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SU Ag Center Visits African Farmers

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The Southern University Center for International Development Program was a recipient of the 2009 **Borlaug Fellows Women in Science Fellowship** in collaboration with the SU Ag Center. This program provided training to agribusiness entrepreneurs from the African countries of Kenya and Malawi. The four Women in Science Borlaug Fellows received six weeks of training at the SU Ag Center in the summer of 2009. The ladies were: Maness Nkhata-Ngoma, Patience Mngolimwale, Stella Kachoka, and Eunice Mwonjera.

In November, 2010, Drs. Fatemeh Malekian, associate professor, SU Ag Center, Rufus Nwogu and Walter Wiles, LSU International program, traveled to Kenya and Malawi as a follow up to evaluate the Borlaug Fellows Program.

In Kenya, the SU Ag Center team met with a USDA representative and members of the African Women in Agriculture at Eunice Mwonjera's office. Mrs. Mwonjera gave a PowerPoint presenta-

tion of her work, business, and how she has applied what she learned during her Borlaug Fellow training at the SU Ag Center.

Mwonjera owns Hillside Farm which exports fruits and vegetables to European countries. One of the stops for the SU Ag Center team was Kephis, a government laboratory that conducts pesticide tests on fruits and vegetables for export, where future collaboration between Southern University Ag Center and the lab was discussed. The team also visited a number of private fish farms and the USAID Office and met with a representative who provided positive feedback to inquiries.



Health Ministry, Kenya

In Malawi, the team visited Mannes' greenhouse where she raises plants for sale and distribution to other vendors. She has used what she learned in

Baton Rouge to expand her horticulture business. Mannes also runs a processing facility where she extracts oil from maize (corn) and soy, and makes maize flour for human consumption.



School children, Malawi

Next stop in Malawi was Stella's village where the team observed how she has structured her village into different committees and how wonderfully they were working together and accomplishing their set goals. They met at the church and had a question and answer session with the participants. Then they interacted with students at a school, discussing healthy living and lifestyles.

Their last stop was the USAID Office where the representatives declared their commitment to providing them with resources to enhance their projects.

Small Farmer Agriculture Leadership Institute Held in Tuskegee

The 68th Professional Agricultural Workers' Conference (PAWC) took place at Tuskegee University, Tuskegee, Alabama, December, 5-7, 2010. The theme was *Empowering Underserved Farmers and Rural Communities by Changing Legislation, USDA Eligibility Requirements, and Program Delivery*.

Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin conducted the 7th session of the third class for Small Farmer Agriculture Leadership Institute as part of the Professional Agricultural Workers' Conference (PAWC) pre-conference workshops, December 4-5. Class participants numbering more than 30 arrived from various states to attend the conference, two of whom asked questions during the Q&A session with USDA Secretary of Agriculture, the Honorable Tom Vilsack, and keynote speaker at the PAWC.

Dr. Owusu Bandele, Professor Emeritus, horticulture and organic agriculture, Southern University Ag Center gave the George Washington Carver Public Service Hall of Fame Awards Banquet Lecture and Dr. Gina E. Eubanks,

Vice Chancellor for Extension, presided over the event.



Small Farmer Agriculture Leadership Institute class with director Mellion, far left, and SU Ag Center vice chancellor for Extension, Eubanks, far right



Eubanks, left, watches as Tuskegee President, Gilbert Rochon hands Professor Emeritus Bandele, right, a plaque

The 2012 Farm Bill was the focus of this conference. Activities included: networking, workshops, paper presentations, poster ses-

sion, exhibits and displays. The workshops covered topics such as Strengthening Partnerships with USDA, moderated by SU Ag Center's Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin. Paper presentations included success stories, production issues, empowering small farmers and rural communities, and planning successful programs.

Conference participants representing Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center included: Dr. Gina Eubanks, Vice Chancellor for Extension, Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin, Specialist, Agriculture and Director of the Small Farmer Agriculture Leadership Institute, Dr. Bridget Udoh, Communications Specialist, Mrs. Zanetta Augustine, Extension Associate, Mr. Eugene Runles, Farm Superintendent, Ms. Lisa Gray, Research Associate and Mr. Terry Washington, Extension Agent (Rapides Parish).

