As Auburn approaches the holiday break, campus volunteers are making a final appeal to faculty and staff for contributions to United Way. As of Dec. 1, the campus campaign had collected $134,000, approximately 96 percent of its goal for the 2008 United Way Campaign. Volunteers are asking the campus community for donations to help the campaign meet its goal by the end of the semester.

Despite a nationwide economic downturn, Campaign Chair Bill Sauser said he is hopeful the campus fundraising efforts will repeat the success of the 2007 campaign. “Our goal for this year is $140,000, and I’m confident, through the generosity of the Auburn family, we will meet or exceed this goal,” he said.

Support from the faculty, staff and students has been wonderful in this time of need,” he said. Sauser said the campus campaign received a timely boost from the Student Government Association, which pledged $5,000 to support community programs through the United Way.

The campus campaign is part of the larger campaign for United Way of Lee County, which provides financial support to 33 local charities and social support agencies that serve the people of Lee County. The overall goal for this year is $1 million, and as of Dec. 1, the countywide campaign was 85 percent of the way toward meeting its goal.

The United Way of Lee County provides financial support to a variety of local charities and non-profit social services, including Auburn Day Care Centers, Hospice of East Alabama, the Salvation Army, American Red Cross, Project Uplift and Food Bank of East Alabama.

“During this holiday season, I invite all members of the Auburn community to remember the less fortunate among us and give generously,” said Sauser.

United Way pledge cards are available from volunteers serving every unit on campus. For additional information, contact Sauser at sausewi@auburn.edu, Dianne Townsend at townsid@auburn.edu or Susie Hall at hallnor@auburn.edu.

AT&T gift aids Auburn program to reduce high-school dropouts

A $400,000 gift from the AT&T Foundation will support an Auburn-based initiative to reduce the dropout rate in Alabama high schools.

The pilot program involves a partnership between the Truman Pierce Institute in Auburn’s College of Education and five designated high schools in Talapoosa, Lee, Hale and Bulloch counties and Opelika. The college’s Truman Pierce Institute focuses on ways to improve schools and communities by creating partnerships, conducting research and providing programs to meet the needs of schools and communities.

Professor and Institute Director Cynthia Reed and Jeffrey Brooks, an associate professor in the Department of Educational Foundations, Leadership and Technology, will direct the new program, “Building Individual Capacity for Success.”

“This generous gift from AT&T will allow us to provide programming to ensure high-risk students in five high schools do not drop out,” said Reed. “Rather than doing more of the same for these young people, we will now be able to provide mentors, engage the students in community service projects and engage them in leadership development and global awareness curriculum.”

Since its establishment in 1982 as the outreach arm of Auburn’s College of Education, the Truman Pierce Institute has worked with Alabama schools and educators to increase individual and organizational leadership capacity and improve the quality of educational experiences for young people.

AT&T Alabama President Fred McCallum said the company sees the program as a chance to make a difference in the future of the state. “We are committed to making sure our students are prepared for the increasingly competitive global economy,” he said.
Students in the College of Architecture, Design and Construction take a break during construction of a replica of a slave cabin for the Westville living history park. The students built the cabin on campus, and the building was later disassembled, moved to Westville in Lumpkin, Ga., and reassembled there. The inset shows a frontal view of the cabin as it neared completion.

Students build replica of slave cabin for Westville history park

Students from the Design-Build master’s program in Auburn’s College of Architecture, Design and Construction have researched, designed and constructed a replica of a slave cabin in Westville, a living history town in Lumpkin, Ga., that portrays life in the pre-industrial South of 1850.

The installation in November was in conjunction with Westville’s fall festival. The village has historically accurate buildings, such as houses, schools, churches and shops but has not had interpretations of slave houses that would have existed during that period.

Westville’s board of trustees approached Anthony Carey, former chair of Auburn’s Department of History in the College of Liberal Arts, and D.K. Ruth of the Design-Build master’s program to help construct a historically correct 1850s slave cabin. Students, in a studio under the direction of visiting professor Anthony Tindill, created a plan for the design and construction of the structure. Westville then cut lumber to specifications and shipped the material to Auburn.

