

Outreach Efforts Benefit Rural Schools

By: Alice Love, Agricultural Outreach Liaison, NRCS, Auburn, AL

Today's economic budgets negatively impact rural America's children and educators. This is especially noticeable with limited access to computer technology in the classrooms. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) representatives - Alice Love, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Outreach Liaison, and Rodney Stone, 1890 Program Manager - identified this educational barrier in Alabama and reached out to help address the need. Through their efforts, the quality of education for students and teachers in the Macon County School District, Loachapoka High School, and Greensboro Middle School will be enhanced by the gift of computers for the classrooms.



Through a collaborated effort between the USDA Liasons and Alabama USDA Information Technology staff, equipment such as laptops, desktops, printers, docking stations, keyboards, adapters, tablets, and cases were donated to the schools.



Loachapoka and Macon County are in the Alabama NRCS targeted 24 StrikeForce counties (Bibb, Bullock, Barbour, Butler, Choctaw, Clarke, Conecuh, Crenshaw, Dallas, Escambia, Greene, Hale, Lee, Lowndes, Macon, Marengo, Monroe, Perry, Perry, Pike, Pickens, Russell, Sumter, Washington, and Wilcox). Alabama was designated a StrikeForce state earlier this year. The effort focuses on creating jobs, improving quality of life,

expanding business and community development, and building partnerships in persistent poverty counties.

Zelda Kitt, Principal at Loachapoka High School, stated that Loachapoka was recently appointed as a pilot for the One-On-One Initiative. This initiative will enhance student's exposure to the digital world of learning through various educational computer programs. The computer donation was a much needed bonus in the implementation of the initiative.

The computers will also be used in a lab for students as they prepare for American College Testing (ACT). Loachapoka School offers ACT Prep for grades 7-12 and also offered a 4 week ACT Prep and Summer Enrichment Program.

The Macon County School District serves seven schools: Booker T. Washington High – Tuskegee, DC Wolfe – Shorter, George Washington Carver Elementary – Tuskegee, Lewis Adams Early Child Center - Tuskegee Institute, Notasulga High – Notasulga, Tuskegee Institute Middle – Tuskegee Institute, and Tuskegee Public Elementary School – Tuskegee. John Curry, District Technology Coordinator, will oversee the distribution of computers in the Macon County schools based on need.

Anthony Sanders, Principal at Greensboro Middle School (GMS) stated the computer donations will enhance school technology to prepare students to function effectively in a technological and global society. Recently the school partnered with Shelton State Community College in their Boosting, Engineering, Science, and Technology (BEST) Program. This program is designed to inspire students to pursue careers in engineering, science, technology, and math.

All school representatives expressed a sincere gratitude and a "hearty" thanks to the Alabama USDA-NRCS for the much needed donation.



John Curry, Macon County School District Technology Coordinator.