Making a Difference

Auburn Alum Named Time Magazine “Hero”

by KATIE JACKSON

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

Clinton apparently was impressed by Abe as well, so much so that he picked Abe as his choice for Time Magazine's April 29, 2010, "100 Most Influential People" edition. But then, who wouldn't be impressed?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Consumers prefer good-tasting, high-quality filets and lower prices and are more concerned about production practices to improve product quality and consistency.

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

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

“Of course, it is easier to make a fish filet more planning and predictable to the public, but it is easier to see how much production is to make the job easier to do, more efficient and ultimately, more profitable for the industry,” Emmons says.

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

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

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

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

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

New Approaches

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

And that relationship with Coleman also continues. “Mr. Clinton is always discussing the project or having one of his aides either call or visit the project,” says Abe. “So far, he’s the best PR I have ever had!” And PR has now made Abe a much-sought-after speaker. In fact, he will return to Auburn Nov. 6 to the Fall 2010 York Dining Lecture (www.ag.auburn.edu/yorklecture).

Making Contact

College of Agriculture: 334-844-3245 | www.ag.auburn.edu

Academic Departments:

Agricultural Economics and Business (334)-844-6000 | www.aeb.auburn.edu

Agronomy and Soils: 334-844-4100 | www.soils.auburn.edu

Animal and Dairy Sciences: 334-844-4800 | www.adsa.auburn.edu

Biotechnology: 334-844-4100 | www.aubuntu.org/programs/biotech

Entomology and Plant Pathology: 334-844-5360 | www.pest.auburn.edu

Forestry: 334-844-4820 | www.forestry.auburn.edu

Poultry Science: 334-844-4715 | www.auburn.edu/ptx

Animal and Dairy Sciences: 334-844-4800 | www.adsa.auburn.edu


Entomology and Plant Pathology: 334-844-5360 | www.pest.auburn.edu

Forestry: 334-844-4820 | www.forestry.auburn.edu

Poultry Science: 334-844-4715 | www.auburn.edu/ptx

Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station: 334-844-3245 | www.ag.auburn.edu

Assistant Director: 334-844-8272

Animal and Dairy Sciences: 334-844-5521

Aaes Affiliated Schools and Colleges:

College of Human Sciences: 334-844-5790 | www.human.auburn.edu

College of Science and Mathematics: 334-844-5370 | www.cos.auburn.edu

College of Veterinary Medicine: 334-844-5676 | www.vetmed.auburn.edu

School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences: 334-844-1007 | www.sfw.auburn.edu

Alabama Cooperative Extension System:

Director’s Office: 334-844-4444 | www.aces.aea

Details

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For assistance or further information, call 334-844-5017 or e-mail agillustrated@auburn.edu. You may also contact us about subscriptions or other editorial issues at request@comcast.net.

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WOODS ON THE WATERS

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Lee County Creek Named for Homer S. Swingle

It’s official! A previously unnamed stream that runs through the upper fisheries research station in north Auburn is now officially designated by the U.S. Geological Survey as Swingle Creek. Signage has been erected in the park where the creek crosses roadways on Lee County roads 188 and 72. The creek’s naming came about through an application made by Auburn’s Watershed Management Project, also known as SWAMP and Au- tor, the Department of Fisheries and Allied Aquacultures (FAA). According to Eric Ruther- ford, a research associate in FAA and SWAMP co-coordinator, the unnamed stream came to their attention when SWAMP leaders were working with the Lee County Highway Department and Alabama De- partment of Environmental Management to erect signs on streams and creeks throughout the county. When they realized that this stream not only was nameless, but also originated from Auburn University’s fisheries research station, Rutherford and FAA Department Head Daniel Posey proposed the USGS’s Board on Geographic Names to officially name it in honor of Homer S. Swingle, an Auburn University fisheries professor who passed away in 2009.

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

MANRRS Focusing on Diversity

Minorities are often a minority in the fields of agriculture, natural re- sources and related sciences, but one College of Ag club is working hard to break down barriers and create opportunities for minority students.

That group — The National Society for Minority in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) — began in 1986 at Michigan State University and has now expanded to many 4-H and FFA chapters, including the Auburn chapter has about a dozen ac-

The Wright Stuff

Incoming Freshman Serving as State FFA Officer

by KATHY WILLIAMS, AG COMMUNICATIONS INTERN

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

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

Wright’s duties as sentinel will be present- ing numerous leadership workshops across the state throughout the year, being a member of the Youth Agricultural Leadership Team and participating with the other Alabama State officers at Na- tional Convention and assisting in planning and delivering the Ag Roundup, which is the state’s largest youth agriculture event.

Wright says he feels ready for everything his senior year will bring. This year he is looking forward to visiting the county FFA’s chapter meetings and really getting to know the members.

