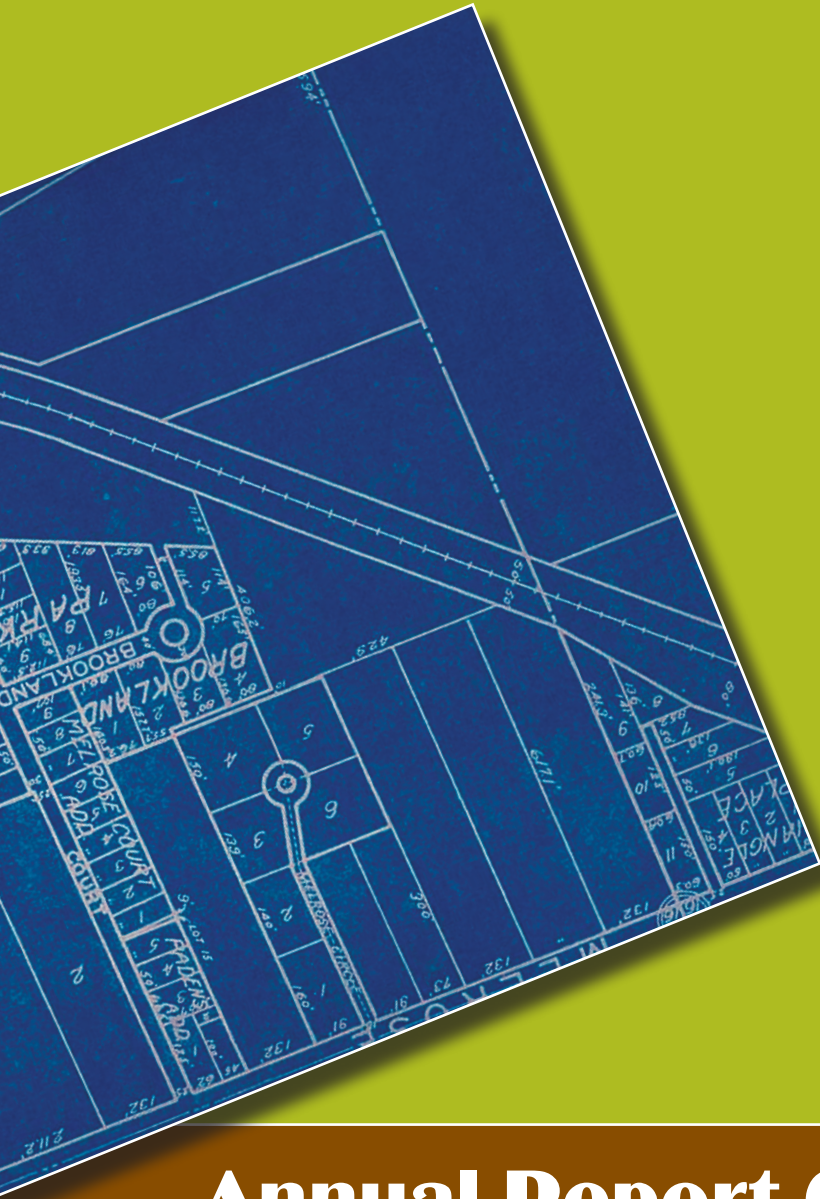


From Blueprint to Action



Annual Report 08



Southern Rural Development Center



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During the summer of 2007, the SRDC unveiled its new strategic plan with the publication *Blueprint for the Rural South*. This document showcases three key priorities that are commanding the Center's attention over the course of the next five years. The three areas of work unveiled in the *Blueprint* were as follows:

- Fostering Civic-Minded Communities,
- Building Economically Vibrant Communities, and
- Expanding Opportunities for Distressed and Low-Wealth Communities.

While these priorities appear to be straightforward, in reality, they constitute complex, challenging issues for our region's land-grant universities. How do we strengthen the involvement of local residents in guiding, deliberating and acting on community priorities? How do we help rural communities embrace a set of economic development activities that are viable, balanced, equitable, and sustainable? And how do we help communities focus attention on the chronic challenges that have been part of the fabric of the rural South for so many decades – such as poverty and food insecurity? It's to these core issues that the bulk of the Center's time, energy, and resources will be dedicated over the course of the next several months.

Our 2008 Annual Report highlights some new efforts we've launched that align with our three priorities. While they represent works in progress, these new activities showcase the initial steps we have taken over the past year to move our five-year strategic blueprint **from plan to action**. At the same time, we offer valuable insights on the many programs, projects and activities that we continued in 2008 to help advance the rural development research and Extension outreach efforts of our region's 29 land-grant institutions.

In light of the fiscal stresses that Southern land-grant schools are likely to face in 2009, the SRDC is recommitting itself to the creation of multi-state, multi-institutional research and Extension teams that can tackle the tough community development challenges facing our region. Such collaboration is vital to the efficient and effective use of our collective resources. It is during these difficult times that the SRDC must strive to demonstrate its value to our region's land-grant universities and partners.

In closing, we offer our sincere thanks to all of our land-grant university colleagues and SRDC partners who have guided our work in 2008 and who will play a crucial role in shaping our activities in 2009.

Bo Beaulieu, Director and Professor

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bo Beaulieu". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Year in Review 2008

From Blueprint to Action



January 7-9, 2008
 Clemson, South Carolina
 Business Retention and Expansion training offered by the SRDC.

February 2008
 Washington, D.C.
 Entrepreneurship Community of Practice eXtension Web site officially launched at the National Agricultural Outlook Conference.

March 2008
 New SRDC Web site launched.

June 4-6, 2008
 Penn State University
 SRDC co-hosted the "Youth Entrepreneurship Symposium" with the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development.

May 28-29, 2008
 Baton Rouge, LA
 "Expanding Viable Opportunities for Low-Wealth Communities in the Delta: A Regional Summit" co-sponsored by the SRDC.

SERA-37

The New Hispanic South

February 11-13, 2008
 Atlanta, Georgia
 SERA-37
 The SRDC organized the inaugural meeting of the SERA-37 team.

March 2008

 Farm Foundation provided 11 scholarships for Extension CD educators to attend the SARE Conference.



November 2007
 The SRDC showcased RIDGE projects from 2000-2007 with six new publications.

March 2008
 "Internet Strategies to Improve Farm Business Management" e-commerce curriculum authored by Sarah Roth, Jeffrey Hyde and Ellie Hollobaugh Vranich debuted.



June 2008
 A redesign of the "Connecting Rural Communities" e-commerce curricula developed by William Shuffstall, Sheila Sager, Rae Montgomery, & Dana Noonan was released.





August 2008
Sustainable Community Innovation
Grants Program RFP announced.



October 28-29, 2008
Hattiesburg, Mississippi
The SRDC hosted a second
Women in Agriculture Conference.



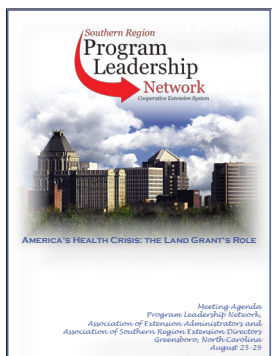
July 20-22, 2008
Galveston, Texas
The SRDC offered
a second Business
Retention and
Expansion training.



September 2008
Regional Rural Development Centers
received a U.S. Economic
Development Administration Grant
for the "Know Your Region" Initiative.

October 2008
New National e-Commerce
Extension Initiative's Webinar
series kicked off with five
Webinars scheduled from
October through December.

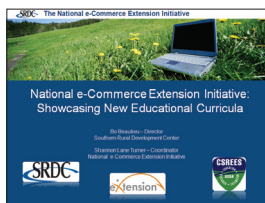
August 25-29, 2008
Greensboro, North Carolina
"America's Health Crisis:
The Land-Grant's Role"
Southern Region Program
Leadership Network
Annual Conference
gathered 232 Extension
personnel.



October 14-15, 2008
Raleigh, North Carolina
"Bridging the Culture Divide:
Inclusive Extension Programming for
Latinos" workshop held.



August 2008
Five new Research
Innovation and
Development
Grants in
Economics (RIDGE)
grants funded.



October 2008
The National e-Commerce
Extension Initiative Mini
Grants RFP announced.



September 23-25, 2008
Grenada, Mississippi
Women in Agriculture Conference
hosted by the SRDC.

Fostering Civic-Minded Communities

Expanding Engagement, Building Leadership and Bringing Government to the People



Highlights:



7-8 Partnerships with
Kettering and
Everyday Democracy



9 Bridging the Culture
Divide: Addressing The
New Hispanic South

Fostering Civic-Minded Communities: Expanding the Voices of Local People

*It was just a few years ago that Robert Putnam pronounced in his book *Bowling Alone* that the civic fabric of American communities was declining. His research proved to be a wake-up call for those concerned about the future vitality of their localities. Without question, land-grant universities in the South have long recognized the importance of building the leadership skills of local people and as a result, have designed and delivered leadership development programs in countless communities across their respective states. Despite these important programmatic investments, the reality is that too many people still are sitting on the sidelines with regard to guiding the direction of their communities.*

Is it apathy? Is it the hustle and bustle of everyday life that makes it tough for people to participate in in-depth leadership programs? Or is it uncertainty about how best to influence the priority activities of their localities? No doubt, the reasons are many, but the Center's strategic Blueprint for the Rural South, released in July 2007, made it clear that the hundreds of stakeholders offering input into the Center's new plan were pleading for the land-grant system to help them find new ways to have an influence on the decisions being made about their communities.