As a teaching tool for the students, the house was first constructed at Auburn. The disassembled structure was then shipped to Westville, where it was reconstructed in its permanent location.

Funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the project was directed by Andy Moye, former chair of the Westville Board of Trustees, in collaboration with the History Department in Auburn’s College of Liberal Arts and the College of Architecture, Design and Construction.
Profiles in Excellence

Veterinary students find example in professor

Steve Kincaid describes his teaching style as “methodical” and “blue collar,” yet colleagues and former students in Auburn’s College of Veterinary Medicine overwhelmingly describe the veteran professor as one of the best teachers they have ever encountered.

Kincaid, a faculty member at Auburn since 1989, has won top awards for excellence in teaching both at Auburn and in the veterinary medicine profession. He received the National Norden Award of the Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges as the best veterinary instructor in the nation in 2002, and he received a Gerald and Emily Leischuck Endowed Presidential Award for 2008 as one of the best teachers in any curriculum at Auburn.

Kincaid was nominated for the Leischuck Award by Edward Morrison, head of Veterinary Medicine’s Department of Anatomy, Physiology and Pharmacology, Kincaid’s home department. In recommending Kincaid for his knowledge, professionalism, dedication and teaching style and method, Morrison wrote: “In my career at four universities, I consider Steve to be simply the best and most effective instructor I have had the privilege to work with and observe.”

Also in support of the nomination, numerous colleagues and former students praised Kincaid as one of the most dedicated, best prepared and most approachable professors they have ever encountered. Several colleagues and veterinary practitioners added that the veteran professor was a mentor to them early in their careers and he remains a role model.

Dan Givens offers a dual perspective of Kincaid: “I have had the opportunity to interact with Dr. Kincaid as a student in his classroom at Auburn in 1990 and as a colleague within the College of Veterinary faculty at Auburn from 2000 to present. Steve Kincaid truly maximizes the effective use of innovative teaching methods and works tirelessly in his commitment to student success.”

“Blue collar’ teaching
Leischuck Award winner Steve Kincaid receives high marks from Veterinary Medicine colleagues and former students for his ability to make difficult concepts and procedures understandable. Students, especially, note his willingness to spend extra time helping them understand the material.

“The key is coherence,” Kincaid said. “Each lecture, laboratory exercise, reading assignment, special problem, problem-solving exercise and report, as well as each course that I teach, is a piece of a puzzle to guide students through the educational experience.”

To help students comprehend subject matter in the classroom, he uses a mix of traditional teaching tools — such as blackboard and overhead projectors — and newer technologies — including computer imaging, DVDs and movies. In lab sessions, he integrates clearly visible materials and everyday experience with use of microscopes to demonstrate practical applications of knowledge.

The goal of all these activities, he says, is to create an overlap for teaching and learning. “I commit my time to students based on the premise that teachers and students work together for the acquisition of knowledge rather than the teacher ruling the classroom and students going through the motions of learning because of the fear of receiving failing grades,” he said. “Consequently, I spend significant time with students outside of the classroom.”

Editor’s Note: Profiles in Excellence is a periodic series of feature articles about Auburn faculty and staff who have been honored by the university or nationally for the top level of achievement in teaching, research, outreach or within a professional field.
From late autumn until spring, cooler temperatures often lead to colorful sunsets and peaceful evenings. Jeff Etheridge and Melissa Humble of Photographic Services in the Office of Communications and Marketing digitally captured these and similar images while shooting scenes for the university’s 11”x14” 2009 wall calendar “Twilight on the Plains.” Copies of the calendar are available for $10.75 at Photographic Services in Foy Hall and may be ordered online at www.auburn.edu/photo or by phone at 844-4560.
Russian journey

Quest for astronaut selection starts in Moscow for Rotary Scholar

“Здравствуйте,” Russian for “hello,” is a phrase Auburn student Judith Bailey is using a lot this semester. A senior majoring in aerospace engineering, Bailey is spending the year studying in Russia at the Moscow Aviation Institute as the recipient of a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship.

