



## A Message from the Center By: Peggy R. Wright

Fall is here and many interesting things are going on in the region. In the next weeks we will be privileged to have two dynamic speakers, former President Bill Clinton and Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., in our community to give thought provoking lectures that I look forward to. In our next issue we hope to give you brief summaries

of their talks. As we continue to engage in dialogue with our numerous partners across the Delta, DSC will keep you abreast of those issues and topics that affect all of us.

Also, let us continue to keep the many men and women who are serving in Iraq and other foreign soils in our thoughts.

## Eliza Miller High School Documentary produced...

An Eliza Miller High School documentary was produced by a Communication Arts graduate of NYIT, Dana Bingham, recently. Ms. Bingham, along with a non-profit organization "Help for a New Day" located in West Helena, Arkansas submitted a proposal for the film to the Arkansas Humanities Council in January 2002. The organization received a grant for \$17,000 in November to help fund the project.

The film, which is called "Eliza Ross Miller: Ye Shall Know Thee By Thy Fruits," chronicles the Eliza Miller High School from its inception in 1925 with the purchase and donation of land in Helena's Catholic Hollow to its mandatory integration in 1970. Several Eliza R. Miller descendants, school alumni, and teachers were interviewed for this project.

Ms. Bingham is the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. George Bingham of Helena, Arkansas. Her father is the director of the Chamber of Commerce in Helena. She has received numerous awards for her work on a wide range of documentaries over the last few years.

For more information about the documentary, which premiered August 29-31, 2003 during the Eliza Miller Senior High Al-School Reunion, you may contact the Arkansas Humanities Council in Little Rock.

*[Information received from the June 2003 NYIT—The Manhattan Chronicle article by Vincent Savino and the article in the January 15, 2003 edition of the Phillips County Progress]*

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### Special points of interest:

- "The Eighth Annual National Booker T. Washington Economic Summit held October 8,10 2003 at Tuskegee University.
- Mattie Wortham wins an Emerging Historic Preservation Scholarship
- Mississippi Delta Regional Issues Fall Conference held in Little Rock on October 2, 2003.
- St. Francis County Museum is displaying the Oral History Traveling Exhibit.
- 1st annual African-American Cemeteries Conference held in Helena, Phillips County, Arkansas.
- Liberty Bank Distinguished Lecture Series Featured former President Bill Clinton
- Job Announcements
- Delta Juke Joint Serves as "Ground Zero" for Blues Lovers
- Last Quarter Reports Released

# Eighth National Booker T. Washington Economic Development Summit held October 8 -10, 2003

The Eighth National Booker T. Washington Economic Development Summit “*Economic Development in Persistent Poverty Communities: Best Practices, Programs, and Policies*” was held October 8-10, 2003 at the Kellogg Conference Center on the Tuskegee University campus.



Dr. Booker T. Washington

The Summit focused on community initiated programs that are linked to regional, national, and global markets. Additional emphasis was placed on federal and local agencies that can provide resources and technical assistance to help carry out economic development through historically black colleges and

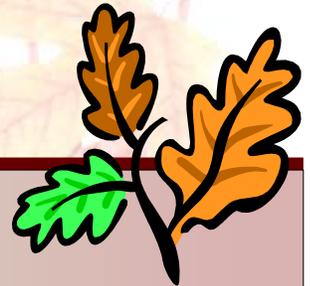
universities HBCUS.

Topics covered during the Summit included:

- Rural Entrepreneurial Initiatives
- Doing Business with Federal Agencies
- Youth Entrepreneurship
- Information Technology in Rural America and Business Development
- Wealth Creation in Rural America

- Faith-Based Economic Development
- Resource Opportunities
- Disadvantage Businesses and Transportation
- Access to Revolving Loan Funds
- Rural Incubator Programs

For more information concerning this Summit and other programs at the university visit their website at <http://www.tuskegee.edu>.



## Mattie Wortham Wins An Emerging Historic Preservation Leader Scholarship

Mrs. Mattie Wortham, President of the Judd Hill Memorial Scholarship Fund, Inc. of Trumann, Arkansas, competed for - and won - an Emerging Preservation Leaders Scholarship from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, which helped pay her expenses to the National Trusts Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado, September 30 – October 5, 2003.



