Spring, finally

March finally arrived in April this year, and Auburn students have been making up for the slow start to spring. A.K. Bruton, a public relations/pre-law major from Birmingham was one of several students who took advantage of a windy day for kite flying last week during a WEGL-sponsored event on Cater Lawn.

Program offers faculty, staff option of saving on health insurance

In exchange for having their blood pressure, glucose and cholesterol levels checked, Auburn faculty and staff can save $25 a month on their health insurance premiums next year under the new Healthy Tigers Initiative.

Employee participation is optional for the program, which is a joint venture of the university’s Office of Payroll and Employee Benefits and the Harrison School of Pharmacy. The medical screenings begin May 3, and insurance savings for participants will start Jan. 1, 2011, at the beginning of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama accounting year for Auburn’s employee health insurance plan.

The savings, up to $300 a year, will actually be the lesser of two benefits for some participants, especially those who are at risk for heart disease or diabetes and do not know it, says the initiative’s coordinator, Kimberly Braxton Lloyd, assistant dean for pharmacy health services in Auburn’s Harrison School of Pharmacy.

Based on a similar and well-received program for State of Alabama employees, the Healthy Tigers Initiative is designed to slow the annual increase in health insurance premiums by offering an incentive for university employees to learn more about their own health. “Based on the experience of plans elsewhere,” Braxton Lloyd said, “a significant number of persons will use that knowledge to protect their health.”

In addition to the benefits that individuals receive from early detection and management of potential medical problems, she said a widespread emphasis on health and wellness can provide additional insurance savings for all employees and the university.

If the experience is the same at Auburn as elsewhere, she said, everyone in the health insurance plan will benefit through a slower rise in premiums. “Studies have shown that implementing a health and wellness plan can decrease the rate of increase in health-care costs,” she explained. “Disease states that are caught and managed early have better outcomes for the employee and are less expensive to treat.”

Braxton Lloyd said the effort to slow the increase in health care costs is doubly important for Auburn’s faculty and staff because the university is self-insured. Although Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Alabama administers the plan, all claims are paid from a funding pool financed chiefly by premiums from employees and the university.

To qualify for the savings, faculty and staff members can either participate in a free health screening on campus between the first part of May and the end of November or have their physician submit a form, available soon, with the results of a health screening by the individual’s physician before the end of November.

Braxton Lloyd said the screening will measure a limited number of indicators — blood pressure, cholesterol and glucose levels — that are important to everyone who cares about his or her health and quality of life. She noted that many individuals already receive regular health screenings from their physicians, and many of those are following the advice of their doctors to protect their health.

Others assume that they are in good health and don’t bother to get routine medi-
Insurance discount

continued from page 1

ecal screening to confirm it, she noted. These individuals stand the most to gain from routine, annual health care screening, Braxton Lloyd said, noting that, in addition to the $25 monthly discount on health insurance, they can get an early diagnosis of a potentially life-threatening medical condition.

Free screenings will be available after May 1 by appointment at the Auburn University Pharmaceutical Care Center in the W.W. Walker Building, home of the Harrison School of Pharmacy.

The program will also offer a series of health and wellness screenings, similar to last fall’s flu vaccine clinics, across campus, and at Auburn-Montgomery.

Employees will also have the option of having the screening done at their doctor’s office, with the physician submitting the form. The results of screenings since Jan. 1 will be accepted. In addition, a network of pharmacies across the state is being enlisted in the program to screen Auburn University employees who do not work at the main campus.

If the screening reveals very high health-risk factors, the person will be referred to his or her physician for consultation, and the $25 insurance co-pay for the doctor’s visit will be waived. Following the consultation, the employee will be eligible for the premium reduction.

Braxton Lloyd said the State of Alabama’s voluntary program demonstrated that a voluntary program with incentives can be very successful. The program for state employees has a 95 percent participation rate and is seeing its insurance costs running 15 percent to 20 percent below those of other government insurance plans and those of private employers.

