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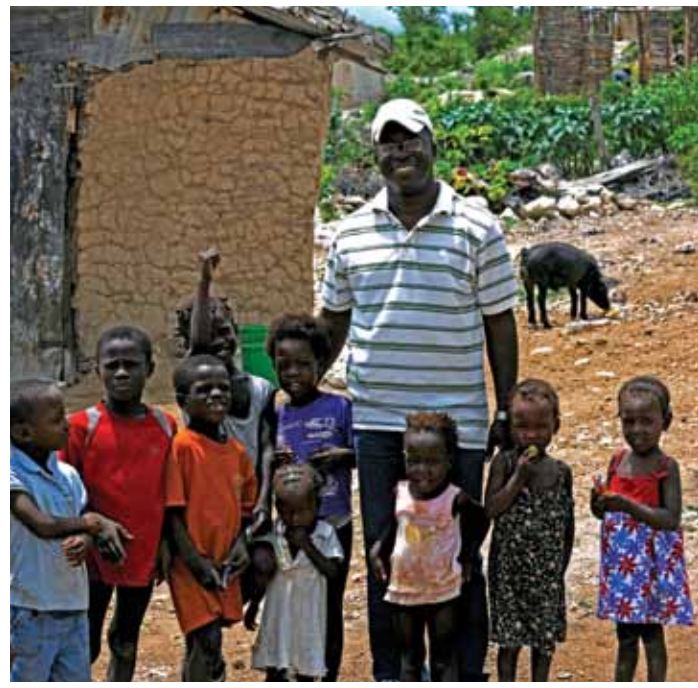
Making a Difference

Auburn Alum Named Time Magazine "Hero"

by KATIE JACKSON



FEEDING FISH, FEEDING PEOPLE—Valentin Abe, a Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures alumnus who is helping develop fish farming options in Haiti, was honored recently in the April 29 Time magazine issue that featured the 100 people who most affect our world. He was nominated for the honor by former U.S. President Bill Clinton, whom Abe met in October 2009 when Clinton visited his fish farming operation in Haiti. Abe, a native of the Ivory Coast, has spent 13 years in Haiti establishing successful fish farming operations that not only help feed Haitians but also help boost their incomes. He is also featured in the August 2010 issue of Auburn Magazine (visit www.aualum.org) and will be on the Auburn campus in November to deliver the Fall 2010 York Distinguished Lecturer Series presentation. Learn more about his visit at www.ag.auburn.edu/yorklecture.

WHEN FORMER U.S. President Bill Clinton showed up Oct. 1, 2009, at a Haitian fish farm operated by College of Ag alumnus Valentin Abe, the fisheries and allied aquaculture graduate was pleasantly surprised by Clinton's knowledge of fisheries and aquaculture.

Clinton apparently was impressed by Abe as well, so much so that he picked Abe as his choice for Time Magazine's April 29, 2010, "100 Most Influential People" edition.

But then, who wouldn't be impressed?

Abe grew up as the youngest of eight children living in one of the poorest neighborhoods (Koumassi) of the Ivory Coast's capital, Abidjan. The area was so poor that Abe and his fellow first- and second-graders sat on the floor for their classes because the school had no chairs and tables.

"We had to be careful not to dirty our uniforms since most of the kids had only one and we could only wash it at the end of the week," he recalls.

Despite those humble educational beginnings, Abe's father, a mechanic, and his mother, who sold fish in the local market, worked hard to ensure that their children had access to educations. Sure enough, all eight of the Abe children earned college degrees (Abe has a Ph.D.; another brother is an economist; yet another is a medical doctor).

Abe got his initial degree in animal sciences, but was always attracted to fisheries and "jumped ship" to it when he was named a Fulbright Program scholar.

"Aside from my mother selling fish for over 20 years, I grew up on the banks of the lagoon Ebrié, which runs through the middle of Abidjan," he says. "Fishing has always been a passion for me."

When Abe was awarded a Fulbright scholarship in 1988, his government insisted that one of only four Fulbrights awarded to Ivorians that year be in fisheries because the country desperately needed specialists in that field. Abe happily agreed, and Auburn was an obvious choice for his university affiliation.

"First, two Ivorians came to Auburn's International Center for Aquaculture and Aquatic Environments for training in the 1980s and when they returned they were like God," he says. "Second, every time you opened a book on fisheries and aquaculture you would find an Auburn professor. Professors like Claude Boyd, R.O. Smitherman, Len Lovshin, Rudy Schmittou and John Plumb were legends."

Even though Abe was also accepted at Boulder, Colo., for his Fulbright experience, he readily chose Auburn, a decision he has never regretted.

"My experience at Auburn was fantastic," he says. Abe's graduate committees included Boyd, Smitherman and Plumb (he completed his master's degree in 1991 and the Ph.D. in 1995). In addition, working under Ronald Phelps, his major professor, was "one of the best experiences of my life," and he says that working with Bryan Duncan in the International Center for Aquaculture and Aquatic Environments for his postdoctorate (completed in 1997) "made me who I am now."

It was through ICAAE that Abe worked on various overseas projects, which confirmed for him a desire to work in the international community. His ICAAE connections also landed Abe in Haiti for what was supposed to be a short-term Rotary Club–sponsored project.

"A gentleman named William (Bill) Schneider (who had received a grant from the Rotary Club of New Smyrna Beach, Fla., and the Rotary Foundation) wanted to develop aquaculture in Haiti," says Abe. Schneider contacted Auburn looking for an aquaculture specialist and FAA faculty members "volunteered" Abe for the project.

The original plan was to build a model fish farm in Haiti and leave; construction was expected to take about six months. But construction took much longer and there was no one available to run the farm after completion. So, when Schneider asked Abe to stay two more years and train a young Haitian agronomist to take over, he agreed. It didn't hurt that, by that time, Abe had met and married Ruth Josefino, a native of the Dominican Republic who had grownup in Haiti.

"Six months became two years and two years became 13 years," Abe says.

Those nine extra years came about because Abe wanted this project to succeed, which was no easy task.

"There have been many attempts to culture fish in Haiti in the past, but most of them failed," he says. "For example, in 1999, I visited about

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View from AGhill

New beginnings are opportunities to develop new friendships, work on new challenges and provide new energy to an organization. As I begin this new position as dean and director at Auburn, I look forward to getting to know you, the many stakeholders, partners, alumni, students, faculty and staff who have made Auburn an outstanding place! People are the lifeblood of any organization and developing a strong relationship with you really makes a difference in our success.

While we have overcome many challenges in the past, we do have many challenges ahead. The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico threatens the Gulf and coastal ecosystems and the economic viability of many industries in the state. Rapidly changing culture dampens our ability to attract students into our programs. Globalization of the business community is changing the skill set needed by our graduates. Global policy issues related to food, energy, environment and health may significantly impact the way we do business in Alabama agriculture.

One thing is for sure…agriculture is at the center of the major global issues facing society. This is an exciting time for Auburn University, especially the College of Agriculture and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station. I look forward to working with you to help address these challenges and to make Auburn University an effective, responsive and relevant organization for the future.

Bill Batchelor
DEAN, COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE
DIRECTOR, ALABAMA AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

New Approaches

Pond to Plate

New Program Helping Bolster Catfish Industry

by KATIE WILLIAMS & ANDREW THOMPSON
Ag Communications Students

Cross-campus colleges at Auburn University are teaming up with industry with the same goal in mind: to help the Alabama catfish industry at a time when foreign imports, high input costs and a weak economy are damaging the market.

The Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures (FAA) in the College of Agriculture, the Auburn Technical Assistance Center (ATAC) in the College of Business and other sectors of the catfish industry are working together for the Pond to Plate project, an effort aimed at improving all levels of the catfish industry's value stream.

According to John Jensen, project manager and professor emeritus of FAA, change within the catfish industry is inevitable; however, it can be positively achieved with the proper training and knowledge.

"The project is about trying to show people in all sectors of the catfish industry the way to change, and how to make change help them be more profitable and sustain their future," Jensen says.

Jensen adds that consumers must be kept in mind when making changes because in the end, it is what they want to eat and what price they want to pay that drives the market.

Consumers prefer good-tasting, high-quality filets and lower prices at the supermarket, and right now imported catfish appear to have those qualities as evidenced by their growth in sales in the U.S.

Auburn University and its partners want to help change that.

"We don't have a competitive product," Jensen says. "We have a good product, but we need to have a better product, a product with consistency in color, texture, taste and appearance every time. And, the product has to be price competitive."

