Family Fun Day 2014 festival coming next week

Auburn University will hold its 18th annual Family Fun Day for university employees and their families on Wednesday, June 4, at Ag Heritage Park on Donahue Drive from 12:30-4:30 p.m.

The annual festival features musical entertainment and a wide variety of games and activities for adults and children, as well as free food, beverages and other treats, with services contracted through an outside vendor.

In addition, Healthy Tigers will be on hand to conduct a screening clinic inside the Ham Wilson Arena, providing an opportunity for employees or their spouses to complete a health screening to save on health insurance premiums.

Lynne Hammond, assistant vice president for human resources, said Family Fun Day has grown over the years while remaining true to the original concept. “Albert Snipes, our employee relations director, now retired, came up with the idea for Family Fun Day years ago as a way to let our employees know they are appreciated and to give them an opportunity to bring their families on campus for some good, old-fashioned fun. The event has become an annual tradition that our employees seem to really enjoy.”

Hammond continued, “The event is also a way to bring our Auburn Family together to foster a sense of community and celebrate a shared purpose in the work we do for the people of the state of Alabama and beyond.”

At left: Inflatables are always a top draw for kids at the annual Family Fun Day, as shown in this scene from the 2011 festival.

Construction projects visible across campus this summer

Several major construction projects on the Auburn campus overseen by Auburn University Facilities Management are scheduled for completion by the start of the 2014 fall semester. Facilities officials say another 15 to 20 percent of Auburn’s 307 current construction projects are expected to be completed this summer.

“Following spring graduation, our Facilities Management staff began work on a number of summer projects that are best completed when we have unoccupied classrooms and less pedestrian and vehicular traffic on campus,” said Ron Booth, director of program management and project execution. “In addition to the completion of many summer projects, we are also looking forward to finishing other major projects including the renovation of Samford Park at Toomer’s Corner and the new Wellness Kitchen on South Donahue.”

Major construction projects planned for summer completion include:

**Samford Park at Toomer’s Corner**
Phase I of the redevelopment and enhancement of Samford Park at Toomer’s Corner includes the installation of new pavers, soil replacement and a circular seating wall. After widespread soil testing and excavation work, the site was declared free of poison, allowing new trees to be transplanted in early 2015. J.A. Lett Construction Company Inc. of Auburn was awarded the project.

**Telfair Peet Theatre Addition**
The Telfair Peet Theatre project is a two-story 10,471-square-foot “Black Box Theatre” addition to the existing building. Once completed, the addition will accommodate seating for up to 150 patrons, a 1,500-square-foot dance studio and additional lobby and support space. Bear Brothers Construction was awarded the project.

**Wellness Kitchen Dining Facility**
The Wellness Kitchen Dining Facility is a 13,170-square-foot building across the street from the new South Donahue Residence Hall. It will offer indoor seating for 216 students, faculty and staff and outdoor seating for 88. The facility will provide a healthy dining venue for the campus community and include custom-designed meal programs for athletes on specialized training regimens. Bailey-Harris Construction was awarded the project.

**Equestrian Center Phase I: Arena Pavilion**
The Equestrian Center Arena Pavilion project is in the Horse Center on the south side of Wire Road across from the College of Veterinary Medicine. The project will construct a 48,600-square-foot pavilion roof for the existing western arena. Bailey-Harris Construction of Auburn was awarded the project.

**Lowder Hall Student and Faculty Lounge**
The Lowder Hall Student and Faculty Lounge is a 3,200-square-foot facility on the east side of Lowder Hall, near West Magnolia Avenue, and will feature a full-service Starbucks. The facility will offer indoor dining for 112 as well as additional outdoor patio dining. Rabren General Contractors of Auburn was awarded the project.

**Olympic Sport Support Facility – New Laundry Facility**
The Olympic Sport Support Facility is a 5,210-square-foot addition to the Athletic Complex building. The project relocates and consolidates two existing Athletics Department laundry facilities – one from the Coliseum and one from...
Auburn, Florida scientists’ discovery opens new doors for studies of evolution, potential advances in medicine

Scientists at Auburn University and the University of Florida have made a discovery that they predict will shake the very foundation of the evolutionary study of the animal kingdom.

With applications in the field of medicine, the researchers say the findings could lead to new ways to investigate neurodegenerative diseases, such as Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s, and open new avenues for bioengineering.

