

**SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY**  
**AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH AND EXTENSION CENTER**



**Leodrey Williams**

**CHANCELLOR'S REPORT**

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# Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Class Graduates

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The Southern University Ag Center held a graduation ceremony for the Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Institute at USDA's Jamie L. Whitten building in Washington, DC on March 24.

The Class III graduation ceremony was a very special event because it represented the culmination of many people's efforts to accomplish the task of taking small farmers and helping them become small farm advocates and agricultural leaders and more successful agricultural business men and women. "What an amazing journey the small farmers took to arrive at that day," said Zanetta Augustine, Extension Associate.

The journey began in October of 2009, and after more than 200 hours of class room instruction and outdoor experiences, it ended in this joyous occasion.

Dr. Leodrey Williams, Chancellor and Dr. Gina Eubanks, Vice Chancellor for Extension of the Southern

University Ag Center were among the special guests that made this event special for our graduates. The ceremony began with a welcome from Dr. Joe Leonard, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, USDA and a Southern University graduate. Mr. Anderson Neal, Acting Director for the Office of Advocacy and Outreach, USDA gave the keynote address and challenge to the graduates. Following the graduation ceremony was a networking reception with the USDA agencies.



**Class III and Leadership Team**

Class III consisted of 31 small farmers from 13 states in the southeast region of the United States. The Institute is a competitive program, and participating members were recommended, screened and approved by a panel of extension agents, agricultural professionals

and agricultural community leaders. Each participant in the program was selected based on expressed thirst for knowledge, dedication and commitment to enhancing their community, and potential to promote the sustainability of small family farms. A 2011 graduate, Brennan Washington stated that "*The institute forced many of us to look at our lives and step outside our comfort zones. And by doing so, many of us accomplished things we would not have thought possible prior to our involvement in the institute.*"

"It was truly an awesome experience. I am so proud to have had the opportunity to work with such a fine group of farmers," said Dr. Mellion-Patin.

The overall goal of the Leadership Institute is to promote the sustainability of small family farms through enhanced business management skills and leadership development.

*Continued on page 2*

## Leadership Class Graduates contd.

*Continued from page 1*

The Institute is conducted by the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center in collaboration with the Southern University Law Center, Prairie View A&M University – Cooperative Extension Program, North Carolina A&T State University – Cooperative Extension Program, USDA, and Kentucky State University.

To date, approximately 80 small farmers have graduated from this program from the following states: Oklahoma, Mississippi, Texas, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina, Louisiana, Kentucky, Arkansas, Maryland, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee and Missouri. This project is supported by the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers

Competitive Grants Program of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA, Grant # 2009-00822.

## SU Ag Center Holds 17<sup>th</sup> Annual FFA Career Development Event

This year, the Southern University and A&M College held the 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Area IV Future Farmers of America (FFA) Career Development Event (CDE) on March 23.

This event brings together 1,100 students from 50 high schools and 25 surrounding parishes, not including teachers and parents who provide assistants each year. The CDE consists of ten judging contests: Livestock, Beef, Floriculture, Dairy Cattle, Welding, Small Engine, Meats, Poultry, Nursery & Landscaping and Dairy Products. This event develops students' leadership ability; provides them with the opportunity to visit an 1890 Land Grant Institution and enlightens them on issues that impact agriculture in the state of Louisiana.

The CDE's competitions were rewarded with outstanding results. In the Dairy Foods category, Central Lafourche claimed first place and Chelsey Sloan of Springfield Blue held the High Individual score. In Electricity, first place went to Colby Thompson of Frank-

linton. Franklinton Blue placed first in Small Engines, while Dylan Schexnayder, St. Amant Gold took top High Assembly position and Kyle Creel, Franklinton Blue soared High in Troubleshooting. Thibodaux came in first in the Livestock category with Chris Moore of Central Lafourche as High scoring Individual. In Floriculture, Walker Blue placed first, Top Middle position was Fifth Ward Blue, and High Individual was Victoria Arledge of Walker's Blue team. The first place went to Springfield Blue in Nursery/Landscape, Fifth Ward Blue took Top Middle position and Rob Winn, of Springfield Blue took home the High Individual score. In the meats category, first place went to Central Lafourche Blue, Top Middle went to Raceland Middle and Emily Pontiff of Central Lafourche Blue ranked as High Individual. The Poultry contest concluded with Springfield Blue in first place, Fifth Ward Junior in Top Middle and Cody Scott of Springfield Blue ranked as High Individual.



