

History is made by Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers CBO

Story by Beverly Moseley

A vision of having a state headquarters' office and training center has become a reality for the Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers Community Based Organization (TSFR/CBO).

Recognizing the organization's unprecedented growth and commitment to outreach and education, the Navasota George Washington Carver Alumni Association, through a joint partnership agreement, has donated two wings of the Carver Community Center to the group. The inaugural meeting was held April 3, 2012.

"This will enable us to more readily help producers in a training environment, as well as hands-on, because there is acreage available for us to simulate activities such as planting forages, gardening, along with providing equipment repair areas, maintenance and training labs and areas to bring in small animals," said Wade Ross, state coordinator of the TSFR/CBO.

Founded in 1998, the organization is dedicated to assisting limited resource agricultural producers with information and participation in the services and programs offered by organizations and agencies, including the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

A chapter in history

The Carver Community Center comprises what was once the George Washington Carver High School campus which closed its doors in 1968. The original campus dates back to 1865. In 2008, the alumni association approached the Navasota Independent School District about utilizing the property for community and civic activities. Their efforts paid off when the school district officially gave the alumni association the property through a gift deed.

"Our goal is to make this historical site a symbol of pride and success. Your being here only enhances the mission of serving others," said Callie Day, director of the Carver Community Center, to the more than 30 meeting attendees.

Day provided the opening welcome remarks, along with an overview and history of the campus.

Education carried the evening meeting with presentations on soils and livestock

production. Willie Holmon, soil conservationist with the NRCS in Bryan, gave a soil survey map review to attendees.

Unprecedented growth

The TSFR organization has six regions whose members reach 64 Texas counties through its meetings, workshops and field days. Last year, more than 50 workshops were held.

“The biggest thing is we expanded from the initial 48 counties to 64 counties where we hold monthly meetings to discuss the needs of farmers and ranchers,” Ross said, adding that attendance did rise due to the strain of 2011’s historic drought.

The organization’s outreach efforts have grown so much that a new region was added to the CBO. This new region is McLennan County, which includes Waco and surrounding areas. The organization’s outreach area was previously focused in Central and East Texas.

Working partnerships

Some of the organization’s recent growth is a result of their work through a USDA outreach grant. The TSFR and the Texas/Mexico Border Coalition (TMBC) CBO are the primary organizations tasked through a USDA three-year grant with coordinating outreach efforts and training, along with providing technical assistance to socially-disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. The University of Texas Pan American is the lead institution in this advocacy and outreach program.

Ross works closely with staff from the NRCS on communication efforts and in providing speakers for workshops and field days who provide information on conservation planning, technical assistance and Farm Bill programs.

Along with NRCS, other federal entities involved in the project are the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA) and the USDA-Rural Development (RD) and the National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS). Partnering state entities are the Texas Soil and Water Conservation District Board (TSWCDB), Texas Agri-Life Extension and Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA). Local Resource and Conservation Development (RC&D) Councils and Soil and Water Conservation Districts are cooperative partners.

For more information on scheduled workshops or field days contact Wade Ross at (979) 589-3649 or visit www.texas-smallfarmersandrancherscbo.com. More information on the NRCS, its partners and activities can be found at www.tx.nrcs.usda.gov, <http://twitter.com/NRCSTexas> or www.facebook.com/USDANRCSTexas.



Callie Day, director of the Carver Community Center, provides the opening welcome remarks, along with an overview and history of the campus.



The vision of having a first-ever state headquarters' office and training center has become a reality for the Texas Small Farmers and Ranchers Community Based Organization (TSFR/CBO). Members and visitors attended the organization's inaugural meeting April 3 at the Carver Community Center in Navasota.



TSFR members and visitors can find plenty of information on the NRCS' available technical and financial assistance at the new state headquarters.



Education carried the evening meeting with several presentations. Willie Holmon, soil conservationist with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Bryan, gave a soil survey map review presentation.