Auburn University staff members Sheryll and Mark Meadows returned fulltime to their campus jobs in June, several weeks after a tornado blew apart their Lake Martin home with the couple inside.

Mark recovered relatively quickly from minor but potentially serious injuries and is back with the Facilities Division, where he is construction projects supervisor, while Sheryll has progressed to walking with a cane as she recovers from a severely fractured leg. She returned to Information Systems Support in Ingram Hall in late June but had worked from their temporary home, her father’s house in Opelika, with her laptop the previous two weeks.

While the couple are trying to put the terrifying night of the tornado behind them, Sheryll agreed to reflect back on that night and its aftermath to thank and update the many members of the university community who have provided assistance and expressed concern. Sheryll says widespread campus community support, which helped sustain her during the recovery, has convinced her that “The Auburn Family” applies to far more than athletics.

The tornado that struck along the shore of Lake Martin on April 27 did not receive much state or national news coverage at the time because it was part of the wide swath of storms that caused massive damage, killing hundreds of people across central and northern Alabama. Yet the storm that struck the Meadows’ home and heavily damaged the home of their son and his family less than a quarter-mile away was reported as an F4 or F5, the most destructive levels, and covered a path a half-mile wide and 40 miles long, from around Tallassee into Chambers County.

At least five people were killed by the East Alabama tornado, but no one else in the extended Meadows family, including their son and his wife and children, was seriously injured.

Sheryll says she places her family’s loss of property, rather than lives, in that context. “I felt the house lift off the ground and then...”

The Meadows had taken shelter in the hallway of their home with their dog Lucy when the tornado struck around 8:30 p.m.

In less than a minute, the storm shook and then lifted the house, dropping it, the couple and their dog at the edge of the woods away from the lake. Mark was thrown clear of the debris, while Sheryll was pinned under part of the debris, with her leg badly shattered. Their dog was missing but later turned up unharmed.

“...I felt the house lift off the ground and then...”

School adds new degree in natural resource management

Auburn University’s School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences has added a new degree, a bachelor’s in natural resource management, to its current program. The degree joins the school’s existing degree programs in forestry, wildlife ecology and management, wildlife pre-veterinary medicine and forest engineering.

“The addition of this degree fills the needs of students who wish to pursue an outdoor career outside of our current cornerstone majors in wildlife sciences and forestry,” said Greg Somers, associate dean of education in the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences. “We are very happy to add this choice to our other majors and thank the faculty, employers, staff and students who worked to make this degree a reality.”

The natural resource management degree is a flexible major with core natural resource management courses plus a required minor, concentrating coursework on one of many diverse outdoor careers.

Somers said the variety of minors – including political science, fisheries, business, recreation and hydrology – provides flexibility in directing the major toward a variety of jobs in natural resource management.

Although flexible, the major has required courses in science, math and management. A full year of biology and chemistry is required, with supportive courses such as calculus, ecology and basic soil science.

Geographic information system courses and environmental services are also required of each successful graduate of the program.

The new degree has up to 14 hours of free electives to allow students to match coursework to their desired field of study. Students can customize the major with selections from restricted electives in statistics, economics, management and landscape. The restricted electives are designed to ensure that every student has sufficient statistical knowledge, management skills and basic natural resource courses to successfully compete for jobs even in a difficult economy.

— Katie Wilder
Scientists, engineers scanning historic Toomer’s Oaks to help assess potential for saving endangered trees

An Auburn professor has drawn upon modern geological technology to provide new information to forestry and horticulture experts as they cope with the effects of the deliberate poisoning of the university’s historic Toomer’s Oaks.

Geography Professor Luke Marzen recently performed a scan of the Toomer’s Oaks using a terrestrial light detection and ranging, or T-LiDAR portable scanner, in collaboration with the U.S. Geological Survey’s Alabama Water Science Center. The mobile scanner sends out laser beams that, in the case of the Toomer’s Oaks, produced a three-dimensional replica of the trees.

The scan will serve as a historic preservation of the two famous oaks whether efforts to save the poisoned trees succeed or fail.

Marzen has been a geography professor at Auburn for 10 years. Although originally from Iowa, Marzen said he has grown to love Auburn, including the traditions surrounding university athletics.

