

# AAPSE Treasurer Candidate Submission Packet

## Submitted by *Sonja Thomas*

### **1. *What is your leadership and working style?***

As a leader, I like to listen first and respond accordingly. I believe it is important to identify the traits of the individuals in your organization and how you can best serve. I work well in an environment where the group is flexible with their vision and with outlined goals they wish to complete. I enjoy helping individuals reach their goals but it should always fit the group's agenda. Furthermore, I have a type A personality and I like to stay on task and ensure all priorities and goals are met.



### **2. *What is your vision for AAPSE?***

AAPSE does a wonderful job of developing trainings and resources for PSEP and SLA members. But the marketing of our items do not always reach its intended audience. We have individuals that retire, or move to other job opportunities and leave with a wealth of knowledge that is not shared with their replacement. I would love to see AAPSE develop a legacy campaign for new employees that are hired to replace our retirees. This could be remedied by introducing welcome packets that include a combination of information that a new PSEP employee would need along with a designated mentor and can be issued by the treasurer or secretary. The responsibility of the mentor would be to serve as a source of contact for all things PSEP related. Sustainability seems to be the pressing issue for PSEP programs. Moving swiftly to get new employees trained and on board with the AAPSE vision would ensure no state falls behind. I would also like to see AAPSE develop a mandatory training for new PSEP and SLA employees to further the AAPSE initiative.

I would also love to see AAPSE continue to reach out to other countries and encourage the development of similar PSEP programs. Starting with countries such as India and Africa where pesticide poisonings are extremely high but funding is not as easily accessible. I would also love to see AAPSE continue to encourage our County Agents to become members of the organization. They are our "foot soldiers" and have the outreach capabilities coordinators and SLAs need, to reach pesticide applicators and homeowners.

### **3. *What experience and skills do you bring that will benefit the organization?***

When I began as PSEP coordinator, I was given 13,000 dollars and told to build a sustainable program. That was 5 years ago. Since that time I have hired 6 employees and currently manage a budget of >100,000 per year. Of which ~50,000 are "hard" funds. I have introduced programing

that stands as the model for online training in Auburn leading to co-writing and receiving a \$770,000 USDA grant for beginning farmers. I am no stranger to finding ways to encourage membership and engage individuals. I have served on several local, state and national boards. Serving as Secretary, Treasurer, committee member and chair. In those capacities I have managed websites, newsletters, membership fees and online meeting registration.

**4. *What challenges and opportunities do you see facing AAPSE?***

The need to increase membership and awareness of the organization along with the ever shrinking funds to support PSEP appears to be one of the challenges facing AAPSE. However that is also a great opportunity to expand the awareness of the organization. The organization can increase its memberships through the promotion of student and industry enrollment. This can be accomplished by offering scholarships to student members and continuing to reach out to our industry professionals through partnerships. We can also make it easier for new members to join by including membership fees in with registration if desired and introducing a way to pay for membership via credit card on our website. Some states do not allow employees to pay for memberships. This is a difficult decision if you have to choose between several associations yearly and you are required to pay for them personally.

**5. *What other information would you like the AAPSE members to know about you?***

Earlier in my career I worked at the county level as an Agricultural and Natural Resources County Extension Agent in Fayetteville, Georgia. Through this position I worked with Farmers, Homeowners and Pest Control Companies in areas related to Agriculture, Urban Entomology, Forestry, Animal Sciences and Water Quality. By working with this group of people I have an understanding of how they prioritize training. Most applicators only attend meetings if required. Keeping these individuals engaged is a difficult task. My focus as Alabama's PSEP coordinator has been to find niche training areas desired by applicators and develop programs that cater to these requests. This allows applicators to become familiar with our programs through handouts, introductions and related material as well as pinpoint future training areas.

Working with AAPSE is similar in that we have to identify the core needs for each state that will keep new and current members engaged in the association. I truly believe this is related to how we build up our new PSEP coordinators when they begin. I believe new coordinators should attend a training that will ensure they are well versed on the Federal and State rules and regulations along with resources and how to employ them within their state.

