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RODEO:
STUDENTS LEARN THE ROPES
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On the cover: Justin Thigpen of Waycross, Ga., competes in the team roping competition at the Great Southland Stampede Rodeo sponsored by the UGA Block and Bridle Club on Thursday, April 18, 2013.

Kathy hammock
When agricultural leaders from around the world gathered in Atlanta this summer for the World Food Forum and Symposium, keynote speaker Sonny Ramaswamy, director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture, said the talent pool across agriculture is too shallow.

“In the next few years we expect about 60,000 new jobs to become available in U.S. agriculture (that require a college degree),” he said. “Nationwide, we have around 28,000 students studying agriculture."

Colleges of agriculture across the nation have soaring enrollments, but the industry demand for well-educated, highly skilled workers is outpacing supply. Allowing more students onto class rolls requires renewed investment from those who fund our institutions. Steadily increasing tuition, which has caused student loan debt to skyrocket over the past decade, isn’t the answer for public institutions.

While agriculture graduates enjoy some of the highest starting salaries and lowest unemployment rates, many find themselves drowning in debt before they can even start their careers. Finances shouldn’t prevent our most capable students from completing college and bring successful in the marketplace.

A recent UGA study leaves little doubt that higher education is a sound public investment. The study, conducted by the Terry College of Business, showed University System of Georgia schools have a $14.1 billion impact on local economies.

“These economic impacts demonstrate that continued emphasis on higher education as an enduring pillar of the regional economy translates into jobs, higher incomes and greater production of goods and services for local households and businesses,” said Jeff Humphreys, director of the Terry College Selig Center.

As the world’s population expands over the next 40 years, food production must double. This will require even more well-trained employees and more cutting-edge science to keep people fed. A well-educated workforce is a foundation of the agriculture industry. Georgia can and must help meet this need.

Strong investments in higher education will help us produce more graduates, generating more jobs, higher incomes and greater production of goods. We are blessed with abundant resources and favorable growing conditions. We have world-class ports in Atlanta and Savannah to export products to customers who need them. We also must have a strong, well-educated workforce as the foundation of the industry.

from the dean

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Small fruit, big deal

By Clint Thompson

Erick Smith is a blueberry, peach and strawberry connoisseur, which is exactly what you’d expect of the state’s newest small fruit specialist.

“Nothing’s better than a fruit medley,” said Smith, who joined the Department of Horticulture on the Tifton campus in April.

Smith can trace his family roots to a homestead farm established in the Oregon Territory in the 1850s. On the farm, Smith’s grandparents grew blueberries, a fruit Smith devoured as a youngster. “I can’t say it was love at first bite, but I knew it was a good flavor, and that I liked it,” he said. “I was never shy about eating a blueberry.”

These days, his favorite way to eat them is right off the bush, treating the fruit like candy.

Smith is also fascinated with blueberries because of the health benefits they provide. According to UGA research, blueberries are a good source of vitamin C, iron and fiber. They’re cholesterol- and sodium-free and are a key source of potassium. Their health benefits have a strong influence on Smith’s research.

“Working with a crop that has great health benefits really makes me feel like I’m participating in making a healthier world,” he said.

Pizza Farm

By Merritt Melancon

Many young people believe pizza comes from a box, but last spring more than 600 metro Atlanta students learned that it actually begins on the farm.

At the first Pizza Farm educational field trip held May 8-9 at the State Farmers Market in Forest Park, Ga., dozens of UGA Extension volunteers and staff encouraged students to touch the wheat, tomatoes and herbs that go into making a pizza. A meat station and live dairy cow helped kids understand the origins of their favorite toppings.

Professional pointers

By Andrea Gonzalez

What began as a seminar course for agronomy students is now one of the college’s most popular classes. Since Keith Karnok began teaching “Career Preparation and Professionalism,” enrollment has grown because students want to learn practical skills for the workplace.

The one-hour course covers how to develop and write specific career goals, cover letters and resumes, and the dos and don’ts of interviewing. Other topics include email, voicemail and telephone etiquette. Karnok, a Megs Distinguished Professor in the Department of Crop and Soil Sciences, also invites industry experts to provide students insight into the business world.

Demand for the class is growing. Originally offered just to upperclassmen, the course is now open to freshmen and sophomores. This year it will be taught in both the spring and fall for the first time, with up to 200 students in each session.

Although he’s officially retired, Karnok continues to teach this class because he enjoys contributing to students’ success.

“I don’t want these students to be counted out of a potential job because of some small error they may have unknowingly made,” he said.

Rock Eagle cabin construction

By Sharon Dowdy

Georgia’s 2014 state budget will fund the construction of 17 more new cabins at the Rock Eagle 4-H Center. Nine new cabins have been completed at the Eatonton camp, two are currently under construction and work will soon begin on five more.

Replacement cost is $500,000 per cabin, which includes demolishing the old cabin. New cabins sleep 22 people in six bedrooms, each with a private bath.

State 4-H Leader Arch Smith hopes to see the camp’s cabin replacement project completed by 2018.

