Ag Dean Richard Guthrie (far left) and David Rouse (far right), head of fisheries and allied aquacultures, meet with Ruhakana and Jocelyn Rugunda, fish farmers from Uganda who have been working with the AU FISH (Fisheries Investment for Sustainable Harvest) project in Uganda. The Rugundas visited the Auburn campus in June to see AU's fisheries and allied aquaculture program firsthand. They have been working with Karen Veverica, an AU employee who is serving as chief of party for the FISH project, a 40-month effort begun in 2005 and funded by a \$2.5 million U.S. Agency for International Development grant to jump-start commercial aquaculture development in Uganda.

Bottom photo: Randell Goodman, director of the E. W. Shell Fisheries Center in Auburn, hosted the Rugundas during their visit.

research news

News from the AAES and other Alabama land-grant-related entities.

A Flexible Soybean?

AAES agronomist David Weaver at Auburn is working with scientists at Clemson to develop a soybean that may give growers more planting-date flexibility and higher yields.

The optimal time to plant soybeans is early May to mid-June, but many producers double-crop beans with wheat and can't plant their soybeans till they've harvested their wheat—often after that planting window has closed.

Soybean plants start flowering based on length of day. Thus, the late-planted beans begin to flower before they're fully developed, and yields suffer—to the tune of half a bushel for every day after June 15 that they're planted. Some varieties do mature later than others, but yields still drop.

Weaver's work would incorporate into current cultivars genes that would make them insensitive to day length, so that they would mature based solely on planting date, not length of day. It would give double-croppers, as well as full-season growers looking to plant early to avoid the inevitable late-summer drought, some solid options.



BEANS ABOUT IT—An AAES research project is working to develop a soybean with more flexible planting dates.

Research Spotlighting Whitetails

Five years ago, AU wildlife ecologist Steve Ditchkoff unveiled innovative plans to establish in rural Tallapoosa County a 430-acre outdoor laboratory dedicated to the most exhaustive study ever of North America's most abundant big-game animal: the white-tailed deer.

The lab would be located on land at the AAES's Piedmont Research Station in Camp Hill. But before the project could begin, the land had to be fenced. To raise money, Ditchkoff turned to the private sector—to individuals, landowners, organizations and businesses who derive pleasure or profit from hunting whitetails.

Support was strong, and now 3.8 miles of eight-foot, high-tensile fencing surrounds the AU Deer Lab. About 40 deer—most of which Ditchkoff has captured, tagged and released—were on the land when the fence was completed, setting the stage for groundbreaking research on whitetails "in the wild."

In the long-term, AAES-supported study, Ditchkoff and team will monitor individual deer throughout their entire lives, capturing each on a regular basis and collecting data that will answer previous unknowns about whitetails' genetic makeup, reproductive success, growth, survival and susceptibility to disease and parasites.

But whitetail biology won't be the sole focus of the project. AU agronomists will be investigating growth and productivity of food plots for deer; horticulture faculty, the effectiveness of deer repellents in deterring browsing on ornamental plants; foresters, the impact of deer on forest regeneration; and veterinary medicine pathobiologists, diseases and parasites.

Ultimately, work at the AU Deer Lab should vastly enhance the scientific management of white-tailed deer.

For more on the study, go to www.sfw.sau.edu/ditchkoff and click on Deer Lab.

Scientists Comparing Range, Cage-laid Eggs

As of 2012, conventional cages that egg producers have used for years to house laying hens will be illegal in Europe. From then on, all eggs will be laid either by hens in "enriched" cages or by "range" hens—birds with access to outdoor pasture space and freedom to roam and forage.

This November, California voters will decide whether to follow Europe's lead and outlaw cage production methods.

One of the key assertions animal rights activist groups use to stir supporters is the claim that range eggs are better—and better for you—than eggs from caged laying hens.

That might be true. But then again, it might not. The reality is that little to no unbiased, scientific, peer-reviewed research comparing the two—nutritionally, microbially, sensorially and in terms of performance as ingredients in food products such as angel food cake and mayonnaise—has been done. Until now.

In a two-year study that began at Auburn in November 2007, a team of AAES poultry and animal scientists along with researchers from North Carolina State and

Tuskegee universities is putting range eggs and cage-laid eggs through the wringer to see how they stack up.

AU's Patricia Curtis, lead researcher in the project, says that in addition to the in-depth egg analyses, the researchers also will compare the meat from range and cage hens in terms of nutrition, texture and taste.

The study's data will benefit consumers, producers, processors and food manufacturers.



Soil-Water Relationships Studied

In a detailed study that currently is under way at 13 sites across Alabama, AU and AAES soil scientist Joey Shaw and collaborators from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Auburn are focusing on soil-water relationships in Alabama's Coastal Plain soils.

Specifically, at each of the 13 sites, the team is determining the depth of the water table from the soil's surface when it is at its "seasonal high," and how long it remains at that peak level.

Then, they are meticulously analyzing the soil at each site, recording in detail the soil's features, including color, texture, structure and consistency.

A strong knowledge of the relationship between the depth of the water table and soil features will help facilitate assessments of a soil's suitability for a particular use, even during times of the year when water tables have receded.

Results of the study will provide farmers, developers, natural resource managers and environmental consultants and agencies an improved tool to use in their land use decision-making.



National Egg Processing Center Established at AU

The incredible, edible egg is the focus of a newly established center at Auburn University—the National Egg Processing Center—that is taking a collaborative approach to ensure that our table eggs are safe and to be sure the \$4.9 billion U.S. egg industry continues to thrive.

The center is a joint effort among AU, North Carolina State University, the University of Georgia and the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Research Service's Egg Safety and Quality Research Unit in Athens, Ga. Through this collaboration, the center will leverage egg-related research and outreach programs at each of the partner institutions.

"A university-based center can provide the expertise to address emerging food safety and security threats," said center director and AU poultry science professor Patricia Curtis. "This center can help support the economically important egg industry while also ensuring that the eggs we rely on continue to be safe, healthful and delicious."

Beyond bringing about the needed research collaborations related to food safety, quality and security, the center will also explore new uses for eggs and new value-added egg products. An Egg Advisory Council comprised of egg company representatives has been formed for the center to identify critical issues that the center's research, outreach and teaching efforts should address. Planning also is under way to build a state-of-the-art research facility where this farm-to-fork research can be performed.