“I believe biosystems engineering is a grow- ing discipline,” Wright says. “Biosystems basically means agriculture, which we all know is vital to everyone’s life. I believe I can use my passion for agriculture and knowledge of agriculture to help benefit the population at large.”

Wright wants to help his education a step for- ther and go through a fifth year and obtain his agricul- tural education degree. His father, who is an alumnus of Auburn, was an agricultural education teacher throughout Wright’s childhood.

As Wright puts it, “Auburn is my home place to go in the Wright house.” In addition to his fa-

nent of associate professor.

In Memoriam

Laura Beth Guglielmi

was named the Auburn University Employee of the Year

Aug. 14-21 is Welcome Week on the Auburn campus (classes begin on Aug. 14) and Ag Hill will celebrate on Aug. 20 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. with various events, including Ag Roundup Nov. 6. Learn more by contacting Megan Rose in the Student Services Office at mrose001@auburn.edu or 334-844-3201, visiting www.ag.auburn.edu and clicking on the Calendar link or stopping by the events monitor just inside the dean’s office in Homer Hall.

For more information, contact Renee Cadenhead at 334-542-0881 or dbb0003@auburn.edu.

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

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

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

In one project, Yu’s team found that bio-oil from the Deepwater Horizon Experiment Station, is using near infrared spectroscopy to rapidly scan and measure the strength and stiffness of small-diameter Southern pine boards so that woodworkers can make wood composite products such as oriented-strand-board (OSB) panels and to sort out the strongest and stiffest. These flakes will be applied to the surface of composite to determine whether such reinforcement produces a high-strength composite that, because juvenile pines are less dense than mature ones, is also light.

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

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

A second study is looking at the possibility of creating new, strong products by the Alabama Ag Experiment Station and could replace petroleum-based wax and resins in bonding solid- and composite-wood products.

The bio-oil would be used on the exterior of the wood, which is currently used, more moisture resistant and more environmentally friendly. The pine-based bio-oil would cost from a nickel to 30 cents a pound, compared to resin and was at 50 cents to $1.20 a pound.

Two other experiment station researchers, biology engineering assistant professor Ash Bullard and Middle Tennessee State University biology professor Snags National Science Foundation grant for work related to the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.

“Beyond the Spill” by KATIE JACKSON

Auburn Research May Help Alabama’s Oyster Industry Recover

By KATIE JACKSON

Auburn’s Dr. Bill Walton, assistant professor of fisheries and allied aquacultures, is among scientists looking to study the long-term effects of the oil spill in response to the spill. He is deeply concerned about the spill’s immediate and long-term impacts, but he also contends that now is the time to think ahead and possibly rethink oystering in Alabama.

“Not one had an plan for an oil spill,” he says, “but developing a plan for a post-spill future is vital.” Walton says he thinks this may present an opportunity to strengthen Alabama’s seafood industry. With that in mind, he is cautioning some suggesting some new ideas, all backed up by past and current research.

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

Coming to Auburn from Massachusetts, where oyster farming is common, Walton sees intensive oyster aquaculture as a way for Alabama oystermen to augment, not replace, their incomes from wild-caught oysters. His mon, Walton sees intensive oyster aquaculture as a way for Alabama oyster-aquacultures assistant professor Ash Bullard take samples to learn how the toxic effects of the spill impact the Southern highbush blueberry species that dominate the 620 to 80 acres of farms-market berries across the state.

Southern highbush blueberries made their debut 20 years ago, offering Alabama blueberry producers’ costs, because they have multiple trunks and are concentrating on breeding Southern highbush/sparkleberry hybrids and on grafting highbush and sparkleberries. They also will identify the physiological characteristics that are significantly less acidic and lower in organic maturity and harvesting, and they’re counting on the Southeast Fisheries Science Center in Mississippi to observe growth habits and select candidate nursery the sparkleberry to make that happen.

The bio-oil would be safer on the environment than the usual fuel oil, but it would still need to be tested for the Gulf.”

“The study was part of a comprehensive, long-term research project to test what is happening to the fish,” he says of his site.

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

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

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

“The domestic is that Southern highbush is decreasing in the market and the fruit producers calibrate their spreader equipment and and width of application.

“Thus far in the multi-disciplinary study, Spi- er has collected sparkleberries from Alabama and Mississippi and is germinating the seeds from those, and then he’ll plant the seedlings at the Auburn Experiment Stations Wier Research and Extension Center in Headland to observe growth habits and select candidate nursery. He’s also working to develop several propagation techniques for sparkleberries.

Southern highbush blueberries made their debut 20 years ago, offering Alabama blueberry producers a chance to increase efficiency of blueberry production so that berries can compete in the Southeast and Mississippi and is germinating the seeds from those, and then he’ll plant the seedlings at the Auburn Experiment Stations Wier Research and Extension Center in Headland to observe growth habits and select candidate nursery. He’s also working to develop several propagation techniques for sparkleberries.

