



# FOCUS

## ABRAHAM BALDWIN AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

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### Medal of Honor Recipient to Speak at ABAC Commencement December 9

Medal of Honor recipient and retired Major General of the Marine Corps James Livingston will be the speaker at the fall commencement ceremony at ABAC on Dec. 9 at 6 p.m. in Gressette Gym.

President Richard Nixon awarded Livingston the Medal of Honor on May 14, 1970 for his bravery in the Republic of Vietnam on May 2, 1968. The official citation states that Livingston was twice painfully wounded by grenade fragments during the battle but "courageously led his men in the destruction of over 100 mutually supporting bunkers."



Major General James Livingston, Retired, USMC

According to the citation, despite being "wounded a third time and unable to walk, he steadfastly remained in the dangerously exposed area, deploying his men to more tenable positions and supervising the evacuation of casualties. Only when assured

of the safety of his men did he allow himself to be evacuated."

Livingston was born in Telfair County and graduated with a civil engineering degree from Auburn University. He was then commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps. He also holds a graduate degree in management from Webster University.

For his exemplary duty in the Marine Corps, Livingston also received the Silver Star, Purple Heart, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Navy Commendation Medal, and the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with a gold star. He retired from the Marine Corps in 1995.

Approximately 175 graduates are scheduled to participate in the ceremony.

### Bookstore Open House Thursday

The ABAC Bookstore will hold its fifth annual Holiday Open House on Dec. 1 from 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. Refreshments will be provided.

Shoppers will receive 25 per cent off all gift and clothing items. Free gift wrapping will be available.

For more information on the Holiday Open House, contact bookstore manager Tracy Dyal at 391-4825 or [tdyal@abac.edu](mailto:tdyal@abac.edu).



### Phi Theta Kappa Offers 'Great Holiday Wrap' Tuesday

Phi Theta Kappa will host a "Great Holiday Wrap" in conjunction with the Christmas Concert on Tuesday. Participants can bring their gifts to the lobby of the Carlton Center from 3 - 9 p.m. Members of the honor society will be on hand for your holiday wrapping needs. Light refreshments will be provided.

Boxes will be available at a cost of \$1-\$5 depending on the size. Participants can bring their own box or wrapping paper and \$1 will be deducted from the wrapping fee.

Contact Kim Talley at 391-4786 or [ktalley@abac.edu](mailto:ktalley@abac.edu) for info.



### Christmas Season Begins Tuesday With Concert in Chapel

Welcome the holiday season with a Holiday Music Celebration on Tuesday at 4 p.m. in the Chapel of All Faiths at ABAC.

This event is open to the public at no charge. Refreshments will be served in the lobby of the adjacent music building when the concert ends.

The concert will feature the ABAC Jazz Choir, directed by Dr. Susan Roe with ac-

companist Marjorie Fix.

Wayne Jones will sing "Sweet Little Jesus Boy", and Roe will perform "O Holy Night." Dr. Kay Weeks will also have a special reading. The concert will also feature audience participation in beloved Christmas carols. Students will perform selections including "There is Faint Music" and "A Swinging' Christmas."

The Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society will

be set up in the lobby of the Carlton Center for those who would like their gifts wrapped while enjoying the concert. Phi Theta Kappa members will wrap presents from 3 - 9 p.m. with prices ranging from \$1 - \$5 depending on the size of an item. Participants can also bring their own supplies.

For more information, interested persons can contact Roe at 391-4943.



# Merrill Selected For GEAC Lifetime Achievement Award

The Georgia Education Advancement Council honored Chief Advancement Officer Melvin Merrill from ABAC with a rare Lifetime Achievement Award at its recent annual meeting in Young Harris.

In his presentation, GEAC Awards Committee Chair Jeff Boggan said the award had been presented only four previous times in the history of the organization. Ironically, one of those was in 2010 when ABAC Public Relations Director Mike Chason received the honor.