Bailey is one of four students from Alabama chosen to receive the Rotary award for the 2008-09 academic year; two students received six-month scholarships while Bailey and another student received nine-month scholarships.

The Web site for Rotary International states that Rotary’s Ambassadorial Scholarships, the foundation’s oldest and best-known program, is the world’s largest privately funded international scholarship program.

The purpose of the program is to increase international understanding and friendly relations among peoples of different countries and geographic areas.

With aspirations to become an astronaut, Bailey began studying Russian while at Auburn in the hope that knowledge of the language will help her attain her career goals. “I heard that it helps if you are able to communicate with the cosmonauts and can act as a liaison between the American astronauts and the Russians,” she said.

The co-op student, who has already gained work experience at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, will study propulsion, vibration and viscous fluids during her time in Russia. In addition to two engineering classes, she is also taking a language and culture class each semester.

“I am most excited about seeing the different culture and I am eager to see how they do school in Russia as compared to the United States,” she said.

One big difference for Bailey is the timeframe of her semesters. Since Russians celebrate Christmas according to the Gregorian calendar, the holiday falls in January. This will alter the traditional academic year to which Bailey is accustomed. She said fall semester at her school in Russia is Sept. 1 through Jan. 24. She will then have a break until Feb. 6, when she begins the spring semester, which lasts until the beginning of July.

Another change for Bailey will be the number of times she gets to visit home. As a native of Alexander City, she is used to the frequency and convenience of her home being just “down the road.” While in Russia, however, she will only travel home once, during the fall break at the end of January. But she said her parents and friends plan to visit her in Russia, which will help ease any homesickness.

While abroad, Bailey will be hosted by a Rotary Club in Moscow. During her time in the city, she will give 10 to 15 presentations to the host club and to other organizations concerning life in the United States. Also, she will start a civic project.

“I’m thinking of initiating some sort of litter clean-up project or starting a soup kitchen or food bank program,” she said.

She is living with two Russian girls in a three bedroom flat. A Rotary Club mentor from her host district in Russia is available to help Bailey throughout her stay.

Bailey said she plans to stay in Europe for a month or so beyond her time in Russia so that she can travel and experience other countries. When she returns to the United States, she plans to give presentations of her experience to various Rotary Clubs, specifically those in the South Alabama District and especially the Opelika club that sponsored her application to the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship Program.

“I think this study abroad experience is invaluable because not only will it make me unique and hopefully stand out to a future employer but it also gives me the opportunity to look at things in a new and different way.”

— Katie Wilder

Colleges commemorate Charles Darwin’s 200th birthday with series of events, public lectures

The purpose of the program is to increase international understanding and friendly relations among peoples of different countries and geographic areas.

With aspirations to become an astronaut, Bailey began studying Russian while at Auburn in the hope that knowledge of the language will help her attain her career goals. “I heard that it helps if you are able to communicate with the cosmonauts and can act as a liaison between the American astronauts and the Russians,” she said.

The co-op student, who has already gained work experience at the Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, will study propulsion, vibration and viscous fluids during her time in Russia. In addition to two engineering classes, she is also taking a language and culture class each semester.

“I am most excited about seeing the different culture and I am eager to see how they do school in Russia as compared to the United States,” she said.

One big difference for Bailey is the timeframe of her semesters. Since Russians celebrate Christmas according to the Gregorian calendar, the holiday falls in January. This will alter the traditional academic year to which Bailey is accustomed. She said fall semester at her school in Russia is Sept. 1 through Jan. 24. She will then have a break until Feb. 6, when she begins the spring semester, which lasts until the beginning of July.

