Distinguished Alumnus to Speak at ABAC Commencement

Dr. Beverly Sparks will be the guest speaker at the spring commencement ceremony on Thursday at 10 a.m. in Gressette Gym on the ABAC campus.

Sparks served as the Associate Dean for the University of Georgia (UGA) Cooperative Extension Service before her retirement earlier this year. She received the Distinguished Alumnus Award from the ABAC Alumni Association at Homecoming on April 10. The Distinguished Alumnus Award is presented by the ABAC Alumni Association in recognition of alumni who have distinguished themselves through professional achievement, community service and service to the college. It is the highest honor bestowed on an alumnus by the Alumni Association.

Sparks grew up in Tifton and attended ABAC from 1974-1976, earning her associate degree in agricultural science. As a student she worked at the Coastal Plain Experiment Station. She continued her education at UGA, receiving a bachelor’s degree in horticulture and a master’s degree in entomology. She earned her Ph.D. in entomology from Louisiana State University.

An extension urban entomologist at Texas A&M from 1983-89, Sparks was the first female extension agricultural specialist for the university’s agricultural extension service. She was also the first female president of the Southeastern Branch of the Entomological Society of America and later became the first female Associate Dean for Extension at UGA.

While in Athens, Sparks served as an Extension Entomologist from 1989-95 before becoming Extension Program Coordinator for Entomology from 1996-2002. From 2002-2006, she was District Extension Director for the North and Northeast districts. She was Assistant Dean and Interim Associate Dean for Cooperative Extension from 2006-2007 and Associate Dean for Cooperative Extension from 2007 until 2015.

Six members of her family have attended ABAC. Her husband, Allen Lee Tibbetts, is also an ABAC graduate who attended from 1974-76.

A ticket is required to attend the commencement ceremony at ABAC. Those without a ticket may view the ceremony via a live video feed in Howard Auditorium. A limited number of tickets are available to each graduate.

The ABAC commencement ceremony will include the ABAC Alumni Association presentation of the prestigious George P. Donaldson award to the top associate degree graduate who participates in the event and the ABAC Alumni Association Award to the top bachelor’s degree graduate who participates in the ceremony. Approximately 304 students are expected to receive diplomas.

Inaugural Class of National Residence Hall Honorary Inducted

Student Life and Housing held an induction ceremony for the first ever group National Residence Hall Honorary. This organization is an honor society for the top 1% of the students who live on campus. These students exemplify three areas: academic excellence, campus leadership, and service in the community. Twenty students were inducted during the ceremony.
Lovett Named Chair of ABAC Foundation Board of Trustees

Georgia Power Company Area Manager Lynn Lovett recently took on the responsibility of Chair of the ABAC Foundation Board of Trustees at ABAC.

“It is an exciting time at ABAC with the continuous growth in enrollment and increasing number of bachelor degree programs being offered,” Lovett said. “As the campus evolves, the ABAC Foundation will play a key role in providing vital financial support for scholarships, programs, and facilities.

“Dr. (David) Bridges (ABAC President) has done a great job of ensuring that our Foundation board is diverse in every aspect, and that each member brings specific expertise to the table. I look forward to working with our board members and the ABAC staff to accomplish ABAC’s mission to provide students with a life-changing educational experience.”

Lovett has been associated with Georgia Power for 36 years and the Area Manager for the Tifton area since 2003. Prior to moving to Tifton, she held several other positions within the company.

One of Lovett’s key responsibilities at Georgia Power is to represent the company through community involvement. In previous years, she has served as chair of the Tift County Foundation for Educational Excellence, the Georgia Agrirama Foundation, and the Tifton/Tift County Chamber of Commerce. She is a former president of the Tifton Rotary Club and serves on the board of directors for the Tifton Museum of Arts and Heritage.

Aside from her new post as Chair of the ABAC Foundation Board of Trustees, she is a member of the Tifton Rotary Club and serves on the Board of Directors for Moultrie Technical College and Ruth’s Cottage and Paticcake House.

Lovett received her bachelor’s degree from Berry College and an MBA in management from Georgia State University. She is married to Jim Lovett, a Georgia Power Community and Economic Development Manager. They have three children, Sarah, Pierce, and Rachel.

Kim Gilman, Chief Executive Officer and Chief Nursing Officer of Phoebe Worth Medical Center and Southwest Georgia Regional Medical Center, will be the keynote speaker for the pinning ceremony on Thursday at 4 p.m. at the First Baptist Church for graduates of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences at ABAC.

Gilman was appointed just this year to the position of CEO and CNO of SGRMC in Cuthbert along with her current responsibilities at Phoebe Worth in Sylvester. Both facilities are 25-bed critical access hospitals. Under Gilman’s leadership, Phoebe Worth Medical Center has had the highest employee satisfaction and the highest emergency center patient satisfaction rating in the Phoebe system.

A graduate of the ABAC nursing program, Gilman began her career at Phoebe in 1992 as a registered nurse. In 2002, she accepted the role of CNO, with the CEO title being added in 2010. Her educational background also includes a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in organizational leadership from LaGrange College.

Active in her community by serving on the advisory board of Albany Community Hospice, Gilman was recently appointed to the Moultrie Technical College board of directors. She is also a member of the Sylvester Kiwanis Club, the Worth County High School Health Occupations Education Program, and is the 2015 vice chair of the Sylvester-Worth County Chamber of Commerce board of directors. Gilman and her husband, Donald, have one daughter.