One way to improve this consistency of product is to implement Lean manufacturing and continuous improvement techniques over the entire catfish value stream, literally from the "pond" to the "plate."

Mitch Emmons, senior outreach associate with ATAC, says Lean is a process improvement technique taken from the automotive industry. It is removing or reducing waste and non-value-added activities from a process to make the process more efficient, easier to manage, more visual for the operator and more controllable. Emmons says it's all about pursuing perfection.

POND TO PLATE—A new project, called Pond to Plate, strives to make catfish fillets more pleasing and palatable to the public.

"It's more or less making it better by utilizing the resources—human and material—that you have," Emmons says. "It's about fostering a work culture that becomes problem-solvers empowered to continually think of and try ways to make the job easier to do, more efficient and ultimately, more profitable for the industry."

Part of the adjustment toward operating under Lean practices with the catfish industry has involved several three-day training sessions where Lean specialists from ATAC work on site with producers and processors to implement improvements on the lines and in the processes.

These training sessions, or "rapid improvement events," create cross-disciplinary teams of people from all levels of the catfish industry to work together to develop and implement ideas that will lead to more efficient practices to improve product quality and consistency.

ATAC Lean Specialist Terri Lawrence says involvement in the project is voluntary; however, as more segments of the catfish industry are getting on board with the Lean practices, word is beginning to spread and interest is growing.

Another example of how Lean manufacturing will help the catfish industry is by lowering the cost of production.

As input prices continue to rise, many catfish producers are forced to either discontinue operations or, when possible, sell their fish at higher prices to remain viable; however, with this increase in fish prices at the store, some consumers may switch to the lower-priced fish products.

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FRAZIER WINS LOVELIEST VILLAGE AWARD—Gerald Frazier, one of the dedicated members of the AAES/College of Ag Agricultural Land and Resource Management team, was recently cited for his exceptional work on the landscape for the Herdsmans' House at Ag Heritage Park. Frazier was recognized by the Auburn Beautification Council with Loveliest Village "Pat on the Back" and "Revitalization" awards for his efforts to improve the landscape around the Herdsmans' House. Frazier chose the direction and renovation of the landscape and directed its completion, gathering much of the plant material through donations from College of Ag departments. He was nominated for the awards by Robert Hensarling, director of Ag Heritage Park. Pictured, from left, are Hensarling, Frazier and Auburn Beautification Council members Kaye Recknor and Dennis Drake.

BODA GETTA BONUS—The organizers of the Boda Getta BBQ festival, held for the second year in a row this past April at Ag Heritage Park, had a great way of saying thanks to the College of Ag for use of the park. They donated $10,000 of the proceeds from the event to the College of Ag scholarship fund. Pictured at the check presentation are Bob Steiner, who helped organize the barbeque event, and Richard Guthrie, who accepted the check just days before he retired as College of Ag dean.

Scholarship Drive Will Help Auburn, Ag Recruit Best, Brightest Students

by JAMIE CREAMER

GENEROSITY IN ACTION—Scholarship donors, such as Ruby Cunningham, center, make a huge difference in the lives of students such as Margaret Salter, left, and Sarah Whitaker who both were awarded the John P. Cunningham Jr. Memorial Endowed Scholarship in fall 2009.

A fundraising initiative that will enhance Auburn University's efforts to recruit and retain academically exceptional students is now in full swing and is giving first-time endowment donors a limited-time opportunity to establish scholarship endowments at special gift levels.

Income generated by endowments created during the new Auburn Scholarship Campaign will allow the university to offer larger scholarships to the sharpest students in Alabama, the nation and abroad, says Mark Wilton, College of Ag development officer.

"Today, competition among universities for the top-performing students is intense," Wilton says. "Increasingly, the level of financial assistance is the deciding factor in these students' ultimate choice of universities. If Auburn is to remain competitive, it's essential that we supplement the scholarships we offer."

That's the objective of the scholarship campaign, which kicked off Aug. 5 and wraps up Dec. 31, 2011. For each endowment set up through the campaign, the donor's gift will be invested, and the income earned on the investment will be paired with an existing Spirit of Auburn or Academic scholarship. The scholarship will be awarded in the donor's name.

Auburn's Spirit of Auburn and Academic scholarships are renewable, four-year scholarships awarded to incoming freshmen based on standardized college-entrance-exam scores and high-school grade point averages. Spirit of Auburn scholarships are automatically given to qualified incoming students who are residents of Alabama; Academic scholarships are awarded to select students from among out-of-state students who meet the criteria. These scholarships can range from $2,500 to more than full tuition annually.

The Auburn Scholarship Campaign is an integral part of the College of Agriculture's development plan, Wilton says.

"Here in the college, we are dedicated to educating people and discovering knowledge that will improve the lives of people everywhere through our research, instruction and outreach programs," he says. "The accomplishments of our students are crucial to achieving this mission.

"Exceptional students can challenge and inspire fellow students, and strengthen the college as well as the university as a whole."

At Auburn, establishing an endowment requires a gift of at least $25,000 over five years. Wilton says the special endowment level that has been made available for the current scholarship initiative only should encourage giving among alumni and friends who have never made an outright gift to create an endowment as well as among faculty, staff and retirees who are part of the university community and members of the 98 Auburn Alumni Association Auburn Clubs located in Alabama and 23 other states.

A scholarship endowment basically provides a continuous, dependable source of funding in perpetuity, Wilton says, adding, "It's a gift that keeps on giving."

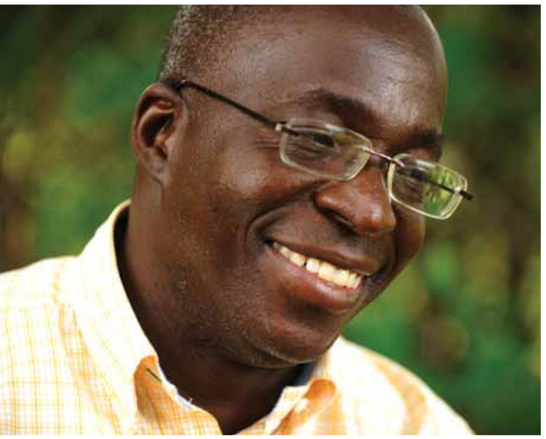
All gifts to the campaign are tax deductible.

For more information about the campaign, visit the website at www.auburn.edu/scholarshipcampaign or contact Wilton at 334-844-1198 or wiltomt@auburn.edu.

(MAKING A DIFFERENCE, *from page 1*)

135 fish ponds in the northern part of Haiti alone. In 2006, only 19 were still operational."

Abe attributes past failures to a lack of long-term support. Many nongovernmental organizations have come into Haiti to set up fish farms and other development projects—but as soon as the funding ends, the aid workers are gone and the projects unravel.



FAMOUS SMILE—If you ask Valentin Abe's mentors and peers here at Auburn what they recall most about the former graduate student, it is his smile and warmth that stand out. Combine those charming attributes with Abe's deep commitment to his fish farming project in Haiti and his even deeper affection and respect for the Haitian people and the result is a man who makes amazing things happen.

But Abe believes fish farming can work and can improve nutrition and the economy in Haiti. And he is determined not to let his project fail, so determined, in fact, that he put his own money into the project to demonstrate its feasibility. The results were not immediate, in part because political turmoil in 2003 through 2006 affected the Haitian economy and Abe's own family—he sent his wife and daughters to the Dominican Republic for safety where they still reside.

By 2006, however, things began to improve and since then the project has continued to expand. Abe has now established some of the most successful tilapia hatcheries in the Caribbean, which he contends still have room to grow. He also has succeeded in turning extremely poor people into entrepreneurs.

"It has the best chance to grow in its history," he says, adding "I have been successful because I made the commitment to stay through the good and the bad times."

The toughest hurdle he faces? "To keep making progress without destroying what I have already achieved," he says. And he has big plans for the future.

"Now that I have demonstrated the idea can work, I want to expand it to the max," he says. His goal is to develop a new industry in Haiti, including several other entities, and to increase fish production to two million pounds of fish in the next two years and to 10 million pounds in the next five years.

"We want to be able to produce fish enough for domestic consumption as well as for export," he says.

Oh, and that relationship with Clinton also continues. "Mr. Clinton is always inquiring about the project or having one of his aides either call or visit the project," says Abe. "So far, he is the best PR I have ever had!"