Over the past year, the SRDC has taken some important steps to advance the capacity of land-grant universities to expand opportunities for Southerners to be heard. Furthermore, it has launched efforts to help build bridges among the region's diverse populations. All of the efforts being showcased are works in progress, but they are indicative of the proactive efforts the Center is launching, in partnership with its land-grant colleagues and rural development partners, to nurture the growth of civic-minded communities. Highlights from new initiatives launched in FY08 are featured in this section.

Tapping the Knowledge and Expertise of Democracy-Building Organizations

Developing partnerships with the Kettering Foundation and Everyday Democracy

If the SRDC had any hope of effectively promoting civic activeness in communities across the rural South, it knew that it would have to tap the knowledge and experiences of organizations that having a strong track record of supporting civic discourse.

Over the past year, the Center has strengthened its working ties with the *Kettering Foundation* and *Everyday Democracy*. The *Kettering Foundation* has a long history of exploring the question of "what makes democracy work?" As a nonprofit research foundation, it has explored deliberative decision-making, paying special attention to the factors that contribute to, or inhibit the involvement of, local people and organizations in public deliberation. *Everyday Democracy* (formally called the *Study Circles Resource Center*) is committed to expanding opportunities for people and organizations to think, talk and work together on solving community problems.



During the past year, the SRDC has been an active participant in a variety of working groups organized by the *Kettering Foundation*. The one having the greatest potential for our nation's land-grant system is an initiative being guided by Kettering's Cooperative Extension Working Group.

Under the leadership of Frank Fear (Michigan State University) and Scott Peters (Cornell University), the SRDC Director Bo Beaulieu is serving on a team of administrators and faculty that is working to secure funding to position the nation's land-grant university system to be a strong and effective institutional agent of democracy, with public deliberation serving as a cornerstone of its civic engagement work. The hope is that funding will be secured in FY09 to launch this ambitious effort in a select number of land-grant institutions.



New Pilot Effort on Public Deliberation Designed

The SRDC's achievements to date with the Kettering Foundation and Everyday Democracy

The SRDC has launched an important partnership with the *Kettering Foundation* and *Everyday Democracy* to pursue an applied research and capacity-building program to empower local citizens through community-based deliberation. With goals of advancing programs for citizens to share their voices and pursue actions on vital issues, the SRDC has taken steps to launch a pilot effort in a small number of communities. To date, the Center has:

- Recruited a 12-person team of Extension and Research faculty in the South who has agreed to work with the SRDC in designing the step-by-step process for implementing a pilot effort.
- Hosted a meeting of this land-grant team and representatives of *Kettering Foundation* and *Everyday Democracy* in Atlanta, Georgia where three subgroups were organized – the first is designing the program flow and community participation criteria; the second is reviewing and finalizing the content of the curricula to be employed in pilot sites; and the third is the research team that is developing the instrumentation needed to assess the contribution that these pilot efforts make in strengthening the efforts of local citizens to share their voices, and to pursue action, on issues of importance to their communities.
- Prepared a proposal to the *Kettering Foundation* to support the work of a multi-state research team whose role will be to study the process and outcomes associated with civic-centered work in the pilot sites; and
- Garnered the support of *Everyday Democracy* to provide valuable training to land-grant colleagues in the pilot states on the basics of organizing inclusive dialogues that can help solve community problems. This important program will be officially launched in FY09.



Pursuing Research on Strategies for Strengthening Citizen-Driven Community Development in the Delta Region

Community researchers have noted how resident participation stands at the heart of community development theory. But, recent studies have shown that community initiatives that are controlled by local residents, versus those guided by a professional community-based organization, often fail to deliver the timely, tangible and community-wide impacts critical to sustaining and expanding participation. These studies point to the need to have a professional organization in place to leverage resident participation into ways that produce meaningful results and impacts. In an effort to explore this issue in the Mississippi Delta region, a team of SRDC researchers examined the nature and degree of success garnered by two distinct types of formal organizations funded to undertake “resident-driven” community development efforts in their target Delta counties.

One organization, a philanthropic foundation, sought to build on the knowledge and talents of “grassroots” residents, embracing the notion that through empowerment, these individuals could use their individual and organizational assets to affect positive changes in their local communities. The other, a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) took a more professionally managed “top-down” approach. The corps of people and organizations that it

tapped were confined largely to those who occupied key leadership positions within the local business, education, government, and civic association

sectors. In essence, the CDFI drew on the talents and resources of those who have been a more traditional part of local improvement efforts, namely those from the community’s middle and upper socioeconomic strata.

The SRDC research team found, in sum, that resident participants reported a greater sense of effectiveness and satisfaction, and exhibited more sustained participation in the case of the CDFI where the level of professionalization was much greater than the emphasis on community control. These findings support recent arguments that participatory community development initiatives would benefit from tapping the set of people, assets and resources that a highly professionalized organization is capable of bringing to the table to address issues of importance to the community. This research will appear in a future edited book being published to showcase asset-based community development efforts across the United States.



Bridging the Cultural Divide: Addressing The New Hispanic South with SERA-37



Recent research published by Robert Putnam (2007) has created quite a stir regarding the impact that the increasing ethnic and racial diversity of many communities in the United States is having on their civic health. He notes that places currently impacted by immigration are experiencing lower levels of trust, social solidarity and social capital. His findings are of concern to the SRDC given that the Hispanic population is now growing faster in the South than anywhere else in the United States.

In an effort to proactively address the challenges and opportunities that diversity brings to Southern communities, the SRDC established and launched the Southern Extension Research Activity (SERA-37) as a way of mobilizing Extension and Research faculty to focus on "The New Hispanic South." The inaugural meeting of the SERA-37 team was hosted by the Center in Atlanta, Georgia in February 2008.



The individuals comprising the SERA-37, which has now grown to 90 members strong, have established three key goals: (1) work collaboratively in understanding the challenges and opportunities associated with Latinos in the South; (2) strengthen the research, Extension outreach and public policy work being done with Latinos in our region's land-grant university system; and (3) advance educational programs and technical assistance to meet the diverse needs of our growing Latino



population. To this end the SERA-37 has established five taskforce groups:

- The **Web Site Taskforce** is creating an easy to manage Web site to spread the word about SERA-37 and facilitate communication as a group.
- The **Training Taskforce** is developing a set training workshop to help our region's land-grant university faculty and staff better understand how to work effectively with this population.
- The **Inventory Taskforce** is creating standardized instruments to evaluate programs and creating the listserv of stakeholders.
- The **Immersion Program Taskforce** is exploring potential multistate exchanges and bi-national exchanges in the region as a way to help strengthen cross-cultural understanding and cooperation.
- The **Research Taskforce** is identifying next steps for research to be done with Latinos in the South.

The SRDC and the SERA-37 co-hosted their first conference October 14-15, 2008 in Raleigh, North Carolina. The workshop, attended by over 90 participants from 16 states, was designed to guide Extension educators in (1) learning about immigration trends in the Southern United States, (2) understanding implications for Extension educators, and (3) identifying promising strategies for delivering Extension programming to Latino/Hispanic audiences.



Building Economically Vibrant Communities

Building Entrepreneurial-Friendly Communities, Strengthening Existing Firms, Advancing e-Commerce, and Expanding Agriculture/Community Sustainability



Highlights:

12 Entrepreneurs and Their Communities Initiative Expands

13 The National e-Commerce Extension Initiative Launches Webinars and New Curricula

17 Business Retention and Expansion Program Trains 50



Building Economically Vibrant Communities: Advancing Economic Development Strategies

There is little doubt in the minds of local residents and leaders that the economic complexion of the rural South is changing. While agriculture and manufacturing remain vital parts of the economic health of many rural places, domestic and global forces are bringing dramatic changes to these sectors. Agriculture is becoming leaner and more efficient while low-skilled manufacturing jobs are on the decline. Though many rural places have experienced job growth over the past decade, many are in the service-producing sectors – which tend to pay lower wages and provide limited employee benefits. Adding to this problem are the rough economic times that are playing out in many parts of the rural South today, challenges that are translating into job losses in many sectors of the rural economy. So the question on the minds of many Southerners today is the following: “What economic development strategies should rural communities consider as they seek to rebuild and strengthen their economies for the long haul?”

