Auburn University will host an extended tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. from Friday, Jan. 15, through Friday, Jan. 22, with the theme "Inspiring the Strength to Love: One Auburn, One Community."

With activities centered on the Martin Luther King Day holiday on Monday, highlights of the eight-day week include a public speaking contest, a scholarship breakfast, guest speakers, student performances and community service projects. All events are open to the public.

The King birthday observance begins with an evening with the Rev. Joseph Lowery, who will speak at The Hotel at Auburn University and Dixon Conference Center at 7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 15. The Methodist minister was one of the primary leaders, along with the Rev. Martin Luther King and others, of the Civil Rights Movement that led to legal and social reforms advancing racial equality in America in the 1950s and ’60s. In 2009, Lowery delivered the benediction for President Obama’s inauguration and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

A public speaking competition, “Word from the Mountain Top,” is scheduled for 5 p.m. Sunday at the Auburn Chamber of Commerce Building on East Glenn Avenue. Students in age groups from middle school through college will address the question, “How can we rise above the confines of struggle and conflict within our society to inspire a greater love for humanity?”

A scholarship breakfast at 7:30 a.m. Monday at The Hotel at Auburn University will feature Vice President for Student Affairs Ainsley Carry as keynote speaker. For tickets, call 844-5042.

Monday will also provide an opportunity for community service in “A Day On and Not a Day Off.” To register, call 844-2976.

At 11:45 a.m. Tuesday in Student Center 2225-27, Nik Heynen, a professor of geography at the University of Georgia, will speak on “The Impact of Environmental Oppression.” Heynen’s presentation is part of the Multicultural Center’s Lunch and Learn Series.

Ohio State University Professor Hasan K. Jeffries, author of “Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt,” will discuss the Civil Rights Era and King’s lasting influence at 2 p.m. Wednesday in Student Center 2222-23.

Wylin Dassie Wilson, scholar-in-residence at St. Dunstan’s Episcopal Church, will speak on “Christian Identity and Economic Justice in the Rural South” at 3 p.m. Thursday in Special Collections and Archives at Draughon Library. Thursday’s activities will also include showing the film “Boycott” at 4 p.m. in the Multicultural Reading Room at the Student Center.
For faculty, students

Audiology work in Guatemala pays unexpected dividends

When Sandra Clark-Lewis, a clinical professor of audiology in Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts, arrived in Guatemala City last August, she never anticipated receiving as much from the local citizens as she planned to give to them, or how rewarding that exchange of cultures would be.

Clark-Lewis led six audiology doctoral students in August as they screened children for hearing loss — and fit hearing aids for those who needed them — during the project “Auburn Audiology Outreach in Guatemala.” They will return in March to provide more screening.

“The people of Guatemala City were so appreciative of our work,” Clark-Lewis said. “I didn’t know exactly what to expect before we went, but the kindness they showed us was priceless.”

During the weeklong trip, the group visited three schools in the area: Los Cedros, a school for boys; Las Rosas, a school for girls; and Los Patitos, a school for children ages 5 and under.

“We started with screening,” said Emma Rice, one of the doctoral students who went on the trip. “If they passed, they were sent back to their classroom. If they failed, they went on for further testing to confirm their hearing loss.”

The group, which also included Martha Miller and Jennifer Esfahani, Auburn alumnae, and Barbara Miller, assistant vice president of Auburn’s Office of Development, tested about 400 children for hearing loss. For the children with confirmed hearing loss, the Auburn group made ear molds that would secure one of 40 new hearing aids donated by GN ReSound.

Clark-Lewis said seeing the cultural differences in Guatemala City, such as the city practically shutting down at noon for an hour-long lunch break, was very educational.

“We were sort of surprised at how good it felt to do that,” Clark-Lewis said. “The food they serve at the schools was good, whole, fresh food. There’s nothing ‘fast’ about it. It’s ‘slow’ food.”

Rice said they would have worked through the lunch hour, but taking that hour a day to stop and just communicate helped them build relationships with the students, staff and translators.

“The other students and I learned a lot from that,” Rice said. “Not that we didn’t want to take the time to get to know them, but it hadn’t been our top priority, since we were there to work.”

With the exception of that one hour a day, Rice and the other doctoral students – Blakely Mitchell, Bradley Hess, Jackie Brooke, Alison Norwood and Anesheia Caesar – worked tirelessly during the trip. Though they mainly tested the hearing of students at the three schools, they did not turn down others who wanted their hearing screened.

“We had a woman bring her young son from two hours away,” Rice said. “She heard through the grapevine that we were coming. It left a big impact on me that we were very much needed there. They probably would have never received this help had we not come.”

