ABAC Will Honor Alumni April 4 at Homecoming

TIFTON—Former students of Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College will be honored at the annual ABAC Alumni Association awards ceremony as a part of the 2014 Homecoming Week on April 4 at 6 p.m. at Gressette Gymnasium on the campus of ABAC.

The ceremony will recognize ABAC alumni who impacted the college and their communities in significant ways. Advance tickets are $30 per person. There will be no tickets sold at the event. Tickets can be purchased from the ABAC College Advancement Office at (229) 391-4895. For more information on the 2014 Homecoming Week, interested persons can visit the web site at www.abac.edu.

ABAC Alumni Association award winners this year include Dr. Tim Marshall of Hahira, Distinguished Alumnus; Alisha Hall of Fort Valley, Helen Brown Sasser Award; Laura Niki Knox from Peachtree City, Outstanding Young Alumnus; James Lee Hall of Arlington, Va., J. Lamar Branch Award; Lola Henning West from Amarillo, Tex., Outstanding Educator; James Holcomb from Savannah, Outstanding Business Leader; Nancy Hilton from Ocilla, Outstanding Health Care Professional; and John David Moore from Chula, Master Farmer.

Honorary Alumnus selections include Dr. Rod Brown of Tifton, Roger Dill of Tifton, and
DeNean Stafford, III, of Tifton. The Gay family and the Howell family from Lincolnton, Gordon, Irwinville, and Athens will receive the Family Legacy Award.

**Marshall**, a native of Cook County, attended ABAC from 1975-1977, earning his associate degree in agriculture. He continued his education at the University of Georgia (UGA), earning a B.S.A. in animal science before completing his education at the University of Florida where he earned a master’s degree in beef cattle management and a Ph.D. in beef cattle genetics.

Currently the Dean of the School of Agriculture at ABAC, Marshall previously served as an extension agent with the University of Florida and managed Nesmith Farm in Alachua, Fla. He holds honorary degrees from the National FFA, the Florida FFA, and the Georgia FFA. Marshall was the 2013 recipient of the E. Lanier Carson Leadership Award at ABAC. His professional memberships include the American Society of Animal Science, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, Georgia Farm Bureau, and the Georgia Agribusiness Council.

**Alisha Hall** is a 2000 graduate of ABAC, majoring in family and consumer sciences. She furthered her education at Fort Valley State University, earning a bachelor’s degree in family and consumer sciences. She is currently pursuing her master’s degree in family and consumer sciences at Texas Tech University. Hall has taught classes at Perry High School and Burke County High School. She now teaches at Perry Middle School. Since her arrival there in 2006, she has been nominated three times for the school’s Teacher of the Year.

Hall was selected to serve on the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America Board of Directors in 2011 and currently serves as chairman of the organization. She was also among 40 educators nationwide selected by the Food and Drug Administration to participate in a week-long food science workshop in Washington, D.C. in 2012.
Knox received her associate degree in political science from ABAC in 2001. She completed her bachelor’s degree of business administration in marketing from Georgia Southwestern State University in 2002 and is currently earning her master’s degree in organizational development and leadership from Saint Joseph’s University.

Her business career began in the cities of Douglas and Valdosta as the Main Street Director. She then served as the Department of Community Affairs Office of Downtown Development Regional Representative for regions one, two, and four. In 2008, she became the Senior Community Economic Development Consultant for Georgia EMC. At present she serves as the Director of Governmental Relations for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.

James Lee Hall received his associate degree in wildlife management from ABAC in 1983. He furthered his education at Brenau College, receiving his bachelor’s degree in business administration and conservation law enforcement. He also received additional training through the federal law enforcement training center in 1991 and wildlife firefighting training in Harris Neck from 1987-2007.

Hall serves as the Chief of Law Enforcement with the National Wildlife Refuge System through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Arlington, Va. Previously, he spent some time managing the 1.92 million acre Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, the most complex refuge within the entire system. He also helped to establish the 10,473-acre Cat Island National Wildlife Refuge in Mississippi, considered to be a critical wetland, black bear habitat, and home to the National Champion Baldcypress, the largest tree species east of the Sierra Nevada Mountains.
West attended ABAC from 1984-86, earning her associate degree in natural science. She received her bachelor of natural science degree from Shorter University before attaining her master of science degree from Texas Tech University. She worked with the Colquitt County Board of Education for 10 years before moving to Texas for employment with the Tahoka and Canyon Independent School Districts. West is now a Region 16 Education Specialist working with 64 school districts in the Texas panhandle.

West is very involved in community and charitable causes including the Goodwill Industries, the Ronald McDonald House, American Red Cross, Amarillo Downtown Women’s Center, and Carenet Crisis Pregnancy Center. She is also an active member of Bell Avenue Baptist Church, where she serves as director of the Missions Committee and sings in the choir.

Holcomb attended ABAC from 1968-70 before earning his bachelor’s degree in business administration from UGA’s Terry College of Business. He did post-graduate work at both Tennessee Tech and Middle Tennessee State University. He is the owner of Ardry Trading Company, Inc. Established in New York City in 1940, the company moved to Savannah in 2003. It now conducts business in over 40 countries on every continent except Antarctica.

