

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

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Building Community Collaborations

Alliances, coalitions and partnerships are usually synonymous with collaborations. Collaborations span different boundaries, including local, regional, state, multi-state and sometimes national.

Simply put, collaboration is a process that aligns interests and goals to get people to work together in new and different ways. When this happens, group communication changes from “I” and “you” to “we,” “us” and “our.”

But why should people work together in collaboration? The main reason is to access information, new personal networks, money and other resources. When communities work together in collaboration, they can also leverage

resources to organize efforts to bring about community change. When communities work together, they are more likely to achieve greater results than working alone.



Building a community collaboration requires understanding a four-stage process: (1) Bring people together; (2) Organize the collaboration process; (3) Develop an action plan; and (4) Sustain the collaboration.

One of the strengths of the faculty working in the LSU

AgCenter’s Delta Rural Development Center (DRDC) is supporting communities through these collaboration building stages. The DRDC provides several educational programs that can be used to start and grow community collaborations.

Here is a short list of collaborations supported by LSU AgCenter faculty in rural Louisiana: the Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana, the Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI), Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Association and Connect Carroll, to name a few.

To learn more about the four-stage process for building a collaboration, see the article on page two.

Dora Ann Hatch



Rich with amenities, traditions and culture, many communities in the Louisiana Delta region remain in poverty.

In November 2004, an observation and a phone call from a concerned citizen who was new to the area began a journey that has culminated in the development of a regional

organization focused on promotion of sustainable rural tourism.

LSU AgCenter community rural development agents provided leadership as coaches for the organizational process which includes West Carroll, East Carroll, Madison, Tensas and Concordia parishes.

Since its organization in December, 2005, Louisiana Delta 65, Inc. has established a board of directors, articles

of incorporation and by-laws, 501(3)(c) status, Web presence, membership meetings, speakers’ bureau and co-sponsorship of a multi-state tourism conference known as the Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Summit.

To learn more about the Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Summit in 2008, see the article on page three.

Dr. Kay Lynn Tettleton & Dr. Cynthia Pilcher

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Leadership Plenty

At the DRDC, we provide leadership educational programs. One program is called Leadership Plenty (LP). The premise of the LP Program is leaders are plentiful in communities yet they need to gain skills in how to build partnerships, resolve conflicts in groups and manage meetings more effectively. All of these skills are necessary to be an effective leader.

The LP Program is comprehensive and focuses on how individuals within groups can learn to work together and take action on behalf of their communities. The LP Program equips participants with the skills, attitudes and relationships required to build stronger communities and organizations. Each of the nine sessions builds on another focusing on group dynamics, exploring specific techniques for managing meetings, dealing with conflict and developing

partnerships, and then focusing on skills needed to plan and implement concrete projects to address such specific challenges in communities as reducing crime, strengthening access to education, and more.

The LP Program has nine modules and classes usually meet for approximately two-and-a-half hours per module. Participants are sponsored by such local organizations such as a Chamber of Commerce. Sponsorship covers the cost of materials and food during the program.

Currently, East and West Carroll Parishes have organized groups to attend the LP Program. The East Carroll class, sponsored by the East Carroll/Lake Providence Chamber of Commerce, began in March and will end May 27. The West Carroll class starts August 4.

If you would like to know more about this program, please feel free to contact the DRDC.

*Dr. James Barnes
Dora Ann Hatch
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Four Stages of Building a Collaboration

Stage 1: Bringing people together begins when an “initiator” discusses his “idea” with another person. The initiator then approaches others sometimes in one-on-one conversations or in group settings disclosing his idea.

The momentum grows as more individuals and organizations become involved and soon the initiator begins to extend invitations to the “right people,” those who can help make the idea become a reality. After the collaborate group forms, individuals or organizations declare their self interests, determine how they can work together and begin to build trust within their group.

Stage 2: Organizing the collaboration is the beginning of organizational structure. The group decides on the structure for the organization and selects a leader. The leader may be the person or persons who brought the group together or can be someone different. After deciding on a structure, the group creates mission and vision statements and work to secure a commitment from its members and/or the organizations they represent. During this stage, one should expect conflict,

because individuals are becoming a “we.”

Stage 3: Develop a plan creates a plan of action. At this stage organizations and individuals contribute resources. By contributing resources, individuals and organizations are making an investment and declaring the importance of the group. During this stage it may become necessary to add new members for expertise or resources as new needs arise. To maintain direction and focus for the group, evaluate at each stage of the action plan.

Stage 4: Sustaining the collaboration is the final stage. To sustain the collaboration, publicize the collaboration, its members and organizations for the work they are achieving. Provide success stories to newspapers, television stations and public meetings to document their achievements. When the work is complete and its time to move on, know when to dissolve the collaboration so that members and organizations can continue to support the community through their efforts in other endeavors.

Dora Ann Hatch

2008 Miss-Lou Tourism Summit

August 12 - 14, Vicksburg, Mississippi

Cultivating Your Community with Fresh Air

Building upon comments from the 2006 (Natchez) and 2007 (Vidalia) conference participants, the steering committee has provided educational sessions packed with a variety of learning experiences that explore topics appropriate for developing and enhancing rural tourism in this multi-state region. The 2008 conference theme is *Cultivating Your Community with Fresh Air* hopes to provide community and tourism leaders with the skills needed to identify resources, create attractions and market rural tourism. This year's conference will focus on nature-based and agri-tourism opportunities.

