Greensboro Echo

JUNE 2005

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MAC/ASU SMALL FARMER'S CONFERENCE

Mississippi Association of Cooperatives in cooperation with Alcorn State University held their 14th Annual Small farmers and Women in Business Conference in Jackson, MS at the Clarion Hotel. This year's conference offered a new perspective as for as involvement with other states. MAC and Winrock International worked collaboratively to engage farmers from Mississippi, Louisiana, and Arkansas. The dynamics worked superlatively to create dialoguing and networking with participants from the tri-states. Attendance surpassed previous expectations, especially by women. According to recent census data reports more women are becoming sole owners of the family farm because they are living longer. The planning committee created an array of workshops, entertainment, speakers, and tours.

The women in business tour displayed businesses owned and operated by women. This created synergies among each participant to move forward and bring their business dreams to fruition. Additionally an agriculture tour occurred with stops at a various farms. The tours ended at Mr. Lee Foote's Farm, who manages cattle and forestry. Mr. Foote has an immaculate farming operation. He exemplifies good stewardship practices along with his lovely wife, who prepared a fantastic meal for the visitors. The conference ended on Wednesday with several workshops, Frank Taylor DOL team leader along with Sandra Ford, Lee Foote, and Arthur Phalo presented on forestry issues. Congratulations to the planning committee for a superb conference.

Pictures from the farm of Lee Foote

Strategic Planning

By Frank Taylor

Heifer North America Team recently held a strategic planning meeting in Mt. Sterling, KY. The entire North America Team assembled to focus on short and long term needs of North America Projects. Frank Taylor President of Winston County Self Help Cooperative and DOL team leader participated in the strategic planning session. Roger Jones, director of the south central program and staff members, Sharon Satchel, Emily King, and Jesse Strassburg attended.

USDA/NRCS' Special Initiative

Bruce Knight, Chief of Natural Resource Conservation Service recently introduced a special initiative for small and limited resource landowner's in 12 states. This initiative was rolled into the EQUIP-Environmental Quality Incentives Program with limitations to qualify for services. Several practices were identified such as irrigation, cross fencing, grazing and fertilization. Special limitations were placed to enhance the opportunities of small landowners to qualify for assistance, such as, owned less than 100 acres, 10 percent in alternative crops and farm sales of $1,000.00. The farmers were allowed 15 days to sign-up for the special initiative at local counties offices. This conception was brought to fruition through the assistance of Ben Burkett, a small farmer expressing and advocating the needs of limited resource landowners. Yes, small farmers have voices and they can create a greater impact by strengthening numbers and galvanizing as one unit. Volume speaks loudly and gain recognition by being informed and knowledgeable of the conservation practices. Wilson Murray and David Brunson from the state office of NRCS participated in Winston County Self Help Cooperative's May meeting to discuss the schematics of the special initiative. The cooperative had 35 participants for this listening session. More landowners should create relationships with service providers to become catalysts for change in rural America. Get involved and create passion to win. When the odds are against you, then you should follow the path into light by faith. Please, depend on the two hands at the end of your wrist to help create change and success. Pictured: Wilson Murray USDA/NRCS Outreach Specialist on their Special Initiative

WCSHC's members attend listening session on Special Initiative

MAC Celebrates 33rd Annual Meeting in Memphis, TN

by Frank Taylor

Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC) held its annual meeting in Memphis, Tennessee. Family Farmers Cooperative from Holly Springs, MS served as host of this33rd gathering. The host group planned a variety of events to indulge participants. Some of the highlights included tours of various locations, North Delta Produce Growers vegetable processing facility, Bolivar/Shelby Federal Credit Union with Gloria Woodley and visits of numerous civil rights sites. The extravaganza continued onto infamous Beale Street until darkness; then the festivities moved into the hotel lobby with a local jazz ensemble providing eloquent sounds. A reception was held in the G. l. Twitty's Room, (board member of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund), where the night ended with networking, socializing and planning for Saturday morning's business session.

MAC's President, Hubert Nicholson, of Board of Directors called the meeting to order at 9:15am. Ben Burkett and Melbah Smith gave individual reports on the plans, financial status, and accomplishments of the state association. Panel discussions were held with Cornelius Blanding, FSC Director of Marketing; Frank Taylor, DOL Outreach Specialist; Delmar Stamps, USDA/ NRCS and Ray McGee, staff on various topics. Leon Crump, State Coordinator from the Federation of Southern Cooperative's South Carolina office offered words of encouragement as luncheon speaker.

