

FEDERATION OF SOUTHERN COOPERATIVES
1967

1970



1972



1982



1985



1992



1998



2002



2010



49th Anniversary
2015-2016

Federation of
Southern Cooperatives/
Land Assistance Fund



2015

*“A Legacy of Hope,
Vision and
Collective
Wealth Building”*



GEORGIA CO-OP MEMBERS



**Finance Director Cornel Crawford
with Board Chair Shirley Blakley**

COOPERATIVE MEMBERSHIP

ALABAMA Alabama State Association Of Cooperatives – Alabama Fisheries Co-op – Coden • Browntown Co-op - Marbury • Demopolis Citizens FCU - Demopolis • Federation of Greene County Employees FCU - Eutaw • Freedom Quilting Bee - Alberta • Marengo County Farmers Co-op - Safford • PLBA Housing Development Corp. - Gainesville • Selma-Dallas Farmers Cooperative - Selma • SOGOCO Goat Producers Cooperatives - Epes • West Alabama Farmers Association - Sawyerville • Sankofa Youth Agricultural Co-op - Livingston **ARKANSAS** Arkansas Farm & Land Development Corp. - Brinkley **GEORGIA** Georgia State Association of Cooperatives • Flint River Farmers Cooperative - Newton • Georgia Child Care and Nutritional Assoc. - Atlanta • Houston Cty. Child Development Center - Perry • Southern Alternatives Cooperative - Ellaville • South Georgia Vegetable Producers - Quitman • West Georgia Farmers Cooperative - Hamilton **KENTUCKY** Kentucky Minority Farmers Association **LOUISIANA** Louisiana Oystermen Association - Plaquemine Parish • Point Coupee Farmers Cooperative - New Roads **MISSOURI** Missouri Rural Crisis Center **MISSISSIPPI** Mississippi State Association of Cooperatives • Attala County Self Help Cooperative • Attala County Self Help Cooperative, Inc • Beat 4 Farms Cooperative A.A.L. • Boque Chitto / Lincoln County Community Center • Family Farmers Cooperative • Indian Springs Farmers Association, Inc. • Kemper Regional Outreach Cooperative (KROC) - Scooba • Milestone Cooperative Association • Mississippi Delta Southern Rural Black Women in Agriculture • Mid-South Progressive Agricultural Group • Mississippi Meat Goat Producers - Pattison • Mt. Zion Saving Lives Outreach Center - Noxapater • New Community Cooperative • North Bolivar Development Cooperative • North Delta Produce Growers Cooperative • Quitman County Development Organization • South Rankin County Farmers Association • Unlimited Community Agriculture Cooperative - Starkville • Winston County Self Help Cooperative • East Central Federal Credit Union (Hope) • Shelby Bolivar County Federal Credit Union • Shreveport Federal Credit Union • First Delta Federal Credit Union **SOUTH CAROLINA** Axiom Farms • Farmers Co-op/CIA • Florence City Farmers Cooperative • Global Producers • Mid-Eastern Farmers Cooperative • Orangeburg Young Farmers Co-op • People's Cooperative • RAFCO Farmers Co-op • Saluda Farmers Association • South Carolina Coastal • South Carolina Sea Island Farmers Co-op • Williamsburg and Clarendon Farmers Coop **TEXAS** Texas Landowners Association - Houston

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THE WHITE HOUSE

Washington

July 29, 2016

I am pleased to join in marking the 49th anniversary of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund.

No matter their zip code, those who work hard and play by the rules should be able to get ahead in our country. For nearly 50 years, the Federation has striven to realize this vision by working to build a legacy of hope and opportunity for those in low-income communities in rural America, especially minorities. By helping unite farmers through cooperatives, organizations like yours support hardworking families throughout the South and remind us of the obligation we have to work together to forge a brighter future for all.

I appreciate your dedication to supporting farm families and communities, and I wish you all the best in the years ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Barack Obama", written in a cursive style.



THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
20250-0100



August 2016

Dear Friends:

When I became the Secretary of Agriculture in 2009, I inherited a department with a long and troubling history with civil rights and a culture of distrust by the very communities we are meant to serve. Over the past eight years, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has made civil rights and diversity top priorities, and I am proud to say that USDA has made tremendous progress toward realizing Abraham Lincoln's vision of the People's Department, where each employee and customer is treated fairly and equitably. I would like to thank the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund for your long standing partnership, and for helping the USDA begin the difficult but necessary work of correcting past injustices and charting a new path forward.

With partners like the Federation, USDA is working to build a more inclusive agricultural workforce, empowering farmers and ranchers of all backgrounds and providing access to the financing and other resources they need to sustain and grow their operations. USDA's annual lending to under-served producers has more than doubled from \$380 million in 2008 to almost \$830 million in 2015. Since 2009, USDA has also facilitated over 2,500 contracts to transition over 400,000 acres of expiring Conservation Reserve Program land from retiring landowners to beginning or under-served producers for sustainable grazing or crop production. The Federation's work to educate farmers about the importance of legacy planning and how to transfer land to the next generation is crucial to keeping farmers of color engaged in agriculture. And we can see that it's working. Thanks to the Federation, the number of black farmers increased by 12 percent from 2007 to 2012, and the number of Hispanic farmers increased by 21 percent.

American agriculture is strongest when we embrace and support *all* of our producers. I want to thank each of you for your ongoing contributions to agriculture and your commitment to the communities that need your advocacy most. USDA is committed to serving alongside you, and we are grateful for your continued guidance and partnership. We know we still have a long way to go, and we look forward to continuing to work with you to further justice and opportunity for farmers and ranchers across our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas J. Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT



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Cornelius Blanding
Executive Director

Greetings to Farmers, Members, Cooperatives, Landowners and Friends:

I want to welcome each of you to the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund's forty-ninth anniversary and annual meeting. I hope you will take this opportunity to learn and share strategies and experiences that will help us continue the battle to achieve a more just and equitable agriculture system both in the United States and globally.