**Students engage in poultry judging contest**

The event took place at M.A. Edmond Livestock Arena, Highway 61N in Alsen, LA and Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center Meat Technology Lab in Baton Rouge.

Willie Rawls, Associate Research Director and William Augustine, Research Associate/Technology Support coordinate the annual event.

## Louisiana Small Farmers Graduate in Baton Rouge

The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center hosted the Louisiana Small Farmer Conference, March 17-19 in Baton Rouge. The theme for this event was, "Sustaining Louisiana's Small Family Farms." This conference was enlightening, informative and designed to educate and expand the awareness of educational opportunities, USDA programs and services, and other resources which help small farmers stay in business. The overall goal of the conference was to provide an opportunity for Louisiana's small agricultural producers to come together and share strategies as well as be informed about the latest educational tools and resources which could impact the survival of their agricultural businesses. The conference targeted small and beginning farmers, agricultural business owners, community-based, and nonprofit organizations.

During the opening session, SU Ag Center Chancellor Leodrey Williams, extended a warm welcome to participants and in conclusion said, "If we don't do anything to help others, we have not done much at all," referring to outreach activities to the larger community. The commissioner of Agriculture & Forestry Mike Strain, DVM was on hand to welcome conference attendees from across Louisiana. He stated that, with the push for alternative energy, great benefits await farmers and emphasized the importance of "preserving, protecting and keeping our farmlands."

Also to address the audience was Ms. Cathea Simelton, Interim National Program Leader, Small and Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program, USDA, Office of Advocacy and Outreach, Washington, DC. Simelton assured the participants that her office "understands the obstacles small farmers face," and is ready and willing to help them succeed.



**Project Director, Dawn Mellion-Patin**

The conference started with a tour of the Perkins' organic farm in Port Hudson, the Jones' goat farm in Zachary and the Muhaimins' poultry farm in Zachary. The second day of the conference involved intense sessions with topics including challenges to sustaining Louisiana small farms, young agricultural program, establishing a farm plan for new and existing farmers, marketing and legal issues.

The conference culminated on Saturday morning with a graduation for the first class of small farmers who participated in the Louisiana Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Institute. These eleven distinguished honorees from six parishes successfully completed a 75-

hour training program focusing on leadership development and business management.

Chancellor Williams summed it all up when he said "I am proud of you, the students, teachers, staff, retirees, and everyone who has supported this conference."



**Pictured from left to right: Chancellor Leodrey Williams, Terry Washington, Boatner Ware, Cleophus Payne, Keith LeDay, Mary Hollingsworth, Willie Hollingsworth, Phyllis Washington, Wilmer Magee, Mary Irvin, Raymond Cassimere, Algy Irvin, Vice Chancellor Gina E. Eubanks and Project Director, Dawn Mellion Patin.**

"Congratulations to the graduates," said Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin, Director and Chair of conference committee.

## 4-H Leadership Conference Inspires Youth

The 4-H Junior Leadership Conference provides opportunity for a diverse group of youth who are currently engaged in significant leadership and/or service-learning activities to come together for further learning and development of their leadership and teamwork skills. The educational objective of the conference is to increase the leadership skills and knowledge of youth across Louisiana. The conference features a variety of workshops focused on leadership development, communication, teamwork, service-learning, youth-adult partnerships and time management. A key element of the Louisiana 4-H Junior Leadership Conference is a youth-driven focus. Youth decide what's offered, preside over the ses-

sions and teach all the educational workshops.