SU Ag Center Receives Grant Awards from USDA

In the fall of 2010, the Southern University Ag Center received notification that the proposals submitted to USDA were funded as follows:

Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin: the Office of Advocacy and Outreach awarded the sum of \$300,000 for the Outreach and Assistance of Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers in Louisiana. This one-year project will provide technical assistance to Louisiana small farmers. One of the key outcomes of this project will be the highly anticipated Southern University Ag Center's "Louisiana Small and Minority Farmers' Conference" which will be held March 17—19, 2011.

Dr. Mellion-Patin also received a Capacity Building Grant award in the amount of \$199,684. The Academy for the Academic Enhancement of High School Students in the Food and Agricultural Sciences project will offer academic enhancement and leadership development to high school students across the state. The ultimate goal of this project is to enhance the test-taking skills of minority youth while enhancing their leadership development and exposing them to careers in the food and agricultural sciences.

Other recipients of the USDA Capacity Building grant included: Drs. **Yadong Qi**, *Ultraviolet-B Radiation*

Protection Strategies in Selected Southern Trees, \$299,510; **Zhu Ning**, *Quantifying the Responses of Urban Tree Species to Elevated CO₂ and Flooding*, \$299,947; **Bridget Udoh**, *Strategies to Improve Farm and Business Efficiency Through Integrated Communications*, \$185,323; **Kasundra Cyrus**, *Preparing Families for Future Health and Wealth Challenges*; \$264,733; and **Glenda S. Johnson**, *Southern University Childhood Obesity Prevention Study*, \$281,533.

Southern University Holds Plant Biosecurity Symposium

Southern University, Baton Rouge, and Ag Center scientists hosted the third annual "Frontline Biosecurity Symposium" to discuss potential threats to our nation's natural resources and agriculture in November 2010.

The event was kicked off at the Southern University's Smith-Brown Memorial Student Union, the second day, it moved to the Agricultural Research and Extension Center. The symposium featured presentations and demonstrations from scientists and professionals working on the front lines of research. They have been monitoring high consequence pathogens, insect pests, and invasive weeds that are dangerous to our nation's agriculture and renewable natural resources.

Presentations and hands-on demonstrations were made by Alabama A&M University, Ohio State University, LSU, Florida A&M University, Southern University, USDA ARS, USDA APHIS, US Customs and Border Protection, Department of Homeland Security, and Louisiana Dept. of Agriculture and Forestry. Approximately 120 professionals, students, scientists and community members interested in the health and safety of plants attended the symposium.

Urban Forestry Professor Daniel Collins organized this event to discuss natural and manmade threats to the US agricultural system.



Dr. Herman Warren, VA Tech, presents



Students listen attentively to presenter

SU Ag Center Vice Chancellor Installed as Association Chairperson

At the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities meeting in November, 2010, Dr. Gina E. Eubanks, Vice Chancellor for Extension, Southern University Ag Center was installed as the Chairperson for Association of Extension Administrators.

The mission of 1890 Cooperative Extension System is to assist diverse audiences, with emphasis on those who have limited social and economic resources, to improve their access to positive opportunities through outreach education.



Dr. Gina E. Eubanks

Memberships include the administrators and/or associate administrators for Cooperative Extension at 1890 land-grant institutions and Tuskegee University.

Regional conference seeks ways to enhance economic growth

The Center for Rural and Small Business Development and Communities of Color Network represented the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center at the annual Southern Regional - Asset-Building Coalition Conference.

The purpose of the conference was to engage a diverse group of community

and faith-based organization leadership, financial and academic institutions, federal and state governments, private sector, policy advocates, researchers, and other key stakeholders in a discussion on existing challenges against economic growth in the Gulf Coast states. Much emphasis was placed on defining policies and pro-

grams that support low-income families and communities. They also looked at practical opportunities that coalitions can employ to help families become economically stable.

SU Ag Center Reaches out to Capital Area Technical College

On November 8, the Center for Rural and Small Business Development collaborated with Louisiana Department of Family & Children Services to conduct a workshop for students at Capital Area Technical College, Baton Rouge. The students were interested in starting Daycare businesses.

They were eager to get assistance in planning their business ventures, but amazed at the new childcare regulations, rules, and guidelines in the daycare businesses. Several of them were already considering changing to other business ventures.

Business Development Specialist Eual Hall reminded them of important considerations of entering any business venture regardless of the type of business.