Mrs. Mattie Wortham  
Picture by: Christine Perry

Along with technical assistance from Arkansas State University's-Delta Studies Center, participation in the Emerging Preservation Leaders Program will strengthen Judd Hill Memorial Scholarship Fund's project to preserve two culturally significant African-American Poinsett County cemeteries at the Judd Hill and Tulot Plantations.

Considered by many as the premier preservation conference in the United States, the Emerging Preservation Leaders Scholarship Program has provided financial assistance to more than 780 preservationists from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds over the years.

This year's conference offered the tools to strengthen local capacity to preserve historic places and revitalize communities. Participants learned through plenary and educational sessions, field visits, discussion groups and tours of Denver, surrounding small-town and rural areas.

The National Trust, created by Congress in 1949, has a nationwide network of regional offices, a loyal and dedicated membership of

more than a quarter million, and a range of programs, projects and services to help communities preserve and protect their heritage.

The Judd Hill Memorial Scholarship, Inc. is a charitable organization 501 © (3) that was formed in 1995. The organization has awarded several scholarships to date. By awarding these scholarships to African-American students, the committee has inspired local businesses to participate in its fund-raising for the scholarships.

For more information on the Judd Hill Memorial Scholarship Inc. contact:

Mrs. Mattie Wortham, President  
Judd Hill Memorial  
Scholarship Fund, Inc.  
PO Box 652  
Trumann, AR 72472-0652  
(870) 483-9079

# Mississippi Delta Regional Issues Fall Conference held in Little Rock

Honorable Rodney Slater, Arkansas State University President Les Wyatt, University of Louisiana in Monroe President James Cofer and Little Rock Mayor Jim Dailey hosted the Mississippi Delta Regional Issues Fall Conference at the Statehouse Convention Center in Little Rock. The one-day event addressed issues such as economic development, health care, education, agriculture and other critical issues facing the seven-state, 219 county region.

According to a Jonesboro Sun article dated on October 4, 2003, around 100 people gathered in the states capital to discuss issues critical to development and success in the Delta Region. It began with opening comments from University Presidents Les Wyatt and James Cofer followed by three panel discussions.

*"...100 people gathered in the states capital to discuss issues critical to the development and success in the Delta Region."*

- **Panel I:** Emerging Models in Economic Development moderated by Dr. Don Cotton, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Research & Technology Transfer, Arkansas State University.
- **Panel II:** Healthcare in the Delta Region: Creating Opportunities from Challenges moderated by William M. Bourn, Dean, College of Health Sciences, The University of Louisiana at Monroe.
- **Panel III:** The Role of Regional Industries, Institutions, and Universities in Economic Development moderated by Clyde Williams, William J. Clinton Presidential Foundation.

During the conference, Wyatt announced \$880,000 worth of investments into the Delta by several groups and companies and they include:

- \$430,000 from the Foundation for the Mid-South to help low-income people with starting new businesses,

buying a home, and paying for education or other long-term goals.

- \$250,000 from Enterprise Corporation of the Delta to fund expansion of its "AIR2LAN" program. Those funds will help provide affordable high-speed Internet service to people in the Delta who have not had it previously.
- \$200,000 grant from the First National Bank of Phillips County to help the city of Helena begin a cleanup and beautification program.

Others who spoke at the conference and expressed their support for the work being done included U.S. Congressman Marion Berry, D-Gillett, and Representatives Vic Snyder, D-Little Rock, and Mike Ross, D-Prescott.

*[Excerpts from article by Rob Moritz, Stephens Media Group, Jonesboro Sun, Saturday, October 4, 2003.]*

## The Oral History Exhibit On Display

The Arkansas Delta Agriculture and Community in Transition, 1920-1980: An Oral History Photographic Traveling Exhibit is on display at the St. Francis County Museum located in Forrest City, Arkansas.

The exhibit, which captures the heart of the Delta Region through the voices of its people, features 31 carefully selected interviewee photo and quotes that focus on agriculture during the 60 year period covered by the project. Peggy R. Wright, Coordinator of the Delta Studies Center and Dr. Brady Banta, Dean B. Ellis Director of the



St. Francis County Museum  
Located in the Rush-Gates Home on  
603 Front St, Forrest City, AR

Archives and Special Collections, served as co-managers for the project. Drs. C. Calvin Smith and Larry Ball, formerly of the ASU History Department,

were project co-directors. Other members of the project team included Christine Perry, DSC Research Assistant, Rasheda Hamilton, Vaneta Harvey, Pat Snodgrass, Natasha Washington, Lynne Zollner Project Interviewers and Burr Swann.

