

GREENSBORO ECHO

Voice of Rural America

WCSHC'S Census Day - by Thomas Gregory

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What a pleasant surprise! My staff and I accepted an invitation to participate in Winston County Self Help Cooperative's (WCSHC) First Saving Rural America Conference on January 5, at the Louisville Coliseum. Our goal was to help farmers complete the 2007 Census of Agriculture. Many farmers, like most of us, do not enjoy completing Census forms. We did not know what to expect.

We first met Frank Taylor, the President of the WCSHC. How can I best describe Mr. Taylor? The words dynamic, forceful, friendly, etc. do not come close to capturing his personality. Perhaps the phrase "force of nature" is best. Mr. Taylor is the president of the Cooperative. He is working to "Save Rural America," which was the theme of the conference. If anyone can do it, Mr. Taylor can.

It is very important that every farmer report on the Census of Agriculture. USDA makes many funding decisions based on the statistics published in the Census. Suppose you believe your county would benefit from a new program to improve marketing channels of vegetable crops. How could you convince Congress to appropriate funds? The first question they would ask is "How many farmers would benefit from the program?" The answer to that question is in the Census of Agriculture. You see that it is very important that every farmer participate.

There were more than 250 people at the event and many were farmers. I was surprised at the number of new farmers. Even more surprising was the number of farmers who completed Census forms. My staff and I were busy from 7:00 AM to well after lunch. Each of us appreciated the kindness and cooperation of all. We complete 35 forms and many more promised to complete them at home.

The National Agricultural Service is a small agency in terms of budget, but not in importance. We are the "Fact Finders for Agriculture." Other USDA agencies are given the task of administering programs that put money into farm operations; our task is to publish statistics that allow Congress to monitor the financial well being of America's farms. I wish to extend a sincere "Thank You" to the Winston County Self Help Cooperative and Mr. Frank Taylor for their hospitality and cooperation on the 2007 Census of Agriculture.



Self-Development of People hosts Community Workshop in Louisville *By Margaret Mwale*



ments to improve the quality of life for rural families. The tractor is used to maintain the group's youth garden project, plant hay and vegetables and harvest various crops.

All forty-four members of WCSHC benefit from the project, which they also own and control; key criteria for Self-Development of People grant funding. The group's long-term strategy is to help create sustainability and economic opportunities in rural communities. The self-help youth group component formed in 2003 and consists of youth between the ages of 6 to 18 years. The youth through their garden project in 2007 sold over \$4000 worth of vegetables to the local community. Intergenerational training occurs between the two groups with the older members teaching youth members how to plant and harvest a garden as well as life long lessons related to handling finances and academics. Mr. Frank Taylor, WCSHC president went on to say "We are planning for tomorrow, however, we are living for today, ...planning for our future through today's activities."

The Self-Development of People workshop attracted 51 people from several community-based organizations within and outside Louisville. The workshop explained the SDOP program, how it works, what qualifies a group for funding and the ap-

plication process. Several people expressed they learned how to submit a winning proposal and that the session was extremely informative. Two other community workshops scheduled for Mississippi will be on February 29, 2008 in the Gulfport/Biloxi area and March 1 in Pascagoula. For additional information on these two workshops, please contact Ms. Mary McAdory at the Self-Development of People national office at 1-888-728-7228 ext. 5782 or at (502) 569-5782.

Self-Development of People a ministry of the Presbyterian Church (USA) enters into partnerships with groups of economically poor people who want to change their lives and their communities. The National Committee carries out its work by making grants to, and entering into partnerships with, community groups that meet SDOP's criteria for funding. Grants normally are not more than \$20,000.

To apply for grants at the national level contact the national office toll free at:

English—1-888-728-7228 ext. 5782/
Spanish—1-888-728-7228 ext. 5790
or visit the SDOP website at www.pcusa.org/sdop. Prospective applicants can also ask for grants from the local committee by contacting the Presbytery of Mississippi at (601) 582-9136.

On a mild evening for early January in what has traditionally been the tree farming community of Louisville, Mississippi, Self-Development of People in collaboration with Winston County Self-Help Cooperative (WCSHC) hosted a community workshop. The partnership between Self-Development of People and WCSHC dates back to 2005 when the group was awarded a \$24,000 grant to purchase a tractor and imple-

WCSHC's Second Business Session-by *Frank Taylor*

The Winston County Self Help Cooperative's Second Business Session of 2008 occurred on January 14, at Louisville Coliseum-30 members in attendant. Meeting started approximately 3:50pm with uplifting words from Leon Goss. Second business session added a new component of information focused on marriage relationships facilitated by co-op member Elder George Miller. According to members, this session allowed each individual to reevaluate their relationship and spur family's decisions as a team. Several members suggested Elder Miller should present this session in the third quarter with youth involvement. Other issues discussed, pass on of HPI's animals in March, credit card workshop February 4, homebuyers seminar February 18, field day activities, youth's super bowl fundraiser, members accepted 2008's animal roster report and Charles Hampton reported on committee appointments for the Mississippi's State Legislative Body.

For more information, contact, Frank Taylor at 601-291-2704 or fltaylor@bellsouth.net