And that PR has now made Abe a much-sought-after speaker. In fact, he will return to Auburn Nov. 3-6 as the Fall 2010 York Distinguished Lecturer (www.ag.auburn.edu/yorklecture).

(POND TO PLATE, *from page 2*)

Lawrence believes, however, that if the catfish was clearly labeled as import or domestic, some consumers would be willing to pay for the slightly more expensive domestic fish to support the U.S. economy.

Terry Hanson, associate professor of aquaculture economics and Extension specialist, says, "The catfish feed cost has increased by about $130 per ton in the past five years to $350 per ton. In normal times, 50 percent of the cost of production is feed, but that is higher now with higher feed costs. Fuel costs have increased as well and because these two factors of production have increased production costs so much, the U.S. catfish industry is hurting and is less competitive with similar imported fish products."

Hanson also says producers are only getting about five cents more per pound in those same five years from the processors for their fish. Because of these high feed prices, Jensen says it is essential that catfish producers decrease the feed conversion ratio, which is the amount of feed it takes to grow an additional pound of fish.

"If we could get that down from 2.8 to 1.5, we'd save enough money to be competitive with China and anybody else," Jensen says. "We have to do that, which means looking at different ways to grow fish, and we have to have more control over the inventory and final size harvested."

One way to achieve that, Jensen believes, is by making the fish a more uniform size and eliminating the larger fish because it takes more feed for it to increase in size than it does for a smaller fish. Also, the larger fish sometimes eats the smaller fish.

A sluggish economy is also adding to the problems of the catfish industry.

"Seventy-five percent of all fish is eaten in restaurants, so when restaurant consumption goes down because of economic recession, it hurts," Jensen says.

Along with the FAA, ATAC and individual sectors of catfish production, other groups involved in boosting the Alabama catfish industry include the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, the Alabama Catfish Producers Association, USDA-ARS—Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory, United Soybean Board and other public and private organizations.

In addition to Jensen, Hanson, Emmons and Lawrence, others who have been instrumental in making the Pond to Plate Project possible are David Rouse, FAA department head; Jesse Chappell, associate professor and aquaculture Extension specialist; Jeff Terhune, associate professor, fish health; Mitt Walker, director of the catfish division of the Alabama Farmers Federation; and Julie Bebak, veterinary medical officer of the USDA-ARS Aquatic Animal Health Laboratory.

Currently, the project is just in Alabama. Jensen says he would like to see it spread to the other catfish farming regions of the U.S.

"This is the best project I've ever been involved in," Jensen says, and he's been with Auburn University for 38 years.

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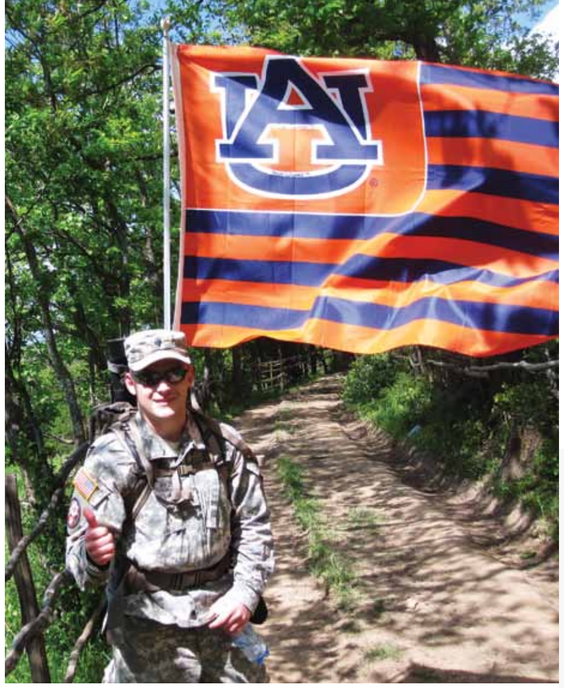


FULL SUPPORT—At left, U.S. Army Reserve Sgt. Josiah Greene proudly carries the Auburn flag on a 26-km road march through Kosovo, where he was deployed on a peacekeeping mission. While in Kosovo, Greene, an animal sciences major at Auburn, established a fund at St. Jude Children's Hospital to show support for Auburn football signee Shon Coleman, who was diagnosed with leukemia in March. Below, Coleman poses in his jersey from the 2010 U.S. Army All-American Bowl, where he turned in a strong performance that raised his stock as a college recruit. (Photo courtesy of St. Jude Biomedical Communications)

The Human Touch

'A Brother in Need'

Ag Student, Soldier Rallies Auburn Family Around Football Signee

by JAMIE CREAMER

Josiah Greene never has been one to get caught up in all the hype surrounding college football recruiting, but this year, the College of Ag animal sciences major and ardent Auburn fan got hooked. From his U.S. Army Reserve quarters at Camp Bondsteel in Kosovo, Greene cruised the Internet almost daily in the months and weeks leading up to national signing day 2010, keeping up with the latest rumors on which high-school football standouts were leaning toward Auburn.

"It was a way for me to connect to home," says Greene, who, as a soldier in the Reserve's Battle Group Med Falcon unit, was a good 5,500 miles from his Auburn home on a nine-month peacekeeping mission. "I didn't feel so far away."

Right near the end of recruiting season, Greene started following a five-star recruit out of Olive Branch, Miss., name of Shon Coleman. The 6-foot 7-inch, 285-pound Coleman—rated by top college-football-recruiting authorities at Rivals.com as the No. 1 recruit from the state of Mississippi and the third-best offensive tackle in the nation—had verbally committed to Auburn in April of '09, but a stellar senior season as a lineman for the Olive Branch Conquistadors upped his stock significantly. As Feb. 3 and national signing day approached, the Web was abuzz with reports that Coleman was ditching Auburn for Miami, Ole Miss, even Alabama.

When, on the big day, Coleman honored his commitment and officially signed with Auburn, Greene let go a mighty War Eagle into the Kosovo night. And to think: By the time Coleman and the rest of Auburn's highly ranked class of signees made their debut at Jordan-Hare to the roar of 87,000 fans, he'd be among those roaring.

"Something like that, it gave me a lot to keep my head up for, to work hard and finish my job (as a radiology specialist at Camp Bondsteel's hospital) so I could come home and be a part of it all in 2010," says Greene, 25, a sergeant in the Reserve.

In late July, he and his unit wrapped up their mission in Kosovo, and Greene returned safely to his family and friends in Auburn. He's back in school this semester, three credit hours shy of his junior year in animal sciences' production track. ("I've had to take off a couple of semesters because of Army training," he says.)

For a huge all-sports fan like Greene, Saturday, Sept. 4, and Auburn's kickoff of the 2010 football season can't get here fast enough. You can bet he'll be in the stands, bodda-getting amidst a sea of orange and blue, but he won't be seeing Coleman in the lineup—not this season, anyway.

Less than two months after he signed with Auburn, Coleman was diagnosed with leukemia.

It was in mid-March, and De Keisha Tunstall had taken her seemingly healthy 18-year-old son to a doctor to have a lump on his chest and another on his head removed. "The one on his head bothered him when he'd put on his helmet," she says. "We were taking care of that, getting him ready to go to Auburn."

Test results delivered the tragic news that the knots were symptoms of acute lymphoblastic leukemia. Coleman was admitted to St. Jude Children's Hospital in nearby Memphis. He already had a couple of chemotherapy treatments behind him by the time word of his diagnosis got out.

Shon Coleman

In Kosovo, Greene was stunned when he came across the news online, and his heart went out to Coleman and his family. But he wanted to DO something, something that would let Coleman know members of his newly acquired Auburn family were behind him 110 percent.

His first move was to honor Coleman by carrying an orange-and-blue Auburn flag with "Shon Coleman" written on it on a 26-km, Royal Danish Army–sponsored unity march through the Kosovo countryside. He also wore a specially designed patch with Coleman's name, the image of a lineman in his stance and a yellow ribbon dangling from the interlocking AU. The five other soldiers from his unit on the march wore the patches on their sleeves, too.

"None of them had any affiliation with Auburn, but they wanted to step up and show their support for not just Shon but others with cancer," says Greene, who sent the patch he wore to Coleman.

The second thing Greene did was establish a fund—the Shon Coleman Tribute Fund—at St. Jude, with all donations to go toward cancer research at the world-class hospital.

"I felt like it would be a small gesture of support for a brother in need," Greene says. "And I hoped it would be a way to get the Auburn family back home involved."