Over the past year, the SRDC has worked closely with land-grant colleagues and rural development partners across the region and beyond to help advance economic development strategies that align with the needs and capacities of today’s rural communities. More importantly, we are seeking to facilitate economic development efforts that best align with the mission and strengths of our land-grant institutions. As such, we are pursuing those efforts that build on the internal assets of rural communities, including those designed to retain and expand existing businesses, those that unlock the entrepreneurial spirit among youth and adults, and those that promote the adoption of e-commerce for rural firms seeking to market their products or services to regional, national, and/or global markets. The following showcase some of the new and expanded efforts the SRDC pursued in FY08.

Building the Next Generation of Entrepreneurs: The Youth Entrepreneurship Initiative

In the entrepreneurship listening sessions that the SRDC hosted in the region in 2005, local participants urged the Center to tap the ingenuity and entrepreneur spirit of local youth. In response to their request, the SRDC co-sponsored with the Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development (NERCRD) the first annual Land-Grant Youth Entrepreneurship Symposium (Land-Grant YES) in June 2008. The workshop brought Extension educators and program leaders together for a face-to-face symposium focused on youth entrepreneurship best practices, research findings, and future program development.



The goals of this symposium were threefold: (1) develop and expand social capital among the educators in this area through the creation of a more formal youth entrepreneurship Extension workgroup; (2) frame a “breakthrough” project in the area of youth entrepreneurship that could be collaboratively developed by members of this group, and (3) enrich

the work of the eXtension entrepreneurship team by adding a youth component of the “Entrepreneurs and their Communities” eXtension initiative. Participants at the Youth Entrepreneurship Symposium were united in their enthusiastic responses to the material presented. The symposium attracted participants across the United States and as far away as American Samoa.

New and Improved e-Commerce Curricula Developed

Since 2003, the SRDC has served as the lead entity for the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative, an effort designed to introduce, strengthen and expand the delivery of Extension-based e-commerce programs to small businesses, governments and communities in rural America. SRDC-led investments have resulted in the development of a host of new e-commerce educational resources that Extension educators across the country are able to use for delivering high quality e-commerce programming to their customers. Furthermore, the Center has played an active role in expanding the e-commerce knowledge and skills of Extension educators.

Over the past year, the SRDC has invested in the development, review and refinement of the following e-commerce products:

- **Connecting Rural Communities:** Connecting Rural Communities is designed to help rural communities expand their access to the Internet. Developed by William Shuffstall, Pennsylvania State Cooperative Extension; Sheila Sager, Pennsylvania State University; Rae Montgomery, University of Minnesota Extension Service; and Dana Noonan, this guide is designed to enhance the use and adoption of information technology tools and infrastructure in rural communities.
- **Internet Strategies to Improve Farm Business Management:** The primary purpose of this product is to educate farm managers about existing Internet-based technologies designed to enhance or complement their managerial skills. The product was written by Sarah A. Roth and Jeffrey A. Hyde, both at Pennsylvania State University.
- **Strengthening Competitive Advantage of Rural Businesses with e-Commerce and Experience Economy Strategies:** This new e-commerce curriculum is designed to improve the competitiveness of small rural retail, hospitality and tourism businesses. Its main goals are to enhance the understanding of experiential strategies and demonstrate how these strategies can be effectively incorporated into a firm's Web site design. This exciting product was developed by a team from Iowa



State University -- Miyoung Jeong, Ann Marie Fiore, Cheryl O. Hausafus, Linda Niehm, and Haemoon Oh.

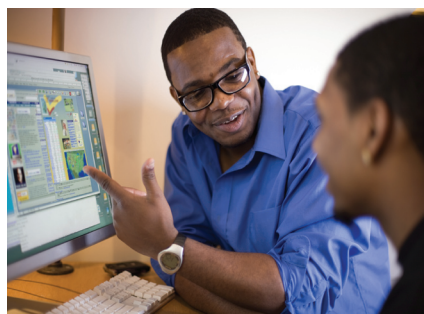
- **Helping Artisans Reach Global Markets:** Providing educational information to crafters (artisans) on the benefits and methods of utilizing e-commerce to strengthen their businesses is the central focus of this curriculum. The Web-based resource, developed by Pamela J. Brown with Texas AgriLife Extension, provides artisans with sound, research-based information to guide their decisions on whether or not to develop a Web page, how to implement it, what resources to utilize, and how to evaluate the Web site's effectiveness.
- **e-Commerce as a Strategy for Improving Business Vitality: Lessons Learned from Small Rural Businesses:** This resource explores how exciting small rural businesses have used e-commerce marketing strategies to increase profits and expand markets. The case studies are the result of in-depth interviews conducted with a variety of rural businesses and related service providers. This important document was prepared by David L. Barkley and David Lamie, both from Clemson University; and Deborah Markley, from the RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship, University of Missouri-Columbia.

2008 e-Commerce Webinar Series Launched

In October, the SRDC launched the new e-commerce Fall 2008 Webinar Series. The series represents an innovative strategy to introduce Extension educators, entrepreneurs, small business owners, community leaders, and others to the exciting new e-commerce products being released as part of SRDC's competitive grants program. Four e-commerce curricula are being highlighted over the course of the Fall 2008 Webinar Series, with practical guidance on how to successfully implement the material. The 2008 Webinar Series is co-sponsored by the eXtension "Entrepreneurs and Their Communities" team.

Delivering e-Commerce Opportunities to Communities and Small Businesses Across America: the e-Commerce Mini-Grants Program

In an effort to promote the use and delivery of the new e-commerce educational products being released by the SRDC, the Center announced a new mini-grant program that will help expand the adoption of e-commerce strategies by communities and small/micro businesses. Land-grant university (LGU) Extension educators or Extension teams are being invited to submit proposals outlining how they propose to implement one or more of the new e-commerce educational curricula released, or slated to be released, by the end of 2008. Grants will provide seed funding of up to \$3,000 to promote the adoption of these important products.



2008 Webinar Series Schedule

October:

Connecting Rural Communities

November:

Internet Strategies to Improve Farm Business Management

Helping Artisans Reach Global Markets

December:

Strengthening Competitive Advantage of Rural Businesses with e-Commerce and Experience Economy Strategies

New Looks Debuted for Web Site and Electronic Newsletter

The eNews bimonthly newsletter, undertaken as part of the SRDC's National e-Commerce Extension Initiative, received a facelift in 2008, as did the e-commerce Web site. Five issues of eNews were released over the October 2007 to July 2008 time period. eNews has approximately 900 subscribers, receiving the latest in e-commerce news, research, grants and programs.

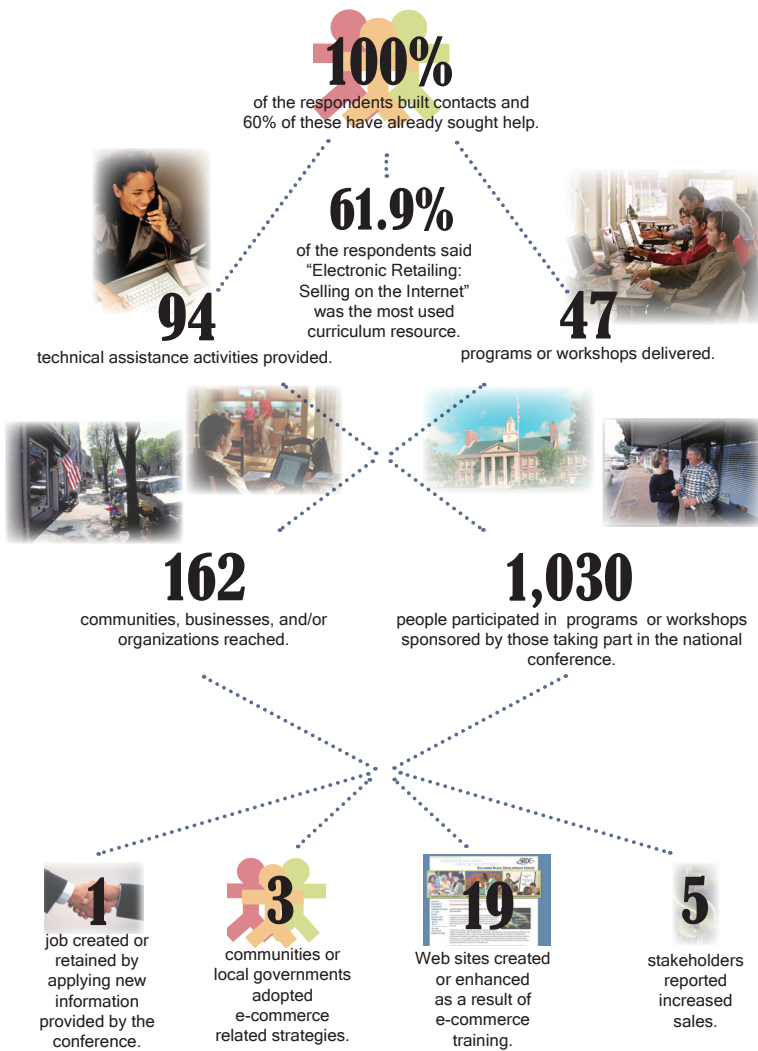
Also upgraded in both content and quality, the Web site dawned a new contemporary look that boasts easy and attractive navigation. The new site also showcases the recently introduced Webinar Series as well as the Mini-Grants Program. Archived Webinars are featured on the Webinar page as well as on the curricula page, enabling future visitors to benefit from these programs.