I also challenge you to begin to think about the next Farm Bill as you evaluate the impact of the current bill. This is very important to the economic survival of our membership and the communities in which they live. Over the next several months the Federation and its partners will be contacting you for your input as we develop a Farm Bill policy package to help educate policy makers on the unique

needs and concerns of small and specifically African-American farmers and rural communities.

As this Annual Meeting ends, we also will begin planning for the Federation's fiftieth (50th) Annual Meeting in August 2017. Please think about this important milestone and send us your thoughts and ideas on how we can best celebrate this historic occasion.

I hope you will enjoy yourselves and we look forward to continuing on this cooperative journey.

Yours in struggle,

Shirley Blakley
Board Chair

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Members, Board of Directors, Staff and Partners:

We are in the midst of some challenging times in the world, our country, the south and our communities. There is unrest in the world, a seemingly growing divide in our country, continued economic disparity in the south and constant encroachments on land in our communities.

Therefore, we must hold steadfast to our organization's mission and focus. We must continue to be a catalyst for the development of self-supporting communities through cooperative economic development, land retention, advocacy and other initiatives that increase income and build collective wealth.



We must continue to seek and build effective partnerships throughout the world. We are the ones who can best set the example of COOPERATION! We must be the ones who fight the good fight and build institutions that are owned and controlled by the people. We must be the ones who recognize and work toward the common good. After all, we are all in this together and are all connected by the same air, water and soil. So we must all work together to protect the common good, the land and the environment.

Our priorities and resources must be committed to our focus areas of cooperative economic development, land retention and advocacy. We will continue to increase our efforts to create, expand and retain cooperative businesses in our communities. We have to work even harder to protect the landholdings of black farmers and landowners in order to maintain our most valuable asset. More than ever we have to raise our voices so that they are loud enough to be heard and become

part of the national conversation to influence programs and policies that affect our communities and country.

We must continue to be organized at the local level through our cooperatives and credit unions, organized at the state level through our state associations and organized regionally through the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund

Our collective voices must join our many partners and become an echo of our constant message of self-help and local control through cooperative economic development, land retention and advocacy.

Our message is part of our legacy which is “A Legacy of Hope, Vision and Collective Wealth Building.”

So we must continue to build onto that legacy, even in the midst of these challenging times.

Cooperatively,

Cornelius Blanding

2016 Program Reports

Rural Training & Research Center

The collective membership of the Federation owns a unique Rural Training and Research Center (RTRC) between the towns of Epes and Gainesville in Sumter County, Alabama. The Federation and the local Panola Land Buying Association together own more than 1,300 acres of farm and forested land, which form the land base of the Center.

The Center facilities were built between 1971 and 1974 as a place to provide meeting and training space for the Federation's membership across the rural South. For more than forty years, the RTRC has served the membership and other community-based organizations as a gathering place to inspire organizing and action for a peoples' movement for economic and social justice.

The Federation has title to 850 acres on three separate tracts of land including the 375-acre tract where the Center itself is located. The RTRC tract is bordered on the east by 2,000 feet along the Tombigbee River, the pathway of the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway. At the Center, we have offices, a dormitory that can house up to 70 people overnight, a multi-purpose building, demonstration farming sites, forestry and agroforestry demonstration projects, a silvopasture goat herd, nature trail, two fishing lakes and other features.

The RTRC is the base of operations for our Alabama State Association of Cooperatives outreach and technical assistance staff. A dozen or more full time staff, VISTA volunteers, student interns and others work from the Center providing training, technical assistance and advocacy services to our membership in Alabama and surrounding states.

The Center has a variety of farm, forest and agroforestry demonstration sites including an irrigated garden, plasticulture, an organic youth garden, raised beds, a hoop house and other demonstration plots.

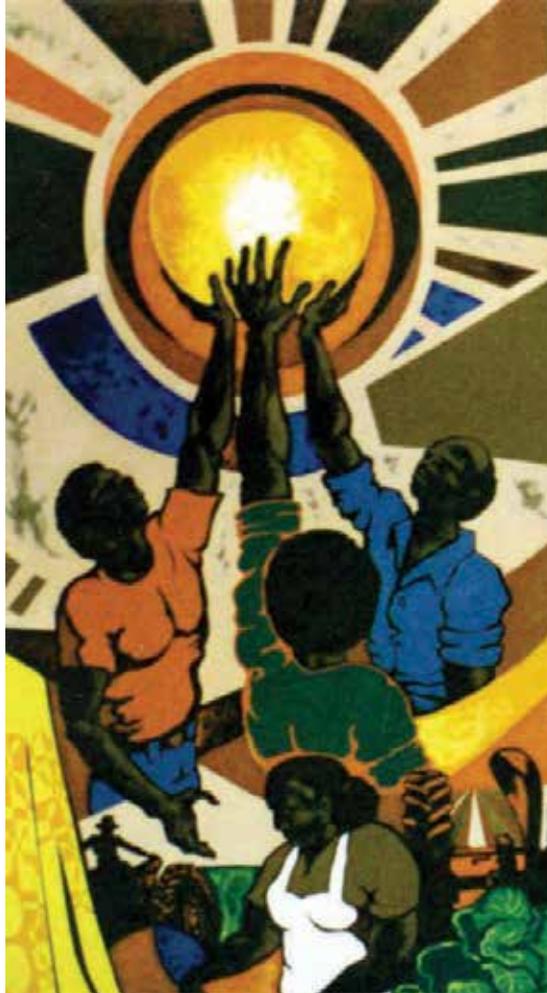
In the last few years, the Federation has been managing and developing its timber resources to demonstrate various agroforestry practices, including non-timber forest products like medicinal plants, mushrooms, pine straw and other products. The Federation selectively cuts timber on two of its tracts to make way for replanting Long Leaf Pine, the natural pine in coastal sandy loam soils. With assistance from the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service

(NRCS) EQUIP conservation program, the Federation contracted with a local African-American forestry services firm to do land preparation and planting of 50 acres of Long Leaf Pine and 70 acres of Loblolly Pine on the eastern part of the RTRC land. The trees planted in 2015 are growing well and will develop to provide a demonstration of different management practices, wildlife habitat, growth and sales potential of different types of timber and non-timber products. More alley cropping and silvopasture demonstrations will also be established.