The group also received a visit from Georgina Mariscal, the first audiologist in Guatemala and an Auburn audiology alumna. Clark-Lewis said Mariscal returned to the schools recently to meet with the children who received hearing aids during their visit.

“After returning to the U.S., we had state-of-the-art earmolds made for each child and sent them to Georgina, and she delivered them to the schools,” Clark-Lewis said.

The group is planning to return to Guatemala City during spring break 2010 to continue its work. They gave a portable audiometer, which is the tool used to screen hearing, to the Guatemala City schools and trained them to use it during their initial trip.

“It is important for the schools to be able to procure their own hearing screening program in order to sustain this project,” Rice said. “When we return we can retest the children who have failed and fit them with hearing aids, if they need them.”

— Natalie Nettles

International outreach

A child from Los Patitos, a school for children aged 5 and under, undergoes hearing screening.

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Honorary degree

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where he held various positions in the nuclear division, including managing the Farley Nuclear Plant. Later, as chief nuclear officer of the Nuclear Generation Group at the Tennessee Valley Authority, he was credited with the turnaround of the agency’s nuclear program and the restart of TVA’s shutdown units.

In 1997, he joined Unicom as president and chief nuclear officer of its nuclear generation group. Under his leadership, the company’s nuclear program experienced marked improvement and growth, and in 2000, Unicom merged with PECO to create Exelon Corporation. Before his retirement in 2004, Kingsley served as president and chief operating officer of Exelon Corporation and as chief executive of Exelon Generation, which today is one of the largest power generators in the nation.

“Oliver has been more than successful in his endeavors on behalf of the College of Engineering,” said Engineering Dean Larry Benefield. “I personally applaud his efforts as he works tirelessly toward his goals, and we look forward to his continued accomplishments for Auburn University.”

— Sara Borchik

King Week activities

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At 11:45 a.m. Friday, Jan. 22, the week will culminate with a Martin Luther King Jr. birthday celebration in the Multicultural Reading Room at the Student Center featuring music and reflections on the life and contributions of the nation’s preeminent civil rights and social reform leader.

The King Week activities are coordinated by Access and Community Initiatives, a unit of the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs. For more information on King Week at Auburn University, see the Web site www.auburn.edu/aukingweek.
Auburn named Scholarship Provider of Year for 2009

A national organization recently recognized Auburn as Scholarship Provider of the Year for 2009.

Presented at the National Scholarship Providers Association annual conference in New Orleans, the award recognized the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Affairs’ Provost Leadership Undergraduate Scholar, or PLUS, program.

The PLUS program provides academic and social support to Auburn students pursuing their undergraduate studies. The program, which provides an $8,000 four-year, renewable scholarship at $2,000 per academic year, has been developed to complement the goals of the Auburn University Strategic Diversity Plan.

“This award is a great honor and tribute to Auburn University,” said Overtoun Jenda, associate provost for diversity and multicultural affairs. “We are really excited for the PLUS students and dedicated staff who have made it possible for the PLUS program to receive nationwide recognition.”

PLUS includes a retention program that provides peer mentoring, leadership opportunities and training, time management and study skills, tutoring and counseling services and an opportunity for participants to enroll together in a series of classes throughout their freshman and sophomore years.

The program has benefited 125 students since its inception in 2006. Of those students, 55 are first-generation college students.

The Scholarship Provider of the Year award includes a $2,500 prize, recognition at the NSPFA conference and on their Web site, a plaque and an invitation to present a session at next year’s conference.

Auburn awarded more than $33 million in scholarships for the 2009-10 academic year. Sixty-five percent of all freshmen who enrolled and 27 percent of all enrolled students received scholarships, compared to last year’s 56 percent and 23 percent, respectively. Overall scholarship amounts awarded by the university have increased by more than $18 million over the last four years.

“We are especially grateful to the Board of Trustees for establishing two key scholarship programs effective for the 2007-08 academic year,” said Director of University Scholarships Velda Rooker.

“Both the Spirit of Auburn Scholarship for Alabama residents and the Academic Scholarship for nonresidents directly contributed to the significant increase in scholarships awarded,” Rooker said. “We received another boost this past year when we began offering an on-campus housing allowance for four years to National Merit Finalists, National Achievement Finalists and National Hispanic Scholars.”

— Carol Nelson

Education faculty named to leadership posts in state, national organizations

Two College of Education faculty members have recently been elected to leadership positions in state and national education organizations.

Marilyn Strutchens, a Mildred Cheshire Fraley Distinguished Professor of secondary mathematics in the Department of Curriculum and Teaching, becomes president-elect of the Association of Mathematics Teacher Educators this month. She takes office at the conclusion of the organization’s annual conference in Irvine, Calif., and will serve four years total — one as president-elect, two as president and one with the following president-elect.

