

A Message from the Center Peggy Robinson Wright



ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

Delta Studies Center

We proudly share in this newsletter our recent successes and new opportunities for partnerships and collaborations.

The first phase of our Oral History Project was completed and highlighted by the unveiling reception of our traveling exhibit on Sunday, August 26, 2001. It was attended by many across the Delta area. Our hats are off to all of the families who were a part of the project that would not have been possible without their help. The center continues to get calls and requests to host the exhibit in different communities.

Our thanks to the USDA-NRCS, East AR RC&D, and Arkansas State University for providing the funding necessary for the project. We have recently received an additional \$50,000 from NRCS and East Arkansas RC&D to continue our efforts.

It has been a busy few months for me as I am now pursuing my doctorate in Community Economic Development at Southern New Hampshire University. This would not have been possible without the sup-

port and financial assistance provided by Dr. Rick McDaniel and the Office of Academic Affairs.

Another announcement of interest to share with you is the swearing in of Mr. Pete Johnson, Delta Regional Authority Chair that will be held on Tuesday, October 23, 2001 at 4:00 p.m. in Clarksdale, Mississippi. We look forward to being a part of this important day.

Delta Studies is continuously evolving our collaborative network. Numerous advisory committee involvements are beginning to bear fruit. Those are:

- The Delta Compact is in the process of extending a compact network throughout the Lower Mississippi Delta Region;
- The Arkansas Delta Service Corps has approved us for three Delta Service Corps members. These corps members will be involved in the second phase of our Oral

History project.

- The Arkansas Delta Rural Development Networks (ADRDN) has formalized the Mid Delta Community Consortium and received \$942,000 in funds. I have been asked to serve on the Statewide Network Steering Group. More information on this valuable health resource will be forthcoming on our web page.

Forthcoming Delta Studies events include:

- Brown Bag Delta Studies Center Advisory Board briefing on the Delta Regional Authority in late October or early November; and a Cultural Heritage Tourism Training and Strategy Building Conference in late November.

Efforts to make Delta Studies Center the best it can be will continue with your help.

Welcome to our New Student



Miasha Morgan, Delta Studies Center, Student Assistant

The Delta Studies Center would like to take this opportunity to welcome our newest member on board, Ms. Miasha Morgan. Ms. Morgan is a transfer student from East Arkansas

Community College in Forrest City, Arkansas.

She is a long time resident of the Forrest City area and has come to ASU's main campus to finish her degree in Elementary Education.

Ms. Morgan will be working closely with the Center's staff helping with the day to day operations as a student assistant.

Welcome Aboard
MIASHA!

Special points of interest:

- *Oral History Exhibit Unveiling*
- *ASU-DSC Oral History Heritage Project Information*
- *Community Investment Symposium*
- *Arkansas Minority Health Commission Meeting.*

Oral History Exhibit Unveiling

The Arkansas Delta, Agriculture in Transition: 1920-1980 An Oral History photographic traveling exhibit was unveiled on August 26, 2001 in the ASU Museum. The exhibit captures the heart of the Delta Region, through the voices of its people. Delta Studies Center interviewers, since 1998, have traveled 17 Eastern Arkansas counties to con-

duct over 106 interviews with people who experienced various aspects of the Delta during the 60-year period covered in the project. Among those present for the unveiling were Representative Travis Boyd, EastAR RC&D, Mr. Kalven Trice, Conservationist, USDA-NRCS, Dr. Rick McDaniel, VP-Academic Affairs, Arkansas State University, Dr. Linda Pritchard, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, Arkansas State University, interview participants, their families, and other Delta civic and community leaders.

Peggy R. Wright, Coordinator of the Delta Studies Center and Dr. Brady Banta, Dean B. Ellis Library Director of Archives and Special Collections and



(Left to Right)
State Representative Travis Boyd – EastAR RC&D,
and Kalven Trice— USDA-NRCS

and Natasha Washington served as interviewers. Burr Swann, Project Manager, for Delta Studies Center Rural Development Initiative, was lead grant writer for the project.

Funding for the two year project was provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, under the auspice of the East Arkansas Resource Conservation and Development Council, with Arkansas State University providing in-kind and matching funds.

“Agriculture is at the core of the Delta Region’s culture, history, and economy,” explained Wright, as she described the presentation. The exhibit and accompa-

nying catalogue, highlight quotes and photographs of 31 individuals who were interviewed as a part of this project. The traveling exhibit addresses their words the “economic, political, social, and historic changes” that they witnessed over the 60-year period of the study.

Dr. Banta envisions that researchers seeking a better understanding of the Delta’s changes will recognize that “the interviews document an environment and culture that have all but disappeared through the personal insights of and perspectives from men and women who witnessed or participated in the transformation of the Delta.” More than 3,200 hours of taped interviews have been transcribed and, once catalogued, will be available to the public through the Dean B. Ellis Library Archives and Special Collections Department.