At the conference, youth participants are not only learning about leadership, they are practicing it.



St. Helen Parish participants

This year, a total of nine youth from St. Helena Parish participated in this event: Samuel Richardson, Darrell Griffin, Nekia Coleman, Chiquenna Gordon, Jasmine Spain, Melanie Carter, Lajarious Floyd, Trent Tanner, and Shaletia Landry.

Youth participated in such tracks as S.E.T., Service Learning, and Leadership.

Angela Myles, Southern University Ag Center *Youth Development Agent* for St. Helena and Tangipahoa Parishes coordinated the event.

## Stronger Economies Together Gains Strength

Stronger Economies Together (SET) represents an exciting initiative launched in 2009 by USDA Rural Development in collaboration with the nation's Regional Rural Development Centers and their land-grant university partners. The purpose of SET is to strengthen the capacity of communities/counties in rural America to work together in developing and implementing an economic development blueprint that strategically builds on the current and emerging economic strengths of their region. Phase I pilot efforts are in place in 23 multi-county regions located in nine states: Arkansas, Arizona, Kentucky, Louisi-

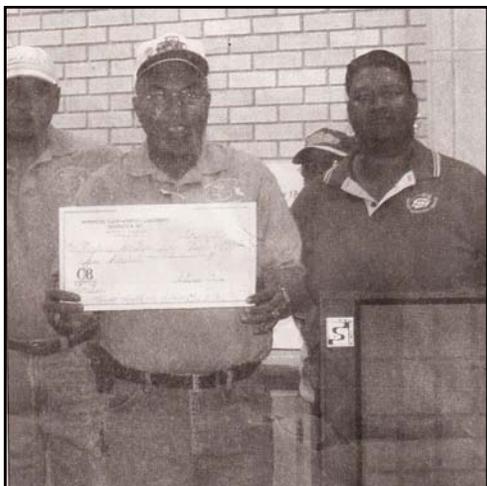
ana, Missouri, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Beginning in 2011, SET is expanding to 11 new states as part of Phase II including Alabama, Colorado, Indiana, Michigan, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New York, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Washington.

**Kenyetta Nelson-Smith** coordinates this program at the Southern University Ag Center. On April 14, a SET training session will be held at the Baton Rouge Area Foundation, 402 N. Foster St., Baton Rouge, and on May 12 in East Feliciana Parish. Contact: Kenyetta Nelson-Smith, (225) 771-2242 ext. 315.

**Glenn Dixon** leads the SET training effort for the Acadiana Region of Louisiana. This SET region consists of four parishes serviced by the Southern University Southwest Center for Rural Initiatives in Opelousas where team members meet monthly.

## Morehouse Black Farmers Hold Successful Annual Meeting

At the Morehouse Black Farmers/Landowners Association growers' meeting, Antwain Downs, farmer and member of the club, was presented a check for \$2,500 from Monsanto, Inc.



**Antwain Downs, center, holds a check that he presented to the Morehouse Parish Southern University Alumni Chapter.**

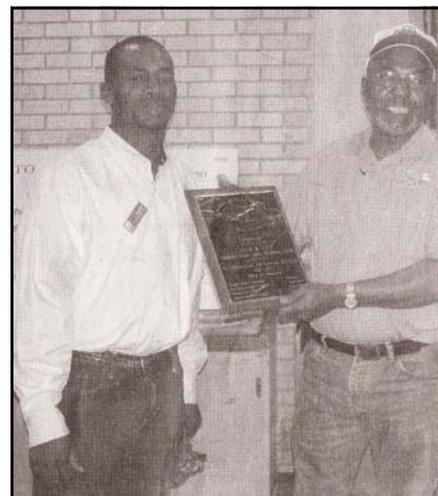
In 2002, a group of black farmers in Morehouse Parish organized what is now known as the Morehouse Black Farmers/Landowners Association. This group of 14 men meets once a month to discuss what is happening in the world of agriculture.