With the cost of health care continuing to increase across America, health insurance premiums may continue to rise in 2011 and beyond. But Braxton Lloyd noted that participants in the Healthy Tiger Initiative will still pay $25 less per month than non-participants.

Additional information and updates about the initiative will be posted online at www.auburn.edu/healthytigers.

— Roy Summerford

Tickets available at Human Resources for Wednesday’s Administrative Professionals Day celebration luncheon

Motivational speaker Kurt Kilpatrick will be guest speaker at a luncheon celebrating Administrative Professionals Day on Wednesday, April 21.

Kilpatrick, who is a certified speaking professional and has recorded three comedy albums, will speak on the topic “90 Percent of Life is Half Mental” at the 11:30 a.m. luncheon in the Student Center Ballroom.

Kilpatrick earned a doctorate of jurisprudence degree from the Jackson School of Law at Mississippi College, and performs on the “Burt and Kurt Center for Common Sense,” a daily radio talk show on the Crawford Broadcasting network.

Because of limited seating, reservations should be made early. For more information and for registration forms, see the Web site www.auburn.edu/administration/human_resources/emprelations/apdaylunch.pdf.
Former Auburn SGA president to attend Cambridge this fall as Rotary Scholar

Lauren Hayes, a spring 2009 Auburn University graduate and former Student Government Association president, has won a Rotary Foundation Ambassadorial Scholarship to attend Cambridge University this fall.

Hayes will pursue a master of philosophy degree in education with a focus on politics, development and democratic education. She will examine the charter school movement in the United States and the United Kingdom.

“I feel extremely blessed and fortunate to have this experience ahead of me,” said Hayes. “I’m extremely thankful for the Rotary Club for this opportunity to study at Cambridge and for my friends, family and Auburn professors and administrators who provided so much support and encouragement throughout this process.”

She added, “I believe my education at Auburn both in and out of the classroom prepared and inspired me to pursue the Rotary Scholarship.”

As a student at Auburn, Hayes was elected the university’s second female SGA president and in that role spearheaded the successful effort to build a new student recreation and wellness center as well as helped to create the position of vice president for student affairs for the university. She graduated with a 3.93 grade-point average in the College of Liberal Arts, majoring in public administration and German.

Because of her numerous academic and leadership accomplishments, Hayes was selected to the USA Today Academic All USA Second Team in the spring of 2009. The former student leader now serves as co-chair of the Honors College Development Council and on the College of Liberal Arts Women’s Leadership Institute Board of Advisors.

“Lauren Hayes is an embodiment of the Auburn Woman — a woman with true character,” said Paul Harris, associate director of the National Prestigious Scholarship Office at Auburn. “I am reminded of a quote on character which encompasses the person of Lauren Hayes: ‘What is character? Character can be described as someone who does the right thing, who works hard and doesn’t cut corners.’ Lauren is one of the hardest working students I know, always doing the right thing and never cutting corners.”

During the study period, scholars are expected to be outstanding ambassadors of goodwill to the people of the host country through both informal and formal appearances before Rotary clubs and districts, school and civic organizations and other forums. After study has been completed, scholars share their experiences with the people of their home countries and with the local Rotarians who sponsored their scholarship.

— Mike Clardy

Arkansas educator appointed as College of Business dean

Bill Hardgrave, founder and executive director of the Information Technology Research Institute in the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas, has been named dean of Auburn’s College of Business.

“Dr. Hardgrave brings to Auburn a tremendously high level of expertise in business and in the constantly emerging technologies that improve product development and distribution,” said Auburn Provost Mary Ellen Mazey. “As founding director of a center, he has extensive experience in collaborating across academic disciplines and with the business community.”

Hardgrave holds the Edwin and Karlee Brabrand Chair in Information Systems at Arkansas and is the founder and director of the RFID Research Center. His research and publications have focused on software development and radio frequency identification, or RFID, which involves placing a small tag on a product for inventory management, tracking and pricing.

“I strongly believe in engaging the business community in all that we do, because this deep interaction will be a key to our ascension,” Hardgrave said.

