Inside This Issue:

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- Getting GREEN Results
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Sheep and Goats
Fort Valley State University is a world-renowned institution in the study of goats and sheep.
Millions of workers in the United States are employed by the agriculture industry, which offers many jobs beyond farming. Whether you are a student, recent college graduate or seasoned professional, the careers below are opportunities that may be intriguing.

**Botanists** study microorganisms and giant trees - all plant life. Botanists who like to be outdoors may be plant explorers. They may study the effects of pollution, such as acid rain on plants, and work toward environmental protection.

**Nutritionists and Dietitians** help people look and feel well by making the connection between food, nutrition and health. They can be healthcare workers, researchers, managers or educators.

**Food Safety Specialists** preserve our food supply. They understand, and apply, federal, state and local laws, rules and regulations governing food protection.

**Renewable Energy Specialists** interact with public and private sector groups, forecast new technologies and stay current on relevant public policies to ensure the world's future energy needs are met.

**Science Writers** generate text for news stories, manuals and press releases for non-profit and for-profit corporations. Their main job is to describe science without using scientific terms.

**Veterinarians** diagnose, treat and prevent disease, and disabilities, in animals.

Fort Valley State University is addressing the growing concern that the United States is not preparing a well-trained, competitive, workforce for the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). The institution is providing youths STEM-based education and learning opportunities. Contact Woodie Hughes Jr., interim 4-H program leader, for information about FVSU programs that emphasize STEM areas.

For more information about earning an agriculture degree at Fort Valley State University, contact Donovan Coley, director of marketing and outreach, at 478-825-3976 or coleyd@fvsu.edu.

Sources: Woodie Hughes Jr., interim 4-H program leader; U.S. Department of Agriculture Living Science; U.S. Department of Labor Bureau; National Assessment of Educational Progress.
Vitamins and minerals can be a small, but important part of the diet. It’s best to get nutrients from foods, but an alternative is to ingest supplements; check out a few types below.

### Vitamin A
- Helps keep skin clear and smooth
- Controls bone growth
- Keeps mucous membranes firm and resistant to disease
- Protects against night blindness and promotes healthy eyes

### Sources
- Yellow or orange vegetables
- Dark green leafy vegetables
- Butter, whole milk
- cheddar-type cheese and ice cream
- Margarine fortified with vitamin A
- Eggs and liver

### Vitamin C
- Helps make cementing materials that hold body cells together
- Makes walls of blood vessels firm
- Keeps the body resistant to infection and heals wounds and broken bones

### Sources
- Citrus fruits
- Tomatoes
- Strawberries
- Cantaloupe
- Green bell peppers
- Broccoli
- Raw or lightly cooked greens and cabbage
- Radishes
- White potatoes
- Rose hips
- Onions

### Calcium
- Forms and maintains strong bones and teeth
- Maintains heart and other muscle function
- Aids in blood clotting
- Maintains cell membranes
- Helps conduct nerve impulses to and from the brain

### Sources
- Milk
- Tofu
- Canned salmon and sardines (with bones)
- Leafy green vegetables
- Fortified breakfast cereals
- Almonds
- Whole-wheat bread
- Yogurt

### Zinc
- Aids in growth, tissue formation and healing
- Maintains the immune system
- Aids the action of various enzymes
- Helps the male reproductive system mature
- Helps regulate appetite

### Sources
- Meat
- Poultry
- Oysters and other shellfish
- Eggs
- Hard cheeses
- Whole-wheat bread
- Legumes
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Wheat germ
- Almonds
- Pumpkin seeds
- Sunflower seeds

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Atalie Johnson, a Sumter County fifth-grader, enjoys collards served during school lunch.
Fresh, locally grown, produce can be found in more places than farmers markets. Thanks to the work of a Fort Valley State University county extension agent, the lunch trays of thousands of grade school students throughout Georgia contain fresh collard greens and pink eye purple hull peas grown by local farmers.

Stefan Price, FVSU’s Bulloch County extension agent, serves as a liaison between school nutrition counselors in Georgia and the Coastal Georgia Small Farmers Cooperative based in Glennville. Through this co-op, school nutrition counselors order fresh greens and peas online and have orders shipped directly to their schools.

