Growing Agritourism in Georgia
FROM AG HILL

Dear Alumni and Friends,

Dire circumstances often present great opportunities. We have seen this time and again over the past few months. These events have given the college an opportunity to once again demonstrate our value to the state and our relevance in society.

The unprecedented downturn in the economy brought many challenges to all of us. The college is working to make required budget reductions while maintaining quality teaching, research and extension programs. To avoid layoffs, a sizeable number of faculty and staff volunteered to retire. We knew that over the next five to 10 years about half of our seasoned county agents would retire. That has now been accelerated. Luckily, many of them will be able to continue to work with support from local funds until the state can replace the positions.

At the same time, we have worked to provide much needed economic forecast information to producers to help them make sound decisions for the coming year. Just after the first of the year, we made our annual trip around the state holding forecast meetings to share the best information our economists have to offer.

In the midst of this growing economic pressure came word of another salmonella-related recall involving a peanut processing facility in Georgia. Quoted in more than 450 media reports across the country and the world, college research and extension faculty worked to deliver the most up-to-date, fact-based information on the incident to producers and consumers. We applaud their outstanding efforts to provide this valuable service to the media, the industry and the public.

In this issue of Southscapes you will hear from farmers across Georgia who are searching for ways to maximize their profitability through agritourism. You will find other stories about initiatives we are able to undertake with strong support from grant funds. As we all strive to get the most from what we have, and get by on less, I want to assure you that we are doing all we can to make sure the citizens of Georgia are getting their money’s worth from this college.

Sincerely,

J. Scott Angle
Dean and Director
College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

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AGRITOURISM IN GEORGIA

Farmers across the state are putting out their welcome mats and inviting the public to their farms for up close and hands-on ‘agritainment.’ It all started with pick-your-own farms, and now agritourism has expanded to include corn mazes, hunting trips, shrimp boat excursions and much, much more. At Lane Southern Orchards in Ft. Valley, cousins Duke Lane III and Phillip Rigdon invite visitors to pick their own strawberries, and visit the farm daily or for the annual spring fling and Fourth of July celebrations.

Cover photo by Stephen Morton

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An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution
Buzz Kill

Grant Funds Multi-university Research to Find Solutions to Colony Collapse Disorder

By April Sorrow

The current economy has many homeowners struggling to pay their mortgages so they won’t lose their homes. But what if your home just collapsed one day? That’s exactly what happened to half the bee colonies in 36 states across the nation last winter. The bee equivalent of a housing meltdown is caused by colony collapse disorder, a condition that was first identified in November 2006. CCD expresses itself in bee colonies where foragers have abandoned the nest, “Our long-term goal is to restore large and diverse populations of managed bee pollinators across the U.S. to sustain natural and agricultural plant communities.” ~Keith Delaplane, entomologist UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

Scientists believe a combination of factors contribute to the phenomenon including pesticide exposure, environmental and nutritional stresses, new or reemerging pathogens and a new virus that targets the bees’ immune systems. “At this point it’s more forensic science than experimental science,” Delaplane said. “We have a set of symptoms but we don’t understand cause and effect.”

Initial research is focused on determining which factors are contributing causes of CCD, either individually or in combination. The scientists hope to have some practical answers for beekeepers and farmers who rely on bees for pollination. Plans include:

- developing best management practice guides,
- breeding strains of bees with genetic resistance to parasites and pathogens,
- improving the regulatory framework for better protection against pathogens, pests and parasites and
- creating Web-based distribution of science-based information on bee health and CCD.

The research team is also laying the groundwork for a bee stock registry. Although honeybee pollination is an essential part of crop production, the impact on human beings is not a matter of life or death, Delaplane said. “More human calories are supplied by wind-pollinated cereals like wheat and rice,” he said. “However, when economies improve we see an increase in the consumption of meat and dairy products and bee-pollinated fruits like melons and berries.”

Bottom: Bees wait their turns in drinking-straw-and-electrical-tape cages. About 200 to 400 pounds of untended young bees and honey. Using a $4.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, researchers hope to find solutions to CCD. “Our long-term goal is to restore large and diverse populations of managed bee pollinators across the U.S. to sustain natural and agricultural plant communities,” said Keith Delaplane, an entomologist with the UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. Delaplane is directing a four-year project. The 19-member team includes researchers and extension specialists representing 17 states are working on the project. The multidisciplinary team of specialists in epidemiology, virology, pathology, ecology, toxicology, bee biology, apiculture and integrated pest management. “We are trying to look at CCD from every angle, address it with research and deliver the knowledge to clientele groups who need answers,” Delaplane said. “Expectations are high.”

Normally, weakened bee colonies are robbed clean by neighboring bees. But when a colony is decimated by CCD, the untended honey may remain untouched. Scientists believe a combination of factors contribute to the phenomenon including pesticide exposure, environmental and nutritional stresses, new or reemerging pathogens and a new virus that targets the bees’ immune systems. “At this point it’s more forensic science than experimental science,” Delaplane said. “We have a set of symptoms but we don’t understand cause and effect.”

Below top left: Honeybee lab technician Robert Collom (left) and Keith Delaplane test honeybee response time using a device Collom built. When the light switch panel is turned on at certain time intervals, the nozzle blows a scent at the bee. Following in Pavlov’s footsteps, Delaplane then tests to see if the bees remember that they get sugar water after they smell that particular scent (below top right). Bottom: Bees wait their turns in drinking-straw-and-electrical-tape cages. About 200 to 400 pounds of sugar were used per week to run this test. When the test is completed, the bees are released.