Assessing the Impact

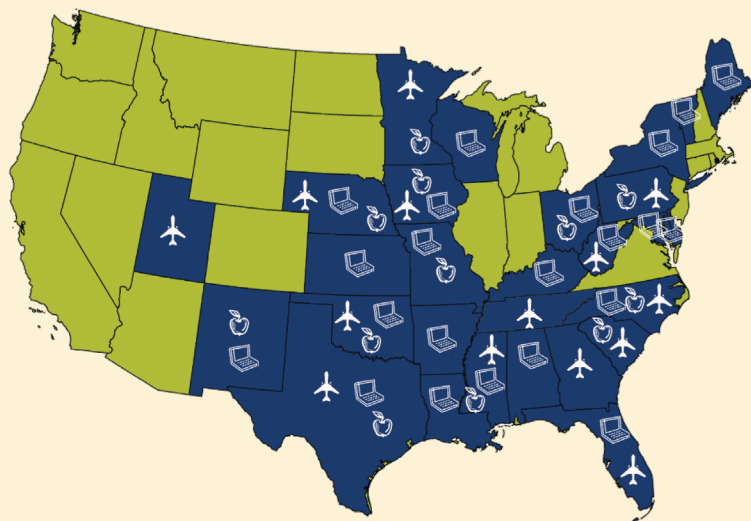
The National e-Commerce Training: "e-Commerce Strategies for Small Businesses and Communities"

The SRDC hosted a national conference in June 2007 titled "e-Commerce Strategies for Small Businesses and Communities." While the workshop appeared to be well received by those in attendance, the Center was concerned as to whether or not the Extension educators who attended training were able to employ their new resources to make meaningful impacts in the communities they serve.

To get a better handles on possible impacts, the SRDC initiated a Web-based survey in March 2008 targeted to those who attended the national conference at the Lied Center in Nebraska. The survey was completed by 28 of the 52 participants (54 percent response rate). Some of the key results include the following: (1) all respondents stated the conference helped them build contacts, and 60 percent had already sought help from those contacts.; (2) an impressive 47 programs or workshops were conducted, reaching a total of 1,030 people, as a direct result of the national conference. These survey results include activities conducted within the first six months following the conference. More key findings associated with the survey are captured in the accompanying chart to the right.



The SRDC's Overall Investments in the National e-Commerce Extension Initiative



To what extent have the efforts of the Center proven beneficial to land-grant institutions across the country? The SRDC sought to answer this question as part of another piece of its accountability efforts in FY08. The accompanying U.S. map highlights the three principal types of investments (totaling \$902,158) that the Center has made over the past five years: (1) grants awarded to states' land-grant institutions to develop specific e-commerce educational products; (2) travel assistance provided to those attending the national e-commerce training workshop discussed above; and (3) scholarships awarded to Extension educators to defray registration fees for various e-commerce workshops sponsored the SRDC since 2005. As the map reveals, Extension educators located in 26 states have benefited from the e-commerce efforts that the SRDC has undertaken since 2003.



Sustainable Community Innovation Projects

Nine projects from farmers markets to agri-tourism funded in FY2008



The SRDC continued its successful partnership with the Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SSARE) program by helping fund nine new projects promoting sustainable community and agriculture initiatives. These projects, under the Sustainable Community Innovation Grant program, seek to find win-win solutions to the tough economic challenges that rural communities and farmers jointly face.

Chicora Farmers Market (South Carolina) - This project's innovative approach will build linkages between local farmers and a community where food stamps are a primary commodity, enhancing local farm sustainability while providing high quality nutritional choices to low-income families.

Farmers Market Support Activities (South Carolina) - This project links various businesses, families, professionals and farmers in a collaborative problem-solving effort to provide economic benefit to farmers and vendors at the farmers market.

"Gathering" of Homestead Economic and Entrepreneurs of Food Based, Organic Foods and Other Related Businesses (Tennessee) - This project seeks to develop an eight county entrepreneur coalition where individual farm families can benefit from economic development by sharing ideas and responsibilities.

Growing Healthy Markets: Healthy Farms, Healthy Food Project (Kentucky) - By developing a diversified and stable market for Kentucky farmers, this project will facilitate entrepreneurial and value-added activities including building a market for the Agricultural Education and Marketing Center and providing fresh healthy food to Kentucky school children.

Integrating Nature into Agri-tourism (Arkansas) - By participating in the Business of Birding Institute, southern planners and farmers are exploring the potential of nature-based agri-tourism

opportunities to improve farm income and rural economies while preserving natural resources.

Something's Cooking in the Kitchen (Georgia) - Current regulations require costly certified kitchens that make it economically unfeasible to produce small scale food products. This project seeks to overcome this challenge by creating a network of local entrepreneurs who will produce and market their value-added products to the community.

Stecoah Kitchen Entrepreneurship & Agri-Tourism (North Carolina) - This project will promote locally grown products. Components include use of a shared commercial kitchen facility and joint promotion of local products.

Training for Sustainable Community Development: Phase III (Alabama) - Thirteen communities deemed "at risk" for sustainability will engage in an integrated planning process designed to strengthen community development skills, assess positive strategies that best use local resources, and connect these communities to outside resources to address critical sustainability issues.

Youth and Agriculture: A Bridge to the Future (YABF) for From Tree to Table (Virgin Islands) - The Virgin Islands Farmers Cooperative long-term goals are to rebuild an agricultural industry that can attract and retain young local entrepreneurs and provide quality locally produced foods to the Territory's residents.



Scholarships Awarded to Attend 20th Annual SARE Conference

Attending the 20th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Conference was an inspiring experience for 11 Extension Community Development educators from around the nation. With support from the Farm Foundation, scholarship recipients enjoyed a rich week packed with extensive resources promoting joint sustainability of both agriculture and communities. Following the conference, the team began work on a joint project to showcase some of the best practices from among the past funded SARE projects. Focusing on youth, innovative marketing and community engagement as over-arching themes, the team has selected 12 outstanding projects to serve as case studies. Work is continuing through this next year to explore how these projects have progressed, what lessons have been learned along the way, and how effective sustainability efforts have been over time. The SRDC anticipates release of these case study reports in early 2009.



Business Retention & Expansion Program Trains 50 Professionals

In an effort to expand its partnerships for rural economic development in the Southern region, the SRDC has entered into a strategic alliance with Business Retention & Expansion International (BREI), the professional organization that provides Business Retention & Expansion (BR&E) certification for participants.

As an economic development strategy, BR&E programs are designed to help existing businesses develop and expand in today's global economy. This year the SRDC offered two Basic Course certification opportunities for Extension and economic development professionals.

These sessions were held at Clemson University in South Carolina on January 7-9, 2008 and in Galveston, Texas on July 20-22, 2008. In all, 50 professionals received BR&E certification with 29 of these being Extension professionals and 21 being economic development or industrial recruitment professionals from both the public and private sectors. Lead instructor Hank Cothran from the University of Florida indicated that these classes received the highest evaluation scores of any BREI session of which he has been a part.

In keeping with the Center's commitment to measure impact, the participants in these two training events will be contacted during regular intervals over the new year to gauge the effects of this effort.

Mississippi Women in Agriculture Plans Three Conferences

Mississippi Women in Agriculture is a unique educational program that strives to empower and encourage women involved in production agricultural operations to become more integrally involved in the management and operation of their businesses. Due to its critical role in the inaugural series of educational seminars, the SRDC was asked to coordinate this valuable program upon the retirement of Dr. Beverly Howell, State Program Leader for Family and Consumer Sciences with the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Funded by two grants from the Southern Region Risk Management Education Center and Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), the second round of the program is well underway. Educational seminars have been planned in the northern and southern parts of Mississippi during late 2008 with a third being planned in the Mississippi Delta region in early 2009. The first annual Mississippi Women in Agriculture State Conference is slated to be held in March 2009.



Mississippi Women in Agriculture participants complete the conference on September 25, 2008 in Grenada, Mississippi.

(Left to Right) *Front Row:* Cathy Booth, Tunica County; Rita Green, Grenada County; Jean Moss, Grenada County; Joy Miller, Yalobusha County; Sherilyn M. Jones, Bolivar County. *Back Row:* Paula Threadgill, Program Evaluator; Pamela Redwine, Yalobusha County; Karen Holcomb Mason, Atlanta, Georgia; Ruth Holcomb, Grenada County; Christina Felder, Yalobusha County; Judy Hill, Chickasaw County; Gail Spears, Rankin County; Sonia Hancock, Project Coordinator.