Price, who was familiar with the national Farm to School Program, participated in a pilot study with Extension personnel at Florida A&M University and the U.S. Department of Agriculture. From the study and hands-on training he received, Price saw an opportunity for the co-op and schools in Georgia.

“They have everything here to be able to meet market demands,” Price said, referring to the co-op’s farming equipment and labor force. He said once the farmers had a facility running and in place, it naturally gave them the opportunity to focus on this particular market. The co-op is serving about 250 schools encompassing 125,000 students.

Price said initiatives like Farm to School are popular because more people within each state are trying to provide a marketplace for their own farmers, giving consumers a product grown in their state.

Charles Henry, the co-op’s manager, plants seeds in July and begins harvesting in October. His orders are placed from October until March.

“Sixty-five percent of my time and efforts are spent working on Farm to School,” said Henry, who oversees the total annual production of about 45,000 bags of collards and peas.

The 60-year-old said the co-op washes and bags the collards and peas, and the collards are also cut, two to three days a week from October to March. Price assists in the delivery of the produce.

The produce is a healthier alternative to frozen vegetables, said Henry, whose
team is proud to offer a more nutritious product. “As a co-op it makes us feel good knowing we’re supporting the kids,” Henry said.

Tabitha Johnson, parent of fifth grader Atalie Johnson, who attends Sumter County Elementary School, said she was surprised when her daughter told her the collard greens she eats at lunch are fresh. “I think it’s a good thing because when I was in school we didn’t get nutritious food like that,” Johnson said.

The mother of two said she is appreciative because she knows her child is eating healthy in her absence and Atalie enjoys her school’s lunch.

Atalie said she knows fresh vegetables are healthy and she needs to eat them. “The food is fresher and tastes better,” Atalie said.

Sumter County’s director of school nutrition, Martha Harvey, said Farm to School is performing well.

The co-op offers a specific cut of collard greens that helps when serving dozens of children bustling through cafeteria lines.

“The co-op designed a special cut for us so we won’t have long strings, which are hard to serve with the spoodles. No other company has wanted to help us to do that,” she said.

Harvey said Farm to School is beneficial because it aids in school nutrition, which may be the only nutritious meal some students receive daily.

“We are responsible for making sure the children have the nutrients that they need so they can go in the classroom and learn,” Harvey said.

Clockwise from top right: Extension agent Stefan Price (center) discusses opportunities for the Coastal Georgia Small Farmers Cooperative with co-op manager Charles Henry (left) and Jessie Rhodes, co-op president.

Cafeteria workers fill students trays with collards at Sumter County Elementary School in Americus.

Fresh collards prepared for students.

Charles Henry, manager of the co-op, displays a bag of collards similar to the bags sent to schools systems across Georgia.
More Pumps Per Gallon

Tips for saving gas

Going to a service station can put a strain on one’s budget. With gas prices rising, practicing fuel efficiency techniques may be helpful, especially for road trips. Leon Porter, a program assistant at Fort Valley State University, provided the tips below that may keep a few extra dollars in your pocket.

**Drive Sensibly** - Speeding, accelerating and heavy braking can consume more gas.

**Stay Within the Speed Limit** - Vehicles have different speeds where they meet their best fuel mileage; fuel economy drops drastically above 50 miles per hour. Therefore, experts recommend staying within the posted speed limit, which also promotes safety.

**Don’t Overload Your Vehicle** - Pack your vehicle wisely; for every 100 pounds you overload your vehicle, the mpg will drop by 2 percent. The excess weight usually affects smaller vehicles, not larger ones.

**Don’t Idle the Motor Too Long** - Leaving the motor running while parked can be costly. You can burn up to half a gallon of gas, depending on engine size and air conditioner use. Keep your motor turned off until you are ready to leave. If you excessively turn your engine on and off though, you can increase the wear and tear on your starter.

**Cruise Control and Overdrive** - When traveling on highways use cruise control. This helps your car maintain a steady speed, which saves fuel. Most cars are now equipped with overdrive, which is a gear that allows the motor to reduce speed and save gas.

Earnestine Powell noticed a 48-foot mobile classroom parked in front of the Stewart County Senior Center she visits regularly. For weeks Powell and other seniors anxiously awaited the semi-trailer’s visit so they could participate in the Medicare counseling that would take place inside of it.