Odis Hill, member and agent with the SU Ag Center, stated that “they help each other out.” They examine new programs, share marketing information. Most of the members grow row crops like cotton, corn and soybeans with a few beef cattle farmers in the midst. The association also works with young people by encouraging them to undertake gardening. The group holds two events every year – a growers' meeting and a farm tour.

The Morehouse Black Farmers, Landowners Association in conjunction with the Southern University Ag Center held the annual growers' meeting at the LSU Ag-Center in February. Students from the 4-H Club at Delta Junior High and the Food Service class at Bastrop Schools were invited. Several guest speakers and friends of the farmers were also present.

Renita Marshall, DVM, Southern Ag Center; Nathan Crisp, USDA/Agriculture Statistic Services; and Lee Jones with USDA/Rural Development spoke about the importance of, and opportunities in agriculture.

Presentations were made by Monsanto and other agencies. Odis Hill, Assistant Area Agent, Morehouse/Union Parishes and event coordinator was honored with a plaque.



**Odis Hill, left, receives plaque**

The *Bastrop Daily Enterprise* carried an article entitled: “Helping each other is the motto for the Morehouse Black Farmers, Landowners” in its February 23 issue.

Photos courtesy of the *Bastrop Daily Enterprise*.

## Agent Tackles Recycling Issue

Katherine Ervin, SU Ag Center Parent Educator, Bossier Parish, taught parents how to recycle by using Kool-aid pouches to make little girls' handbags and Easter baskets from scratch. Ervin noted that parents are always looking for new ideas and ways to help them continue making smart choices for their families or place a simple smile on their children's faces.



Parent, right, holds up finished product in recycling class

“One man’s trash is another man’s treasure,” said Ervin. Many parents and individuals look for new ideas to help stretch the family dollar and sewing is a great way to save money.

## Parish Agent Provides Training on Pesticide Application

Agent Glenn Dixon, East and West Carroll Parishes, provides training for area producers needing to become private pesticide applicators. He educates pesticide applicators and users in Northeast Louisiana about integrated pest management strategies, including the safe, proper, and legal use of pesticides.



Pesticide application training session

The program promotes responsible decision-making, which will protect pesticide users, public health, plant and animal health, and the environment. In March, more than 26 producers either recertified or tested for certification with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry.

## FACULTY AND STAFF ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES

### Scientist Receives International Award, Serves on USDA Committee, Named YMCA Woman of Achievement



**Dr. Malekian**

Fatemeh Malekian, Associate Professor - Food Science and Nutrition, recently received the Elizabeth Fleming Steir Award. This award is given every two years to honor a member of the Institute of Food Technologists (IFT). The award is in recognition of the pursuit of humanitarian ideals and unselfish dedication that has resulted in significant contributions to the well-being of the food industry, academia, students, or the general public. Examples of such activities include: academic advis-

ing or mentoring; service to IFT or the industry, institutions, governments, or public; service to groups or individuals in need, such as working in hunger alleviation programs or in the delivery of education to persons without other means of acquiring it. Members come from virtually every discipline related to food science and technology, and from more than 100 countries around the world.

To read more about IFT, please visit: <http://www.ift.org/>

### Selected to Serve on USDA Committee

Fatemeh Malekian has been selected to serve on the National Institute of Food and Agriculture's (NIFA) professional development sub-committee. The goal of the committee is to work with NIFA in assisting Human and Nutrition state specialists, county agents

and staff in the use of new technologies as tools for professional development. To make this a feasible objective, the focus will be tackling one technology at a time. Sub-committee members will identify and contact states to determine who has already mastered

the technology. Using their input, the sub-committees will provide the Human and Nutrition NIFA program leaders with the necessary information on needed activities, tools, and so forth.

### Named YWCA Woman of Achievement

In Baton Rouge, Malekian was named YWCA Woman of Achievement; served as lieutenant governor for Kiwanis International; and received the Polaris Award for her significant strides in promoting the growth and development of a

diverse and unified community. Currently, she serves on the Board for Capital Area Family Violence Intervention Center (Battered Women). Fatemeh Malekian has committed her life, energy, focused research, professional develop-

ment, and vocational interests not only to her family, but also to the improvement of health as impacted by nutrition and a safe food supply.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES contd.