As soon as the fund was in place, Greene e-mailed family and friends about it and posted it on Auburn message boards, and by the first day's end, the fund had topped $2,000. Greene was so enthused, he sent another e-mail promoting the fund, this one to ESPN The Magazine's senior writer, Bruce Feldman. "I thought maybe with some bigger exposure to not just SEC rival fans but fans of college football around the nation we could make a huge, huge impact for children fighting against this terrible disease," Greene wrote.

So in his April 29 blog, Feldman wrote about Greene and Coleman and the tribute fund, and donations from across the U.S. rolled in, pushing the fund past its original goal of $10,000.

By the time Greene landed back in the States July 18, the fund stood at $16,196. He doesn't plan to let things fizzle out, either. The current goal is $20,000, but Greene is perfectly willing to keep bumping that goal higher.

Before he set the fund up, Greene got Ms. Tunstall's OK via a Facebook message.

"I teared up," Coleman's mother says. "What a sweet and generous thing to do."

When she told Coleman what an Auburn student deployed in Kosovo was about to do, "he said, 'are you serious?' He's very touched by what Josiah's done."

As for Coleman, his progress has been nothing short of amazing. He started phase one of chemo the last week in March and 15 days later tested 100-percent cancer free. He finished the second phase of chemo in July and has begun phase three, which entails lower dosages of chemo for 120 weeks.

"Shon has taken it all like a champ," Ms. Tunstall says. "He hasn't lost any of his hair and has lost only a little weight." On May 16, the Auburn signee graduated from high school with his class.

Ms. Tunstall says Coleman intends to start classes at Auburn summer semester 2011. His sister, Sha'ona, also a 2010 high-school graduate, will do likewise.

"He will be down on the Plains in no time," she says, "and I can't wait to personally thank everyone who prayed healing onto my son."

Tax-deductible donations to the Shon Coleman Tribute Fund can be made online at stj.convio.net/goto/wareagleshon.

Though Greene may have set up the fund, he says he didn't do anything but get the ball rolling.

"It was the hearts of people back home that kept it rolling and that keep it rolling today," he says.

TAKING AUBURN TO THE WORLD—College of Ag students Clark Roper and Emily Brennan spent 15 days in August touring Taiwan's agricultural sectors through a program called Exploring Agriculture in Taiwan. The opportunity was provided through U.S. Congressman Bobby Bright's office. Before they took flight to discover new worlds, the two helped model a new T-shirt design that commemorates Comer Hall's 100th birthday. Learn more about the students' adventures in the October issue of Ag Illustrated. To order the limited edition T-shirt go to www.ag.auburn.edu and click on the Ag Store button.

Lee County Creek Named for Homer S. Swingle

It's official! A previously unnamed stream that runs through the upper fisheries research station in north Auburn is now officially designated by the U.S. Geological Survey as Swingle Creek.

Signs have been erected in two locations where the creek crosses roadways—on Lee County roads 188 and 72. The creek's naming came about through an application made by the Saugahatchee Watershed Management Project, also known as SWaMP, and Auburn's Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures (FAA).

According to Eric Reutebuch, a research associate in FAA and SWaMP co-coordinator, the unnamed stream came to their attention when SWaMP leaders were working with the Lee County Highway Department and Alabama Department of Environmental Management to erect signs on streams and creeks throughout the county. When they realized that this stream not only was nameless, but also originated from Auburn University's fisheries research station, Reutebuch and FAA Department Head David Rouse petitioned the USGS's Board on Geographic Names to officially name it in honor of Homer S. Swingle, an Auburn professor who is credited with founding Auburn's internationally revered fisheries and aquaculture program.

The naming of the creek was officially approved by the Lee County Commission in March.

SWINGLE STREAM DEDICATED—Family members of the late Homer S. Swingle, founder of Auburn's internationally revered fisheries and aquaculture program, were on hand to officially name a Lee County creek in their patriarch's honor. Pictured, from left, are Eric Reutebuch, Bill Deutsch and David Rouse, all in the Auburn Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures; Melissa Middlebrooks with the Alabama Department of Environmental Management; Alayia and Jamie Pierce, great-grandchildren of Homer Swingle, and their father, Roger, who is Swingle's grandson.

The Wright Stuff

Incoming Freshman Serving as State FFA Officer

by KATIE WILLIAMS, AG COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

Will Wright

There's a sentinel coming to the College of Agriculture…a Future Farmers of America sentinel that is.

Will Wright, an incoming freshman from Lauderdale County High School in Rogersville, Ala., is the 2010-2011 sentinel for the Alabama FFA Association.

Having a state FFA officer reside on a college campus is something new this year. In previous years, FFA only allowed juniors and seniors in high school to be state officers. That rule has now been changed to include first-year undergraduates in the state officer appointment list.

Wright believes this is a good decision by the organization because it allows more developed and experienced leaders to take the leadership reins and turn the FFA into an even better organization.

"The leadership and maturity you gain through life experiences are way more beneficial than what you could find in a book," Wright says. "I know that my abilities as a freshman in college are way more advanced than they were when I was in high school."

Wright's duties as sentinel will be presenting numerous leadership workshops across the state throughout the year, being a delegate along with the other Alabama State officers at National Convention and assisting in planning and executing the State Convention that more than 2,000 FFA members will attend.

Being an FFA officer is nothing new to Wright. He was the Rogersville FFA chapter president for his last three years of high school, North District historian his sophomore year and North District treasurer his senior year.

Wright added that both of his parents were also involved in FFA. His uncle was a state officer from 1977-78, and his sister, who is a junior agricultural communications major at Auburn, was a state officer from 2006-07.

Wright became interested in FFA after he saw the immense passion his father had for agriculture. He even kept that passion he gleaned from his father in mind when choosing a major: biosystems engineering with a minor in ag leadership.

"I believe biosystems engineering is a growing industry," Wright says. "Biosystems basically means agriculture, which we all know is vital to everyone's life. I believe I can use my passion for agriculture and knowledge of agriculture to help benefit the population at large."

Wright wants to take his education a step further and go through a fifth year and obtain his agricultural education degree. His father, who is an alumnus of Auburn, was an agricultural education teacher throughout Wright's childhood.

As Wright puts it, "Auburn is the only place to go in the Wright house." In addition to his father and sister, Wright's three older brothers have also attended Auburn.

"It is a tradition for my family to live and love Auburn," Wright says. "Auburn is absolutely the best place for me to be. It just basically groups together all of my wants, needs and strengths and will help me achieve all of my goals."

Besides his own family's roots in the Auburn tradition, Wright also likes the family-like atmosphere that the university provides.

Wright has to juggle his officer duties with class scheduling, exams, papers and homework assignments; however, he has a plan.

"At my Camp War Eagle session, I made sure to schedule my classes so that I could easily be able to visit a chapter's meeting," Wright says. "I did this by making sure that on at least three of the five days of the week I am able to reach any place in the state by 3:15 p.m. This is the time chapter meetings usually start."

Other members of the 2010 officer team consist of: Elizabeth Wilson, president; Jackson Harris, vice president; Carley McWilliams, secretary; Allison Meeks, treasurer; Becky Almquist, reporter.

Faculty and Staff Accomplishments

Five College of Agriculture faculty were awarded promotions or promotions with tenure for 2010. **Allen Davis** in fisheries and allied aquacultures and **Yucheng Feng** in agronomy and soils are now full professors, while biosystems engineering's **Mark Dougherty**, poultry science's **Kenneth Macklin** and agronomy and soils' **Scott McElroy** have earned tenure and attained the rank of associate professor.

Keith Cummins, professor of animal and dairy sciences, has been chosen as one of eight spokespersons from across the United States for the American Dairy Science Association. As a spokesman, Cummins will serve as a media contact for the issues affecting the dairy industry in the Southeast.

Ann Gulatte was named the Auburn University Employee of the Year through the Spirit of Excellence program.

Clarence Johnson

Clarence Johnson, professor emeritus of biosystems engineering, received the John Deere Gold Medal Award at the 2010 annual international meeting of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers in June. Johnson was recognized for his pioneering research in soil dynamics, accomplished with colleagues at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Soil Dynamics Laboratory in Auburn.

MANRRS Focusing on Diversity

Minorities are often a minority in the fields of agriculture, natural resources and related sciences, but one College of Ag club is working hard to bring more diversity to Ag Hill and the life sciences.