Funding for this project was provided by the U.S. Department of

Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service under the auspices of the East Arkansas Resource Conservation and Development Council with additional support from Congressman Marion Berry and Arkansas State University.

The photographic exhibit will be available to the general public Monday through Friday from 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. until December. For more information you can contact the Delta Studies Center at 1-877-731-3020 or visit the St. Francis County Museum's website at <http://www.sfcmuseum.org>

# African-American Cemeteries Conference

## By: Stephen Carroll

On September 19th and 20th of 2003, Preservation of African American Cemeteries, Inc. (PAAC) held their 1st Cemetery Conference in Helena, Arkansas, entitled: Reclaiming Our Past To Preserve Our Future."

Dr. C. Calvin Smith, distinguished Professor of the Heritage Studies Ph.D. Program at Arkansas State University, was one of the keynote speakers at the conference. He said that the reason he first became interested in cemeteries was "because of what they can tell us about the past." He also said that cemeteries hold keys to the past and future. Dr. Smith provided background information on some of the more influential people who were buried at Dixon and Magnolia, two of Helena's bigger cemeteries. Although his presentation focused more on the historical aspect

of cemeteries, he also recognized the importance of preserving the cemeteries, too. Part of the problem is that when some of the families leave town, the history of those cemeteries sometimes goes with them, stated Dr. Smith.

Dr. Roberta Hughes Wright, of Detroit, Michigan, spoke about the history of black cemeteries in America, past and present. She applauded the conference and what it was trying to accomplish, saying that it is often difficult to find people, young and old, who are interested in preserving cemeteries. She mentioned her book, *Lay Down Body*, about Detroit's three black memorial cemeteries, and the history behind them.

Dr. Smith and Dr. Wright were just two of several gifted speakers who

spoke at the conference. There was also a panel discussing how to get more involved in the preservation of black cemeteries. Several local mayors made appearances at the conference, including the mayors of Helena and West Helena. Carrie Wilson spoke about the preservation of Indian burial grounds. Conference attendees were taken to several local historical black cemeteries in

*"...problem is that when some of the families leave town, the history of those cemeteries sometimes goes with them."*

the area. On the last day of the conference the Preservation of African-American Cemeteries, Inc. held an awards luncheon. The con-

ference was sponsored in part by a grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## Liberty Bank Distinguished Lecture Series featured former President Bill Clinton

The first Liberty Bank Distinguished Lecture Series took place on October 28th at the Fowler Center's Riceland Hall with featured guest speaker former President Bill Clinton.

The Liberty Bank Distinguished

Lecture Series is designed to enhance the educational experience for lectures by presenting inspirational business, industry, educational, and government leaders that will enrich the educational experience for Arkansas State

University students.

For more information about upcoming Liberty Bank featured speakers please contact University Advancement at (870) 972-3362.

## Job Announcements

### Beacons & Bridges Inc.

A Jonesboro-area, faith-based nonprofit organization is seeking an individual to develop and direct the activities of its small business development program. Seeking candidate who has background in small business development, accounting or community/economic development. Advance degree with 3+ years experience preferred.

For more information contact:  
Beacons & Bridges, Inc.

Attn: Search Committee  
231 South Fisher St.  
Jonesboro, AR 72401.

### Mid South Faith-Based Development Center

The Foundation for the Mid South seeks an Executive Director of the Mid South Faith-Based Development Center. This individual will coordinate with other FMS staff, consultants, diverse community leaders and clergy and board members

in the development and implementation of project work plans and the management and supervision of overall project activities.

For more information contact:  
Elliott Wright  
Executive Search for MSFBD Center  
1346 Midland Avenue 6J  
Bronxville, New York 10708  
(914) 441-7502  
ewrightny37@aol.com

# Delta Juke Joint Serves As “Ground Zero” for Blues Lovers

## By: Stephen Carroll

Over the years, “Ground Zero” has made its mark as the home of Delta Blues. And if you ever made your way over to the delta blues club in Clarksdale, Mississippi, you can literally leave your mark there.

Up until a couple of years ago, the building that houses “Ground Zero” was just an old abandoned building; before that it was “Delta Cotton and Grocery Company.” Today it is an up and jumping juke joint where musicians from around the world come to perform, and the club even provides spaces on the tables and the walls for visitors to sign their names.