Hardgrave added, “We will work closely with our multiple stakeholders to create an environment of engaged scholarship, which will enhance the educational experience of our students, enlighten our research and boost the value of our outreach regionally, nationally and globally.”

In 1999, Hardgrave established the Information Technology Research Institute at Arkansas with a $4 million endowment from the Walton Family Charitable Trust Foundation. In 2005, he founded the RFID Research Center which quickly became one of the world’s leading centers for examining the business value of RFID. In 2008, the RFID Research Center’s lab was named by NetworkWorld as one of the “10 coolest labs” in the United States.

Hardgrave received his doctorate in management information systems from Oklahoma State University. Before entering academia, he worked in a variety of roles for software development firms.

— Charles Martin
Flag for Iraq
Auburn resident Mike Watkins shows a flag he created commemorating Auburn University to send to his son-in-law, U.S. Army Sgt. Ben Bryant, for display with other collegiate flags at army base “Q-West” in western Iraq and to accompany some combat missions. The flag features signatures of University President Jay Gogue, Alabama Gov. Bob Riley, Senators Richard Shelby and Jeff Sessions, Congressman Mike Rogers, State Rep. Mike Hubbard, Auburn Mayor Bill Ham, Auburn Army ROTC Battalion Cmdr. Jon Segars and Coach Gene Chizik.

On April 30
‘Auburn Pops!’ benefit concert to raise funds for scholarships

The Auburn Community Orchestra, conducted by Howard Goldstein, will present “Auburn Pops!”, a benefit performance of historic hits from Broadway, at Telfair Peet Theatre on April 30.

Proceeds from the event will support scholarships in the departments of Art, Music and Theatre in the College of Liberal Arts.

The evening begins with a pre-show celebration at the home of Auburn University President and Mrs. Jay Gogue for the first 200 ticket holders at 6:30 p.m., followed by the 75-minute concert performance in the Peet Theatre beginning at 8:30 p.m.

Billed as “a grand tour through some of the greatest hits in the history of the Broadway musical,” the concert will feature tunes from “Cabaret,” “Porgy and Bess,” “Chicago,” “Oklahoma,” “Les Miserables,” “A Chorus Line,” “Hair-spray” and other popular musicals.

Daydrie Hague of the Theatre Department will serve as the evening’s mistress of ceremonies.

Lighting designer Joel Shier — the assistant lighting designer for the current Broadway production of “The Addams Family” — will provide the production’s main design elements, and the choreography is by Claudia Oates. The entire production is under the direction of University Theatre’s Music Director Joseph Bates.

Works produced by art majors will adorn the Telfair Peet Theatre gallery during the performance and theatre and music majors will be featured in the show.

Individual tickets for the performance are $125 and two tickets are $200. To reserve tickets or for more information, contact Marjorie Teeter at teetemb@auburn.edu or 844-4154.

Engineering student receives Goldwater Scholarship for 2010

David Marshall Harris, a junior in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering majoring in chemical engineering at Auburn, has been chosen as a 2010 Barry M. Goldwater Scholar.

The scholarship, awarded to only about 300 students nationwide, is widely considered the most prestigious award in the United States for undergraduates in the science, engineering, technology, architecture, and mathematics disciplines.

Harris specializes in biomedical applications of chemical engineering, and his goal is to use polymer engineering to make a safer and more effective drug-eluting stent. A graduate of Spain Park High School in Hoover, he is a member of the University Honors College.

Harris’ research has been guided by Mark Byrne, the Mary and John Sanders Associate Professor of Chemical Engineering and director of the Biomedical Devices and Drug Delivery Labs at Auburn.

“Receiving this scholarship was a pleasant surprise as well as a career validation for me,” the honors student said. “I want to go to medical school as part of an M.D. and Ph.D. program and have a career in biotechnology and patient care. I chose my research project because there is a great need for safer drug-eluting stents and I hope to be able to provide that one day.”

“David deserves this significant honor, and he stands out among his peers by his excellence both inside and outside the classroom,” Byrne said.