A small ten-acre silvopasture research station is maintained on the Training Center land and utilized for research by the Alabama Agricultural Land Grant Alliance (AALGA) consisting of the three state land grant universities: Alabama A&M, Tuskegee and Auburn. Tuskegee and Alabama A&M have been conducting research for the past three years on optimal stocking rates for goats in silvopasture areas. The Federation's role is to

invite local farmers to view the research and demonstration plots as well as hold workshops to explain and communicate the findings to farmers in the area.

The RTRC also serves as a meeting place for Federation activities and member groups in the area. The Alabama State Association of Cooperatives, Southeast Goat Producers Co-op (SoGoCo), a youth forestry work camp with Alabama A&M University and other co-op membership events are held at the Center each year. Twenty college students attended the Forestry work camp.



The Southern Grassroots Economic Project (SGEP), a coalition of cooperative development and community based organizations, which includes the Federation, held its CoopEcon 2014 conference at the Center in October. This conference brought together over 125 cooperative members and developers, from across the South, to focus on worker cooperatives as a means to organize working people to find alternative and more democratic and equitable ways to control their lives, livelihoods and communities. The meeting was held with simultaneous translation of all speakers from English to Spanish and Spanish to English. This was the fourth networking and training meeting sponsored by SGEP, the first was held at Highlander Center in Tennessee and the last three have been held at the Federation's RTRC in Epes. In 2015, SGEP held smaller local and regional cooperative learning and networking gatherings with the next full CoopEcon session to be held in October 2016 at the RTRC in Epes.

Many other local and more distant groups rent the Center facilities for meetings, training, family reunions, rural retreats, weddings and other activities. Among the groups hosted at the RTRC facilities recently were: Middle Tennessee State University for a retreat, Alabama A&M University forestry activities, Mississippi Coalition for Better Education for a meeting, Southern Partners Fund for a grant-making workshop and many other groups. We are looking forward to expanding, modernizing and improving the facilities of the RTRC over the next few years to better serve our members and supporters.

On August 1, 2016, Dr. Marcus Bernard of North Carolina came to Epes to assume the position of Director of the Rural Training and Research Center. He stated that he "looks forward to the challenges and struggles of this new position." John Zippert, long-time Center Director and Director of Program Operations, plans to retire to a position of a part-time adviser and supporter of RTRC staff and the Federation as a whole.

Alabama State Association of Cooperatives

The Alabama State Association of Cooperatives (ASAC) works with a dozen cooperatives and community development credit unions involving 5,000 farm and rural families in the state. The membership includes six active agricultural cooperatives, a fishing cooperative, a worker cooperative producing quilts and other sewn items: a land and housing management association, and three community development credit unions. ASAC is based at the Federation's Rural Training and Research Center and shares staff and program initiatives with the Federation.

During this program year, the ASAC received Federal funding from the USDA 2501 Outreach and Technical Assistance and Socially Disadvantaged Group Grant programs. State

support was provided by the NRCS Strikeforce Initiative for outreach, and Alabama Department of Agriculture, under the block grant Specialty Crop Program to assist the Sanokofa Youth Agriculture Project. Tuskegee University partners with ASAC in providing demonstration programs for pasture improvements for goats and vegetable production. Private funding was provided by the Daniels Foundation and the Porch Creek Band of Indians.

ASAC works closely with the Federation's Rural Training and Research Center to provide outreach, technical assistance and training opportunities for African American farmers and landowners in the western Alabama Black Belt counties. All of the target counties we are serving are also in the USDA Strikeforce area, which means they receive intensive outreach and support.

During the past year, the ASAC reached over 600 farm and rural families through community outreach meetings, farm demonstration days and one-on-one family farm visits.

- 15 eligibility workshops for farmers seeking access to various USDA program services as well as the benefits of various programs and assistance were held in the west Alabama target counties.
- 47 Alabama farm families were assisted to receive support from NRCS – EQUIP for forestry, hoop houses, fencing and other needed conservation assistance; this number includes 30 families who specifically received conservation assistance and management plans for their forestry holdings.
- 8 farmers were assisted in securing FSA micro-loans for a total of \$255,000 including purchase of farm equipment, solar irrigation systems, beef cattle and other agricultural enterprises - 8 additional micro-loan applications are pending.



Photo: On a farm in Hale County, Alabama with Mr. William "Bill" Kendrick. His program is "Cultivating A Healthier & Wealthier Alabama" with his uncle, Mr. Frank Hunter, Jr., Owner & Operator of Hunter Organic LLC, one of the few Alabama USDA Certified Organic Farmers. Their goal is to improve the quality of food, health, education and employment opportunity especially among rural poverty stricken community. The Federation was asked for assistance. In photo: Bill Kendrick, Frank Hunter, Jr., Dr. Susan Bambo, Walter Brown, and Pamela Madzima.