The study of parasites can also help document the effects of the oil spill. “Our focus is on the health of the aquatic environment,” Spi- der said. “We are looking at the parasites, the impacts and also think ahead to the future. Walton has three research sites off the Alabama coast in Mobile and Baldwin counties where he is testing various bagging and growing systems. Now, since none of the oysters in his study can be sold or consumed, he is using those systems from those sites and a dozen others to determine the effects of the oil spill.

“We have a miniature canary-in-the-coal-mine project to see what is happening to the fish,” he says of his site.

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

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“Like all the seafood, we were here before the spill for commercial fishermen and the seafood industry and Auburn will be there for them after the spill,” he adds.

Walton sees intensive oyster aquaculture as a way for Alabama oystermen to augment, not replace, their incomes from wild-caught oysters. His

William H. “Bill” Walton, assistant professor of fisheries and allied aquacultures at Auburn University, thinks that intensive oyster farming may hold promise for Alabama oyster industry in the future. Walton believes that many oyster farmers have found that overlapping applications were re- ported to maintain the desired spinner-disc speed and width of application.

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“Sing any frog or litoria frog, which lives within the fish, is known to negatively affect the Southern highbush berries. It’s a sad situation that is going to see fewer parasites?” and I think the answer for the Southern highbush berries is that it will be more tolerable of conditions and have a much greater resistance to mechanical harvesting.

Thus far in the multi-disciplinary study, Spi- er has collected sparkleberries from Alabama and Mississippi and is germinating the seeds from those, and then he’ll plant the seedlings at the Auburn Experiment Stations Wier Research and Extension Center in Headland to observe growth habits and select candidate nursery. He’s also working to develop several propagation techniques for sparkleberries.

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College of Human Sciences
Endowed Professors Named in CHS

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

"Endowed professors are critical in securing our status and esteem within the academic world," says June Henton, dean of the College of Human Sciences. "El-Din Shah and Ireland have these marks as leading-edge researchers and visionary educators who continuously enrich the learning environment in the College of Human Sciences.

Mona El-Din Shah has been working at Auburn in 1990, and was named alumni professor in 2005 and creative research and scholarly awards in 2007. Funded by approximately $7 million from the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation and supported by the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, her interdisciplinary research is noted for building bridges across several disciplines concerned with child health.

Connell joined the Auburn faculty in 2003 as an assistant professor and extension resource management specialist from 1979-1999. She has been nationally recognized for her efforts to engage, develop, facilitate and grow the College of Human Sciences. "Dr. El-Din Shah and Dr. Connell have met these standards as leading-edge researchers and visionary educators who continue to work tirelessly to expand the horizons of their fields through world-class research and scholarship," says June Henton, dean of the College of Human Sciences.
**August 25**

**O-Night**

6 p.m.

Ham Wilson Livestock Arena - Auburn

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

Contact: Megan Ross at 334-833-3201 or mbr0001@auburn.edu

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**Aug. 26**

**Montgomery Young Alumni-Meet the Dean**

Riverwalk Stadium - Montgomery

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

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

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**Aug. 28**

**Scholarship Recognition Program**

10 a.m.

Ham Wilson Livestock Arena - Auburn

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

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

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**Aug. 31-Sept. 1**

**New Student Update Nights**

6 p.m.

Ham Wilson livestock Arena - Auburn

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

Contact: Megan Ross at 334-833-3201 or mbr0001@auburn.edu

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**Sept. 30**

**Ornamental Horticulture Field Day**

8 a.m. to noon

Ornamental Horticulture Research Center - Mobile

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

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**Oct. 2**

**Poultry Science Alumni, Friends and Recruiting Barbeque**

Poultry Science Building - Auburn

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

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

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**Now through Sept. 30**

**The Market at Ag Heritage Park**

Thursdays, 3-6 p.m.

Auburn

The Market at Ag Heritage Park is a growers-only farmers market featuring fresh local produce, goat cheese, honey, stone-ground grains, plants, baked goods, educational exhibits, cooking and gardening demonstrations and much more. It is open to the entire community and is held each Thursday through Sept. 30.

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

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**Aug. 20**

**Crops Field Day**

8 a.m. to noon

Wiregrass Research Extension Center - Headland

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

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**Aug. 20**

**Take 5 with the College of Ag**

10 a.m. to noon

Comer Hall - Auburn

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

Contact: Megan Ross at 334-833-3201 or mbr0001@auburn.edu

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**Recipe File**

**Savor the Sweetness**

**Fig Bread Great Way to Enjoy Summer’s Bounty**

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

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**Fabulous Fresh Fig Bread**

3 eggs

2 ½ c. sugar

2 c. ripe figs, mashed

¾ c. vegetable oil

3 c. flour

2 tsp. baking soda

1 tsp. salt

½ tsp. cinnamon

½ c. buttermilk

1 c. chopped pecans

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