***Candidate Statement:***

AAPSE strives to be inclusive and open to assist states with pesticide safety. As stated on the AAPSE website members:

*“Enhance public health and the environment through involvement in education, outreach, and research which directly benefits pest managers, policy makers, and the public.”*

Our current members are dedicated to ensuring new resources and information is brought to the public and shared with all stakeholders. The need is ever pressing to become a driving force with the upcoming changes and possibility of new budget cuts to EPA and State programs. AAPSE needs to move swiftly, to ensure ALL states are in accord with our mission and priorities. Enhancing membership and making it easier for new members to join may be one avenue to increase awareness and build stronger programs in each state.

As treasurer I would be willing to find new ways make membership more accessible. Assist with grant opportunities to implement ways to increase training and resources in states and continue our goals to remain a 501c3 organization.

# Sonja B. Thomas, Ph.D.

Pesticide Applicator Training Coordinator  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Auburn University  
Alabama Cooperative Extension System  
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Auburn University, AL 36849

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## Education

**Doctorate in Entomology**, The University of Georgia August 2011  
Dissertation Focus: Urban IPM and Pesticide Regulation  
Adviser: Dr. Brian T. Forschler

**Masters of Science in Entomology**, The University of Kentucky August 2004  
Thesis title: "Factors Relevant to the Potential Commercial Rearing of the  
Heteropteran Predator *Geocoris uliginosus*: Cannibalism and Photoperiodic  
Induction of Reproductive Diapause"  
Adviser: Dr. Kenneth V. Yeargan

**Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology/Archaeology** December 2001  
Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama  
Archaeological Lab Technician Fall 2001  
Archaeological Field Assistant Summer 2001

## Employment

**Alabama Cooperative Extension System** July 2012-Present  
*Pesticide Applicator Training Coordinator/Pesticide Safety Education Program*

- Developed Private Applicator Online Program
- Manage a \$100,000+ budget
- Develop training materials and trainings for 26 commercial applicator categories
- Hire and supervise 6 employees

**Ralcorp Holdings** Oct 2011- May 2012  
*Assistant Safety Manager*

- Maintain Safety procedures
- Audited Safety Data Systems Log
- Conducted noise, and hazard levels
- Posted emergency information
- Developed confined space trainings
- Evaluated inventory, including spill response materials and other equipment

**University of Georgia, Athens, GA****September 2008 - August 2011***Graduate Research Assistant Household and Structural Entomology Research Lab*

Department of Entomology

Supervisor: Dr. Brian Forschler

- Developed a comprehensive IPM plan for the Chattahoochee River National Recreational Area (National Park Service), Roswell Georgia.
- Developed a matrix for the Eight Steps of Urban IPM.
- Researched and reported to the Georgia Department of Agriculture Structural Pest Control Commission the state standings concerning the Pesticide Use Record Violations in schools, through evaluation of pest control violations acquired by pest control operators in Georgia.
- Developed a Curriculum for Integrated Pest Management in Georgia Schools for Grades K-12

**University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service****February 2007-August 2008***Agricultural and Natural Resources County Extension Agent**Fayette County, Georgia*

College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

Supervisor: Greg Price

- Worked with Farmers, Homeowners and Pest Control Companies in Areas related to Agriculture, Urban Entomology, Forestry, Animal Sciences and Water Quality.
- Provided Community programs designed to address Agricultural needs in the County and surrounding Counties.
- Hired and Supervised one horticulture program assistant and 120 Master Gardener Volunteers.
- Evaluated turf grass problems, for homeowners, area golf courses and taught Turf grass management courses for pesticide recertification credits.
- Managed \$10,000 Master Gardener Budget.

**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA-ARS)****January 2006-January 2007***Biological Science Technician (Vegetable Entomology)**Tallahassee, Florida*

Supervisor: Dr. Stuart Reitz and Dr. Lamberth Kanga

- Assisted with biologically-based IPM programs to manage thrips in field-grown tomatoes.
- Also assisted Florida Agriculture and Mechanical University in recruitment of entomology students.

**University of Kentucky College of Agriculture****January 2002-August 2004***Graduate Research Assistant Soybean Entomology Control Lab*

Department of Entomology

Lexington, Kentucky

Supervisor: Dr. Kenneth V. Yeargan

- Research involved classical biological control of pests in Alfalfa, Soybean and Corn using the generalist predator *Geocoris*.
- Lab duties involved maintaining colonies of *Geocoris* spp, *Heliocoverpa zea* and *Heliothis virescens*.
- Field planting and maintenance of various vegetables for research.