Great American Smokeout Day Celebrated at SU Ag Center

November 18, 2010 was the day the nation celebrated the Great American Smokeout (GASO). This annual event is held on the third Thursday in November throughout the nation, encouraging Americans to stop tobacco smoking.

At Southern University, the day was filled with activities sponsored and participated in by the SU Ag Center-Communities of Color (CoC) Network and Fresh Campus. The theme for the day was "Stop the Habit TODAY for a Healthier Tomorrow." The day began early with an informational tabletop display at the Southern University Student Union where students engaged in conversation about the dangers of tobacco use.

Regional Coordinator, **Urina F. Holt** celebrated the 35th Annual Great American Smoke Out at Southern University, Shreveport (SUSLA) Health & Physical Education Complex in Shreveport, on November 18.

Ms. Holt announced the event on local monitors throughout SUSLA main campus and the metro center; she also displayed flyers, posters, and e-blast inviting faculty, staff and students along with individuals in the local community to participate in the GASO event.

Dr. Ray L. Belton, Chancellor of SUSLA signed a proclamation recognizing the event to encourage smokers and tobacco users to make a plan to quit, or to plan in advance and quit smoking on that day.

Mayor Cedric B. Glover also signed a proclamation declaring that the City of Shreveport observes the day by choosing not to smoke or use tobacco products. Ms. Holt spoke on the importance of living a tobacco-free life by not using tobacco. She also shared some of the harmful and deadly ingredients that are found in tobacco and explained where to go for help.

The audience listened to the many causes and effects that tobacco has caused in the African American communities. Some of the participants testified they were willing to stop smoking for that day and/or willing to consider giving up smoking completely. Giving up smoking or using tobacco for one day may lead someone to not return to such an addictive and health risk habit.

Great American Smokeout Day contd.

Frankie Poland, regional coordinator with the CoC Network, was guest speaker at the GASO event held at Clinton Middle School.



Poland addresses audience

Later, the Fresh Campus and the CoC Network had an evening of celebration. The Greek organizations on campus provided valuable information about tobacco use in the form of skits as well as other slide presentations.

Paula Jordan, Communities of Color Network Regional Coordinator, partnered with two agencies to plan Great American Smokeout activities in Regions 4 and 5. In partnership with Southwest Louisiana Area Health Education Center, Paula was able to show 6th-12th grade students in Iberia Parish a DVD entitled *Truth or Dare*. In an effort to encourage students to refrain from or quit using tobacco, the DVD highlighted the negative impacts and health risks associated with tobacco use. Additionally, students in 6th grade were provided with information on tobacco laws in Louisiana to share with their parents.

In Region 5, Ms. Jordan worked with the pastor and music minister at Open Arms Baptist Church

in Lake Charles, LA to host a noon prayer service. The purpose of the prayer service was to pray for the release of individuals who are held by the bonds of tobacco. Pastor Carlos Ross opened the service with a prayer and Minister Eric Johnson played soft music for the meditation.

Shawntell Lewis-Harrell, Regional coordinator, conducted an educational booth display at the Louisiana State Building in Alexandria during the Great American Smokeout event. Several employees and constituents visited the booth for tobacco educational awareness information and to sign pledges vowing to live tobacco-free. As a token of appreciation for their participation, Harrell issued several giveaways such as t-shirts, stress kits, pens, notepads, and cigarette crushies with tobacco-free messages. In addition to this all-day activity, Harrell aired a public service announcement on KKST KISS 98.7 FM, encouraging Central Louisiana tobacco users to refrain from using all tobacco products on GASO, hopefully, to quit for life. On-air personality Jay Stevens interviewed Harrell to discuss the mission of Communities of Color Network, why the organization's work is vital in the African-American community, and the importance of GASO.

Communities of Color Network Regional Coordinator, **Shirley B. Simon** manned a tobacco education/awareness booth display for the annual Great American Smokeout Day

event at the Zulu Social and Pleasure Club in New Orleans. The GASO Event was held to encourage smokers to quit for at least one day in the hope that they may decide to permanently kick the habit. Smokers who took part in the event and quit smoking for 24 hours were asked to put at least five cigarettes into the CoC's Putting Your Heart Into Your Health Brown Bag. Each Zulu member that participated was given a CoC T-shirt and other smoke-free prizes as a token of appreciation. "Even if they don't quit permanently, they learned that they can kick the habit for a day and that they have plenty of support," said Simon. She shared the CoC's mission, the impact tobacco use has on the African-American community, dangerous chemicals used in tobacco products, the effects of second-hand smoke exposure, and the Quit line number.