How sweet it is

By Sharon Dowdy

Our scientists are searching for a way to help Vidalia onion farmers guarantee their crop meets consumers’ expectations – sweet, but not too pungent.

“When you chew an onion with your mouth closed, you taste the sweetness, then you open your mouth and get the pungency,” said UGA food scientist Bob Shewfelt. “Pungency is what goes up the back of your nose and makes your nose vibrate – whether it makes you cry or makes it feel hot in your mouth.”

The four-year study compares instruments that measure sweetness and pungency with the opinions of trained sensory panelists and untrained onion tasters. The human taste testers said sweetness is the most important factor. The scientists also found that consumers ranked less pungent onions as more acceptable.

“In the long term, we want to find an instrumental method that can discriminate against various onions. If one is too pungent, it will be kicked out and not sold raw,” said Shewfelt, who led the study until his recent retirement.

Identifying that perfect mix of sweet and pungent will help keep both consumers and farmers satisfied.

For more information about this program, visit extension.uga.edu/k12/pizza-farm.

Vidalia onions are sorted into grades at a Tattnall County, Ga., facility to be sure they meet certain size standards. CAES researchers are working to guarantee the onions meet consumers’ sweetness and pungency standards, too.

For more information about this program, visit extension.uga.edu/k12/pizza-farm.
A teacher among teachers
By Merritt Melancon

Maria Navarro, an associate professor in the Department of Agricultural Leadership, Education, and Communication, received a 2012 New Teacher Award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. “Uncovering the link between rural agricultural development and violent conflict has undeniably influenced my academic and professional career,” wrote Jeremy Akin (AB – International Affairs, ’10), a former Fulbright Research Fellow who took Navarro’s international agricultural development course and submitted a letter of recommendation for the award.

For more information, visit tinyurl.com/CAESNavarro.

Shockingly effective
By Sharon Dowdy

For more than 10 years, CAES food scientist Yen-Con Hung has studied the use of electrolyzed oxidizing (EO) water to make food safer and surfaces cleaner. His latest research does both, using EO water to clean beef hides in an effort to reduce levels of six E. coli strains in beef processing.

Since it could take as few as 10 E. coli bacteria to get someone sick, depending on the strain, effective sanitation is essential to public health and food safety. Our researchers have also studied using EO water to clean food processing plants and preparation areas, remove pathogens from fresh poultry and prevent mold from growing on nursery plants.

If it wasn’t for CAES, I wouldn’t …
Compiled by Andrea Gonzalez

… have discovered my true passion for research conservation.

… understand the economic decision-making process required for policy makers.

… have had as many opportunities to travel all around the country, to network with individuals who could potentially help me gain employment or to succeed academically because of the amazing support system the college has built.

… can ever discovered how truly delicious an education can be.

… be able to question and explore my studies of interest; I wouldn’t be able to work closely with distinguished faculty on research we share a common passion for; I wouldn’t have had the amazing experiences working hands-on with livestock; and I wouldn’t have made some of my very best friends.

… be who I am. CAES brought me out of my shell at a young age and taught me how to walk into the world with a confident head on my shoulders.

… have been given the opportunity to learn an appreciation for science.

… be at UGA.

Esteemed economist
By Merritt Melancon

Jeffrey Dorfman, an economist with the college since 1989, was recently named a fellow of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association, the top professional association for agricultural and natural resource economists, and became a contributing writer for Forbes. Dorfman’s achievements include advances in modeling and forecasting.
The UGA Trial Gardens: Armitage’s lasting legacy

A new chapter

Over his 30 years at UGA, and at the helm of the Trial Gardens that he co-founded with fellow horticulturist luminary Michael Dirr, Armitage has become an expert in “great stuff” — the plants gardeners want to plant and the joy that gardening brings.

This summer marked Armitage’s last in the Trial Gardens. He’s retiring at the end of the year and has turned over the reigns to horticulture professor John Ruter, who ran the native plant arboretum at UGA’s Tifton campus for 22 years. In his “retirement,” Armitage plans to continue adding to his long list of gardening books, web classes and smartphone apps for gardeners.

Ruter says he isn’t planning on making big changes in the UGA Trial Gardens, which will still be funded by companies who want UGA horticulturists to test their plants for hardiness in the Southeast. But, it will be different. It will have to be.

From past to present

Armitage and Dirr started the Trial Gardens almost as an experiment to see if they could, and the thing stuck. Today, it’s still holding its own in a few thousand square feet of space tucked between the UGA College of Pharmacy and the Snelling Dining Hall.

“People ask if you could do the same thing (start a garden on campus) today, and I say, ‘I have no idea,’” Armitage said.

That was 30 years ago, and each year since, plant companies have sent thousands of new plant varieties to be tested there to see if they can be marketed to Southerners. The Trial Gardens have become an important link between UGA’s Department of Horticulture and the ornamental plant industry.

Some of the most famous plants to come out of the garden were varieties that Dirr and Armitage developed — the first sun-loving coleusas, the decorative sweet potato ‘Margarita’ and the homestead purple verbena. These are plants that changed Southern gardens and are sold around the world.