**Auburn University****Fall 2000-December 2001**

Archaeological Lab Technician. Anthropology Dept.

Fall 2001

Dated, preserved and recorded artifacts from field excavations

Archaeological Field Assistant Fort Mitchell, Al

Summer 2001

Preservation and Identification of artifacts including animal and human remains.

Surveyed and excavated protected areas.

**National Park Service Mammoth Cave National Park**

**May 2000-September 2000**

*Park Interpreter/Guide*

Mammoth Cave, Kentucky

- Visitor tours through caves and park areas.
- Presented educational seminars and camp safety training for park visitors.
- Preservation of Museum collection.

**Auburn University College of Science and Math**

**September 2000- May 2000**

*Undergraduate Research Assistant*

**Department of Zoology**

Supervisor: Dr. Mary T. Medonca

- Assisted in a study exploring the neuroendocrine mechanisms controlling the timing of reproductive behavior in the big brown bat.
- Duties included, training Big Brown Bats to ground feed on meal worms.
- Inserting locating chips.
- Capturing bats for future lab research.
- Recording mating data.

**Extension Experience**

- Agriculture and Natural Resources County Extension Agent in Fayette County, Georgia
- Agriculture and Natural Resources Foundations Training
- Urban Ag. Turf Issue Team Co-Chair
- Distance Diagnostics Team Member. Traveled to Honduras to teach the Distance Diagnostics System
- Conducted: 52 house visits, 697 in office visits and 5, 455 correspondence (not including media) in 2007 addressing turf, structural and agricultural related issues.
- Fayette County Drought Advisory Board Member
- Fayette Citizen Monthly Column addressing Urban ANR related issues.
- Contribute website development training
- 4-H Basics training

**Academic Teaching Experience**

Ento 2010 TA-Insects and the Environment

Fall 2010

Ento 2011TA- Insects and the Environment

Spring 2011

Biology 1107-Labs Instructor

Spring 2008

Biology 1103-Labs Instructor

Fall 2009

General Entomology Lab TA

Fall 2003

- Maintain insect teaching collection
- Prepare, administer and grade laboratory exams
- Evaluate student insect collection

### **Awards/Grants/Internships**

Recipient of the Bob Russell Urban Entomology Scholarship from the Georgia Pest Control Association -2010  
UGA Teaching Assistantship-2010 & 2011  
UGA Research Assistantship-2009  
UGA Teaching Assistantship-2008  
University of Kentucky Lyman T. Johnson Fellowship-2003-2004  
UK Research Assistantship-Jan 2002-2003  
Recognition and 1<sup>st</sup> place (11,000 pounds of vegetables donated) Plant a Row for the Hungry - Atlanta Journal Constitution 2008  
Received Wal-Mart Grant for Georgia Master Gardeners 2008  
Georgia Association of County Agriculture Agents, Agriculture Education Poster Contest 2<sup>nd</sup> Place  
National Pest Management Association Internship (NPMA) 2009 –Las Vegas Nevada  
National Pest Management Association Internship (NPMA) 2010-Hawaii  
Student debate 1<sup>st</sup> place as UGA team member Entomological Society of America, Indianapolis, IN 2009  
Student debate 1<sup>st</sup> place as UGA team leader Entomological Society of America, San Diego, Ca. 2010

### **Publications (refereed)**

**Brannon, Sonja L.,** K.B. Decker, K. V. Yeargan.2006. Photoperiodic Induction of Reproductive Diapause in the Predator *Geocoris uliginosus* (Hemiptera: Geocoridae). *Annals of the Entomological Society of America* 99(2):300-304.

Abraham, C.A., **S. Brannon**, S. V. Joseph, S. Nair and C. M. Scocco. Biological control of insects has deleterious impacts on human health and agricultural food crops, while providing only temporary solutions to insect pest problems, and should be discontinued. *American Entomologist* (Submitted and Accepted January 2010).

S. Nair, W. Boozer, R. Bottjen, **S. Brannon** and S. Weldon .Increasing natural enemy diversity among arthropods is compatible with the goals of biological control and IPM. *American Entomologist* (Submitted and in Press February 2011)

### **Publications in Preparation (not in press)**

**Brannon, Sonja L.,** B. T. Forschler. Assessment of Pest Control Violations Issued by the Georgia Department of Agriculture in Georgia Public Schools. *Urban Ecosystems*

**Brannon, Sonja L.,** B. T. Forschler. Dichotomous Key for the Eight Steps of Urban IPM. *Journal of Integrated Pest Management*.