For more information contact Curtis at 334-844-2639 or Pat_Curtis@auburn.edu.

Making Art from Science

By Leigh Hinton

Most people, the 80-acre research farm at the Prattville Agricultural Research Unit looks like any other farm in Autauga County: rows of cotton plants emerging from red clay, dark green stands of corn, pole sheds housing farm equipment. But when Kathy Fuller looks at these scenes, she sees a lot more.

"Most folks see the science of farming. I see the art in it," says Fuller, a retired secretary with tons of creative energy.

Fuller recalled the first time this vision of science as art struck. She was driving down a road in Montgomery County, a road lined with cotton fields, a road she'd been down many times before. "The cotton plants were in bloom, and I stopped the car, got out and thought, 'The cotton sure is pretty this year. Someone should let folks know how pretty this is.'"

And for the last three years, Fuller's mission has been to share her vision of this beauty with her neighbors and folks in general, to enable them to see the beauty in the crops that grow all around her rural community.

It started with cotton. To realize her vision, Fuller wanted to know all about this ubiquitous crop: how and when cotton is planted, how it is harvested and everything that happens in between planting and harvest. So she started asking questions, which soon led her to visit with Don Moore, director of the Prattville Agricultural Research Unit.

"Don has been such a help," she says. "He's taught me so much about cotton and put me in touch with lots of people who have helped me learn. The only hitch is he can't look at a cotton field and see art."

But Fuller can.

And when she looked at the planting chart for the 2006 flex cotton variety trials—those rows of words and figures that made up the chart—she saw a quilt. More specifically, she envisioned the seven groups of cotton seed suppliers as color families (one supplier could be assigned the color orange, one brown, another red and still another blue). She saw the four columns of numbered plot assignments, randomly numbered from 1 to 35, as four rows of 35 fabric strips. Her vision turned into a quilt top pattern called the crayon box.

Fuller made six different color sketches of the quilt, scrambling and reassigning colors to the different groups of cotton seed suppliers until she had created a sketch with many instances of the colors blue and orange occurring beside each other.

"I wanted to make a quilt with the colors orange and blue side by side because my inspiration came from the cotton grown at the Prattville Agricultural Research Unit, which is part of Auburn University," says Fuller.

She titled the 80-inch-wide by 110-inch-long quilt "Flex Cotton Variety Trials," and it is not for sale. No way. No how.

The same is true for the second quilt she made, "2006 Thrips Test." A talk with Ron Smith, entomologist and professor emeritus in the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology at Auburn University, and some research on quilt patterns led Fuller to create a log cabin pattern using the thrips damage rating results.

No bigger than a grain of pepper, thrips are one of the pests that invade cotton in its earliest stages. Since a lot of research on thrips involves scouting—visiting the

fields to evaluate such variables as plant height, stand density and damage to the plants by thrips—Fuller decided to make this quilt in the colors of the Boy Scouts: yellow and blue.

She included a red block in the center of the pattern, which traditionally indicates the hearth of the log cabin, and in the case of the thrips quilt, the seven different seed sources. The small block just below the hearth block indicates the damage rating for that seed type.

Fuller's quilting days are not over, although she says the next quilts she makes will not be hand stitched as were both the "2006 Thrips Test" and the "Flex Cotton Variety Trials" quilts; the latter contains more than 50,000 hand stitches. She is creating a series of three quilts titled "Patriot's Garden" inspired by her parents' love of nature. These quilts will be centered around a red, white and blue color scheme and will be sold, with a portion of the sales donated to the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Garden, which is being built in Autauga County on three acres of land at the Prattville Agricultural Research Unit. (See story on page 17.)

But Fuller's inspiration to make art from science has not stopped with quilts. She is producing a book that will be

chock full of Autauga County history told through the stories of individuals and families with a central theme of cotton. The book has a working title of "Paint a Bale of Cotton: Art, Handicrafts and Memories Tell Stories of Cotton in Autauga County."

Fuller is finding it difficult to track down stories, much less art and handicrafts attached to the stories. That is why she started quilting.

"There was no art created about research in Autauga County, so I made the quilts. That's why I say this story about cotton is meant to be told. Who would have thought you could take a cotton planting diagram and come out with a quilt?"



Kathy Fuller sits atop "2006 Thrips Test" quilt and holds "Flex Cotton Variety Trials" quilt.

Most folks see the science of farming. I see the art in it," says Fuller.

News from the College of Agriculture's Student Services program. For more information on these stories or on educational opportunities in the College, contact Don Mulvaney, coordinator of leadership and student development, or Dave Williams, interim associate dean for instruction, at 334-844-2345 or visit www.ag.auburn.edu/.



GOING PLACES ONLINE—Prospective students interested in the College of Agriculture now have a new Web site to visit that can help them find their place in our college.

Oh the Places You Can Get To... On the New College "Go Places" Web Site

By Deborah Solie

AU College of Agriculture students are going places. From study abroad opportunities to internships and eventually on to successful careers, our students can pursue exciting challenges and explore their dreams. Whether their goals are to go to school close to home or farther away, we want to help them get there.

With that in mind, the college has created a new Web site, www.ag.auburn.edu/goplaces, with tips and searches to help high school students prepare for their own unique college experience. A few of the tools we have provided are:

- **Sophomore, Junior and Senior Timeline:** Planning for college begins as early as their sophomore year. We've provided tips on how to get ready for college and how to navigate the admissions process.
- **FAQs:** We answer such burning questions as, "What should I look for in a college?" "I found a school that I like – what do I do next?" And more! We've pulled from a variety of sources to help students as they prepare for their next level of education.
- **Scholarship Searches:** The College of Agriculture gives out more than \$600,000 in scholarships each year. Our Web site provides the scholarship application form as well as numerous links to scholarship opportunities outside the College of Agriculture and Auburn University. The money is out there and we want to help students get it!

The Web site also gives students information on selecting a college, planning for a career, choosing a major and getting accepted to Auburn—some of the most common questions asked by our future students.