While its variety testing program has made the garden a darling of the green industry in Georgia, what’s made it famous is the way people flock to it every time there is an open house. That may be Armitage’s most valuable gift, said Wilf Nicholls, director of the State Botanical Garden of Georgia.

“Part of what makes him special is his expertise and his willingness to share it with the master gardeners, the landscape designers and the beginning gardener who is looking for the right ‘hangy-downy thing’ for their container garden,” Nicholls said. “He will speak to all of these people on their level and help. There’s no snobbery in Allan Armitage.”

While Armitage is turning over the keys to the garden, there’s a good chance visitors will still see him on campus from time to time, speaking and leading workshops.

“He’s always been a teacher,” Nicholls said, “and that’s not a job you really ever retire from.”

Sowing seeds for future growth

UGA Department of Horticulture professor John Ruter took over the day-to-day operations of the UGA Trial Gardens on July 1. Previously, he spent two decades as a horticulture professor and nursery-crop research and Extension specialist on the UGA Tifton campus, where he also ran the Native Plant Arboretum.

As he transitions into his new role, Ruter plans to use the space as a year-round teaching tool by planting more perennials and annuals that bloom in the fall and early spring when classes are in session, and work with graduate students to develop new plant varieties. Ultimately, Ruter hopes his changes will attract even more visitors, allowing the garden to run more efficiently and be used for more horticulture classes.
Empowered by Peanuts

By Clint Thompson

Peanuts are big business in Georgia, but the crop may also be key to helping farmers in developing countries prosper while creating a safe, nutritious food supply.

UGA will serve as the management entity for a new $15 million U.S. Agency for International Development grant aimed at just that, and will oversee competitively awarded grants from numerous institutions worldwide. The Peanut Collaborative Research Support Programs, or Peanut CRSP (also managed by UGA), was the predecessor to the new program, which will be known as the Peanut and Mycotoxin Innovation Lab. The PMIL’s work will focus on five Feed the Future countries designated by USAID: Haiti, Ghana, Mozambique, Malawi and Zambia.

UGA plant pathologist and Tifton-based Extension specialist Bob Kemerait has been involved in work in Haiti since 2007, along with fellow UGA faculty members Tim Brenneman, Steve Brown, Jay Williams and John Sherwood.

“When you begin work in a developing country, you’re so excited. You want to make a difference, you want to bring change, you want to bring hope,” Kemerait said. “The goal for everyone involved in Peanut CRSP was to give deserving people a better chance in life.”

The work done in recent years, and to be continued over the next four years, thanks to the $15 million grant, will strive to provide the local research necessary to support an effective peanut production and utilization system in the host countries. It is hoped that improved peanut production will result in increased economic value and, ultimately, in economic development and improved nutrition and health. Reduction of aflatoxin, a mycotoxin that has major health consequences in developing countries, is a key element of the project.

“I think the peanut industry has always had an interest in helping humanitarian situations,” said Steve Brown, CAES assistant dean for Extension and former PMIL interim director. “The University of Georgia and the peanut industry are proud to have this program centered out of the state of Georgia.”

David Hosignton, former deputy director general for research at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics, became the new PMIL director on September 1.

For more information, visit peanutcrsp.org and caes.uga.edu/commodities/fieldcrops/peanuts.
Breeding blueberries

By Sharon Dowdy

Breeding the perfect blueberry takes 12-14 years.

UGA horticulturist Scott NeSmith breeds about 5,000 new blueberry plants each year. He evaluates those for three years before culling the number down to between 200 and 250 plants.

After six to eight or more years, he chooses to focus on the best five or 10 plants. A couple of years later, he’s hopefully bred a blueberry that’s tasty enough to go to market.

Berries from Titan, a UGA blueberry bred for commercial farmers, grow as large as a quarter. Most blueberries are usually a little smaller than a dime.

Georgia-grown blueberries are a $200 million industry, and are the state’s No. 1 fruit by farm gate value and acres.

Summer Sunset, a UGA blueberry bred especially for homeowners, produces multicolored berries that turn yellow, then orange, then deep orange, then red and finally midnight blue when they are ripe.

Home gardeners can choose blueberry varieties for their landscapes by calling their local Extension office or visiting the UGA Research and Education Garden in Griffin, Ga. Blueberry varieties grow there in rows where consumers can view the plants year-round.

Since 1981, the 4-H performing arts group Clovers and Company has wowed local and national audiences. Many talented singers, dancers, musicians and stagehands from across the state have promoted and shared the excitement, leadership and talent found in Georgia’s 4-H program.
Many members often join 4-H because they heard about Clovers and Company and want to be a part of it. The group acts as a catalyst to not only get youth more involved with 4-H, but to also propel them toward a successful career in the performing arts. -Cheryl Varnadoe
State Coordinator, Clovers & Company

The current cast is made up of approximately 50 4-Hers representing more than 35 counties in a variety of performances. They range in age from 10 to 18, and are selected through a rigorous audition process. The growing success of the program has brought more visibility to Georgia 4-H and the performing arts project areas.