“I have rolled Toomer’s corner a couple of times but more than anything, I like to go there after football wins and just enjoy the atmosphere,” Marzen said. “I was in Washington for the annual Meteorological Society meeting when the news broke that the trees had been poisoned. I was pretty shocked when I heard. My first thought was of trying to contact my former student Dusty Kimbrow to do a scan of the trees.”

Marzen spurred collaboration between the university and the USGS Alabama Water Science Center, where Kimbrow, a 2008 Auburn graduate, works. The center owns the tripod-mounted laser scanner, which the USGS Alabama Water Science Center uses to create three-dimensional models of land surfaces; those models enable scientists and engineers to record the topography of a region and monitor for erosion, quantify erosion or even monitor landslides.

Athena Clark, director of the USGS Alabama Water Science Center, said the T-LiDAR can be used to scan a variety of things from historic buildings to monitoring caves and glacier snow melts.

“The possibilities are almost endless,” said Clark, who is an Auburn alumna. “Dr. Marzen contacted Dusty because he knew we had the T-LiDAR instrument and was curious about the application of using it to scan the oaks. I was curious myself. We don’t usually use it to scan trees. I was very interested in seeing what the outcome was.”

“We scanned the large oak first,” said Marzen. “The results of the scan can tell us the height of the tree, the volume of wood and the expanse of the canopy. We might even be able to get another scan in a few months and compare it to the one we already took. This would allow us to get an estimate on any loss of foliage.”

“The T-LiDAR created an exact three-dimensional model of both trees,” Clark said. “In the future, someone could even take that data set and essentially create a replica of the tree or a scale model if they so wished. We call it a historical preservation of the tree because every dimension is captured in XYZ coordinates.”

Marzen is also working with Horticulture Professor Gary Keever and Forestry Professor Art Chappelka as they explore the logistics of a possible project that would allow them to scan all of the trees on the Auburn campus.

“The purpose of the study would be to measure the overall quality and health of all the trees on Auburn’s campus,” said Marzen. “Plus, it would be nice to have a historical record of Auburn’s more than 8,000 trees.”

Research firm ranks College of Business among best for supply chain education

The Auburn University College of Business is ranked among the nation’s top 25 supply chain education providers, according to a recent report released by global research firm Gartner Inc. Gartner surveyed more than 400 supply chain practitioners and academics and evaluated domestic programs based on criteria that included industry value, program size and program scope.

At the undergraduate level, Auburn is ranked at 19.5, as are Indiana University, the University of Kansas, the University of South Carolina and Texas Christian University. The University of Tennessee, at 9.5, is the only other Southeastern Conference school in the undergraduate ranking. Auburn is ranked 25th at the graduate level and 20th among public institutions.

Previously, in 2005 and again in 2009, Auburn appeared among the nation’s top 20 in a study published in Supply Chain Management Review. The study evaluated educational programs on nine criteria including faculty, curricula, reputation and alumni visibility and was based on a survey of supply chain professionals and university educators.

— Dina Kanellos Roberts

Campus Calendar

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13

HEARING AID OPEN HOUSE Tests for hearing difficulties and demonstrations of the latest technology in hearing aids, day-long activities, Speech and Hearing Clinic, Haley 1199; call 844-9600 for appointment to have hearing tested; activities continue on Friday, July 15

THURSDAY, JULY 14

FARMERS MARKET The Market at Ag Heritage Park, 3-6 p.m., adjacent to Ham Wilson Livestock Arena; also Thursday, July 21

NEXT Auburn Report FRIDAY, JULY 22

LAST DAY of classes for summer semester FRIDAY, JULY 29
Education students serve local community through Summer Program for Students with Disabilities

Inside the local Richland Elementary School, Auburn University students oversee a trio of three-year-old children having fun with swings, tricycles and exercise balls. What appears to be a typical recess period for children is actually an exercise in “incidental teaching” for students in the university’s College of Education.

The three children are among the 50 receiving extended school year services as part of Auburn’s 2011 Summer Program for Students with Disabilities. The children, from Auburn, Opelika, Lee County and Chambers County, have developmental disabilities affecting social interaction and communication.

Undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Education’s Department of Special Education, Rehabilitation and Counseling use creative and personalized methods of instruction to help the children learn skills such as counting, using words, identifying the difference in shapes and behaving courteously in social settings. In what is called “incidental teaching,” activities such as a race around the room on tricycles or a session on the swings are used to reinforce earlier lessons designed to elicit social responses from the children.