Approximately 85 ABAC nursing students are expected to graduate during the spring commencement ceremony on Thursday at 10 a.m. in Gressette Gym.

Senior Class Cookout
The Senior Class of 2015 was honored at a cookout sponsored by the Alumni Association. Those seniors in attendance received a gift and wisdom from alumni who spoke. Congratulations to our graduates!
Swords Named Director of Student Accounts

The Office of Fiscal Affairs is extremely excited to announce the new Office of Student Accounts. Jessica Swords, Director of Student Accounts, has been hired to lead this new endeavor.

A Tifton native, Swords received an Associate of Science in Business Administration from ABAC in 2008 and earned her Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting from Georgia Southwestern State University in 2010. Currently, she is pursuing a Master of Business Administration from Georgia Southwestern and plans to graduate in the upcoming spring term. Swords began her career in higher education at Moultrie Technical College, where she served as the Accounts Receivable Supervisor from 2011 to 2013. She has served as the Student Accounts and Veteran Affairs Coordinator at ABAC since 2013.

“I am honored to have been given this opportunity at ABAC. The creation of the Office of Student Accounts is essential for assisting our students with their financial needs. Being an integral part of providing financial services and solutions to support students is a role that I’ve embraced eagerly since my arrival at ABAC. Students are the most important element of our campus. I’m excited to provide them with assistance throughout their educational journey,” said Swords.

The primary mission of the Office of Student Accounts is to support the College’s educational goals through the accurate assessment of student tuition and fees; collection and receipting of college funds; timely disbursement of student refunds; and, to provide an appropriate service support system for the faculty and staff.

The Office of Student Accounts is located on the second floor of Branch Hall. There will be several updates made over the next four weeks to signage and website information to reflect these changes. In the meantime, the chart below to help determine who to contact going forward concerning student, faculty and staff questions. Please feel free to contact the Office of Financial Aid or the Office of Student Accounts for any questions you may have concerning these changes.

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<th>Office of Financial Aid</th>
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Phone: 229.391.4910 Fax: 229.391.4871
finaid@abac.edu (sfs@abac.edu will forward)

Phone: 229.391.4924 Cashier: 229.391.4999
studentaccounts@abac.edu
Cookbook Sales Support Nursing Scholarship
Purchase your “Cooking with ABAC Nursing” cookbook today! They are $15 and can be purchased in the Health Science Building. Proceeds benefit the Lisa Purvis Allison Scholarship Fund.

Georgia Federation of Women’s Club Memorializes Bessie Tift
The Georgia Federation of Women’s Clubs’ Tifton 20th Century Library Club celebrated National Arbor Day and GFWC Federation Day with the planting of a tree on the ABAC campus. The tree was planted in honor of Bessie Tift, founder of the club in 1905 and a longtime supporter of the Second District A&M School, which later became ABAC. Present for the brief ceremony were (l-r) ABAC Grounds Supervisor Brad Barbee, ABAC Department of Agriculture Head Dr. Ray Smith, and club members Shirene Daniell and Faye Slappey.

Spinks Retires After 21 Years at Georgia’s Museum of Agriculture
A name synonymous with the Georgia Museum of Agriculture, Monty Spinks, retires after 21 years.
Monty Spinks, Grounds and Maintenance Supervisor, began his career at the then Agrirama in 1994. From that point on Spinks has been an integral part of the Museum and Historic Village.
Spinks approaches his retirement from the Museum with an eye toward the future and a tinge of trepidation. “For the past 21 years I have had the opportunity to have a career in a place that is not only close to my heart but my Dad’s as well,” Spinks said. “It is going to be quite an adjustment.”
With the ever-present and highly contagious smile that always adorns his face, Spinks plans to take up residence in the seat of his tractor during retirement.
The development of the Museum stems from a conversation between Monty Spinks’ father, Ford Spinks, a former state senator, and Rosalie Shephard, the widow of James L. Shepherd. Following that conversation, Ford Spinks spearheaded efforts to build a museum of Georgia agricultural history, and the Agrirama opened to the public on July 1, 1976.

ABAC Students Speak at Tifton Sertoma Club Meeting
Two students from ABAC were the featured speakers on Thursday at a special meeting of the Tifton Sertoma Club on the ABAC campus. Marlee Mathis, a nursing major from Nashville, and Josh Page, a journalism major from the United Kingdom, spoke at the meeting in the Donaldson Dining Hall. Director of Public Relations Emeritus Mike Chason introduced the students and gave the club an update on the college. Mathis is the reigning Ms. ABAC, and Page is a member of the ABAC tennis team who is about to leave for the national tennis tournament to defend his national title at number one singles.

Summer Dining Services Hours
Dining Hall: Closes Wednesday after lunch and re-opens June 1 for limited serving hours.
Breakfast: 7:30 to 9:15 a.m. 
Lunch: 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. 
Dinner: 5 to 6 p.m.

Pizza Hut/Subconnection: Closes Thursday at 9 p.m. and re-opens June 1 for the hours of 5 to 9 p.m.

The Aggie C-Store: Closes Thursday at 9 p.m. and re-opens June 1 for the hours of 11 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Coffee Corner and Lakeside C-Store: Closes Wednesday and will not reopen until fall semester.

For more information, contact ABAC Dining Services at 229.391.5170