

Voice of Rural America



GREENSBORO ECHO

Spring Field Day Enjoyed by All

by Glynda Phillips, editor/MS Farm Country-MS Farm Bureau Federation

What a wonderful experience we had at the Winston County Self Help Cooperative's (WCSHC) Spring Field Day on April 9 at the WCSHC Farm near Louisville. The program, food and fellowship were outstanding.

Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation President David Waide gave an inspirational talk entitled "Farmers Are My Heroes" while Dr. Carla Huston with the Mississippi State University College of Veterinary Medicine talked about "Animal Health Care." Also on the agenda were Rev. Jack Miller, Louisville's Mayor Moe Yarbrough, Jesse Strassburg of Heifer Project In-

ternational, and WCSHC President Frank Taylor.

Omerio Dotson and husband Dee were presented a trophy, roses, and a cash award in recognition of her receiving the "Woman in Agriculture Award" from the Alcorn State University Extension Service and Mississippi Association of Cooperatives. Omeria and Dee have beef cattle, laying hens, vegetables and timber on their small farm near Louisville. They were featured in a recent issue of Mississippi Farm Country magazine.

While the adults held their meeting, a large group of young people learned about soil and water sampling, courtesy of Jesse Strassburg of Heifer International Mississippi's Field Coordinator.

Following the meeting, everyone enjoyed a delicious catfish dinner.

The award-winning Winston County Self Help Cooperative works hard to help small and limited resource farmers succeed at making a living off their land. Farmers are taught to care for their land, their animals and their trees and are encouraged to build relationships with experts within the field of agriculture. Sustainability is key.

The co-op is dedicated to "Saving Rural America," and their message is quickly spreading across Mississippi and throughout the nation.

Soil Scientist Youth at Winston County Cooperative's Spring Field Day



As part of the Winston County Spring Field Day held April 9th, 2007 youth diagnosed the health of the groups' cooperative cattle pasture. Youth walked the four

corners of the field inspecting organic matter, grass and legume varieties, roots, land contours, bugs and even cow pies. Heifer International's Mississippi Field Coordinator, Jesse Strassburg, facilitated an open dialogue with the youth on attributes of a healthy pasture. The youth were especially eager to share their knowledge on the role of earth worms in the soil (not the parasitic kind) and the benefits they provide

to pastures and cattle. Earthworms are small but their role is very important in improving soil aeration, rain water absorption and the break down of organic matter like cow manure into available nutrients for grasses. A pasture with earthworms shows promise for healthy soils, grasses, and cattle. More information on the benefits of earthworms in pastures can be found at <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/nutcycle.html>.

The youth also grabbed soil samples while walking and running through the pasture. The youth observed how different the pasture is from one area to another and understood the importance of mixing soil samples from all areas of the pasture to get an accurate soil test. And though local extension offices test soils for free, the youth tested their own soil nitrogen levels right there on the field and got their results immediately with an N-P-K soil test kit promoted by the GLOBE Program (Global Learning and Observations to Better the Envi-

ronment: www.globe.gov). The youth tested the coop pasture soil sample against tests on retail organic compost and manure. They could see how high in Nitrogen the manure was compared to the ready made store bought organic compost and from that to the cooperative pastures' soil. This particular soil test kit doesn't provide a numeric N-P-K value and instead measures an elements color value which can be compared to other soil tests performed throughout the year on the pasture. This particular kit (#221774) tests fifty soil samples for Nitrogen, Phosphorous, and Potassium and costs less than \$25 and can be purchased along with various other soil test kits at www.benmeadows.com or by calling 1-800-240-6373

The youth concluded the field day activity by discussing ways of improving soil management through erosion control, rotational grazing, and amending the soil with natural and synthetic fertilizers.

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Voice of Rural America

Mayor Moe Yarbrough's-Point of View



Recently I had another opportunity to attend a field day put on by the Winston County Self Help Co-op. As usual it was a very informative meeting. I did not count the people that were there, but I think it was the largest crowd yet. As I've told Frank Taylor and Jean Harper, this is one of the most positive things that I've seen in our county. I believe in time the co-op will expand and have even more members both young and old. The great thing about this co-op is that it involves both our children and adult citizens of our county. It is my hope that the Future 4-H Club will continue to grow and we'll have more than one in the City of Louisville. What bet-

ter way to minister to our youth than interest them in how to garden, how shake hands correctly, or just good old time manners, and many many other things, and this is all being done by volunteers. I believe the more time we spend with our youth now the less time we will have to spend worrying about them in the future. Any time I get a chance to mention this Self Help Co-op, and what they are doing, I do. I can promise the Mayor and the Board of Aldermen support the Co-op and will do everything possible to assist them any time we are called on. We certainly encourage the Co-op to continue the good work

DR. Carla Huston's Point of View



several other guests, including the mayor of Louisville, the president of the Farm Bureau, and representatives from NRCS, to name a few. It was quite refreshing to see such support from the local and state communities.