Our goal is to show students interested in the many careers related to food, agriculture and natural resources that they need look no further than the AU College of Agriculture. The college offers 18 different majors and minors that prepare students not only to help sustain the supply of food and fiber that people rely on for their most basic needs, but also to address such issues as natural resources conservation, environmental protection, local and global economic development and, ultimately, improvements in the health, quality of life and well-being of humankind and the planet. We hope to help students become involved in the industry that influences one out of six jobs in the United States.

You can help! Encourage students you know to visit our Web site, no matter their interest, and take advantage of this valuable source of information.

This Web site will help students as they prepare to GO PLACES!

www.ag.auburn.edu/goplaces



FFA'ERS GALORE—T.C. Brown, Lineville High School—In early June, Auburn University hosted more than 1,000 students, agri-science teachers and alumni during the 79th Annual Alabama FFA Convention. The College of Agriculture played a vital role in the event by hosting career development events on Ag Hill, providing convention support throughout the sessions and sponsoring a lunchtime social with string bands and departmental displays.



A BIG BREAKFAST, A BIG DAY—Many of the College of Agriculture's 98 spring semester 2008 graduates got the big day off to a delicious start May 10 when they attended the Alabama Poultry & Egg Association-sponsored Graduation Breakfast at the Ham Wilson Livestock Arena and dined on omelets of their own making as well as other breakfast dishes. At commencement ceremonies in the afternoon, the college and AU awarded bachelor's degrees to 40 graduates in animal sciences, 32 in horticulture, 17 in ag economics and rural sociology, four in agronomy and soils, three in fisheries and allied aquacultures and two in poultry science. Another 13 students were awarded bachelor's degrees in biosystems engineering. Several advanced degrees in agriculture also were awarded. According to information provided by departments, those included one master's in agronomy, three master's in animal sciences, one master's and one Ph.D. in entomology, three master's and two Ph.D.s in horticulture and one Ph.D. in plant pathology. All total, 2,687 AU students received their diplomas during the ceremonies.



LEARNING TO LEAD—Games such as the one students are playing here at the AU Challenge Course will be a chief component of one of four new leadership courses to be piloted in the College of Ag in 2008-09. The new courses are being added to the current courses that count toward the 18 credit hours in leadership classes needed to earn a leadership minor in order to meet the changing professional development needs of students, says Don Mulvaney, the college's leadership and student development coordinator. The two classes that will debut this fall are AGRI 4930, developing your "aQ," or agriculture and natural resource quotient; and AGRI 4970, facilitating experiential learning and leadership. For spring 2009, the college will offer AGRI 2800, agricultural communication and leadership, and AGRI 4970, entrepreneurial ag leadership. For information on the courses or the leadership minor, contact Mulvaney at mulvadr@auburn.edu or 334-844-1514.

Ag Students Go Global

By Colin Fleming

Wish you could get away for a while? Want to see the world? Thanks to the Auburn Abroad program, some agriculture majors looking to broaden their horizons may get their chance. The Office of International Agriculture is offering several study-abroad programs this year.

According to the Office of International Agriculture, study abroad programs make students more competitive when applying for jobs. Study abroad programs also provide participants with professional contacts and an appreciation for other cultures.

AU agricultural economics and rural sociology professor Joe Molnar will lead a tour of food and farming systems in Sicily during the Thanksgiving holidays. The trip involves studying the Italian food system by visiting markets and farms.

Molnar, the Office of International Agriculture's coordinator, understands the significance of studying abroad.

"There are so many possibilities, alternative approaches to farming and agriculture than what you can see here in Alabama," said Molnar. "It's important to experience different perspectives about life and different views other countries may have about food consumption."

In August, animal sciences professor Diego Gimenez will guide a study tour in Brazil for about 10 days. Students will experience the infamous Rio de Janeiro nightlife while learning about Brazilian agronomy, veterinary medicine and animal science.

Other stops on the trip include Cacimba de Pedra, the world's largest wetlands, and the Iguacu Falls, a series of waterfalls taller than Niagara Falls and wider than Victoria Falls. Other study tours that will be available in the coming year include locales as exotic as Costa Rica and New Zealand.

The College of Agriculture also offers longer study abroad programs for academic credit.

For example, during the summer, students can spend up to six weeks at Myrescough College in England studying equine science with animal and dairy sciences professor Dale Coleman or horticulture with horticulture professor Jeff Sibley. And on the weekends, they are free to tour Europe.

Another option is to take a Maymester Abroad course. Maymester courses are rigorous three- to four-week sessions beginning immediately after spring semester.



GOING BANANAS—Candace James, Mary Paige Gann, Gina Lehman, Lindsay Stevenson, Aresene Semilien and Suyapa Triminio Meyer visit a banana farm in Honduras. Suyapa is an AU grad and a research associate at the Panamerican Agricultural School (Zamorano).

Next year's Maymasters will be held in Tripoli, Greece, covering international economics with agricultural economics and rural sociology professor Henry Thompson, and New Zealand, covering soil and the environment with agronomy and soils professor Wes Wood.

Study abroad programs aren't just for undergraduates. Graduate students looking to get their master's or doctoral degree have the opportunity to study in China.

Typically, study abroad trips cost \$2,000 or more. PACT plans, scholarships and student loans can be applied toward the cost of the trip. Students are advised to attend the Study Abroad Fair held in September and February at the Haley Center Concourse or contact the Office of International Agriculture at (334) 844-5615 for more information.

According to Molnar, the most important thing for a student interested in study abroad opportunities to do is to get his or her passport right away.

Orr Fund Sends Horticulture Students to Italy

In May of this year, the Henry P. Orr Endowed Fund for Horticultural Excellence helped support eight special undergraduate students and two faculty on a short-term study tour of gardens in their cultural and historical context in northern Italy.

Students who earned the honor to participate included: **Kyle Williams, Ben Nemeec, Catlin O'Neal, Jonathan Newell, Whitney Griffin, Anna-Marie Murphy, Evan Prescott and Justin Phillips.** Faculty members **Amy Wright** and **Ken Tilt** led the tour.

The itinerary included tours to Lake Maggiore, the Borromea Islands, Isola Madre, Villa Taranto, Stresa, the lake country in Tuscany, Genoa, Pisa, Lucca, Marlia, Florence, Bologna and Verona. The study tour group visited a number of private gardens, botanical gardens, plant producers and captivating and unique landscapes.