Enhancing Distressed Communities

Addressing Food Assistance and Nutrition Challenges, Expanding Decision-Making Tools and Enhancing Community Capacity for Long-Term Responding to Disasters



Highlights:



19 Strengthening Emergency Preparedness

20 Creating Upward Communities

21 Exploring Measures of Economic Distress

22 Rural Community College Initiative Evaluated

Expanding Opportunities for Distressed and Low-Wealth Communities

On a number of measures, the rural South continues to face serious economic and social challenges. For example, poverty rates in rural areas of the region are among the highest in the nation and they are especially problematic in concentrated areas of Appalachia, the Mid South Delta area, and the Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Also of concern are the sizable number of working adults who lack the education and/or skills needed for their communities to attract the type of knowledge-based jobs that are so crucial to their long-term vitality. As if the data were not bad enough, many parts of the South are at high risk of suffering from a variety of natural calamities, such as tornadoes, hurricanes and floods. It is these very statistics, along with others, that make the focus on low-wealth and distressed communities in the rural South such an important element of the SRDC's priority activities in the region.

However, the work of the SRDC is not so much rooted in these "negative statistics." They are guided by a genuine belief that local people, organizations and institutions have the dedication and commitment to create a better tomorrow. It is with this spirit in mind that the SRDC began to focus part of its efforts in FY08 on distressed communities in the rural South. We highlight three important research and Extension efforts launched over the past year – one concentrating on poverty alleviation efforts in the Delta region, a second focusing on the development of a better set of metrics for measuring economic distress in the Appalachian region of the country, and a third addressing emergency disaster preparedness efforts in low-wealth areas of the South. Aligning with our priority on low-wealth people and communities, we also present a synopsis of ongoing initiatives.

Strengthening Emergency Preparedness: Plans Underway for Building Capacity in Low-Wealth Communities

The names Katrina, Rita, Gustav, and Ike conjure up vivid images of the devastation that can happen to Southern communities that find themselves in the path of major hurricanes. Similar challenges exist with floods, tornadoes and other natural disasters. In recent years, many of these hazards have left their imprints on a host of Southern communities. Especially hard hit were people and communities having the least amount of resources to respond -- the poor, the elderly, the disabled, and those with limited transportation options.

Finding ways to help low-wealth communities and people effectively prepare for and respond to disasters is one of the new activities initiated by the SRDC in 2008. In partnership with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)/U.S. Department of Homeland Security and the Cooperative Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES), the Center is working hand-in-hand with land-grant university Extension educators in five states to undertake community-based field assessments of the nature of disaster awareness and preparedness efforts now in place in disadvantaged households and communities in select sites within these states. Of special interest to FEMA, CSREES and the SRDC is securing the input and insights of local people and organizations living in communities that face the double challenge of elevated natural disaster risks coupled with a variety of socioeconomic challenges (such as high levels

of poverty, large number of single-parent headed households, and geographical isolation). Through

a series of community roundtables that will begin in early 2009, Extension educators in the five sites will address two important goals: (1) gain clarity on how best to provide disadvantaged households and communities with the knowledge, tools and capacity they need to

effectively prepare for, and respond to, a variety of disasters; and (2) determine how well the educational resources produced as part of FEMA's Emergency Preparedness Demonstration (EPD) activities are able to effectively meet the needs of these disadvantaged audiences. Following the community-based roundtable meetings, the SRDC will coordinate and host a regional face-to-face meeting to carefully study the results of the five pilot state reports. Common themes and concerns offered by local stakeholders will be documented and subsequently shared with FEMA and CSREES officials. Such feedback will be designed to introduce needed refinements to FEMA's emergency preparedness and disaster response activities targeted to low-wealth households and communities.



Creating “Upward Communities” to Tackle Poverty in the Delta Region

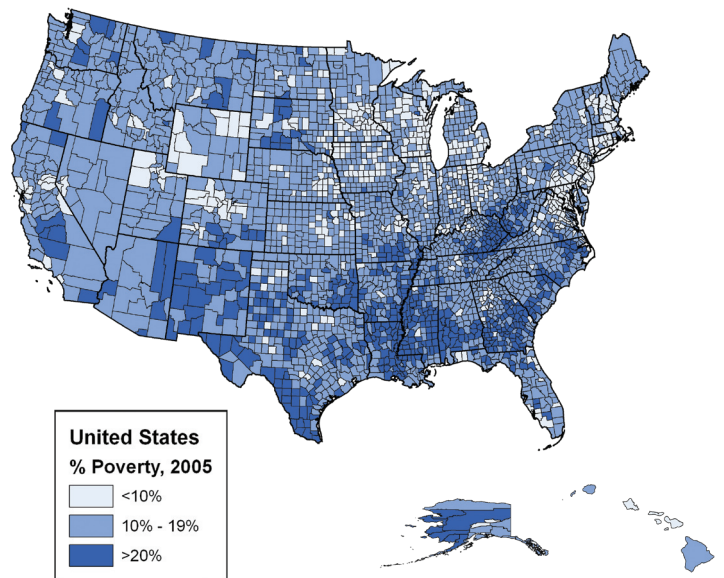
Given that the South is home for three-fourths of all high poverty counties in the nation (465 of the 610 high poverty counties in the United States in 2005), and that poverty touches individuals, families and communities in a number of significant ways, the SRDC began to focus its efforts in a concentrated geographic area classified as being “high poverty.” The Mid South Delta Region emerged as a logical target site for this initiative.

One of the new activities the SRDC undertook in FY08 was to build an important partnership with Louisiana’s two land-grant institutions, Louisiana State University and Southern University, for the purpose of organizing and hosting a summit that would bring together researchers, educators and practitioners from across the region to explore strategies for alleviating poverty in this region of the South. With the guidance and valuable assistance of these two institutions, as well as other key partners (the Louisiana Poverty Initiative, the USDA Economic Research Service, and the Louisiana Association of Nonprofit Organizations), the SRDC co-sponsored the “Exploring Viable Opportunities for Low-Wealth Communities in the Delta” Summit in May 2008. With over 80 participants in attendance — many of whom serve low-wealth communities in the region — the conference generated a high degree of enthusiasm. More importantly, many in attendance agreed to work together to help foster positive changes in the Delta region. Among the “next steps” summit participants recommended be pursued were the following:

Capacity Building: Explore ways to strengthen partnerships in the Delta region so that resources can be used more effectively to meet the needs of low-wealth areas.

Civic Engagement: Investigate ways to empower local citizens to be active participants in community planning.

Education of Communities: Provide needed skills to help foster effective, open community leadership that can address issues linked to poverty.



Education of Individuals: Enhance skills of individuals struggling financially to empower them to take steps to financial stability (i.e. job skills, money management techniques, etc.).

Policy: Identify policies that can help alleviate poverty.

Race Relations: Recognize the importance of race in the context of poverty and create an environment that welcomes open discussions geared toward healing.

Research: Focus on sound research and delineate promising approaches emerging from such studies that may offer viable “on the ground” approaches for tackling poverty.

With these follow-up activities in mind, the SRDC is now building a Web site titled “Upward Communities” that is designed to provide a variety of valuable resources to land-grant university faculty and low-wealth communities who wish to focus on reducing poverty and promoting prosperity in the Delta and in other high poverty areas of the South. The site will include data relevant to high poverty counties, research reports on poverty-related topics, and promising approaches being used by Extension, nonprofit organizations, agencies, and others to proactively address poverty-related issues.



**APPALACHIAN
REGIONAL
COMMISSION**

Exploring New Measures of Economic Distress: A Research Partnership with the Appalachian Regional Commission

Over the past year, a team of researchers from Ohio State, Penn State and the SRDC worked in concert with the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) on a project designed to take a fresh look at the current indicators employed by the ARC to classify counties as economically distressed. This important initiative took stock of the strengths and limitations associated with the current indicators being employed by the ARC, and showcased a series of new indicators and data sources that could advance the capacity of the ARC to better assess the long-term socioeconomic viability of counties in its region. These new indicators included “forward-looking” measures, as well as indicators of social capabilities.

The team’s nine-month research study was completed, submitted and accepted by the ARC in September 2008. In essence, the team encouraged the ARC to reexamine its current distress index to better reflect socioeconomic shifts since the 1980s. The team felt that new indicators that more accurately point toward future distress were needed in order to ensure that ARC was effectively aligning resources to needs. After a careful evaluation of over 50 potential indicators, the team recommended that seven key variables be adopted by ARC to monitor economic distress in the region. The report, *An Assessment of Alternative Measures for Determining Economically Distressed Counties and Areas in the Appalachian Region*, is featured on the ARC Web site.

The Assessment of the Delta Geographic Concentration Initiative Provides Ongoing Feedback and Assistance to Community Sites

With funding provided by the Walton Family Foundation, the SRDC has continued to provide leadership to an evaluation team that has been charged with the responsibility of documenting and analyzing the impacts of a major project titled the

“Delta Geographic Concentration Initiative” (DGCI).

