ABAC Project Receives Highest Honor from Board of Regents

For Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, the Historic Front Campus Project revitalized the “front door” of the campus in a landmark fashion. For that monumental endeavor which culminated with a rededication ceremony on March 1, ABAC has received the Regents Award of Excellence from the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

ABAC’s historic rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of Tift, Lewis and Herring halls and the front of campus revitalization was the basis for the award. USG Vice Chancellor for Facilities Jim James said the Regents present the award for projects which redefine the “spirit of place” on a campus.

“It creates or re-creates and embodies the special atmosphere of that campus, that particular place,” James said during the presentation at the recent statewide facilities conference in Atlanta. “It is more than a group of buildings. It is the space between the buildings, and the totality of experiences created there.”

ABAC Director of Capital Planning Melvin Merrill, who was the campus liaison for the project, said the massive undertaking involved the rehabilitation of the circular drive in front of ABAC, called the “sweetheart circle”, the front lawn, the three signature buildings, and the area directly behind the buildings.

Tift, Lewis and Herring were three of the original buildings on campus at the 1808 opening of the Second District Agricultural & Mechanical School. Over the years, the three buildings fell into a state of disrepair and the last of the three, Tift Hall, closed in 2007.

Tift, Lewis and Herring now house the ABAC History Room, administrative offices, student services and the Stafford School of Business. The campus “sweetheart circle” and front grounds have been revitalized with new landscape, hardscape and signage features.

Lauded for its revitalization of ABAC’s “front door”, James recognized the Historic Front Campus Project for exemplifying the notion that the “whole is indeed greater than the sum of its parts.”

“The renovation and reuse of Tift, Lewis and Herring was truly a once-in-a-lifetime project,” said Monica Mastrianni, Greenline Architecture President. “We are honored to have had the opportunity to work with members of the ABAC community and the Board of Regents to create a project that breathes new life into the campus.”

Turks Create Endowment for ABAC

George and Betty Turk recently established an endowment at ABAC to fund enrichment opportunities for students in the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

George Turk (’52) has served on the Ag Alumni Council for many years and was instrumental in establishing the annual Ag Classic golf tournament which generates funds to provide scholarships for students in the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

“George Turk is a role model to many, inspiring us to serve ABAC as he does. His enthusiasm, energy and commitment are unmatched,” said Dr. Tim Marshall, Dean of the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

“These generations of the Turk family have attended ABAC including George Turk, their son Charles and more recently, their granddaughters, Charlie and Faith. George Turk is retired from Gold Kist. He and Betty have been married for 57 years and reside in Commerce, Ga.

“Gifts such as the Turk endowment will provide life changing opportunities for ABAC students for many years into the future. We are thankful for their leadership gift,” said Paul Willis, Vice President for External Affairs and Chief of Staff.
Canned Food Drive to Benefit Ruth’s Cottage Today & Tuesday
ABAC Dining Services will be hosting a canned food drive today and Tuesday from 11:30 to 2:30.
Anyone that brings in four canned goods will receive a free lunch in the dining hall. Bring your items and support Ruth’s Cottage. Contact Tina Duggins at tduggins@abac.edu for more information.

Documentary Screening of “deepsouth” Nov. 21 in Howard
The award-winning documentary, “deepsouth”, will be screened in Howard Auditorium on Nov. 21 at 6 p.m. at ABAC. This viewing is free of charge and open to the public. The showing of this documentary is part of an effort by the ABAC Rural Studies faculty to open a dialogue regarding an important health care issue in the rural south. Free HIV testing will also take place from 10 a.m.—2 p.m. in the front lobby of Donaldson Dining Hall on Nov. 21.

This film is about the largely forgotten and interwoven issues facing the rural American South. Beneath layers of history, poverty and now soaring HIV infections, four Americans redefine traditional Southern values to create their own solutions to survive. The film is directed and produced by Lisa Biagiotti.

Biagiotti will be in attendance at the screening to introduce the film and field questions during a community dialogue and question-and-answer session after the screening. Biagiotti has written and produced stories for the Los Angeles Times, PBS, Current TV, and Human Rights Watch. Her work focuses on complex, under-reported social issues, from the sanitation crisis in SouthEast Asia to homophobia in the Caribbean.

Biagiotti won the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Award in 2009 for stories she produced on the humanitarian crisis in the eastern Congo. She teaches storytelling to first-time filmmakers and speaks internationally about digital journalism and independent filmmaking. She holds a master’s degree from Columbia University’s School of Journalism.

This event is sponsored by the ABAC Foundation, South Health District of the Georgia Department of Public Health, Center for Teaching and Learning, the ABAC Schools of Human Sciences, Liberal Arts, and Nursing and Health Sciences, the Honors Program, Georgia Association of Nursing Students, Rural Studies Club, SPECTRA, and the Tifton-Tift County Arts Council.

For more information on this event, interested persons can contact Troy Spicer, Interim Dean of the ABAC School of Nursing and Health Sciences, at (229) 391-5020.

