

UNDER ONE ROOF

BUILDING COMMUNITIES IN THE DELTA

Mid South Delta LISC

October 2007



Sen. Willie Simmons, Rep. John Mayo, Deborah Anderson and Sen. Robert Jackson describe the work of the Mississippi Delta Revitalization Task Force.



Delegates visited the National Civil Rights Museum at Memphis, followed by a reception at Delta Research, Education and Development Foundation at West Memphis.

TEN YEARS: partnership and progress

You start with an idea, which is to help nonprofit groups turn depressed communities into healthy and sustainable ones. Every year you try to measure the power of the idea and the goal and search for ways to strengthen them.

The annual conference of community development corporations in the Middle South, "Under One Roof," undertakes that task. The 10th one at Tunica, Miss., in September furnished a good milepost in the developing partnership between Local Initiatives Support Corp. and CDCs and other nonprofits in the Delta regions of Mississippi, Arkansas and Louisiana.

By chance it was a milepost for two CDCs that organized a decade ago and illustrated the success of the partnership.

In those 10 years, said Clarence R. Smith, vice president of Mount Pleasant Community Development Corp. in Ouachita Parish, Louisiana, the CDC has put 735 families in that distressed community into homes that were either built or rehabilitated.

It developed 120 units of multi-family housing, 201 single-family homes, acquired 340 multi-family units through rehabilitation partnerships and has 74 single-family homes under construction. It recently began work on still another affordable housing development, the Kenneth Jackson Memorial Estates, named after the first chairman of the Mount Pleasant CDC in 1997. It will be the

first development undertaken by the CDC without a for-profit partner.

"LISC has been at our side since our inception," Smith said at the opening session of the conference.

It was also the 10th birthday of the Lee County Community Development Corp. at Marianna, Ark. More than 80 families have closed on new homes in the city after receiving homebuyer counseling and other assistance from the CDC to build or acquire and rehabilitate homes.

Lee County CDC runs a prototype Freedom School, a summer educational program for at-risk children conducted in collaboration with the Children's Defense Fund. In the second year of the school in 2007, Lee County CDC college interns tutored more than 80 children of the town.

This spring, the CDC began another model development program, the Sustainable Communities project. Renee Wilburn, executive director of the Lee County CDC, Jim Capraro, a community development consultant, and Glenn Nishimura, program director of Mid South Delta LISC, reviewed the first phase of the Marianna project at the conference's opening session.

More than 100 residents representing a broad cross-section of the community were interviewed about the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities facing the dwindling county-seat city, and people gathered for a town-hall meeting on the city square to begin crafting a strategic plan for raising the quality of life in the community. Marianna residents chose three goals to pursue — education and youth, economic development and civic engagement — and assigned task forces to identify projects to address those needs.

Other CDCs reported a range of activi-

ties during the year from affordable housing like Tunica County CDC's new 21-unit subdivision and St. Francis County (Ark.) Community Development Corp.'s contract with Forrest City to revitalize its downtown. Others reporting on their achievements were Macon Ridge CDC at Ferriday, La., Chicot Housing Assistance Corp. at Lake Village, Ark., Quitman County Development Organization at Marks, Miss., Esther Stewart Buford Foundation at Yazoo City, Miss., Mississippi County (Ark.) EOC at Blytheville, Boys, Girls, Adults CDC at Marvell, Ark., and Together for Hope in Phillips County, Ark.

The core of the conference this year as always was training. Expert panels conducted 23 training sessions on single- and multi-family housing development, organizational development, and national and state housing and economic policy.

Three Mississippi state lawmakers gave an optimistic report on the Delta Revitalization Task Force, an initiative of the Mississippi legislature that has come under some criticism because its first initiatives died in the legislature this year.

Rep. John Mayo, a sponsor of the bill creating the Task Force, said the project should not be viewed as a study but a process. Everyone already knew the problems facing the Delta region of the state, and the Task Force began the work of developing long-term solutions. Sen. Robert Jackson, a member of the Task Force, said the biggest challenge was to change the mindset of Delta people.

Sen. Willie Simmons said it took 200 years for the Delta to reach its current condition and that the Task Force should be given the latitude of not being expected to create miracles overnight. He recalled when Mississippi's congressional delegation wielded great power over the federal purse strings but it did the Delta no good. The state's connections in the Bill Clinton administration produced no transformation.