“He has remarkable scholarship and is highly motivated, both contributing to his unparalleled professional promise. This scholarship and the recognition associated with it gives him the opportunity to make substantial strides in an open-ended educational pursuit such as research,” Byrne continued.

“Competition for the scholarship is intense,” said Paul Harris, associate director of the National Prestigious Scholarship Office. “We can select only four undergraduate students to submit applications at the national level. The applicants must write a research proposal and explain to the selection committee what their findings were and also submit three letters of recommendation. We select only the strongest candidates to move forward.”

Meanwhile, Zachary Devries, a junior in the College of Sciences and Mathematics majoring in zoology and a graduate of Auburn High School, was named a 2010 Barry M. Goldwater Honorable Mention. An Undergraduate Research Fellow and member of the University Honors College, Devries’ research involves the behavioral and physiological responses to low aquatic oxygen levels in two species of salamanders and was directed by Raymond Henry, professor and assistant chair in the Department of Biological Sciences.

The Barry M. Goldwater Scholarship Program was established to provide scholarships to outstanding students who intend to pursue careers in mathematics, the natural sciences and engineering. Each scholarship covers eligible expenses up to a maximum of $7,500 annually for undergraduate tuition, fees, books and housing.

In awarding scholarships, the foundation of trustees considers the nominee’s field of study and career objectives along with the extent to which that individual has the commitment and potential to make a significant contribution to the field of science or engineering.

— Brittany Cosby
Canebrakes

An Auburn professor wants today’s Alabamians to experience a once-common but increasingly rare plant that Native Americans used as a mainstay in daily life and that 18th century naturalists saw as prime wildlife habitat.

Mark Smith, an assistant professor in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences, is developing ways to restore river cane that once covered floodplains throughout the state. “It’s extremely beneficial for wildlife, soil erosion prevention and could possibly be used as an agricultural commodity,” Smith said.

Smith, who is also a specialist with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, is excavating river cane plants in Alabama and sending them to a project collaborator, Roundstone Seed Company in Upton, Ky., which will use greenhouses to grow 25,000 sprigs from the roots. A year from now, Smith will plant those sprigs on three 30-acre plots in Marshall and Etowah counties in North Alabama.

“Many birds depend on canebrakes as habitat,” he said. “The endangered and possibly extinct Bachman’s Warbler once thrived in canebrakes. Deer and other game animals also like cane thickets.”

According to the online Encyclopedia of Alabama, canebrakes, also spelled canebreaks, once covered much of the Southeast. Naturalist and artist William Bartram in the 1770s described “vast cane meadows,” “cane pastures” and “an endless wilderness of canes.” On the lower Tombigbee River in 1775, Bartram noted canes as “thick as a man’s arm, or three or four inches in diameter.”

River cane is an American relative of Asian bamboo that spreads by means of underground stems and can reach heights of 30 feet. Native Americans used river cane to build shelters and to make baskets, arrow shafts and a variety of utensils.

“Canebrakes have disappeared over time as land was cleared for other agricultural purposes,” Smith said. “There are a few small canebrakes in places, but most of the large, historic canebrakes are gone. We believe there is much benefit to restore some areas of river cane.”

Smith’s work at Auburn builds upon laboratory work done at Mississippi State University, where he obtained his doctorate in 2004.

— Charles Martin
Senior in Education earns Fulbright assistantship to teach in south of France

Helen Hunter Robertson, a senior in the College of Education at Auburn, has been awarded a Fulbright-French Ministry of Education Teaching Assistantship to teach in France for the academic year 2010-11.

Robertson, who is majoring in foreign language education/French, will be placed in the Academie de Toulouse where she will be assigned to one or more schools in the Toulouse region of southern France.

Each year the Fulbright Scholarship program and the French Ministry of Education allot 50 applications for the Fulbright-French Ministry of Education teaching assistantship. The application process requires a detailed project proposal and personal statement. The applicant must also submit three letters of recommendation, a letter certifying fluency in French and interview with the campuswide selection committee.