The traveling exhibit is available to community and civic groups. Bookings may be arranged by contacting the Delta Studies Center at (870) 910-8034 or (toll free) at (877) 731-3020.

“The exhibit captures the heart of the Delta Region, through the voices of its people.”



State Representative Travis Boyd with the EastAR RC&D speaking at the Oral History Unveiling on August 26,



Mr. Kalven Trice, USDA-NRCS addressing the guests at the Oral History Unveiling on August 26, 2001



Guests looking at the Oral History Exhibit.



The family members of deceased interviewee M.C. Jeffers, Sr. listen to various speakers address how important the preservation of Oral History is to the Delta.

ASU-DSC Oral History and Cultural Heritage Tourism Project

ASU-DSC Oral History and Cultural Heritage Tourism Project is an expansion/continuation of ASU-DSC's oral history activities. The project will focus on the history, heritage, and culture of small communities, significant historical sites, personages, and events.

Recent National Park Service and Department of Transportation reports have firmly established the "potential" for cultural heritage tourism as a viable economic development approach in the Lower Mississippi Delta Region. Many low-income and minority communities have not possessed the staff capacity and

expertise to document and preserve sites and stories of cultural heritage significance. It is our hope to utilize trained Delta Service Corps members to help these communities save their heritage by conducting Oral History Interviews as well as establishing potential heritage sites within these poverty stricken areas.

The priority of this project will focus on the human needs aspect of heritage. Project successfulness will result in employment, small-business development, and income generation opportunities for local communities and residents in the field of cultural heritage tourism.

Project Staff Include:

Directors:

Peggy R. Wright, Coordinator/DSC
Dr. Brady Banta, ASU Archivist and Director of the Heritage Studies Doctoral Program

Supervisor:

Christine Perry, DSC/Research Assistant

Interviewers:

Vaneta Harvey, Delta Service Corp Member
JaJuan Johnson, Delta Service Corp Member

Community Investment Symposium

A Community Investment Symposium hosted by the Federal Depository Insurance Corporation Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Little Rock, and Memphis branches was held at the Arkansas State University Convocation Center on October 2, 2001.

Speakers included: Ms. Peggy Robinson Wright, ASU Delta Studies Center, Mr. Ray Williams, Enterprise Corporation of the Delta, Mr. Ed Stepp, Midsouth Leadership Development, Arkansas Develop-

ment Finance Authority, and Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corp.

The goal of this symposium was to provide area bankers an opportunity to learn information and gain insight into resources and organizations that can enhance

"Provide area bankers an opportunity to learn information and gain insight into resources and organizations that can enhance their community development investment efforts."

their community development investment efforts. In an effort to accomplish this goal, Ms. Peggy Robinson Wright, from DSC, was asked to share information on the Delta Studies Center and explain how area banks can get more involved with the Centers programs.

Cooperative Meeting with the Arkansas Minority Health Commission Dr. Phyllis Skorga, DHEP

On August 20, 2001 Director Tommy Sproyles and Charlotte Llewellyn of the Arkansas Minority Health Commission came to Arkansas State University to meet with faculty and staff and to talk about Delta related programs. Dean Susan Hanrahan of the College of Nursing and Health Professions attended the meeting to give an overall perspective about grant-funded projects that concentrate on the Delta and are in current operation at the College. Dr. Phyllis Skorga, Director of the Delta Health Education Partnership provided information about the goals and



L to R.. Dr. Susan Hanrahan, Dean, College of Nursing-ASU, Mr. Tommy Sproyles, Director of Arkansas Minority Health Commission, Jeremy Frakes, DHEP-ASUI, & Jackie Gilbert, HPPI Program.-ASU.

activities of the 4 states and 6 university interdisciplinary distance-learning consortium. Ms. Peggy Wright, Director of the Delta Studies Center spoke to the group about the coordination role of the Center and the specific activities that have been conducted such as the oral history project. Ms. Jacqueline Gilbert, Director of the Delta Class Health Professions Partnership Initiative provided information about the activities of this collaborative project with Arkansas Delta primary and secondary schools to promote interest in adolescents about a career in health care delivery.

Mr. Sproyles discussed with the group his interest in increasing access to minority health care providers especially in the Delta areas of Arkansas. He spoke about current efforts in Lee, Chicot and Crittenden counties to disseminate information and educate residents about health opportunities. And he spoke about targeted programs such as a community based hypertension project that are being developed for the Delta. He indicated that the new Medical Director for the Arkansas Minority Health Commission, Dr. Alfred Adams would be concentrating on developing collaborative relationships with health care professionals in the Delta to set up these community health initiatives over the next few months.

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