

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

\*Spring Field Day activities on April 24, 2006 at 5:30 p.m. at Bobby Hardin's Farm located on High Point Weir Road Louisville, MS

\*WCSHC next monthly meeting will occur on May 1, 2006 at 3:55 p.m. at the extension office in Louisville, MS

Call Gloria Moore for more details

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# GREENSBORO ECHO

## 114<sup>th</sup> Conference-by Pam Madzima



Tuskegee University held the 114<sup>th</sup> Annual Farmers' Conference on February 23-24, 2006. The Annual Farmers' Conference dates back from 1892, when Booker T. Washington observed the need to seek remedies to improve the conditions of rural black farmers in the South, who had just gone through slavery, and were facing social, economic, and educational and morale problems. Today, this work continues as agricultural workers focus on addressing the problems that small-scale farmers, landowners and communities face in managing changes in agriculture. The theme for this year's conference was: *Small Rural Farms Partnering in Local, National and Global Markets*, to demonstrate the capability of smaller farms to produce beyond their communities. The objectives of the conference were to (1) share up-to-date information relevant to

small-scale farmers and landowners involved in the production of traditional and alternative agricultural products; (2) create an awareness about family health, nutritional challenges, and existing resources for rural families; and (3) strengthen networks and partnerships that address problems of small-scale agriculture and rural communities. A great wealth of information was presented by various USDA agencies, University specialists, Extension staff, community-based organization staff, and farmers. Information disseminated to the audience included, small farm cooperative marketing and value added product development opportunities; programs and opportunities involving youth in agriculture; upcoming grant opportunities available from the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program for small farmers; health awareness targeting

obesity management and treatment strategies; wills, estate planning and personal finance management for financially distressed families; and landowner protection procedures from illegal use of land. Some of the keynote speakers included, Honorable Bobby Singleton, Alabama's 24<sup>th</sup> District State Senator; Mr. Ralph Paige, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund's Executive Director; and Alabama's State Commissioner of Agriculture, Ron Sparks. A special highlight of each year's conference is to honor the legacy of Thomas Monroe Campbell, Sr., the nation's first Cooperative Extension Agent, and to award the Merit Farm Family award. Mr. Alphonso Hooks from Shorter, Alabama was awarded the 2006 Merit Farm Family Award for exhibiting agricultural success and dedication to community service. The Farmer's Conference, which drew many participants from all over the South, including Frank Taylor President of the Winston County Self-Help Cooperative was afforded an opportunity to dialogue the cooperative's credo of helping save to save rural America.

## February Activities

February 6 held regular monthly meeting.

February 12, Arbor Day activities.

February 15-18 one member participated in leadership training at Prairie View University in Hempstead, TX.

February 19, youth attended 4-H sponsored basketball game at MSU.

February 23, leadership team held planning meeting.

February 23-24 one member participated in Tuskegee's Farmers Conference.

February 25, 3 members participated in 4-H Training Conference at MSU.

February 27, held march's regular monthly meeting.

## February Report-by Frank Taylor

The Winston County Self-Help Cooperative continued to help save rural America in the month of February with several intriguing events. The cooperative met on February 6, with Elizabeth Myles from Alcorn State University's Small Farmers Department dialoguing on services for farmers. Myles stated she is enthusiastic to be working with the Winston County Self-Help Cooperative members and other farmers to help save rural America. Alcorn State University's Small Farmers Department offers technical assistance, loan packing, and identifying emerging markets. Additionally, Myles is working with the North/South Institute to recruit farmers for the Second Annual Farmer's Summit in Fort Lauderdale, FLA on March 6-8.

Myles received an honorary membership from the Winston County Self-Help Cooperative because she is committed to help small farmers earn extra income from their natural resources, according to Willie Matthews, coop member.

The cooperative instituted a writing and public speaking component for the youth members. This initiative has unanimous support from the cooperative membership and parents. The participants will follow stated guidelines to participant in this initiative. The cooperative members will choose the winner(s) and a monetary gift will be given. Zoria Nicholson essay on DR. Martin Luther King Jr was selected as February winner. She attends Fair Elementary School in Louisville, MS.