"Name-dropping does not tell the story of the impact of the trip and the educational opportunities for the students and the faculty," says Tilt. "When students look back at the whirlwind of sites, they will get flashbacks of sitting on a mountain top looking down the slopes at rows and rows of olive trees and grapevines across the scenic countryside of Italy, being surrounded by wooden casks containing thousands of gallons of aging wines and listening to a passionate sixth- or eighth- generation Italian who told his sad story of no heir to carry on the generations of winemaking in his family."

CIAO FROM ITALY—AU horticulture students and faculty members participating in the May 2008 Henry P. Orr Endowment-supported study tour to Italy had the opportunity to see many famous sites, including the Leaning Tower of Pisa they're posed in front of at right. Far right, tour group members, from left, horticulture associate professor Amy Wright, Ben Nemeec, Catlin O'Neal, Jonathan Newell, Whitney Griffin, Justin Phillips, Kyle Williams, Anna-Marie Murphy and, kneeling, Evan Prescott, pause during a garden tour to allow professor Ken Tilt to take yet another photo.



Information on the College of Agriculture's alumni and development programs. For more information on becoming a donor, contact the College of Agriculture's Development Office at 334-844-1475. For more information on our alumni programs contact 334-844-3204.

AAES Land and Resource Management Horsing Around

By Robert Hensarling

Though AU has a national champion equestrian team and a dream to someday have a state-of-the-art equine center, the existing facilities at the AU Horse Unit are making do, and they are even better now thanks to Glen Terrell, operations manager for the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station's Agricultural Land and Resource Management group.

Terrell came up with a plan to provide a facelift for the barn now used at the horse unit—a former sheep barn. This structure not only houses tack rooms and a quasi-veterinary area, but also team dressing rooms and equipment storage.

After consultation with Greg Williams, equestrian team coach, the Land and Resource Management team went to work in March and completed the project by mid-April.

The Land and Resource Management group provides construction, earth preparation, irrigation systems, buildings, roads and ponds in support of AAES research projects and also keeps Ag Heritage Park up and running. Team members for the barn renovation work included Greg Parker, Henry Avery, Justin Jackson, J.W. Yarbrough, Gerald Frazier, Larry Pitts, Franklin McGinty, Jared Burt, J.R. Martin and Glen Davis.

The most severe issues were with the barn structure itself. Although there have been several improvements made at the barn over the past two years, the most dramatic changes were recently completed. These changes included upgrades to the stall areas, landscaping and a complete overhaul of the barn façade. The exterior of the barn was in terrible disrepair with rotten wood, peeling paint and missing boards. Additionally, stall entries, railings and doors needed to be repaired or replaced.

In order to move the project forward as quickly and cost effectively as possible, the decision was made to use rough sawn timber as the new look for the barn. This timber originally came from felled trees within Ag Heritage Park. The use of this timber drastically reduced the potential project cost by several thousand dollars. The nature of rough sawn timber required that each board be sent through a planer to ensure a common thickness and to restore its original color. More than 1,000 board feet of timber was planned for this project.

The next phase of the project involved overlaying the original surface with the newly planed timbers. The process for applying the wood is called a board-and-batten system. This system was chosen because the look resembles many of the older barns from the early 1900s. This system involves attaching large, 12-inch-wide boards or planks vertically on the entire perimeter of the structure. Once this is done, additional timbers are cut into several smaller strips for overlaying the edges of the larger boards. The final process involves attaching the planks with nails that are driven in a specific pattern to ensure cohesive binding to the underlying structure.

Many labor hours were dedicated to this project and the end result is a beautifully hand-crafted exterior unmatched by any structure on campus. The Ag Land and Resource Management team proves again that they can tackle any job sent their way!



TEAM PLAYERS—The AAES Agricultural Land and Resource Management crew worked magic on the barn at the AU Horse Unit this spring, turning the structure into a safer and more attractive building. Members of the crew include, from left, Justin Jackson, Henry Avery, J.R. Martin, J.W. Yarbrough, Greg Parker, Gerald Frazier, Franklin McGinty, Larry Pitts, Jared Burt and Glen Davis.



FACELIFT COMPLETE—The barn at the AU Horse Unit has had a new facelift that gives it the look of an old-fashioned board-and-batten barn, thanks to the work of the AAES Agricultural Land and Resource Management team.

Huffman Named AMI Foundation President

Randy Huffman, a College of Agriculture alumnus and son of retired animal sciences professor Dale Huffman, was named American Meat Institute Foundation president.

Huffman joined AMI in 2000 as vice president of scientific affairs. In his new position, he is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the foundation, including its research initiatives, "best practices" development and educational programming.

Prior to joining AMI, Huffman was director of technical services for three years at Koch Industries, Inc., in Wichita, Kan., where he had responsibilities for product development and food safety with the Koch Beef Company. Earlier in his career, he served as vice president of technical services at Fairbank Farms in Ashville, N.Y. He has a bachelor's degree in animal science from Auburn and master's and doctoral degrees in animal science from the University of Florida.



Randy Huffman



Author, Author

AU President Jay Gogue is on a mission...to collect all the books penned by AU faculty and staff.

While we have some of those titles and copies in our offices, we know there must be plenty out there that are out of print or out of circulation.

If you know of any books written by College of Ag faculty and staff, send us titles and names of authors! If you have some copies you want to donate, let us know that as well. You can contact us at 3 Comer Hall, Auburn, AL 36849 or at AgComm@auburn.edu.

Ag Classic 2008



TAKING AIM—Johnny Adams, executive director of the Alabama Poultry and Egg Association, takes aim at a clay during the 2008 Ag Classic shooting clay tournament. The event, which included golfing, fishing and shooting clay competitions, raised some \$15,000 for the College of Ag.



TEAM WORK—This group of College of Ag supporters—including Adam Nemeroff, Rob Robertson, Rob Bradshaw and Greg Bradshaw—was one of 31 teams that competed in the 2008 Ag Classic golf event.



ALL SMILES—This young College of Ag supporter—Jack Terry—was one of 13 people who competed in the Ag Classic fishing tournament.