For more than a century, scientists have believed that sponges represented the earliest living lineages of the animal tree. Using advanced genomic sequencing techniques, researchers in Auburn and Gainesville discovered that ctenophores, or comb jellies, are actually at the base of the animal kingdom.

The research results were published May 21 in the journal Nature.

Study finds that internships give boost to students in job market

Those low-paying internships some of your students work in college may have a bigger impact on their future employment than they realize at this stage in life.

A recent study found that those who are underemployed, or have accepted a job beneath their skill set, receive 15-30 percent fewer interview requests than job seekers who became ‘adequately’ employed after graduation. However, college internship experience obtained by job seekers reduces the negative effects of underemployment substantially.

The authors of the study, Auburn’s Alan Seals, the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse’s John Nunley and Adam Pugh, and the University of Pennsylvania’s Nicholas Romero, submitted resumes to 2,000 online job postings in seven cities – Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Dallas, Los Angeles, Minneapolis and Portland – across job categories including banking, financial services, insurance, management, marketing and sales.

“Between January and July of last year, we sent out about 9,000 fictitious resumes from recent college graduates to online job postings,” said Seals, an assistant professor of economics in Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts. “We randomized the characteristics on the resumes – work experience, degrees, internship experience – and then calculated the difference in interview requests across these randomly assigned characteristics.”

Job seekers in the team’s sample included those unemployed at the time of application, those who had an initial spell of unemployment after graduation or those who had continuous employment following graduation. Because recent college graduates are likely to experience underemployment, applicants were randomly assigned work experience that either required no college education or required a college education and was specific to the industry of the potential employer.

“We find that potential employers do not take into account unemployment spells, even a year long, when deciding whether or not to interview a candidate,” Seals said. “However, we find that employers discriminate heavily against candidates who accept a job that is beneath his or her skill set or does not require a college degree.”

But the researchers found that internship experience obtained during the completion of one’s degree reduces the interview-request gap between the currently underemployed and the currently adequately employed by about 50 percent, while internship experience completely eliminates the interview-request gap between the previously underemployed and the previously adequately employed.

“To me, the take-home message is that for recent college graduates it is worse to take a job which does not require a college degree than it is to search for a job that does require a college degree while remaining unemployed,” Seals said. “The internships have a remarkably large and long-lasting effect on subsequent employment opportunities. This explains why so many young people are willing to work as interns for so little, or even, where allowed, for nothing at all.”

– Carol Nelson

A&P Assembly officers

Vic Walker, left, of Veterinary Medicine Clinical Services, has been elected chair-elect of the Administrative and Professional Assembly. Walker, who served as chair of the Staff Council in 2003-04, while in a different staff classification at Auburn, will move into the role of A&P chair-elect July 1, when Ashley Hamberlin, center, of Internal Auditing, becomes chair of the A&P Assembly for 2014-15. As chair, Hamberlin will succeed Bryan Elmore, right, of Budget Services, who will serve next year as the Assembly’s immediate past chair. The A&P Assembly represents non-faculty employees in administrative and professional classifications in matters of university governance.
At Jule Collins Smith Museum

Historic Auburn Oak lives on in world of art

A large woodturned bowl created from a portion of one of the famed Auburn Oaks is the highlighted feature in a new exhibition “Matt Moulthrop: Auburn Oak,” at the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art.

The exhibition is on display through Aug. 31 and runs concurrently with a retrospective of the Moulthrop family, “Heartwood: Woodturned Vessels by Matt, Philip and Ed Moulthrop.” Following the exhibitions’ closings, the Auburn Oak bowl will remain on view through 2015 as part of the museum’s growing permanent collection.

Third-generation woodturner Matt Moulthrop of Atlanta makes his art working primarily with southern tree species, in addition to trees from all over the United States. “You can go all over the country, and often it’s really the trees that can make a place special,” said Moulthrop. “People have memories of that visual of a landscape.”

Moulthrop said he followed the national coverage and reached out to alumnus Jim Gorrie, who was then able to connect him with university and museum administrators about creating a piece for the museum’s collection. “I went to view the Auburn Oaks as living trees and looked at what sections had the most interest,” he said. “I picked a section of the tree on College Street. There was a ‘Y,’ like a fork, in the tree near the top – almost like a crown.”