Another change for Bailey will be the number of times she gets to visit home. As a native of Alexander City, she is used to the frequency and convenience of her home being just “down the road.” While in Russia, however, she will only travel home once, during the fall break at the end of January. But she said her parents and friends plan to visit her in Russia, which will help ease any homesickness.

While abroad, Bailey will be hosted by a Rotary Club in Moscow. During her time in the city, she will give 10 to 15 presentations to the host club and to other organizations concerning life in the United States. Also, she will start a civic project.

“I’m thinking of initiating some sort of litter clean-up project or starting a soup kitchen or food bank program,” she said.

She is living with two Russian girls in a three bedroom flat. A Rotary Club mentor from her host district in Russia is available to help Bailey throughout her stay.

Bailey said she plans to stay in Europe for a month or so beyond her time in Russia so that she can travel and experience other countries. When she returns to the United States, she plans to give presentations of her experience to various Rotary Clubs, specifically those in the South Alabama District and especially the Opelika club that sponsored her application to the Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship Program.

“I think this study abroad experience is invaluable because not only will it make me unique and hopefully stand out to a future employer but it also gives me the opportunity to look at things in a new and different way.”

— Katie Wilder

The College of Sciences and Mathematics and the College of Liberal Arts will sponsor a series of events in January and February to commemorate the 200th birthday of Charles Darwin.

The events also commemorate the 150th anniversary of Darwin’s book “On the Origin of the Species by Natural Selection,” the most influential work in the history of the biological sciences.

Darwin was born in Shrewsbury, England, on Feb. 12, 1809, and was educated at Edinburgh and Cambridge universities. Conclusions from his studies of natural selection and the evolution of species, summarized in an 1858 essay and in detail in “Origin of the Species,” published in 1859, led to a broad scientific consensus on evolution and provided the foundation for the scientific field of biology and related disciplines.

Although most events will be in January and February, the commemoration began in October with a Littleton-Franklin Lecture on patterns of life and the future of humans by internationally prominent anthropologist Richard Leakey.

On Jan. 12, the first event in the series for spring semester will be a DVD showing of biologist and author Kenneth Miller’s presentation “Darwin, God and Design: Evolution and the Battle for America’s Soul.” That will be followed on Jan. 27 by a Littleton-Franklin Lecture by Pulitzer Prize-winning author Natalie Angier, “The Canon: A Whirligig Tour of the Beautiful Basics of Science.”

On Feb. 2, David King of the Department of Geology at Auburn will speak on “Darwin as Geologist,” and on Feb. 9, Geoff Hill of the Department of Biological Sciences will speak on “Exchanges Between Darwin and Wallace.”

The time and place for Natalie Angier’s presentation will be announced later. The other presentations will be at 3 p.m. in Rouse 112.
Improving health

Educator honored for work with children, parents

Leah Robinson of the Department of Kinesiology in Auburn’s College of Education has been named the 2009 winner of the Hally Beth Poindexter Young Scholar Award by the National Association for Kinesiology and Physical Education in Higher Education.

The association presents the award annually to a higher education professional in his or her first five years of work at the university level. The award is named for the former chair of the Department of Kinesiology at Rice University; Poindexter has been a leader in her field during a career that spans more than 50 years.

Robinson, the first Auburn faculty member to be selected, will receive the award and present her research on “Perceived Physical Competence and Actual Motor Competence in Children Who Are At-Risk” at the association’s 2009 conference in January.

Robinson said the award will inspire her to continue seeking answers to some of the health issues plaguing pediatric patients through her activities with the Department of Kinesiology’s Motor Behavior Center, where she works with Mary Rudisill, Mark Fischman and Danielle Wadsworth to help improve the health and quality of life for young children from rural, underserved areas.

Recent data from a state agency indicate that 18 percent of Alabama’s young children are obese. The percentage has risen each year and has grown to include an especially high number of African-American children in Alabama’s rural counties.

“All of my research is dealing with populations who are in need or are at-risk,” she said. “I really want to help those who are underserved, who need the work and the assistance and the support. That’s something that drives me in working with the kids at Moton Center and other day care centers. They (the children) look forward to seeing me and they’re actually learning from me being there, but I’m learning from them too.”

