Built on Solid Ground
From Ag Hill

Dear Alumni and Friends,

At the end of every year we often see reviews of the year’s biggest news headlines. Last year was no exception: the inauguration of a president, the struggling economy, a pop star’s passing. Included among the year’s headlines was the death of one of agriculture’s brightest stars, Norman Borlaug.

Borlaug, a wheat breeder from Iowa, is said to have possibly saved the lives of more people than anyone who ever lived. For his life’s work to end starvation through better plant breeding, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. Yet, he never stopped searching for an end to world hunger.

In a 1903 speech, Theodore Roosevelt said, “Far and away the best prize that life offers is the chance to work hard at work worth doing.” Norman Borlaug clearly got that. Every day when I walk through the halls of this college, I see dedicated faculty earning life’s “best prize” and students benefitting from it. As I travel the state, I see people in all facets of agriculture working hard at work worth doing, the rewards of which will be enjoyed for generations to come.

Many people in agriculture approach their careers as mission work — work done in the service of others. This edition of Southscapes showcases a sampling of that good work.

You will meet Rich Thompson, a CAES alumni working for Habitat for Humanity to find property that will offer a home and hope to those in need. You will see a story about county agents, of whom we have demanded so much in the face of falling budgets, conducting vital applied research to benefit the growers they serve.

It’s easy to dwell on the down economy and the challenges it puts in our path. Economists predict 2010 will be a better year, and we certainly look forward to better times. But, let’s not forget that for many people in our world, generations have awaited better times that still seem too far away. Join me in thanking those in our classrooms, on our alumni rolls and among our faculty and staff who are working hard to speed those better times. Among them may well be the next great agricultural missionary who will further the work Norman Borlaug dedicated his life to starting.

Sincerely,

J. Scott Angle
Dean and Director
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
Paul Wigley glances over Drew Collins’ farm as he drives toward the highway.

“Look. Two ducks swimming in the field.” In a few months, he’ll be back at Collins’ farm – where water’s now standing – with handfuls of the colored flags he uses to mark different areas of the field for his peanut fungicide trials.

Usually, south Georgia hurts for water. But today, the ground squishes when Wigley, the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension coordinator in Calhoun County, steps in low areas. A wet spring is good news for Calhoun County farmers who typically rely heavily on irrigation to keep their crops from withering. It’s bad news when it comes to plant diseases that love southwest Georgia’s dank humidity.

Wigley’s learned a thing or three about disease-combating chemicals during his 32 years in Extension. When he started his fungicide trials, UGA’s College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences didn’t have a peanut pathologist, so he helped fill the void.

His first fungicide trial tested “a product we didn’t know an awful lot about,” he said. “And we didn’t like the results.”

Since then, he’s worked alongside both Extension specialists and farmers to test more than 40 fungicides in almost 100 different combinations on a multitude of peanut varieties.

He’s specifically looking for fungicides that combat a disease called Rhizoctonia peg rot, which plagues Calhoun County’s nearly 15,000 acres of peanuts. When he finds ways to fight it, Wigley’s fieldwork adds up to dollars saved for his farmers, who produce an average of 4,000 pounds of peanuts per acre. Since 2003, the 4,700-person county has gained $79 million in peanut profits.

For Collins, having research plots on his land “lets me get a real good look at new chemicals when they come out,” he said. Having Wigley around has “helped a lot. I just feel that he knows more than I do about fungicides.”

As a county Extension employee, all that research isn’t in Wigley’s job description. But like many other agriculture and natural resources agents across the state, he puts in extra hours to help his producers.

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Lumpkin County Extension coordinator Greg Sheppard added new crops to his responsibilities when the wine grape — twine or netting. For years, twine has been the standard way of keeping hay together. But the netting-wrapped bale, right, is proving to be a "better alternative. "Agent research takes what researchers and specialists do work closely with specialists to plan their own research projects, questions demand more thorough answers. That’s when agents faculty who hold advanced degrees in their specialty fields — for information their producers need. But sometimes the the farms he deals with are small in comparison to the massive problems along with the farmers every day.” — Ken Lewis Southwest District Extension Director Upson County agriculture is heavily based in beef cattle. Many of the producers work day jobs and spend their nights and weekends as cattlemen. Upson County Extension coordinator Wes Smith admits that part-time farmers can do two things: reduce nitrogen requirements and increase forage quality. Legume-fixed nitrogen is also economically advantageous if commercial nitrogen costs more than $400 a ton.

