



Supporting Nontraditional Families

Impact Statement

The Problem/Issue:

Statistics present a complex definition of Alabama's families for the 21st century. In fact, nontraditional families are currently more the norm. In Alabama, 29 percent of families with children are headed by single parents and new forms of nontraditional families continue to develop. These nontraditional families may be single parents, foster parents, multiracial, grandparents raising grandchildren or same-sex parents. Blended families created through divorce and remarriage are also on the rise.

What's Been Done:

Extension's Urban Family Network offers a comprehensive program and an annual Family Conference to advance families economically, socially and physically in the 21st century. The primary objective is to establish partnerships, networks and support groups to strengthen the resiliency of families in urban communities.

Why We Care:

More than 7,500 face to face contacts were made through the wide variety of programs offered under the auspices of the Urban Family Network. Habitat for Humanity partnered with Extension in Anniston to provide educational training for Habitat clients. In June 2003, Habitat constructed 36 houses in the Anniston area. Before moving into their new homes, recipients were required to attend and complete home management classes provided by Extension. The 36 families were trained in financial management, meal planning and comparison shopping. All of the families completed the program.

Statistics indicate longer lives for the senior population of Alabama. With these extended years come health, legal and financial security concerns for seniors. To address these growing concerns, Extension has established a partnership with the Alabama Bureau of Geriatric Psychiatry to provide outreach opportunities to underserved and hard to reach seniors. The initiative supports a mutually beneficial agenda to better serve the aging population with legal, health and financial information through collaboration.

Extension organized Successful Aging Summits in several metropolitan areas to educate local senior citizens, caregivers, clergy and professionals on legal, health and financial issues of aging. More than 650 seniors took

part in the summits. On-site screenings and referrals by local health care agencies were valued at an estimated \$29,000. Approximately 25 percent of the attendees who did not have wills indicated that they intend to have one written.

An intersystem task force of state agencies was organized under the umbrella of the Alabama Relatives As Parents Program to create and expand services to grandparents and other relatives who have taken on the responsibility of surrogate parenting. Extension serves as the lead agency in collaboration with Alabama Association of Retired Persons, the Alabama Department of Human Resources Kinship Care Program, and the Alabama Department of Senior Service-Alabama Cares Program. The goals of Alabama RAPP are to provide technical assistance for establishing and facilitating support groups, conduct informational sessions, and identify community resources for grandparents and other relatives parenting children. Support groups have been established across the state. Local support groups established their goals to meet the needs of grandparents and relatives by organizing support groups and or conducting community information meetings. Grandparents and children benefit greatly from involvement with RAPP. Grandparents have reported a greater understanding of how to help children with homework, manage money, and recognize disabilities their children may have. More importantly, they have learned where to find the help they need to resolve these and other problems.