

**FFA National Convention  
Agri-Entrepreneur Award Breakfast  
Indianapolis, Indiana  
October 26, 2006**

**Thomas C. Dorr  
Under Secretary for Rural Development  
Remarks**

**(Mr. Dorr was introduced by Kent Schescke, Senior Director,  
Partnership Division, National FFA)**

**Thank you, Kent, for that very kind introduction. General Mills has probably trademarked the phrase “breakfast of champions,” but I don’t think General Mills will mind me using it here.**

**The 10 finalists we are honoring this morning are indeed champions. On behalf of President Bush, Secretary Johanns, and a great team at USDA Rural Development, congratulations on a very fine achievement.**

**As you probably remember, Albert Einstein once said that the most powerful force in the universe was compound interest. In a tongue-in-cheek kind of way we all understand his point.**

**In the same spirit, let me say today that entrepreneurship is even more powerful than compound interest.**

**Entrepreneurship isn't a simple thing. It's creative. It's dynamic. It's complex. It actually consists of many parts: vision ... initiative ... discipline ... planning and execution ... integrity in one's dealings with others ...determination ... resiliency ...**

**... And last but certainly not least, faith and courage: faith that we CAN change the hand that we're dealt, and the courage to give it a try.**

**Entrepreneurship is being a good steward of one's time and talents. It is one of the things that moves the world. Some examples are legendary:**

- I don't want to start an inter-denominational quarrel here this morning, but I've always driven green tractors myself -- and I like the fact that John Deere started in a blacksmith shop.**
- Of course, the red tractors run back to Cyrus McCormick, another farm boy who built a business from scratch.**

- **That's almost ancient history nowadays, but more recently Bill Hewlett and David Packard started in a garage with an initial investment of \$538.**
- **Bill Gates and Paul Allen started Microsoft in their dorm rooms. Sam Walton started with a run-down Ben Franklin store. J.W. Marriott started with a root beer stand. The list goes on and on.**

**But in the final analysis, building a big company isn't the real measure of success. I'm sure you already know that. Being your own boss, doing well for your family, doing right by your customers, employees, and community – those are the real tests.**

**The fact is, every small town ... every healthy city neighborhood ... every thriving community, urban or rural, is built on good jobs made possible by entrepreneurs not very different from the young people in this room.**

**We see this every day at USDA Rural Development. Our mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in rural**

**communities. We are essentially an investment bank with a current portfolio of \$93 billion. We invest in rural infrastructure, housing, community facilities, and businesses. We serve rural America.**

**That's a big place. Rural America covers three quarters of the land area of the United States. It is home to 60 million people. It contains areas of chronic poverty as well as some of the fastest growing places in America.**

**Even after recognizing that diversity, however, there is a riddle which is familiar to anyone involved in community or economic development.**

**The riddle is, why does one community do well, while another very similar community just a few miles away continues to struggle?**

**As we look carefully at that question, again and again the same answer comes up. It is the caliber of local leadership – business and community leadership -- which consistently makes the difference.**

**This means community and political leaders who will face up to problems rather than ignoring them and hoping they'll go away. It**

**means community and political leaders who can look beyond the next election and lay a foundation for the next generation.**

**And it means local entrepreneurs with the vision, energy, and skills to build a better future, not just for themselves but for everyone around them.**

**FFA and the Agri- Entrepreneurship Program are in the business of developing that kind of leadership, and we are very proud to be one of the sponsors of this important initiative.**

**The future of rural America is bright. 10 of the reasons are sitting with us this morning. It is a high privilege to be with you today. Again, congratulations on a job well done, and good luck in your future endeavors. Thank you.**