"There’s something I can do and my county folks will see the benefits of,” he said.

He’s also tested to see whether cows will eat dormant Bermuda grass. “We let them onto the plot a month to six weeks before they calve and let them harvest their own hay,” Smith said. Using this method would allow producers to save $40 per cow per year. And with about 4,000 “mama cows” in Upson County, that works out to a fair amount of savings, he said.

Using Midville

Across the state, CAES specialists and researchers are doing projects at eight research and education centers in addition to the UGA campuses in Athens, Griffin and Tifton, and on the Georgia Southern University campus in Statesboro. At the Southeast Georgia Research and Education Center in Midville, there’s also space for agents to conduct additional “on-farm” research, although center superintendent Anthony Black tries to make sure they’re matched up with specialists who have expertise in the areas they’re working in.

“Agent research takes what researchers and specialists do and fine tunes it to a particular location or set of circumstances, making the research even more valuable to a local grower,” said Steve Brown, assistant dean for Extension.

In 2008, the Midville station reopened after being closed for three years due to budget cuts. “During the interim time period, the county agents kept it going on their own,” Brown said. By doing so, they gained the community’s support to reopen the station and reestablish southeast-Georgia-focused research.

“If this research had not been done, I would be using data out of Tifton,” said Emanuel County Extension coordinator Mark Crosby. “And what we found with research is that the fungicides that work well up here are not the same ones that are working well around Tifton and the southwest Georgia area.”

Four hundred of the Midville station’s 720 acres are in cropland, with 35 acres as pecan orchards. The primary crops being tested are cotton, peanuts, soybeans and corn. Other trials include a small grain variety test and a biofuels project.

“The Extension agent research is particularly interesting to me because it’s so easy to transfer to the farm,” Black said. “A farmer can drive up here and see something that could be on his farm in a week if he wanted it to be.”

Jenkins County Extension coordinator Wade Parker agrees.

“We’re not trying to split atoms. We’re trying to do research that has immediate results for farmers.”

Part-time Farmers

Upson County Extension coordinator Wes Smith admits that the farms he deals with are small in comparison to the massive tracts of land in south Georgia, but their needs are just as unique.

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Cooperative Extension in Georgia started in the early 1900s with on-farm trials that brought the university to the people. Today, agents still work to show producers better ways to get food — and fiber — from farm to fork.

“I think research goes back to the very core, the very roots of Cooperative Extension,” Lewis said. It’s a win, win, win situation — on the part of the agent, farmer and specialist. |
Amidst the Skyline:
Ag Alum Helps Lay the Foundation for Habitat Houses

Richard Thompson (’92, BS – Agricultural Economics) can’t see the downtown Atlanta skyline from his Habitat for Humanity office. Located on the same block as the historic Oakland Cemetery, his office is part of the skyline. Working and living in a big city has been a change for Thompson, who hails from the small south Georgia town of Cuthbert.
“Most people think of homebuilding when they think of Habitat for Humanity. But before we can build an affordable home, we have to own the dirt.” ~ Rich Thompson

Thompson left his position at Kroger and joined the 50-member staff of Columbia’s Bethel AME Church and Bethel Christian Academy, where he put his business knowledge to work running the school, managing the payroll, setting up a 401(k) plan for the employees and making wise financial decisions on the church’s behalf. “I loved it,” he said. “The added bonus was that my daughter and I get to work together every day, and my office was literally around the corner and down the hall from her classroom.” When his wife (and fellow UGA alum), Winnie, finished her Ph.D. in public health and accepted a faculty position at Emory, the family made plans to return to Georgia. Still in a non-profit mindset, Thompson began searching for a job in Atlanta. Habitat for Humanity seemed like a perfect fit.

