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**Athens Resident Named Distinguished Alumnus at ABAC**

**TIFTON**—Dr. Beverly Sparks from Athens will receive the 2015 Distinguished Alumnus Award on April 10 at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College during the annual ABAC Alumni Association awards ceremony.

Advance tickets for the 6 p.m. dinner and awards ceremony in Gressette Gym are $30 each. No tickets will be available on the day of the event. The ceremony recognizes ABAC alumni who impacted the college and their communities in significant ways.

Tickets can be purchased from the ABAC College Advancement Office at (229) 391-4895. For more information on the 2015 Homecoming Week, interested persons can visit the web site at [www.abac.edu/homecoming](http://www.abac.edu/homecoming).

The Distinguished Alumnus Award is presented annually in recognition of alumni who have distinguished themselves through professional achievement, community service and service to ABAC. It is the highest honor bestowed on an alumnus by the Alumni Association. It was first presented in 1969.
Sparks resides in Athens where she recently retired as the Associate Dean for the University of Georgia (UGA) Cooperative Extension Service. She attended ABAC from 1974-1976, earning her associate degree in agricultural science. As a student she worked at the Coastal Plain Experiment Station in Tifton.

After completing her ABAC degree requirements, Sparks received a bachelor’s degree in horticulture and a master’s degree in entomology from UGA. She earned her Ph.D. in entomology from Louisiana State University.

An extension urban entomologist at Texas A&M University 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 the first female Associate Dean for Extension at UGA.

At UGA, 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.

Sparks has five other family members who have graduated from ABAC. Her husband, Allen Lee Tibbetts, is also an ABAC graduate who attended from 1974-76.

Active in professional organizations, Sparks is a member of the Entomological Society of America, the Georgia Entomological Society, the National Association of County Extension Agents, Georgia Association of County Extension Agents -4-H, both the National and Georgia
Extension Association of Family and Consumer Sciences, the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors, and the Epsilon Sigma Phi sorority.

In 1994, Sparks was recognized as the Outstanding Young Professional from the Georgia Association of County Agricultural Agents (GACAA) and received the State Team award from Epsilon Sigma Phi. Her accolades continued in 1998 when she was awarded the Walter B. Hill Award for Public Service at UGA.

Sparks was named a Walter B. Hill Fellow in 1999, received the Distinguished Service Award in 2000 from both the GACAA and the NACAA, and was recognized for Outstanding Service to the Georgia Pest Control Industry in 2002. She also received the Georgia Power Woman of the Year award in 2006 and was the recipient of the UGA College of Agricultural Service Medallion in 2014.

Sparks has written numerous pieces for publications in books, journals, and other reference material. Her charitable contributions include United Way, Relay for Life, and breast cancer awareness programs. Sparks has also taken part in the Athens Clarke County Mentor Program and served 21 years as a volunteer for the UGA Gymnastics Program.

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