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## CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

### Dr. Leodrey Williams

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## Presented to:

## Board of Supervisors

## Southern University and A & M College System

*"Linking Citizens of Louisiana with Opportunities for Success"*

## SU Ag Center Project Provides Food Safety Training in Armenia

During the week of December 12, 2014, Fatemeh Malekian, Professor of Nutrition and Food Science at the Southern University Ag Center provided training on Retail Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) to food handlers in Yerevan, Armenia. HACCP is a preventive system to ensure safe food production. The training started with an introduction followed by participants gathering into small teams of 4-5 members, basing the team names on HACCP principles.



Workshop participants develop Retail HACCP plan

To give all participants equal footing, the basics of the training were focused on Serving Safe Food “ServSafe” and sanitation slides, gradually moving into the full HACCP details. The session consisted of brainstorming, discussions, questions and answers and menu grouping.

At the end of the five-day training, each team was able to produce a useable Retail HACCP plan. The training concluded with team presentations and distribution of certificates to participants.

The trainees expressed their collective appreciation for the opportunity offered to them through the partnership of the United States Department of Agriculture, Center for Agribusiness and Rural Development, an Armenian farm service center, Southern and LSU University Ag Centers.

A news release from the LSU AgCenter on January 16, 2015 entitled “AgCenter project teaches food safety in Armenia” details the involvement of the two Ag Centers

and the relevance and impact of the HACCP training in Armenia, which has been on-going for several years.

The full article is available online on the [LSU AgCenter](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/news_archive/2015/January/headline_news/AgCenter-project-teaches-food-safety-in-Armenia.htm) website at [http://www.lsuagcenter.com/news\\_archive/2015/January/headline\\_news/AgCenter-project-teaches-food-safety-in-Armenia.htm](http://www.lsuagcenter.com/news_archive/2015/January/headline_news/AgCenter-project-teaches-food-safety-in-Armenia.htm)

## The SU Ag Center Holds Spring Convocation and Planning Meeting

The three-day convocation, which was held January 7-9, brought SU Ag Center employees from across the state together in A. O. Williams Hall to share progress reports, clientele needs and strategic plans for the year. Administrators, faculty and staff convened to review the state of the Center while

planning strategic ways of moving forward. The 2015 convocation was unique because it also brought research, extension and teaching staff together to collectively strategize on working models that will ensure the improved well-being of all the Center’s stakeholders.



Section of 2015 opening session



SU System President Mason addresses employees

During the opening session, Southern University System President Ronald Mason joined the SU Ag Center’s Adell Brown, Executive Vice Chancellor and Vice Chancellor for Research and Gina E. Eubanks, Vice Chancellor for Extension, to bring greetings to employees. In their opening remarks, Drs. Brown and Mason brought hope and inspiration for the future of the Ag Center and the Southern University System, despite anticipated budget cuts for the Louisiana Higher Education System.

Concurrent Sessions consisted of five main areas: Agriculture and Natural Resources; Community and Economic Development; Family and Human Development; Nutrition and Health; and Youth Development. Other discussion topics included Finance, Technology/Communication, Plan of Work/Reporting, Data/Cyber Security and Human Resources. The convocation culminated in a kickoff of the 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration of the 1890 Land-Grant Act during the January SU System Board Meeting.

## Ag Leadership Institute Concludes Successful Session

The Small Farmer Ag Leadership Institute training took place at the Southern University Ag Center, January 22-23, 2015. Nearly 20 participants from 10 states gathered for practical learning in a classroom setting. Discussion sessions included “What is the Small Farmer Agricultural Leadership Institute, presented by Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, Assoc. Dean-Special Initiatives & Facilities, North Carolina A&T State University; “Farmers Share Experiences, Ideals and Desires,” Ms. Allison Johnson, USDA/1890 Program Manager; “Introduction to

Building a Sustainable Business Handbook,’ and the “Roundtable Discussion-What is Leadership?” by Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin. Other topics covered were colors of assessment, determining your values, leadership assessment, mapping your leadership path, farm history and current situation. The session culminated in a taste of Louisiana dinner on campus.



Institute participants pose in front of A.O. Williams Hall

Dawn Mellion-Patin, PhD, agriculture specialist, director of the Institute and can be reached at 225-771-3532.



## Extension Agent Teaches Vertical Grow Hydroponics in Iberia Parish

To promote one of the key aspects of the Southern University Ag Center's mission for higher education through community initiatives, extension agent DeLane Ross, of St. Martin / Iberia Parishes, collaborated with community garden coordinator Phanat Xanamane, to demonstrate the possibility of growing vegetables in an urban environment.