The meeting concluded with an agreement that Winston County Self Help Cooperative will host MAC annual meeting at Lake Tiak-O-Khata in Louisville, MS. Gloria Moore of Winston County Self Help Cooperative, stated, we are developing plans for the 34th gathering and look forward to replicating this year's efforts. Again, a special thanks is extended to Family Farmers Cooperative for being such gracious host.

Collaboration

AT WORK by Frank Taylor

Winston County Self Help Cooperative realizes the importance of soliciting technical support from service providers and universities.

The cooperative linked with Mississippi Sate University's School of Forestry to obtain assistance in developing forest management plans and dialoging with forest landowner about understanding the schematics.

Alex Harvey, Michael Crab and John Wesley (pictured) were assigned to this project over 4-month period. The students performed an overall appraisal of the natural resources and identified the necessary steps for implementation by the forest landowners. The landowners were thrilled to receive this valuable information. Thanks to the students and to MSU's School of Forestry.

PASS-ON

The Winston County Self Help Cooperative will sponsor its first pass on ceremony June 11, 8:30am at the cooperative's farm located Louisville; Ms. The pass on is a formal ceremony of pass on bred heifers to other cooperative member to help end world hunger. For more information contact Hubert Nicholson 662-773-3336 or roger Jones 800-359-9613.

Rural Coalition's Assembly

The Rural Coalition recently held its bi-annual assembly in Fresno, California. The Rural Coalition is a non-profit organization based in Washington, DC. The organization helps protects the sovereignty of small family farms by offering technical support, marketing, policy issues, worker's rights and a holistic approach to life. Dorothy Harper, a member of Winston County Self-Help Cooperative Youth Leader and Frank Taylor, DOL team leader participated in the assembly. Dorothy stated that the assembly provided a fabulous opportunity to meet individuals from different cultures and to learn how they manage their farms. Ms. Harper will share her experiences with the youth group and others about career opportunities in natural resources.

Pictured: Frank Taylor and Jean Harper

Federation of Southern Cooperative Board Training

Hubert Nicholson, president of Mississippi association of cooperatives board of directors recently participated fiduciary responsibilities as a board member. This valuable training was held in Atlanta... Nicholson, stated, each cooperative member should participate this formal board training.

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Healthy Living

The Winston County Self Help Cooperative recently sponsored a health fair under the leadership of Oneida Moore. This was a spectacular opportunity for the general public to obtain important health information and recognition of foreseeable health care changes. The event was held at MT. Moriah Baptist Church Annex from 9-1:00pm. An estimated 60 eager participants learned the definition of healthy living, which includes proper nutrition, regular exams, exercise, mental rest, and being aware of body composition. Information was presented on heart and kidney disease, stroke, diabetes and obesity.

Dr. Lionel Fraser an urologist from Jackson, MS, performed free prostate exams. Prostate abnormalities occurred at a higher rate in African American males; therefore, we should have regular exams starting at age 40 to preserve a quality lifestyle. Additionally, information was presented on organ donation and financial stability.

According, Oneida, the health fair was a tremendous success and we should focus our energies on creating healthier regiments for the next generation. Again, we applaud Oneida for organizing and facilitating this needed health fair. Additionally, a special thank you is extended to Rev. Pittman, Mt. Moriah Church Family and Dr. Fraser.

My Tuskegee Experience

I recently spent two days on the immaculate campus of Tuskegee University. I was there to participate in the university 113th annual farmer's conference. The event involved farmers, practitioners, academia and governmental agencies, which created an array of individuals to network and dialogue on farm polices. Tuskegee University is located on cultivates hills of historic Tuskegee, Alabama. The university is identified by two great pioneers Dr. Booker T. Washington and the world greatest scientist Dr. George Washington Caver. You will find several land marks and buildings erected in memory of these two great pioneers. (See below)

Tuskegee university is the sister school to Hampton University located in the bayside city of Hampton, VA. Tuskegee University was the first University to sponsor a farmer's conference and they are continuing to disseminate research information and interpret the needs of farmers. Each year a farmers is recognized for exercising extreme care of the natural resources and implementing good stewardship practices. Tony Haygood, Jr. and family were recognized as "Farmer-of-the-Year".