As Powell and the other seniors stepped aboard the classroom, professionals greeted them and began counseling about their current healthcare plans.

Powell, a retired school cafeteria manager, who does not have Internet access at home, said she looked forward to the visit so she could gain a better understanding of the Medicare information she receives in the mail.

“There’s so many different drug plans available. I needed to ask questions because I’ve worked too hard to not be able to get help,” said Powell, a 70-year-old mother of six.

Fort Valley State University’s Mobile Information Technology Center provided a location where the seniors could conveniently receive the healthcare information. The center has 20 computer stations, wireless Internet, a printer and a 50-inch flat screen television. For two months last fall, the mobile classroom traveled around Georgia so experts could conduct open enrollment and counseling about Medicare offerings.

These information sessions are the result of a partnership with GeorgiaCares, Fort Valley State’s Cooperative Extension Program and community-based organizations.

**How did we do?**

Fort Valley State University’s traveling mobile center visited 22 locations in 2012, providing wireless Internet access to hundreds of seniors. The center’s Internet capabilities, and counseling of GeorgiaCares coordinators, allowed Georgia’s seniors to enroll in Medicare programs.

**Here’s the impact:**

- **375** Extra Help/Low-Income Subsidy applications completed and submitted to the U.S. Social Security Administration; potential total savings for applicants is $1.5 million.

- **404** Qualified Medicare Beneficiary, Specified Low-Income Medicare Beneficiary and Qualified Individuals applications completed and submitted to Georgia’s Department of Health Services and its Department of Family and Children Services; potential savings of $508,555.

- **171** Medicare Part C (Medicare Advantage Plans) enrollments completed.

- **553** Medicare Part D (Prescription Drug Plans) enrollments completed.

*Source: Erika D. Lawrence, GeorgiaCares’ state team leader.*
Fort Valley State University’s Mobile Information Technology Center offers free services to Georgians seeking technology training and accessibility. The 48-foot mobile classroom is equipped with a 50-inch flat screen video display, wireless Internet, DVD player, laser printer and 20 computer stations. The center travels across the Southeast upon request, offering schools, community-based organizations, civic groups and governmental agencies services such as:

- Basic computer training
- Software application training
- Workforce development
- K-12 academic computer training
- Cybernet safety training
- Migrant education

Although the onboard generator permits setup in a variety of field locations, users must provide a secure and level site for the center. Also, a wheelchair lift is available for physically challenged individuals.

Right: Earnestine Powell, a resident of Stewart County, receives Medicare enrollment assistance inside Fort Valley State University’s Mobile Information Technology Center parked at the Stewart County Senior Center.

Shameika Averett, a GeorgiaCares site coordinator who conducted the one-day workshops, says the mobile center was a tremendous help for GeorgiaCares. Her organization provides free information and assistance to Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers.

“Reaching seniors in rural counties is one of our challenges. With the mobile unit we can take the information to them and serve several people at one time,” Averett said.

On average she assisted 30 to 40 people each visit, Averett said, which potentially resulted in savings averaging between $4,000 and $24,000 per person, depending on income levels. The savings occur when seniors qualify and enroll in low-subsidy drug plans, or the qualified Medicare Beneficiary Program. These plans save seniors money on medical, hospital and prescription drug costs, she said.

Powell, who worked 40 years in Stewart County schools, said her visit was helpful because her new coverage will keep money in her pocket. “I start my new coverage in April and this will help me save money on my asthma pump,” Powell said.

Terrence Wolfork, who oversees the mobile center, said the Medicare counseling program, which began primarily in south Georgia, has traveled the entire state.

Wolfork, who helped to initiate the partnership, said the impact is huge. “Using an analysis, we found out we saved seniors $250,000 in 2011,” he said.

Wolfork said the center visits many places, including senior centers, pharmacies and community centers. “Many seniors don’t have access to facilities, or don’t have transportation, so we are able to bring it to them,” he said.

GeorgiaCares program consultant Christine Williams said many people in rural counties are hard to reach because oftentimes there’s a lack of Internet accessibility and transportation.

Williams said the center allows free Internet accessibility and one-on-one counseling, which seniors favor. “We give you information for free, and we can look over paperwork and help them to understand information they receive in the mail,” she said.

