

FOCUS

MAGAZINE 2023

REACHING *Rural* RESIDENTS

Administrator receives
grant to help rural
communities receive
broadband services

Blackbelt Small Farmer
Ruminant Association
Greensboro, Alabama
Hale



FORT VALLEY
STATE UNIVERSITY

EXTENSION

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FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, FAMILY SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Dr. Keith Howard

Dean, College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION PROGRAM

Dr. Mark Latimore Jr.

Associate Dean for Extension

Terrence Wolfork

Assistant Administrator of Communications, Conferencing and Technology

AGRICULTURAL COMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT

Marquinta Gonzalez

Director

ChaNaè Bradley

Senior Communications Specialist

Russell Boone Jr.

Public Information Editor/Writer

Latasha Ford

Research Communications Manager

Ervin Williams

Video Specialist

Jeff Brothers

Graphic Designer

DID YOU KNOW?

Fort Valley State University (FVSU) is an 1890 Land-grant University?

What does that mean? As an 1890 Land-grant University, FVSU performs important public services by carrying the scientific knowledge of agriculture, resource management, human development, and technology to farmers and urban residents. Through its staff of Cooperative Extension program leaders, specialists, county agents, county Extension program assistants and support personnel, the program provides educational services in the four primary Extension areas:

- Agricultural and Natural Resources
- Family and Consumer Sciences
- Community Resource Development
- Youth and 4-H Development

FVSU is one of 19 1890 Land-grant Universities in the United States that is committed to serving the needs of all communities and families through science-based educational, research and technology transfer mechanisms. The goal is to expand the problem-solving capabilities of the institution and to enhance our state and nation.



Learn more about the latest programming from the 19 1890 Land-grant Universities in the Extension Today newsletter at 1890aea.org/extension-today-newsletter



Visit us on social media at:

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or on the web at ag.fvsu.edu

FORT VALLEY EXTENSION EARNS AWARDS AT SOUTHERN REGION MEETING

Fall semester is the time of year when Cooperative Extension professionals across the Southern region, including Fort Valley State University (FVSU), gather to network, share resources, build partnerships and address emerging issues affecting our communities as a collective unit.

Members of the Southern Region Program Leadership Network (SR-PLN), Association of Extension Administrators (AEA) and the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED) convened from Aug. 21-24 in Orlando, Florida, for the annual conference.

Cooperative Extension empowers farmers, ranchers and communities of all sizes to overcome their challenges, adapt to changing technology, improve nutrition and food safety, prepare for and respond to emergencies, and protect our environment. Extension educators and specialists help change lives in the communities they serve.

This year's theme for the conference was Next Generation: Evolving the Extension Enterprise. Attendees heard from keynote speaker Mansfield (Pete) Key III,

a leading growth development strategist and international motivational speaker. Also, Tom Davidson of Leadership Nature presented a two-part virtual session on Treating Your Employees Like Volunteers (and Your Volunteers Like Employees) for pre- and post-conferences.

This working meeting provides an opportunity for land-grant institutions in the Southern region to advance their mission of fostering and strengthening Extension education programming. The structure of SR-PLN allows multi-institutional communication within and among disciplinary and functional lines.

In addition, Extension professionals receive awards for their exceptional service in the land-grant system. AEA awarded Woodie Hughes Jr., assistant Extension administrator state 4-H program leader, and Dr. Cedric Ogden, assistant professor/Extension engineer specialist, at FVSU for their impact in their program areas. Hughes received the Excellence in Extension programming in 4-H award. Ogden received the Excellence in Extension programming in community resource development

award. AEA leadership recognized both awardees at the joint meeting.

This is Hughes second time receiving the Excellence in Extension Award.

“To receive this award for a second time over my 20-plus-year career at FVSU is a humbling, inspiring and blessed feeling,” he beamed. “However, on my own accord, I could not have done this work. I am an instrument who God works through, along with many 4-H adult volunteers, youths and families that complete and sustain all the impactful 4-H positive youth development program work at the community stakeholders’ level.”

Hughes added this award reflects him being an innovative and adaptive leader, Food Systems Leadership Institute Fellow, underserved educator, National 4-H Trailblazer and military veteran. To be eligible to receive such a prestigious award, the awardee must be a Cooperative Extension 4-H Program professional exhibiting excellence with a minimum of five consecutive years of Extension programming responsibilities.

The FVSU 4-H Program strives to build strong and sustainable foundations through teaching and providing 4-H positive youth development outreach education, experiential learning activities and opportunities for support for the healthy growth of youths



Woodie Hughes Jr., assistant Extension administrator state 4-H program leader and Dr. Cedric Ogden, assistant professor/Extension engineer specialist, at Fort Valley State University received awards by the Association of Extension Administrators in Orlando, Florida.

and families. As a result of the FVSU 4-H Program Walmart Foundation 4-H Healthy Habits grant project activities, more than 500 households have received free fresh produce from the 4-H Village Community Garden in Sylvester, Georgia, annually.

Ogden also echoed that it is honor to be recognized for his contributions and efforts.

“Receiving this award is a reminder of the responsibility that comes with it. This recognition fuels my determination to continue pushing boundaries, striving for excellence and making a positive impact on the world,” he said.

The FVSU engineer specialist added, “Technology and renewable energy outreach to underserved communities in Georgia are beneficial in increasing access to services, resources and opportunities to those who need it most. By providing education and training through Extension,

a significant impact is made by bridging gaps and creating pathways from students and landowners to industry leaders and policymakers.”

Dr. Mark Latimore Jr., FVSU’s associate dean for Extension, congratulated both awardees.

“This special recognition by AEA exemplifies Mr. Hughes and Dr. Ogden’s dedication to their work and service for the purpose of providing educational and positive experiences that enrich lives,” he commended. “The Fort Valley family is thrilled by our colleagues’ accomplishments.”

Since 1989, the purpose of the joint meeting has been to promote multistate cooperation by identifying and addressing emerging issues. Extension professionals serve in eight key areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources, Community Development, Family and Consumer Sciences, 4-H Youth

Development, Communications, Information Technology, Middle Management, and Program and Staff Development. These committees meet regularly throughout the year to complete multiple plans of work goals.

Accomplishments from this collaborative effort include a 2022 Southern Region Teen Leadership Conference in Crossville, Tennessee, data collection from a disaster loss assessment survey, organizing community resiliency webinars related to climate change, and communications curricula for institutional trainings.

A land-grant university is an institution that provides research-based programs and resources for residents in their state and has been designated by its state legislature or Congress to receive the benefits of the Morrill Acts of 1862, 1890 and 1994. There is one land-grant institution in every state and territory of the United States and the District of Columbia. Certain states have more than one land-grant institution as a result of the second Morrill Act, and some western and plains states have several because of 1994 land-grant tribal colleges.