“Many members often join 4-H because they heard about Clovers and Company and want to be a part of it. The group acts as a catalyst to not only get youth more involved with 4-H, but to also propel them toward a successful career in the performing arts,” said Cheryl Varnadoe, state coordinator for the program.

For most cast members, it’s more than just an extracurricular activity; it’s a life-changing experience. Members interact with peers who share their passions and develop the skills necessary to become star performers.

“As a home-schooled student with a passion for the arts, I struggled to find artistic outlets. The 4-H show choir gave me a place to perform once or twice a month, a community of performers to work with and the opportunity to explore many different genres of music,” said Mary-Clayton Gilbert, a recent Clovers and Company alumna who is currently studying musical theatre at the University of Oklahoma.

While Gilbert attributes much of her personal success to 4-H, she admits she would not have become a member of 4-H if it weren’t for Clovers and Company.

“Without this performing arts group, I would have never joined an ‘agricultural’ club. But after joining, I realized the many benefits and opportunities of 4-H, I am still benefitting, from all I learned,” she said.

The highly competitive program has been the start for many well-known musicians, vocalists and songwriters such as Jennifer Nettles, lead vocalist of Sugarland. In 2012, Nettles was a mentor on the television show “Duets,” a reality singing competition on ABC. John Glosson, also a former Clovers and Company member, placed second as her singing partner. The show also featured footage of Clovers and Company performing with Nettles at the National 4-H Legacy Gala in New York.

“(More than 6) million viewers saw this performance, and I was honored to represent my community in a positive light. This was the biggest achievement in my life, and it will never be forgotten,” said Michael Woods, one of the six members who performed with Nettles.

Other successful alumni include Carole J. Bufford, Hannah Dasher, Nikki Deloach and Hillary Lindsey. Bufford has performed in musical theater productions in New York City for eight years. She is also a nationally respected jazz singer and cabaret performer. She has no doubt that her experience with Clovers and Company helped her get where she is now.

“We had limited resources at our school as far as musicals go. This was the first time where I really met a bunch of other people who were similar to me. I got exposure to a bunch of music, and it was the first time I’d ever sung harmony. Working in a company like Clovers really prepared me for performing in large-scale cast shows,” she said.

Many alumni keep in touch with the organization long after their Clovers careers end. At the 32nd anniversary reunion in March, several former members, including Nettles, Glosson and Bufford, performed in the alumni showcase at the Rock Eagle 4-H Center.

Clovers and Company alumni interested in reconnecting should visit georgia4h.org/public/edops/cloversandcompany.

Page 15: Jennifer Nettles performs with Mark Hilliard, John Glosson and Clovers and Company members Ashton Prior, Mary-Clayton Gilbert, Austin French and Michael Woods during the 2012 National 4-H Legacy Gala in New York City. Above: Clovers and Company alumna Jennifer Nettles shares the stage with current cast members (left-right): Hannah French, Jada Cato, Natalie Starling, Destan Musgrove, Asley Hutchison, Morgan Hutchison and Garrett Collins. Left: The 2012-2013 cast, ranging in age from 10 to 18 and representing more than 35 counties in Georgia, put on a special performance at their alumni reunion in March, which included a past member showcase.
For the last 39 years, local lawyers, teachers, bankers and electricians have pulled on their best boots and Wranglers to watch three days of roping and riding at the Great Southland Stampede Rodeo.
H
g hightempo stadium music blares as families and groups of students stream in and find their seats on metal bleachers in the 1,800-seat South Milledge Avenue livestock arena, where the show has been held for the past three years.

By the time the show starts, everyone is ready for action.

“Whether you’re 6, 36, 66 or 96, you’re going to have a good time here tonight,” booms Roger Mooney, a professional rodeo announcer who has called the rodeo’s action from horseback for the past 20 years.

The applause and cheers from the crowd on that opening night are confirmation that a small group of student volunteers has done it again, like they’ve done every year since 1974.

The rodeo is a success.

“You know that all of those people who organized the rodeo back then were watching; you want to make sure it’s a good show,” said Cleve Jackson, a senior studying agribusiness and animal science and the 2013 rodeo chairman.

That first group of UGA Block and Bridle Club members, who built the rodeo from the ground up in the 1970s, laid the foundation for each year that has come after it.

Now that the rodeo is closing in on 40 years, that original team of students and their cohorts have children at UGA, and many of them are following in their parents’ footsteps — pulling out all the stops to make sure that one of the largest rodeos east of the Mississippi River continues for generations to come.

“It was something that we hoped would carry on, but when you’re in a club for one or two years, you just don’t have control over its destiny,” said Charles Jackson (BS – Animal Science, ’76), Cleve’s father and a 1975 and 1976 rodeo organizer.

“We expected that it would continue past us, but for it to have been going on this long is something special.”

Saddling up

The first rodeo was the brainchild of a group of determined UGA Livestock Judging Team students who wanted to put on a rodeo to raise money to travel to livestock judging events.

That was 1972, and the team members envisioned the rodeo as a competition for cowboys, pure and simple, said Jack Spruill (BSA – Animal Science, ’72), who helped organize the rodeo between 1972 and 1974. They didn’t know if the public would even be interested in a rodeo in Athens, he said.