**Research**

Bottom: Bees wait their turns in drinking-straw-and-electrical-tape cages. About 200 to 400 pounds of untended young bees and honey. Using a $4.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, researchers hope to find solutions to CCD. “Our long-term goal is to restore large and diverse populations of managed bee pollinators across the U.S. to sustain natural and agricultural plant communities.***

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~Keith Delaplane, entomologist

UGA College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences.

In addition to UGA, participating institutions include Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station, Cornell University, Illinois Natural History Survey, North Carolina State University, Kentucky State University, Michigan State University, Penn State University, Purdue University, University of California-Riverside, University of Maine, University of Massachusetts, University of Minnesota, University of Nebraska, University of Tennessee, USDA ARS Weslaco, Texas, and Washington State University.

Q: What’s all the BUZZ about?

A: Our food supply!

Honeybees pollinate about a third of the nation’s food supply and add $15 billion annually to U.S. crops. They pollinate 130 different fruits, vegetables and nuts including almonds, apples, avocados, blackberries, blueberries, broccoli, carrots, cherries, cucumbers, oranges, peaches and saybeans.

Honeybees aren’t the only pollinators, but they are the most prolific and easiest to manage for the agriculture industry’s large-scale pollination needs. The number of managed bee colonies has dropped from five million in the 1940s to half that number. In California, the almond crop alone needs 1.3 million bee colonies, about half of the nation’s supply. To meet demand, commercial beekeepers truck bees to provide pollination.

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Agritourism in Georgia

Georgia offers a growing variety of local escapes. Take your pick. By Stephanie Schupska

The apple cider poured thick and brown out of the plastic jug, as much different from store-bought apple juice as it was similar. Throughout the store, shiny red, golden, yellow and green apples beckoned from their baskets. We took at least three bushels home. It may have happened just once in my childhood, but that stop at an apple house in Ellijay still brings back memories: my first taste of apple cider, the sharp tartness of a Granny Smith and applesauce canning later with my mom. Every year when tree leaves start to change colors and the air crackles with crispness, I yearn for the north Georgia mountains and their apple bounty.

Many Georgians share similar stories, like how agriculture shaped a 9-year-old’s view of the seasons or gave an adult a reason to act like a kid again. Whether it’s a farm tour, a black-water pond, a turkey hunt, a winery tasting room or a u-pick venue, agritourism gives people a way to unwind while reconnecting with their roots.

Root of the matter

Agritourism started with apple houses, says Scott Cagle, who owns Agri-Tour Solutions. Apples were introduced to Ellijay in 1903. Cagle’s family helped usher in the modern era of agritourism in 1993. Their dairy, located in the already overcrowded Atlanta suburb of Cherokee County, was landlocked then. Instead of moving farther north, they started offering tours as a way to increase revenue without having to increase their size.

With activities ranging from flower picking and bonfires to a corn cannon and maze, the dairy now caters to school groups and the public.

David Dyer, head of the recently developed Georgia Agritourism Association (www.visitgafarms.com), said the state’s first agritourism ventures also included roadside markets and quail hunting plantations. He owns Garland’s Ridge Farm, a tree farm that is managed for quail, turkey and deer.

“And you can’t discount horse lovers,” he said. “That’s all agritourism. In the north Georgia mountains, we have the hiking trails. To me, the agritourism umbrella is more than just the farmers. It’s all kinds of outdoor activities.”
Agritourism in Georgia
Take your pick.

F.J. Graddy Hunting Farms
By Stephanie Schupska

Hogzilla is dead. But hunters bet the famous behemoth’s cousins still roam south Georgia. With hopes of setting their sights on a record-setting swine, or other legends, many drive from across the country to F.J. Graddy Hunting Farms. James Connelly (BSA–Ag. Econ. ’99) runs the family farm in Georgetown, Ga. And he’s more than happy to share his way of life with his guests.

“Some people just love to hunt,” he said. “They can be in the woods, and they don’t have to kill anything.”

Hog hunts – which are legal in the vicinity of corn seed when deer and turkey aren’t in season – aren’t the farm’s only attractions. It also caters to turkey, deer, dove and quail hunters. But wild boars are Connelly’s big draw.

Connelly says, “You know you’re a redneck if you hunt from your cell phone.”

Using his Blackberry, James Connelly checks on a group of hunters from Maryland. Getting e-mails on his cell phone allows Connelly to stay in touch even when he’s in the woods.

The hogs that roam the farm’s woods and neighboring fields are tasty, but they aren’t cute, curly-tailed, pink pigs. They can be big destroyers.

“If I had a row-cropping operation, I wouldn’t charge people to come and hunt,” Connelly said. “There’s no telling how much a group of hogs can destroy in a night.”

Connelly points to a hog wallow. The muddy, water-filled hole serves as a hog bathtub of sorts. The tree next to the hole gives him an idea of how tall the hog is that made it. A bit smaller than Hogzilla, he says, but still large enough to entice hunters like those who are en route from Maryland to share stories over a campfire. “Our grandfather, Duke Lane, Sr., takes a backseat at the business now,” Lane said. Despite the changes and expansions, the Lane family stays rooted in Georgia agriculture. And Lane and Rigdon have their own built-in checks-and-balances system.

Web site: fjgraddyhunting.com

The new vacation destination

“You can take your family to a movie, but you’ll probably light on the way and split up at the movies to see different shows,” said Kent Wolfe (BSA–Ag. Econ. ’88), an agritourism specialist with the University of Georgia Center for Agribusiness and Economic Development. “It’s not really a family event.” Wolfe should know. With three teenagers, he occasionally has trouble talking over their iPads, cell phones and game systems. One year, instead of speeding through south Georgia on their way to Florida, Wolfe and his family made a detour to Mark Glass Alligator Farm in Camilla. His kids still talk about the trip.