For more information, visit srpln.msstate.edu.

Find Extension programs in Georgia at ag.fvsu.edu/extension.

SUMMER HIGHLIGHTS

FVSU Family and Consumer Sciences staff engage communities, make impact

Fort Valley State University's Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Cooperative Extension staff continue to serve the state of Georgia through research-based information. From meeting clients individually, to conducting group activities within their counties, FCS staff are moving forward by steering in- person programming safely. They are also incorporating virtual opportunities for clients. Below are some of the outreach projects that took place during summer 2023.



GEORGIA RESIDENTIAL EXTENSION EDUCATION NETWORK (GREEN) PROJECT

Billy Brown

Energy educator

- Conducted GREEN Energy lightbox demonstration for Albany High School, Starbase Robins and FVSU Upward Bound Program students.
- Conducted GREEN Energy workshop at Barret Senior Center in Cordele, Georgia.
- Participated in Marshallville Back-to-School Bash.
- Selected for poster session at the 2023 Georgia Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (GEAFCS) annual conference in Waycross, Georgia.



TWIGGS COUNTY

Terralon Chaney

County Extension agent

- Distributed free vegetables and bottled water to residents.
- Distributed free water cases to Twiggs County residents.
- Conducted food demonstrations with Twiggs senior citizens for creating healthy meals with homegrown vegetables.





HANCOCK COUNTY Ginger Chastine

County Extension agent

- Connected with the director of the Sparta-Hancock County Library to discuss partnerships for upcoming programs and events.
- Collaborated with a health service technician from the

Hancock County Health Department regarding an upcoming community health fair.

- Developed health and wellness literature and news articles for programs.



PEACH COUNTY Sabrena Johnson

County Extension agent

- Collaborated with Vallhi Apartments for Seniors community garden.
- Assisted client in receiving funds for utilities and home improvement through county funds.

- Conducted nutrition activity with 4-H about portion size.
- Completed Youth Mental Health First Aid Certification.



MACON COUNTY Alicia Montgomery

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP) program assistant

- Participated in library summer programs in Marshallville Library and Macon County Literacy Center.
- Participated in local food bank distribution by providing nutrition literature.

- Continuing to recruit participants in Macon County for EFNEP classes.
- Developing a relationship with the Macon County Library to conduct nutrition education sessions with youth during the summer.





CRAWFORD COUNTY Millicent Price

County Extension agent

- Assisted clients with registration for county cooling benefits program.
- Collaborated with Salem Baptist Church to provide health information and educational tools for Father’s Day initiative.
- Participated in the summer reading program for youth at the Crawford County Library.
- Co-hosted the Georgia Farmers Initiative for Training and Sustainability (GA-FITS), “Who Gets the ‘Home’ House?” webinar with 129 participants on Zoom and 147 on Facebook Live. Visit youtu.be/0i22ak8EkxE to watch the virtual presentation on YouTube.



MARION COUNTY Brenda Salter

County Extension agent

- Presided over the virtual GA-FITS estate planning meeting “Who Gets the ‘Home’ House?” webinar with 129 participants on Zoom and 147 on Facebook Live.
- Participated in “Understanding Heirs’ Property” funding training meeting.



DOOLY COUNTY Rolanda Willingham

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education (EFNEP) program assistant

- Graduated and taught 12 homemakers from the EFNEP program in June.
- Graduated and taught 15 (EFNEP) clients in July.
- Participated in Dooly County Back to School Bash.
- Recruited participants to the Crisp and Dooly County EFNEP programs.
- Participated in the summer reading club program – weekly on Wednesdays.

MAINTAINING THE OPERATION

Farm manager sustains 1,176 acres to aid in Extension and research projects.

by *RUSSELL BOONE JR.*

For more than 43 years, Jared Fluellen has maintained the farm at Fort Valley State University.

The farm, officially known as Fort Valley State University's Agricultural Research Station since 1980, has two sections totaling 1,176 acres. On the farm one can find corn, pecans, peaches, soybeans and crops used in biofuel production. Livestock raised at the facility include sheep, cattle, goats, and horses.

“As farm manager, my main responsibilities include purchasing equipment, livestock, and arranging the maintenance and repair of machinery and buildings on the farm. I also plan activities for staff and student workers, oversee budgeting, record keeping and sales,” Fluellen said.

Additionally, the FVSU farm manager said he coordinates

actions on the farm such as planting, harvesting, irrigation, chemical application and assisting scientists with research plots and layouts.

Much of his work is influenced by his childhood. Fluellen grew up on a 150-acre farm in Perry, Georgia, where the family grew various crops including cotton, peanuts, wheat, soybeans and small vegetables. They also had a farrowing and feeder pig operation.

“I enjoyed working on the farm with my father. During my younger years, I was infatuated with driving our tractor and watching the crops grow,” Fluellen said.

As he grew older, Fluellen realized that there was more to farming than watching crops grow and driving farm equipment. It was then he decided to attend college and major in agriculture. As an undergraduate student at FVSC,



Jared Fluellen has served as farm manager for Fort Valley State University for more than 43 years.

“ I want people to avoid the pitfalls that I may have experienced in farming. It’s always advantageous to provide knowledge to farmers who will come behind you.

- Jared Fluellen, Farm Manager

Fluellen participated in extra-curricular activities such as the Animal Science Club and the Agri-Demic Forum.

After graduation, Fluellen worked as a feed and animal health products manager in Athens, Georgia. While working in Athens, Fluellen knew he wanted to be a farm manager somewhere, but he did not foresee it happening at FVSU.

In 1979, the position of farm manager opened at FVSU, and Fluellen immediately applied for the opportunity. “I was elated to be selected to fill the position, especially since I was already familiar with the layout of the farm area due to my undergraduate days at FVSU,” he said.

Fluellen, given a free hand in developing the layout of the

farm, immediately started building on his plans. Thanks to his vision, the farm is what it is today. “I worked closely with research directors and Extension administrators to develop the farm layout so it could assist the research, Extension and teaching programs,” he said.

Furthermore, the longtime FVSU employee says it is a pleasure to pass down information and knowledge to those with a genuine interest in farming. “Hopefully, they will learn and grow from my advice and enhance their work experience. I want people to avoid the pitfalls that I may have experienced in farming. It’s always advantageous to provide knowledge to farmers who will come behind you.”

The farm, officially known as Fort Valley State University's Agricultural Research Station, has two sections totaling 1,176 acres.



