

FSC 39th Annual Meeting by Frank Taylor



The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance fund began celebrating their 39th Annual Meeting on August 17, 2006 at the Birmingham - Sheraton with the Estelle Witherspoon Lifetime Achievement Awards Dinner. Reverend Joseph Lowery and Mrs. Evelyn Lowery were this year's recipients. The two were honored for their unyielding efforts to promote social and economic justice in the United States and throughout the world. The Honorable Charlie Rangel, Democratic Congressman from New York was the event chair. Various tributes and other accolades were given and well received by the honorees.

The Federation's Annual Meeting resumed Friday morning at the training and research center in Epes, Alabama. Workshops were held Friday morning, the forestry tour with Amadou Diop was that afternoon and the annual fish fry was held that evening. A longtime employee of the Federation, Ms. Anulet "Pat" Jackson was honored by a birthday celebration during the fish fry. On Saturday, the annual prayer breakfast with Rev. Wendell Paris, Jr. as guest speaker. He captured the audience with a sermon entitled "Chickens versus Eagles - Eagles have to fly!"

During the business session, Mr. Ralph Paige, Executive Director, proclaimed "We must have fire in our bellies to help save rural America". We are ever working feverishly to help restore livelihoods, homes, farms, communities and cities affected by hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We

have been working none stop delivering relief aid in various forms: such as, financial support, food, clothing, feed for herd, legal services, developing farm plans, and other needed services which began three days immediately following Hurricane Katrina and is continuing to date. The Federation is committed to resurrecting affected areas in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Texas with a passion of helping those individuals less fortunate.

We have staff members organizing workshops around legal issues, land-retention, emerging crops, and accessing foundations. "Our souls are with each individually impaired family" and we will work until normalcy returns. Today, "we are fortunate to have several individuals participating from Mississippi Gulf Coast and the Greater New Orleans area".

Mr. Paige allowed Pastor Burton from Pearlinton, MS located in Hancock County a survivor who suffered a direct impact to offer word of encouragements. Pastor Burton, 88 years old, stated "I had lived in Pearlinton for sixty years and I will be there until God calls me home. However, I am blessed to be among the living today. I spent 8 long exhausting hours hanging on to a tree limb for life in 20 feet of water until hurricane Katrina's wind subsided. I called on God for another opportunity to see my children, grandchildren, friends and others. My family and I were spared by the grace of GOD". Pastor Burton, weeping and dripping tears, exclaimed with a loud voice "God is Alive and well" created rippling chorus of "Hallelujah, Hallelujah", "Joy, Joy" and "hands clapping". This moment of oneness caused tears of thanksgiving and songs from participants.

Mr. Paige reported, financially we are operating at even keel with hope of obtaining more funds to help implement other pertinent programs. We have assisted 6,000 families on a minimum budget; therefore, if we could secure more funds from USDA and other organizations, we could really help save rural America. Paige concluded with thanks to South Carolina State Association, Kentucky and Louisiana Delegations for tasteful meals and grand southern hospitality.

Mississippians received the following awards at the FSC 39th Annual Meeting 2006:

Donnie Travis - Farmer of the Year;
Lawyer Reed -Volunteer of the Year;
Kim Crisler - Employee of the Year; and
Winston County Self Help Cooperative -Youth Cooperative of the Year.



Estate Planning Workshop

On Friday, July 28, 2006 the Winston County Self Help Cooperative & Federation of Southern Cooperatives sponsored a workshop that was designed to assist landowners retain and effectively manage property. The goal and objective of land retention is being met by setting up estate plans for individuals who qualify within the guidelines established by the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. Linda A. Hampton is the local attorney who is responsible for developing the estate plans for the individual participants. There was good community participation. All those present stated that the project provided a much needed service and encouraged others to attend future workshops.