“When it comes to time, ag- or nature-based tourism is just like any other kind of tourism. Instead of spending hours in a museum, strawberries are picked at a patch close to home. Instead of working out on a treadmill, a hike is taken through the woods in search of birds.”

The UGA CAED Web site Accessing Agricultural Treasures, or AGnET, lists 6,111 agritourism venues at appx.caes.uga.edu/agnet.

Lone Southern Orchards
By Sharon Dowdy

Duke Lane III (BS–Ag. Comm. ’02) and Philip Rigdon (BS–Ag. Econ. ’99) are fifth generation farmers. Following in their grandfather’s footsteps and occasionally under his watchful eye, the cousins manage the day-to-day operations at Lane Southern Orchards in Ft. Valley. Proud of the past, they know they must continue to add to the business in order to stay successful.

Known for its peaches – 30 different varieties in all – the 5,000-acre farm also has pecans, a packing shed, a store and a bakery with everything from fresh-baked peach and cinnamon pecan bread to jellies, preserves and even peach-flavored gum balls.

In the winter months, they sell fresh Florida citrus. Their Peach Tree Cafe offers hot and cold sandwiches and a fresh soup and salad bar.

“We started our roadside market with two or three rocking chairs and a three-tier display filled with peach baskets,” said Rigdon. “Every year, we added on and added on until we built up to what you see today.”

Peaches are still their bread and butter, but the new generation is leading the business in different directions. “While we’re committed to peaches, we recognize the need to diversify,” Lane said. “The diversification into pecans and agritourism has allowed us to literally weather the storm.” And the storms have come. Late frosts in 2007 and 2008 significantly damaged their peach crops.

To keep on top of the latest research, Lane and Rigdon work closely with their local University of Georgia Cooperative Extension agent and are active in the Georgia Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association.

Visitors to the orchard can now pick their own strawberries. The cousins plan to add blueberries, blackberries, muscadines and kiwi. “We want to eventually have some sort of crop growing all year round,” Lane said.

They also offer a variety of family activities, including a corn maze, a spring fling event and a huge Fourth of July celebration. “And we have cookouts where kids can make s’mores over a campfire,” Rigdon said.

Traditional roadside signs still lead visitors to the business, but they are now helped by billboards on the interstate and a company Web site.

Despite the changes and expansions, the Lane family stays rooted in Georgia agriculture. And Lane and Rigdon have their own built-in checks-and-balances system. “Our grandfather, Duke Lane, Sr., takes a backseat at the business now,” Lane said.

“But he’s always around,” Rigdon said. “And he’ll sure let us know his opinion on what we’re doing if need be.”

Web site: www.lanesouthernorchards.com
Agritourism in Georgia

Take your pick.

C

Credles Adventures

By Stephanie Schupska

Cliff Credle swings the net over the catch table and tugs it open. Hundreds of fish, a few shrimp, some mud and a horseshoe crab spill out. It’s the first catch of the Lady Jane’s two-hour cruise, and the six boys surrounding the table are ready to plunge their hands into the fishy mess.

“Their moms are going to find fish in their back pockets when they go to do their laundry,” Captain Larry Credle jokes.

The Lady Jane spends each January dry docked for repairs, and this is her first trip of the year. It’s also 10-year-old Derek Nicholas’ birthday party. One he and his friends won’t soon forget.

Derek’s birthday is in January, but he opted to wait to celebrate it in February on the Lady Jane, said his dad Chris Nicholas. “He’s into the environment and marine life,” Nicholas said.

Back at the table, Cliff Credle, who is both second mate and Larry’s son, tries to stop the boys from grabbing anything poisonous – like the small stingray he handles carefully, or the toadfish he won’t even touch.

He’s used to saving landlubbers’ hands. Last year, the Lady Jane took 4,621 passengers on 167 trips off the coast of Brunswick. The 60-foot vessel was the first, and is currently the only, commercial fishing trawler in the United States certified to carry passengers. She can take out up to 49 per trip.

Captain Larry Credle steers the Lady Jane toward home after a shrimping tour. He hopes to eventually expand his operation to include dolphin tours and a pirate ship. “We already have the costumes,” he said.

The elder Credle has caught wild Georgia shrimp since 1964, when he and his dad first traveled to Georgia’s coast. Commercial shrimping is a dying industry now, he said. Fuel costs, 17- to 20-hour days and foreign imports have made life on the sea hard. But Derek is out to improve things.

“Their moms are going to find fish in their back pockets when they go to do their laundry,” Larry said. “You never know what you’re going to catch. They’ve pulled up a prehistoric megalodon shark tooth, multitudes of sharks, eels, puffer fish and, of course, tons of shrimp.”

Cliff tagged along on the shrimp boat when he was 9. He and his dad built their first boat together when he was 11. Now a sophomore in high school, Cliff’s planning to become a marine biologist.

Back at Derek’s birthday party, Cliff pulls in the second of three catches for the day and shows the boys how to pop a shrimp head off. Pulling in the net is “like Christmas,” Larry said. “You never know what you’re going to catch. They’ve pulled up a prehistoric megalodon shark tooth, multitudes of sharks, eels, puffer fish and, of course, tons of shrimp.”

They check the boys’ hands for fish before the cruise ends, and Joanie Nicholas, Derek’s mom, hauls the day’s catch to shore. It’s the Nicholas family’s third trip on the boat. “Anytime people come to visit, we take them out on the boat,” she said.

Web site: www.credlesadventures.com

“Reconnect with your food”

Danny Durrence of D.C. Durrence Farm in Glennville once had a child ask him where the peanut tree was. He gives people a literal connection between the land and their food by allowing them to pick their own produce.