ABAC Students Build Pumpkin Chunker at Museum
Students working at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village recently built a project which hurls pumpkins hundreds of feet through the air. The Pumpkin Chunker, which is really an oversized slingshot, is formally known as a counterweight trebuchet. It served as a major attraction during the Museum’s Fall Frolics events each Saturday in October.

The idea for the Chunker was originally proposed to the GMA staff in 2011 by Friends of the Museum board member Charlotte Bedell. Students participating in the project were Chris Mullis, Nathan Dupree, Medford McDonald, Brandon Douberly, Kody Plemmons, Chad Warrick, Josh Bennett, and Chandler Bartley. Mullis served as the lead builder/engineer for the project.

Steve Pair of Fitzgerald donated the beautiful hickory timbers that he personally milled for the project. He also served as a technical advisor during the build.

“I am extremely proud of this talented group of ABAC students,” said Garrett Boone, Assistant Director of the GMA. “We are fortunate to have them working at the Museum. This project was not an easy one, but they tackled it with enthusiasm and showed a tremendous amount of skill in a variety of different areas in order to surmount the hurdles encountered throughout the build and during its operation.”

Veterans Day Celebration Today in Meadows
ABAC Veterans are invited to a Veterans Day appreciation celebration today beginning at 11:30 a.m. State Farm is sponsoring the event and there will be grilled hot dogs and hamburgers in the Meadows from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. There will also be gifts for the veterans as well as some “door prizes”. Students, faculty and staff who are veterans are welcome.

Contact Jessica Swords at jswords@abac.edu or 229.391.5010 for more information. Thank you veterans for all you have done for our country! We appreciate your service!

Campout for the Homeless Friday & Saturday
A Campout for the Homeless benefitting Ruth’s Cottage will take place on the ABAC Lakeside lawn beginning at 7 p.m. on Friday and continuing until 7 a.m. on Saturday. All ABAC students, faculty, and staff are eligible to participate. This event is sponsored by the Student Government Association.

At 7 p.m. on Friday, guest speaker Nancy Bryan will talk about how Ruth’s Cottage and the Patticake House serve the Tifton community and how the proceeds raised will benefit these local organizations. Afterwards, participants will create temporary homes from cardboard boxes and camp out on the lawn to bring attention to the plight of homeless people nationwide.

There is a cost of $1 for a small box, $2 for a medium box, and $3 for a large box. Duct tape is also available for $3. The Baptist Collegiate Ministries will provide dinner during the evening, and breakfast will be served by the Student Government Association.

For more information on the campout, interested persons can call the SGA office at (229) 391-5095.
Due to the many changes related to benefits for 2014, (including the transition of all ABAC voluntary plans to a system wide USG voluntary benefits platform), it is critical that you plan to attend one of our ABAC Open Enrollment formal employee communication sessions. **ENROLLMENT WILL BE ACTIVE THIS YEAR, NOT PASSIVE - THIS MEANS THAT EACH EMPLOYEE WILL BE REQUIRED TO MAKE ELECTIONS!**

ABAC Open Enrollment formal employee communication meetings will be offered at the Branch Student Center Courtroom at the following dates and times:
- Monday: 8:15 a.m., 10 a.m., 12 p.m., 2 p.m., and 4 p.m.
- Tuesday: 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 2 p.m., and 4 p.m.
- Wednesday: 10 a.m., 1 p.m., 3 p.m., and 5 p.m.
- Thursday: 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 1 p.m., and 3 p.m.
- Friday: 10 a.m., 12 p.m., 2 p.m., and 4 p.m.

Please sign up for the date and time that works best for you using the following link: [http://www.emailmeform.com/builder/form/7AdmfUJRQe](http://www.emailmeform.com/builder/form/7AdmfUJRQe)

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**Experience holiday life in the 1880s with Victorian Village by Candlelight from 5:30-7:30 p.m. on Dec. 8 at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College. **

**Tickets for this event are $15 per person, must be purchased in advance, and are now on sale at the Country Store.**

The evening is limited to 125 visitors with 25 people in each of five groups for the Victorian Village tours. Groups will meet at the Country Store to leave on the Museum train every 30 minutes beginning at 5:30 p.m., with the last group leaving the train station at 7:30 p.m.

During this lamp-lit event, guests will learn about two of the Victorian traditions that have become a part of the legend of Santa Claus. Visitors will get a taste of the community’s celebratory spirit as they stop in for a Christmas Eve visit in a Victorian-era village in South Georgia back when electricity was a luxury, humble gifts were made by hand, and Christmas Eve was spent cooking delicious treats on the open hearth of the fireplace.

Guests will ride on train cars pulled by the 1917 Vulcan steam engine into the glowing Historic Village lit with lanterns and kerosene lamps. The first stop on the hour-long village tour will be the Clyatt Cabin, where Father Christmas and Old Befana will greet guests with a folktale.

Guests will then journey down a lamp-lit path to get a glimpse of how two Wiregrass Georgia families welcome the season. The Tift House will depict the Christmas of an affluent family. The Tifton Choral Society will be on the porch of the Tift House singing traditional 19th century carols for visitors. At the Knight Cabin, guests can see what a typical Christmas was like for a sharecropper family.

