

Providing research-based community rural development programs and technical assistance to the communities of rural Louisiana

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Launching the Delta Rural Development Center

Welcome to the first volume of the LSU Agricultural Center's Delta Rural Development Center (DRDC) newsletter!

The DRDC is located at Oak Grove, La in the Thomas Jason Lingo Community Center. The DRDC collaborates with public and private organizations to promote community rural development.

The DRDC primarily serves the Delta Region of Northeast Louisiana. The DRDC faculty deliver research-based educational programs in entrepreneurship, leadership, agricultural enterprise development and rural tourism to the communities of rural Louisiana.

Connecting Rural Louisiana

The February 2006 Pew/Internet and American Life Project reported that only 24 percent of rural Americans have broadband connection at home compared to 39 percent of urban and suburban residents. Why the gap?

According to the Government Accounting Office (GAO), the cost of providing service is prohibitive due to fewer rural customers. The GAO also reported information

Rural development efforts at the DRDC utilize a team-based approach. Faculty provide communities with technical assistance to create and strengthen regional economic development



The LSU Agricultural Center's Delta Rural Development Center is located at 10284 Hwy 17, Oak Grove, La.

initiatives and collaborations, such as the Rural Community College Initiative, *Connect Carroll*, Louisiana Delta 65 Inc., Discover Northeast

Louisiana Outdoors, the Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana and more.

In this issue, we briefly discuss one of our community initiatives, *Connect Carroll*, which identifies the important connection between broadband internet connectivity and the economic development of rural areas. We also list community initiatives, programs and contact information for our faculty.

If you have questions about our community rural development programs, please call the DRDC at (318) 428-3571.

*Dr. James Barnes
 Assistant Professor &
 Director of the DRDC*

about existing provider services and the volume of potential rural customers is difficult to estimate, which contributes to the gap in coverage. This is true in rural Louisiana, too.

The DRDC has responded in two ways. First, we have begun a pilot project called *Connect Carroll* whereby faculty have begun collecting and mapping rural customers and existing broadband ser-

vice in East and West Carroll. Also, the DRDC held a meeting with legislators, internet providers, higher education officials and representatives from Louisiana Economic Development on February 7 to discuss how rural areas in other states have been better connected through the work of an organization called ConnectedNation. We are considering a partnership with this organization as we work with local governments and communities to *Connect Carroll*.

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CLED

At the DRDC, we offer three leadership programs. In this issue, we explain the Community Leadership and Economic Development (CLED) program.

CLED is a leadership development program that has been co-sponsored by the LSU AgCenter, Louisiana Electric Cooperatives, the Louisiana Public Facilities Authority and the Police Jury Association of Louisiana, Inc., as an effort to combine leadership skills training with community and economic development strategies.

The curriculum addresses team building, leadership style assessment, communication, negotiations, understanding the specific community's structure and demographics, comprehensive economic analysis and the identification of relative community economic development issues and concerns.

The typical cost of the ten-week program is approximately \$3,000. CLED is usually taught one night a week for ten consecutive weeks in three-hour sessions. To date, more than 500 people in 14 parishes have completed CLED. Almost half of the participants have either been a candidate for an elected office or appointed to a board or commission. More than 81 percent reported that they have been involved in community projects since completing the class.

The program has led to the creation of recycling programs, farmers' markets, job fairs, welfare to work projects, recreational trails, community enrichment centers, housing and retirement facilities, downtown development, industrial parks, business retention and expansion programs, day-care centers, and efforts to improve water, drainage, zoning, education and transportation issues.

If you have questions about CLED, please contact us or the DRDC.

*Dr. Sandy Dooley &
Dr. Karen Overstreet*

Community Initiatives

Economic Alliance of North Louisiana:

Membership is comprised of mayors, police jurors, chambers of commerce, tourism groups and others interested in creating a sustainable economy through education and building local partnerships in the parishes of Bienville, Claiborne, Jackson, Lincoln, Winn and Union.

Festivals Roundtable: Hosted by the LSU AgCenter and Louisiana Delta 65 Inc. festival planners from northeast Louisiana initiated a roundtable format to network and enhance existing festivals and events and initiate new ones as a community and economic development tool.