That group—The National Society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS)—began in 1986 at Michigan State University and an Auburn University chapter was established in the mid-1990s. The Auburn chapter had become inactive until 2006 when School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences professor Brenda Allen, with the support of Auburn's Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs, helped reactivate the Auburn chapter. Allen, who is also an Extension urban forestry specialist, has been a professional member of MANRRS since 1997 and serves as adviser for the AU chapter.

LEADING THE WAY—Auburn University students were helping lead the way at the recent MANRRS 25th Annual Career Fair and Training Conference held in Orlando, Fla. Pictured, from left, are Quinton Miles, Lauren Parker and AU chapter president Derris Burnett.

Currently, the AU MANRRS chapter has about a dozen active members and welcomes new members of all racial and ethnic backgrounds interested in agricultural and related sciences careers. MANRRS members promote and implement initiatives that foster inclusion and advancement of members of ethnic/cultural groups underrepresented in agricultural and natural resource sciences and related fields in all phases of career preparation and participation. MANRRS members have the chance to develop leadership skills, build career networks, interact with life science professionals and gain access to jobs and internships.

In March 2010, six Auburn MANRRS members attended and participated in the MANRRS 25th Annual Career Fair and Training Conference in Orlando, Fla. There they were able to network and to participate in leadership training, professional development programs and undergraduate and graduate research discussions and competitions.

Lenese Grant, a graduate student in nutrition and food science, participated in the research poster competition. Derris Burnett, Auburn University MANRRS chapter president and an Auburn Ph.D. student in animal sciences, was elected to a national office—Region III graduate vice president.

To learn more about MANRRS, contact Allen at 334-355-0557 or Burnett at 334-552-0881 or ddb0003@auburn.edu.

Cool Lineup for a Hot August

Fall Semester Kicks Off with Lots of Ag Hill Activities

August in Auburn is almost always hot, but on Ag Hill it's extra hot with lots of cool activities.

The "cool" lineup begins with Moving Day Picnics, to be held Aug. 7 and 14 from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on the lawn of Comer Hall. These events, which feature food hot off the grill and ice-cold drinks, are sponsored by the College of Ag Student Services office and the college's Parent Council. They offer students and parents a break from moving in along with a chance to meet fellow students and parents and get to know College of Ag faculty, staff and administrators.

Aug. 14-21 is Welcome Week on the Auburn campus (classes begin on Aug. 18) and Ag Hill will celebrate on Aug. 20 from 10 a.m. to noon with an event called "Take 5 with the College of Ag." Students are invited to come by the front steps of Comer Hall to meet the dean, get a tour of Ag Hill and grab a bite of Comer's 100th birthday celebration cake.

On Aug. 25, Ag Council will host O-Night, an event that introduces new College of Ag students to the many Ag Hill clubs and organizations. O-Night will be held at Ham Wilson Livestock Arena on Donahue Drive beginning at 6 p.m. and free food and drinks will be provided.

College of Ag 2010-2011 scholarship recipients and donors will be honored on Aug. 28 beginning at 10 a.m. back at Ham Wilson Arena with a ceremony and breakfast reception.

New Student Update nights are planned for Aug. 31 and Sept. 1, also at Ham Wilson Arena, beginning at 6 p.m. These events, hosted by the Student Services staff, are designed to give all incoming freshmen and new transfer students the scoop on how to be a successful student.

August is just the beginning of a fall full of College of Ag activities and events, including Ag Roundup Nov. 6. Learn more by contacting Megan Ross in the Student Services Office at mhr0001@auburn.edu or 334-844-3201, visiting www.ag.auburn.edu and clicking on the Calendar link or stopping by the events monitor just inside the dean's office in Comer Hall.

Student Accomplishments

Laura Beth Guglielmi

Laura Beth Guglielmi, a sophomore majoring in agricultural economics, was named the Auburn University Learning Community 2009-2010 Student of the Year this spring and is the first-ever student to receive the award. The award was presented by the Learning Community Activities Board, an Auburn student organization focused on providing extracurricular opportunities for students participating in learning communities. Learning community students and faculty were encouraged to nominate a student of the year, coordinator of the year and faculty member of the year. Guglielmi's coordinator, College of Ag Academic Advisor **Suzanne Shaw**, nominated Guglielmi saying, "She has been a delight in the class. She is one of the students that has made this year a real joy for me." Guglielmi was a member of the College of Agriculture Learning Community and has been asked to assist this coming year with other College of Ag learning communities. She was recognized at the Learning Community Planning Conference held in May 2010.

Daniel Mullenix and **Ajay Sharda**, both graduate students in biosystems engineering, received 2010 Precision Agriculture Outstanding Graduate Student awards at the 10th International Conference on Precision Agriculture held in July. They are among an elite group of graduate students selected to receive this award from six different countries.

Proposals for master's and Ph.D. degree programs in Biosystems Engineering were approved in June by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. These new programs will start fall 2010. The approval of these programs is a significant milestone for the biosystems engineering department. For many years biosystems engineering graduate students have earned their degrees through other collaborating programs on campus. These programs should spark new student interest in research on engineering applied to biological systems and be a significant boost to faculty members who are building research programs.

In Memoriam

Leonard Ensminger, 97, former professor and department head of agronomy and soils, passed away on June 5. He served at Auburn from 1944 to 1978 and also managed his own farm in Gold Hill, Ala. Donations in his honor may be made to the Dr. L.E. Ensminger Scholarship Endowment at 202 Funchess Hall, Auburn University, Alabama 36849 or the American Red Cross.

Unspoiled

Thinking Beyond the Spill

Auburn Research May Help Alabama's Oyster Industry Recover

by KATIE JACKSON

IN THE BAG—Bill Walton, an assistant professor of fisheries and allied aquacultures at Auburn University, thinks that intensive oyster "farming" may hold promise for Alabama's oyster industry once the effects of the oil spill are known and begin to abate. Intensive oyster farming involves growing oysters in mesh bags that are suspended in the natural waters of the Gulf of Mexico or surrounding bays.

If caps and luck hold, the onslaught of oil surging from the Deepwater Horizon well into the Gulf of Mexico may be under control, but uncertainty remains about whether the spill is actually contained and what its long-term effects will be. As residents of the Gulf Coast wait for news and answers, College of Agriculture faculty and staff are working on possible plans, one of which may be a big help to Alabama's oyster industry.

Bill Walton, assistant professor of fisheries and allied aquacultures, is among numerous Auburn personnel looking for answers and options in response to the spill. He is deeply concerned about the spill's immediate and long-term impacts, but he also contends that now is the time to think ahead and possibly rethink oystering in Alabama.

"No one had a plan for an oil spill," he says, "but developing a plan for a post-spill future is vital," and Walton thinks this may present an opportunity to strengthen Alabama's seafood industry. With that in mind, he is cautiously suggesting some new ideas, all backed by past and current research.

Walton, who is stationed at the Auburn University Shellfish Laboratory on Dauphin Island, joined the Auburn faculty in January 2009 and immediately began researching intensive "oyster farming," a form of aquaculture that involves growing oysters in bags suspended or anchored in the Gulf, as an option for Alabama waters.

Coming to Alabama from Massachusetts, where oyster farming is common, Walton sees intensive oyster aquaculture as a way for Alabama oystermen to augment, not replace, their incomes from wild-caught oysters. His goal is to help them produce premium oysters for the half-shell market, which can be sold at a higher premium than wild-caught oysters. "We are looking for a consistently beautiful oyster that will bring a higher price than oysters intended for the shucked market," says Walton.

"My thinking before the oil spill was that aquaculture may offer an opportunity in the Gulf that some people may want to take advantage of," he says. Extensive, on-bottom oyster farming is not new in the Gulf of Mexico, particularly in Louisiana, but few people have pursued it in Alabama. Post-oil spill, Walton's thinking has not changed, and others may be recognizing its potential.

Needless to say Walton, who is also an Alabama Cooperative Extension System specialist, has been fielding lots of questions about when the waters will reopen and how the oil, dispersants and even booms will affect wild oyster populations. Answering those questions fully and with confidence is impossible until the oil flow is fully stopped and assessment of the damage can truly begin.

What Walton and other Auburn faculty who work on the Gulf Coast can do for now is help document the day-to-day impacts and also think ahead to the future. Walton has three research sites off the Alabama coast in Mobile and Baldwin counties where he is testing various bagging and growing systems. Now, since none of the oysters in his study can be sold or consumed, he is using those oysters from those sites and a dozen others to document the effects of the oil spill.