“I was highly impressed by Helen in the interview, as well as in her application materials,” said Ralph Kingston, an assistant professor of history who served on the Fulbright selection committee.

“We talked a good deal about time she spent in Paris, and her experience working with high school students learning French in Columbus. At one stage of the interview, I even switched to speaking French and she didn’t skip a beat. She was smart, motivated and keen to take what she learned at Auburn into the community.”

Selection Committee member Ralph Kingston

Robertson was the only student from Auburn to apply for the Fulbright-French Ministry of Education English Teaching Assistantship this year, but nationwide there are more than 500 applicants for 50 assistantships. The award is $1,200 per month, a monthly stipend which is reportedly equivalent to the earnings of a French citizen who is awarded a graduate assistantship.

“She was smart, motivated and keen to take what she learned at Auburn into the community.”

Penaskovic to discuss spiritual memoir in public lecture at Draughon Library

Religious Studies Professor Richard Penaskovic, author of “Bobby Brown & Richie Blue: A Spiritual Memoir,” will discuss the book in a public lecture at 3 p.m. Thursday, April 22, in Special Collections and Archives at Draughon Library.

Penaskovic’s book is the story of a set of twins and their unique perspective on life. The book discusses topics ranging from the pre- and post-Vatican II church and religious life, urban life in the 1950s, the antinomies between two ethnic groups: the Italians and the Slovaks, and the psyche of twins.

Penaskovic is a professor in the Department of Philosophy in the College of Liberal Arts.

The public lecture is sponsored by the Caroline Marshall Draughon Center for the Arts and Humanities in the College of Liberal Arts, Auburn University Libraries, and the Auburn University Bookstore. Additional information about the program and the series is available at the center at 844-4946 or online at www.auburn.edu/cah.

AT&T presents grant to College of Business

Telecommunications giant AT&T has given Auburn’s College of Business $200,000 to support the new Office of Professional and Career Development. AT&T gave the gift through its philanthropic arm, the AT&T Foundation.

The gift will be used for technological equipment and applications such as computers, database subscriptions and computerized assessment tools.

Scheduled to open this fall, the new office will serve business students and student organizations by centralizing employers’ activities, including recruiting, career education, professional development and faculty relations.

Students will be provided with coaching assistance, career and industry resources and technology applications as they choose career options, develop job searching skills and learn how to identify and network with employers.

“We are pleased to work with Auburn University to provide business students and their future employers this important resource,” said AT&T Alabama President Fred McCallum Jr., a 1979 Auburn graduate.

AT&T’s previous gifts and pledges to Auburn include $400,000 for a program to reduce high school dropout rates and $150,000 to the College of Engineering’s minority engineering program. The foundation has pledged a total of $750,000 to the university.
Byrne receives Auburn’s first award for mentoring undergraduate research and creative scholarship

Mark Byrne, an associate professor in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, has received the 2010 inaugural Provost’s Award for Faculty Excellence in Fostering Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship at Auburn.

Provost Mary Ellen Mazey presented the award to Byrne at the seventh annual Auburn University Undergraduate Research and Creative Forum on April 7, following his selection by a five-member committee of faculty and students.

The new award will be presented annually to recognize a faculty member who has taken extraordinary measures to mentor undergraduate students in research and scholarship endeavors.

“Auburn University is committed to encouraging and creating significant opportunities for undergraduate scholarship and creative endeavors outside the classroom,” said Mazey. “It is important that we recognize faculty members, such as Dr. Byrne, who are leading the way in establishing undergraduate research at Auburn and nationally.”

Mazey added, “One of the things that stands out about Dr. Byrne is his dedication to helping undergraduate students understand the importance of research and scholarship in their total academic experience and then helping them move beyond the fundamentals into scholastic endeavors of the highest quality. He is having a huge impact on the future success of his students.”

Byrne, the Mary and John H. Sanders associate professor of chemical engineering in the Samuel Ginn College of Engineering, was nominated by Chemical Engineering Department Chair Chris Roberts, with letters of support from several former students, who have progressed to graduate school, medical school or professional careers.