Fluellen discusses the depth of recently planted seeds to students and faculty conducting research.



Moreover, Fluellen enjoys the fact that his job gives him the chance to work with students and scientists, in addition to adapting to the latest technology used in agriculture. He also delights in the teamwork needed to run the farm. He said it provides him with fuel to develop innovative ideas.

“The scientists and students push me to learn more so that I can better serve them in various capacities. The job is challenging, and I never know what it entails from day to day. I also enjoy using the latest in advanced machinery and how it improves job productivity,” he said. Some of this equipment includes livestock

barns using Wi-Fi and webcams, automatic feeders for animals and climate control systems.

As a veteran farmer, Fluellen said it is an exciting but challenging endeavor that is expensive, requires a thorough work ethic and is time consuming, but enjoyable.

“I would suggest that an individual interested in farming should work on a farm for one or two years. I would tell them to keep their operation simple, be willing to adapt to new procedures, and not try to do everything alone. Accept things that you cannot control and be

appreciative of the feeling of grace and reward when successfully meeting your goals for the year.”

In addition, he said farmers with access to educational opportunities can achieve success. “Farming is now more specialized than it was when I started with my father. It has become a high-tech job that requires some sort of education. Seventy percent of farmers have a higher education degree, a vocational certificate or diploma in the trade,” he said.

Fluellen is married to his wife of 39 years, Vivian (an FVSU alumna) and they are the parents of six children.

OUTSTANDING OPPORTUNITIES *through* OUTREACH

Woodie Hughes Jr, Fort Valley State University's assistant Extension administrator state 4-H program leader, became the first African American male 4-H Program Leader to be recognized as a National 4-H Trailblazer in the history of the National 4-H System. For more than 20 years, Hughes has made an impact through 4-H across the state of Georgia and beyond. During his tenure, the 4-H leader has secured more than \$12 million in external funds. This section highlights the impact of several 4-H projects spearheaded under the leadership of Hughes.

Fort Valley State University's Wal-Mart Foundation 4-H Healthy Habits grant project

Amount: \$110,000

Impact: 3,609 youth served their community at the Village Community Garden in Sylvester, Georgia, where they learned 4-H healthy habits through ongoing 4-H Healthy Living Outreach Education.

Impact: More than 500 households received fresh produce from the Village Community Garden for free on an annual basis

Fort Valley State University 4-H Tech Changemakers Grant Project

Amount: \$42,000

Impact: 4-H Youth Ambassadors and the 4-H Tech Changemaker Youth Ambassadors reached a total of 323 adults with 6 hours of training in Internet safety, searching and applying for jobs online, social media safety and responsible behavior guidelines for the Internet.

Fort Valley State University Positive Youth Development 4-H Mindfulness grant project

Amount: \$50,000

Impact: Engaged more than 200 Chattahoochee Hills 4-H Charter School students and their parents about the importance of being mentally healthy through mindfulness education.



Fort Valley State University's Office of Sponsored Programs recognized Woodie Hughes Jr, assistant Extension administrator state 4-H program leader, for his service during the 17th annual Grantsmanship Training and Recognition Institute. He received a plaque and certificate and is recognized as program/project director of the year for 2023.

The 1890 Region 4-H Program Leaders Multi-State Youth Innovators Empowering Agriculture (YEA) USDA-AFRI grant project.

Amount: \$7,850,000 (5-year period) In addition, this proposal also received a subaward for \$475,000 as a part of a seven multi-state initiative.

Projected Impact: FVSU's 4-H program plans to serve a minimum of 60-100 new 4-H Program youth annually through 4-H College and Career Readiness Outreach Education and 4-H mentoring programming annually.

Below are the ES-237 State 4-H Youth participant/enrolled reporting category numbers for the Fort Valley State University Cooperative Extension 4-H Program for October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023 without duplication.

Youth participating in Individual Study/Mentoring/Family Learning Programs

65

Youth participating in 4-H Special Interest/Short-Term Programs

6,280

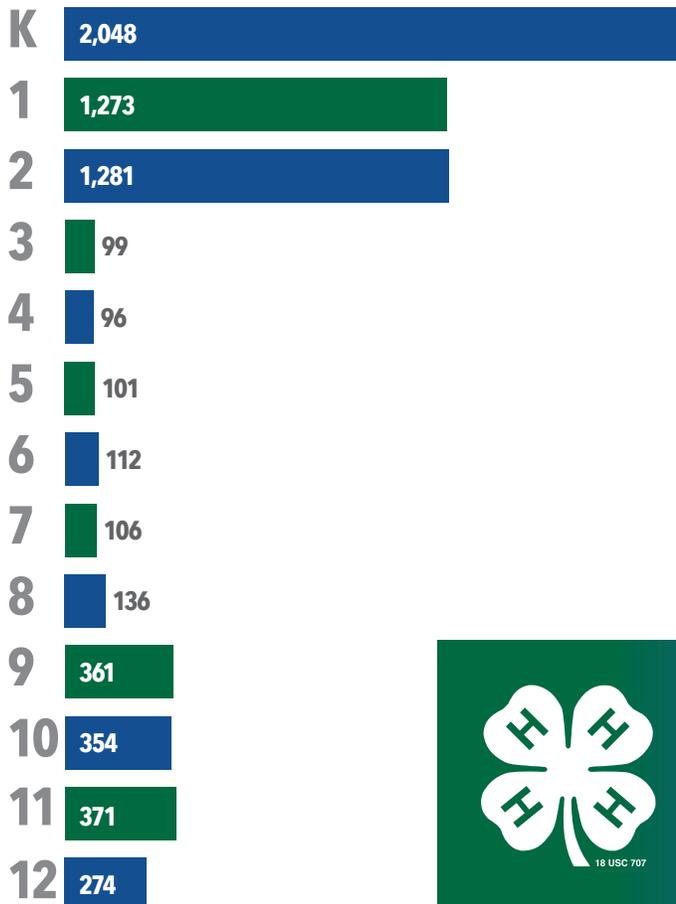
Youth participating in School Enrichment Programs