### SU Ag Center Strengthens St. Landry Town, Brings Home Regional Award

The town of Washington in St. Landry Parish is one of the poorest places in one of the poorest counties in the nation. The median household income per US Census is \$14,731. This is extremely low when compared to \$34,559 for St. Landry Parish, \$44,492 for the state of Louisiana and \$52,029 for the United States. With statistics such as this, the Town of Washington was selected to participate in the pilot program entitled, "Turning the Tide on Poverty." This program aims to involve a range of community members in seeking a "place-based" solution to poverty grounded in local talents and concerns, and led by local voices.

The process began last year with a five-week process in which community members explored and discussed ways to find real, workable solutions to the root causes of poverty in their community. It also looked at short term ways to help those most in need.

A resolution for the Turning the Tide on Poverty Project was created and presented to the Town Council in late March. The resolution outlines the origin and the vision for the community-run nursery for the Town of Washington. It was unanimously adopted.

The project team's action vision is a community-run nursery along with allied neighborhood gardens to pro-



**Turning the Tide on Poverty Team Meets in Washington**

duce and sell Louisiana native plants. This project has the potential to provide jobs and income, encourage beautification, and bring the community together for a common cause. It could also be integrated into the local elementary school to teach students gardening skills, good banking habits, and the importance of giving back to the community. This endeavor could also enhance tourism and business trade already established in the historic community.

Latonia Morrison-Frank showcased the work done on Turning the Tide on Poverty Project in the town of Washington at Southern Regional Development Center's Board and Advisory Committee meeting in Starkville, MS. The Team received the regional award for the southern region at the 2011 National Association of Community

Extension Professionals conference held in March.

"The Washington team is very excited about their latest accomplishments and the support they are receiving from their Town Council. They are moving towards making their vision a reality," said Latonia.

The town of Washington is one of two pilot sites participating in the "Turning the Tide on Poverty Project" in the state of Louisiana. The project is being conducted in five states—Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Oklahoma. The project partners are Southern Rural Development Center/Mississippi State University, Everyday Democracy, Farm Foundation, Kettering Foundation and the five State Teams. The Louisiana State Team is Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and its Southwest Center for Rural Initiatives and the Louisiana State University AgCenter. To read more about Turning the Tide on Poverty, visit <http://srdc.msstate.edu/tide>.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES contd.

**Mila Berhane**, senior research associate, presented the plant science booth entitled: “Plant a seed and see it grow,” as part of the youth tours during the recent Livestock Show. The goal was to demonstrate to children how to recycle while growing a plant. Children were provided with recycled pots, made of old newspaper and filled with soil in which they planted edible sunflowers seeds. Members of the AKA sorority volunteered to work in this booth.



Students learn how to plant sunflower seeds

More than 500 children participated in the activity throughout the day.

Berhane also coordinated the Floriculture and Nursery/Landscape contests during the recent annual Area IV FFA event. General knowledge test and plant identification are part of these contests. More than 200 students participated in both contests.

**Katherine Ervin**, agent, Bossier Parish, collaborates with the North Western Regional Re-entry Program where she teaches a budgeting class to 45 inmates on how to define key terms used in personal banking; develop a

budget; make decisions necessary to achieve a balance; and develop a financial plan for future and personal goals.

She continues to work with staff at Caddo Correctional Center where she attended the first An-

nual Volunteer Appreciation Ceremony to show her commitment in making a difference in the lives of many incarcerated individuals.

**Sarah Sims**, agent, Madison Parish, coordinated several activities in March including bringing two youth participants from Madison Parish to the SU Ag Center Livestock Show in Baton Rouge. One of the youth placed 1<sup>st</sup> in Market Steer and won Louisiana Breed Market Steer competition. A total of five youth and six adults attended and participated in the Show.