On Solid Ground

Today, as a real estate acquisitions manager for Atlanta Habitat for Humanity, Thompson combines his real estate experience with his non-profit connection. “Most people think of homebuilding when they think of Habitat for Humanity,” he said. “But before we can build an affordable, Earthcraft™ certified home, we have to own the dirt.”

A Mission-driven Mindset

After graduating from CAES and ROYC, Thompson completed what he calls his “obligation to Uncle Sam” as an Army field artillery officer before working for Punciac Foods, a manufacturing division of The Kruger Co., in Columbia, S.C. There, he was able to use both his college education and his Army operation management experience at Kruger’s flagship manufacturing facility. “When climbing the corporate ladder, I also launched a real estate business and became increasingly active in the leadership of our church,” Thompson said. “Before long, preparation met opportunity and I switched from a profit-driven, corporate mindset to a more mission-driven, non-profit mindset. I wanted to make the numbers work at my church — just like I did at Kroger.”

Thompson focuses on finding the perfect sites for future Habitat homes. In a busy year, Atlanta Habitat can acquire 80 properties through donations or purchases. The 2010 goal is 40 to 45 properties.


Where? Atlanta, Ga.

Why? “Before you can build a house, you must first own the land,” he said. That goes for Habitat houses, too.

How? Thompson works behind the scenes to make sure every Atlanta Habitat house is built on a solid foundation. Compiling a “due diligence packet” on each potential new property starts with finding it on Google maps, “which is my friend,” Thompson said. Then, he mines databases like the City of Atlanta GIS (Geographic Information System) for topographic maps and City of Atlanta cadastral maps — the hand-drawn, official record of lot configurations — and navigates other proprietary software for information about a property’s zoning, lot size, legal description and property value, and to make sure it has access to services like sewer, water and electricity.

When Thompson began working for Habitat three years ago, most of the properties he acquired were vacant lots. These days, with the housing market downturn and a shrinking supply of desirable vacant lots, it is often less expensive to buy foreclosed, abandoned properties that can be demolished and replaced with a newly constructed Habitat for Humanity home. This approach helps reduce Habitat’s initial investment costs, and also helps revitalize Atlanta neighborhoods blighted by abandoned homes.

~ Amanda E. Seemers

For more information, visit www.atlantahabitat.org.
Amidst the Skyline, continued from previous page

to complete. When asked if he’s ever helped build a Habitat home, Thompson chuckles. “Well…my boss and I built steps for a house in northeast Atlanta,” he said. “It took us about eight hours to do it. But now every time I pass that house, I think about those steps.”

While he may not have hundreds of hammer hours under his belt, Thompson’s behind-the-scenes work ensures that Habitat houses begin with a solid foundation.

Giving Back

Over the years, Thompson has relied on the solid leadership and business foundations 4-H and CAES helped lay for his career. Today, because he is committed to ensuring that current and future CAES students have similar career and life-building experiences, he chairs the CAES Student Recruitment and Affairs Committee and serves on the CAES Alumni Association Board of Directors.

Broder, who is now the CAES associate dean for academic affairs, isn’t surprised by Thompson’s success. “As a student, he was always positive, upbeat and enthusiastic;” he said. “Rich always seemed to have a goal of not just being an average student. He was the kind of student that you were glad to see succeed.”

Thompson still uses the lessons he learned in his basic business principles class about the four Ps of marketing: product, price, packaging and promotion. “In my job, the product is real estate,” he said.

Habitat for Humanity depends on volunteers and partnerships to power its nonprofit organization. Students, graduates and friends of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences jump in when needed — with hammers, plants and advice. We’ve listed just a few of those connections here, and each person mentioned represents an organization’s worth of givers.

Ed Saulveter
Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association

Gwinnett County completed its 100th Habitat home in December 2009, and Master Gardeners have been involved in 75 of the builds. Saulveter, who has served on the Habitat board of directors, teaches prospective homeowners how to care for their landscapes in a class they’re required to take before closing on their homes.