“It’s very rewarding because you watch the children make progress,” said Vanessa Hinton, a doctoral candidate in the College of Education who teaches at Dawson Elementary School in Columbus, Ga. “It’s very important for the child and for the college student. The child benefits from the instruction and the college student has the opportunity to use strategies discussed in class.”

The children in the summer program range in age from 3 to 12. The Auburn students use practices outlined by the National Autism Center to create a learning environment that fosters academic and personal growth. Doris Hill, coordinator of educational and community support for Auburn University’s Center for Disability Research and Service, said the undergraduate and graduate students develop goals for each child based on an Individualized Education Plan, or IEP, which includes components devoted to social skills, mathematics and language arts.

“Our ratio is approximately one teacher to two students, and includes much individualized attention,” Hill said. “It is a highly structured, highly engaging, positive learning environment.”

“Extended school year services are required by law when written into a student’s IEP as a service to be provided by the school district,” Hill added. “These services help students maintain valuable skills they might otherwise lose over the summer months. We’re extending the goals that are written into the students’ school Individualized Education Plans.”

The summer program also serves as an individualized education plan of sorts for current and future educators. The Auburn University students learn how to collect and apply data related to student progress and utilize emerging technological tools like the Apple iPad 2 for communication and literacy-based learning. In 2010, Margaret Flores, Scott Renner and Kate Musgrove, of the Center for Disability Research and Service, began looking for ways to use iPads to help children with autism improve their verbal communication skills and learn appropriate social behavior.

During the summer program, teachers also learn how to connect with students of different ages whose disabilities vary in severity. For example, graduate student Sara Catherine Patterson has found that engaging pre-schoolers is far different from the processes used with older children. In her classroom, she and her co-teachers sang a song to prepare children for story time and rewarded their attention with the opportunity to feed fish in a virtual aquarium on the iPad 2.

There are other lessons that Hill and Flores, an assistant professor of special education and Center for Disability Research and Service affiliate, respectively, try to impart as well. Student teachers learn to create positive, encouraging atmospheres, to hold themselves and each other to high standards and to become passionate advocates for students with disabilities.

“It’s important to build collaborative relationships with other teachers,” Hill said. “Sometimes you become the school’s expert on special education even though you’ve just graduated with a bachelor’s degree.”

— Troy Johnson

Volunteers aid recovery

Continued from Page 1

everything went blank,” she said. The next thing she remembers was hearing Mark calling her name, responding to him and a few minutes later receiving a text message on her cellphone from a Business Office colleague.

Mark pulled Sheryll from under the debris, went through the woods to get help and returned a short time later. Sheryll could not call out on the cellphone, but within minutes, she received a text message on it from Beverly Hughes of Payroll and Employee Benefits. “Are you OK?” Beverly asked. Even though she could not call out on her phone, Sheryll was able to text a response asking Beverly to call 911 for her.

After notifying authorities, Beverly and her husband jumped in their car and drove to the disaster area to help. In the meantime, the Meadows’ sons Blake and Dusty had joined Mark and volunteer firefighters from Reeltown in preparing Sheryll for transport and putting a splint on her injured leg.

As the Hughes approached the disaster area, they learned from rescue workers that a team was on the scene and Sheryll was being transported by boat to a ramp a few miles away, where an ambulance was waiting. There, the two friends met as the boat pulled up. From the boat ramp, Sheryll was taken to an area hospital and then transferred to a hospital in Montgomery, where surgeons replaced a large section of her femur with a metal rod.

In the weeks since the disaster, hundreds of people have offered assistance. Some were neighbors, some were colleagues of son Blake, who works at Jackson Hospital in Montgomery. Yet, in terms of numbers and amount of support, the university community has gone far beyond what she could have imagined, Sheryll said.

“Not just dozens, there’s been hundreds of people here who have helped in one way or another or offered condolences and asked how they can help,” she said. “There’s just way too many to start naming people individually. I am grateful to all of them.”

Nearly everyone in the Business Office and many other individuals across campus checked on her and offered assistance, some even bringing food while she was laid up at home with the broken leg.

“I used to think ‘The Auburn Family’ just applied to football, but it is not like that at all.”

Sheryll Meadows

Volunteers from Facilities, meanwhile, have donated some of their off-days to help frame and roof a new home on the old house site. If all goes well, the couple will be in their new home by September. And their dog, which turned up unharmed after being blown into the woods, will be with them.