### **Non Refereed Articles**

**Thomas, B.S.** 2013. Safety and General Pesticide Information, *Alabama Pest Management Handbook*. Ala. Coop. Ext. Sys. ANR-500-A.

**Brannon, S.L.** 2007-2008 Monthly Column in the *Fayette Citizen*, Fayette County, Ga.

## **Presentations at Professional Meetings**

**Brannon, S. L.** and B. T. Forschler. December 2010. An Assessment of Pesticide use Record Violations in Georgia. Entomological Society of America Annual Meeting. San Diego, California.

**Brannon, S.L.** and B.T. Forschler. December 2010. Creating a Matrix for the Seven Steps of Urban IPM. Entomological Society of America Annual Meeting. San Diego, California.

**Brannon, S. L.** and B. T. Forschler. May 2010. An Assessment of Pesticide use Record Violations in Georgia. National Conference on Urban Entomology. Portland Oregon.

**Brannon, S. L.** and B. T. Forschler. July 2010. An Assessment of Pesticide use Record Violations in Georgia. National Conference on Urban Entomology. Georgia Department of Agriculture Structural Pest Control Commission Meeting

**Brannon S.L.** 2009. Biological control of insects has deleterious impacts on human health and agricultural food crops, while providing only solutions to insect pest problems, and should be discontinued. Student debate. Entomological Society of America, Annual National meeting, Indianapolis, IN.

**Brannon, S. L.** and B. T. Forschler. January 2010. Household and Structural Entomology Program Update. Georgia Pest Control Association Annual Meeting. Athens, Georgia.

**Brannon, S. L.** and B. T. Forschler. January 2009. Household and Structural Entomology Program Update. Georgia Pest Control Association Annual Meeting. Athens, Georgia

**Brannon, S.L.** 2007. Using Black Plastic Mulch Irrigation Methods to increase yield in a Plant a Row for the Hungry Plot. Georgia Association of County Agriculture Agents Annual Meeting. Waco, Georgia.

**Brannon. S. L** and B. T. Forschler. 2007. Developing an IPM plan for the Chattahoochee River National Recreational Area. Georgia Entomological Society. Cordele, Ga.

## **Other Presentations**

**Brannon, S.L. 2008.** Indoor and Outdoor Insect Control. Turf Issue Team Lunch and Learn Series. Fayetteville, Ga.

**Brannon, S.L.** October 2007. Peachtree City “Water Quality and Conservation” Peachtree City, Ga.

**Brannon, S. L.** September 2007. “Attracting Birds and Bat Control”. American Business Women’s Association. Peachtree City, Ga.

**Brannon, S.L.** June 2007. “Insect metamorphosis”. Carroll County Junior Master Gardener Program. Carroll County, Ga.

**Brannon, S.L. 2007.** “What’s Bugging You” Henry County Master Gardener Meeting. Henry County.



## **Professional Memberships**

Southern Region IPM Work Group  
Southern Region School IPM workgroup  
Alabama Pest Control Association  
Alabama Vector Management Association  
Alabama Fruit and Vegetable Association  
Turfgrass Association  
Alabama Association of County Agriculture Agents  
Georgia Pest Control Association  
National Pest Management Association  
Entomological Society of America  
Association of Applied IPM Ecologists  
National Association of County Agriculture Agents  
Georgia Association of County Agriculture Agents  
National Association of Extension 4-H Agents  
Georgia Association of Extension 4-H Agents  
PSEP-IMI Priority Resource Team Committee Member  
CTAG board Member  
SWAT team member for the new Pesticide Center

## **Professional Committees, Moderating sessions at meetings, Participation in working groups.**

School IPM Working Group.  
E-extension working group  
Moderator for the Southern Nursery Association Meeting August 2007  
Moderator Curo Honors Program UGA 2010  
Moderator NPMA Annual Meeting Hawaii 2010  
Symposium Organizer ESA 2009- "Entomological Perspective Addressing Challenges in the Developing World: New Frontiers in Food and Bio-security" Reno, Nevada  
Alabama Vector Management Association Executive Board Member (Editor)  
Internationals Association of Black Entomologists (Treasurer and Secretary)