

First Annual Youth Agriculture and Training Conference

-by Dennis Murray



On November 11-12, 2006 Winston County Self Help Youth Group hosted a Youth Agricultural & Training Conference at Mount Moriah M.B Church and Lake Tiak-O-Khata Hotel in Louisville, Ms. The conference featured speakers from governmental agencies, private sector, and young entrepreneurs like Cobby Williams of Washington, DC, a native Mississippian; Dennis S. Murray Jr., of Conyers, Georgia, Youth Development and Capacity Building, Inc. 2006 scholarship winner Tyler Lafourche of Atlanta, Georgia.

Louisville's Mayor Moe Yarborough welcomed the conference attendees and greeted sponsors, Alfonzo Drain, Director of USDA's Small Farms Coordination, Cheryl Bailey and Beatra Solomon of USDA's Forest Service, and Wilson Murray, Outreach Specialist of NRCS Mississippi State Office, served as keynote speaker. The Winston County Self Help Youth Group Director, Jean Harper, and staff displayed the warmest southern hospitality. They

greeted everyone with Mississippi smiles and hugs. We received warm words from Carol Williams and Mary Hopkins. The registration staff, Chris May, Chandin May, Shirley Harris, Cassandra Norton, Jean Jimmerson, Jennifer Hopkins and others, did an outstanding job.

The children and young adults entered the conference early to get a good seats while Jean Harper and staff served breakfast. There were smiles of joy on many faces entering the church. Excitement filled the air. I was very happy to see these children ready to learn. They were ready to have a great time and discover new ideas in Agriculture, communications, life skills, entrepreneurship, marketing produce, farmers markets, collaborations, partnerships, and educational programs that included internships, work-study, college scholarships for high school students and youth ready to enter college.

However, the purpose of this conference was to bring governmental agencies, private sector professionals, with young entrepreneurs to share there professional expertise and life teaching skills for the youth of Winston County Self Help Youth Group and surrounding counties. Several community based organizations participated: Jessica Foxx of Beat 4 Farmers Cooperative in Macon, MS; Wendell Parish of Mississippi Action for Community Education Inc. (MACE) in Greenville, MS; and, Willard Tillman of Black Historical Research Project, Inc. in Wewoka, Oklahoma.

Workshops highlighted rural opportunities for youth in agriculture that included farmers markets, youth development featured speakers were Cheryl Bailey and Beretta Solomon of USDA/

Forest Service, and William Tillman spoke on youth plasticulture initiatives. USDA/ Forest Service's Smokey Bear presented at the Old National Guard for the younger children from ages 2-10. Smokey bear created happiness and robust smiles as he instructed the children why they shouldn't play with matches. Youth Development and Capacity Building, Inc tried to make the younger children program educational and fun for them. I think we hit the mark with Smokey Bear and the welcome packages they received during the program.

The sponsors of the conference were USDA/ Small Farms Coordination, USDA/ Office of Outreach, USDA/ Forest Service, USDA/ NRCS, USDA/ Farm Service Agency of Washington, DC. Murray's Notes Advertising/Public Relations, Washington, DC/Atlanta, Georgia and Youth Development and Capacity Building, Inc, Dacula, Georgia. were major contributors to the success of this program in Louisville. We want to express our deepest thanks to Jean Harper and her assistants, Rev. Benjamin Pittman, City of Louisville, and Harold Hudson, a community man and my friend . Thanks the following individuals for supporting our conference Earlean Crowder, Olivia Crosby, Ella prince, Lorenzo Metts, Nellie Nathan, Brandi Nicholson, Rev. Dennis & Toni Jackson, Barbara Eichelberger, Maxie Gardner & Hubert Nicholson.

Scenes from the First Annual Youth Agriculture and Training Conference



Saving Rural America-by Frank Taylor

The question has been asked whether rural America will exist in twenty years. The proverbial answer is no, however, there is a group of individuals in Louisville, Mississippi committed to help save rural America. The Winston County Self Help Co-op Youth Group is working diligently to help preserve a simpler way of life. "Clean air & water, wildlife, recreation, fresh produce and God's natural resources are importance issues, according to youth member Chris Mays". "We have ignited a wave in our community with activities focused on managing our natural resources through various projects". Our youth garden project is a constant supplier of fresh produce for our community and we enjoy providing this service and earn extra income for our youth organization.