“Dr. Byrne is world class in his ability to engage and challenge undergraduate research students to reach their utmost potential,” wrote Roberts. “While the sheer number of students that he has mentored is impressive, it is their meteoric level of achievement that makes his contributions through undergraduate research and scholarship most remarkable.”

Roberts noted that two students mentored by Byrne placed first nationally in undergraduate research competition at the 2006 and 2008 annual meetings of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers. “As a result of Dr. Byrne’s mentorship, these students have reached the epitome of what we hope to have our students achieve in Chemical Engineering at Auburn University,” he wrote.

In remarks to the award committee, Byrne said he emphasizes to his students the value of failure as well as success in research. “They learned to fail often, but in that failure they learned to succeed. Success was not awarded; it was earned by many of them and is not only reflected in awards, publications or presentations.”

Byrne, who holds a Ph.D. from Purdue, has been a faculty member at Auburn for six years. In that time, he has mentored 20 undergraduate researchers in his lab and directed with Steve Duke an interdisciplinary project, the National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduate Programs, that involved 32 students. He also serves as an organizer for the Undergraduate Research and Creative Scholarship Symposium Forum.

— Roy Summerford
In ‘Audubon’s Final Achievement,’ JCS Museum displays rare birdless exhibit of famed naturalist’s mammal prints

Auburn University’s Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art has opened a new exhibition, “Audubon’s Final Achievement: The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America,” on view through July 3 in the newly reopened Louise Hauss and Davis Brent Miller Audubon Galleries.

Of the original bound volumes of “The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America,” many sets were taken apart for individual display or sale. The Jule Collins Smith Museum has, as part of its permanent collection, The Louise Hauss and Davis Brent Miller Audubon Collection, an exceptionally fine, complete set of the bound first edition of “The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America.”

Audubon’s 19th century paintings of quadrupeds are still considered the finest animal prints published in America.

The Quadruped folios are being displayed for the first time at the Jule Collins Smith Museum. The exhibition is completed with prints on loan from The Museum of the Southwest, Midland, Texas, and two original preparatory oil paints by John Woodhouse Audubon on loan from The John James Audubon Museum in Hendersonville, Ky.

Also on display are objects from the collecting expedition Audubon made in 1843 on loan from the State of Alabama Department of Archives and History. A digital catalogue of all 150 images in the Miller Collection will be available in the gallery on April 9.

Early in the 1840s, John James Audubon decided to collaborate with his long-time friend, the Rev. John Bachman of Charleston, S.C., to produce a folio edition of all the four-legged land mammals of North America. Bachman supplied much of the scientific knowledge to identify and name the mammals. With the assistance of his wife, Maria Martin, the two produced a companion text for each of the three volumes of the publication.

Audubon’s sons, John Woodhouse and Victor, supplied many of the original drawings of the mammals and backgrounds, and managed the business affairs of the project.

“The Viviparous Quadrupeds of North America” was published in three volumes of 50 plates each between 1845 and 1848. J.T. Bowen, a printer from Philadelphia, produced the stone lithographs, which were hand finished by watercolorists. Bowen created an estimated 300 sets.

Kiplinger to keynote April 26 symposium

The Women’s Philanthropy Board in the College of Human Sciences will present its eighth annual Spring Symposium from 8 a.m.-2 p.m. April 26 at The Hotel at Auburn University.

At this year’s symposium on “Thriving in the ‘New Normal’: Maximizing Your Philanthropic Footprint,” business and government leaders will discuss financial and economic issues. The luncheon keynote speaker will be economic journalist and business forecaster Knight Kiplinger, editor-in-chief of Kiplinger’s Personal Finance Magazine, Kiplinger.com and the Kiplinger Letter.

Registration for the symposium is $85 and includes the 12:30 p.m. luncheon. Tables of 10 can be reserved for $850. Contact Sidney James Nakhjavan at 844-9199.

Donna Bohanan presents Final Lecture to Class of 2010 and others in community. See page 6.