Deborah Anderson, who staffed the Task Force, agreed that the chief work was in altering attitudes of Delta people, starting with a feeble mindset about education.

Rev. Herron Wilson, the conference's keynote speaker, brought the same message. Wilson, director of Delta Missions Inc., said people working on development in the Delta should remain focused on seeing that every child got opportunities.

"Every youngster in the state of Mississippi and in your state is valuable and deserves a chance," Wilson said.

"My vision," he said, "is to take the Delta by a storm" but to do it by investing in one family at a time and one town at time.

A panel of foundation representatives that invest in the Delta gave the delegates tips on obtaining funding from charitable foundations. They were Gloria Dickerson of the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Jim Metzinger of the F. B. Heron Foundation, Bill Rahn of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation and Andrew Smith of the Foundation of the Mid South. Their messages were remarkably similar: Develop personal relationships with people at the foundations, demonstrate not what the problems are in your community but precisely the impact the grant will have on the creation of wealth among poor families, and demonstrate fiscal accountability.

Rahn said the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation generally limited its philanthropy to projects that would have an impact on Arkansas through education, economic development and economic, racial and social justice.

The conferees visited the National Civil Rights Museum at Memphis, at the site of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968.

It was the last conference for Nishimura, who stepped down this fall as program director for LISC. The conferees recognized Nishimura and Cathy Wilson, the retiring program officer for LISC, who had been with the organization since its formation in 1995. Nishimura said it had been an honor to work with people so deeply committed to improving the lives of people in the Delta and to bask in their achievements.



Herron Wilson



Beatrice Shelby of BGACDC shows off her door prize.



Andre Stephens (from right), Nina Dixon and Jerrod Anderson of the St. Francis County CDC review a year's good work.

LISC Local Advisory Committee

Ivy Allen

Foundation for the Mid South

Regina M. Austin

Fannie Mae Community Business Center

Alan P. Branson

Enterprise Corporation of the Delta

Gloria Dickerson

W. K. Kellogg Foundation

John C. Edwards

Attorney

Lydia P. Jackson

Capital One

George Penick

RAND Corporation

Hillis Schild

Regions Financial Corp.

Carolyn Shanks

Entergy Corporation

Ben Steinberg

Southern Bancorporation

Clinton: CDCs, LISC are national secrets

In the United States, the Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC) has been working with distressed communities since 1980 to promote the same kind of comprehensive economic progress the Millennium Development Goals envision for poor nations. LISC works through local community development corporations to create affordable housing, commercial, industrial and community facilities, businesses and jobs. It provides loans, grants and equity investments, technical and management assistance and support for more helpful government policies.

I am always surprised by how few Americans have heard about LISC's remarkable work. Since 1980, LISC has raised more than \$7.8 billion from 3,100 investors, lenders and donors. The funds have been put to use in more than 300 urban neighborhoods and rural communities to help 2,800 organizations build or rehabilitate more than 196,000 affordable houses and nearly 30 million square feet of retail, community and educational space. LISC operations have created more than 70,000 jobs, helped more than 100 businesses, developed 53 supermarkets and farmers' markets, built 120 child-care facilities for 11,000 kids, renovated 136 playing fields serving 120,000 children and financed 80 schools for 28,000 students.

Since 2003, LISC has worked to make the most of the 25 percent New Markets Tax Credit for investments in commercial projects, museums and artist spaces in poor neighborhoods and rural communities. It's a great incentive, but most investors don't know about it. So far LISC has invested in nine New Markets projects in several states.

I am especially proud of two other

— From *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World* by Bill Clinton, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

LISC efforts using AmeriCorps volunteers and helping communities damaged by Hurricane Katrina, Rita and Wilma. Since 1994, LISC has enlisted one thousand AmeriCorps volunteers in 18 cities from Boston to Los Angeles. In the hurricane-af-

There are more than 4,000 community development corporations today, with a wealth of experiences to be shared. They are really just investment vehicles that can be used to meet whatever the most pressing needs are.

— Bill Clinton

affected areas, it has already provided more than \$100 million in loans, grants and equity, repaired 610 homes, assisted 1,000 evacuee families, raised \$7.5 million for community development and started building more than 2,400 homes.