"We have a miniature canary-in-the-coal-mine project to see what is happening to them," he says of his sites.

"We need to document impacts, but also need to think about what our options are when and if the oil spill is stopped," he says. "I think it is really important to think about what can be done for recovery. How will we identify areas that are getting clean and are safe for fishing? Are there ways to improve the fisheries? Does oyster farming look like a better option than wild-caught oysters? I can't hold oyster farming out as the solution, but it needs to be an option."

In the meantime, Walton and his fellow Auburn fisheries and allied aquaculture scientists and specialists are poised to help in any way they can.

"There is the response today and the response next week, but at some point we need to think about the long-term recovery response," he says. "Auburn is good at building industry and looking at how we get someplace better and that will be an important role for us into the future.

"I like the idea that Auburn was here before the spill for commercial fisherman and the seafood industry and Auburn will be here for them after the spill," he adds.

TAKING STOCK—Students working for fisheries and allied aquacultures assistant professor Ash Bullard take samples from the Gulf of Mexico.

College of Ag Professor Snags National Science Foundation Grant to Study Oil Spill Effects

by SARAH PHILLIPS

Stephen "Ash" Bullard, assistant professor in the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures, recently received a $145,000 National Science Foundation Rapid Response Research grant for work related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

The 12-month study will be conducted by Bullard and Middle Tennessee State University biology professor George Benz. Beginning this month, the researchers will study parasites of fish as biosensors to learn how the toxic effects of the spill impact the marine and coastal environment of Alabama.

"Our focus is on the health of the aquatic environment in Alabama and adjacent states," Bullard says. "We plan to use each parasite species as a natural biosensor to examine the impact of the spill on fish health and ecosystem functioning."

A decline in the ecologically diverse community of fish parasites, including ectoparasites, which live on the surface of the fish, and endoparasites, which live within the fish, is known to be associated with marine pollution and indicates negative consequences for the marine food web and water quality of coastal and offshore fish.

The study of parasites can also help document the immediate and extended environmental "ripple effects" associated with the oil spill in the north-central Gulf of Mexico as well as inform others about the use of parasites as bioindicators of oil pollution on a regional scale.

"The question that we're asking is, 'Are we going to see fewer parasites?' and I think the answer will be yes," Bullard said. "We expect fewer invertebrates and fewer mollusks. It's a sad situation in the Gulf."

Bullard conducted his Ph.D. and postdoctoral research in the Gulf of Mexico where he collected 16 years worth of research on parasites. He has hopes of comparing his previous data to this study's findings.

Partnerships of scientists and fisheries biologists have been established for the regional study, and include the Southeast Fisheries Science Center, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, National Marine Fisheries Service, Florida Marine Institute, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and the University of Southern Mississippi's Gulf Coast Research Lab.

New Products Could Boost Demand for, Add Value to Small-Diameter Pine Trees

Studies aimed at adding value to young, small-diameter Southern pines the timber industry now considers worthless are under way at Auburn University, and the findings could potentially change the market for those trees.

Brian Via, an assistant professor in forestry with expertise in wood composite products and new-product development, is heading both projects.

One study, funded by the Alabama Ag Experiment Station, is using near infrared spectography to rapidly scan and measure the strength and stiffness of wood flakes—wood particles used by mills to make wood composite products such as oriented strand lumber—from juvenile pines and to sort out the strongest and stiffest.

Those flakes will be applied to the surface of composites to determine whether such reinforcement produces a high-strength composite that, because juvenile pines are less dense than mature ones, is also light.

"Wood composites in the South are weaker due to the high percentage of juvenile wood that is used. This product attempts to increase the strength by placing stronger flakes on the surface which can then be converted to lighter-weight products," Via said. "This would make our region more competitive with composite manufacturers in the North because they don't have to utilize this juvenile wood."

Neil Kohan, a graduate student working with Via on the project, has already developed a methodology for testing the strength of the wood flakes.

A second study is looking at the possibility of converting young-growth pines into a bio-oil that could replace petroleum-based wax and resins in bonding solid- and composite-wood products.

The bio-oil would be safer on the environment than the currently used products, more moisture resistant and more economical. Via estimates the pine-based bio-oil would cost from a nickel to 30 cents a pound, compared to resins and wax at 50 cents to $1.20 a pound.

Two other Experiment Station researchers, biosystems engineering associate professor Oladiran Fasina and assistant professor Sushil Adhikari, are working with Via on the USDA Forest Service–funded project.

For more information on Via's projects or the Forest Products Lab, contact Via at bkv0003@auburn.edu or (334) 844-1088.

Blueberry Hybrid Would Cut Production Costs

by JAMIE CREAMER

Southern highbush blueberries made their debut 20 years ago, offering Alabama blueberry producers an alternative to the rabbiteye blueberry varieties that dominate the 620 or so acres of fresh-market berries across the state.

SINGING THE BLUES—Nutritious blueberries are a high-value specialty crop, but they're also expensive to produce. Researchers at Auburn, Florida and Oregon State are developing an early-season blueberry hybrid that will be more adaptable to soil conditions and easier to mechanically harvest than the May-ripening Southern highbush blueberry, thereby cutting production costs and making fresh-market blueberry production more profitable.

The upside of Southern highbush blueberries is that they ripen earlier, which gives growers a jump on the market and allows them to command premium prices.

The downside is that Southern highbush production is expensive, nearly double the cost for rabbiteyes, largely because Southern highbush demand highly acidic soils.

And, as with most all cultivated fresh-market blueberries, Southern highbush species are typically harvested by hand, which increases producers' costs, because they have multiple trunks that make mechanical harvesting impossible.

But blueberry growers can take heart, because Jay Spiers of Auburn's horticulture department and fellow scientists at the University of Florida and Oregon State University are cooperating in a research project aimed at bringing down the high cost of Southern highbush production and harvesting, and they're counting on the sparkleberry to make that happen.

Sparkleberry is a wild blueberry that isn't nearly as finicky about soil pH and light-textured soil as the Southern highbush, is drought-resistant and has a single trunk. Spiers and cohorts are using breeding and grafting techniques to incorporate those desirable traits into the Southern highbush so it will be more tolerant of soil conditions and have a tree-like growth suited to mechanical harvesting.

Thus far in the multi-disciplinary study, Spiers has collected sparkleberries from Alabama and Mississippi and is germinating the seeds from those, and then he'll plant the seedlings at the Alabama Ag Experiment Station's Wiregrass Research and Extension Center in Headland to observe growth habits and select candidate rootstocks. He's also working to develop asexual propagation techniques for sparkleberries.

Meanwhile, Florida and Oregon State scientists are concentrating on breeding Southern highbush/sparkleberry hybrids and on grafting highbush shoots onto the selected sparkleberry rootstocks. They also will identify the physiological characteristics behind the sparkleberry's high tolerance of soils that are significantly less acidic and lower in organic matter than the Southern highbush requires.

In 2011, the hybrids and the grafted plants will be planted in a research/demonstration plot at the Gulf Coast REC in Fairhope and evaluated for soil adaptation, mechanical harvest potential and fruit yield/quantity.

"Cultivated blueberries are a high-yielding, high-value specialty crop, and production in the U.S. and globally is increasing," Spiers says. "The project will address the critical need for reducing costs and increasing efficiency of blueberry production so that growers remain competitive and profitable."

Spiers' work is funded by an AAES grant; the five-year project as a whole is funded by a USDA specialty crops grant.

High-Tech Tools Spread Litter with Precision

by JAMIE CREAMER

Farmers who fertilize their fields and pastures with chicken litter can apply it more uniformly and reduce overlap applications by as much as 20 to 30 percent using precision agriculture technologies, a team of Alabama Ag Experiment Station researchers has found.

Poultry litter is a mixture of chicken manure, feathers, bedding material and wasted feed and can vary considerably in physical characteristics such as density, particle size and moisture content.

A LOT OF LITTER—Every year, the billion-plus broilers produced in Alabama leave about 1.7 million tons of soil-enriching litter in their wake. Almost all of that litter is used to fertilize pastures and farmland.

When applying poultry litter, crop and livestock producers calibrate their spreader equipment to distribute the organic fertilizer at a set rate based on the nutrient content of the litter and the nutrient deficiencies in their soils. But that manual setting doesn't take into account variations in litter density and, specifically, moisture, both of which can affect how accurately and uniformly litter is spread on fields and pastures.