“I cannot say enough about how great everyone has been and how much we appreciate it,” Sheryll said. “I used to think ‘The Auburn Family’ just applied to football, but it is not like that at all; when you need help, this really is one big family. Everyone really is ‘All In.’”

— Ray Summerford
Campus News Briefs

American Society of Animal Science elects Sartin president-elect

James Sartin, a professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine’s Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology and the Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, was recently elected as president-elect of the American Society of Animal Science.

The professional society fosters the discovery, sharing and application of scientific knowledge concerning the responsible use of animals to enhance human life and well-being.

Campus units may again buy Apple products through University Bookstore

Recent issues involving the State Bid Law concerning purchase of Apple Corp. products have been resolved, and campus units that use Apple products in their operations may again purchase Apple hardware, peripherals and software through the University Bookstore.

HP is the university’s preferred vendor for desktop and laptop computers, but the university Business Office recognizes that in some cases, with appropriate justification, the purchase of an Apple computer is necessary.

Information regarding the purchase of sales tax exempt apps will be issued as soon as it is available. Departments should be prepared to provide the business use purpose for the purchase when placing their Apple orders. Departments must continue to submit a Purchase Requisition through Banner for any Apple purchase that will exceed $2,500. For more information about Apple products, contact Matt Caudle or Randal Berrows at the University Bookstore, 844-4241.

Veterinary Medicine professor named real-life superhero by optics producer

Vitaly Vodyanoy, a professor of physiology in the College of Veterinary Medicine and director of the biosensor laboratory, has been named a real-life superhero by Edmund Optics.

Edmund Optics is a leading producer of optics, imaging and photonics technology for research and development, electronics, semiconductor, pharmaceutical, biomedical and military markets around the globe. The company’s “real-life super heroes” are using optics to foster innovation, drive cutting-edge research and benefit industry.

The “superpower” developed by Vodyanoy enables real-time imaging of living cellular structures. Vodyanoy, in collaboration with other scientists from academia and industry, developed a cutting-edge microscopy technique that features increased resolution and a dual mode fluorescence imaging capability enabling unlabeled techniques for identification of viruses and observation of interactions between labeled and unlabeled nanoparticles with the use of a traditional optical transmission microscope.

Physicians Executive MBA team finishes second in international competition

A four-member team from the Physicians Executive MBA Class of 2011 in Auburn’s College of Business recently finished second in the inaugural Compete for Healthcare International Case competition in Milan, Italy.

At the event, master’s degree students from around the world discussed the challenges facing modern health care systems. Auburn’s team was among more than a dozen competitors from leading such universities as Cambridge, Erasmus University and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. A team from Bocconi University’s SDA Bocconi School of Management in Milan was the only one to finish ahead of Auburn’s PEMBA team.

Index

1 Couple give thanks to university community for comfort, assistance following tornado
2 Scientists, engineers using laser to gain new perspective on fate of Toomer’s Oaks
3 Education students give back to local schools through work with summer program

The Auburn Report is published by the Office of Communications and Marketing at Auburn University. Executive Director of Communications and Marketing: Deedie Dowdle. Auburn Report Editor: Roy Summerford. Communications and Marketing contributing editors, writers and photographers: Mike Clardy, Charles Martin, Carol Nelson, Neali Vann, Amy Weaver, Candis Hackett Birdfield, Jeff Etheridge and Melissa Humble. Other contributors are based in colleges and schools throughout the university.

Issues of the Auburn Report appear every other Friday year-round, except for some semester breaks and extended holiday periods. Due to campus holiday schedules, the Auburn Report is published once in November and two consecutive weeks in early December. The publication schedule is online at www.ocm.auburn.edu/au_report/2011AUArchives.html. Deadline for delivery of items for publication is noon on Monday before date of publication. Direct inquiries, suggestions and news items to the Auburn Report, 23 Samford Hall, Auburn, AL 36849. Telephone: 334/844-9984. Electronic mail: summero@auburn.edu.

The Samford Tower and interlocking AU logos in this publication are registered trademarks of Auburn University and may not be reproduced without written permission from the AU Office of Trademark Management and Licensing, 303 Samford Hall, Auburn, AL 36849.

www.ocm.auburn.edu/au_report/aureport.html