Wildflower Garden to Honor Lady Bird Johnson

By Leigh Hinton

Named for a woman whose heritage was in Autauga County and whose passion was conservation, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Garden is being planned for installation at the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station's Prattville Agricultural Research Unit.

According to Don Moore, director of the PARU, the garden in Autauga County will be affiliated with the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, and will help educate people about the environmental necessity, economic value and natural beauty of native plants.

Located on approximately three acres of land, the space highlights native Alabama plants and will include a children's garden, a butterfly and hummingbird garden, a woodland garden and a trial garden for growing flowers that are not native to the state.

The garden will be installed in stages and first steps include creating the children's and butterfly and hummingbird gardens with their walking trail along with installing irrigation and power and constructing a pavilion.

Water features will include a bog area and a running stream. Kiosks, some of which will incorporate Lady Bird Johnson memorabilia such as letters or photographs, will also be built in the area.

Lady Bird's connection to the area goes way back. Every summer until she was a young woman, the former First Lady visited her Aunt Effie Pattillo's relatives in Autauga County, Ala. As she explained in an article published by Time in the mid-1960s, "Until I was about 20, summertime always meant Alabama to me. With Aunt Effie we would board the train in Marshall (Texas) and ride to the part of the world that meant watermelon cuttings, picnics at the creek and a lot of company every Sunday."

The garden was the brainchild of Bob Lee who, as a member of the Prattville Chamber of Commerce tourism committee, saw value in having a garden to attract visitors to the area.

"The tourism committee knew that Lady Bird Johnson had spent her summers in the Billingsley area north of the PARU, so having a wildflower garden in her honor



Prattville Mayor Jim Byard, Jr. and artist Margrete Barnes Vause hold her depiction of an Indian Blanket wildflower, one of three paintings commissioned by Friends of the Garden as part of their fundraising efforts for the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Garden.

seemed like a good fit," says Mary Ray, horticulturist for the city of Prattville.

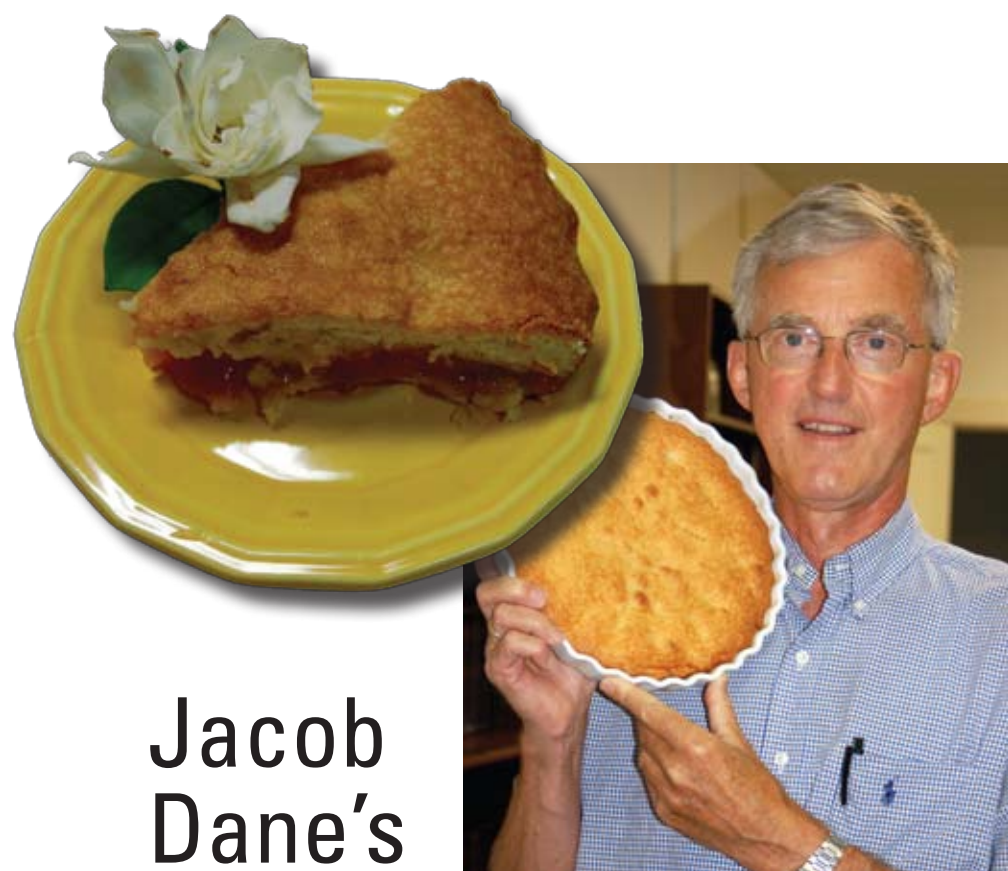
Ray chairs the Friends of the Garden, a committee of local citizens responsible for the establishment of the garden.

Fundraising efforts by the Friends of the Garden have included commissioning paintings of three of the former First Lady's favorite Autauga County flowers—Indian blanket, black-eyed Susan and evening primrose. The originals of the three donated paintings will be on permanent display at the Prattville library, and prints of the paintings will be offered as gift cards for sale with the proceeds going to the garden.

Friends of the Garden is also selling bricks inscribed with the purchaser's name to help fund the project's \$120,000 budget.

And, in mid-June, state Sen. Wendell Mitchell presented the Friends of the Garden committee a \$5,000 check to help with initial construction costs for the garden.

For more information on the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Garden, contact Ray at 334-358-3245 or mary.ray@prattville.com.



Jacob Dane's Pear Tart

When he retires at the end of August, Jacob Dane will have more time on his hands, more time for photography—a new hobby that he is industriously pursuing—and an old hobby, cooking, which he learned at an early age from his father who was a baker in Rotterdam, the Netherlands.

Although the featured recipe for Pear Tart was not his father's, Dane acquired it from his brother when he and wife Fenny were visiting his home in the Netherlands.

"This is a Dutch recipe that has become a family favorite," says Dane. "If you poach your own pears: it may take a lot of time to prepare, but it's well worth the effort."

Because of its popularity at dinner parties, we asked Dane to share his recipe with us.