Over the past year, the evaluation team (made up of SRDC, the University of Arkansas and Florida

Atlantic University research/Extension faculty) has monitored the implementation and impacts of the DGCI in three Delta counties, providing the Walton Family Foundation with meaningful and objective assessments of the initiative’s progress. Furthermore, the evaluation team has provided ongoing feedback and technical assistance to the two intermediary organizations that Walton has funded to do the community-based work in the target sites. Such feedback has been designed to help strengthen the activities the two intermediary organizations are

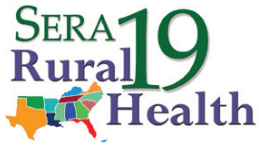
pursuing in the target sites. In addition to guiding the DGCI effort, this evaluation research is helping the SRDC get a better handle on the type of rural development strategies that can gain traction in economically distressed areas, such as the Mid South Delta region.

The Mid South Delta Data Library

As part of its work with the Walton Family Foundation, the Center has been actively working on the development of the Mid Delta Data Library. The purposes of the data library are threefold: (1) serve as a “one-stop-shop” for over 50 data variables relevant to community and economic development in the region; (2) provide narratives to assist in the interpretation of the data; and (3) offer the option for data savvy individuals to download data to allow more advanced analyses to be completed. The Mid South Delta Data Library captures data in seven categories – economic, education, health, housing, labor market, demographics, and safety. Data are available on the 58 counties and parishes in Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi that constitute the core of the Mid South Delta Region.



Rejuvenating SERA-19: A Focus on Rural Health



The rejuvenation of the Rural Health SERA-19 is complete! The issues of rural health access and promotion continue to confront

the South, particularly areas characterized as having high poverty and high percentages of limited-resource or minority populations. To address these challenges, 22 Extension and research professionals took part in the annual Rural Health SERA-19 meeting on August 4-6, 2008 in Houston, Texas.

Given the tremendous support provided by SERA's officers and Administrative Advisors Gale Cramer from Louisiana State University and Jim Trapp from Oklahoma State University, future plans were developed for further enhancing the work of group. These plans include the following:

- Continuation of the proceedings of the group to maintain a recognizable output of the group's conferences;

- Continuation of a mid-year meeting of the SERA in conjunction with the Priester National Extension Health Conference; and
- Redesigning the Rural Health Institute curriculum to make it suitable for the eXtension Professional Development Community.

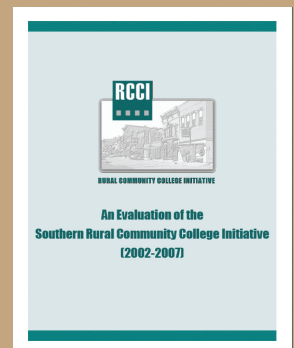
To spur the land-grant system's response to these challenges, the SRDC has served as a key player in coordinating the efforts of the health and rural/economic development Extension and research faculty who serve on the SERA-19 team. The team is actively engaged in the development of a Web-based health institute curriculum and the hosting of place-based learning activities to discover new and emerging programs in all areas of health sciences. The SERA-19 team is providing a valuable mechanism to facilitate communication between Extension and research faculty and field staff on critical rural health issues impacting the rural South.

Rural Community College Initiative Evaluated

As a capstone to the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI) coordinated by the Southern Rural Development Center and the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development from 2002-2007, the SRDC has released an evaluation of the RCCI program in the Southern Region. Authored by Priscilla Salant and Stephanie Kane of the University of Idaho, the report examines four key questions that are crucial in determining the success of the effort. Through site visits to every RCCI team and discussions with RCCI college administrators, land-grant university faculty and residents of the colleges' service areas, the report examines the Ford Foundation's expectations of the program as well as the realities of implementation by the Initiative's partners. RCCI was designed to empower rural community colleges by providing them with tools to become more actively engaged in their communities. The

RCCI program has targeted three areas of strategic importance to communities:

(1) equitable economic development, (2) civic engagement by previously unheard voices in the community, and (3) expanded access to the college's quality educational programs. Many efforts initiated as part of the RCCI programs continue to thrive, including collaborative efforts between these community colleges and the 1862/1890 land-grant universities in their states. These initiatives include the development of educational curricula designed to serve the needs of minority populations.

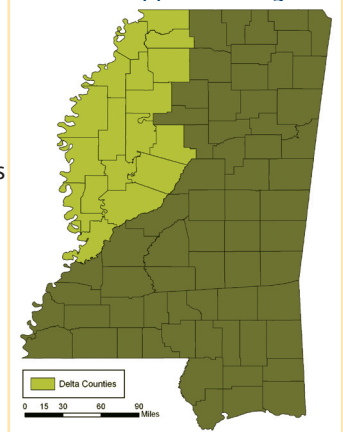


The Delta Rural Revitalization Project Strengthens Research and Outreach

The Delta Rural Revitalization Initiative is a multi-pronged and comprehensive applied research and outreach education effort intended to better understand, address, and respond to the significant socioeconomic shifts taking place in the Mississippi Delta region, including the restructuring of the area's economic complexion, the out-migration of both youth and adult members of the labor force, and changes in the region's demographic composition. The SRDC, working hand-in-hand with Mississippi State University and the Delta Council, is coordinating a number of activities such as (1) supporting and strengthening the work of the Delta Data Center, a facility that provides local governments and economic development organizations with timely and up-to-date data and information to guide and strengthen their local communities and economic development activities; (2) investing in two Extension educators who are spearheading innovative economic development activities and serving as

the access point for valuable and innovative economic development-related works being carried out by Mississippi State University; (3) launching of research and outreach education programs that explore the feasibility of alternative economic development strategies, including entrepreneurship, business retention and expansion, and knowledge/creative economies; and (4) providing timely and useful communication to local decision-makers, organizations, and citizens on socioeconomic challenges and opportunities.

The Mississippi Delta Region



RIDGE Grant Program Focuses on Food Assistance Challenges

Rarely a month goes by without a new report on the troubling rise of overweight and obesity among our nation's adults and youth. While the problem is alarming, the situation is even more sobering in the South. Case in point, overweight and obesity rates in the South are among the highest in the nation. So is the proportion of people who are food insecure, who live in places called "food deserts" where access to nutritionally sound foods is hard to come by, or who have to tap food assistance support programs to help make ends meet (such as Food Stamps and Free School Breakfast and Lunch Programs). To say the least, the region's vulnerable populations are sizable and diverse.

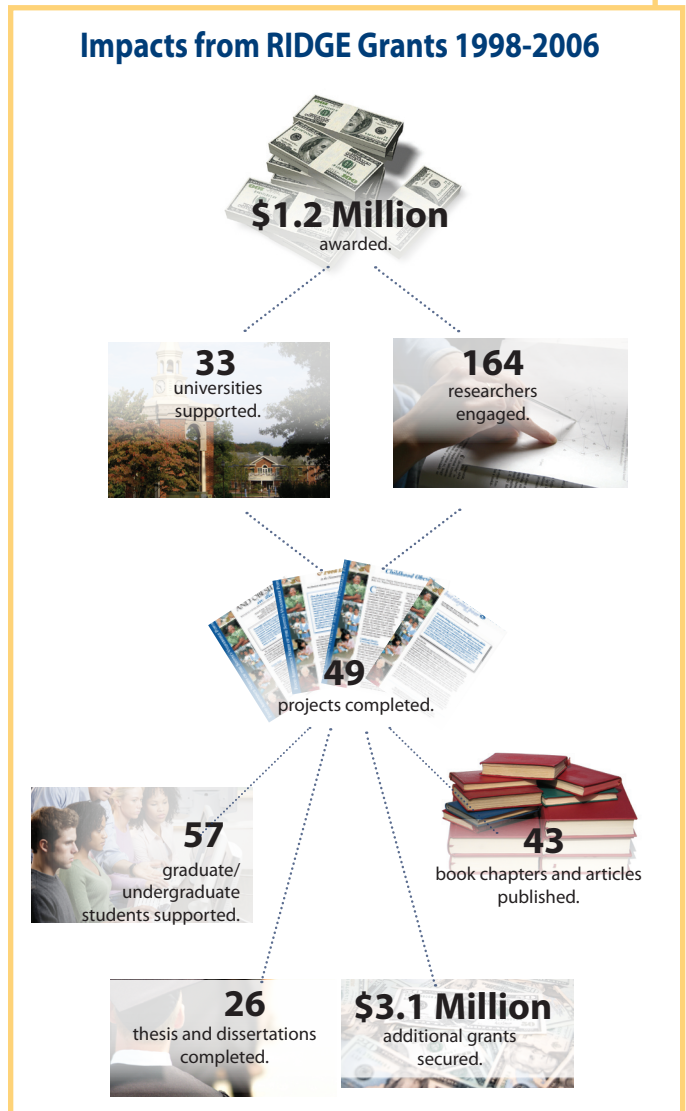
Understanding the critical food assistance needs of low-income people, families and communities depends on sound, sustained research. With the support of the Economic Research Service (ERS), the SRDC has made significant strides over the past decade in strengthening and expanding the quality of social science-based research at the region's higher education institutions. It has done so through its active partnership with the ERS' RIDGE program (Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics). By providing competitive seed funding to higher education institutions and others across the region, the SRDC has sought to expand our understanding of the myriad of food assistance and nutrition issues facing the South. These investments have paid important dividends, including solid contributions to the scientific literature, improved strategies for meeting the needs of the region's diversifying population, and better insights on how federal and state food assistance policies and programs can be fine-tuned to enhance their effectiveness. In fact, the accompanying chart provides a sampling of the outputs that have been realized as a product of SRDC's RIDGE investments undertaken.