- 38 farm and rural families submitted applications to USDA Rural Development for assistance with loans for new housing construction (Section 502) and for housing rehabilitation (Section 504); of these, 6 were approved for \$320,000 and the rest are pending; an additional group of 12 families are working on credit remediation steps to improve their credit standing to qualify for housing loans in future application periods.

ASAC also provided direct technical assistance and support to several of our cooperative members including the South-eastern Goat Cooperative (SoGoCo) and Greene-Sumter Farmers Marketing with marketing and promotion. The cooperatives involved with the Black Belt Fruit and Vegetable Marketing and Innovation Center in Selma were assisted with planning, production and marketing assistance. The Alabama Fisheries Cooperative in south Mobile was assisted with membership training, market development and business planning.

The Federation of Greene County Employees Federal Credit Union in Eutaw, Alabama was assisted with membership development, planning, fundraising for their location on the Courthouse Square in Eutaw and other operating assistance.

Georgia

In the past year the Federation’s Georgia Field office provided outreach, education and technical assistance to approximately 408 farmers/members. These services were provided through 18 informational workshops along with meetings and newsletters. Topics covered included USDA programs, marketing, estate planning, land retention and cooperative development.

The staff worked closely with USDA personnel through close to 209 phone calls. USDA personnel also participated in Federation sponsored workshops and meetings with farmers. The objective was to make sure that as service providers, the Federation and USDA were, as much as possible, on the same page when delivering information and assistance. The goal is still to build trust among all parties so that the farmer can have confidence in the process.

Direct one-on-one assistance was provided to 258 farmers/members. This assistance was provided through office visits by Federation members/farmers and farm visits by our outreach specialist. The specialists and farmers developed individualized service plans and assistance is provided in accordance with the needs identified. The farm visits are



supplemented by telephone visits and counseling - 499 telephone counseling sessions were conducted.

By the Numbers

- 1,177 newsletters were mailed or e-mailed to farmers and members
- 830 fliers were mailed to farmers and members
- 410 farmers/members attended workshops
- 9 veteran farmers were assisted with accessing USDA programs
- 24 farm business plans were completed for operating, farm ownership and micro-loans with a total value of \$4,142,717:
 - 2 micro-loans were approved for a total of \$99,200.00
 - 5 micro-loans were denied for a total of \$190,000.00
 - 9 operating loans were approved for a total of \$1,005,699.00
 - 8 operating loans were denied for a total of \$1,766,618.00
 - 2 farm ownership loans were approved for a total of \$587,000.00
 - 1 farm ownership loan was denied for a total of \$300,000.00
 - 2 restructured loans were approved for a total of \$194,200.00
- 26 farmers signed up for NRCS, EQIP and CSP practices.
- 28 farmers were assisted with applying for Georgia Agriculture Tax Exempt cards which identifies the holder as a qualified agricultural producer and is exempt from paying Georgia taxes on farm related products.

Georgia Farmer’s Conference

We held our 33rd annual Georgia Farmers Conference in Albany, Georgia in February 2016. More than 300 farmers and supporters attended. The theme was “Cooperatives: Leading,

Serving and Growing Rural Communities”. The keynote speaker was Val Dolcini, Administrator for USDA Farm Service Agency.

Photo below: Georgia farmer John Canty (rgt), a Terrell County, Georgia vegetable farmer, is holding the zucchini squash, The farmer in the back is Elisha McKenzie. John Canty has the 8 foot fence around his field to keep deer from his vegetables. Staff member Cathy Kendrick (lft) is performing a site visit on the Canty farm. Canty’s vegeta-

On Thursday, nine workshops were held concurrently: NRCS Programs and Eligibility, FSA Farm Programs, Farm Loans, Rural Development, Cooperative Development, Southern Cooperatives (SOCO) the Regional Marketing System, Estate Planning, Heir Property and Risk Management. Friday morning, a USDA panel discussion on Crops & Markets Outlook was held. After speaking, Val Dolcini held an open dialogue with farmers. Members/farmers also displayed and sold many of their value-added products.

Mississippi Association of Cooperatives

Currently, the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC) consists of twenty-two cooperatives and three associate cooperatives. The Attala County Self-Help Cooperative hosted this year's Annual Meeting in Kosciusko, Mississippi. Representative Robert G. Clarke, former Mississippi Speaker of the House, was this year's guest speaker.

Funding

We received a \$20,000 cooperative agreement from the Farm Service Agency and \$199,000 from the Rural Cooperative Grant Program. We received \$150,000 from the Kellogg Foundation for the "Project for a Healthy Mississippi" (PHMS) and \$200,000 per year from Agro-Ecology.

Projects

MAC was the primary host this year for a two day conference at the E-Center in Jackson, Mississippi. The conference began with visiting two learning sites: Foot Prints Farms, owned by Cindy Ayers-Elliot, and Jubilee Ranch, owned by Primus and Earlene Wheeler. Both visits were very informative and inspirational. The symposium ended with several topical workshops. Latrice Hill was the guest speaker for the opening session and Hollis Watkins Muhammad was the honored luncheon guest speaker on that Friday. There were 75 people in attendance, including, Alcorn State University Extension and Small Farms Agri-Business Center NRCS, FSA, Forestry Commission, Wildlife and Fishery, and Risk Management personnel.

Cooperative Development/MCCD

During 2015–2016, the Mississippi Center for Cooperative Development (MCCD) assisted 15 groups with cooperative education (101 and Board training) and provided technical assistance, such as strategic planning, and market develop-

ment. A total of 50 women were assisted with business plan development along with strategic planning. A total of 375 were impacted.