Simon hands bag of information to event participant, left

St. Helena Community Garden Club Gets Help from SU Ag Center

The St. Helena community garden is located on 123 Park Loop Road in Greensburg on approximately two acres of land. This club consists of youth and adults.

For the fall garden, students planted vegetables such as collard, mustard, turnip, cabbage greens and green onions.

The youth actually learned where vegetables come from, how they grow and what they look like.



Adults and youth work together

Additionally, they learned how to prepare vegetables for eating from harvest to serving. Given that these days, most youth seem to have difficulty recognizing basic vegetables, and

knowing what to do with them, growing vegetables is providing them with a valuable life skill and education while they have fun.

Benefits of the garden include: improved quality of life for participants; enhanced catalyst for neighborhood and community development; stimulation of social interaction; encouraged self-reliance; neighborhood beautification; production of nutritious food; and reduced family food budget.

Angela Myles, area agent, coordinates this effort.

Workshop helps parents help their children

St. Helena Parish School System hosted a workshop entitled, “Helping Parents Help Their Children,” late 2010. Ms. Delores Johnson, Parent Educator, SU Ag Center, facilitated the workshop. Johnson provided the group with great tips on how parents can assist their children such as designating a specific area and time for homework.

She also explained that children can learn how to use math and organizational skills by assisting with meal preparations. “Ms. Johnson was very engaging, in-

formative and a pleasure to work with,” said a participant.

The parents in attendance were very receptive of these tips and participated in group discussions regarding improving students’ study habits, assisting the school and encouraging other parents to participate.

Johnson was very engaging, informative and a pleasure to work with. “My hope is that we will be able to work together in the future on another project,” said Johnson.



Parenting workshop

Faculty and staff accomplishments and activities

SU Ag Center Employee Appointed to Board

De'Shoin York-Friendship, Assistant Specialist – Nutrition, has been appointed to the Executive Committee of the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank's Board of Directors. De'Shoin will also serve as Secretary for the Board. The Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank serves 11 parishes and has over 120 member agencies.

The Center for Rural and Small Business Development sponsored a follow-up home buyer's workshop at Refuge Temple in Amite, with more than 15 participants in attendance. Several of the participants were at previous workshops because of the need to get a good understanding of the process for completing the USDA, Rural single family home applications. A total of 15 applications were collected and edited for submission.

Additionally, the Center responded to a request from the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences at Southern University to present information on starting a business to students in Consumer Economics class. The topics covered included: How to Distinguish a Non-Profit from a For-Profit Business; Various Funding Sources; Developing a Business Plan; Why or Why not Business Loans;

Starting the Business Application Process; and Starting a Childcare Business.

Mel Coco, Southern University Ag Center Nutrition Educator participates in benefit Lunch. Family and Consumer Science Regional Coordinator, Quincy Cheek, coordinated the Dean Lee Employee Health Expo and Team Lou benefit lunch for the Susan G. Komen Foundation late 2010. The event was held at the Dewitt Livestock Facility in Alexandria, Louisiana. A blood drive conducted by the LifeShare Blood Center was also held at this event.



Mel Coco informs Benny Swor, left, Dean Lee employee about the health risks associated with overweight/obesity

Upcoming Events

January 4, 11, 18, and 25: Parenting Class on Family Stress, La JET, Baton Rouge

January 8: Louisiana Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Institute: Lake Charles

January 20 – 21: Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Institute – Class III:, University of Arkansas –Pine Bluff

February 1, 8, 15, and 22: Parenting Class on Family Stress, La JET, Baton Rouge

February 5: Louisiana Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Institute, Lafayette

March 3-5: 68th Annual State Livestock Show, M.A. Edmond Livestock Show Arena, Baton Rouge

Mar 5: Louisiana Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Institute, **Graduation** Ceremony, Washington, DC

March 17—19: Louisiana Small and Minority Farmers' Conference, Baton Rouge

March 29: Connecting Businesses with Contracts: Southern University Ag Center hosts free procurement opportunities conference, Baton Rouge