She also brought two farmers to the three-day SU Ag Center Small

Farmers’ Conference and Tour held in Baton Rouge.

Sims continues to coordinate the Youth Garden Project in Madison schools. More than 90 youth received cabbage seedlings from Bonnie Farms Cabbage program, and were trained on how to transplant the cabbage and grow their own plants. Each student received a cabbage plant to take home and grow. Students will enter the cabbage contest to be held in May.



Students take home cabbage for planting

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ACTIVITIES contd.**

When Madison Parish High School in Tallulah called on the SU Ag Center for assistance in a football field renovation endeavor, agents **Glenn Dixon and Sara Sims** responded. The request was made after visiting a previous renovation led by an Ag Center demonstration conducted by Dixon.

The agents will work with the school by making recommendations to produce a safe playing surface for their student athletes. Dixon and Sims will provide information and direction for pest management and cultural practices needed to produce high quality turf at Madison Parish High

School in time for the 2011 football season.

**Fatemeh Malekian** presented at the EFNEP, FNP, FF\_NEWS Bi-Annual Nutrition Educators' Conference at LSU Lod Cook Conference Center on March 15. Her presentation was entitled "Oil spill Response: Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center."

**Fatemeh Malekian**, Associate Professor - Food Science and Nutrition; **Margarita Khachatryan**, Research Associate; **Curtis Chisley**, Meat Specialist; and **Albert Howard**, Meat Plant Manager, conducted a consumer acceptability test on goat meat/rice bran sausage products in the SU Ag Center's metabolic kitchen on March 25.

The test is part of a USDA funded project entitled "Nutritional Content, Antioxidant Activity and Microbiological Safety of Goat Meat and Value-Added Goat Meat Products." Thirty-three students, faculty and staff participated in the tasting-testing panel.



Meat tasting team prepares samples. Left-right: Margarita, Curtis, Fatemeh and Albert



Panelist tastes sausage products

*Upcoming Events*

**April 8-10**, 41st Annual State and Regional Horse Show, M.A. Edmond Livestock Show Arena, Baton Rouge. Contact: Christie Monroe, 225-771-2242

**April 12**, parenting class on Family Stress - La JET, Baton Rouge. Contact: Delores Johnson, (225) 771-2242 ext. 237

**April 19**, parenting class on Family Stress - La JET, Baton Rouge. Contact: Delores Johnson, (225) 771-2242 ext. 237

**April 22**, parenting class on Family Stress - La JET, Baton Rouge. Contact: Delores Johnson, (225) 771-2242 ext. 237

**April 30**, 6th Annual Goat Field Day, SU Ag Center, Baton Rouge. Contact: Lisa Gray, Research Associate, (225) 771-2242 ext. 316

**April 14**, Stronger Economies Together (SET) training, Baton Rouge Area Foundation, 402 N. Foster St., Baton Rouge. Contact: Kenyetta Nelson-Smith, (225) 771-2242 ext. 315

**May 3**, parenting class on Family Stress - La JET, Baton Rouge. Contact: Delores Johnson, (225) 771-2242 ext. 237

**May 10**, parenting class on Family Stress - La JET, Baton Rouge. Contact: Delores Johnson, (225) 771-2242 ext. 237

**May 17**, parenting class on Family Stress - La JET, Baton Rouge. Contact: Delores Johnson, (225) 771-2242 ext. 237

**May 12**, Stronger Economies Together (SET) training, East Feliciana Parish. Contact: Kenyetta Nelson-Smith, (225) 771-2242 ext. 315

**May 24**, parenting class on Family Stress - La JET, Baton Rouge. Contact: Delores Johnson, (225) 771-2242 ext. 237

**May 31**, parenting class on Family Stress - La JET, Baton Rouge. Contact: Delores Johnson, (225) 771-2242 ext. 237

**June 16-18**, Family & Youth Exposition, Southern University Ag Center, Ashford O. Williams Hall, Baton Rouge, LA. Contact: Wanda Burke (225)-771-2242 ext 325