“Most [people] have no idea what it means to be a homeowner,” he said. “I help them understand that the outside is as important as the inside for keeping your house value up.”

Kayla Calhoun
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Calhoun, a junior environmental economics and management major, just finished her term as UGA Habitat for Humanity’s vice president of campus outreach. She sees Habitat as “a great resource for people who want to get out and build stuff,” that also “makes you feel more connected to your surroundings,” she said.

Mark Esoda
Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Association (GGCSA)

As the Atlanta Country Club golf course superintendent, Esoda, a CAES graduate and current college alumni association president, helped connect GGCSA and Habitat. “This partnership produced working solutions for sustainable landscapes at Habitat homes and a new volunteer source that continues today,” he said.

Habitat houses begin with a solid foundation.

In Tanzania, I rode a camel, handled snakes and got chased by a baboon. I feel like most people study abroad to see our differences and go expecting a different culture, and while I did do that, what struck me most was how alike we are. I didn’t expect to go to Africa and find my life calling. I decided to study land degradation by going the route of soil and water conservation.

Kyla Calhoun
Junior, environmental economics and management
Calhoun, Ga

Study abroad has impacted our college because we’re consistently sending more students abroad, and they’re bringing back new ideas. Learning’s not just happening in Athens, Tifton and Griffin. It’s also happening in Europe, South America and Japan.

Carolina Reburn
Study abroad recruitment coordinator
CAES Office of Academic Affairs

Working in Brussels gave me a broader perspective of everything — life, school, work — and I’m probably much more responsible as well. It was a good opportunity for me to grow up without everyone saying, “Grow up.”

Jake Smith
Senior, food science and technology
Cornelia, Ga

Study abroad recruitment is a part of the Deans’ Promise, which gives students the opportunity to learn beyond the classroom.

For more information about the Deans’ Promise, visit www.caes.uga.edu/academics/promise/index.html.

How has studying abroad impacted your life?

Compiled by Stephanie Schupska

Stephanie Schupska
Assoc. prof. of soil and water conservation

Colquitt, Ga.

Senior, food science and technology

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Short answer: “Grow up.”

I had a horticultural epiphany during a History of the Landscape Gardens of Great Britain study abroad class when I was undecided about my major. I grew up in a very small rural town, and the course broadened my horizons and changed my career and life aspirations. I pattern my own study abroad class after the one I took, and I enjoy witnessing similar life-changing experiences in my own students.

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Cornelia, Ga.
History draws students to plants

Story and photo by April Sorrow

The goal is not for everyone to become plant pathologists, but for them to be aware of what role these diseases have in their lives,” he said. By covering history from the Irish potato famine and American chestnut blight to the Salem witch trials and citrus canker, Walcott introduces students from all across the UGA campus to plant pathology.

“I registered for the wrong class, but stayed,” said Mark Griffin, an agricultural economics major. “It is interesting how plant diseases affect everything else in the world.”

Brian Butcher, a speech communications major, took the class because the course description sounded interesting and it was something he knew nothing about, he said. “I was interested to see how plants and people work together. A lot of the time, at least with plant diseases, we don’t learn from our mistakes,” he said. “We do what is best for the economy or what is most profitable.”

Plant diseases cause food shortages and occasionally famine, and they often affect social, political and cultural change, too.

Influencing Migration

In Ireland and India, plant diseases caused famines that resulted in massive human migrations. In the 19th century, the potato was the dominant food source for an Irish population that was growing rapidly. Because so much of the crop could be grown on a few acres, the average Irish man ate about 12 pounds of potatoes each day.

“They also produced corn, pigs and other agriculture products,” Walcott said. “But these products were used to pay the rent on the land or were exported. Potato was by far the major food source.” A growing population that depends on one type of food spells trouble. In 1845, ideal weather conditions allowed a fungus to wipe out the Irish potato crop, causing an immediate famine and mass emigration.

Superstition and an ignorance of plant diseases at the time also contributed to the great Irish exodus, Walcott said, because many people thought they could do nothing but leave the country.