Winston County Self Help Youth Group and Dennis Murray of Conyers, Ga hosted a Youth in Agriculture Conference in Louisville, Ms with more than 100 participants promoting the idea of saving rural America. "Dorothy Harper, Youth Director said our parents, grand-parents and community supporters are working to help save rural America by connecting with Dennis Murray and others to stimulate our youth consciousness of the natural resources". "We are elated to host this prolific event according to community supporter Mary A. Triplett". We enjoy working and training our future generation of landowners and this conference will help reveal more career opportunities and advance their knowledge of USDA's programs. Again, we are working collectively to help save rural America.

Wcshc's Leadership Class

Winston County Self Help Co-op's Leadership Development Class continues with technical support from Alcorn State University's Community Voices Program. According Mary Hannah, class participant, "we are moving forward with monthly sessions on various topics to improve the livelihood of rural America through leadership development". "We are invigorated & encouraged to formulate plausible solutions for social-ills affecting our communities through strategizing and developing measurable outcomes from within our leadership class. Winston County Self Help Co-op's Leadership Development Class meet monthly at extension office in Louisville, Ms. The leadership class will met January 19, 2006, 5:00pm at Mt. Moriah Baptist Church located on Martin Luther King Drive, in Louisville, Ms. For more information contact Hubert Nicholson 662-773-3336.

WCSHC's Monthly Meeting

Winston County Self Help Cooperative's November meeting moved with swiftness toward 2007's agenda of activities. Mr. Leon Goss invoked an un-lifting prayer which generated atmosphere of cooperation. Carol Williams co-op's secretary reiterated previous minutes with approval from membership. Old business discussed, fall field's day activities, cattle health, preparing to move heifers, and each member submitting their work plan for 2007. Derrick Hopkins and Willie Matthews reported, pass on animals have made a successful transition with sensation appetites for hay and grains. Issues of new business discussed, alternative crops and developing a research component for market analysis on each proposed crops. Elegene Nunn and Carol Williams accepted chairmanships to steer this process. Elizabeth Myles Alcorn State University's Marketing Director elaborated on the North-South Institute's Conference schedule for January 16-18, 2007 in Davie, Florida. Several members from Winston County Self Help Co-op are planning to participate. George Wicks from Columbus, Ms participated with plans of joining WCSHC to help save rural America in January 2007. Winston County Self Help Cooperative's Christmas Gala will be held on Friday December 1, 5:55pm at the extension office in Louisville, Ms. For more information contact Gloria Moore 662-705-0112.

**For More Information,
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Frank Taylor's POV on Post Katrina's Recovery 2006

More than one year later, families are scattered, uncertainties remain, and disappointments have turned into a full-time occupation for most coastal residents in post Katrina. Families are still waiting for relief from FEMA and MEMA; however, the political arena has hindered and caused long-term headaches. The Federation of Southern Cooperatives and Mississippi Association of Cooperatives continue to move forward in assisting various cooperatives and families.

We are currently working with Attala County Self-Help Group. They are preparing to join with MAC & FSC in early 2007 as members of both organizations. Winston County Self Help Cooperative is planning to place goats with Jesse Fleming of ACSHG by year ends. This will be a demonstration project for farmers in central (northcentral) Mississippi. As part of the Federation's relief work in Mississippi, Attala County was designated as a disaster area; therefore, we are working feverishly to help affected families with marketing and loan packaging. ACSHG has participated with Winston County Self Help Cooperative on several events recently. Six (6) members traveled eastward to Louisville, Ms to participate in WCSHC's Second Pass on of Heifer International animals. Additionally, we are providing technical with USDA's loan applications and cost share programs.

Additionally, we are continuing to provide technical support to Marion County Self Help, a post-Katrina Group. They are working on repairing fences and patching barns to prepare for winter. Winston County Self Help Cooperative is preparing to move ten heifers into the coop's pasture. Beat Four Cooperative is planning for their first pass on ceremony in spring of 2007.

We are encouraging our clientele to sign up for the small farmer initiative cost share program at USDA-Natural Resource Conservation Service.

We are continuing to help save rural America.



WCSHC... "Helping to Save Rural America"