This Summit is a result of a collaborative effort of the Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Association, LSU AgCenter, Mississippi State University Extension Service, Louisiana Office of Tourism, Mississippi Development Authority (Division of Tourism), Southern Rural Development Center and a host of others. Here's a synopsis of the conference schedule:

Tuesday, August 12:

9:30 a.m. Pre-conference tour (optional); \$25
The Louisiana Delta Tour (Hermoine House, High Delta Safari, Poverty Point Historic Site, Thomas Jason Lingo Community Center, Panola Pepper, the Louisiana Cotton Museum and Grant's Canal)

*Events to be held at the Southern Culture Heritage Center:

1 p.m. Exhibit set-up
1- 5 p.m. Registration
4 p.m. Opening session
Keynote address: *Nature-based/Eco-tourism*
Agri-tourism Panel Discussion
6:30 p.m. Reception

Wednesday, August 13:

9:00 a.m. Curator's tour of the Old Courthouse Museum
10:15 a.m. Board buses for Rolling Fork
Step-on speakers, *Swamp Tours/Corn Mazes*
Boxed lunch
Farm Tours
Louisiana Birding Trails
The Great River Birding Trails
Update on Public Policy from both states
Tour of Mont Helena
Tour Delta National Forest
4:45 p.m. Leave Rolling Fork to return to Vicksburg
Step-on Speakers, *Swamp Tours/Corn Mazes*
6 p.m. Reception at the BB Club

Thursday, August 14:

8:30 a.m. City Auditorium
Capnote address: *Value of Parks and Public Lands to Rural Tourism*
10 a.m. Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Association meeting
11:30 a.m. Adjourn

Conference Registration:

Optional pre-conference tour (August 12): \$25
Early registration (by July 1): \$75
Registration (after July 1): \$100

<http://srdc.msstate.edu/misslou>

Dr. Cynthia Pilcher

About the Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Association

The Miss-Lou Rural Tourism Association organized with the purpose of planning and implementing educational programs targeted to agencies and organizations focusing on tourism-related issues and owners of tourism-related operations in the Miss-Lou region. This region is defined as being the following 17 counties and 16 parishes: **Louisiana** – Avoyelles, Catahoula, Concordia, East Carroll, East Feliciana, Franklin,

Madison, Point Coupee, Richland, St. Helena, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Tensas, Washington, West Carroll and West Feliciana parishes

Mississippi – Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Copiah, Franklin, Hancock, Issaquena, Jefferson, Lamar, Lincoln, Marion, Pearl River, Pike, Sharkey, Walthall, Warren and Wilkinson counties

The 2008 officers include Sally Durkin (MS), president; Glen McGlothlin

(LA), President-Elect; Karlyn Ritchie (MS), Secretary and Walter Tipton (MS), Treasurer. The Board of Directors include: Guylyn Boles (LA), Dottie Burt (MS), Kay Burton (MS), Wilbert Carmouche (LA), Meg Cooper (MS), Janice Guido (MS), Tina Johnson (LA), Kathi Mayor (LA), Vicki Netterville (MS), Kathy Nunnery (LA), Lynette Tanner (LA) and Polly Rosenblatt (MS).

Dr. Cynthia Pilcher

Community Initiatives

Community Asset Mapping: 4-H’ers, elected officials and faculty from the DRDC are mapping the broadband infrastructure in Oak Grove with geographic information systems (GIS) tools to support economic development projects.

Connect Carroll: Faculty from DRDC have begun working with local internet providers and others to map the broadband internet connectivity in West and East Carroll parishes to identify the significant gaps in service and to engage internet providers and community institutions to work collaboratively.

Delta Outdoors and Wildlife Association: A 12 parish organization focused on enhancing outdoor recreation and rural tourism in northeast Louisiana. (www.deltaoutdoors.org)

Louisiana Agri-Culinary Association: This newly organized group is developing a farm to table food eating experience that highlights the origin of foods grown in the Cajun region. The traveler’s dining experience also includes excursions to agricultural and cultural locations.

Tensas Beautification Task Force: This newly organized group in Tensas Parish has been meeting since July with goals of improving beautification issues and enhancing community development parish-wide.

Tools for Small Business Enhancement : Workshops available for business owners and employees designed to improve customer service and business practices. Scheduled by request, these classes are presented in 45 minute sessions combined to create a three hour workshop.

Community Rural Development Events

JUNE

- June 3 Entergy Team Conference, Baton Rouge, La
- June 19 Louisiana Delta 65 Inc., 9:30 a.m., Tallulah, Extension office
- June 23-25 Delta Regional Authority Annual Conference. Visit [Http:\www.dra.gov](http://www.dra.gov)
- June 25 Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana, 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. Ruston Civic Center

JULY

- July 17 Louisiana Delta 65 Inc. 9:30 a.m., Tallulah, Extension office
- July 20-22 Business Retention and Expansion Training, Sponsored by the Southern Rural Development Center, Galveston, Tx [Http://srdc.msstate.edu/economic/bre.htm](http://srdc.msstate.edu/economic/bre.htm)
- July 30 Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana, 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. Ruston Civic Center

AUGUST

- August 12-14 Miss-Lou Regional Tourism Summit, Vicksburg
- August 21 Louisiana Delta 65 Inc., 9:30 a.m., Tallulah, Extension office
- August 27 Economic Alliance of North Central Louisiana, , 9:00 to 10:30 a.m. Ruston Civic Center

SEPTEMBER

- September 18 Louisiana Delta 65 Inc, 9:30 a.m., Tallulah, Extension office
- September 24-26 Southern University AgCenter’s Community and Faith Leadership Development Conference, Clarion Hotel and Conference Center,

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.