267

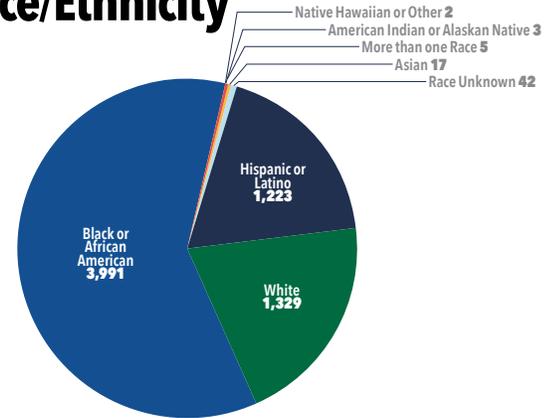
By County



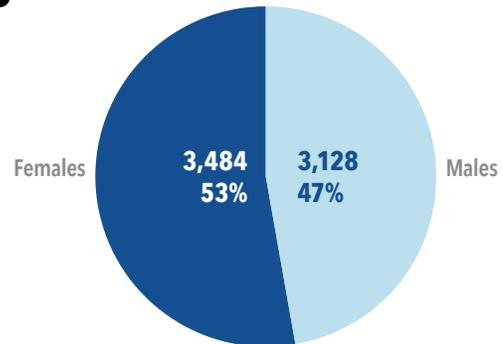
By Grade



By Race/Ethnicity



By Gender



TOTAL YOUTH PARTICIPANTS 6,612



During the Southern Region Program Leadership Network (SRPLN) meeting, Hughes was honored by the Association of Extension Administrators (AEA) with the Excellence in Extension Award in 4-H. Learn more about his award on page 4.

PROBLEM SOLVED

South Georgia pecan farmers improve crop with help from FVSU county Extension agent



by RUSSELL BOONE JR.

Matthew and Deborah Williams are retired but by no means are they taking it easy.

Instead, the Hahira, Georgia couple have decided to devote most of their free time to running the Williams Farm and improving the production of their pecan grove.

For more than 20 years, the Williams' have grown pecans. Presently, their grove has more than 50 trees on two acres.

Since 2012, Matthew, a retired industrial mechanic, and Deborah, a retired educator, have used the sales of their pecan crop to supplement their retirement income.

While the yields were satisfactory, the couple felt there was room for improvement. "Initially, we were trying to do it on our own. We really didn't have anybody we could depend on," Matthew said.

However, that all changed when they connected with Joshua (Josh) Dawson, Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Lowndes County Extension agent while attending a pecan growers meeting.

"They told me about the problems they were having, and the relationship grew from there," Dawson said.

The FVSU Extension agent said that when a client approaches him to seek help with a problem, it is best to keep the dialogue simple. "I'm not here to throw out big terms or anything like that. I have a regular conversation, see what's going on and see how I can help them. I don't promise them the world, I just go out there and do what I can do," he said.

With Dawson's help, the Williams' learned several methods to help increase their pecan production. One of them includes pruning the trees so they can get the

Joshua Dawson, FVSU Extension agent for Lowndes County, poses with Deborah and Matthew Williams next to a pecan harvester.



“Trying to be a farmer without help from Extension and professionals such as Josh is hard unless you went to school to be a farmer. You just need the help.”

- Deborah Williams, Pecan Farmer

proper sunlight and air to grow better.

“Josh came out with his tools, helped us, showed us what we needed to do and how to prune them.” We followed his instructions and the next year our trees just grew,” Deborah said.

Matthew says it is especially important that a farmer has a good working relationship with their Extension agent. “When we do run into problems, we will call Josh and he will come to see what is going on,” he said.

Deborah eagerly describes a situation where they immediately called on Dawson’s expertise to solve a problem.

“One day, we noticed that the trees were dropping a lot of leaves. We told him that we’d never seen that before, so he came out and took a few samples. He then walked through the orchard, sent the samples off for examination and returned later to tell us what we needed to do,” she said.

With Dawson’s assistance through the local Extension office, they learned the proper time to use fertilizer, what to use to spray

the trees and the proper time to spray. “We are doing better. Last year, we had a wonderful crop. Anyway, we made a little money,” Deborah said with a laugh.

The Williams’ said they recommend anyone seeking help from FVSU’s Extension office to contact Dawson first. “He’ll lead them to where they need to go. Trying to be a farmer without help from Extension and professionals such as Josh is hard unless you went to school to be a farmer. You just need the help,” Deborah said.

In addition to their pecan growing operation, Dawson also helped the Williams obtain a high tunnel hoop house. They plan to work closely with Dawson as they seek to expand their operation to grow vegetables, grapes and citrus fruits.

Furthermore, the FVSU Extension agent says he stays motivated by providing his client’s good service. “If you’re going to be in this profession, you must be willing to help others. I’m not going to have all the answers, and I tell people that. But I do my best to help solve their problem.”



Pecans Facts

Often enjoyed as a stand-alone snack, or as an addition to pies, cakes, salads and as a topping for a myriad of baked goods, take heed to some interesting facts about one of Georgia’s unique commodities.