Credle’s Adventures in Brunswick provides a similar lesson for people, showing them seafood at its freshest – on a boat, right out of the water and slapping around on a table.

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“When you get people out on a farm, they understand more about how food is produced and where it comes from,” Cagle said. “When you pull a potato plant out of ground and say, ‘This is where your French fries come from,’ it gives people that connection. Many have no idea that potatoes and peanuts grow underground.”

Farmers markets, also considered agritourism operations, are helping people save money, eat locally and connect with their food.

(Continued on page 13)

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(Continued on page 13)

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Agritourism in Georgia
Take your pick.

Farm Fresh Tattnall
Story and photos by Stephanie Schuppska

Tattnall is roughly 200 miles from Atlanta, but that isn’t stopping urbanites from driving to the southeast Georgia county. It’s not an amusement park, concert or resort that’s attracting them. They’re hitting the road for fresh vegetables.

In order to understand the attraction, all you have to do is bite into a vine-ripened tomato from D.C. Durrence Farm or be welcomed by Driggers Farms’ farm dog, Cocoa, as you head out to pick peppers straight from the field.

With the help of their Web site, farm cooperative Farm Fresh Tattnall is making it easier for Georgians from Augusta to Canton to know what produce is available in the county and where they can pick or buy it.

The site gives travelers and locals an idea of what’s in season – carrots and cabbage in the winter; strawberries and onions in the spring; pecans and pumpkins in the fall and everything from tomatoes to sweet corn in the summer.

"It’s a unique opportunity for urban people to come out to our farms," said Danny Durrence, who owns D.C. Durrence Farms on Highway 301 just outside of Glennville. "If we didn’t have Farm Fresh Tattnall, many of them wouldn’t have the opportunity."

While members of the co-op operate their own farms and roadside stands, they share resources and knowledge – and customers, something that’s unusual outside of their group.

In early February, Cliff Riner pulls up a handful of carrots before slicing off a head of cabbage at W.A. Rogers and Sons Farm. At their roadside stand, he checks out some broccoli before moving on to the Vidalia onions.

Riner, one of two University of Georgia Cooperative Extension agents in Tattnall County, recently inherited the management of the cooperative from retired agent Reid Torrance. In 2001, Terance got the co-op going by encouraging 18 u-pick and roadside stand operators to combine their resources.

"When commercial vegetable prices are cheap, farmers can make more selling customer direct," Riner said. "They can set their own prices."

Co-op members realize the immediate benefit to joint promotion, reporting a 30 percent increase in customer traffic year after year for several years running.

Walter Driggers of Driggers Farms sees a lot of repeat customers, some who come two or three times per year. He and his wife, Teila, market almost all of their produce from their front porch in Collins and their store in Metter.

Customers are attracted by both the opportunity to eat lunch under the pecan trees at Durrence Farms or swipe a credit card in exchange for produce at Driggers’ vegetable stand.

"We want people to come out and bring their kids and show them what agriculture is," Durrence said.

Web site: farmfreshtattnall.com

(Continued from page 11)

"More people are eating local through their farmers market. Done right, that’s agritourism, in my opinion, because you’re creating a market for the products you grow," Eagle said.

Tiny stimulus packages

"Agritourism in the state is worth about $80 million," Wolfe said. "It creates tax revenue for areas that may not have much and creates jobs in rural areas, both part time and full time."

According to the 2007 Georgia Farm Gate Value Report, nature-based tourism generated $49.8 million and ag-based tourism generated $30.4 million in 2007. Both are listed as agricultural commodities.

In a big city, that’s pennies in a bucket. In tiny towns across Georgia, those pennies are vital for survival.

In Georgetown, a town of about 1,000, James Connelly runs a hunting business – batteries, fuel, seed and feed. It gives the community a sense of pride to have all that."

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Between 1997 and 2007, agritourism in the U.S. grew 28 percent annually, Wolfe said. Tourism in general grew about 2 percent a year.

Roadblocks

Opening up farms to the public can bring problems. The No. 1 issue is liability. "If someone walks across my farm and a tree falls on them or they fall in a well, they can sue, even if I didn’t give permission for them to be on the land," Dyer said.

This year, Georgia’s General Assembly is again going to look at a bill to give agritourism venues some legal protection.

Farms in counties transitioning from rural to metro can face problems holding onto their farm tax status as counties consider zoning them commercial – a jump in tax payments that would put many farms out of business.

To make agritourism truly viable, Dyer said, it would need to be viewed as just another farm product. "This way if you plant a corn maze or have a place for people to smash pumpkins, it’s just another crop on your farm, just another crop that you’re producing."

Continuing the trend

Cagle said agritourism in the state has three golden opportunities: 1) To pull people off I-75 as they travel to and from Florida; 2) To entice people visiting Atlanta to go outside of the city; and 3) To attract people with Georgia’s beauty, weather and ease of travel.

"We in Georgia are so fortunate," Dyer said. "Our state is flat in the south and has rolling hills in the north part, with swamps and rivers and lakes. We have more in Georgia, more opportunity than we saw in other states. We simply need to get organized to take advantage of it and get more people involved in it."
Growing Leaders Through Giving

Students develop service leadership skills and strengthen community

Story by Brad Haire

Many College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences students who seek leadership experience must develop and coordinate volunteer community projects. But many don’t just volunteer to improve their grades or to pass a class. They do it because they know it is the right thing to do.

Jim McBride learned this firsthand when CAES students showed up at his farm earlier this year to get their hands dirty. McBride owns and operates Jim’s Farm, an organic farm in Winterville, Ga., near Athens. Two years ago, he began to suffer from a pinched nerve in his neck. The constant pain prevents him from doing much of the intense manual labor required on his farm. During the winter months 250 blueberry bushes need pruning and the garlic and onions need to be hand-planted.