New RIDGE Grants Funded in 2008

In April 2008, the SRDC announced a new round of competitive grants and by the June deadline, the Center received 22 grant applications, a record number. The five selected proposals, coupled with the names of the principle investigators and their institutional affiliations, are presented below:

"Federal Food Assistance Programs: Part of the Childhood Obesity Problem or Solution?" -- *Elizabeth Rigby, University of Houston*

Impacts from RIDGE Grants 1998-2006



"Exploring the Structural Determinants of Food Stamp Program Dynamics in the South: Does Place Matter?" -- *Tim Slack, Louisiana State University*

"Assessing the Impact of On-Line Application on Florida's Food Stamp Caseload" -- *Coleen Heflin, University of Missouri*

"The Role of Food Insecurity and Caregiver Feeding Styles in Diet and Quality and Weight Status in Head Start Children" -- *Janice Stuff, USDA/ARS Children's Nutrition Research Center*

"Child, Mother, and Other Adult Perspectives, Interactions, Negotiations, and Choices about Food in Rural and Urban Food-Insecure Households in South Carolina" -- *Mary Stella, University of South Carolina*

Staying Connected

Strengthening the Land-Grant's Ability to Respond to Rural Southern Needs



Highlights:

26 SRDC e-Newsletters Premiere New Designs

27 Financial Report Shows FY08 Funding

28 Board and TOAC Members

29 Partners

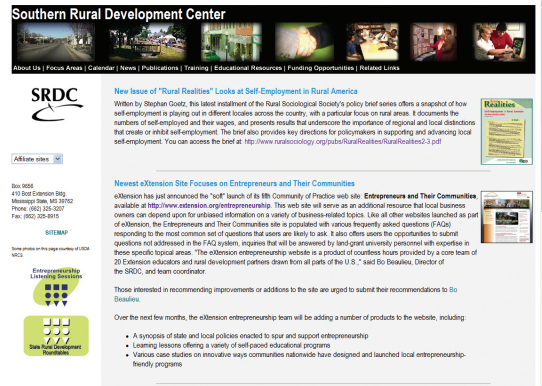
SRDC Web Site Receives a Facelift in 2008

As the SRDC has launched the first year of the five-year plan, it has remained true to its goals and mission – to advance the ability of the region’s 29 land-grant universities to address the critical set of contemporary rural development issues. As part of this larger plan, the SRDC revamped its Web site in April by restructuring the programs under the three priority areas:

- Priority Area 1: Fostering Civic Minded Communities,
- Priority Area 2: Building Economically Vibrant Communities, and
- Priority Area 3: Enhancing Distressed Communities.

Each of these priority areas has a drop down menu that contains materials and resources most closely aligned with that priority. For instance, e-Commerce and Entrepreneurship can be found under “Building Economically Vibrant Communities” while the RIDGE Program and Health SERA-19 fall under “Enhancing Distressed Communities.” By arranging the site thematically, navigation has improved to allow visitors to learn about existing and new programs. It provides information in a way that is most meaningful to our land-grant colleagues and rural development customers. The new arrangement has encouraged the growth of available resources across projects.

Previous SRDC Homepage Before Revision



New SRDC Homepage Debuted in April 2008



Garkovich Receives Bonnie Teater Lifetime Achievement Award

The SRDC annually presents the Bonnie Teater Community Development Educator Lifetime Achievement Award to an outstanding Extension educator in the South whose work is innovative and whose community development Extension activities reveal a true commitment to rural people and communities in the region.

The SRDC was proud to honor Dr. Lori Garkovich as the 2008 recipient of the Bonnie Teater Community Development Educator Lifetime Achievement Award. Garkovich currently serves as a professor of Community and Leadership Development at the University of Kentucky. She has directed 15 visioning exercises, delivered 48 Extension presentations, 30 Extension workshops, managed 43 facilitated discussions since 2001, and garnered nearly \$1.5 million in research grants. One of her nominators, Dr.

Paul Warner, Assistant Director for Program and Staff Development, explained that “Lori Garkovich epitomizes the university faculty role as it was intended to be. Not fragmented into research, instruction, and public service, but rather with all three functions integrated within the person.”



It is most fitting that Dr. Lori Garkovich be honored by the Southern Rural Development Center as the 2008 recipient of the Bonnie Teater Community Development Educator Lifetime Achievement Award.

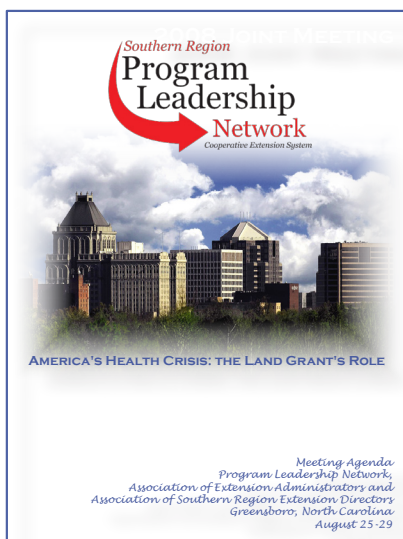
SRDC e-Newsletters Premiere New Designs

Each month, the SRDC proudly sends out e-newsletters to stay connected with our land-grant partners and the communities they serve by delivering vital information straight into their inboxes. To coincide with the updating of the Web site, both *Around the South*, the SRDC monthly e-newsletter for announcements related to the Southern region, and *Grant Connections*, the SRDC bimonthly e-newsletter that compiles funding information primarily for land-grant universities in the South, premiered new attractive designs.

Each month these publications deliver pertinent information about new reports, conferences, career opportunities, and more to subscribers. *Around the South* boasts the highest readership with 1718 subscribers. Also with a sizable readership, *Grant Connections* has 787 subscribers. The e-newsletters and archives are featured on the SRDC Web site.



2008 SRPLN Conference Gathers Extension Personnel from across the South



The annual Southern Region Program Leadership Network was held in Greensboro, North Carolina in conjunction with meetings of the Association of Extension Administrators and the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors. This conference had 232 participants representing 19 states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C.

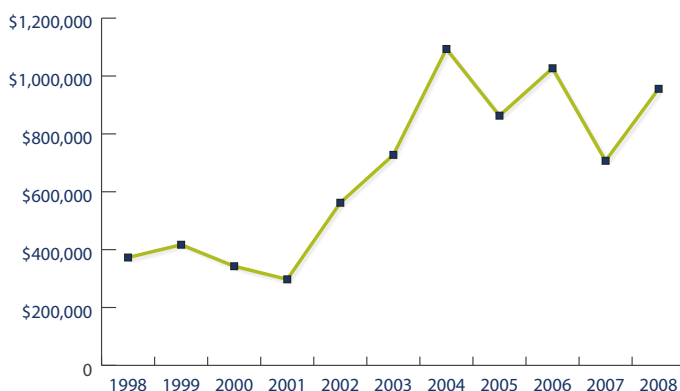
The SRDC has been asked to assist the Program Leadership Committee (PLC) in two important activities related to the 2009 conference. First, the SRDC is continuing its role of providing logistical support for the conference which will be held at the Florida Hotel in Orlando. Second, Alan Barefield has been asked to assist the PLC leadership in conducting a study of the PLN conference structure and developing a list of recommendations to be presented to the region's Extension Administrators and Directors regarding this structure. This study is expected to be completed by Spring 2009.