Roy Baldwin, a retired mail carrier, said he found the mobile center convenient. The 69-year-old Lumpkin native tried enrolling over the phone, but prefers the assistance of a counselor and use of computer at the same time.

“It’s good to be able to sit down and talk to someone personally,” Baldwin said.

For more information, contact Terrence Wolfork, assistant administrator of communications, conferencing and technology, at 478-952-4730 or wolforkt@fvsu.edu.
SAFETY first

Center built to provide refuge for animals during emergencies
Each year thousands of people evacuate their homes, fleeing the threats of natural and manmade disasters. During these challenging times, evacuees may have animals that face many threats if left behind.

Some people will not evacuate, or will wait until the last minute to evacuate, if they cannot take their pets said Dr. George McCommon, a Fort Valley State University associate professor of veterinary science. According to the American Humane Association 47 percent of Americans would refuse rescue assistance if it meant leaving without the family pet.

With this sentiment in mind, along with observations from the Georgia Department of Agriculture and other state emergency officials, there was a need to build a state facility that would help prevent citizens from making this decision.

On Sept. 12, 2012, the State Animal Facility for Emergencies (SAFE) Center officially became activated. The 7,800-square-foot facility on FVSU's campus is nestled off of Carver Drive. It is equipped to house 105 dogs, 80 cats and 30 horses.

FVSU’s central location in the state, its land-grant university mission and veterinary technician program made it an ideal place to house the center, said McCommon, SAFE Center interim director. “It was just a natural fit,” he said.

Students enrolled in FVSU’s veterinary technician program will provide animal care at the safe center during a disaster. McCommon said if a disaster occurs this center will provide students hands-on training that will prepare them for their careers.

Nikki Bozeman, a 23-year-old veterinary technology major, said she considers it a
privilege to possibly have the opportunity to work at the center. “It gives you a chance to put what you learned into real-life situations and to know that you’re helping someone that’s in need,” Bozeman said.

Brianna Haynesworth, a veterinary technology student at Fort Valley State University, checks to see if a cage inside the SAFE center accommodates the size of a dog.

In addition to offering services to residents in the Southeast during disasters and training for FVSU students, the center can also serve as a training facility for state officials.

“It’s a great place for them to come and practice different scenarios, mainly emergency and disaster preparedness,” McCommon said. Training participants could include veterinarians, law enforcement officers and animal control personnel.

At the ribbon cutting ceremony, Georgia Department of Agriculture Commissioner Gary Black said the SAFE Center provides a headquarters to operate in the event of catastrophic weather incidents that, he says, are likely to occur.

Black said FVSU has made animal safety a priority and FVSU’s staff has the heart for it. “You take it personal and that shows the integrity of your program,” he said.

Robert Cobb Jr., state veterinarian for the Georgia Department of Agriculture, admired the center’s cages during a tour after the ribbon cutting ceremony. He said having this facility ready to receive animals is a big help.

“Disasters do not happen very often, but when it happens you just need it now,” Cobb said, referring to the center.

The center has not taken in animals yet, but McCommon says he’s ready to go. “We’re going to live and learn,” he said. “We like to think we’re adaptable enough, and with the resources of the university and affiliated associations we can adapt to any situation and overcome any problems and produce a positive outcome for all involved.”

Pets need safety too

Time is usually of the essence during a disaster. To ensure the safety of pets, the tips below provide some advice that could make it easier to cope during the chaotic moments of a natural or man-made disaster.

1. Organize first aid kits for pets; include items such as water, health records, food, identification tags or collars.

2. Purchase portable animal carriers; keep in mind that animals may be confined for days so be sure the carrier accommodates their size.

3. Develop a list of places that welcome animals during disasters; look for shelters, animal-friendly hotels and emergency centers within a 100-mile radius of your home.

4. Inquire about relief plans from local non-profit agencies such as the Red Cross or United Way. Also, contact local emergency relief personnel such as fire departments and wildlife or agricultural professionals.