He needed help to keep things running. Jessica Forbes, the project coordinator for AgrAbility in Georgia, put out a distress call of sorts for McBride. That help came in the form of a dozen CAES students, along with other Athens-area volunteers.

For two weekends in January, volunteers showed up on McBride’s farm to prune blueberries, plant crops, repair a greenhouse, build compost bins and burn farm debris. “I can’t do this anymore, and this means the world to me,” he said.

Since 2005, AgrAbility has brought volunteers and professional know-how to the aid of disabled farmers and farm workers in Georgia. The federally-funded project is a partnership between University of Georgia Cooperative Extension in both the CAES and in the College of Family and Consumer Sciences, Forbes said.

“She just always does volunteer work. It’s nice to get out and help a part of something,” said Justin Porter, a CAES horticulture graduate student from Savannah. “Up on the farm, if somebody needs help, you help them.” Porter was one of the volunteers who came to McBride’s aid.

Good leaders aren’t just people who know how to motivate and inspire others. Tomorrow’s effective leaders will know how to serve others.

“In the new era of leadership, leading is more than just one person getting their agenda accomplished. We have seen how in big business that has backfired,” said Jennifer Williams, a CAES assistant professor based on the UGA campus in Griffin, Ga.

“Allowing the students to gain insight on their own personal leadership development by applying their knowledge to a project which asks them to look beyond their own personal needs has been the most effective way for students to learn.”

For example, Williams’ Griffin students worked with Chick-fil-A, Inc. to raise money for a leadership scholarship. Her Athens students created a centralized philanthropy center for the UGA Greek system. She and her colleagues incorporate volunteer lessons and projects into several courses they teach in the department of agricultural leadership, education and communication.

“Volunteering is a great way to get connected to the community in which one lives. One characteristic of a true leader is the ability to give back to those in need. To share one’s expertise to better the community and make a difference is a very important attribute of leadership,” said Dennis Duncan, a CAES associate professor and ALEC graduate coordinator.

In recent years, Duncan said, students in his classes have developed and carried out volunteer projects to help nonprofit organizations like the Boys & Girls Club, American Red Cross, the northeast Georgia Food Bank, Humane Society, Athens (Ga.) Traveling Nurses Program and Habitat for Humanity.

A servant leader also knows when to lead and when to let others take charge, said Chris Morgan, a CAES assistant professor. Volunteering allows the practice of both.

“Our goal is for students to have a better understanding of who they are as a leader after completing our course,” Morgan said. “To learn about leadership is one thing, but to practice it is quite different.”

(Stephanie Schupska contributed to this story.)
Most mornings, a select group of inmates from the Rogers State Prison near Reidsville, Ga., go outside and get their hands dirty, all in the name of science and to help improve Georgia’s vegetable and onion industries. They provide the essential, labor-intensive work that’s necessary at the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Vidalia Onion and Vegetable Research Center. The fledging center is the brainchild of Reid Torrance (BSA–Ag. ’80, MA–Ext., ’97), the UGA Cooperative Extension coordinator in Tattnall County.

“Gives Life to Center”

This is the only place in this part of the state that conducts commercial vegetable research, but also it’s unique because of the inmate labor detail,” Torrance said. In vegetable research, he said, it makes a big difference when labor is readily available to provide timely harvests. The prison labor, worth $120,000 annually, is a big savings for the facility, which has become vital in an effort to support the state’s fastest growing commodity group.

“Growers had always wanted research done in the onion belt,” said Torrance, one of the world’s foremost Vidalia onion experts. “Other than on-farm projects, we didn’t really have any place to do that.”

So, in November 1996, Torrance had a brainstorm: “We’ve got 9,000 acres out there at the prison, and surely they have a little corner out there somewhere where we can do some research.”

He made some calls and set up a meeting at the Warden’s Clubhouse with UGA and Department of Corrections representatives, legislators and onion growers.

The old Page Nursery, a site where the Georgia Forestry Commission once grew pine seedlings, was recommended. Already equipped with irrigation risers, the site was perfect.

UGA researchers quickly established onion research plots there. Soon after, Torrance inked a 15-year lease agreement for 22 acres of fields and three acres with usable buildings. Funding to support the new center came from the legislature and private supporters.

In spring 2000, 80 people attended the center’s first onion field day. In less than a year, a dozen projects relating to several disciplines were taking place.

Now the center needed a plan to staff and equip the facility. Torrance needed working hands more than anything else and he didn’t have to look far. The prison inmates were right there.

The center continues to grow and now receives $50,000 annually from the Vidalia Onion Committee. Dozens of scientists across the state from a variety of disciplines now conduct research there.

In 2008, the forestry commission gave the entire 142 acres of the old Page Nursery to the college, including the farm’s two houses, which are used by the farm supervisors.

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To learn firsthand about Hispanic culture, Kate Whiting traveled to rural Mexico. Her experience there, she said, made her better able to serve the growing Hispanic population in Georgia.

Whiting is a University of Georgia Cooperative Extension agent in Peach County. She and 16 other UGA Extension agents and specialists took a two-week study trip to Veracruz and Xalapa, Mexico in May of 2008.

The group included agents from Bartow, Clarke, Clayton, DeKalb, Elbert, Houston, Liberty, Laurens, McDuffie, Peach, Pierce and Thomas counties. “The opportunity to interact with families and see them in their day-to-day lives helped me understand the cultural aspects of their lives and some ways we are different,” Whiting said. “(The trip) gave me a better overall understanding of the culture and having this knowledge makes it easier to communicate with my Hispanic population.”

An estimated 7 percent of Georgia’s population is Hispanic, but that percentage can be two or three times larger in some individual counties.