One hundred years later, during World War II, a plant disease also caused a less well-known but, some say, much worse famine and exodus in India. Like Ireland a century before, the population in India’s Bengal region depended heavily on a single crop — rice — as its primary food source. But a rice disease wiped out the crop at the same time India was trying to gain independence from Britain. Coupled with war tensions, the disease contributed to the death or migration of 2 million to 4 million Indians, Walcott said.

Impacting Law

Although the infamous Salem witch trials targeted people accused of witchcraft, a plant disease, Claviceps purpurea, may actually have caused the bizarre behavior of the supposedly bewitched victims. Ergot, a fungus that grows on rye, may have been the source of the strange events that led to the imprisonment of more than 150 people accused of being witches in 1692. Nearly all of them were found guilty of the felony offense of witchcraft, and 20 people were executed.

Plant diseases have also been the source of modern legal proceedings. Until the turn of the 20th century, American chestnut trees were common nut-bearing trees that flourished across the United States. In the early 1900s, an unnoticed Asian pathogen, Cryphonectria parasitica, was unintentionally introduced to North America and caused a disease called chestnut blight that virtually wiped out the species.

Due in part to this disease, Congress enacted the Plant Quarantine Act of 1912, which gave the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service authority to regulate the import and transportation of plants that potentially carry pests and diseases harmful to agriculture.

Fueling Debate

Citrus canker has bedeviled the Florida citrus industry since 1910. It was thought to be eradicated several times only to come back stronger, most recently in 1995. To save the state’s $9 billion citrus industry and combat the disease’s spread, the state government, by law, could remove and destroy exposed trees from private property, a move that upset many backyard orchardists, particularly around Miami’s citrus-growing area. However, in 2006, after the U.S. Department of Agriculture determined that citrus canker eradication was not feasible, the Florida Legislature decided to revise the laws that had threatened individuals’ property rights.

“This disease has really brought to the fore, constitutionally, what right the government has to take over personal property for the greater good of society,” Walcott said. “This is about people’s rights, not just a plant disease.”

As freer global trade continues to force the world into closer contact, plant diseases will continue to influence law and potentially change how and where people live.
Sniffing Out Stink Bugs

By Brad Haire

“For an entomologist, Georgia is paradise, with warm weather most of the year, many different crops and a lot of diversity,” said the entomologist with the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, Toews, 37, cut his bug-science teeth in Kansas, where he grew up and did his postdoctoral research. But there, as in other Midwestern states, farmers usually grow only one or two crops, typically wheat, corn or soybeans. Sure, they have pest problems, he said, but nothing like in Georgia where hordes of hungry bugs wreak havoc on many crops. And cotton gets hit harder than most.

In recent years, no other bug has caused more problems for cotton farmers than the stink bug, a rancid little critter nobody wants to startle.

Cotton Culprit

Georgia’s subtropical climate suits cotton, where the crop is worth between $500 million and $600 million annually. That same climate is a welcome home for bugs, too. For decades, farmers sprayed insecticides on cotton 12 to 14 times, or once a week, during the growing season to protect it. Stink bugs were likely present then, but controlled by spraying. With the eradication of the boll weevil in Georgia in the early ’90s, farmers started spraying insecticide only two or three times during the growing season instead of weekly. In the mid-’90s, farmers started planting cotton varieties containing a bacterium that kills caterpillars soon after they eat the leaves but doesn’t hurt stinkbugs.

Without traditional chemical controls, stinkbugs have emerged as a costly cotton problem.

Since arriving in Georgia, Toews has been trying to find efficient ways to control the pungent pest. And he thinks he can do it by learning more about its travel habits.

Hungry Horde

Georgia farmers plant a variety of crops in fields near each other from spring until late fall.

In early spring at the start of the growing season, stink bugs emerge from the roadside weeds or wooded areas where they wintered and migrate to developing crops. They linger along the way, feeding, looking for companionship and building populations in early-maturing crops like corn or wheat.

By late summer, they’re a hungry army, turning their focus to the tasty developing cotton boll — the fruit that makes lint, which is the foundation for everything from clothing to cotton balls — and threaten Georgia’s $500 million cotton crop.