She added, “Any time I see a kid improve in terms of their skill development or engaging in more physical activity, that is encouraging. It might be a small group that I’m working with and making the change in now, but hopefully as my research and lab continue to grow, we can hit larger populations of kids.”

Since arriving at Auburn in 2007, Robinson has received the College of Education’s Outstanding Faculty Early Career Award for Excellence, Research and Outreach and the Young Professional Award of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

Rudisill, a Wayne T. Smith distinguished professor and head of the college’s Department of Kinesiology, said Robinson’s success as a scholar stems from her blend of energy and authenticity.

Rudisill said Robinson is helping improve the lives of children by encouraging them to be more physically active and educating their parents about risk factors for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and other serious health issues.

“I think she’s so effective because she’s so genuine,” Rudisill said. “She genuinely cares about the children she’s working with and she really wants to help advance them and help them meet their full potential.”

Auburn Day Care Centers Director Ethel White said she has seen a significant change take place in the centers’ classrooms and playgrounds, where Robinson and her colleagues have devoted so much time and energy to the cause of strengthening the physical and cognitive skills of local children.

“She has become an integral part of our program by reaching out to families in times of need and reaching out to children,” she said. “She has added an extra service to our program and is teaching children the value of exercise and fitness and helping them to develop a healthy lifestyle.”

— Troy Johnson

Achievements

James Barth, Lowder Eminent Scholar in Finance in the College of Business, is visiting India from Nov. 2-Dec. 20 at the invitation of the U.S. Department of State. Barth is presenting public lectures, holding roundtable discussions, meeting with government officials and giving interviews to news media. He is also speaking at universities and research institutes on the “Global Economic Crises: U.S. Response” and the “Global Financial Meltdown: Causes and Lessons for the Future.”

Paul Harris, associate director for national prestigious scholarships in the University Honors College, recently presented in German the invited paper “Latino Immigration to the American South: Challenges in Cultural Assimilation and Political Incorporation” at the international symposium “Transnationalism’s Impact on Culture” in Potsdam, Germany. The symposium was sponsored by the Institute for German and Jewish Studies at the University of Potsdam.

Chris Newland, a neurotoxicologist in the Department of Psychology in the College of Liberal Arts has been appointed to a panel for the National Research Council, a division of the National Academy of Sciences. The panel will review the Environmental Protection Agency’s policy for regulating the chemical perchlorethylene, which has long been associated with dry cleaning or certain industrial operations and may pose health hazards.
Going Lean
Library implements Lean process for quality improvement

With help from the Auburn Technical Assistance Center in the College of Business, Auburn’s libraries are going Lean, with a capital “L.”

Library Dean Bonnie MacEwan says she first became interested in exploring the continuous quality improvement benefits of ATAC’s Lean Program in improving library processes after talking with her sister, who is responsible for strategic planning for a major health management organization. Upon learning of an open enrollment opportunity last summer through which ATAC would be teaching a course in Lean Office as part of the university’s Human Resources professional development offerings, she signed up.

“I didn’t know much about Lean, but I wanted to find out more because I could see similarities between the challenges of the Auburn University Libraries and the HMO,” MacEwan said.

Unable to attend the Lean Office class because of a scheduling conflict, MacEwan sent Paula Sullenger, head of the Acquisitions Department.

“After participating in the Lean Office training, I saw quickly how we might apply the concepts in the library,” Sullenger said.

A continuous improvement system with roots in the automotive manufacturing industry, Lean is centered on removing waste and non-value-added activities from a process. In accomplishing that goal, the process often leads to greatly improved efficiency, resulting in better quality, increased productivity, greater customer satisfaction, reduced costs, higher employee satisfaction and more efficient use of space, skills and other resources.