On December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2014, DeLane and Phanat met with members of the New Iberia West End community and delivered two Verti-Grow Hydroponic

Towers. These Hydroponic Towers are user-friendly gardening systems that provide ample growing conditions in limited amounts of space. The goal was to show residents that gardening is possible in areas that have limited yard space and/or inadequate ground to plant vegetable crops. Residents were amazed to see the simple set up process and the relative simplicity of the Hydroponic tower system. The system utilizes water circulation system that transports plant nutrients throughout the vertical towers from an attached reservoir. The plants grow in vermiculite, which is a soilless medium that holds the roots of plants together.

The unity between the Southern University Ag Center and the Hydroponic Garden in New Iberia has sparked the interest of many residents to begin gardening in their urban environments. The Hydroponic Community Garden is a segment of the Best Life Iberia project sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana.



Ross, left, and Xanamane examine plant

Extension Agent DeLane Ross was invited to speak at the Heirloom Produce Cooperative meeting in New Iberia on the night of December 16. The subject was "Increasing Sustainability through the Concepts of Companion Planting." These unique

growers focus on vegetable production through the use of Heirloom seed varieties. The class offered was designed to educate producers on the science of farming as a means of applying techniques that have multiple benefits to both farmers and their planted crops. The goal was to educate produces on the benefits of using alternative methods to grow desired crops

throughout Iberia Parish. During the class, DeLane explained the importance of understanding the symbiotic relationships that plants have and applying this technique in a way that closely mimics the relationships found in nature. He urged growers to consider planting crops in combinations that contribute to the overall soil structure. Plants with long taproots such as carrots, dill and parsley absorb nutrients that have been leached overtime into the subsoil and replace it in the top soil. Plants with shallow fibrous roots such as cabbage and beans build layers of organic matter in the top soil to form humus over time. In addition to the direct effect of companion planting, it should reduce the need for farmers to apply chemicals throughout their gardens.

The Heirloom Produce Cooperative is a segment of the Best Life Iberia project that is sponsored by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana. This group participates in Farmers' markets throughout Iberia Parish.

## Hibiscus Research Stands Out in North Louisiana Ag Expo

On January 16-17, Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center staff comprising of researchers and extension agents participated in the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual North Louisiana Agri-Business Council Ag Expo. This event, which was held at the Ike Hamilton Expo Center in West Monroe, La., educated the community of the various day-to-day aspects of agriculture and science. The Ag Expo brings to the forefront innovative agricultural products, practices and advances in technology. The event was attended by over 10,000 people from Louisiana, South Arkansas, East Texas and Mississippi.

The Southern University Ag Center's booth highlighted the various methods of urban and conventional gardening and distributed by-products of those techniques. Drs. Janana Snowden, Research Associate, and Vanessa Ferchaud, Research Associate, received high recognition for their research group's work with the hibiscus (*Roselle Sadariffa*) plant. Approximately 900 observers had the opportunity to sample hibiscus tea, which was prepared by the SUAREC staff, and learn of the many health benefits that the plant provides. Over 600 copies of publications were disseminated with nearly 200 hibiscus seed packets provided to farmers interested in growing the plant. This *Roselle hibiscus* exhibition was inspired by project director, Dr. Kit L. Chin, Professor Plant & Soil Sciences, along with research team member, Dr. Yadong Qi, Professor of Urban Forestry, and

funded by USDA/NIFA project #2012-38821-20092.



Snowden shares information with event participants

"Dr. Janana Snowden and Dr. Vanessa Ferchaud really represented the Southern Ag Center very well. They had some timely publications and educational information regarding Hibiscus *sabdariffa* for the public which was very well received along with significant interest. I think the most impressive thing about these two researchers was their ability and willingness to discuss the Southern University Ag Center as well as their research project on Hibiscus

*sabdariffa* with the public. Snowden and Ferchaud's performance this weekend certainly made North Louisiana more aware of a Southern University Ag Center and many wanting more," praised Rafash Brew, Area Horticulture Specialist, Northeast Region, LSU AgCenter.

In addition to representing the Southern University Ag Center, the team also attended a luncheon where Louisiana Dept. of Agriculture Commissioner Mike Strain was the keynote speaker. He emphasized the importance of agriculture and international trade through Louisiana's five ports.

Overall, the 33<sup>rd</sup> North Louisiana Agri-Business Council Ag Expo provided great exposure for the SUAREC's research and extension endeavors in the community and also provided an advocate of recruitment for the Southern University System.

For more information about Hibiscus *sabdariffa*, contact Drs. Kit Chin, Yadong Qi, Janana Snowden or Vanessa Ferchaud at (225-771-2242).

## Communities of Color Network kicks off cessation initiative

The SU Ag Center Communities of Color Network (CoC) kicked off their initiative in Caddo Parish on January 22 in the Jessie Stone Building on the Southern University at Shreveport Campus. The kick-off consisted of an educational awareness workshop that provided African American men with cessation resources and information about free services that are available to help them stop smoking.