2015-2016 Rural Center Business Development

37 Training Seminars/workshops conducted:

- 3 Basic Cooperative Development, Coop 101
- 5 Board of Directors training
- 11 Strategic Planning Sessions
- 14 Marketing Workshops, RCDG & (Farm to School)
- 1 Symposium
- 3 Field Days

New Cooperatives/ Groups Identified

- Assisted in organizing the following 2 cooperatives: *Jubilee Ranch LLC and Delta Community Farms*
- Participated in the "Cooperation Jackson Cooperative Conference" in 2015

Project for a Healthy Mississippi

The Project offers information about and offers healthy locally grown food to Mississippi school children.

Public Schools

- Hinds County Public Schools:
 - 3 schools (680 students)
 - Sales of greens and sweet potatoes*
- Attala County Public Schools:
 - 2 schools (250 students)
 - Built greenhouse on site and introduced fruits and vegetables to students as healthy alternatives*
- Forrest County Public Schools:
 - 7 schools (800 students)
 - Introduced vegetables to students*

Private or Charter Schools/ Institutions

- 3 Private schools (285 students)
 - Sold over 1500 pounds of watermelon*
- 8 Charter schools (Louisiana) (2500 students)
 - Sold over 1000 pounds of watermelon*

Two Colleges

- University of Mississippi and Alcorn State University (400 students)
 - Sold collards, squash, and corn, watermelon*



2015 Agriculture/NASS Workshop in Mississippi

Agro-ecology

The Farm worker Association of Florida, in collaboration with the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, the Rural Coalition, La Via Campesina North America, and allies, are utilizing agro-ecology as a vehicle to connect farmworkers and farmers in the justice movements internationally, and to engage them in the process that reawakens agricultural heritage; utilizes shared practice, participatory research and experimentation; and examines socio-economic models of production that are community-based. At its core, this collaboration incorporates the contributions of Black and Brown women and youth.

The significance of Agro-ecology for indigenous community farm workers and Black farmers in the Southeast is defined



Denver Winston
(Ben Burkett's granddaughter)
"Our future rural leader"

by a framework that is rooted in a Campesina model of learning. It supports reclaiming traditional and ancestral knowledge which serves as the foundation for social and ecological transformation. It further incorporates the politics and history of migration, economy, and small-scale agriculture with a clear understanding that: *Industrial agriculture and U.S. Trade policies have forced people to abandon their traditional ways of growing and providing*

food for their families and communities.

Mississippi Agriculture Mediation Program (MAMP)

The funding for MAMP was approved by the USDA's Agriculture Mediation Program for the past year. Three FSA mediation cases were held, and ten Rural Development cases. In 2015-2016 the Mediation Program saved eight homes, \$190,199 in equipment and more than 150 acres of land.

South Carolina

South Carolina State Association (SCSA) is focusing on the following counties: Beaufort, Charleston, Clarendon, Florence, Georgetown, Hampton, Jasper, Orangeburg, Richland, and Williamsburg Counties. Resources such as NRCS, FSA, and Rural Development were just a few of the programs offered throughout the year. Due to a damaging hurricane, the Federation had to target most of its assistance to hurricane recovery for its members. SCSA partnered with Farm

Aid to provide assistance to farmers throughout the state in need of assistance with hurricane related damage.

FSC/LAF South Carolina State Association and Farm Aid were able to provide grants to sixty farms in the amount of \$500.00 each to aide in their recovery efforts.

Letter from a South Carolina Farmer

Hi everyone, and Happy New Year!

I wanted to reach out and say thank you one more time for all your work on the SC disaster grants. We were able to get them out the week before Christmas, and they were received in time for the holidays. I have received some thank you cards and letters, and I wanted to share what people have said:

"I cannot tell you how surprised and thrilled I was to find your check in my mail box on Christmas Eve! It truly made my spirits leap for joy and helped to make this a wonderful holiday. I plan to use these funds to buy groceries well into the New Year. God bless you all and please thank Willie Nelson for his part in keeping Farm Aid going. Thanks again!"

"I received your check and I appreciate the funds very much. We have had a very difficult year just the last two days we have received over three inches of rain. We will not harvest half of our cotton crop this year. Water is still in our fields. Our grades are not the best. Please keep all farmers in your prayers. Again, thank you for your aid checks, and may you and your family have a merry Christmas and a blessed new year."

*Thank you again for all the work you do for family farmers!
Jennie*

Outreach Activities and Results

- 30 farm visits and calls were made to farmers and landowners
- 2 informational workshops were held with farmers and landowners on USDA programs
- 4 farmers markets are established in Kingstree (Williamsburg County)
- 2 cooperative development trainings were held for Global Producers and for AXIOM Farms

Applications

Farm Aid: Sixty (60) farmers' submitted applications for hurricane relief grants.

Photo: Ben Burkett, Mississippi farmer and State Director of the Federation's Mississippi State office, with Denver Winston, his 1 year old granddaughter. Denver's mother, Darnella Burkett-Winston, is the Coordinator of Project for a Healthy Mississippi at the Federation's Mississippi Office.



Sustainable Forestry & Land Retention Program

Land Retention Initiatives

The Federation's nationally recognized African-American land retention program continues to serve as an innovative model for other organizations that work in this area. The Land Assistance Fund implements land retention projects to educate and assist landowners with land tenure problems. Chief among these problems is heir property ownership. Heir property owners in rural areas usually lack the financial resources to access legal and/or non-legal resources that offer solutions to heir property problems. Subsequently, these landowners never develop a long term strategy for securing their land tenure.

The Land Assistance Fund provided direct assistance to over 65 families this year. We also responded to over 75 phone or web-based requests for information or assistance with land retention questions. Our work has impacted nearly 4,000 acres of land. The Federation has specifically assisted landowners by conducting 10 family presentations/meetings, 6 Outreach and Education Workshops, and 3 Wills Clinics. Thirty landowners received a simple will, durable power of attorney, and/or living will at the free Wills Clinics.