Source: American Humane Association.
Crunchy Apple Salad
Makes 2 servings, about 1 ½ cups each

**YOU WILL NEED**
⅛ cup pineapple juice
2 cups diced apples (about 2 medium red delicious or similar apples)
⅛ cup chopped pecans
⅛ cup raisins
6 oz. low-fat or fat-free vanilla yogurt

**STEPS**
1. Pour pineapple juice into medium bowl.
2. Rinse apples and dice (throw away stem and core).
3. Place apples in pineapple juice. Toss to coat.
4. Remove apples from pineapple juice with slotted spoon and place in medium bowl.
5. Add chopped pecans and raisins to apples.
6. Add vanilla yogurt to apple mixture. Stir well to break up clumps of raisins.

**Nutrition Facts**

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Source: Georgia EFNEP “Meals In Minutes” (2012, 3rd edition)
Small Investment, LARGE RETURN

4-H inspires young entrepreneur

Millicent Cosby, a sophomore from Fort Valley, honed her entrepreneurial skills by participating in the 4-H Program supported by Fort Valley State’s Cooperative Extension Program.
Getting an early start is key to many ventures, but that is old news to Millicent Cosby. She’s a sophomore at Fort Valley State University who’s been tinkering in the business world since she was 10 years old. Back then she was also a member of 4-H, a national youth organization that encourages entrepreneurship, leadership and studies in science.

“The leadership skills I have today were developed as a 4-H Sprout. I don’t mind telling parents, teachers or future sponsors of the camp that I’m a product of the camp and their kids will be future entrepreneurs, or better leaders, if they attend,” said Cosby, an agricultural economics major. “4-H is a great place for kids to learn new skills, develop their own personalities and have new experiences. I love who I have become and the people that help me.”

Cosby shares more of her experience about 4-H and how her affiliation with the organization, hosted through Fort Valley State’s Cooperative Extension Program influenced where she is today.

Did 4-H have any influence on you wanting to start your own business? “Yes it did. I was a 4-H Sprout. We went to Camp John Hope for a camp when I was about 10. I knew nothing about starting my own business or thinking anybody my age could start a business until Mr. Woodie (Hughes) introduced us to entrepreneurship camp. It was a heavy influence actually.”

What are the first items you sold? “The first thing I sold was Girl Scout Cookies. The profits don’t go to you, but you learn, ‘who do I sell to?’ I sold to people in my church, my friends and my family. I learned then that selling Girl Scout Cookies was entrepreneurship even though the profits were going to the club.”

What did you learn from your participation in 4-H? “I learned leadership qualities, and I learned that school was the most important thing. I learned how to build friendships, teamwork and team building skills. I also learned about a lot of ag-based things that I didn’t know about before.”

Did being involved with business ventures at such a young age have anything to do with the major you decided to pursue in college? “Yes it did. I was going to be a business management major, but when I took Dr. (Mohammed) Ibrahim’s ag economics enrichment program in the summer, before college started, that’s when I decided to switch to ag economics. It fit perfectly with my background and my future.”

What are your plans after graduation? “Definitely to pursue a career in my field. I know of a lot of agencies such as the USDA, and a lot of private businesses such as Monsanto that will be looking for someone like me to work for their company.”

What would you tell a student interested in 4-H? “I would say that it’s a great idea if you want to experience new things and meet new people.”

Cosby feels that her membership and experiences in 4-H and the Agricultural Economics Club at FVSU will enhance her marketability in seeking employment.

More about 4-H
Fort Valley State University is one of 109 land-grant institutions that sponsors 4-H through its Cooperative Extension Program. The 4-H network reaches 6 million youth and utilizes 540,000 volunteers, 3,500 professionals and boasts over 60 million alumni.

The FVSU Cooperative Extension 4-H Program provides experimental learning opportunities for youth, ages of 5-19, in the areas of:
- Science, Engineering and Technology
- Citizenship/Leadership
- Healthy Living
- Workforce Preparation/Entrepreneurship

Component (Grades) of FVSU’s 4-H Program are: Clover Sprout (K-4th), Cloverleaf (5th-6th), Junior (7th-8th), and Senior (9th-12th).

For more information on the 4-H Program, contact:
Woodie Hughes Jr., Interim 4-H Program Leader
478-825-6219
hughesw@fvsu.edu
ag.fvsu.edu/index.php/extension/four-h/

Scan the code to visit the 4-H page on ag.fvsu.edu.
Getting GREEN Results

Do the rising costs of utility bills leave you in shock? Luckily, Fort Valley State University’s housing specialist, Keishon Thomas, has some advice on how to decrease energy use and reduce utility bills. Her suggestions show how much could be saved annually by making adjustments throughout your home or apartment.

