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Norman Park Resident to Receive ABAC Award April 10

TIFTON—Lauri Jo Bennett from Norman Park will be presented with the 2015 Helen Brown Sasser 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.

The Helen Brown Sasser Award is presented annually in recognition of alumni who have distinguished themselves by successfully balancing traditional family values with career and community service. Support of ABAC is also taken into consideration. When the award was first presented in 1959, it was called the Master Homemaker Award. It was presented during the administration of Helen Brown Sasser, the first female president of the ABAC Alumni
Association. The second oldest award presented by the Alumni Association, it was renamed in her honor in 1997.

**Bennett** attended ABAC from 1987-88, majoring in early childhood education. She went on to earn her bachelor’s degree in early childhood education from Brewton Parker College, her master’s degree from Grand Canyon University, and a better processing degree from Clemson University.

While at ABAC, she was a member of the Student Government Association and the Show Choir through the college’s music program. As an alumnus, Bennett has worked with the Deans of the Stafford School of Business, Dill and Susan Driscoll, as well as spoken to several business classes. She has partnered with the School of Agriculture and Natural Resources to recruit ABAC students as interns and has judged several activities for the school.

Bennett’s husband, Mike, is a 1988 graduate of ABAC. They have two children, Mikelyn, a graduate of ABAC’s nursing program and a registered nurse at Tift Regional Medical Center, and Hal, a sophomore majoring in agricultural business at ABAC. Bennett was a school teacher from 2002-09 before turning her business interests and her hobby of canning food into Lauri Jo’s Southern Style Canning, LLC in 2010.

On March 24, 2011 the Georgia Senate and House of Representatives presented the business with a resolution honoring the company’s growth. In 2012, the business became an Ag Tourism Destination. She served as the host of the Celebrity Cooking Stage at the 2014 Sunbelt Agricultural Exposition where she did live demonstrations of some of her favorite holiday recipes.
Lauri Jo’s jellies, salsas, and other items are now sold in some Kroger, Whole Foods, Fresh Market, Earth Fare, and Harvey’s stores, along with specialty stores across the U.S., Naval Bases around the world, and the Food Network Café at the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. Recently she shot a pilot for a TV show, “Farm to Table with Lauri Jo," which is presently being shopped to all the major television networks.

Bennett is an avid supporter of the FFA on both the local and state levels. She is a member of Norman Park First Baptist Church. She and her husband cook breakfast every week before Sunday School for all who attend.

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