

Greensboro Echo

The Voice of Rural America

WCSHC's SRAC Exceeds Expectations" -by Frank Taylor

On January 5, 2008, more than 300 individuals descended onto Louisville Coliseum's premises for Winston County Self Help Cooperative's First Saving Rural America Conference. According to founding co-op member Mary Hannah, "we designed our conference for the benefit of small farmers, landowners and individuals interested in managing Mother Earth's natural resources. Today's attendant validates our commitment to provide accurate, credible and timely data to create sustainability in rural communities". Omerio Dotson Co-op Treasurer expressed gratitude for the overwhelming youth participation in WCSHC's First SRAC. Additionally Bobby Hardin last of the founding members said, "We surpass a huge milestone by exceeding our expectations of participation

from farmers and landowners...with four other states representing...Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama and Florida".

WCSHC's Saving Rural America Conference started on Friday afternoon with a community grants workshop sponsored by the Presbyterian Committee on the Self Development of People. Margaret Mwale workshop facilitator highlighted the necessary steps of submitting a proposal with accurate information for approval. Sandi Bennett of (New Community Co-op-Bassfield, Ms) stated, "we obtained pertinent information to help stimulate our plans of submitting a proposal within the year". According to Dorothy Harper WCSHC Youth Director said, "Mwale infused 50 participants with hope of creating

sustainability in rural communities by obtaining assistance through the Self Development of People".

Winston County Self Help Cooperative extends appreciation to the following individuals and organizations. The City of Louisville, Farm Bureau, Southern Echo, Mississippi State University's School of Veterinary Medicine and Extension Program, Heifer International, Mississippi Association and Federation Southern of Cooperatives, Farm Service Agency, Alcorn State University and Natural Resources Conservation Service, Self Development of People, Winston County Extension Office and Wiyguls' Family Farm. A special thanks to WCSHC members, youth, supporters and participants.



WCSHC's First Annual Saving Rural America Conference by Doris Newton

Doris Newton, Office of Outreach, Center for Minority Farmers, participated in Winston County Self Help Co-op First Annual Saving Rural America Conference in Louisville, Mississippi, January 5, 2008. This conference was organized by one of USDA's new community-based organization (CBO) partners, the Winston County Self-Help Cooperative. Over 300 individuals participated, including 261 farmers and ranchers; 53 children and teens; and approximately 50 volunteers and federal and state government representatives.

Natural Resources Conservation Service Chief, Arlen Lancaster, was the luncheon speaker and shared information on the current farm bill process and its potential impact on rural America as well as information on the importance

and use of census data. Lancaster encouraged participants to complete the 2007 Census.

Newton also staffed an exhibit table and shared USDA programs and services literature with participants that had been collected through various agency and small farms coordinators and sent earlier to the conference contact. The information was well received by participants! Other agencies and organizations that provided exhibits and/or presentations included, FSA, NRCS, NASS, Heifer International, MS State University's School of Veterinary Medicine, Alcorn State University & MS State Extension Programs, and MS-SSWAG.



Kleiner's Conference Experience by Anna Kleiner

Many attendees at the WCSHC's Saving Rural America Conference benefited from the small group discussions on agricultural marketing and individual networking with Ben Burkett of the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC) and Anna Kleiner of Southeastern Louisiana University. Ben provided an abundance of practical advice regarding production techniques and marketing strategies based on his many years of successful farming experience, while Anna reported on the 2006 focus group project exploring marketing challenges and opportunities in Louisiana

and Mississippi, in which several WCSHC members had participated. Topics discussed during the marketing sessions included organizing and participating in farmers markets, approaches to making farm-to-school connections successful, financial and technical resources available to farmers, and strategies for producing and processing specific fruits, vegetables, and livestock.

For More Information, Please
contact Frank Taylor 601-291-2704

fltaylor@bellsouth

