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March 18, 2014

Rural Symposium April 4 at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture

TIFTON- A Rural Symposium will be held on April 4 from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. at the Georgia Museum of Agriculture and Historic Village at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College.

Featured speakers will include Dr. Cornelia Flora, Michael LaBroad, and Michael Sligh. U.S. Congressman Sanford Bishop and State Representative Jason Shaw are also scheduled to be in attendance to talk with the symposium participants.

“This is another way to bring national speakers to highlight what we teach students in the Rural Studies program,” Dr. Darby Sewell, Dean of Human Sciences at ABAC, said.

The Symposium was put together by ABAC faculty and staff in support of the college’s Rural Studies degree, which is the first of its kind at any college or university in the United States. Symposium participants will address issues in Business and Economic Development, Politics and Modern Cultures, Social and Community Development, and Writing and Communication, which are the concentrations inside the Rural Studies degree.

“We expect students and faculty will attend as well as regional community members, but we are expecting folks from as far away as Nova Scotia.” ABAC Vice President for Academic Affairs Niles Reddick said.

The registration fee is $50 for the general public and $20 for students. Interested persons
can register at [www.abac.edu/ruralsymposium](http://www.abac.edu/ruralsymposium). Space is limited for this event, and early registration is encouraged.

Flora is a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Cordova in Spain and a Professor Emeritus at Iowa State University. Her research interests include international and domestic development, community, and the sociology of science and technology, particularly as related to agriculture and participatory change. Flora has a B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley, and M.S. and Ph.D. degrees from Cornell University. She and her husband, Dr. Jan Flora, are authors of “Rural Communities: Legacy and Change.”

LaBroad joined Rural Media Group in 2012. As the inaugural Chief Marketing Officer, he brings over 30 years of experience to the marketing efforts of some of America’s largest and most recognized brands. LaBroad spent 25 of his post-college years working in every discipline of marketing at Anheuser-Busch. He was also the Chief Marketing Officer of the entertainment division that included SeaWorld, Busch Gardens and the innovative Discovery Cove.

Recruited to join Bass Pro Shops in 2003, LaBroad also served the National Hockey League as inaugural Chief Marketing Officer. Prior to joining Rural Media Group, he was the Managing Director of the Egan-Anderson national marketing consulting practice.

Sligh is a founding member of Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI-USA). RAFI-USA is a private non-profit organization that began as the National Sharecroppers’ Fund, which was founded in the 1930s by a group of bi-racial tenant farmers organizing for fair treatment and led by Eleanor Roosevelt and other distinguished individuals. Sligh manages policy, research and education regarding agricultural best practices, agro-biodiversity, agro-biotechnology, organic identity preservation and a range of food justice and other value-added
food labeling and marketing issues. He has more than 30 years of experience in agricultural practices and policy analysis.

A part-time family farmer and a trained anthropologist, Sligh lives, farms and works in North Carolina. He is the founding Chair of the USDA/National Organic Standards Board, founder of Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group and of the National Organic Coalition, a founding partner of the Agricultural Justice Project and a founding member of Domestic Fair Trade Association.

Shaw has served Georgia House District 176 since 2010. He serves as chairman of the Georgia Legislative Rural Caucus, a bipartisan group that takes a leading role in issues and legislation that impact agriculture, natural resources and the needs of the state’s rural communities. He also serves as vice chairman of the House Insurance Committee. He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Georgia.

Currently, Shaw serves as a director of the Professional Insurance Agents Association of Georgia, Southern Financial Systems, the South Regional Joint Development Authority, the Georgia Olive Growers Association and the American Olive Oil Producers’ Association. He is the owner of Shaw Insurance Services, Inc., and is a partner of Georgia Olive Farms, Inc.

Bishop is serving his 11th term in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Georgia’s Second Congressional District, which covers 29 middle and southwest Georgia counties. Since 2003, Bishop has served on the House Committee on Appropriations. He also serves on the Agriculture, Rural Development, and Food and Drug Administration committees. A 1968 graduate of Morehouse College, Bishop received his law degree from Emory University in 1971. He served in the U.S. Army, and he was the primary partner in the law firm of Bishop and Buckner, P.C., before being elected to Congress.