"I just want to thank ABAC President David Bridges for continuing to recognize quality performance down at ABAC," Boggan said. "That says a lot about the leadership at the institution."

GEAC is a statewide organization composed of professionals in advancement, public relations, and alumni relations. It includes both public and private colleges and universities. Merrill has twice served as a director on the GEAC Board.

"Melvin's valuable contribution to our institution and its advancement team is distinguished by his demonstrated dedication to the mission of ABAC," Bridges said. "This is a well deserved honor."

Merrill joined the ABAC administration as the Director of Development and President of the ABAC Foundation, Inc., in 1978. Today, he serves as Chief Advancement officer and has extensive experience in educational fundraising, development, campus planning, construction management, budgeting, and finance.

Under his leadership in the area of development, more than 8,600 constitu-

ents have contributed in excess of \$23,540,000 in support of ABAC programs. In the advancement role of his position, capital projects valued at more than \$76,700,000 have been or will be completed on the ABAC campus by the end of the fiscal year.

Merrill played a significant role in the development of on-campus housing at ABAC when the ABAC Foundation and then President Mike Vollmer put together a plan to build ABAC Place and ABAC Lakeside. Over 1,200 students now live at ABAC in ultra-modern campus housing as a result of that effort.

Merrill's latest responsibility is helping to coordinate the work on the historic front of campus project which includes the revitalization of ABAC's three oldest buildings, Tift Hall, Herring Hall, and Lewis Hall.

Named as the Arts Citizen of the Year in Tifton in 1997, Merrill was also selected for the Honorary State FFA degree in 2007, as an Honorary Alumnus by the ABAC Alumni Association in 2009, and as a finalist for the Lanier Carson Leadership Award in 2010. Merrill is a member of the Tifton Rotary Club, and he and his wife, Anita, are members of the First United Methodist Church.



Melvin Merrill received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the GEAC annual meeting in Young Harris on Nov. 17. On hand to celebrate his accolade were (l-r) Mike Chason from the public relations office, Director of Sponsored Programs Betty McCorvey, Merrill, Vice President for Advancement and External Affairs Keith Barber, Melvin's wife, Anita; former ABAC employee Amanda Bridges, and ABAC President David Bridges.

## Larger Joins the Office of Information and Technology Services at ABAC

Russell Larger is the new computer services specialist in the Office of Information and Technology Services (OITS) at ABAC. He began his new role on Oct. 31.

Larger is not a stranger to the world of technology. He maintained and supported a large Local Area Network (LAN) that included 300 computers and 20 printers while serving in the United States Air Force from 1996-2005. He then started his own computer business, A&R Computers in Ray City, specializing in repairs, upgrades, and wireless networks.

"I sleep and breathe computers," Larger said. "I don't play video games on them, but I like to build them and keep them working at their optimum level."

He is currently attending Wiregrass Technical College, where he will earn his networking specialist degree in June, 2012.

When he is not working with computers, he likes to spend time with his wife of 14 years, Aleta, an attorney in Nashville, and their four children, Hannah (6), Rebekah (9), Lehi (11), and Jared (12). He also owns a nine-home rental business, A&R Rentals.

Since joining the ABAC staff, he has had nothing but positive experiences from the campus.

"ABAC has been wonderful," said Larger. "I have enjoyed the people I have met, and my impressions of the college have been nothing but great."

## Cone Joins Student Financial Services

Robin Cone has joined the Office of Student Financial Services as a customer service representative. She began her new role on Oct. 31.

Cone received an associate degree in psychology from ABAC, a bachelor's degree in psychology from Valdosta State University, and is currently in Troy State's graduate program where she will earn her degree in public administration.

Her work experience includes serving as an academic advisor at Troy State University, a service specialist and OASIS co-facilitator with the Georgia Department of Labor, a social worker for Diversified Resources, and as a family independence case manager for both the Tift County and Colquitt County Divisions of Family and Children Services.