In the Auburn study, biosystems engineering associate professor John Fulton and fellow scientists equipped a standard litter spreader with an electronically adjustable hydraulic flow-control valve that controls the speed at which the spinner discs apply the litter to the land. Using a controller located in the tractor or truck cab valve, the operator can maintain the desired spinner-disc speed and width of application.

Repeated trials over fields at the AAES' E.V. Smith Research Center indicated litter was 17 percent more uniformly distributed over a field with the electronic controls that maintained a constant spinner-disc speed than with a traditional manual control valve that conveys litter onto the spinners at variable speeds.

When GPS-based guidance-system and section-control technologies were used, the researchers found that overlapping applications were reduced 20 to 30 percent, Fulton says.

The study was part of a comprehensive, long-term research project to determine how precision ag technologies impact Alabama farmers' profitability and the environment. Fulton, who heads up the project, says the findings are intended as a resource producers can turn to when weighing the pros and cons of purchasing precision-ag equipment.

"In addition to saving farmers money and time and increasing their yield potentials, precision agriculture helps them avoid overfertilizing their land so that there are no excess nutrients that could be carried by runoff to area streams and rivers," Fulton says. "Precision ag can minimize farming's environmental impact."

College of Human Sciences

Endowed Professors Named in CHS

Mona El-Sheikh

Endowed professorships recognize the exceptional merit of Auburn faculty, and two professors in College of Human Sciences have recently been singled out for this honor. This month, Mona El-Sheikh will assume the title of Leonard Peterson & Co. Inc. Professor of Human Development and Family Studies and Lenda Jo Connell will be the inaugural Under Armour Inc. Professor of Apparel Merchandising, Design and Production.

"Endowed professorships are critical in helping us retain and reward faculty scholars who are nationally and internationally renowned and who meet the highest standards of professional rigor in their areas of scholarship," says June Henton, dean of the College of Human Sciences. "Dr. El-Sheikh and Dr. Connell have met these standards as leading-edge researchers and visionary educators who continually enrich the learning environment in the College of Human Sciences."

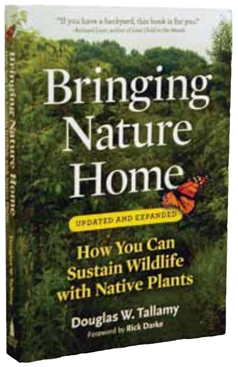
Lenda Jo Connell

El-Sheikh began her career at Auburn in 1990 and was named alumni professor in 2005 and creative research and scholarship awardee in 2007. Funded by approximately $7 million from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation and supported by the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, her interdisciplinary research is noted for building bridges across several disciplines concerned with child health.

Connell joined the Auburn faculty in 1971 and served as Extension resource management specialist from 1976-1990. She has been nationally recognized for both her teaching abilities and her research scholarship, which has generated more than $4.5 million in grants and awards. Connell's research interests include the application of 3-D body scanning and computerized design in apparel product development.

College of Sciences and Mathematics

Lecture to Address Value of Native Plants



Author of the award-winning book *Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants*, Doug Tallamy will lecture on common non-native invasive plant species and the importance of including native plants in local landscapes. The 5 p.m. lecture, which will be followed by a book signing, will take place on Oct. 19, on the AU campus (location TBA).

Tallamy, professor and chair of entomology and wildlife ecology at the University of Delaware, began studying the far-reaching effects of non-native invasive plant species—think kudzu, privet and mimosa—when he noticed that these types of alien invaders provide little to no benefit to their local environment.

"I realized, largely from walking around my own house, that the whole evolutionary process, the dance between insects and plants, is blocked when plants are brought in from elsewhere. Insects can't eat the non-native plants so energy is not transferred up the food chain," Tallamy says.

"Ninety-six percent of our terrestrial birds feed insects to their young, so when the insects can't find food, the birds can't find food and all the interactions that keep our ecosystems going stop."

For more information, including the location of the lecture, visit the Donald E. Davis Arboretum website at www.auburn.edu/cosam/arboretum.

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences

OUT IN THE TREES—As a sort of rite of passage to the professional curriculum and understanding the forested environment, forestry students spend the summer between their sophomore and junior years attending a 10-week practicum program at the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences' Solon Dixon Forestry Education Center just south of Andalusia. During the summer practicum, students live and learn at the 5,300-acre Dixon Center where they gain valuable hands-on experience in the field skills necessary for their education and future careers. Pictured is Alex Hedgepath a student of forestry from Fairhope, performing a boundary line recovery exercise during practicum this past July.

College of Veterinary Medicine

Veterinarians Deploy to Afghanistan

OPERATING IN AFGHANISTAN—A military policeman and a 5-year-old Labrador retriever named Dakota report for patrol duty in Afghanistan. Dakota, a military working dog who is specifically trained in detection of improvised explosive devices, suffered a gunshot wound to the hips when on patrol recently in Marjah. Three Auburn CVM faculty deployed to Afghanistan this month as part of the 358th Medical Detachment, a U.S. Armed Forces veterinary services unit based in Tuskegee, will be responsible for providing medical and surgical care to working dogs and other military animals. (Photo courtesy of Sgt. Heidi Agonstini)

Three members of the College of Veterinary Medicine faculty deploy this month to locations throughout Afghanistan in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. CVM faculty include Jacob Johnson, assistant professor and small animal anesthesiologist in the college's Department of Clinical Sciences; Extension veterinarian Soren Rodning, assistant professor in the Department of Animal Sciences in the College of Agriculture; and Brad Fields, veterinary medical officer with the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries and director of emergency programs.

All are members of the 358th Medical Detachment (Veterinary Services) headquartered in Tuskegee. Johnson is commander of the veterinary detachment.

"The unit's primary missions are to ensure a safe food supply for the U.S. Armed Forces and to maintain the health of government-owned animals, primarily working dogs, through medical and surgical care," says Johnson. "The unit can also be asked to assist in agricultural reconstruction efforts aimed at restoring the animal agricultural systems of the country."

This will be the first deployment for the 358th Medical Detachment since its conversion to a full veterinary detachment in 2008. One of only eight units of its kind in the U.S Army Reserve, it is composed of soldiers from all over the country. Teams within the unit are composed primarily of veterinarians, food inspection specialists and animal care specialists, but also include various support personnel.

Master Gardeners Broaden Extension's Reach

MASTERFUL—Master Gardener Gail Cruea of Lineville expertly lops a limb off one of the crape myrtles at the Clay County Courthouse in Ashland as she and a few of her fellow East Central Alabama Master Gardener Association members prepare the trees for spring. The group, one of 38 Master Gardener associations in Alabama, has been helping keep the courthouse crape myrtles shaped up for several years.

Across Alabama, a network of more than 2,500 Master Gardeners is answering questions, conducting workshops and working in a variety of horticulture outreach efforts. Kerry Smith, coordinator of the Alabama Master Gardener Program for the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, says this group of volunteers is a vital partner with Extension.

"Alabama's cadre of certified Master Gardeners is crucial in broadening Extension's reach to new audiences," she says. "They provide 'the feet on the ground' to accomplish many of our Extension programs."

To become a certified Alabama Master Gardener, an individual must take 50 hours of gardening and pest management education and complete at least 50 hours of volunteer service. To maintain certification, a Master Gardener completes at least 25 hours of service and 10 hours of continuing education annually. The Alabama program is more than 25 years old.

Paul Mask, Extension assistant director for agriculture, forestry and natural resources, agrees with Smith.

"Master Gardeners are crucial to Extension's ability to take the latest research and information to Alabama residents," he says. "As Extension faces continued decreases in its budgets, Master Gardeners are important partners with our horticulture agents and specialists."

In 2009, Alabama Master Gardeners worked more than 138,000 volunteer hours.

"Master Gardeners' work across Alabama had a value of more than $2.8 million in 2009," Smith says. "That's the equivalent of about 75 full-time employees."

She adds that some programs citizens use frequently would not be possible without Master Gardener efforts.

"Our Gardener Helpline is one program that would not exist without Master Gardeners," Smith says. "While Extension agents review the call reports, it is Master Gardeners who answer the phones and provide homeowners and gardeners with answers."

In 2009, more than 264 Master Gardeners contributed 9,315 volunteer hours with a value of almost $189,000 to the helpline. They provided assistance to more than 3,500 callers.

Surveys show the success of the helpline. Seventy-one percent of clients surveyed said the information they were given helped them make a better decision. About 50 percent said the information saved them time, effort or money. Overall, 76 percent of callers were very satisfied with the information they received from helpline volunteers.