They put up their possessions — a few trucks and washing machines — as collateral, so that the stock contractor and other vendors would allow them to order animals and services on credit.

“We did all have to sign a note to get the money, and we did put up our belongings,” Spruill said. “But if they knew how little possessions we had, they probably wouldn’t have taken it.”

The term “DIY” hadn’t been invented back then, but the first rodeo definitely qualified. Club members hauled hundreds of tons of arena sand and hay — by themselves — from the animal sciences farm out on South Milledge to Stegeman Coliseum. They even operated the coliseum’s spotlights during the rodeo.

“I don’t think we had any idea of it being the kind of rodeo it became,” Spruill said. “We just suddenly looked up and the stands were full.”

Two years later, in 1974, what started as a simple cowboy competition became the Great Southland Stampede Rodeo, complete with all the pomp and showmanship that have since become synonymous with what was — until recently — the only student-run, Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association-sanctioned rodeo in the country.

A wild ride

After a few years, the rodeo started receiving statewide notoriety. Thousands of people streamed into Athens each April to catch the show.

One of the kids in the stands back then was Mooney. Today, he’s a professional rodeo announcer by trade and rodeo fanatic by choice who travels across the country announcing large multi-million-dollar rodeos. Despite his full schedule of rodeo gigs, Mooney always makes time to announce the Great Southland Stampede Rodeo, complete with all the pomp and showmanship that have since become synonymous with what was — until recently — the only student-run, Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association-sanctioned rodeo in the country.

Dusting off

Nostalgia, because that’s not quite what the rodeo looks like anymore.

Since the late 1980s, the rodeo has been through some ups and downs. The rodeo lost some of its steam after the country music acts were scrapped, but it took its biggest hit after being moved from Stegeman Coliseum in 2003.

The rodeo had started in the coliseum, and being there was part of its brand — part of why people came, said Jake Willcox (BSA – Agribusiness, ’09), who was rodeo chairman in 2008.

“They had such a good turnout at the coliseum that it was almost like a football game,” he said. “Something that you just looked forward to doing every spring.”

Despite not having a venue, the 2004 rodeo organizers refused to give up on the show. That year, they moved the event to Oconee Heritage Park in south Oconee County, about 19 miles south of Athens.

Even though the rodeo went on, turnout dropped steeply.

Willcox, who worked on the rodeo when it was at Heritage Park, said the whole club knew that they would have to move it back to Athens for the event to survive.

“We had a hard time getting the numbers,” he said. “We knew we wouldn’t have a chance to get back to the coliseum, but we always wanted to bring it back to Athens.”

However, getting back to campus was no small undertaking. After that first year of not being at Stegeman, the club was broke, and it felt like they were starting from scratch, Willcox said.

“We took a $65,000 gamble to move it back to the university (to the Animal and Dairy Science Arena on South Milledge Avenue), not knowing whether it would work or not, and it did,” he said. “And it’s gotten better and better … But in the beginning, just something as simple as figuring out if we had enough toilet seats for that many people just was completely overwhelming.”

continued next page
Back in the saddle

The student organizers must have gotten the details, even down to toilet capacity, right because over the past three years, the rodeo has attracted sell-out crowds each night. The students have also developed some marketing muscle, reaching out to UGA sororities and fraternities to organize group attendance, and organizing theme nights like “Tough Enough to Wear Pink,” which benefits breast cancer awareness and treatment, and the “Tough Enough to Serve” armed services appreciation night.

“We want to restore it back to its former glory and maintain it as one of the biggest events on South Campus and one of the main events on campus,” Cleve Jackson said.

One of the things that students have done to turn the rodeo around in recent years was to switch rodeo-sanctioning bodies. Moving to the less traditional Rodeo Association in 2012 saved the money needed to turn the rodeo around, said club president Anna Moses (BSA – Animal Science, ’12), and made the rodeo profitable, said Cleve Jackson.

“Making the change has also made it possible to put that money into scholarship funds and outreach for the Block and Bridle Club, including taking petting zoos to local elementary schools and investing more elementary school students to see the show for free.”

One of the students who have been key to the rodeo’s revival over the past few years, and who have come to feel like they are part of the rodeo’s family, “This is one of those rodeos that’s very intimate,” Mooney said. “You’re up close; you’re very personal.”

Once you’ve attended just one time, it becomes your official “hometown rodeo,” like it did for Mooney.

People won’t let that kind of tradition go easily. While it’s had a few ups and downs over the years, the Great Southland Stampede has become the little rodeo that picks itself up, dusts itself off and comes back better than ever. Hopefully 40 years later on down the line, I’ll be able to take my own grandchildren here to see the rodeo, and maybe one of my sons will have worked in the line, I’ll be able to take my own grandchildren here to see the rodeo, and maybe one of my sons will have worked in the line, I’ll be able to take my own grandchildren here to see the rodeo, and maybe one of my sons will have worked in the line, I’ll be able to take my own grandchildren here to see the rodeo, and maybe one of my sons will have worked it,” said Cleve Jackson.

Community and alumni support have been key to the rodeo’s revival over the past few years, and they’ve come to feel like they are part of the rodeo’s family.