The cross-cultural studies program gives UGA Extension workers new skills to serve this growing segment of Georgia’s population, said Jorge Atiles, associate dean for outreach and extension for the UGA College of Family and Consumer Sciences.

“The state demographics demand that extension agents need some cross-cultural training. Whatever their area of expertise, sooner or later they will work with Latin Americans.”

~ Jorge Atiles
Associate Dean for Outreach and Extension
UGA College of Family and Consumer Sciences

Living with host families, the group immersed themselves in Mexican culture, took language classes and visited local schools, social service centers, farms and rural outreach centers connected with the Universidad Veracruzana.

“They are exposed to the culture beginning with breakfast in the morning. They are immersed in the family. They learn what life is really like in a Mexican home,” said Glenn Ames, director of the UGA Office of International Public Service and Outreach.

“Their hospitality and attention to leisure time really impressed me,” said Edda Cotto-Rivera, a UGA Extension radon and diabetes educator in DeKalb County. “They take time to be with their family, walk their kids to school and have family meals.”

Cotto-Rivera especially took note of the differences in Mexican meals. This information, she said, helps her plan and deliver effective nutrition programs in DeKalb.

“Their nutrition is different,” said Cotto-Rivera, who grew up in Puerto Rico and speaks Spanish. “The spices
Garden Grows Knowledge

Orphanage trains in food preparation and preservation
By April Sorrow

Most boys wouldn’t list “learning to preserve food” among their favorite summertime activities. But the boys who live in the ProNiño orphanage in El Progreso, Honduras were grateful for the life-saving lessons taught by University of Georgia Extension agent Judy Hibbs.

Hibbs, the Clarke County Extension coordinator, first traveled to Honduras in July 2007 with a group of extension agents for cultural training. While there, the group taught the boys how to plant a garden so they could improve their diets. Hibbs worked with the kitchen staff to create recipes to address dietary concerns.

“THERE are about 100 boys who live in one of the three orphanage sites,” Hibbs said. “In addition to having lost their families, many of the boys are going through withdrawal symptoms associated with sniffing glue – a drug they do in order to suppress their appetites.”

Before Hibbs’ help, the boys’ diet consisted mainly of beans, rice and tortillas. They got their water and one serving of milk every day and a vegetable twice a week. The diet was high in fat and sodium and low in nutrients.

Upon returning to Georgia, Hibbs told the leader of Atlanta Supporters of ProNiño that the orphanage needed food preservation training. “If the staff could learn basic food preservation methods they could extend the availability of the vegetables they grow in their garden and get better prices at the market by purchasing in bulk and preserving them at the center,” she said.

Atlanta Supporters of ProNiño raised funds and purchased two freezers, a commercial refrigerator, two food processors, two food dehydrators and canning and freezing equipment for the orphanage. The program also bought supplies for a food preservation center, or “alcena” in Spanish.

Hibbs returned to Honduras last summer and created nutrient-rich recipes and taught food preservation skills to a staff of four boys who will run the alcena. “We used the food processors to grind zucchini, carrots, onions and peppers into a spaghetti sauce recipe, since that’s a dish currently served and eaten,” she said. “They may not have a family meal at lunch anymore, and they lose that family connection,” Hibbs’-said.

“The boys would like to preserve food for the winter. They would also like to have a dehydrator and freeze mustard greens, green beans and field peas. The boys also plan to sell salsa they hope to produce enough fruits and vegetables in the garden to feed the boys and possibly sell the extra produce in local markets. They also plan to sell salsa they hope to produce enough fruits and vegetables in the garden to feed the boys and possibly sell the extra produce in local markets.

By April Sorrow

Advice for Trying Economic Times

Economic experts have gone so far as to state that the U.S. is in the midst of the greatest recession our nation has faced since the Great Depression. American families are affected directly by this crisis through job losses, home foreclosures and rising fuel and food costs. To help families deal with the financial crisis, Southscapes sat down with University of Georgia Cooperative Extension financial management specialist Michael Rupured and asked his advice.

How can I reduce my expenses?

How much can you cut from your expenses? Expect to cut 10 to 20% from your budget. Many families are discovering that 10% or more is not a huge sacrifice.

Think before you spend. If you live from paycheck to paycheck, pay close attention to where your money goes. Most families can reduce spending by as much as 20 percent without feeling much, if any. Carry a notepad and write down every penny you spend. Sit down every few days, or at least once a week, and add up how much you spent and what you are buying. Little things you do on a frequent basis, such as snacking from vending machines at work, smoking, or eating lunch out, can add up to a lot of money in a month’s time.

How can I cut back on monthly bills?

Shop around, regularly, for everything – insurance, utilities, telephone service (including cell phones), Internet access, credit cards and other goods and services. The cost difference from one provider to another can be astronomical. The great deal you got two years ago may no longer be the best deal available, so it is important to recheck at least once a year. Make sure you only pay for what you use. Cancel extra features or services you rarely or never need. Think about targeting one or two spending areas.

What about my credit cards?

If you have excellent credit, carry a balance and pay more than 14.9 percent APR (the current average), contact the credit card company and ask for a lower rate. Currently, consumers with excellent credit can find credit cards with interest rates as low as 6.5 percent and no annual fee. If you are unsure about your credit history, Georgia consumers may obtain up to two free credit reports per year from each of the three major credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion).
**A Brain for Birds: Senior Hatches Plan**

By Allie Byrd

F

From the common everyday chicken to the exotic sun conure, Sarah Masoero loves birds. She loves them so much that she's decided to pursue a career as an avian veterinarian.