ATAC’s instructors have assisted with Lean improvement training and implementation events for hundreds of manufacturing firms throughout Alabama and the Southeast. They also have taken the Lean system into the service industry, having trained at Aflac’s corporate headquarters in Columbus, and into the medical field where they have trained personnel from East Alabama Medical Center in Opelika.

After meeting several times with participants from Auburn University Libraries and conducting an in-depth assessment of the process proposed for improvement, ATAC instructors helped participants develop a training plan.

The plan targeted the library’s Electronic Journals Process for the initial improvement activities. Approximately 4,000 electronic journals comprise this process, which accounts for about half of the library’s $5 million annual collections budget.

Sullenger said transactions in the process can lead to a tremendous backlog of documentation and processing tasks. They may take anywhere from a few days to several weeks to complete, she said.

“ATAC recommended that we select a core group of our employees who have direct, but different responsibilities in the process,” said Sullenger. “Those employees would be our unit Lean leaders.”

Sixteen library employees involved in cataloging, acquisitions, public service, reference and document delivery took 16 hours of Lean Office training and then immersed themselves in an intense three-day kaizen (improvement project) of the Electronic Journal Process. In addition, Sullenger took ATAC’s five-day “boot camp” Lean Certificate Series course to prepare her to be the library Lean “go-to” person.

At the formal kaizen out-briefing on Oct. 30, the project team deemed the undertaking a success.

“We turned a mostly reactive process into a proactive one,” Sullenger said.

“We overcame a basic problem of the work being too dependent on central key people into one in which there now are additional knowledgeable and capable people involved.”

ATAC facilitators described the training and approach.

“They achieved workload balancing,” explained ATAC’s Terri Lawrence, who with ATAC Lean Specialist Rick Battye, facilitated the training and kaizen event.

At the formal kaizen out-briefing on Oct. 30, the project team deemed the undertaking a success.

“We turned a mostly reactive process into a proactive one,” Sullenger said.

“We overcame a basic problem of the work being too dependent on central key people into one in which there now are additional knowledgeable and capable people involved.”

ATAC facilitators described the training and approach.

“They achieved workload balancing,” explained ATAC’s Terri Lawrence, who with ATAC Lean Specialist Rick Battye, facilitated the training and kaizen event.

“This is one of the most important things we’ve done in a long while. It is making us think differently about what we do and how we do it. It will make us better stewards of these resources, better managers and better employees.”

The library’s continuous improvement team will remain intact, and MacEwan said the initiative will continue in the Electronic Journals Process while extending into other processes throughout University Libraries.

— Mitch Emmons
More than 1,400 to get diplomas at graduation ceremony on Dec. 19

Auburn will award an estimated 1,442 academic degrees at its fall graduation at 2 p.m. Dec. 19 in Beard-Eaves-Memorial Coliseum.

Of those degrees, 1,101 are bachelor’s degrees, 266 are master’s degrees, 73 are doctorates and two are specialist degrees.

The College of Liberal Arts, with 275, will award the most undergraduate degrees, followed by 270 from the College of Business. The Samuel Ginn College of Engineering will award 120 degrees, the College of Education 113 and the College of Architecture, Design and Construction 91. The College of Sciences and Mathematics will award 83 degrees, the College of Human Sciences 72, the College of Agriculture 55, the School of Forestry and Wildlife Sciences 13 and the School of Nursing nine. The ceremony can be viewed live through AU’s Web site at www.auburn.edu/graduationlive. The broadcast begins at 1:45 p.m.

Auburn has awarded more than 210,000 degrees at the main campus since its founding as East Alabama Male College in 1856.

Happy Holidays to one and all!

Index

1 United Way nears goal, makes final appeal for contributions
2 Students build replica of slave cabin for display at Westville
3 Students, colleagues praise Vet Med professor for ‘blue collar’ teaching
4 Rotary Scholar learning Russian language, culture in Moscow
5 Education faculty member wins national award for outreach
6 Library taking Lean approach to improving quality, productivity

University photographers record scenes of campus at twilight for Auburn’s 2009 calendar. See page 4.

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