These services include nicotine gum, patches and prescriptions, but participants must complete an application to see if they qualify. CoC employees were available to assist with the completion of the application process during the event.

The event was covered by [KTAL-TV NBC 6](#) in Shreveport under the heading “SUSLA plays host to a Smoking cessation program to help African American Men.”

Urina Holt serves as the Regional Coordinator for Region 7.

Also in St. Landry Parish, CoC Regional Director Troy Kennedy recently held a workshop for students at the Southwest Center for Rural Initiatives in Opelousas to help young people avoid the dangers of smoking. He also gives free talks throughout the 10-parish area the center serves.

“I have talks geared to everyone from pre-kindergarten students to people 100 or older,” he said. “I can teach anyone.”

The Communities of Color Network, an affiliate of the Louisiana Public Health Institute and the Louisiana Campaign for Tobacco-Free Living, provides support and technical assistance to African

American communities to help ensure that they are well-informed about the dangers of tobacco and understand how to protect themselves from unhealthy exposure.

He is also concerned about second-hand smoke. If you are in a smoke-filled nightspot or a home with a smoker, he said, just breathing the air for 30 minutes is the equivalent of smoking a cigarette yourself.



CoC staff and others gather around anti-smoking sign at the cessation kick off

If anyone would like more information or to schedule a free talk for their class, club or group, Kennedy can be reached by calling the Southwest Center for Rural Initiatives at 337-943-2410.

The workshop was featured in the [Daily World](#) newspaper on January 22, entitled “Free workshops offered on dangers of smoking.”



## Kiwanis Club, LDAF Partner with Local School on Gardening Project

Recognizing the need for urban youth to understand the value of farming and where their food comes from, the Early Risers Kiwanis Club initiated the idea of establishing a school garden at Winbourne Elementary School in Baton Rouge.

Phil Quaterano, Chairman of the Kiwanis group and his committee comprised of Henry Stamper, Press Robinson, and Fatemeh Malekian of the SU Ag Center met with Brenda Wilkerson, Principal of Winbourne Elementary School to discuss the gardening project. Mrs. Wilkerson was receptive to the idea and the project got underway. The Kiwanis members enlisted the assistance of SU Ag Center personnel, Stephanie Elwood, Extension Associate and Terrence Marshall, East Baton Rouge Parish County Agent. A budget for the garden was established and funding approved by the Kiwanis Club.

Along the way, Mrs. Wilkerson had an audience with Mike Strain, Louisiana Commissioner of Agriculture, and told him of the project. Dr. Strain offered assistance from his department as well.

Research has shown school gardens have many benefits. The first and most obvious is that the students learn about agriculture. They learn where their food comes from. Students learn the responsibility of caring for living plants. Teamwork, social skills, healthy food alternatives, literature, math, science, art and physical education can all be taught by student participation in school gardening. Physical activity resulting from gardening helps to ensure good health by reducing obesity.

The materials were purchased, and the Kiwanis committee members and SU Ag Center personnel constructed and filled the boxes with soil. On planting day the students, principal, school garden leaders, Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry (LDAF) personnel, and SU Ag Center Agents got busy and planted the Winbourne Elementary School Garden.



Team preparing ground for school garden

Students will now appreciate caring for and watching their garden grow, and in a few weeks enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Terrence Marshall can be reached by emailing [terrence\\_marshall@suagcenter.com](mailto:terrence_marshall@suagcenter.com)

## Faculty and Staff Accomplishments and Activities



***Fatemeh Malekian,***  
Professor of Nutrition and Food Science has been selected to serve on the Health Literacy Action

Team by Gina E. Eubanks, Vice Chancellor for Extension. The team connects with the broad-based effort “Healthy Food Systems, Healthy People” of the Extension and Experiment Station Committees on Organization and Policy (ECOP and ESCOP).



***Kamran Abdollahi,***  
Urban Forestry Program Leader and research scientist at Southern University Ag Center has been appointed to serve as a member of the Baton Rouge Green Board.

"The field of Urban Forestry plays a significant role in education, research and outreach for improving the quality of life of our communities. Southern University's Urban Forestry Program is working with Baton Rouge Green and the US Forest Service to improve the quality of life in Baton Rouge through tree planting and outreach activities based on scientific findings through research. Events such as this Baton Rouge Green Arbor Day are vital for providing communities with scientific information about the importance of our urban forests," Dr. Abdollahi said.

At the Baton Rouge Green Arbor Day celebration, Dr.

Abdollahi, who also serves as the Forestry Program's Graduate Director expressed his appreciation for being given the opportunity to serve on the board.

The Baton Rouge Green organized an Arbor Day luncheon at LSU on Friday, January 16, 2015, and the highlight of the keynote speaker is available online at: <http://theadvocate.com/news/11325918-123/an-urban-forest-can-help>.