I was invited to give a presentation on herd health. The sheer interest and dedication

of this group to sustain and better rural America was evident from the moment we arrived. Members asked questions during the presentation that led to some interesting discussions on issues facing the cattle industry, such as food safety and zoonotic diseases, diseases which can be transmitted from animals to humans. What set this apart from many of the meetings that I have attended is that this wasn't a normal monthly social function, but a collaborative effort to further knowledge and promote education

among its members. The farm raises cattle and has been involved with Heifer Project International (HPI), an organization which I have had an interest in since college. I receive the HPI magazine every quarter, but this was the first time I was able to actually see the good that the program can do.

The youth had their own field day agenda. It was amazing how interested these young folks were in farming and agriculture. This is the future of our industry and it's good to know that there are still young people out there interested in this wonderful way of life. Of course, I am hoping that we will see some of these youth considering veterinary medicine as a career ~ we're always looking for bright young minds here at the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine, especially ones interested in rural practice! The youth advisors are doing a wonderful job working with such polite and courteous youth and should be commended!

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WCSHC's 2007 Spring Field Day Activities-by Frank Taylor

On a cool brisk spring and overcast day in Louisville, Ms, The Winston County Self Help Coop members, friends, supporters and visitors gathered at the coop's farm for an afternoon of learning, networking, and dispensing emerging information to help save rural America with technical providers in attended from USDA's agencies, universities, non profits and other organizations. This year's field event added a new dimension of youth activities facilitated by Jesse Strassbury, of HPI Mississippi's Field Coordinator.

WCSHC members started gathering and staging for field day activities at 3:10pm according to coop member Shelton Cooper, "We are preparing for a fantastic event and we should have better than average participation because of superb weather conditions." The coop's monthly meeting started approximately at 3:55pm with prayer by Leon Goss. The meeting lasted 35 minutes with reflections from previous events, such as, Alcorn State University's Small Farmers Conference and Mississippi Association of Cooperatives' Annual Meeting. Therefore, this allowed David Waide President of Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation an opportunity to highlight issues affecting Mississippi's farm families. He echoed, Winston County Self Help Coop's Theme of "helping save rural America" by

working collectively to manage our natural resources and being conscious of policies affecting rural America. The coop membership acknowledged Mrs. Omerio Dotson for receiving "Woman in Agriculture Award" from Alcorn State University's Small Farmers Conference. Kim Crisler stated the Federation of Southern Cooperatives' Annual Meeting will occur on the third weekend of August in Epes, Alabama. The monthly meeting concluded with coop members agreeing to meet on April 30, 3:55pm for discussions on animal identification. A serve provider from Farm Bureau will present on this looming issue.

Field days activities started as scheduled 4:55pm with Rev. Jack Miller offering prayer and words of welcome from Moe Yarborough, Mayor of Louisville. David Waide reiterated words of thanks for receiving an invitation to participate and to connect with WCSHC members/friends. Dr. Carla Huston from Mississippi State University's School of Veterinary Medicine presented on a variety of health issues affecting cattle and Huston answered numerous questions from members and visitors on preparing cattle for summer grazing. DR. Huston suggested that each member should participate in a beef quality assurance seminar ASAP. The coop membership agreed to host a BQA seminar in mid June. Delmar Stamps and Michael Carr from

Natural Resource Conservation Service conveyed words of appreciation and stated, "Winston County Self Help Cooperative is moving in the right direction to help save rural America." Glynda Phillips, Editor of Farm County Magazine participated by photographing and providing a story for the Greensboro Echo Newsletter.

Field day activities concluded with an afternoon snack prepared by coop member Roy Eichelberger and family. Eichelbergers prepared hot dogs and delicious southern fried catfish served with chips, cookies, iced cold soda & water. According to Cylesha Hopkins Wife of coop member Derek Hopkins, said "I thoroughly enjoyed participating in this family event, therefore, I am planning to participate in WCSHC's fall field day tentative schedule for Monday, October 8".

Jean Harper, youth director said "more than 80 individuals participated in this year's spring field Day activities and we are planning to increase fall's field day participation by 20 percent."

Again, we are thankful to the Bethel Baptist Church Family and Pastor for allowing the use of their facilities and a Sincere thanks to Mark Searals of Merials for sponsoring spring field day activities 2007's.

Scenes from Field Day: April 9, 2007