A stop at the Drug Store will follow, where Farmhouse Beef Stew and cornbread will be available for visitors before heading to the bonfire where they will enjoy some hot apple cider. The train will then depart to take visitors back to the Country Store. All visitors will receive a keepsake ornament hand-forged by the village blacksmith and a guidebook to remember the evening.

For ticket information on this event, interested persons can contact the Country Store at (229) 391-5205.

The Museum will offer more holiday events with Wiregrass Christmas on Dec. 14 from 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. and the North Pole Express on Dec. 19-20 from 5-8 p.m.

The Museum will be closed from Dec. 22, 2013 – Jan. 1, 2014 for the holidays. The Country Store will be open for holiday shoppers through Dec. 21 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
Baldwin Players ‘Taming of the Shrew’ Great Success
Actors (l-r) Slayten Carter, Alena Phillips and Kaylee Stokes from the Baldwin Players’ production of “The Taming of the Shrew” take a well-earned break after the closing night performance. This marked the first time that William Shakespeare was performed at ABAC in quite a few years, and it was a resounding success. The cast and crew worked long, hard hours over the last few months to bring this story to life. They earned the heartfelt thanks of the director, Dr. Brian Ray, who said he couldn’t be prouder of their effort. The play had great audience support over the three nights, and they had a great time! The Baldwin Players’ next production will be a musical, “Smoke on the Mountain”, at the Wiregrass Opry stage at the GMA March 6-8.

Navy SEAL Team Member Speaks to ABAC Students
Former Navy SEAL Team member Coleman Ruiz spoke to students at ABAC on Wednesday about his experiences with the unit and how those events shaped his life. He gave the students timely tips on how the best leaders first begin their careers by learning to follow. The seminar was sponsored by the Stafford School of Business.

ABAC Retiree Event Sets Attendance Record
Nearly 90 retirees of ABAC attended the Open Enrollment Workshop last Tuesday. They received a timely update on ABAC benefits for the year to come. They also received a tour of Tift Hall from Mike Chason. Thank you to Sodexo, ABAC Police, ABAC Ambassadors and Richard Spancake and the Human Resources Office for making this event one of the best ever.

Cane Grinding & Syrup Making at Museum
From the mule-powered cane mill to the smell of syrup cooking, visitors will become enchanted with the days of old in South Georgia on Nov. 16 and 23 at the annual cane grinding and syrup making parties at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village.

For many Southerners, cane grinding and syrup cooking are family traditions that have been passed down through many generations. The Museum is one of the few places left where visitors step back into in time to see sugar cane grinding with a mule leading the way. The sweet juice pouring from the cane mill will then be transferred to the syrup shed where it will be cooked down in a cast iron kettle to make delicious cane syrup.

Visitors can also enjoy wool washing, carding and dying at the Clark Cabin throughout the day. Cornmeal pancakes with hot cane syrup can be sampled at the Gibbs House. Cane syrup will also be available for sale. Concessions at the Historic Village Drug Store will include soup and corn bread, hotdogs, ice cream, and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

An extra added attraction on Nov. 23 will be Native American dance programs from GoNativeNow. Leading the dancers will be Little Big Mountain, a fourth generation dancer, singer and educator on Native American culture. An encampment will accompany the dance programs throughout the day.

The “Backroads of Georgia” exhibit of photos and essays will also be available for viewing in the Museum Gallery. Visitors can also take a ride on the steam train pulled by the 1917 Vulcan locomotive. Costumed interpreters will be visiting with guests and explaining the cane grinding process and the intricacies of producing a bottle of cane syrup.

Saturday admission is $10 for adults, $8 for seniors (age 55 and over), $5 for children 5-16 years of age, and free for children four and under. The Museum is closed on Sundays and Mondays.

For more information on these and other upcoming events, interested persons can contact the Museum staff at (239) 391-5205 or visit the Museum’s website at www.abac.edu/museum.

Golf Course Superintendents Conference
On Nov. 4, Dr. Eddie Seagle and John Layton accompanied Turfgrass and Golf Course Management students Clayton Chandler, Chris Pitts, Brad Thompson, and James Galvin to the Georgia Golf Course Superintendents Conference at the Atlanta Athletic Club. The students represented ABAC by attending educational seminars and networking with green industry leaders. The students also had the opportunity to meet and gain experience from ABAC alumni and past J. Lamar Branch recipients Palmer Maples, Jr., and Anthony Williams at the annual awards banquet. Pictured (l-r): Seagle, Layton, Chandler, Pitts, Thompson, Galvin, Maples and Williams.

Concert Choir will be performing their fall concert at 7 p.m. on Tuesday in Howard
The FOCUS is an electronic publication produced by the ABAC Public Relations Office. Please submit information by Thursday at noon to Ashley Mock at amock@abac.edu for inclusion in the next FOCUS.

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15 Jackie Rose
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