Before becoming owner of Ardry, Holcomb worked as a senior sales representative for Westinghouse Electric from 1971-81. His contributions to ABAC include serving as a Foundation Trustee and as a member of the Alumni Association. Named to the ABAC Foundation President’s Club in 2006, Holcomb created an endowment for ABAC students majoring in business from Chatham, Clarke, Effingham, Hart, and Towns counties.

Hilton received her associate degree in nursing from ABAC in 1991. She was the recipient of the nursing program’s highest award, the 1991 Divisional Award of Distinction. She
received her bachelor’s degree in nursing in 1993 from Georgia Southwestern State University. An employee at Tift Regional Medical Center since 1990, Hilton currently serves as Assistant Vice President of Patient Services with the Tift Regional Health System.

Professionally, Hilton is a member of the American Nursing Association, American Organization of Nurse Executives, the Georgia Nurses Association, the Georgia Hospital Association, the Georgia Organization of Nurse Leaders, and Sigma Theta Tau. Her charitable affiliations include the American Red Cross, American Cancer Society, American Heart Association, Alzheimer’s support groups, and the Tift Regional Foundation’s 30 Minute Club.

Moore is a 1986 graduate of ABAC with a degree in agriculture. He received his bachelor’s degree in agronomy in 1988 and his master of agronomy degree in weed science in 1990 from UGA. Both his wife and daughter attended and graduated from ABAC. His two sons are currently taking classes.

Moore’s farm includes 40 different crops ranging from row crops, vegetables, nuts, fruits, turf, and ornamentals. He started farming on 50 acres in 1990. By 2005 his farming operation included 900 acres. In 1993, Moore took advantage of his educational background to establish a contract field research company, Southeast Ag Research, Inc., to utilize all aspects of his farm.

Moore has served in professional organizations including Young Farmers, the Fellowship of Christian Farmers, and the Farm Bureau. Presently he is an active member of the National Alliance of Independent Crop Consultants. He has been a member of Northside Baptist Church since 1990 where he is a deacon and Sunday School teacher. He traveled on mission trips in the wake of Hurricane Katrina as well as an agricultural mission to east Asia. His charitable
involvement includes working with Lifehouse Ministries, Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children, and Compassion International.

**Brown** was a member of the ABAC faculty for 32 years in the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources. He received his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. in forest resources from UGA. On Sept. 1, 1982 he joined the Division of Agriculture and Forest Resources at ABAC. He was the department head of forest resources and a professor of forest resources upon his retirement on Aug. 1, 2013 when he was named Professor Emeritus.

Brown was instrumental in bringing a four-year degree in Natural Resource Management with majors in Forestry and Wildlife Management to ABAC in 2011. He incorporated Global Positioning Systems and other technologies into the curriculum to make sure ABAC’s graduates were ready for the workplace. Under Brown’s leadership, the ABAC forestry program garnered regional and national recognition and earned accreditation by the Society of American Foresters.

**Dill**, a native of Tifton, has given tirelessly to ABAC, the ABAC Foundation, and the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village (GMA). Donating both his time and talent, Dill has been an ABAC Foundation Trustee since 2003, served as Foundation Chairman and on the Finance and Investment Committee. He is also a President’s Club member and avid supporter of Evening for ABAC as a Gold Sponsor and the Marshall C. Guill Scholarship.

Dill also serves on the Friends of GMA board and supported the GMA Membership Campaign. As a civil engineer, he has helped ABAC and the ABAC Foundation with several construction projects, most recently volunteering his time to improve Moorman Drive located at the Forest Lakes Golf Course.
**Stafford** and his family have supported ABAC financially for many years and promoted the college in a variety of ways. He is a strong advocate for ABAC’s Stafford School of Business, frequently hiring graduates of the school. He serves as the chief executive officer and president of his father’s legacy, Stafford Development Company. The company includes five core businesses focusing on real estate, hospitality, food services, equipment sales and services, and other ventures.

Stafford’s parents, DeNean Stafford, Jr., and his wife, Flora, were strong supporters of ABAC for over a decade before the Stafford Foundation for ABAC was established in 1996. ABAC’s Stafford School of Business was named in honor of the Stafford family on Nov. 7, 2012.

Three generations of the Gay family and the Howell family have attended ABAC, beginning with Marilyn Goree Gay (1956-57). Originally from Lumpkin, she was the pianist for Vespers and the ABAC band and a member of the Baptist Student Union (BSU) and Future Business Leaders of America. Her son, Dennis, attended ABAC from 1983-86, earning his associate degree in forestry. Dennis’ son, Will, (2008-2010) majored in agricultural education and daughter-in-law Laura Parker Gay (2006-2009) received her associate degree in education. Amanda Gay (2010-2011), now the Chemistry Lab Coordinator in ABAC’s School of Science and Mathematics, received her associate degree in chemistry from ABAC in 2011 after transferring from Mercer University in 2010.

The Howell side of the family began with Wayne Howell of Irwinville (1959-1960) and Ella Gentle Howell of Fitzgerald (1960). Wayne Howell received his associate degree in agriculture, and Ella received her Certificate of Secretarial Science from ABAC. Their daughter,
Lynn Howell (1984-1985), majored in home economics while at ABAC. She was a member of BSU, the Travelin’ Stallions square dance team, and played piano for the ABAC bands. A native of Athens, Lynn met her husband, Dennis Gay, at ABAC.


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