When not working or in class, she enjoys reading, hunting, fishing, and camping. She and her husband, Jason, a manager at Superior Uniform, have two children.



## Cookout for the Veterans

ABAC honored the veterans on campus with a hot dog cookout on Nov. 16 in The Meadows. Those honored included Clayton Riehle (standing) and Joseph Schriefer. Riehle is a part-time ABAC student who works in the Office of Institutional Research, and Schriefer is an animal sciences major from Newnan. Both men served in the Air Force. Thanks to Keith Perry for organizing the cookout each year.

## AT&T Presents Scholarship Check to ABAC

Courtney Brinson, Regional Director of External Affairs for AT&T Georgia, recently presented a check for \$2,500 to ABAC President David Bridges to use for the ABAC scholarship program.

"I believe that this gift will assist some students in getting a great college education here at ABAC," Brinson said.

Brinson also thanked State Representative Tony McBrayer and State Senator John Crosby, who were on hand



Those present for the AT&T presentation were (l-r): ABAC Vice President for Academic Affairs Niles Reddick, State Representative Tony McBrayer, ABAC Director of Sponsored Programs Betty McCorvey, AT&T Georgia Regional Director of External Affairs Courtney Brinson, ABAC President David Bridges, State Senator John Crosby, and ABAC Vice President for Planning and Operations John Clemens.

for the presentation.

"Tony and Judge Crosby are committed to education, and we appreciate the

job they do in the state legislature," Brinson said.

Bridges thanked Brinson for the financial boost to the scholarship program and the lawmakers for their support in the legislature.

"We really appreciate the support we get from the state," Bridges said.

"We're also very thankful for the support we get from AT&T and the private sector. The availability of scholarship funds enables our recruiters to attract some high quality students."

Bridges said "the retention rate is up, the graduation rate

is up, and our bachelor's degree programs are growing faster than any of our programs of study at the college."

# Rural Studies Students Take Second in State Competition

Three teams of ABAC students recently competed against 40 teams from all 35 institutions within the state at the University System of Georgia's Social Business and Microcredit Forum in Atlanta. One of those ABAC teams emerged from the pack with a second place finish in the competition.

The team of Ashley Morris, a rural studies major from Newnan; Kimberly Wilmot, a rural studies major from Jackson; Esthela Lopez, a rural studies major from Tifton; Elizabeth O'Quinn, a rural studies major from Fitzgerald; and Abbey Bowen, a rural studies major from Tifton, took home the second place prize in the student competition for the team's social business plan, outdistancing competitors that included the University of Georgia. The plan included the identification of a social problem in the community and proposed solutions. Each team was only allowed five minutes to make its presentation.

"This was all about teamwork," said Earl Denham, advisor for the ABAC teams and part-time instructor in the School of Business. "They identified a need and put a plan together from what they have learned in class. It was phenomenal teamwork."

"The team's performance is an excellent example of all the ABAC participants focusing on a single goal," said Dr. Jeff Gibbs, Dean of the School of Business.

"All three teams worked together in preparing for the competition. I am extremely proud of these students and their dedication to getting the most out of their education at ABAC. This is certainly an indicator of the excellent education provided by ABAC and the leadership opportunities the college offers its students."

Gibbs also praised Denham for his contributions to the team's finish. "Professor Denham had these students better prepared than any of the teams ABAC competed against," said Gibbs. "He is a valuable asset to ABAC."

The forum featured the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner and founder of the microcredit concept, Professor Muhammad Yunus. Known as the "Father of



The ABAC team received second place at the University System of Georgia's (USG) Social Business and Microcredit Forum. On stage for the presentation were (l-r) Willis J. Potts of the USG Board of Regents; Kimberly Wilmot, Esthela Lopez, Elisabeth O'Quinn, Abbey Bowen, Nobel Peace Prize recipient Dr. Muhammad Yunus, Ashley Morris, USG ACE Fellow Mohammad Bhuiyan; Dr. Jeff Gibbs, Dean of the School of Business at ABAC; and Earl Denham, part-time Instructor of Business.