The Land Assistance Fund provided outreach and education on heir property, farm succession planning and estate planning to over 600 farmers and ranchers at meetings and conferences throughout the year. One new land retention initiative in the Federation's diffusion of innovation strategy includes landowners who serve as Land Retention Ambassadors. Land Retention Ambassadors lead peer-to-peer learning and community learning activities at the Federation's meetings and conferences. The ultimate objective is to build a network of Landowner Ambassadors who can share their successful land retention strategies and provide support for other landowners. Randall Hildreth, a land retention ambassador, was selected to participate in the USDA's AG Outlook Forum (Land Tenure Panel) in Washington, DC in February 2016.

Our Sustainable Forestry and Land Retention Program is a regional effort with a comprehensive strategy for land retention across the South and is a key component of our land retention work. Since 2013, the Federation has partnered with the U.S. Forestry Endowment for Forestry and Communities, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the USDA Forest Service, and the Alabama Forestry Commission to implement the Sustainable Forestry and African American Land Retention Program (SFLR) in West Alabama.

SFLR offers the opportunity to 1) educate project participants as well as their communities on the role sustainable forestry can play in creating intergenerational wealth, 2) show a successful forestry management plan can help reverse the trend of African-American land loss by making sure that the land is an asset rather than a liability and 3) create a model for helping to solve the problem of heir property which is arguably one of the main contributors to the loss of African-American land.

The focus of this project is to develop landowner support strategies that will increase income and asset value from Black-owned forestland, thus preserving the family and community asset of land ownership. The Federation's project team, including a Registered Forester and an Attorney, has assisted landowners in increasing the value of their land by developing forest management plans, addressing heir property issues and helping to qualify landowners for conservation programs with the Natural Resource Conservation Service. To date, over 80 landowners have received forestry and/or legal services under the program.

The Federation was refunded for Phase 2 of the SFLR project. This support presented an opportunity to continue to bring forestry to the forefront of the Federation's mission by supporting our core services in cooperative development, land retention and advocacy. In Phase 2, the Federation's outreach strategy is focusing on supporting forest landowners with technical assistance, while increasing access to cost share and conservation incentives programs which enhance land value. We are also focusing on the development of forest-related income producing enterprises. This outreach strategy inherently includes a goal of creating a trusted network of consulting foresters and forestry service contractors to assist Alabama landowners in implementing forestry practices including site prep, reforestation, timber stand improvement, harvesting and timber sales. The project forester is managing the implementation of forestry management practices for landowners who have received CAP plans. Additionally, the Project forester is completing forest management plans, and providing information, education and training to landowners during one-on-one site visits.

The Federation is partnering with Tuskegee University's 1890 Enterprise Project (funded by US Forest Service) to

support forest health and productivity for small landowners. As a result of this partnership, a joint summer internship in forestry was facilitated by the Federation and the Limited Resource Landowner Education and Assistance Network (LRLEAN). Terence Jackson, a Tuskegee University student has spent the summer working in Epes, Alabama with Alabama forestry landowners to educate them on forest health including actions to abate impacts of species, fire, and disease, while learning and demonstrating forest health management.

The Federation also partners with Southern University Law Center to identify law students who have a strong interest in public interest law and working with African American landowners to support the outcomes of SFLR. Walter Brown, returned for his second year in the Federation's Summer Legal Internship Program.

Seasonal High Tunnel Initiative

For the past four years in Cleveland, Ohio, the Federation has partnered with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), with the support of Congresswoman Marcia L Fudge's office (OH-11). As a result of this partnership, a total of 76 hoop houses have been built, with 16 applications pending awaiting approval.

Due to the high success rate of this project, a "Southern Regional High Tunnel Initiative" has been established in the urban areas of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, and North Carolina.

International Cooperative Economic Development

The Federation continues to be involved in international cooperative economic development and currently has projects and/or relationships in Haiti and Cuba. Our work is centered around direct technical assistance, cooperative and credit union development, farmer-to-farmer and cooperative-to-cooperative exchange programs.

In Haiti, the Federation is also consistently interested in and is focused on creating a sister-to-sister organizational relationship with a federation of small cocoa producers, developing value added processing capacity in Haiti and cooperative-to-cooperative marketing relationships between member cooperatives in Haiti and the US South.

In Cuba, the focus has been about learning and exchanges between small farmers, cooperatives and partners interested in sustainable agriculture, cooperative development and fair trade. The Federation has a long standing relationship with an "Association of Small Producers" in Cuba and is also working with Tuskegee University and their Cuban counterparts to establish a university-to-university exchange



focusing on research, small farmers, cooperatives and sustainable production.

The ultimate goal of the Federation's international cooperative economic development efforts and work with small farmers, cooperatives

and rural communities all over the world is to establish a network of limited resource farmers and cooperatives that are engaged in fair trade and cultural exchanges.

USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service Project (NASS)

In 2015, with the cooperative agreement between the Federation and the NASS, the Federation outreached to its offices throughout the south about the upcoming Agriculture Census in 2017. In this outreach there were meetings with farmers in Mississippi, South Carolina, Alabama and Georgia. Information about Black farmers was gleaned from the 2012 Census to provide for farmers an update of the farming data overall and to stress the importance, for one, of the agriculture census for Congressional determination of funding to the states for agriculture programs. Information about the 2012 Census was also distributed nationally and on the Federation's website.

Federation and Honduras Group Win 2015 Food Sovereignty Prize



The "Food Sovereignty Prize" is awarded every year by the U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance. In 2015, the Federation was honored to win the prize along with the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras. Cornelius Blanding of the Federation and Miriam Miranda of the Black Fraternal

Order of Honduras were given the prize on October 14, 2015 in Des Moines, Iowa.