Toews said.

Over the years, Toews and his research team have been awarded a million dollars in grant funds to investigate stink bugs, including a recent three-year, $154,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture-Southern Region Integrated Pest Management Center.

Continued on next page
Continued from previous page...

**Diverse Farmscape**

In rhythmic 4/4 time, Toews and John Herbert, a postdoctoral researcher working with Toews, swung large sweep nets and hopped their way through a late-season soybean field in Tift County. They passed and searched through the torn branches and leaves in the net.

“Got one,” Toews said, holding a little green bug in his hands. In 2009, this insect’s ancestors claimed 16,500 bales of cotton in Georgia alone, equaling $5.1 million in damage. Toews and his team also use traps, positioning systems to learn about the insect’s reproductive habits, or cycles, and track its path through the farm.

Literate on their hands and knees at times, the team monitors and takes weekly samples from a 402-acre block of contiguous peanut, green sorghum, pecan, watermelon, corn and, of course, cotton fields, or what Toews calls their research “farmscape.”

They pay close attention to population buildup and the times when stink bugs enter the cotton fields, where they typically settle at the edges of the fields first, he said.

“We are targeting sprays on these edges at the times they are moving into the fields to prevent the need for spraying the entire field,” he said. “By doing this, we’re not broadcasting the field and killing beneficial insects that can actually help fight other (cotton-eating) pests.”

By targeting just the edges at the right time, he said, farmers may be able to reduce their insecticide use by 75 percent; some by as much as 90 percent.

“When you start seeing things together, the puzzle becomes clearer,” he said. “In addition, the more we learn about stink bugs in cotton, the more we can transfer that knowledge into other crops, such as pecans and even vegetables.”

**Mike Sikes, BSA – Agriculture, ’77, is a certified Master Gardener, and has served as president of the Georgia Nursery Association. He works for McCorkle Nurseries, Inc., is currently a horticulturist for the Gardeners’ Confidence Collection, and is also a district director with the Georgia Master Gardener Association. He has been recognized by the Georgia Green Industry Association as their Distinguished Professional of the Year, and with 25 years of experience in the horticulture industry, Mike is truly “a garden connoisseur.”**

**Fred Greer, BSA – Agriculture, ’62, MS ’64, has been recognized with the Georgia Forestry Association’s Wise Owl Award, the highest honor bestowed by the organization for service to the state’s forestry community (2008). His recipient was Gov. Sonny Perdue. During his 28 years with C&S Bank, Greer established the bank as a leader and innovator in the agribusiness community.**

He coordinated events that took Georgia’s agricultural leaders on tours of agribusiness operations throughout the U.S. and Canada. He worked closely with the Georgia poultry and cattle industries and garnered support from C&S Bank for youth organizations like 4-H, FFA and FHA. He initiated support from C&S Bank for the formation of the Georgia Agribusiness Council. He has served as president of the Georgia Alumni Association and the Georgia Agribusiness Council; chairman of Senator Sam Nunn’s Agricultural Advisory Committee, the Agricultural Division of the American Bankers Association, and both the Georgia 4-H and Georgia FFA advisory committees; vice-chairman of the Georgia 4-H Foundation; and treasurer of the Georgia Forestry Association. In 1997, he was inducted into the Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame.

**Bob McLeod, BSA – Agriculture, ’80 (right), is the owner-operator of Pineview Peanut Company in Pineview, Ga. He serves on the Wilcox County Farm Bureau Board and the Colony Bank Advisory Board, and is the chairman of the Georgia Farm Bureau Advisory Board for fruit. He and his wife, Lyn (left), have three children: Robert (second from right), who is a current CAES senior studying agricultural engineering; Laura Lyn (Miss UGA 2010 – second from left), who will graduate from UGA with a degree in public relations in December 2010; and Anna Grace, who is a junior at Crisp County High School.**
**1990s**

Horng-Ji Lai, BS – Food Science, ’96, is an assistant professor at National Chi Nan University in Chia-Yi City, Taiwan.