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Crickets, grasshoppers and scorpions: Pecky peas or tasty treats? Harman Johar (BSA – Entomology, ’13, BSAB – Applied Biotechnology, ’13) is banking on insects being the future of food.

Two years ago, Johar formed World Entomophagy, a business that produces raw, edible insects. Entomophagy is the study of humans eating insects.

“Insects are considered a food of the future,” said Johar. “Insects are considered a food of the future,” said Johar. “Insects are considered a food of the future,” said Johar. “Insects are considered a food of the future,” said Johar.

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Remember when we were students at UGA? Chances are there were CAES alumni helping us in ways we never knew.

Through scholarships, club activities, job connections and more, those alumni supported programs that made our time at UGA better. Now, as alumni, it’s time to return the favor and support current and future CAES students.

We would like to see CAES alumni once again leading all UGA contributors in percentage of alumni giving. The CAES Alumni Board has committed 100 percent participation. Won’t you join us so current students can experience the same opportunities you had while you were here? Consider supporting the Eterna Fund, which funds all CAES Alumni Association activities, including scholarships and student enhancement programs.

In a renewed spirit of unity, the UGA Athletic Association is asking everyone to “Commit to the G” and support all athletics. I’m asking you to apply this slogan to your alma mater. Let’s commit full-on to CAES: Get involved, give back and reconnect.

Your Alumni Association Board of Directors is dedicated to finding new and varied opportunities for you to commit to the college. With all of us pledging our commitment to CAES, I truly believe all facets of our college will benefit.

Please feel free to contact me or the Office of External Relations if you have feedback or want to get more involved. I’m looking forward to strengthening my commitment to CAES, and I hope you will join me.

Sincerely,

John McKissick
BSA – Ag Economics, ’74, MS – Ag Economics, ’78

Garden up

Story and photos by Merritt Melancon

When you run out of gardening space for planting rows, it’s time to start planting on the walls.

Public parks and DIY backyard gardening magazines are filled with nifty living walls and vertical gardening projects. They’re easy to build and look cool, but vertical gardeners seem to keep running into the same problem — gravity. Gravity pulls the irrigation water away from the plants at the top of the wall before their roots can absorb it. Plants at the bottom of the wall end up waterlogged, even with the best soil preparations.

That’s a problem JoHannah Biang (BSA – Horticulture, ’09, MS – Horticulture, ’12) attempted to solve. Biang is the farm manager for the student-run, on-campus UGArden. As a graduate student, she used her time there to research the soil mixtures and irrigation rates for living walls for her master’s thesis project.

Biang grew up northwest of Macon in Meansville, Ga., and gardened with her family.

“That’s where my love for plants began.”

The UGA Office of Sustainability provided Biang with a grant to pay for the construction of a permanent living wall at the UGArden, where she put her knowledge and love of gardening into action.

Her wire-framed wall at the campus farm contains perennial herbs, which are provided directly to Athens families through the farm’s mobile market and the garden’s farm stand.

The living wall at the UGArden is built into the back of a concrete retaining wall. In the future, Biang hopes to install a similar wall near the Snelling Dining Hall so the chefs there can use campus-grown produce.

Biang hopes her work will inspire gardeners to try vertical farming. The data she collected about irrigation rates and soil types should also help other professional gardeners perfect their vertical growing strategies.

For more information, visit ugarden.uga.edu.

JoHannah Biang is working to perfect the irrigation of vertical wall gardens. In the future, she hopes to construct an herb garden wall near Snelling Dining Hall on the Athens campus.

JoHannah Biang tested different irrigation systems and rates as part of the research she did for her master’s degree.

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Paying it forward

By Amanda E. Swennes

A couple of years ago, with their 30s fast approaching, Elliott and Christy Marsh realized it was time to sit down and take a serious look at their finances—things like saving for retirement, paying off student loans and setting up college funds for their daughters, Addison, 9, and Annalee, 6. They also decided they wanted to make it a priority to pay their success forward in a meaningful way.

“We wanted to give someone the opportunity to enrich their student experience. We got a lot out of our time at Georgia and want to help someone else have a positive experience.”

—Christy Marsh

Next year, a CAES student will receive the first award from the newly endowed Elliott and Christy Marsh Legislative Internship Fund, which will provide support for students to participate in the CAES Legislative Internship Program with the Georgia General Assembly.

“We wanted to make a lasting gift and let somebody benefit from what the college was able to give to us,” said Elliott (BSA – Ag Economics, ’02, MAL – Ag Leadership, ’11).

As the CAES Alumni Association secretary/treasurer, chairman of the association’s development and finance committee, and past president of the east Georgia CAES Alumni Association chapter, he says it’s important for alumni to simply get involved, especially if they feel like they’re either too young to give or can’t give “enough.”

“Setting aside the money to fund their new endowment took some thoughtful planning, a little bit of soul searching, and a lot of commitment and passion for both the college and agriculture.”

“We wanted to give someone the opportunity to enrich their student experience,” said Christy (BSA – Marketing, ’02). “We got a lot out of our time at Georgia and want to help someone else have a positive experience.”