Over 30 Presentations Made by SRDC Director and Associate Director

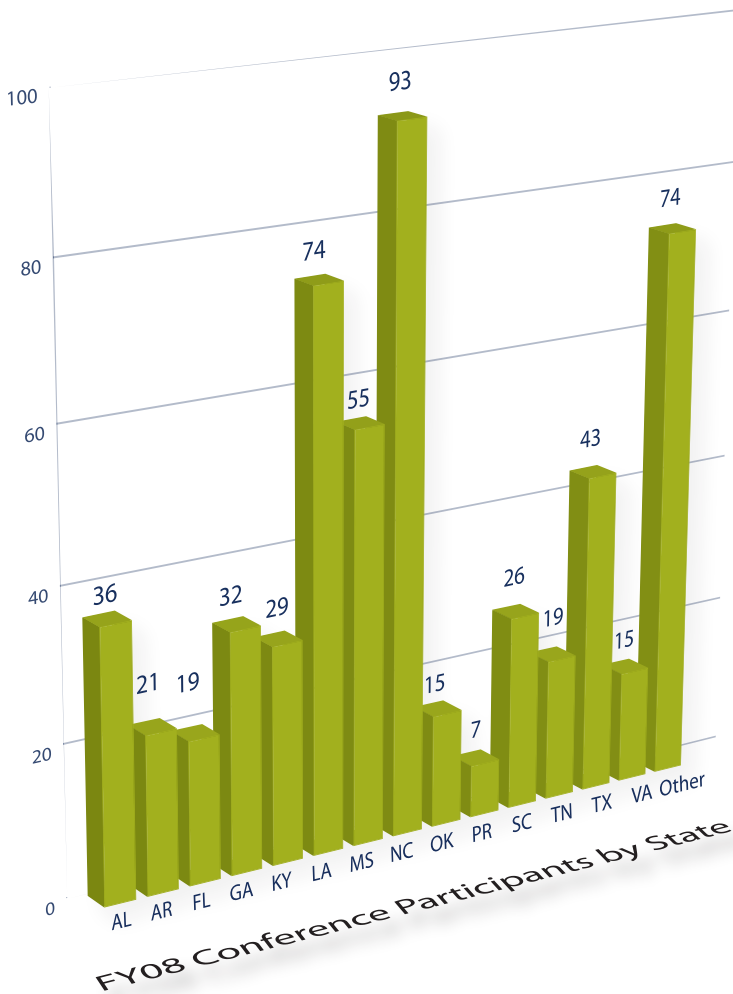
Reaching key stakeholders and partners remains a necessity to effectively respond to the challenges facing the rural South. Throughout 2008, the SRDC Director Bo Beaulieu made 16 presentations reaching a variety of audiences such as the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education and Economics Advisory Board; 2008 Galaxy – NACDEP National Conference; and the 2008 USDA AgOutlook Forum. Also during 2008, Associate Director Alan Barefield made 15 presentations to a variety of groups including the National Research Initiative Panel, Mississippi Women in Agriculture conferences and Business Retention & Expansion trainings.

Trends in Extramural Funding from FY1998-2008 Highlight Resource Levels

With extramural funding amounts from 1998-2008, the below chart showcases the funds the SRDC has captured over the past 11 years. Total extramural funds generated by the Center over this period have now exceeded \$7.3 million. This year saw a substantial increase in extramural funding from \$706,948 in 2007 to \$955,787 in 2008.



SRDC Trainings and Conferences Reaches 574 Participants in 2008



The SRDC hosted a total of 574 participants at the following conferences over the past year:

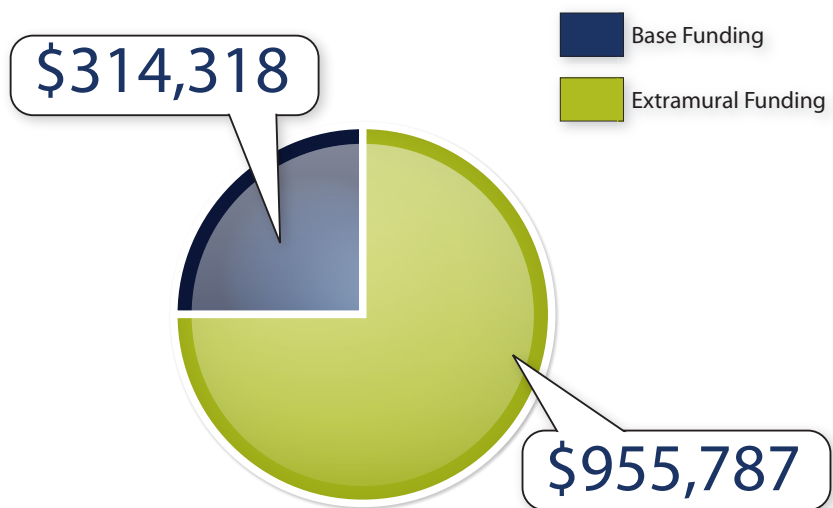
- Business Retention and Expansion Trainings
- Exploring Viable Opportunities for Low-Wealth Communities in the Delta Summit
- Joint Meeting of PLN, AEA and ASRED
- Land-Grant Youth Entrepreneurship Symposium
- SERA-19 Rural Health Meeting
- SERA-37 The New Hispanic South Inaugural Meeting and Conference
- Women in Agriculture Conferences

In addition to participants from the Southern region, participants were drawn from many other places including Kansas, California, New York, Ohio, Indiana, and as far away as Alaska and Canada.

Fiscal Year 2008 Base and Extramural Funding Exceeds \$1.27 Million

The SRDC enjoyed an increase in funding in FY2008 with a total of \$1,270,105 in base and extramural funding. The SRDC remains grateful to the agencies and organizations that have made financial investments in the work of the Center.

The chart to the right shows that 75 percent of its FY08 funding was secured from extramural sources (\$955,787) and 25 percent came from base funding which totaled \$314,318.



Board and TOAC

The Board of Directors and Technical and Operational Advisory Committee guide the work of the Center.

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Organizations and Agencies Committed to Advancing the Well-Being of the Rural South Partners

SRDC Parters

Association of Extension Administrators
Association of Research Directors
Appalachian Regional Commission
Association of Southern Region Extension Directors
Center for Rural Affairs
Cherokee Preservation Foundation
Coastal Bend College
Community Development Society
Cooperative State Research, Education,
and Extension Service, USDA
Delta Council
Delta Health Alliance
East Central Mississippi Health Network
Economic Development Administration
Economic Research Service, USDA
Everyday Democracy
Farm Services Agency, USDA
Farm Foundation
Federal Emergency Management Agency
Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City
(Oklahoma City Branch)
Ford Foundation
Foundation for the Mid South
Haywood Community College
Hired Pen, Inc.
Kettering Foundation
Louisiana Poverty Initiative Team
Louisiana Association of NonProfit Organizations
MDC, Incorporated
Montgomery Institute
National Association of Community Development
Extension Professionals
National eXtension Initiative Leadership Team
National Rural Funders Collaborative
North Central Regional Center for Rural Development
Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development
RUPRI Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
Rural Community College Initiative Team
Rural Development, USDA
Rural Sociological Society
Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment
Station Directors
Southern Financial Partners
Southern Good Faith Fund
Southern Growth Policies Board
Southern Region Risk Management Education Center,
Texas AgriLife Extension Service
Southern Rural Sociological Association
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research and
Education Program
Southwest Community College
Texas Center for Rural Entrepreneurship
Texas Rural Community College Network
Tri-County Community College
University of Idaho
University of Nebraska Lincoln (eXtension Initiative)
W.K. Kellogg Foundation
Walton Family Foundation
West Arete Computing, Inc.
Western Rural Development Center

Southern Rural Development Center Staff

Lionel J. (Bo) Beaulieu
Director

Rachel Welborn
Program Manager

Roberto Gallardo
Research Associate

Alicia Barnes
Editor and Publications Coordinator

Alan Barefield
Associate Director

Vicki S. Vaughn
Business Manager

Shannon Lane Turner
Program Coordinator
National e-Commerce Extension Initiative

Abbie Misso
Office Associate

Mission

The Southern Rural Development Center seeks to strengthen the capacity of the region's 29 land-grant institutions to address critical contemporary rural development issues impacting the well-being of people and communities in the rural South.

Background

The Southern Rural Development Center is one of four regional centers coordinating rural development research and Extension education programs cooperatively with land-grant institutions regionally and nationally. The Centers are supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the Center and its authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Department of Agriculture.

Contact Us

Southern Rural Development Center
190 Bost-North
Room 410 Bost Extension Building
Box 9656
Mississippi State, MS 39759
Phone: (662) 325-3207
Fax: (662) 325-8915
<http://srdc.msstate.edu>

Important Links

Visit Web sites and read full reports from the Annual Report.

Web sites

Entrepreneurs and Their Communities
<http://www.extension.org/entrepreneurship>

Mid South Delta Data Library
<http://mddl.projects.westarete.com>

The National e-Commerce Extension Initiative
<http://srdc.msstate.edu/ecommerce>

The New Hispanic South (SERA-37)
http://srdc.msstate.edu/opportunities/hispanic_south.htm
<http://sera37.wordpress.com>

Research Innovation and Development Grants in Economics (RIDGE)
<http://srdc.msstate.edu/opportunities/ridge.htm>

Rural Health (SERA-19)
<http://srdc.msstate.edu/sera19>

Southern Rural Development Center Newsletters
<http://srdc.msstate.edu/newsletters>

Reports

An Assessment of Alternative Measures for Determining Economically
Distressed Counties and Areas in the Appalachian Region
<http://www.arc.gov/index.do?nodeId=3287>

An Evaluation of the Southern Rural Community College Initiative (2002-2007)
http://srdc.msstate.edu/files/rcci_prog_evaluation.pdf

Land-Grant Youth Entrepreneurship Symposium Conference Proceedings
<http://www.nercrd.psu.edu/Publications/rdppapers/rdp42.pdf>



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December 2008

For more about the Southern Rural Development Center, visit <http://srdc.msstate.edu>.



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