Billy Skaggs, BS – Agronomy, ’96, MAL – Ag Leadership, ’06, received the Extension Turfgrass Award at the Georgia Turfgrass Association’s annual conference and trade show on December 10, 2009. Skaggs was recognized for his extensive work with landscape and turf professionals, including the North Georgia Turfgrass Field Day, which has been held annually in Gainesville since 2003. Skaggs is the county extension coordinator and agriculture agent in Hall County, Ga.

Greg Moore, BSA – Ag Business, ’99, is now the owner and auctioneer of Moore Auctions, based in Valdosta, Ga.

**2000s**

Asa Pogrelis, BS – Animal Science, ’02, is the retail livestock operation involving both cattle and goats. He has traveled and learned from experiences on farms and ranches in both North and South America.

Matthew Freeman, BS – Environmental Economics and Management, ’03, received his Ph.D. in environmental and natural resource economics in 2009 from the University of Rhode Island. He is currently a postdoctoral researcher at Louisiana State University, where his primary research involves two projects — a socioeconomic survey of charter boat captains along the Gulf of Mexico, and an economic evaluation of different types of wetland restoration. Through his Extension appointment with Louisiana Sea Grant, he is involved with the Recreational Saltwater Fishing Task Force and the Shrimping Task Force. He also works on catch share management in fisheries with the National Sea Grant working group.

Nathan Lents, BS – Animal Science, ’04, is the co-founder of YourAgNow and recently launched a new Web site, www.YourAgNow.com, for farmers and ranchers. The free site contains market, weather and agricultural news and performs free break-even analyses. Lents and his family live in Etow, Ga., and operate a diversified livestock operation involving both cattle and goats. He has traveled and learned from experiences on farms and ranches in both North and South America.

Joshua Shook, BS – Animal Science, ’04, received his Ph.D. in food science from Oklahoma State University and has accepted a position with Smithfield Foods in North Carolina.

**Way to go…**

An “Atta girl!” goes out to our own Juli Fields (MAL – Ag Leadership ’04), who was appointed to the National Agricultural Alumni and Development Association (NAADA) Board of Directors. She will chair this year’s national conference, which will be hosted in Athens, Ga., by UGA CAES in June. We are excited about showing off CAES to our colleagues around the nation.

Katie (Anderson) Meyers, BS – Biological Sciences, ’04, is a physician’s assistant in the cardiology department at Hattiesburg Clinic. She lives in Petal, Miss.

Nathan Lents, BS – Animal Science, ’04, is the co-founder of YourAgNow and recently launched a new Web site, www.YourAgNow.com, for farmers and ranchers. The free site contains market, weather and agricultural news and performs free break-even analyses. Lents and his family live in Etow, Ga., and operate a diversified livestock operation involving both cattle and goats. He has traveled and learned from experiences on farms and ranches in both North and South America.

Phil Ravotti, BS – Ag Engineering, ’06, is a design engineer for Heath & Lineback Engineers, Inc. He lives in Ra, Ga.

Allyson (Barnes) Marshall, BSA – Honors Interdisciplinary Studies, Agricultural and Environmental Policy, ’06, was the 2009 J.W. Fanning Distinguished Young Professional Award winner. As the southeastern crop area claims manager for Great American Insurance Company – Crop Division, she manages 60 supervisors, adjusters and office staff and oversees the daily processing of claims payments.

Kate Ewalt Bailey, BS – Agribusiness, ’08, is an agent for American General Life and Accident Insurance and lives in Loganville, Ga.

Ross Yasin, BSA – Agribusiness, ’04, is an ERP deployment specialist for ProBuild, the country’s largest provider of building materials to professional contractors. He lives in Perry, Ga., and travels across the country integrating the company’s more than 500 locations into one standard computer system.

Phil Ravotti, BS – Ag Engineering, ’06, is a design engineer for Heath & Lineback Engineers, Inc. He lives in Ra, Ga.

To include your professional class notes in the next issue of Southscapes, please e-mail Juli Fields at fields@uga.edu, or call (706) 542-3390.