Although she has always wanted to work with animals, Masoero didn't discover her love of birds until she took a poultry science class at CAES. "I started out as an animal health major and switched to avian biology," she said. "I loved the hands-on poultry science classes and doing avian surgery labs.

A senior from Tyrone, Ga., Masoero plans to attend vet school to specialize in avian medicine. After spending time in animal research labs and working in an animal hospital, she knows she wants to practice animal medicine and work with patients and people.

"I've always wanted to be a vet, but now I've gotten into this bird world," she said. "I'm most passionate about clinical work and animal medicine and definitely want to work in an animal hospital."

She applied to the UGA College of Veterinary Medicine in the fall and will find out if she's been accepted in April.

In the meantime, Masoero works in one of the wildlife health labs and helps conduct tests for avian influenza. Technicians collect samples to be analyzed from wild birds across North America.

"In the lab we isolate the virus and test it by extracting it from the samples," she said. "We inoculate eggs with the bird samples to find out if they are infected with avian influenza. If the samples are positive for avian influenza they are further analyzed to determine the subtype of the virus."

These tests help researchers keep track of the avian influenza distribution in North America, learn about the different subtypes and paint a picture of what diseases are circulating in wild birds.

Last May, Masoero also traveled to Costa Rica on the avian biology Maymester trip to study and identify bird species.

"I always wanted to study abroad, but was really hesitant about the accommodations and [wondered] if I would be able to do everything," Masoero said, sitting in her motorized wheel chair. "Dr. (Adam) Davis and Dr. (Mike) Lacy helped arrange everything and made it so I could go. I probably wouldn't have gone if I hadn't felt so comfortable."

Davis and Lacy are professors in the CAES Poultry Science Department. Lacy is also head of the department.

Masoero also assists Dr. Bruce Webster in the poultry science department. They do gait scoring to study how chickens walk and evaluate bone composition for osteoporosis studies.

"Birds are such unique animals, not only in their beautiful diversity, but also in their quirky character," Masoero said. "Birds are a perfect fit for me because they are so comfortable for me to work with, given their size."

In addition to her class work, Masoero co-chairs the student-run organization L.E.A.D., or Leadership, Education and Advocacy for Students with Disabilities. The group promotes awareness about disabilities on campus and also meets with disabled high school students to give them an idea of what college life is like.

"We meet with the students to give them advice and let them ask questions," she said. "It lets these high school students know that it is possible for people with a disability to go to college, especially UGA."
serves as a member of the Shenendehowa Rotary, the Southern Saratoga Chamber of Commerce, the Southern Saratoga YMCA Board of Directors, the Shenendehowa Educational Foundation and sits 1450 of the American Legion as a Son.

James Dobson, MSA–Agronomy ’53, was selected from a slate of nine candidates to receive the first annual Holman Water Quality Stewardship Award. Dobson served for many years as superintendent of the Mountain Research and Education Center in Blainville and can still be found there helping out Joe Ganner and his staff.

Melvin Johnson, BSA–Ag ’57, MEd–Ag ’62, former state director of Agricultural Education and Georgia Agricultural Hall of Fame member, was recognized in January at the State FFA Exposition since 1997, executive director for 2008. Executive director of Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition since 1997, Blalock served as county Extension agent in Dooly and Colquitt counties until 1990.

Megan Mullis Green, BSA–Animal Science ’03, lives in Lexington, KY, where she is participating in a rotating hospital internship (June 2008-June 2009) at Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital. She has accepted a position to stay on in the ambulatory department for an internship for 2009-2010. Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital is one of the premier equine hospitals in the world. It is capable of performing major orthopedic and soft tissue equine surgeries and boasts advanced technology including a Neonatal ICU, MRI and nuclear scintigraphy. Additionally, Rood and Riddle Equine Hospital is the veterinary sponsor of the 2010 World Equestrian Games scheduled to be held in Lexington, KY.

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

1950s

Doug Canup, BSA–Ag Mechanization ’75, director of USDA Rural Development’s single family housing programs, retired in November having served his entire career with the same federal agency.

Stephen Fisch, BSA–Animal Science ’77, DVM ’82, is a practicing veterinarian and founder of AVS Equine Medical and Surgical Hospital in Tallahassee, FL. Fisch was a quarter horse jockey in the 70s before entering UGA. In the 80s and 90s, he raced horses around the U.S. as an owner. Currently he runs Flying Fisch Farms where he breeds quarter horses. He also serves as president of the Florida Quarter Horse Association.

Tommy Nix, BSA–Ag Econ ’81, is the senior vice president of Mountain First Bank and Trust in Brevard, NC. He was recently appointed secretary-treasurer of the Transylvania Regional Hospital Foundation.

Mark Ducas, BSA–Eng ’84, is the director of operations and maintenance at The University of Georgia. Under his leadership, UGA started a program to replace toilets, urinals and faucet aerators with low-flow devices. This retrofitting program saves 30 million gallons of water annually.

Polly Ligon O’Grady, BSA–Comm ’87, was recently promoted to vice president of Mountain First Bank and Trust, was recently elected vice president of the bank. He is an active volunteer for the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors.

G. Barton Pennington, BSA–Ag Econ ’97, MS-Ag Econ ’99, branch manager of the Lexington road branch of Athens First Bank and Trust, was recently elected vice president of the bank. He is an active volunteer for the Athens Area Chamber of Commerce Ambassadors.

1960s

Bob Seligson, BSA–AgEcon, ’78, is CEO of the North Carolina Medical Society. He is also chair of the North Carolina Film Council and serves on the board of the Centennial Authority, which oversees the RBC Center in Raleigh, NC. He was featured in the September ‘08 issue of the Triangle Business Journal.