The selected portion was delivered to Moulthrop following the final roll in April 2013. He exposed the wood to the elements for several months as part of his preparation. He then created a rough form of the bowl before applying a treatment to prevent it from cracking. Following additional shaping and sanding, he applied a specialized finish, invented by his grandfather and further refined by him and his father, to preserve the integrity of the bowl. Moulthrop said that the poisoning did not impact the final product.

“The interest in these trees came from the fact that they were live oaks, the only evergreen in the oak family, and that they lived in an urban environment.”

Adding to the significance as he imagined the final product was the oak’s history, with its university and athletics connections.

“I tried to keep that perspective as I went through the creative forming of the bowl,” he said. “One of the things I intentionally did was to leave bark on both sides of the piece. I did this for two reasons: one to maximize the size of the final bowl, but also for the Auburn Family who knew the tree. There is a bark inclusion at the very top of the piece, and that is where the two major limbs were reaching. This detail is significant to the character and to the historical context of the piece.”

Like Michelangelo who noted that the sculpture was already in the stone just waiting for the artist to reveal it, Moulthrop explained that he too felt he uncovered the piece inside the wood. “That is the artistry of woodturning – dissecting before you begin,” he said. “You’re only given what nature provides you. In the type of sculpting I do and my family has done, we don’t have an enhancement. I want to uncover and reveal what’s underneath in the best way possible, and you have one shot at that intention. You can see that this bowl had more meaning than just the piece itself, so I incorporated as much as I could from the outside in.”

“Our hope is that museum visitors will be awed by the beauty and skill reflected in this artwork,” said Marilyn Laufer, museum director. “We also hope they view this as a tribute, not only to the trees that were lost, but the way the Auburn Family was able to find a way to reaffirm our belief in humanity, evident in this example of creative expression.”

- Charlotte Hendrix

From oak to art

Woodworking artist Matt Moulthrop is shown with the large wooden bowl he crafted through a woodturning process from one of the iconic Auburn Oaks, which had stood at the downtown entrance to Auburn University for approximately 80 years until the poisoned, dying oaks were removed last year. Moulthrop made the bowl from a section of the tree on the College Street side.

Book examines life of the man behind Alabama’s famous golf trail

The man behind one of the most recognizable names in Alabama and among avid golfers worldwide is the subject of a new biography written by History Professor James R. Hansen in Auburn University’s College of Liberal Arts.

The book, “A Difficult Par: Robert Trent Jones Sr. and the Making of Modern Golf,” tells the story of the visionary landscape architect who reshaped not just golf courses, but also the world’s idea of a golf course, leading ultimately to Alabama’s 26-course public golf trail that bears his name.

“Robert Trent Jones Sr. is more historically significant than Robert Trent Jones Jr.,” Hansen said. “In a career spanning 70 years, from his first golf course in 1930 to his death in 2000, he spread the gospel of golf by designing over 400 courses in the U.S. as well as 27 countries on five continents. Because his journey to the status of ‘the world’s greatest golf architect’ was unprecedented, nothing in the history of golf compares with Jones’ epic life story.”

Hansen, a faculty member at Auburn since 1986, has taught a popular honors seminar on the history of golf course architecture. He said his interest in golf goes back to his youth and led to his being co-captain of his college golf team. In addition to writing, playing, researching and teaching the history of golf, Hansen has served for nearly two decades as a course rating panelist for the publication Golfweek.

Hansen said he dug deep for information in the business and personal papers of Robert Trent Jones Sr., which with his help came to be stored in the Cornell University archives, and prodded hard in interviews and correspondence with Jones’ family and associates. “Jones admired the skills of the touring pros but also understood that the courses they played should test the limits of their skills.”

The Auburn professor added, “He made sure that golf at its highest levels was a kind of athletic chess, a game that had to stimulate the mind as well as engage the muscles. At the same time, he understood that in order to prosper in the long term as a popular sport, and not just as an arena for elite practitioners, the courses had to be fun for everyone. No one had ever understood the balance required to achieve that blend of complexity on the one hand and simplicity on the other until Jones made the connection between them explicit.”

- Vicky Santos
Study shows airlines the cabin areas that are most critical for cleaning to protect passengers’ health

Disease-causing bacteria can linger on surfaces in commercial airplane cabins for up to a week, according to an Auburn University study presented last week at the annual meeting of the American Society for Microbiology.