**Laundry Room**

If your water is heated by gas, changing the temperature from warm to cold could save $30 annually. If your water is heated by electricity, this could save $40 annually.

Also, remember to remove lint from the dryer’s lint trap after each use; you could save more than $30 a year. Lastly, don’t forget to adjust water heaters to 120 degrees Fahrenheit; doing so may reduce 3 to 5 percent in energy costs for each 10 degree reduction in water temperature.

**Living Room**

Updating appliances and home fixtures to energy-efficient models can make a difference. A homeowner who makes an investment in energy-efficient windows could save between $100 - $500 annually. Also try swapping out older light bulbs and light fixture models with energy-efficient models.

In addition, turning electronics on and off using one central power strip can conserve energy. Video gaming systems, computers and other electronics oftentimes use power even in the ‘off’ position when plugged into an electrical outlet.

**Bathroom**

Water bill costs may sink to lower levels with the use of low-flow shower heads (2.5 gallons per minute); up to five gallons of water can be saved during a 10-minute shower. Low-flow shower heads also provide additional savings in electrical costs; estimates show up to $145 in savings annually. Likewise, check all faucets in a home and be sure to repair any leaks.

**Kitchen**

To get the heat out of the kitchen, consider purchasing energy-efficient ventilation fans in the range hood above the stove. These fans use 60 percent less energy in comparison to standard ventilation models. Estimates show that during the life of the energy-efficient version, $60 can be saved. In the freezer, remember to defrost manual defrost freezers and refrigerators to eliminate buildup frost. The buildup causes the appliance to use more energy to keep the motor operating.

Total estimated annual savings = $775

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Sources: Keishon Thomas, FVSU’s housing specialist; U.S. Department of Energy; Federal Trade Commission; and the U.S. Energy Information Administration - State Energy Data.
Laundry Room: up to $70

Living Room: up to $500

Bathroom: up to $145

Kitchen: up to $60

Total Estimated Savings up to $775
Meet Your Agent
HANCOCK COUNTY

Ginger Chastine
County Extension Agent
Coverage Area: Hancock County

Hancock County residents can have a better quality of life because of Chastine’s efforts. This Montezuma, GA native offers her residents financial management education, food and nutrition classes and prom health and safety education for parents. She’s a certified Good-Touch/Bad-Touch educator who teaches her community members about child-abuse prevention.

Chastine provides assistance in the following areas:
• Agriculture Education for Children
• Computer Training
• Family Financial Management
• Food Safety and Nutrition
• Health Awareness
• Housing
• Nutrition Education
• Parenting Education
• Positive Youth Development
• Senior Life Education
• Workforce Preparation Training

For more information about programs offered in Hancock County, contact Chastine.
Phone: 706-444-6596
Email: chastineg@fvsu.edu
12877 Broad Street, Suite 205
Sparta, Georgia 31087
What is Extension?
The Cooperative Extension System is a nationwide educational network. Each U.S. state and territory has a state office at a land-grant university, such as Fort Valley State University, which has a network of regional offices.

Within these offices staff and experts are available to provide useful, practical and research-based information to agricultural producers, small business owners, youths and others in rural areas and communities of all sizes.

Ginger Chastine, based in Hancock County, is one of 11 extension agents. There are also three program assistants who work personally with residents in the nearly 30 counties they serve throughout middle, east and south Georgia.

Who Does the Extension Program Serve?
Extension has something for every Georgian, including limited-resource farmers. One-on-one assistance, agricultural events and workshops are available to address an array of issues facing clients. Services and expertise vary with each coverage area.

Extension is here to help Georgians with their challenges.

Clientele Include:
• Animal Producers
• Families
• Future and Current Homeowners
• Gardeners
• Limited-Resource Farmers
• Parents
• Seniors
• Youths

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* Extension agents will be coming soon to these areas.
**FVSU Extension Team Receives First Place Awards**

A national organization recently awarded Fort Valley State University’s Cooperative Extension Program two first place awards for assisting more than 600 families with estate and long-term planning.