Asked why they chose CAES, the Marshes agreed that they felt now was the right time to give back to agriculture.

“Life has led us to ag,” Christy said. “We do give to Terry [College of Business], and I use my marketing degree and mass communication minor every day,” she said, “but Elliott and I both work for ag companies.” (She is a mortgage originator with AgSouth and he is the east Georgia regional manager at Ag Technologies, LLC.)

“We see ag as the past and the future. It’s the backbone of what keeps the world spinning.”

Encouraging students to see first-hand how agriculture policy gets made in Georgia and ultimately affects food, fiber and families around the world is what this “gift at work” is all about.
Will Harris (BSA – Animal Science, ’76), a fourth-generation farmer from Bluffton, Ga., was selected as the Georgia state winner of the 2013 Swisher Sweets/Sunbelt Expo Southeastern Farmer of the Year award. Harris has developed his White Oak Pastures into the largest sustainable farm in Georgia.

Harris was named the 2013 Early County Farmer of the Year. The Georgia Conservancy named him Conservationist of the Year in 2012. He was also selected for the UGA Bulldog 100, honoring the fastest growing businesses owned by UGA graduates, and won the UGA Agricultural Alumni Award of Excellence in 2008.

He has been active in the Institute for Georgia Environmental Leadership and served as president of Georgia Organics from 2006 to 2010. He has also been a member of the Pachitla Cattlemen’s Association and Early County Farm Bureau. Will and his wife, Von, have three daughters, Jodi, Jenni and Jessi.

Jennifer Lance (BSA – Plant Biology and Horticulture, ’01) was awarded a $10,000 Berntta Minkwitz Scholarship by Delta Kappa Gamma Society International, a professional honor society for women educators. She was one of just 24 students across the nation to receive the scholarship, which she will use during the 2013-2014 academic year to work on her doctoral degree in science education.

Campbell Kirbo (BSA – Agribusiness, ’03) lives in Albany, Ga., and is an attorney with Kirbo & Kirbo, P.C.

Vince Mulia (BSA – Turfgrass Management, ’03, MAL – Ag Leadership, ’11) works in Miami for Aramark Higher Education as the associate grounds manager for Florida International University.

Melissa Bowers (BSA – Animal Science, ’08) works in the banking industry and says she uses her animal science degree constantly. She moved to rural Oklahoma in 2009 and began working for Eastman National Bank in 2011. Since then, she has become an analyst for the bank’s commercial and agricultural loan portfolio.

Recently, she was appointed to the Oklahoma Bankers Association’s Agriculture Committee, a post she will hold for two years.

1970s

1980s

1990s

2000s

2010s

Caroline Black (BSA – Ag Education, ’11) is the farm education and agritourism coordinator for Jamie Farms in Alto, Ga.

Dallas Anne Duncan (BSA – Ag Communication, ’11) is the editor of the Farmers and Consumers Market Bulletin for the Georgia Department of Agriculture. She is also growing her Mary Kay team and recently became a senior independent beauty consultant.
Almost 1,000 miles separate Morrisville, N.Y., and Athens, Ga. Yet, between the 1960s and 1980s, the upstate New York town sent dozens of its young people to the University of Georgia to study food science. They came from the two-year Food Processing Technology program at the State University of New York at Morrisville (now Morrisville State College), which was set up to provide technicians for the local fruit and vegetable processing industry, but ended up producing leaders across the food science landscape.

“The pipeline was pretty strong,” said Chris Penet (BSA – Food Science, ’82, MS – Food Science, ’83), who transferred from Morrisville.

Many of the students who made the long trip credit John Galbreath (BSA – Food Science, ’62, MS – Food Science, ’63) for helping them continue their education. Galbreath had been recruited to attend UGA in the 1960s by then CAES Associate Dean Robert Wheeler, who traveled the country to recruit out-of-state students to the growing college. Just months before he was due to finish his doctoral dissertation at UGA, Galbreath was asked to return to Morrisville to teach. He spent the next 33 years teaching in Morrisville’s Food Processing Technology program and shepherding students towards UGA.

“He opened our eyes to what our careers could be and that vision always included UGA,” said Greg Socha (BSA – Food Science, ’82, MS – Food Science, ’83), who also transferred from Morrisville.

Because of his ties to UGA, Galbreath worked with longtime Department of Food Science and Technology head and professor John Powers and other food science faculty to make sure all of the Morrisville students received full credit for their first two years of course work — something they weren’t granted at nearby Cornell University. But there were also more esoteric reasons for students to come to UGA. Athens topography reminded them of their homes in upstate New York, the weather was mild and UGA’s food science curriculum focused on practical knowledge they could apply right out of school.

Today, many of the Morrisville students still keep in touch — a tight-knit club inside the tight-knit world of food science — and they make up about 20 percent of the UGA Food Science Industry Advisory Board. Several of them see each other once or twice a year, and they still try to get together to tailgate at a UGA game every so often. In some ways, it’s like coming home.
In May, eight CAES students traveled to Shanghai, Beijing and Tianjin, China as part of the college’s first study abroad course in that country. From May 13 to June 6, the students, hosted by Shanghai Ocean University and Tianjin University of Science and Technology, met with Chinese food and agriculture industry executives to learn about global food and trade.