Photos: (above) Cornelius Blanding with an urban organic farmer in Cuba. (below) Miriam Miranda from Honduras and Cornelius Blanding receiving the Food Sovereignty Prize in 2015.

Funders 2015-2016

Financials

Alabama Forestry Commission
Alabama Power Company
Alabama State Association of Cooperatives
Andrew J. Young Foundation, Inc.
AT&T
Black Belt Foundation
Capital Impact CHS Foundation
CoBank
Cooperative Business International (CBI)
E. M. Gitt Foundation
Farm Aid
Farm Credit Council
Fund For Democratic Communities, Inc.
Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation
Kurz Family Foundation
Mary Reynolds Babcock Foundation, Inc.
Mississippi Association of Cooperatives
National Cooperative Bank
National Cooperative Business Association/CLUSA
Nationwide Insurance
Robert K. Morris Foundation
Rockefeller Foundation
SARE SHARING Inc
Georgia Department of Public Health
The Daniel Foundation
Tides Foundation
Tuskegee University
University of Georgia Foundation
US Endowment for Forestry & Communities
USDA/ Rural Development
USDA/Agricultural Marketing Services
USDA/APHIS
USDA/Forest Service
USDA/NASS
USDA/NRCS
USDA/OASCR
USDA/Office of Advocacy and Outreach
Winky Foundation

Photo above: Mississippi collards

Federation Of Southern Cooperatives/ Land Assistance Fund's Combined Statement Of Financial Position (Unaudited) August 31, 2015

ASSETS

Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$30,155
Investments	546,361
Receivables:	
Grants and contracts	780,743
Loans	4,259
	<hr/>
Accounts Receivable, net	4,259
Travel advances	74,707
Prepaid Insurance	17,322
	<hr/>

Total Current Assets 1,453,549

Property and equipment, at cost

Land	180,988
Land Improvements	57,608
Parking Lot	12,300
Buildings	1,021,103
Building Improvements	319,133
Equipment	535,320

Less: accumulated depreciation (1,736,008)

New Property and Equipment 390,443

Other Assets	
Deferred Charges	100
	<hr/>

Total Other Assets 100

TOTAL ASSETS \$1,844,092

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

LIABILITIES

Account Payable	\$292,794
Accrued Leave	21,973
Accrued Expenses	253,315
Other Liabilities	63,595

Notes Payable:

Current	
Non-current	103,391
	<hr/>

Total Liabilities 735,068

NET ASSETS

Unrestricted	862,771
Temporarily Restricted	246,268
	<hr/>

Total Net Assets 1,109,039

TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS \$1,844,107

In Memoriam



Donald Alexander, aka ALDOX (1951-2016) was a noted artist from Lafayette, Louisiana who worked as an artist, designer and printer at the Federation's Rural Training and Research Center (RTRC), in Epes from 1971-1976. He illustrated

many of the early publications of the Federation and painted many pictures at the RTRC including the iconic mural on the kitchen wall at the Center.

Rosemary "Rose" Blount Barnes

(1957-2016) began her life's journey in Atlanta. After having married a soldier in the army with whom she bore two sons - which she noted as her greatest achievements - she lived in Germany, Texas and Oklahoma. Since the mid-1990's Rose both volunteered and worked as an administrative support professional with the Federation. Her diligence, kindness and professionalism enabled her to meet and exceed all expectations with the utmost precision.



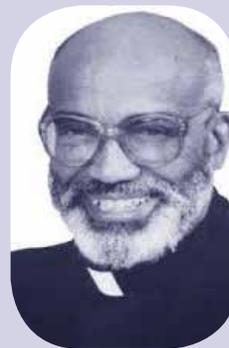
Roberta Amerson Griggs

(1951-2015) worked with the Federation, starting as a teenage member of the Panola Land Buying Association (PLBA). Her's was one of the families evicted from the Parker Plantation in north Sumter County for suing the plantation owner for a fair share of the ASCS

cotton diversion payment and registering to vote. Roberta served as a VISTA volunteer with the Federation in the 1970's and served as the Secretary of the PLBA Housing Development Corporation for many years until her untimely death.