Kirill Vaglenov, a biological sciences graduate student in the College of Sciences and Mathematics, conducted a two-year study – funded through the Federal Aviation Administration’s Airliner Cabin Environmental Research Center – to determine how long E. coli O157:H7 and methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, would survive on commonly touched surfaces under typical airplane conditions.

A major airline carrier supplied researchers with material from armrests, plastic tray tables, seat-pocket cloth, window shades and metal toilet buttons.

“Our data show that both of these bacteria can survive for days on these surfaces, particularly the porous material such as armrests and seat-pockets,” said Vaglenov. “Air travelers should be aware of the risk of catching or spreading a disease to other passengers and practice good personal hygiene.”

For bacteria to be transmitted from a cabin surface to a person, they must survive the environmental conditions in the airplane. In the study, Vaglenov simulated the temperature and humidity levels typically found during commercial flight.

MRSA survived the longest – 168 hours – on material from the seat-back pocket, while E. coli O157:H7 lived for 96 hours on the material from the armrest.

“The point of this study is not to be alarmist, but to point out to the airlines the importance of providing a sanitary environment for travelers,” said Professor Jim Barbaree, director of the study and mentor for Vaglenov. “We want to work with them to minimize the risks to human health.”

The Auburn team is investigating how long pathogens that cause other diseases such as tuberculosis survive in an airplane environment. Vaglenov said future steps will include exploring effective disinfecting procedures and testing other surfaces and materials that have antimicrobial properties to determine if they can help reduce health risks.

The Airliner Cabin Environment Research Center is funded through a Federal Aviation Administration Cooperative Agreement titled “National Air Transportation Center of Excellence for Research in the Intermodal Transport Environment.”

The organization’s vision for the future is that of an integrated global transportation system that is increasingly intermodal, where people and cargo safely, seamlessly and economically travel anywhere at any time by unique and personalized combinations of land, sea and air travel.

– Mike Clardy

Kloepper wins Excellence in Innovation Award

The Auburn University Office of Technology Transfer recently presented its Excellence in Innovation Award to Joseph Kloepper, a professor of entomology and plant pathology in the College of Agriculture, during the recent fourth annual luncheon of the Auburn University chapter of the National Academy of Inventors.

Kloepper’s work uses beneficial bacteria as microbial inoculants to promote plant growth and provide biological disease control. Biological materials developed by Kloepper are being commercialized by BASF Corp. in Ames, Iowa.

“The award that Dr. Kloepper received this year is a testament to the kind of creative translational research that attracts excellent industry partners, like BASF,” said John Weete, Auburn University acting assistant vice president for technology transfer and commercialization.

The National Academy of Inventors was formed in 2010 and has grown to 113 institutional members and more than 3,000 individual members.

Summer construction

Continued from Page 1

within the Athletic Complex building – into the new facility. The addition includes a new laundry, stock handling and equipment repair areas. The roof will extend to provide a covered outdoor terrace and walkway to the Athletic Complex building from the second level of the Biggio Drive Parking Facility. The Olympic Sport Support Facility project will also convert the original hot water boilers in the building to the campus hot water system. J.A. Lett Construction Company Inc. of Auburn was awarded the project.

Additional Summer Projects

Renovation projects that are on schedule to be completed by the end of summer 2014 include but are not limited to:

♦ Ginn Concourse – Screening Wall on Dunstan Hall Site – Facilities Management Landscape Services is installing shade trees, shrubs and sod in the tract along the east side of the Ginn Concourse that was vacated by the demolition of Dunstan Hall.

♦ Foy Hall East Plaza Renovation – The plaza will undergo a makeover with the installation of new seat walls, bicycle racks, lighting and electrical fixtures, landscape plantings and permeable pavers.

♦ Haley Center, Suite 1403 – The space will be converted into a 120-seat auditorium and lecture hall for the School of Nursing.

♦ Parkerson Mill Creek Watershed – Located north of the new Wellness Kitchen, the restoration and improvement project will restore 300 feet of Parkerson Mill Creek by stabilizing its banks, reducing erosion and improving the water quality.

♦ Sciences Center Classroom Building Rooms 116 and 118 – The rooms will be converted into Active Learning Space. Instead of a lecture-style classroom design with rows of tablet arm chairs or rectangular tables and chairs, “pods” are arranged into various table shapes. Students will learn the content of the lectures on their own and then follow-up in class with collaborative discussion groups and interactions, using personal connectivity devices.

– Gail Riese