Led by Yao-wen Huang, professor of food science and technology, and Glenn Ames, professor of agricultural and applied economics, the students visited places like the Shanghai Smiling Shrimp Company, Suzhou No. 1 Silk Factory, U.S. Foreign Agricultural Services’ Agricultural Trade Office in Shanghai, Tianjin Master Kong Instant Noodle Company and the Want Want Group, a food manufacturer from Taiwan that operates more than 100 manufacturing plants in mainland China and employs 60,000 people.

Next year’s course is planned for May 11 to June 5, 2014. For more information, or to refer a student, visit caes.uga.edu/departments/agecon/China.cfm or email Yao-wen Huang (huang@uga.edu) or Glenn Ames (games@uga.edu).
CAESAR, the University of Georgia College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences mascot, was born over Memorial Day weekend, 2001. Back then, he was a smug, squat bulldog with only one job — recruit new students to the college by highlighting classroom and extracurricular activities. Over the past 12 years, he’s become quite the versatile dog.

CAESAR, whose name is an acronym for College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Academic Recruiting, has flown an airplane, trekked through the jungle and even spacewalked. He’s skateboarded, played basketball, rock climbed and gone spacewalking. He’s also been a scientist, a banker in the turfgrass department, played golf for the poultry science with chickens from the poultry science collecting water samples and looking swimming. He’s also been a scientist, a banker in the turfgrass department, played golf for the poultry science collecting water samples and looking swimming. He’s also been a scientist, a banker in the turfgrass department, played golf for the poultry science collecting water samples and looking swimming.

But at the end of the day, CAESAR is first and foremost a student.

“Whatever you can say about CAESAR, he’s not an athlete. His cholesterol level is reasonable, but he’s pudgy. He’s a lover, not a fighter. He’s a scholar, but not a nerd. I think he’s got a little something for every student to identify with.” — Jay Bauer  CAESAR’S creator

“From time to time I tend to think he’s become a post doc. He’s taught once or twice. But all the time, he’s a student. He never graduates,” said Jay Bauer, the CAES illustrator and graphic designer who brings CAESAR to life.

“I think of CAESAR as having a personality,” Bauer said. “My response to things — my taste — has colored what CAESAR does. His taste in clothing is comfortable casual. He’s nothing north of khaki, really. He was in a tuxedo once and it was completely wrong. We both knew it was wrong. He’s usually in a striped shirt and a pair of shorts, occasionally sandals. But never flip-flops — I draw the line.”

“What makes CAESAR lovable, Bauer said, is that nearly everyone can identify with him on one level or another. “He’s not an extraordinarily attractive dog; he’s true to his bulldog heritage — he’s a bit rotund. He’s imperfect; everybody’s imperfect. I think that’s the connection. I just really wanted to give him sort of a fallibility that a perfect character wouldn’t have had. He’s never unkempt or lacking in personal hygiene or manners or anything — he’s a good-mannered dog — but he’s not prissy; he’s not pretentious.”

CAESAR became so popular that CAESAR was born in 2001 and the most popular about on all four feet. With a little nurturing, he quickly learned to stand tall and encouraged CAESAR students to fully engage in the college experience.

In his new role, he’s changed his name to CAESAR, whose name is an acronym for College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences Academic Recruiting, has flown an airplane, trekked through the jungle and even spacewalked. He’s skateboarded, played basketball, rock climbed and gone spacewalking. He’s also been a scientist, a banker in the turfgrass department, played golf for the poultry science collecting water samples and looking swimming.

Dressed for travel, CAESAR led prospective students on a guided tour of the wide-ranging majors offered at CAES.

CAESAR explored a career in teaching and encouraged students to do the same.

CAESAR hangs with his prized pal in this illustration originally produced for the Animal and Dairy Science Department.

CAESAR has made several appearances in the student calendar over the years, never missing the chance to get in the spirit of a holiday.

Dressed as the “Green Paw,” CAESAR lends muscle to a student recycling initiative on the Tifton campus.

CAESAR made his in-person debut at Sunbelt Expo in October 2013. Expect to see him out and about in the coming year.

To see more pictures of CAESAR, visit caes.uga.edu/alumni/news.
"Amazing Abscission Zone* of Blueberry" by Tripti Vashisth (MS – Food Science, ’09) took 1st place in the microscopy category of the first CAES Ag & Art contest, held April 5, 2013.

Vashisth is a horticulture Ph.D. candidate studying the physiological and molecular mechanism of blueberry fruit detachment. She hopes her research will help improve the efficiency of mechanical blueberry harvesting.

Thirty Ag & Art entries from CAES graduate students, staff and faculty were judged in categories such as microscopy, creative/humor/wacky and landscape/animal/plant. Entries were displayed in the Miller Plant Sciences Building.

See all of the winning pieces in the online edition of Southscapes at caes.uga.edu/alumni/news.

*The natural point where blueberry fruits detach from the plant.