Microcredit", Yunus served as the keynote speaker.

The conference was organized to bring together economic development interests from all regions of the state to hear Yunus' social business concept of combining business know-how with the desire to improve quality of life. The forum is part of the USG's statewide economic development partnership efforts with other Georgia entities.

## Former ABAC President Anderson Passes Away

Former ABAC President Stanley Anderson, age 91, passed away in Sandusky, Ohio on Nov. 26.

Anderson served as President at ABAC from 1975 until his retirement on Dec. 31, 1984.

The pursuit of academic excellence and an emphasis on a quality education were the goals during Anderson's tenure as president. A Michigan native, he moved to Tifton from his position as Dean of the College of Agriculture at Texas A&I University. Anderson led the effort to establish the Baldwin Memorial Gardens in front of the Chapel and actually planted many of the original flowers in the Gardens himself.

Private Services will be held in Ohio.

President and Mrs. David Bridges  
cordially invite you to a

*Holiday Open House*

Thursday, December 8

6:30-8:30 p.m.

National Peanut Museum

Located adjacent to the

Georgia Museum of Agriculture Welcome Center

1392 Whiddon Mill Road

# ABAC ACCEPTING ATHLETICS HALL OF FAME NOMINATIONS

Nominations continue to be accepted for the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame. The deadline for nominations is Dec. 15.

Any individual, living or deceased, may be considered for induction into the ABAC Athletics Hall of Fame. Individuals are nominated in one of three categories: Athlete, Coach, or Contributor.

"With the rich athletics' history of our college, it's going to be exciting to see the selections for this next group," Athletics' Director Alan Kramer said.

The inaugural Hall of Fame class in 2008 included Thomas Cheney, Bruce V. Gressette, Norman "Red" Hill, Orion Mitchell, Philip Simpson, and Milena Stanoytcheva.

The Hall of Fame class of 2009 honored the 1984 national championship men's tennis team, Ellen Vickers, Dorsey Brooks, Cook Holliday, P.W.

Bryan, Jr., and Newell "Sarge" Dorsey. The 2010 Hall of Fame class included the 1991 national championship wom-

coach of the ABAC Stallions from 1962-1967; Harley Stewart, player for the Stallions basketball team from 1968-1970; and the late A. B. Malloy, loyal supporter of the Fillies softball team from 1985 - 2005.

Kramer said athletic achievement as well as integrity, sportsmanship, and character will be considered. He said the college is also looking for individuals who may have been good athletes while at ABAC, but who went on to coach high school or college teams to state or national titles.

Alumni as well as the general public are encouraged to nominate individuals for this honor. Hall of Fame criteria and a nomination form can be found at [www.abac.edu/halloffame](http://www.abac.edu/halloffame).

For more information, interested persons can contact Kramer at 391-4928.



en's softball team, Harley Klepfer, Jim Sparks, Joseph Grist, and Thomas "Boo" Weekley.

The 2011 Hall of Fame class included the 1995 ABAC national championship women's softball team; Kyle Farnsworth, pitcher for the 1995 Stallions baseball team; Benny Dees, basketball



## ABAC Fulbright Scholar Speaks at Albany State

Dr. Zsuzanna Boegre, a Fulbright Scholar from Hungary who is teaching at ABAC this year, lectured at Albany State University on Nov. 14. She spoke on her qualitative research work and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 to students in an international business course and to seniors in history and political science.

## ABAC Birthdays

Dec 2 Ryan Myers

Dec 3 Brenda Doss

Dec 4 Kay Powell

The FOCUS is a weekly electronic publication produced by the ABAC Public Relations Office.

Please submit information by **Thursday at noon** to Ashley Mock at [awilliamson@abac.edu](mailto:awilliamson@abac.edu) for inclusion in the next FOCUS.