**New Combine Picks Up Peanut Research**

By Niki Coody

Jimmy Cheney, a peanut farmer from Edison, Ga., and former board member of the Georgia Peanut Commission, donated a two-row KMC peanut combine (pictured) to the UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences in February 2008. KMC refurbished the picker and delivered it to the CAES Tifton campus in October 2009. Prior to this donation, members of the UGA peanut team used a 1967 Lilliston peanut combine that was partially held together with duct tape and baling wire.

Cheney passed away on April 11, 2009, before seeing the tremendous benefit of his gift. The restored combine will primarily be used in small plot research on the UGA Tifton campus farms.

**How do you use your CAES degree? Let us know.**

It’s about 12:30 on Sunday morning and I’ve just returned from the UGA Alumni Association’s Bulldog 100: Fastest Growing Bulldog Businesses event. The Bulldog spirit was alive and well, and we were proud to see the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences well represented among the Bulldog 100.

This inaugural event celebrates UGA alumni who have built highly successful businesses. The first Bulldog 100 class included six CAES alumni. It is quite an accomplishment to be included in this remarkable group of innovative businesses and brilliant business minds. It was equally gratifying to see so many friends of the college and Georgia agriculture represented as well.

This event got me thinking about all the creative ways our alumni put their degrees to use. We often hear about groundbreaking ideas through the grapevine or through our travels around Georgia, and we are constantly looking for new ways to connect our alumni and their valuable experiences with CAES students.

Our students learn about new opportunities, make helpful connections and expand their concepts of what is possible though closer ties with successful, inventive alumni. From scholarships to internships, our alumni can make their mark on the future of agriculture by supporting a CAES with CAES students.

I think we should start a pipeline to hear about your success stories. Have you started a business, found a solution to a problem, been an advocate or answered a need by developing a new product? We want to hear about it. Inspire us with your success stories at www.caes.uga.edu/alumni.
Alumni and Friends,

It has been an honor to serve with the university staff and CAES Alumni Association volunteers as we’ve struggled through the recent state budget crises. Their “can-do” attitudes and fearless efforts to advance in the face of uncertainty have been a joy to behold. If you haven’t already become a part of this organization, you should participate just to be around these folks. Their enthusiasm is contagious!

Of course, none of the UGA CAES Alumni Association programs are free. We’ll keep pursuing new and better ways to improve our programs and keep you connected, but we need your support! Please consider a donation to a CAES alumni fund in any amount. You can use the enclosed envelope or give online at www.caes.uga.edu/alumni/gifts.

It has been my pleasure to serve this year as UGA CAES Alumni Association President. I will treasure all of the experiences I’ve had and the friendships I’ve developed. I look forward to continuing my involvement with CAES for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Mark Esoda
BS, Agronomy (’81), Atlanta Country Club golf course superintendent
2010 CAES Alumni Association President

From Four Towers

MARK ESODA

Save the Dates

Mark your calendar now for these exciting, upcoming events!

JULY

England Gardens and Farms Tour for CAES Alumni
July 26-August 4 • To learn more, visit www.caes.uga.edu/alumni/events or call Juli Fields at (706) 542-3390.

CAES Alumni Association Annual Business Meeting
Friday, September 17 • 11:00 a.m. • UGA Athens Campus

CAES Alumni Association Awards Banquet
Friday, September 17 • 6:00 p.m. • Classic Center, Athens, Georgia

NOVEMBER

South Campus Tailgate
Saturday, November 6 • Legion Field, UGA Athens Campus

Your Southscape

For the past three years, College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences faculty have led a team of U.S. agricultural experts to help Haitian farmers grow more, better-quality peanuts to fight childhood malnutrition in their country.

The team partners with American-founded Meds & Food for Kids, an NGO that makes and distributes Medika Mamba, a peanut-based, ready-to-eat food considered the best weapon in this battle. Funded by USAID and including experts from Oklahoma State University and the University of Florida, the team bases its work near Cap-Haitien on the island’s mountainous northern coast.

Although Haiti’s recent devastating earthquake caused logistical problems, the team is already back in the country continuing its work.

~ Brad Haire

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