**Carol Sensley**, Assistant Extension Agent in

Calcasieu and Jefferson Parishes, SU Ag Center, and Shatonia McCarty of the LSU Ag Center collaborated on a Healthy Lifestyle campaign at Barbe Elementary in Lake Charles. The program was submitted by the school to the USDA and received a National Gold Award. Sensley, McCarty and Sharon Ruffin-Hardy, principal of Barbe Elementary received the award at the school board meeting along with the volunteers that assisted at the school.

Barbe Elementary has been awarded the National Gold Award of Distinction through the Healthier U.S. School Challenge (HUSCC) program sponsored through the USDA - Food and Nutrition Service.

The goal of the HUSCC is to improve the health of the Nation's children by promoting healthier school environments. To help meet the goal, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) identifies schools that have made changes to: improve the quality of the foods served; provide students with nutrition education, and; provide students with physical education and opportunities for physical activity.

“Barbe Elementary would like to thank you for coming in our school and sharing exercise and nutrition information with our students, parents, and community. Your presence in our school has educated our stakeholders on healthy lifestyles, nutrition, functions of the body through Smart

Bodies (body walk), importance of portion sizes, healthy snacks, and the importance of exercise and movement. We share this award with you. Again thank you very much for your dedication and commitment to the students and stakeholders of Barbe Elementary School,” Ruffin-Hardy said.



**L-r: Ruffin-Hardy, McCarthy, and Sensley receive awards**



**Sensley** also taught a nutrition lesson from the “Let’s Eat for the Health of It” curriculum to 42 students in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class at SW Charter Academy in Lake Charles on December 4, 2014.



**Sensley teaches students how to prepare healthy meals.**



Wellness fair booth

**Lisa Weber,**  
Nutrition Educator for St. James and Ascension Parishes presented several nutrition topics at a Health and Wellness Fair that was held at St. James Catholic Church on Saturday, January 10, 2015.

Despite the cold weather in a small rural community, nearly 30 participants gathered to collect information about healthy living. Though the numbers were low, the questions were plentiful. For example, “how much is a serving?” “How can I cut my appetite?” and “why do I need to eat breakfast when I have never eaten breakfast

all my life?” were some of the questions participants were seeking answers to.

Five-year-old Teyana Jones and her six-year-old sister Tyler Ray went home and encouraged their grandfather to quit smoking after learning about the dangers of tobacco use that Hendrix Broussard, Orleans Parish, shared with them at the Health and Wellness Fair. Teyana also said that “pawpaw will lose his teeth if he doesn’t stop smoking,” reported her grandmother. Tyler said “I will start eating more vegetables; I eat too much junk food.”

The Health and Wellness Fair was sponsored by the SU and LSU Ag Centers, St. James Knights of Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary Council, Court 135 and St. James Catholic Church. The church is pastored by Father Chris Decker.

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### *In Memoriam*

#### **Mr. Wilbert Harris**



The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center mourns the loss of Wilbert Harris, Technology Specialist with the Southwest Center for Rural Initiatives. Harris passed away at his home on Friday, January 9.

Harris touched the lives of thousands of Louisiana residents through numerous computer literacy, social media and technology classes that he taught throughout the state. Harris also installed computers and provided technical support to more than 10 Rural Technology Centers in East and West Baton Rouge, Iberville, St. Helena, East Feliciana, Evangeline, St. Landry, Pointe Coupee, Tangipahoa and Rapides Parishes. He will be greatly missed.

## **Upcoming Events**

**February 15:** Horse seminar series for youth 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of every month from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. at Maurice A. Edmond Livestock Arena, Hwy. 61 North, Baker, La. To pre-register for the seminar or for additional information about the Southern University Ag Center's Horse Show Program, call 225.771.6208.

**February 21:** Building Opportunities through Leadership Development (BOLD) Training, SU Ag Center, Baton Rouge, La. Contact Kenyetta Smith at 225-771-5598.

**February 21:** Teen Leadership workshop, Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish. Contact Carol Sensley 337-475-8812.

**March 5-7: Annual Livestock & Poultry Show.** Maurice A. Edmond Livestock Arena, Baker, LA. Contact: Christie Monroe, 225-771-4350.

**March 15:** Horse seminar series for youth, 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of every month 3 p.m.-5 p.m. at Maurice A. Edmond Livestock Arena, Hwy. 61 North, Baker, La. To pre-register for the seminar or for additional information, call 225.771.6208.

**March 21:** Building Opportunities through Leadership Development (BOLD) Training, SU Ag Center, Baton Rouge, La. Contact Kenyetta Smith at 225-771-5598.

**March 24:** Nutrition Training, Lake Charles, Calcasieu Parish. Contact Carol Sensley 337-475-8812.

**April 9:** Annual Procurement conference, Southern University Smith Brown Memorial Union, on the Baton Rouge campus. Contact Gloria London at 225-771-2242.

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