When he resigned as treasury secretary to return to private life, Bob Rubin became chairman of the board of LISC. In the White House and at Treasury, Bob supported my

initiatives to encourage more investment in low- and moderate-income communities. These efforts helped almost 8 million Americans to move from poverty to the middle class — after 12 years in which poverty rates had increased. He's still doing that with his partners at LISC.

If you're an investor who wants a proven model for doing well by doing good, you should contact LISC for opportunities. If you don't have that kind of money but want more productive investment in your community, rural or urban, get involved with your local community development corporation. The CDCs have been around since the first one was established in 1967 in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant section with the support of Sen. Robert Kennedy.

There are more than 4,000 community development corporations today, with a wealth of experiences to be shared. They are really just investment vehicles that can be used to meet whatever the most pressing needs are. If your city or town doesn't have one, you can set one up as a charitable 501©3 corporation, decide what you want to accomplish, and contact LISC about opportunities to work together.



The Soul Man, Billy Bonds, performs at the 30th Annual Mississippi Delta Blues and Heritage Festival sponsored by Mississippi Action for Community Education.

Macon Ridge, Tunica CDCs get HUD rural housing grants

The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development has approved grants to two community development corporations in the Mid South Delta to expand affordable housing and stimulate economic development.

They were among \$16.8 million grants provided nationwide through HUD's Rural Housing and Economic Development Program.

Tunica County Community Development Coalition at Tunica, Miss., will receive \$235,520, which will leverage another \$328,571 from public and private sources. The money will be used several ways, according to James Dunn, executive director of the Tunica County CDC. It will provide homeownership counseling, financial literacy and provide matching funds for a revolving construction loan fund to help

people in the communities acquire their own homes.

Macon Ridge Community Development Corp. at Ferriday, La., will use its \$243,800 RHED grant to conduct 16 homebuyer education workshops and eight financial literacy classes. Twenty lots in Ferriday will be developed for single-family homes. Mid South Delta LISC will be a partner in both projects.



Glenn Nishimura, senior program director of Mid South Delta LISC, and Cathy Wilson, program officer, were recognized for their years of service to the Delta at LISC's 10th conference of CDCs.

George Miles takes reins at Mid South Delta LISC

George Miles of New Orleans, who has 20 years of experience in community development and banking, became program director of Mid South Local Initiatives Support Corp. on Oct. 1, replacing Glenn Nishimura, who resigned after a decade with Mid South Delta LISC.

Miles since 2003 has been executive director of Community Development Capital in New Orleans, an affordable housing loan fund that focuses investments on neighborhood revitalization. It has financed the acquisition or renovation of more than 1,000 properties and channeled nearly \$20 million into distressed neighborhoods.

Prior to joining the community development financial institution he was a senior business manager for four years with Fannie Mae in Washington and prior to that senior product development manager and

senior business analyst with Fannie Mae.

Miles received a bachelor's degree in business administration and political science at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, his hometown, and an MBA at Tulane University in New Orleans. He was assistant vice president of the First National Bank at McGehee, Ark., and worked as a contract consultant for Morgan Keegan investment bankers at Little Rock.



George Miles



Mid South Delta LISC
119 South Theobald Street
Greenville, MS 38701

PRST STANDARD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
CONWAY, AR
PERMIT NO. 345

MID SOUTH DELTA LISC

Greenville Office

119 S. Theobald Street
Greenville, MS 38701
(662) 335-3318
(662) 335-3884 (fax)

Latah Holloway, Program Assistant
David Jackson, Senior Program Officer
George Miles, Program Director
Chontina Singleton, Administrative Assistant

Tallulah Office

P.O. Box 1171
520 Snyder Street, Suite 106
Tallulah, LA 71284-1171
(318) 574-6077
(318) 574 5002 (fax)
Andy Saavedra, Program Officer

Key Supporters of LISC

- | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| Arkansas Development Finance Authority | Foundation for the Mid South | U.S. Dept. of Agriculture |
| CHRISTUS Health | William Randolph Hearst Foundations | U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development |
| Entergy Corp. | F. B. Heron Foundation | Walton Family Foundation |
| Charles A. Frueauff Foundation | W. K. Kellogg Foundation | Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation |
| Enterprise Corp. of the Delta | Mississippi Home Corp. | Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation |
| Fannie Mae Foundation | Regions Bank | |