On Sept. 27, 2012, a team of eight FVSU extension specialists and agents received first place for both the national and regional Extension Housing Outreach Award at the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences conference held Sept. 24-28 in Columbus, Ohio. Three members of that team accepted the award at the conference.

The team consisted of housing specialist Keishon Thomas, director of field operations Marc Thomas, Peach County extension agent Gail Adams, LIFE project coordinator Maureen Lucas, Houston County program assistant Leon Porter, Twiggs County extension agent Terralon Chaney, Hancock County extension agent Ginger Chastine and Macon County program assistant Ricky Waters.

“It is such an honor to receive the national, as well as the regional award. While it is great to assist Georgians, it is also great to be acknowledged by our colleagues for our contributions to the region,” said Keishon Thomas.

Both awards honor Extension programming in the area of housing with outreach programs geared towards low-income and minority families.

-ChaNae Bradley

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**USDA Grant Provides Scholarships, Opportunities for Students**

Four incoming freshmen attending Fort Valley State University this fall will receive more than a bachelor’s degree when they graduate.

Through a U.S. Department of Agriculture grant, the students will be selected for the Agriculture Higher Education Multicultural Scholars program that covers four years of room and board costs, tuition and fees.

Also, each year, students receive a $1,000 book stipend and a $1,500 travel allotment to attend professional conferences. During their matriculation, they also take a trip to Ghana, Africa, using a $4,000 stipend from the grant.

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture agency created this program to increase, and improve, the quality of African Americans and Hispanics entering the agricultural workforce, and graduate and professional schools. The program also offers a paid internship within government or private industry after sophomore year, and a paid summer research experience with an 1862 research institution after junior year. The application deadline was in March.

“We believe this grant will provide an excellent opportunity to enhance our students’ knowledge and hands-on experiences with our land-grant research universities and also with the agricultural and agribusiness sectors. It will also give them international experience so when they graduate, they are better prepared for the global job market,” said Dr. Erika Styles, assistant professor of agricultural economics, who collaborated with FVSU professor Dr. Mack Nelson in obtaining the $160,000 grant to fund the scholarships.

It is collaborations that enable FVSU to provide these excellent and diverse opportunities to scholarship recipients, Styles said. Project partners include: The University of Ghana, Georgia Department of Agriculture, USDA Georgia Rural Development, AgGeorgia Farm Credit, The University of Georgia, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, The University of Kentucky and Kansas State University.

-Russell Boone Jr.
Citizens in some of Georgia’s rural areas are hoping a grant-sponsored program, being tried for the first time in their state, will give them a much needed boost.

Last year, Fort Valley State University received $139,400 to address critical issues affecting 24 southern counties, comprising two regions. Through the Stronger Economies Together (SET) program, this effort is being made possible in 26 states.

The SET initiative is designed to help two regional teams develop, and implement, a blueprint that strengthens and enhances regional economic development activities.

“FVSU Cooperative Extension Program has identified that persistent poverty in the southern parts of our state is rampant,” said Joy Moten-Thomas, who is overseeing Georgia’s SET project. “So we are here to identify a solution to this critical issue.”

With $100,000 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and $39,400 from the Southern Rural Development Center, more than 70 members of this program have received training and are working together to form regional initiatives that help improve the conditions in their communities.

“Training opportunities for members is important to start new initiatives,” said Andrea Hinojosa, who’s lived in Toombs County 28 years. “Every program and/or potential business that surfaces through this process will be a success for our program.”

Extension has examined issues impacting these counties and figured out how to create change for southern Georgia. “These issues may range from high unemployment rates to low educational attainment to other issues negatively impacting the local economies,” said Moten-Thomas, FVSU’s assistant administrator for community development and outreach.

Both teams must establish a plan this year that will address an issue impacting their respective regions. The funding is also supporting logistical expenses such as meeting space, supplies and travel costs.

Kannan strongly feels that farms are the key to revitalizing rural communities and strengthening food security.

“To be recognized by President Obama is an incredible honor. It was a very humbling experience,” Kannan said. “This is also a testament to all the good things FVSU does through applied research and outreach activities to improve the livelihood of limited-resource farmers in the U.S. and around the world.”