Pear Tart with Poached Pears

- 200 grams (2 cups) flour
- 200 grams (1 cup) sugar
- 200 grams (1 stick plus 6 tablespoons) butter, softened
- 4 eggs, separated
- ½ can of almond paste
- Poached pears, *recipe follows*

Combine the flour, sugar, softened butter and egg yolks and mix in a food processor. Beat the egg whites and fold them into the batter. Butter a 10-inch round cake pan. Spread half of the batter in the prepared pan. Slice the almond paste in thin pieces and spread over the batter. (Note: The almond paste will slice easier if you first roll it into a log).

Slice the poached pear quarters into two or three slices and place on top of batter. Then top off with the remaining batter. (Note: You can use canned pears if you are in a hurry, but they don't have as much flavor as the poached pears.)

Bake at 350 degrees F for 30 to 40 minutes or until golden brown.

An attractive alternative to the almond paste and pear combination is apricot filling and canned apricots.

Poached pears

- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 vanilla bean
- 1 star anise
- 1 cup water
- ¾ cup sugar
- ½ lemon, juice and zest
- 2 pears, peeled and quartered

Combine all ingredients except the pears in a large sauce pan and boil for 10 minutes, stirring frequently. Remove from heat and let stand for 10 minutes. Add the pears. Return the pan to the heat and poach (boil lightly) the pears for 30 minutes. Remove the pears and let them cool; then slice them thinly before placing them in the tart. (Note: If you continue to cook the liquid after removing the pears, you will have a delicious syrup.)

Help Needed! Donations for Picnic, that is...

Auburn University's College of Agriculture places great emphasis on helping students and parents feel at home during their time on Auburn's campus. The Student Services office hosts a variety of events throughout the year supporting current and prospective students. For fall 2008 we are sponsoring a move-in picnic for freshman students and parents, three children's field days for area elementary schools and three open houses for high school students from across the South.

We would like to invite you to partner with us in these exciting programs by donating in a variety of ways:

- Monetary sponsorship of events
- Nonperishable items i.e. cups, plates, forks, napkins, children's craft materials, etc.
- Perishable items i.e. hamburger buns, hot dogs, chips, sodas, etc.

As a sign of appreciation for your donation, you will be featured on the College of Agriculture Web site and on all printed materials associated with the sponsored event. There will also be other opportunities throughout the year to promote your organization to current and prospective students. For further information contact Megan Ross at mhr0001@auburn.edu.



ALL ABOARD!—Join dozens of fellow AU College of Ag alumni and friends—as well as ag alums from Clemson University and the universities of Kentucky, Georgia and Florida—for five glorious days at sea in March '09 aboard Carnival's Fascination in the college's second annual "cruise for a cause." The ship sails out of Jacksonville, Fla., March 2, and by the time it returns early March 7, you'll have enjoyed a fun couple of days sailing and two full days exploring the beautiful islands of the Bahamas and Key West. It's dubbed cruise for a cause because a portion of your fare, along with matching dollars from Carnival, will come back to the College of Ag for its scholarship program. On the first cruise for a cause this past February, 46 AU ag alum and supporters participated, and the \$2,548 raised has been awarded as two \$1,274 scholarships to incoming freshmen Jared Batte, an ag business and econ major from Manchester, Tenn., and animal sciences/equine major Lauren Duke of Phenix City. The college's Development Office will mail alumni more details on the upcoming cruise in mid-August. For more info now, email Development's Katie Hardy at hardyk@auburn.edu.

Orr Tourney Nov. 13 at FarmLinks

If spending a crisp fall day playing 18 holes on a challenging championship golf course that's surrounded by rolling hills, meandering streams, massive boulders and wildlife habitat sounds good to you, then flip your calendar to November and circle the second Thursday, Nov. 13.

That's the date for the Sixth Annual Henry P. Orr Memorial Golf Classic at FarmLinks Golf Course on Pursell Farms in the Talladega County town of Fayetteville.

The cost of \$250 per player covers the golf game, the cart, the driving range, tee prizes, lunch, a social, beverages and a first-class rib-eye dinner. Registration and lunch begin at 11:30 a.m., followed by a shotgun start at 12:30 p.m.

A silent auction featuring a range of fantastic items will run from 4:30 to 6 p.m., with dinner and awards presentations scheduled for 5 p.m.

Only 120 golfers can be accommodated at the tournament, so to make sure you're among them, send in a completed registration form as soon as possible. To request an entry form or more information, contact Katie Hardy at 334-844-1475 or hardyk@auburn.edu.

All golf and auction proceeds will go toward the Henry P. Orr Endowed Fund for Horticultural Excellence at Auburn University.

Orr taught horticulture at Auburn from 1947 until his retirement in 1981 and was a strong advocate for supplementing classroom education with study of the green, growing world outside. As he said, "You should go see, not just talk about, the field of horticulture."

Each spring, the Orr fund sends about five horticulture students and a faculty member on a seven- to 10-day international study tour. In the past six years, students have enjoyed tours to England, Costa Rica, the Netherlands, France and Italy.



FIRST LADY SPIRIT—Even Aubie himself made it to the Alabama Farmers Pavilion at Ag Heritage Park in late April to congratulate Myrna Walker, widow of late Auburn University president William Walker, on the new Myrna McGuire Walker First Ladies' Endowed Scholarship for AU horticulture majors that Walker made provisions for shortly before his death in August 2007. Aubie also gave a high-five to horticulture junior Tyler Weldon, who is the first recipient of the \$1,000 Walker scholarship. The First Ladies' endowment was established by the AU Campus Club.

Former AU President Honors Wife with First Ladies' Scholarship

By Jamie Creamer

When William Walker answered the phone in his Emory University Hospital room one mid-July day last summer, Auburn was on the line.

Specifically, it was Bob McGinnis, then vice president for development, calling to inform the former president of Auburn University that AU had just surpassed its \$500-million "It Begins at Auburn" fundraising campaign goal—nine months ahead of schedule, no less.

Myrna Walker listened as her husband of 47 years congratulated McGinnis, grilled him for details and then slightly shifted the conversation.

"He told Bob, 'While I've got you on the phone, there's something I want you to help me with,'" Mrs. Walker recalls. "He said, 'I want to do a First Ladies scholarship in honor of Myrna.'"