Master Gardeners also provided Extension more than 30,000 additional hours—valued at $500,000—directly supporting program efforts.

"Those hours cover a huge breadth of program efforts, from conducting school programs to teaching public workshops to creating and maintaining demonstration gardens," Smith says. "You name a horticulture-related program or activity, and probably at least one Master Gardener contributed work hours to it."

Statewide, 38 local Master Gardener associations are active in 35 Alabama counties. For more information on the Master Gardener program, visit www.aces.edu/mg/.

Extension Launches Online IPM Newsletter

The state's farmers have a new online resource to use in their efforts to protect their crops from insects and diseases. It's the Alabama IPM Communicator, a weekly electronic newsletter that provides information about insects and diseases impacting the state as well as strategies to manage them, says an entomologist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

Ayanava Majumdar, editor, says the newsletter, which debuted in May and is published every Friday, streamlines the delivery of timely integrated pest management information.

"This weekly newsletter enables us to get integrated pest management information from scientists to producers in a very rapid manner," he says. "Time is crucial for farmers who need to know what pest or disease problems may be developing."

The newsletter focuses on integrated pest management strategies and brings together IPM and cropping system experts from different institutions within Alabama.

"It fills an information gap for farmers," Majumdar says. "What they need is timely alerts to pests and diseases so they can act swiftly."

Integrated pest management is an effective and environmentally sensitive approach to pest management that relies on a combination of common-sense practices. IPM practices help producers manage pests through the most economical ways and with the least possible hazard to people, property and the environment.

"Farmers will find each edition of Alabama IPM Communicator includes information that is based on the current issues they are facing in the field, whether they are along the Gulf Coast or in the Black Belt or the Tennessee Valley," says Majumdar.

Funded by grants from the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture Extension IPM Coordination Program, the newsletter is delivered via e-mail to subscribers. Interested farmers and crop advisers can contact Majumdar at bugdoctor@aces.edu or call 251-331-8416 for free subscriptions.

More information about the Alabama IPM Communicator can be found on Extension's Commercial Horticulture website at https://sites.aces.edu/group/commhort/vegetable/Vegetable/IPMCommunicator.aspx.

The newsletter's editorial board includes entomology associate professor Henry Fadamiro and graduate student, Clement Akotsen-Mensah, both of Auburn University's Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology, and Extension horticulturist Cathy Sabota of Alabama A&M University.

Processing Center To Serve Alabama Produce Growers

Alabama produce growers who have lamented the lack of a facility where they could process their damaged and surplus fruits and vegetables into value-added, income-generating products can celebrate the opening of a new food-processing center developed by a coalition of Chilton County community leaders and Alabama Cooperative Extension System professionals.

The center is located in Clanton, in space provided by the local school system. Organizers in Clanton worked with Extension food scientist Jean Weese and members of the Extension food safety team to develop the center as a place where growers can transform some of their produce into jams, jellies, salsas and other value-added products.

"Alabama growers are well equipped to sell fresh-grown products," says Weese. "What they've lacked is a means for selling imperfect products, which may have been pecked by a bird or slightly bruised. The damaged parts can be removed, providing the rest can be processed in some way."

IN A PICKLE—Bread-and-butter pickles made from imperfect or surplus cucumbers are among the value-added products Alabama fruit and vegetable farmers can produce in large quantities at the new food-processing center in Clanton.

Until now, retail outlets in Chilton County have typically looked beyond Alabama—most often to growers in neighboring Georgia—to supply most of these value-added products.

The Clanton-based processing center is designed and equipped to handle all acidified food products. Weese says growers can either process these products themselves or leave them for the center's staff to do. In time, growers may also have the option of selling fresh-grown produce to the facility, which would then process and sell it in area markets.

Equipment to operate the facility is mostly surplus material donated by Auburn University. Extension is providing a food technician for at least a year to provide technical assistance to growers.

The facility is funded through grants provided by the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries. A partnership involving local leaders, Extension and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station is also providing legal and technical assistance and expertise.

Weese and other organizers believe the Clanton processing facility is only the beginning. They are confident that the center will serve as a model for other local farm markets that aspire to go to the next level.

"There will be no other place like this anywhere in the state," Weese says. "We hope it will serve as a prototype for similar centers not only here in Alabama but throughout the nation."

Calendar of Events

August • 2010

s	m	t	w	t	f	s
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
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29	30	31				

September • 2010

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October • 2010

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24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Now through Sept. 30

The Market at Ag Heritage Park

Thursdays, 3-6 p.m.

Auburn

The Market at Ag Heritage Park is a growers-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 each Thursday through Sept.30.

Contact: Laura Herring at 334-321-1603 or herrilm@auburn.edu

Aug. 20

Crops Field Day

8 a.m. to noon

Wiregrass Research Extension Center - *Headland*

Contact: Amy Balkcom at 334-693-2363 or folgeap@auburn.edu

Aug. 20

Take 5 with the College of Ag

10 a.m. to noon

Comer Hall - *Auburn*

Students are invited to come by the front steps of Comer Hall to meet the dean, get a tour of Ag Hill and grab a bite of Comer's 100th birthday celebration cake.

Contact: Megan Ross at 334-833-3201 or mhr0001@auburn.edu

Aug. 25

O-Night

6 p.m.

Ham Wilson Livestock Arena - *Auburn*

This event, sponsored by Ag Council, introduces new College of Ag students to the many Ag Hill clubs and organizations. Free food and drinks will be provided.

Contact: Megan Ross at 334-833-3201 or mhr0001@auburn.edu

Aug. 26

Montgomery Young Alumni-Meet the Dean

Riverwalk Stadium - *Montgomery*

This event features a Biscuits baseball game at Riverwalk Stadium in Montgomery and the chance to meet the new College of Ag Dean Bill Batchelor. Cost is $10 per person (the price of a ticket). It is hosted by the College of Ag Office of Development and the Auburn Ag Alumni Association.

Contact: Katie Hardy at 334-844-1475 or hardykc@auburn.edu

Aug. 28

Scholarship Recognition Program

10 a.m.

Ham Wilson Livestock Arena - *Auburn*

This event honors scholarship winners and donors with a ceremony and breakfast reception.

Contact: Ann Gulatte at 334-844-3262 or gulatam@auburn.edu

Aug. 31-Sept. 1

New Student Update Nights

6 p.m.

Ham Wilson livestock Arena - *Auburn*

These events, hosted by the Student Services staff, are designed to give all incoming freshmen and new transfer students the scoop on how to be a successful student.

Contact: Megan Ross at 334-833-3201 or mhr0001@auburn.edu

Sept. 30

Ornamental Horticulture Field Day

8 a.m. to noon

Ornamental Horticulture Research Center - Mobile

Contact: John Olive at olivejw@auburn.edu or 251-342-2366

Oct. 2

Poultry Science Alumni, Friends and Recruiting Barbeque

Poultry Science Building - *Auburn*

The 11th Annual Auburn University Department of Poultry Science Alumni, Friends and Recruiting Barbeque will be held prior to the Auburn/Louisiana-Monroe football game and features barbeque chicken and other food and drinks as well as door prizes and lots of socializing.

Contact: www.ag.auburn.edu/poul or Amanda Martin at 334-844-2881 or amartin@auburn.edu

For more information on these and many other upcoming College of Ag and AAES events go to www.ag.auburn.edu and click on the "Calendar" button.

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AG illustrated

Recipe File

Savor the Sweetness

Fig Bread Great Way to Enjoy Summer's Bounty

Figs are often abundant this time of year, so abundant in fact that it's difficult to find ways to use them all. This recipe, featured at the Chilton Research and Extension Center's annual Farm, Home and Wildlife Expo held each August, is a delicious way to use those fabulous fresh figs. See other recipes from the Expo and from other College of Ag and AAES sources at www.ag.auburn.edu/recipes.

Fabulous Fresh Fig Bread

3 eggs
2 ½ c. sugar
2 c. ripe figs, mashed
¾ c. vegetable oil
3 c. flour
2 tsp. baking soda
1 tsp. salt
½ tsp. cinnamon
½ c. buttermilk
1 c. chopped pecans

Beat eggs; add sugar and beat well. Add the mashed figs and vegetable oil. Sift together flour, soda, salt and cinnamon. Add to the fig mixture alternately with buttermilk. Beat well. Fold in chopped pecans. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour in greased and floured loaf pans. Makes two large or three small loaves.