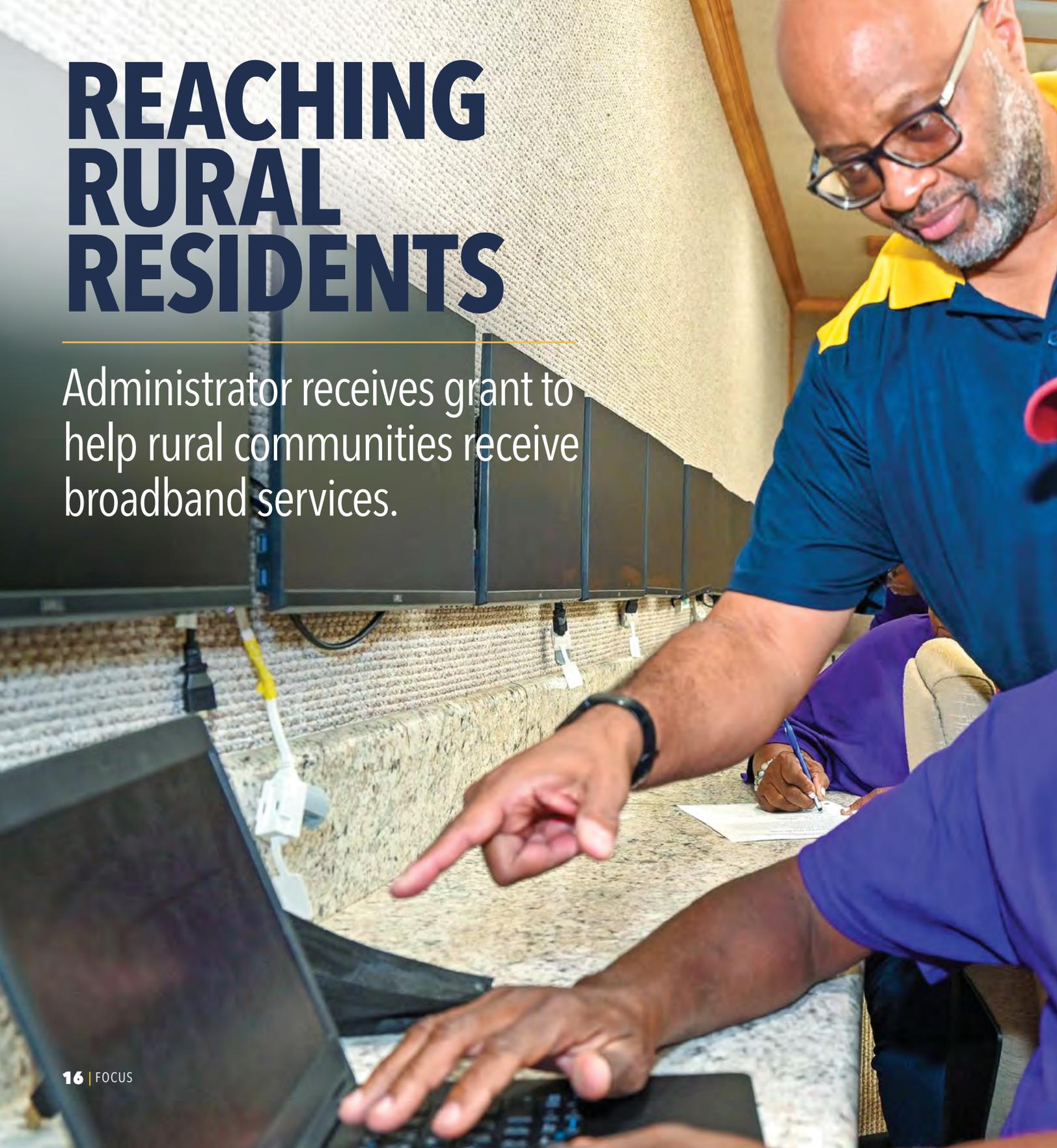
- With more than 215,000 acres planted in the state, Georgia is regarded as the top pecan producing state in the U.S.
- Pecans contain natural antioxidants, can play a role in lowering cholesterol and may help in reducing weight.
- Pecans can be heart healthy due to the small amount of saturated fats and contain no trans-fat. They also contain healthy amounts of unsaturated fats.
- Just one ounce of pecans can supply 10 percent of the recommended daily value for fiber. Pecans also contain 19 vitamins and minerals, are a natural source of high-quality protein, have very few carbohydrates and have no cholesterol.
- Pecan production in Georgia was valued at \$212.6 million in 2022.

Sources: University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

For more information on services provided by FVSU’s Cooperative Extension Program, call (478) 825-6296.

REACHING RURAL RESIDENTS

Administrator receives grant to help rural communities receive broadband services.





Terrence Wolfork, Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) assistant administrator of communications, conferencing and technology, is the principal investigator for a grant that will help to offer rural communities' broadband access, adoption and technology training. The Cooperative Extension leader shared information about the implementation of the grant and how it will help rural Georgians receive essential services.



Stan Shepherd, regional director of external affairs for AT&T Georgia, Monica Ortiz (mother) and son Braulio Ortiz of Peach County High School, Dr. Mark Latimore Jr. associate dean for Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Cooperative Extension Program and Terrence Wolfork, FVSU, assistant Extension administrator for communications, conferencing and technology.

AT&T partnered with Fort Valley State University and donated 100 refurbished laptops to students in the Peach County School System.

What is the name of your grant?

The grant is called Fort Valley State University-Community: Piloting an Ecosystem for Digital Equity. It is funded by the National Telecommunication and Information Administration, (NTIA) Connecting Minority Communities (CMC) grant. It is a collaboration between FVSU Cooperative Extension, FVSU Head Start, and local community-based partners including the Peach County Public Library and the Fort Valley Youth Center of Excellence. The goal is to provide broadband access, accessibility and adoption to our local communities.

What was the amount and how long will it be funded?

The proposal is funded at \$2,997,558 over a two-year period. It is a pilot project and if the project goes well, hopefully NTIA will provide additional funding.

How will the funding be spent?

We purchased some Wi-Fi hotspots which we will take to communities and offer pop-up broadband access. We will use them for multiple activities. For example, if there is a job fair occurring in a rural community, we can take the band and offer broadband access to the community. This is one of the pieces of equipment we purchased within the first year.

We are also upgrading some of our Head Start locations, specifically Macon County, so the teachers, parents and children will be able to have laptops. This will also take place at the Peach and Crawford County Head Start facilities. The grant allows for funding in communities within a 15-mile radius of the university.

How does it help you reach beyond your current position?

“ This grant allows us to offer education and provide technological devices (laptops, tablets and mobile hot spots) to members of the community.

- Terrence Wolfork, Assistant Administrator

We currently take the Mobile Information Technology Center (MITC) out to the community, but once we leave, the community loses access. This grant allows us to offer education and provide technological devices (laptops, tablets and mobile hot spots) to members of the community. We can leave the devices at the facilities. The facility owner may have to pay for the Internet service after the grant period is over, but they will not have to pay for the equipment.

Why were Peach, Crawford and Macon Counties selected?

The communities had to be underserved and lacking

broadband capability. They also had to be within the 15-mile radius of the university. Broadband access and adoption are becoming a basic need. It is the standard for completing job applications, applying for disaster assistance and getting an education. These communities have needs in employment, disaster assistance and education.

Who is involved in this grant?

We have a community advisory board that consists of local Head Start administrators, local librarians, local utility commission personnel, Cooperative Extension personnel and other local public servants in



Terrence Wolfork, Fort Valley State University's assistant administrator for communications conferencing and technology, conducts a training inside FVSU's Mobile Information Technology Center (MITC).

Facts about broadband access in rural and underserved communities

- Nearly one in four rural Americans still say broadband internet access is still a major problem in their community.
- Low-income households may forgo internet service in favor of critical needs such as housing, transportation, and health care.
- Black and Hispanic adults in the United States remain less likely than White adults to say they own a traditional computer or have high-speed internet at home.

- July 2022, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Secretary Tom Vilsack, announced that USDA invested \$401 million to provide access to high-speed internet for 31,000 rural residents and businesses in 11 states. This effort is part of the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to investing in rural infrastructure and affordable high-speed internet for all.

Source: Pew Research Center, U.S. Department of Agriculture Rural Development

the community. It is important to have a broad spectrum of community representation to help make wise decisions and implement services. We are also incorporating Fort Valley State University students as tech navigators. Tech navigators will help train people in the community with technology education. We began training students Fall 2023 with a curriculum developed by Dr. Yolanda Surrency, FVSU's technology curriculum specialist.

Thus far, what feedback have you received from the community?