Three weeks later, Walker lost his hard-fought battle with cancer, but not before having authorized a \$25,000 contribution to the AU Campus Club First Ladies' Endowed Scholarships fund to establish the Myrna McGuire Walker First Ladies' Endowed Scholarship for students majoring in horticulture at Auburn.

And so it was that as spring semester 2008 was winding down, the Campus Club hosted a luncheon at the Alabama Farmers Pavilion at Ag Heritage Park to pay tribute to Mrs. Walker and her late husband and to announce that, beginning with the 2008-09 academic year and continuing on into the future, a deserving horticulture student will be awarded a Myrna McGuire Walker scholarship in honor of the 16th first lady of Auburn University.

The first recipient of that \$1,000 scholarship is Tyler Weldon of Pinson, who also attended the luncheon and had the chance to meet and thank Mrs. Walker for the gift. Weldon is a junior in horticulture with a landscape design emphasis and will graduate in 2010.

The Walkers, both Texas natives, met at the University of Texas as students.

"He was a waiter in my dorm," Mrs. Walker says. "That's how we met."

For more than 23 years of their marriage, the couple lived in Houston, where, from 1965 to 1988, Walker was on the faculty at Rice University. His tenure there included nine years as chair of the Department of Mechanical Engineering and Materials Science

The Move to AU

The family moved to Auburn in 1988 when Walker was chosen to serve as the new dean of the College of Engineering. Eleven years later, he was promoted to provost and then, in 2001, was named interim president of Auburn University. In 2002, the AU Board of Trustees, by a unanimous vote, removed the interim part of the title and elevated him to the presidency. He served in that role until 2004.

That the first ladies' endowment awards scholarships to horticulture majors is most fitting, Mrs. Walker says, because hort students taking shrub, vine and tree identification classes occasionally venture onto the grounds of the President's House.

"I always enjoyed seeing a group of students walking through the garden with their professor and learning about all the plants and trees there," she says.

The Walker contribution to the first ladies' endowment, along with the \$25,000 the Campus Club raised this year through its annual fundraising plant sale, brings the endowment to \$250,868, pushing the club past the halfway point toward a goal of \$500,000.

That's the magic figure at which the endowment annually will award at least a \$1,000 horticulture scholarship in the name of each of Auburn's 17 past first ladies, the current first lady and future first ladies.

In addition to the awarding of the Myrna McGuire Walker First Lady Scholarship for 2008-09 to Tyler Weldon, 14 other horticulture students also will benefit from First Ladies' scholarships. Those students, the names of the former AU presidents' wives in whose honor their scholarships have been presented and the years their husbands served as Auburn presidents include:

- Whitlyn Miller—Sarah Hall Sasnett, 1859-61
- Zachary Hester—Sarah Hamilton Render Dowdell, 1866-72
- Mark Foshee—Eppie Reynolds McGraw Tichenor, 1872-82
- Chance Stephenson—Sallie Fleming Brown, 1882-1883, 1884-1902
- Emily Hung—Mary A. Howell Smith, 1902
- Evan Prescott—Ellen (Nellie) Stanford Smith Thach, 1902-19
- Will Harbison—Letitia Dowdell Ross, 1919-20
- Ben Nemec—Camille Early Dowell, 1920-28
- Joshua Sells—Stella White Knapp, 1928-32
- Kathryn Williams—Annie Smith Duncan, 1935-47
- Emily Wilson—To be announced later this fall
- Meredith Jedlicka—To be announced later this fall
- Dusty Dunn Bagents—Cratus Hester Bailey, 1983-84
- Summer Thaxton—Ann Freeman Martin, 1984-92

"Actually," says club scholarship chairwoman Mary Lou Matthews, "our first goal is \$500,000. The long-term goal is more like \$5 million. There's nothing cheap about our goals."

Jeff Sibley, a horticulture professor and the department's scholarship chairman, says that for the 2007-08 academic year, nine students received scholarships, in the names of past first ladies, from the endowment. Based on the earnings from and donations to the endowment, 15 scholarships have been awarded for 2008-09.

The Campus Club, which is open to faculty, staff and friends of Auburn, in 2001 established the AU First Ladies Award program, in which it would give at least one \$1,000 scholarship a year to a student in any major at Auburn in the name of either one of AU's past first ladies or the current president's wife.

Members decided to hold the first of what would become an annual spring plant sale to raise money for the program. They enlisted the help of the AU horticulture department, which offered dozens of healthy plants left over from research projects and aided in asking nurseries around the state to donate plants for the sale. The sale was an incredible success, and to show its appreciation to AU horticulture, the club voted to earmark all of its scholarships to horticulture majors.

In 2005, an \$80,000 contribution from an anonymous donor who wanted the gift to fund horticulture scholarships and a \$5,000 donation from the Campus Club, the club formally established the First Ladies' Endowed Scholarships.

An announcement on another donation to establish a scholarship in honor of yet another of Auburn's first ladies is expected soon, moving the club closer again to its \$500,000 goal. And when that goal is attained, can \$5 million be far behind?

calendar of events

Now through Aug. 14

The Market at Ag Heritage Park

Thursdays

3-6 p.m.

Auburn

The Market at Ag Heritage Park is a grower-only farmers' market featuring fresh local produce, goat cheese, honey, stone-ground grains, plants, baked goods, educational exhibits, cooking and gardening demonstrations and much more. It is open to the entire community and is held weekly until mid-August.

Contact: Dani Carroll at 334-749-3353 or carrodl@auburn.edu or visit www.ag.auburn.edu/themarket

Aug. 2

Farm, Home and Wildlife Expo

12—5 p.m.; dinner at 5 p.m.

Chilton Research and Extension Center

Clanton

Contact: Jim Pitts at 205-646-3610 or pittsja@auburn.edu

Aug. 9

Summer Graduation Breakfast

9—11 a.m.

Ham Wilson Arena

Auburn University

Auburn

Summer 2008 College of Agriculture graduates and their families are honored at this breakfast hosted by the AU Agricultural Alumni Association and sponsored by the Alabama Poultry and Egg Association.