Ellen Reames, an assistant professor and program coordinator of educational leadership in the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology, has been elected vice president of the Alabama Association for Professors of Educational Leadership. Her election adds to the college’s history of leadership within the organization. Frances Kochan, dean of the College of Education, served as the organization’s interim president when it formed in 1996 and became president in 1998.

Engineering, Nursing joining forces in Kid Check program

Through a grant from Verizon, researchers in Auburn’s College of Engineering are teaming up with the School of Nursing to bolster Kid Check, a program that provides health screenings to children in Alabama’s rural communities.

The Kid Check program enables nursing students to conduct free health screenings for K-12 children in communities that are medically underserved or have high poverty levels. The assessments identify children at risk for chronic health issues and diseases and provide them with referrals to area physicians. They also offer health education to modify any identified risk factors.

One of the hurdles to efficient screenings and securing patient information has been the paperwork to record patient data. Under the direction of engineering faculty member Richard Chapman, wireless engineering students have proposed a system to automate data gathering during Kid Check assessments. With portable wireless devices, the system will permit instant statistical analysis of data by Auburn nurses to assist in recommending referrals and lifestyle changes.

“This is a significant opportunity for (Nursing and Engineering) to be involved in an interdisciplinary project,” said Chapman. “It’s important that the people making software be involved with the people using software. This project gets the developers and designers working together with the professionals who will really use the technology.”

While the primary focus is the accurate, confidential and instantaneous analysis of data in the field, the automated data collection system will also make important health data accessible to public health professionals, as well as state policy makers, while maintaining patient privacy. The system will be used by nursing students to conduct Kid Check assessments this spring.

“So many children and families in rural areas don’t have easy access to health care,” said Barbara Wilder, a School of Nursing faculty member involved with the Kid Check program. “Through this program, our students are able to identify children who may have a previously unrecognized need, while getting experience in the area of community health.”
Achievements

Alabama Farmers Federation honors Agriculture Dean Richard Guthrie

Alabama’s largest and most diversified farm organization has awarded its highest honor to Richard Guthrie, dean of Auburn’s College of Agriculture and director of the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, in recognition of the contributions Guthrie has made to Alabama agriculture throughout a 45-year career that includes 26 years at Auburn University.

The Alabama Farmers Federation presented its Service to Agriculture Award to Guthrie in December during the organization’s 88th annual meeting in Mobile. Guthrie first came to Auburn in 1958 on a football scholarship and four years later received his bachelor’s degree in agronomy and soils, followed in 1965 by a master’s in soil science. He earned his doctorate from Cornell University in 1968 and worked for several years for the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a soil scientist in what today is the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and returned to Auburn in 1983 as a professor and head of the Department of Agronomy and Soils.

From 1985-88, he served as acting dean of the College of Agriculture and then was named associate dean of international agriculture programs, a position he held until his first official retirement in 2003. In fall 2005, Guthrie came out of retirement to assume the dean and director positions he now holds but from which he has announced he will permanently retire in May.

Robinson named winner of two national awards in field of kinesiology

Leah Robinson, an assistant professor in the College of Education’s Department of Kinesiology, has been announced as the recipient of a pair of national awards for 2010.

The American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance selected her as the recipient of the Mabel Lee Award, and the Motor Development and Learning Academy Committee of the National Association for Sport and Physical Education selected Robinson as the recipient of the Lola E. Halverson Motor Development and Learning Young Investigator Award.

The Mabel Lee Award recognizes young American Alliance members who have demonstrated outstanding potential in scholarship, teaching and/or professional leadership. The Halverson Motor Development and Learning Young Investigator Award celebrates young professionals who have made outstanding research contributions to the field of motor development.

Robinson focuses much of her research on early childhood motor skill development and physical activity with a special emphasis on at-risk children. She will receive both awards in March during the 2010 American Alliance national convention in Indianapolis. As a result of winning the Halverson Award, Robinson has been invited to present her research at the 2011 Motor Development and Learning Academy Forum in San Diego.

Penaskovic authors book with brother on religious life, other topics

Richard Penaskovic, professor of religious studies in the College of Liberal Arts, has coauthored with his twin brother Robert the book “Bobby Brown and Richie Blue: A Spiritual Memoir.” The book discusses topics ranging from the pre- and post-Vatican II church and religious life, urban life in the 1950s, the antinomies between Italians and Slovaks and the psyche of twins. The book is available through the AU Bookstore and Amazon.com.

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