There is a strong sense of appreciation. Currently the grant will not allow us to go outside the 15-mile radius, but we have partnered with local companies that will help us to distribute additional laptops outside of the devices paid for by the grant. We are also partnering with the Georgia Technology Authority's (GTA) Affordable Connectivity Program. The program is designed to assist lower-income families in paying for high-speed Internet.

What made you notice the need?

I have always noticed a need for broadband access in rural communities. However, when the pandemic occurred the need increased. During the pandemic, I saw rural communities suffer and some people were not able to shop online for needed items. Many were unable to operate their



businesses because they lacked Internet capabilities.

Once the grant has completed its two-year cycle will the communities lose their broadband?

We hope it continues to grow outside the funding. After the grant has finished its cycle, we still want to provide broadband awareness and adoption and educate small rural businesses about broadband capabilities.

How many people do you think you can reach?

I am estimating 200-300 students will gain experience delivering technology education to communities. We should reach nearly 1,000 people in Peach, Crawford and Macon Counties. We are partnering with the local Boys and Girls Clubs, Head Start facilities and senior citizen centers in small communities.

(From left to right) Dr. Yolanda Surrency, Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) technology curriculum specialist, two Alabama A&M University colleagues, and Terrence Wolfork, FVSU's assistant administrator for communications, conferencing and technology.

After conducting a two-day training on campus, FVSU's Cooperative Extension employees pose outside FVSU's Mobile Information Technology Center (MITC) with colleagues representing Alabama A & M University.

For more information about the NTIA grant, please contact Terrence Wolfork, FVSU's assistant Extension administrator of communications, conferencing and technology at 478- 825-6053 or wolforkt@fvsu.edu.

PARTNERSHIPS *with* A PURPOSE



Agri-Unity, FVSU Extension and the Sherrod Institute collaborate to help small Black farmers through technical assistance

Dr. Niki Whitley,
FVSU animal science
Extension specialist,
and a client draw an
injectable mineral
supplement for use
with calves.



RUSSELL BOONE JR.

To help small and limited resource beef cattle farmers improve their production and move their products to market, Fort Valley State University (FVSU) partners frequently with AgriUnity and other agricultural groups.

AgriUnity helps ranchers raise value-added cattle. This allows them to have access to multiple markets to sell their cattle. The goal of AgriUnity is to help ranchers be successful by sharing experiences and best practices to help mitigate mistakes and improve cattle operations.

Likewise, AgriUnity also aims to address the root causes for the

declining number of African American farms and farmers. Handy Kennedy, a rancher in Tattnall and Candler County, Georgia, is the founder of AgriUnity. The organization, which began in 2019, works alongside FVSU and other organizations to conduct workshops to help farmers and ranchers achieve their goals.

During the summer of 2023, George Amica, owner of a 474-acre beef cattle farm in Fort Valley, hosted a workshop. The event, sponsored by FVSU Cooperative Extension, AgriUnity and the Sherrod Institute-Southwest Georgia Project, drew

Handy Kennedy of Agri-Unity herds calves during a cattle farming workshop in Fort Valley at George Amica's farm.

more than 30 farmers from across the Southeast.

Amica said it's beneficial to have access to the resources that are available through FVSU's Cooperative Extension program. He said he would not be able to host the event without the help of FVSU and its partners. He also appreciates the hands-on technical assistance and information he receives such as tagging and deworming his herd. "This information will help my farming operation work more efficiently," Amica said.

In addition, the Fort Valley farmer said he's become better at marketing.

"I've been putting a whole lot into them (cattle), but not getting a whole lot out of them. This workshop will help me get something out of my cows with the information I have from Fort Valley State." Amica said he is more confident knowing that he can receive more for his investment than in the past.

In the future, Amica plans to attend programs sponsored by FVSU's Cooperative Extension.

Furthermore, Courtney Wilson, a farmer from Ocala, Florida, was impressed with the turnout of the workshop. "It's great. I see a lot of students are here, and they



Felicia Burke, agricultural specialist with the Southwest Georgia Project and Sherrod Institute, conducts a demonstration with a calf during a cattle workshop.

are getting a chance to learn with hands-on experience."

Wilson, who is also president of the Florida Black Farmers Association, said that Black farmers should attend workshops because they provide opportunities for networking with fellow farmers. The Florida farmer said workshops supply an opportunity to expose young people to farming.

Moreover, Dr. Niki Whitley, animal science Extension specialist, said the overall purpose of the educational event is to help Black farmers market and raise calves that will sell for a higher price.

"With that goal in mind, steps to raising high quality cattle, and topics we discuss at these events include breeding, animal identification and record keeping," Whitley said.

In addition, the FVSU professor said the collaboration with AgriUnity has led to successful grant funding opportunities for programs developed to educate Black farmers. The Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program, Cargill and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative all provided grants for educational programs.

Furthermore, Whitley said that beef cattle producers don't have

“I’ve been putting a whole lot into them (cattle), but not getting a whole lot out of them. This workshop will help me get something out of my cows.”

- George Amica, Cattle Rancher

to join AgriUnity to receive help from the outreach programs offered by FVSU Extension, but the two groups work together to help cattle producers. "We include anyone who wants to be added to the AgriUnity email list so they can come to events and get educational support," she said.

Additionally, Whitley said that as more producers become active with FVSU Extension and AgriUnity, they can help collaborate and develop hands-on projects and secure grants.



For more information about AgriUnity, contact Handy Kennedy at (770) 375-1655. To learn more about FVSU's Cooperative Extension Program, contact Dr. Niki Whitley at (478) 391-4840 or whitleyn@fvsu.edu.

IN THE FIELD SPOTLIGHT

Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension personnel educate clients through technical trainings on campus, media services and by hosting outreach events. Being "In the Field" allows Extension to consistently serve as a resource for the state of Georgia. The following events and projects took place from January 2023 - August 2023 throughout the state.



FVSU hosts Georgia Organics Conference on campus

Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program hosted the Georgia Organics Conference on Feb. 18. Participants were treated to a tour of FVSU's organic farm, solar farm and greenhouses. More than 25 farmers and those interested in solar energy attended. Participants listened to presentations by FVSU Extension specialists Drs. Cedric Ogden and James Brown. They also asked questions and connected with other farmers from across the state.

Progress campaign highlights Black farmers, Extension clients



Fort Valley State University's Agricultural Communications

Department celebrated the contributions of Black Farmers with a marketing campaign called Progress. The series featured seven farmers for the month of February who have received assistance from FVSU through Cooperative Extension programming. They also shared their experiences with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Farms Service Agency (FSA) and how they have benefitted from the experience. See the publication at bit.ly/fvsuag-progress.