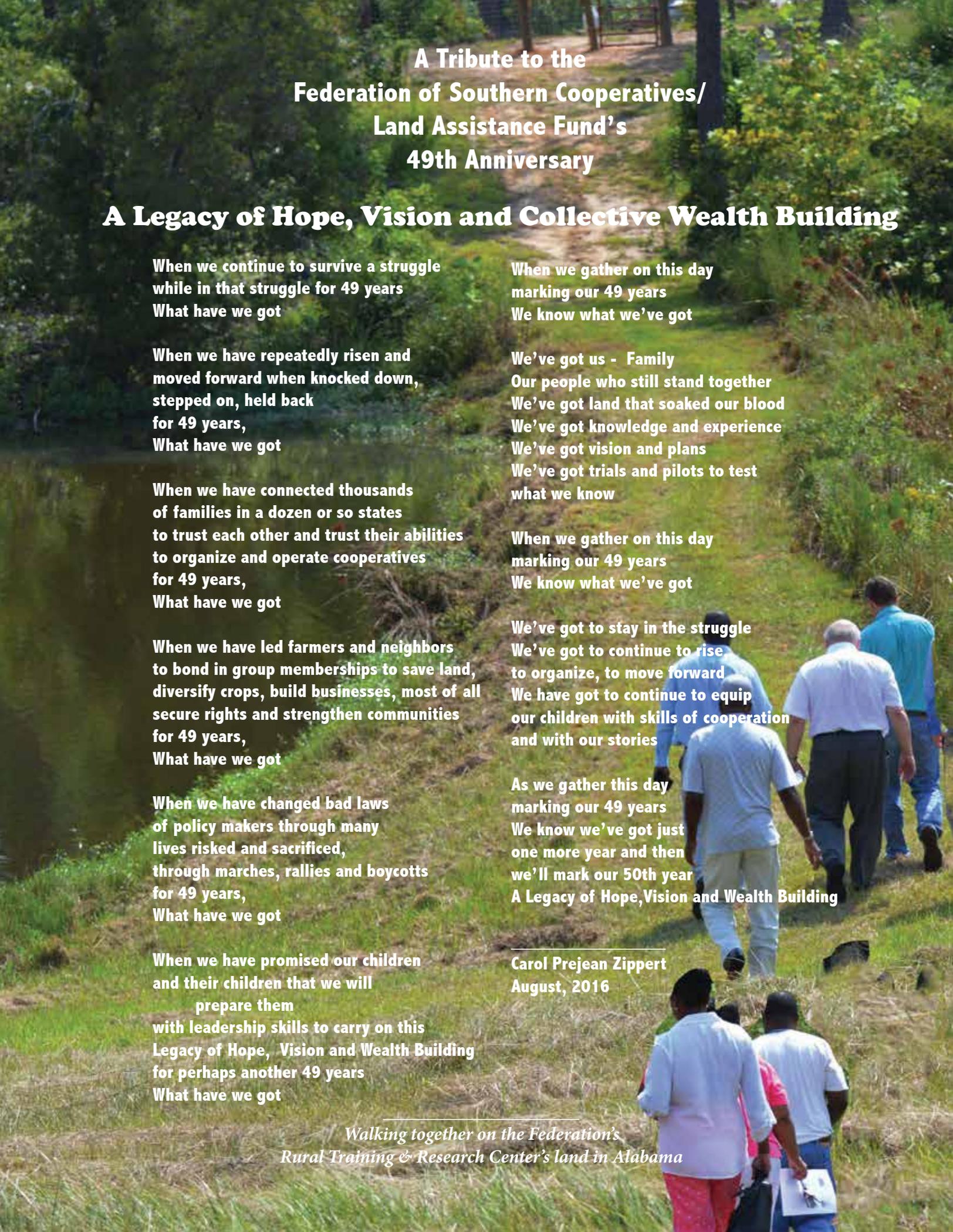


James Hill (1962-2016) walked the road of sustainable agriculture through the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) program. James had no shortage of warm greetings....a kind smile....a firm handshake. The lives he touched - ever-growing; the knowledge he imparted - immense. Originally from South Carolina, James worked at South Carolina State University as an agriculture marketing specialist, an agriculture program coordinator and a water quality program manager. After working at the Federation and several very successful careers, James settled into the perfect role for him in 2004, as the Southern Region SARE 1890 Land Grant Liaison, in the Office of Limited Research Farmer and Minority Outreach on the Campus of Fort Valley State University. James was responsible for 13 Southeastern States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. In this position, James would literally do remarkable things to change the lives of others.



Father A. J. McKnight, C.S.Sp (1927-2016) was a Black Catholic priest (Congregation of the Holy Spirit) originally from Brooklyn, and worked in southwest Louisiana to organize many of the cooperatives and credit unions in the 1960's that helped establish the Federation of Southern Cooperatives. McKnight served as Director of

the Southern Cooperative Development Program and later the Southern Cooperative Development Fund, a lending agency for cooperatives and community development projects across the South. McKnight was active in preserving Zydeco music in southwest Louisiana by helping to sponsor an annual Zydeco Festival in Plaisance and later Lebeau, Louisiana. He also served on the Board of the National Cooperative Bank and was inducted into the National Cooperative Business Association's "Co-op Hall of Fame" in 1987.

A group of people, including men and women, are walking away from the camera on a dirt path that winds through a lush, green field. They are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire, such as white shirts and trousers. The path is flanked by tall grasses and dense foliage, creating a sense of a rural or agricultural setting. The overall atmosphere is one of a community gathering or a shared journey.

**A Tribute to the
Federation of Southern Cooperatives/
Land Assistance Fund's
49th Anniversary**

A Legacy of Hope, Vision and Collective Wealth Building

**When we continue to survive a struggle
while in that struggle for 49 years
What have we got**

**When we have repeatedly risen and
moved forward when knocked down,
stepped on, held back
for 49 years,
What have we got**

**When we have connected thousands
of families in a dozen or so states
to trust each other and trust their abilities
to organize and operate cooperatives
for 49 years,
What have we got**

**When we have led farmers and neighbors
to bond in group memberships to save land,
diversify crops, build businesses, most of all
secure rights and strengthen communities
for 49 years,
What have we got**

**When we have changed bad laws
of policy makers through many
lives risked and sacrificed,
through marches, rallies and boycotts
for 49 years,
What have we got**

**When we have promised our children
and their children that we will
prepare them
with leadership skills to carry on this
Legacy of Hope, Vision and Wealth Building
for perhaps another 49 years
What have we got**

**When we gather on this day
marking our 49 years
We know what we've got**

**We've got us - Family
Our people who still stand together
We've got land that soaked our blood
We've got knowledge and experience
We've got vision and plans
We've got trials and pilots to test
what we know**

**When we gather on this day
marking our 49 years
We know what we've got**

**We've got to stay in the struggle
We've got to continue to rise
to organize, to move forward
We have got to continue to equip
our children with skills of cooperation
and with our stories**

**As we gather this day
marking our 49 years
We know we've got just
one more year and then
we'll mark our 50th year
A Legacy of Hope, Vision and Wealth Building**

**Carol Prejean Zippert
August, 2016**

*Walking together on the Federation's
Rural Training & Research Center's land in Alabama*