Chip Blalock, BSA–Animal Science ’87, was named Moultrie – Colquitt County Chamber of Commerce Agribusinessman of the Year for 2008. Executive director of Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition since 1997, Blalock served as county Extension agent in Dooly and Colquitt counties until 1990.

Denise Deal, BSA–Comm ’92, was recently appointed by the board of directors of the Chattahoochee Bank of Georgia to the bank advisory board. Deal is executive director for vision 2030, a community planning initiative sponsored by the Greater Hall Chamber of Commerce and the HALLmark Initiative.

Billy Suggs, BSA–Agronomy ’96, MALS ’06, was recently elected southern regional vice-director of the National Association of County Agricultural Agents. Suggs will serve a 4-year term on the NACAAD Board of Directors. He is currently the county Extension coordinator and agriculture agent in Hall County. He also serves on the board of directors of the UGA CAES Alumni Association.

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1970s

James Brannen, BSA–Chemistry ’70, president and CEO of the Georgia Bankers Association, was re-elected president of the Georgia Bar Foundation. Brannen has led the Georgia Bankers Association since 1980. GBA is the trade and professional association representing Georgia’s 380 banks and thrift institutions. He is also on the Board of Directors of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the State YMCA. And he is past president of the Georgia Society of Association Executives.

Harry Sloan, BSA–Animal Science ’70, is employed at G. Nuire Nuclear Station’s Duke Energy in the Radiation Protection Group.

Dolores Kunze, BSA–Food Science ’72, DVM ’76, has been practicing veterinary medicine for more than 30 years and recently celebrated 20 years of service to the Boiling Springs, SC community. In 2006, she was named one of America’s Top Veterinarians by The Guide to America’s Veterinarians.

1980s

Chigozie Cyril Asiabaka, BSA–Ag Ed ’81, was elected dean of the School of Agriculture and Agricultural Technology at Federal University of Technology, Owerri, Nigeria.

Chipo Coyne, BSA–Animal Science ’87, was named Moultrie – Colquitt County Chamber of Commerce Agribusinessman of the Year for 2008. Executive director of Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition since 1997, Blalock served as county Extension agent in Dooly and Colquitt counties until 1990.

1990s

Keith Johnson, BSA–Ag Econ ’91, is the human resources director at Jackson EMC. He currently serves on the 4-H Advisory Committee, and he recently became treasurer of the Jackson County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors.

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2000s

Leslie Amber Dowd, BSA–Ag Ed ’02, is a programs coordinator at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, GA.

Chris Grunkteuz, BSA–Bus ’02, MS-Ag Econ ’05, has been appointed to USDA NRCs as the Chesapeake- Chautauqua Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D) Council. He was recently recognized with the Georgia Association of Conservation Districts Superior Professional Support Staff Award.

Chris Hopkins, BSA–Crop Science ’02, MPMLM ’04, formerly with Bayer Crop Sciences, is now the dealership manager for Lasseter Implement John Deere Dealership in Lyons, GA. Hopkins also farms cotton, peanuts and watermelon with his wife (Marilynn Hopkins, BSA–AgBusiness ’05) who works at Lasseter Implement in Hazelhurst, GA.

Laura Thompson Bland, BSA– ‘05, BSES–Environmental Economics and Management
Dear CAES Friends and Alumni,

In this time of economic uncertainty in our country, I remain extremely proud of the programs and opportunities provided by the CAES Alumni Association.

Through the foresight of many great leaders in the early 70s, the CAES Alumni Association’s Eterna Fund was established to assist the association with its programs and initiatives. This endowed CAES fund not only provides academic scholarships and educational experiences for CAES students, but also supplements many important alumni projects such as Southscapes magazine. A publication of this type is crucial for helping promote CAES successes and achievements.

Beginning with the Fall 2009 issue, Southscapes will be mailed to all CAES alumni and friends who have made an annual contribution of at least $35 to any CAES fund. Portions of the magazine will be available online, but to receive the entire publication, we encourage you to make an annual contribution to the college. It is our desire to continue providing you with Southscapes, and we hope this will allow us to do so. An envelope will be included in every issue as a reminder to make your gift.

CAES is fortunate to have the leadership of Dean Scott Angle. His vision for Georgia agriculture has challenged us to a new level of excellence. The CAES Alumni Association congratulates Dean Angle on being named one of Georgia Trends’ 100 Most Influential Georgians for 2009.

As CAES alumni, we have much to be proud of! Please mark your calendars now, and join us on Sept. 25 in Athens for the 55th Annual CAES Alumni Association Annual Meeting and Awards Banquet.

Thank you to all alumni and friends who have made CAES programs successful through your financial support and/or by volunteering your time and expertise. I have enjoyed serving as president of the association, and I look forward to remaining involved for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Cecil R. Spooner
BSA, Vocation Ag ('53), Retired Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture
2009 CAES Alumni Association President

Visit our Web site at www.caes.uga.edu/alumni for an up-to-date list of all CAES Alumni Association activities. For more information contact the Office of College Advancement at (706) 542-3390.
Freckles stands guard at CAES arena

Athens artist Jerry Mattox captured UGA icon Freckles in a lifelike painting he has donated to the CAES Animal and Dairy Science Department. A Texas Longhorn steer, Freckles has resided at the Whitehall farm since 1997. Born in 1992 on the El Coyote Ranch near Kingsville, Texas, Freckles participated in the re-enactment of the Great American Cattle Drive in 1995. Along with 350 other longhorns, he marched 1,500 miles from Fort Worth, Texas, to Miles City, Montana. At the end of the drive, Freckles was purchased by David McMahon who later donated him to UGA. The Freckles painting now hangs in the CAES arena on South Milledge Avenue. Mattox’s painting of Freckles, along with many of his other works, are available at his Web site jtmartworks.com.