Visit ag.fvsu.edu/progress to view the link to the stories, and YouTube videos.



Extension collaborates with agencies, schools for AG Pollinator Day

Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program participated in the AG Pollinator Habitat Field and Career Day at Terrell County High School (TCHS) in Dawson, Georgia, on March 24. "Raising Agricultural Awareness"



was the theme for the event. The event highlighted TCHS's agriculture program and featured exhibitions, food, farm activities

and free samples. FVSU exhibits included the Mobile Information Technology Center (MITC) and Life on the Farm.

2023
HAM & EGG
LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

TUESDAY, APRIL 4, 2023 | 8 A.M.
FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY | STUDENT AMENITIES CENTER
1005 STATE UNIVERSITY DRIVE | FORT VALLEY, GA 31030

Fort Valley State University's Extension hosts the 41st Ham and Egg Breakfast

More than 150 guests gathered in Fort Valley State University's Student Amenities Center on April 4, to participate in the 41st Ham and Egg Legislative Breakfast. The breakfast is an annual event where elected officials, farmers, federal agencies and other stakeholders meet to hear updates about agricultural legislation and issues that impact farmers, ranchers and landowners. Honored guests included U.S. Rep. Sanford Bishop, Rep. Bobby Dickey and Georgia Agriculture Commissioner Tyler Harper. Guests also enjoy a southern style breakfast featuring traditional cuisine including country cured ham, eggs, grits and biscuits.

IN THE FIELD SPOTLIGHT



Fort Valley State participates in 4-H Ag Field Day and Student Expo

On May 4, Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program and 4-H Youth Development Program participated in the Village Community Garden 4-H Ag Field Day and Student Expo. The event,

held in Sylvester, Georgia, connected faculty, staff and students from FVSU and Worth County High School. Annually this event is attended by veterans, farmers, and other stake holders with the goal of learning about U.S. Department of Agriculture programs and policy initiatives that address equity and eliminate barriers when seeking opportunities.

"Black Farmers Tour" makes its first stop at Fort Valley State University

The Georgia Legislative Black Caucus embarked on a "Black Farmers Tour" to connect local Black farmers with resources and networking opportunities. On May 15, more than 40 people traveled from the state capitol to Fort Valley State University to kick off the tour by hosting a roundtable discussion and press conference with Georgia farmers and stakeholders. Representatives from AgriUnity and Fort Valley State University's Cooperative Extension Program were present to engage in conversations and share opportunities and challenges present among Black farmers.

Scan the code to view the news story on the 41NBC News website (<https://bit.ly/3OBv1KH>)





Listening session exposes youth to agriculture

The Order of the Knights of Pythagoras (KOP) held a listening session in the C.W. Pettigrew Center on July 13. The Order of KOP is a community-based mentoring organization sponsored by Prince Hall Masons, Inc. The organization is committed to developing and training leadership and other life skills through mentoring and community service. Extension Engineer and Professor of Engineering Technology, Dr. Cedric Ogden, shared information with students about precision agriculture. In addition, Military Deputy Commander, U.S. Southern Command Vice Admiral Alvin Holsey, also shared information with the students. From this visit, more than 30 youth learned about Fort Valley State University.

Fort Valley State University and University of Georgia Extension co-host estate planning workshop

On August 1, Fort Valley State University and the University of Georgia's (UGA) Cooperative Extension Programs collaborated to present a virtual ZOOM workshop focused on estate planning. The Georgia Farmer's Initiative for Training and Sustainability (GA-FITS) presented the event alongside both Extension programs. Attorney John Donsbach, from Donsbach Law Group LLC, was the featured speaker. More than 300 participants attended the virtual event. The goals of the workshop were to increase outreach, awareness and practical assistance to Georgia residents with asset management and estate planning. Other workshop facilitators included UGA Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) agent Keishon Thomas, for Bibb County, and Ida Jackson, UGA FACS agent for Wilkes County.

GA-FITS
(Georgia Farmer's Initiative for Training & Sustainability)
Presents



**Who Gets The
"HOME"
House?**

Featuring:
John Donsbach
Donsbach Law Group, LLC



Estate Planning:

- What Is It?
- Why Do I Need It?
- Heirs Property - Am I At Risk?
- Much More!

RECIPE

Salmon croquettes





Salmon croquettes can be served as a main course for breakfast, lunch or dinner. Sabrena Johnson, Fort Valley State University's Peach County Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) Extension agent, shares how to prepare this seafood favorite from can to plate in less than an hour.

YOU WILL NEED

- 1 14.75 ounce can of salmon
- 1/2 cup of breadcrumbs
- 1 egg
- 1/2 cup of green onion sliced thin (about 1 bulb)
- 1/2 teaspoon of dill sauce

DIRECTIONS

1. Drain salmon and pour into medium sized mixing bowl. Remove any visible bones and skin (dark gray portion).
2. Add breadcrumbs, egg, dill sauce and green onions to bowl. Use your hands to mix the ingredients.
3. Shape into palm sized patties.
4. Pre-heat oven to 425 degrees.
5. Locate a baking sheet and spray with nonstick cooking spray. Arrange patties about 1 inch apart. Using a spatula, gently press down on each patty to slightly flatten it. Spray the top of each patty with cooking spray.
6. Bake each side of the patty for 8 minutes to form a golden brown crust.
7. Makes four two patty servings.

NUTRITIONAL FACTS

Serving Size: 2 items (137.03 grams)

Servings per container: 4

Amount per serving:

Calories 220

Calories from fat 60

		Percent of Daily Value*
Total Fat	7g	11%
Saturated Fat	1.5g	8%
Trans Fat	0.0g	
Cholesterol	130mg	43%
Sodium	510mg	21%
Total Carbohydrates	10g	3%
Dietary fiber	<1g	4%
Sugars	1g	
Protein	27g	
Vitamin A		4%
Vitamin C		2%
Calcium		35%
Iron		10%

*Based on a 2,000 calorie diet.

Source: *Meals in Minutes (4th Edition)*, University of Georgia Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)

MEET YOUR PROGRAM ASSISTANT

Macon County



Residents of Macon County can count on the experience of Alicia Montgomery to help them prepare healthy, affordable meals for their families.

For eight years, Montgomery has served as an Expanded Food and Nutrition Program (EFNEP) program assistant for Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Cooperative Extension Program. As a former EFNEP participant, she feels a special bond with students participating in her classes.

Additionally, the EFNEP program assistant teaches residents of Macon County how to prepare nutritious meals, food budgeting and food safety techniques. She also performs culinary giveaways and food demonstrations. Each of her classes lasts eight weeks and meets for 90 minutes once a week.