The highlight of my visit was participating in dedication ceremony for the infamous Tuskegee's airman. My spirit was moved to a greater sense of passion to help mankind. These individuals were trained under adverse conditions in mid 1930's. The army was segregated and African Americans Soldiers were placed in infantry and service-oriented duties. However, the airmen were committed to making a difference by becoming the most successful fighting squadron ever assembled. This group of individuals beat the odds and left a path for others to follow. This is an indelible mark on history for all generations. The Tuskegee's airman exemplified courage, passion, integrity and faith to tear down stereotypes and social divides. The original training field and hanger were declared historic sites. Monies have been allocated for immediate restoration on each site. Members from the first historic class of trainees participated in the ceremony. Thanks for this moment in history and my life has been changed for eternity.

By Frank Taylor

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Computer Training

Winston County Self Help Cooperative (WCSHC) and Federation of Southern Cooperatives DOL participants participated in computer training on May 27, in West Point, MS. WCSHC received an E-gov computer from the state office of USDA/Natural Resource Conservation Service in September 2004.

The computer is being used by cooperative members for research, record keeping, market data and networking with other farmers.

The E-gov computer has motivated WCSHC's members and DOL's participants to seek training to advance their computer skills from Stamps in West Point. This partnership was created by WCSHC's members networking at MAC/ASU Small Farmers and Women in Business Conference. Mr. Stamps participated in April's meeting to evaluate the computer skills and develop schematics for the training. Winston County Self Help Cooperative is moving forward to help save rural America.

Winston County Self Help's Field day

Winston County Self Help Cooperative's held field day activities for DOL participants and cooperative members. The field day was held at the cooperative's farm. The weather was fantastic and Mike Skipper, county extension agent led the team building experience. The theme was taking care of your cattle by providing solid nutrient ions and good health care. He stated each farmer should take soil samples every three years to insure adequate ph level's to

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produce health grasses. Fertilize and lime should be applied in November which would allow the application to be absorbed into the soils. Additionally, each farmer needs to be aware of flies and other insects that could causes havoc on the cattle. Kenneth Randle USDA cooperative development specialist applauded the cooperative for working together to affect change in Winston County. He offered technical assistance for a feasibility study to help the cooperative members earn more income from their cattle's sales. The cooperative will sponsor a field day In mid September.

Stride Found

Dorothy Harper is committed to affecting change in her beloved confinement of Winston County. Harper has found her stride to create movement socially and environmentally to provide a place of harmony for future generations. She has a subjective mind and soul to focus on natural resources by participating in workshops, trainings and continuing education classes to broaden her knowledge of the natural resources. She recently completed master gardener classes under the guidance of Mike Skipper, county extension agent. She stated master garden was an enjoyable and a learning opportunity to galvanize knowledge in a vacuum setting. Although, she has lived in Winston County without a relationship with agriculture because of previous experiences, nevertheless, Harper has applied knowledge learned to create a lustrous lawn and garden. Harper said, it is important to protect our environment by taken the necessary steps to save our ecosystem. Trees are important because they provide shelter, food, energy, clothes and filter the atmosphere. Therefore, each individual should exert care for the environment and do not litter. This is our home and where we sleep and enjoy the bundle of rights to life. Harper, serves as youth director for the Winston County Self help Cooperative. The youth group has responded overwhelming by becoming knowledgeable and interacting with the natural resources. They have participated in leaf identification and placed first in their division. They will compete in this year's competition scheduled for June. The youth are involved in planting, raising and harvesting their first garden. They are excited about watching the seeds germinate and grow into mature plants that will yield fresh vegetables. They will sell locally and participate in Beat-4 Cooperative farmer market's in Macon, MS. Harper, would like to thank Harold Hudson, Maxie Gardner, Willie Goss, Rev. Pittman, Sandra Mayo and the youth's parents for supporting this effort. Yes, Dorothy has found her stride by serving the youth of Winston County.

FDIC TRAINING

The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) recognizes the importance of financial education which is why they created Money Smart, a training program to help adults outside the financial mainstream enhance their money skills and create positive banking relationships.

Tuesday, May 31, 2005, Winston County Self Help Cooperative hosted an FDIC training for Cooperative members, community leaders and invited guest. There were 16 in attendance. This event was cosponsored by the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives and the Federation of Southern Cooperatives DOL program.

The purpose of this Train the trainer curriculum is to educate members in financial management to engage their communities and teach other good money management skills.

Willie Lake of FDIC conducted the training session.

JULY MEETING CHANGE

The JULY meeting will be held on TUESDAY, JUNE 7, 2005 at 3:55 p.m. at the Winston County Extension Office. Please be present and on time.