“Ground Zero” opened May 11, 2001. It is co-owned by Bill Lockett, a local attorney and Morgan Freeman, the world-famous actor who makes his home in nearby Charleston, Mississippi, and is an occasional frequenter of the establishment. Lockett and Freeman first met in 1996, when Freeman sought Lockett for legal work. They quickly



Ground Zero Blues Club Clarksdale, Mississippi  
Photo located on the Ground Zero Website [www.groundzerobluesclub.com](http://www.groundzerobluesclub.com)

became friends and got the idea to open “Ground Zero” because of the unsatisfactory condition of other juke joints in the area, where the walls were caving in, audiences were scarce, and live performances were infrequent. The club got its name because the Delta region is considered to be the starting point of the blues music. Lockett ignored suggestions to change the club’s name after the term became synonymous with the World Trade Center after the terrorist attacks on September

*“...got the idea to open “Ground Zero” because of the unsatisfactory condition of other juke joints in the area....”*

11, 2001. “Ground Zero means...the point or beginning of something,” Lockett said. Lockett pointed out there are a disproportionate number of blues musicians from the Delta region as compared to the rest of the state- “probably five to one,” said Lockett. The club has live music every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights (and on occasion, more nights than that).

In the 2 1/2 years “Ground Zero” has been in operation, it has garnered much attention, not just from the local media, but it has always made headlines nationally as well. “We have music lovers that come to Clarksdale from all over the world,” he said, and he also noted that the club has been featured in numerous magazines, including GQ, Southern Living, and National Geographic. Lockett also mentioned that Freeman and others are currently working on a TV show centered around the club, called “Journey to Clarksdale.” He said the show should be airing on HBO or Showtime within the next year.

## Reports Released

### **Affordable Housing and Transportation: Creating New Linkages Benefiting Low-Income Families; By: Anne Canby**

“New research indicates the need to own one or more cars is placing homeownership out of reach for low-income families, effectively restricting the single most effective tool for increasing family wealth.” To find report, visit FannieMae Foundation’s Website at <http://www.fanniemae.foundation.org/programs/hff/v5i2-affordable.shtml>

### **2004 Fair Market Rents By State released by HUD**

This data is available at: <http://www.huduser.org/datasets/fmr/fmr2004F/2004map.html>

### **2002 State Personal Income**

This information has recently been released and is available at the new Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) Website: <http://www.bea.gov/bea/newsrel/SPINewsRelease.htm>

### **Continuing the Investment in Competitive Workforce and a Brighter Economic Future for Arkansas: A Policy Agenda for Investing in Arkansas’ Working Families**

To find report, visit: [http://www.goodfaithfund.org/\\_pdf/pub\\_working/wfp\\_working\\_poor\\_families.pdf](http://www.goodfaithfund.org/_pdf/pub_working/wfp_working_poor_families.pdf)

### **Missing the Bus: How States Fail to Connect Economic Development with Public Transit**

States are failing to coordinate economic development spending with public transportation says a new report from Good Jobs First. To find report, visit: <http://www.goodjobsfirst.org/pdf/bus.pdf>

### **Seizing High-Skill Services in Rural America by: Jason Henderson**

Focus of this report is on how many rural communities are missing the opportunity to capture high-skill service jobs. To review report, visit: [http://www.kc.frb.org/RuralCenter/mainstreet/MSE\\_0803.pdf](http://www.kc.frb.org/RuralCenter/mainstreet/MSE_0803.pdf)

**ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY**

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[www.clt.astate.edu/dsc](http://www.clt.astate.edu/dsc)



**WHITE HOUSE FAITH-BASED AND COMMUNITY INITIATIVES  
MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE**

*OCTOBER 29, 2003*  
(8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.)

Memphis Cook Convention Center: 255 North Main Street; Memphis, TN 38103-1623  
Phone: (901) 576-1200; <http://www.memphisconvention.com>  
Registration: Grand Lobby; General Session: Grand Ballroom  
For more information go to <http://www.dtiassociates.com/fbcilogisticsTN.cfm?location=TN>.

**NATIONAL COMMUNITY LAND TRUST CONFERENCE 2003  
SYRACUSE, NEW YORK**

*NOVEMBER 13-15*

Hosted by: Time of Jubilee and Jubilee Homes of Syracuse  
For more information please contact Jennifer Bandelian, Syracuse Housing Bureau  
(315) 470-1842 or [jbaldelian@visitsyracuse.org](mailto:jbaldelian@visitsyracuse.org) with any questions.