During the classes clients learn the following strategies:

- Saving money on food
- Planning quick and easy meals for the family
- Preparing delicious and nutritious recipes
- Keeping food safe to eat
- Making healthy food choices
- Properly washing hands
- Preparing easy and healthy snacks

Montgomery holds memberships in the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS), the Georgia Nutritional Council (GNC), the Georgia Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (GAFCS) and the National Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (NEAFS).



For more information about EFNEP programs in Macon County, contact Montgomery at:

409 South Street
P.O. Box 55
Marshallville, Ga. 31057
(478) 391-4743
montgomerya@fvsu.edu

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.

Alicia Montgomery, based in Macon County, is one of 16 county Extension agents and program assistants who work personally with residents in 30 counties 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

NEWS & NOTES

FVSU agricultural communicators earn awards from an international organization



Employees of Fort Valley State University's Agricultural Communications Department recently received honors for their work.

The Association for Communication Excellence (ACE) in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Life and Human Sciences, held its 2023 Conference in Asheville, North Carolina June 11-13. Russell Boone Jr., ChaNaè Bradley and Latasha Ford earned five awards for publications and writing.

Boone, public information editor and writer, won silver awards in two categories which include Writing for a Magazine and Writing for a Diverse Audience. Bradley, senior communications specialist, won a bronze award for Annual and Special Reports with Boone and graphic designer Jeff Brothers. In addition, Ford, research communications manager, earned a bronze award for Writing for a Diverse Audience and another bronze award in Technology Education for the Writer's Playground program with FVSU colleagues Dr. Yolanda Surrency, Brothers, Ervin Williams and Jerry Oglesby, and James Hall Jr. of Ashburn, Georgia.

"Earning an award from ACE is always exciting and honorable," Bradley said. "We put a considerable amount of time into developing our publications and content used to communicate the impacts of our Extension programming and agricultural research projects. I always find the critiques useful and beneficial to my work and improvement as a communications professional," the senior communications specialist said.

Ford also expressed gratitude in receiving kudos from ACE. "Our Agricultural Communications Department appreciates the opportunity to highlight our outstanding Wildcat students, alumni, research projects and Extension programs on this valuable platform. As longtime members of ACE, our communications team continues to build connections and learn from other professionals, develop innovative ideas through training, and support the organization by sharing our expertise and serving in leadership roles," said the research communications manager.

"To represent FVSU and win awards from ACE is a rewarding experience," Boone said. "I feel that being honored by your peers in the communications profession is a testament to your abilities and enhances the reputation of our agricultural communications operation on a national level. That goes a long way in helping us promote the programs, individuals and clients associated with FVSU's College of Agriculture and Cooperative Extension Program," he said.

In addition to earning awards, Bradley and Ford both serve in leadership roles for the ACE Board of Directors. Bradley serves as president

elect and Ford serves as director of member services.

ACE is composed of professionals practicing all facets of communications. The organization provides a chance for professional development and networking for individuals involved in promoting knowledge about agriculture, natural resources, and life and human sciences.

To learn more about the organization, visit aceweb.org.

County agent selected for local leadership program



Fort Valley State University's Lowndes County Extension agent was selected to be a part of the Leadership Lowndes Class of 2023. Joshua Dawson is one of thirty emerging leaders chosen to participate in the 12-month programs that aims to equip him with skills to improve the community. Leadership Lowndes provides participants with an opportunity to develop an understanding of the promises and problems of Lowndes County and the diversity of the region. As a county Extension agent, Dawson

provides the agricultural community with research-based information and technical skills to improve farming practices and other agricultural needs.

Fort Valley State Cooperative Extension names agent to Peach County



Sabrina Johnson started her new role as a family and consumer sciences (FCS) agent on March 1. An Extension agent assists clients by providing them with research-based information to help solve problems dealing with basic needs.

Prior to this position, Johnson was the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) program assistant in Peach County for 16 years.

“No matter the circumstances, I feel it is my duty as an FCS professional to help families in the community make informed decisions that will improve their quality of life,” Johnson said.

Kena Torbert, interim FCS program leader for FVSU, said Johnson will continue to have a positive impact on the clients of Peach County. “Being a Peach County native and an EFNEP nutrition educator for the past 16 years allows her to serve as an invaluable asset for FVSU Extension and the community,” Torbert said.

FVSU’s Cooperative Extension Program helps farmers, homeowners,

ranchers and communities by providing them with the latest information on technology and techniques. This includes a variety of challenges ranging from crop production to food safety.

For more information about FVSU Cooperative Extension programming, visit ag.fvsu.edu. To contact Johnson, call (478) 825-6466 or email johnsons@fvsu.edu.

Fort Valley State University Extension helps local students cultivate genius, joy with new program



Writer’s Playground is a new Fort Valley State University (FVSU) Extension program created by Latasha Ford, FVSU research communications manager and a Turner County High School graduate, and Dr. Yolanda Surrency, FVSU technology curriculum specialist. The pilot program began as a vision years ago that came to fruition by co-creator Ford, who wanted to share her love for reading and writing with young thinkers.

With support from their Cooperative Extension leadership at FVSU, Ford and Surrency designed a free creative writing and technology course that aims to foster middle and high school students’ creative thinking and writing, as well as strengthen their research and presentation skills. The pair offered Writer’s Playground in 2022 in Ashburn, Georgia. This project received strong community support from Turner County High School, James Hall Jr., Greater St. Luke

Baptist Church members, parents and additional community members.

The application process was open to Turner County middle and high school students. The writers accepted into the program were Erica Peak, Jada Poteau, Taylor Hardin and Olivia Wilson. They devoted five Saturdays in October 2022 to developing a higher level of thinking by studying diverse poems and short stories, analyzing the devices used in those literary works and applying the strategies to their own work. They learned how to deepen their understanding and present different perspectives in their writings while gaining the confidence to use their voices and find their creative identities. They gained valuable skills that they can use in the classroom, college and in their future profession.

The writers presented their own powerful writing pieces at the end of the program and received a participation certificate during a special ceremony with family, Turner County High School Principal Jason Clark and Fort Valley State University Extension Administrator Dr. Mark Latimore.

In addition, the principal recognized the program and presented the students with laptops and certificates during the Turner County High School Honors Night banquet on April 25, 2023.

Furthermore, the Writer’s Playground course received a bronze award as part of the Association for Communication Excellence (ACE) Critique & Awards Program. The team was recognized at the 2023 ACE Conference in June in Asheville, North Carolina.

Through Writer’s Playground, writers cultivate genius and joy. The next course is scheduled for fall 2023 on FVSU’s campus.



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