Leadership: Faculty from DRDC are working with community leaders from East and West Carroll parishes to establish leadership programs featuring the Leadership Plenty curriculum. This leadership program will begin in late spring.

Louisiana Delta 65 Inc.: A five parish rural tourism marketing organization (East Carroll, Madison, Tensas, Concordia and West Carroll parishes) focused upon increasing visibility of assets and strengthening promotion as a region. (www.ladelta65.org)

Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Association:

Louisiana and Mississippi have 33 parishes/counties represented in a new rural tourism promotion organization focused on increasing the sustainable economic impact of tourism. This group will host the third annual Miss-Lou Summit in August.

Rural Community College Initiative:

This Southern Rural Development Center project created a regional collaboration among Delta Community College, Louisiana Technical College, LSU AgCenter and Southern University. It focuses on promoting educational programs and courses offered to residents of the region.

Upcoming Workshops



E-Business Workshop: A two-part workshop that teaches individuals how to start a small business and take it to the next level by creating an online presence. Individuals may choose to register for one or both sessions.

Part I, “Starting Your Own Business,” is recommended for individuals planning to start, or who have

recently started, or want to expand a small business and those seeking a small business loan. Topics of discussion include business feasibility, business planning, sources of funding, small business resources and required licenses. This class is taught from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. on day one of the workshop series.

Part II, “Starting Your Online Business” teaches participants to select and acquire a domain name, design a Web site, select meta-tags and a Web host, explore online payment options and marketing techniques and learn how to provide security for online shoppers. This 9 hour course is taught from 1 to 4 p.m. on day one and 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on day two of the workshop series.

Part I and II workshops will be offered in the summer 2008. If you are interested, please contact the DRDC.

“Starting A Home-Based Business”: This three-hour workshop taught in collaboration with the Small Business Development Center at LSU Shreveport and provides participants with information on evaluating their business ideas, financing, licensing and registration, taxes, business plans and marketing.

If you would like to receive the next quarterly newsletter via email, please send an email to jbarnes@agcenter.lsu.edu and place “Join DRDC newsletter” in the subject line.

For more about the **LSU AgCenter** visit www.lsuagcenter.com.

Calendar of Events

March		Force, LSU AgCenter, St. Joseph, 5 p.m.	Crystal Rice Plantation, Crowley, 9 to 10:30 a.m., (337) 783-6417
18	Tensas Beautification Task Force, LSU AgCenter St. Joseph, 5 p.m.	17 Louisiana Delta 65 Inc., LSU AgCenter, Tallulah, 9:30 a.m.	28 Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana, Ruston Civic Center, 9 to 10:30 a.m.
	Connecting Businesses with Contracts Procurement Conference, SU Ag Center, Baton Rouge, 8 a.m. to 2 p.m.	29 Louisiana Agri-Culinary Assn. Crystal Rice Plantation, Crowley, 9 to 10:30 a.m., (337) 783-6417	June
20	Louisiana Delta 65 Inc., LSU AgCenter, Tallulah, 9:30 a.m.	30 Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana, Ruston Civic Center, 9 to 10:30 a.m.	17 Tensas Beautification Task Force, LSU AgCenter, St. Joseph, 5 p.m.
25	Louisiana Agri-Culinary Assn. Crystal Rice Plantation, Crowley, 9 to 10:30 a.m., (337)783-6417	May	19 Louisiana Delta 65 Inc., LSU AgCenter, Tallulah, 9:30 a.m.
26	Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana, Ruston Civic Center, 9 to 10:30 a.m.	7-8 Board Training, The Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Alexandria	24 Louisiana Agri-Culinary Assn., Crystal Rice Plantation, Crowley, 9 to 10:30 a.m., (337) 783-6417
April		15 Louisiana Delta 65 Inc., LSU AgCenter, Tallulah, 9:30 a.m.	25 Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana, Ruston Civic Center, 9 to 10:30 a.m.
8	Starting a Home-Based Business workshop, 6 to 9 p.m. Arcadia Town Hall	20 Tensas Beautification Task Force, LSU AgCenter, St. Joseph, 5 p.m.	
15	Tensas Beautification Task	27 Louisiana Agri-Culinary Assn.	