Contact: Ann Gulatte at 334-844-2345 or gulatam@auburn.edu

Aug. 12—13

Auburn Landscape School

The Hotel and Dixon Conference Center

Auburn

The Alabama Nursery and Landscape Association sponsors this two-day event for landscape, nursery and greenhouse professionals and Master Gardeners.

Contact: www.alnla.org

Aug. 28

All Crops Field Day

8 a.m.—noon

Wiregrass Research and Extension Center

Headland

Contact: Larry Wells at 334-693-2363 or wellslw@auburn.edu

Sept. 13

Scholarship Recognition Program

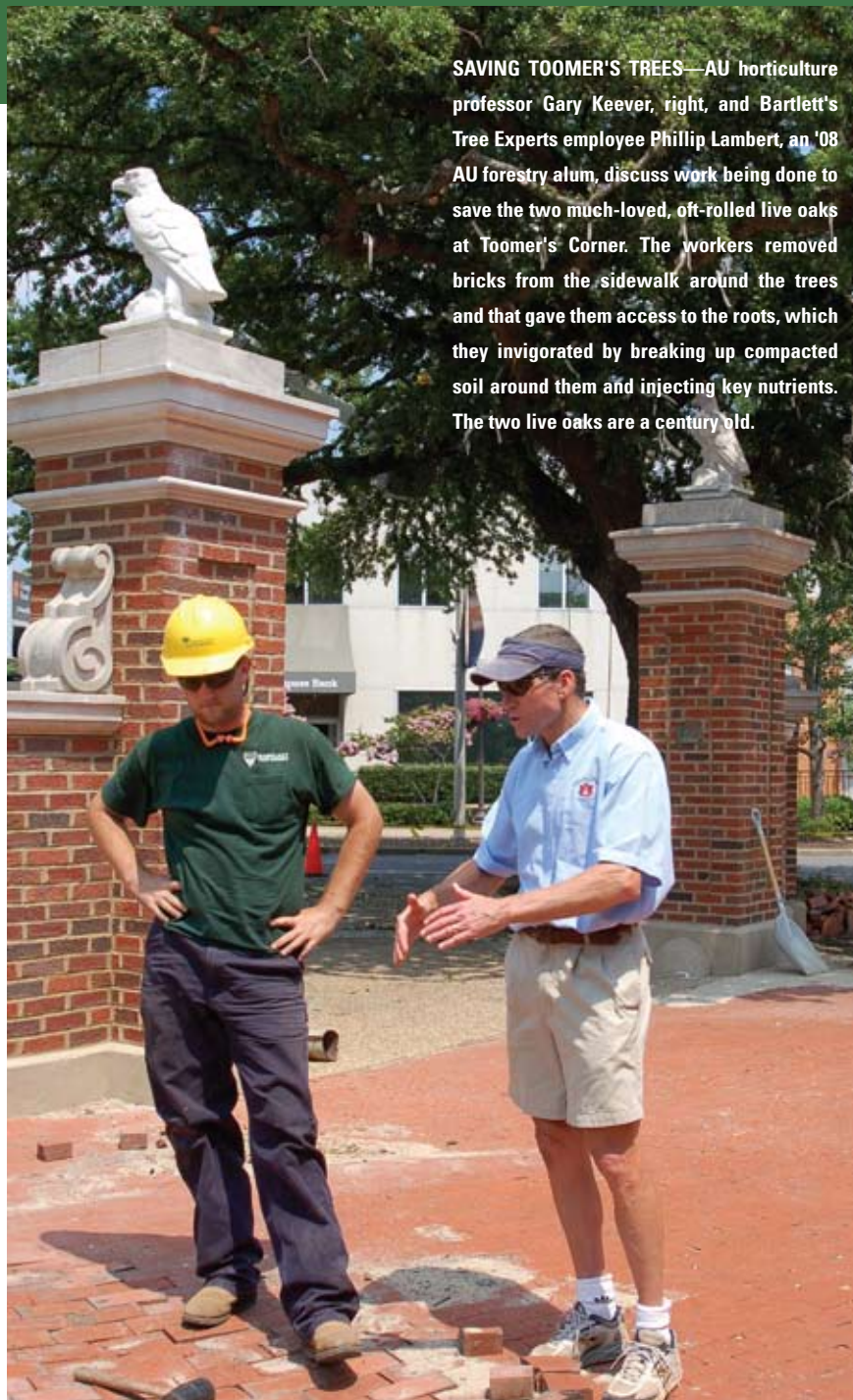
10 a.m.

Ham Wilson Livestock Arena

Auburn University

Auburn

Contact: Ann Gulatte at 334-844-2345 or gulatam@auburn.edu



SAVING TOOMER'S TREES—AU horticulture professor Gary Keever, right, and Bartlett's Tree Experts employee Phillip Lambert, an '08 AU forestry alum, discuss work being done to save the two much-loved, oft-rolled live oaks at Toomer's Corner. The workers removed bricks from the sidewalk around the trees and that gave them access to the roots, which they invigorated by breaking up compacted soil around them and injecting key nutrients. The two live oaks are a century old.

Iconic Oaks Get a Little TLC

Two of Alabama's best-known trees, Auburn's Toomer's Corner live oaks, got a little sprucing up in June when specialists in the care of live oaks performed a horticultural version of "Extreme Makeover" on the historic trees at the southwest corner of College Street and Magnolia Avenue.

A specialist from Bartlett Tree Experts in Tucker, Ga., worked with AU horticulture professor Gary Keever and Cathy Love with the AU Campus Planning and Space Management office to evaluate the structural integrity of the trees, remove dead or damaged limbs, install cables to brace weak branches, break up compacted soil around the roots, add organic matter and fertilizer around the base and treat for insects.

"We hope to improve the condition of the Toomer's oaks through this work," says Keever, who is helping the AU Facilities Division develop a long-term care plan for the iconic trees. "These are not old live oaks; if we can provide better growing conditions, they could live much longer."

The trees have been a fixture at the junction of the campus and town for more than a century, and live oaks often live for 400 years or more. In addition to the stresses common to urban trees, the Toomer's oaks are further endangered by their most dedicated advocates — tens of thousands of football fans who celebrate victories by tossing rolls of toilet paper over the trees after every victory in Jordan-Hare Stadium. Several times in recent years, celebrants have set fire to the paper, causing further damage to the trees.



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