



HIGHLIGHTS

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Kellogg Conference Center * www.twitter.com/pawctu

The PAWC Draws to a Close with Words of Wisdom from Ag Veterans



State Executive Director Daniel Robinson of the Alabama Farm Service Agency



State Executive Director Fred Harrison of the Georgia Farm Service Agency



State Executive Director Wilfred L. Pace of the South Carolina Farm Service Agency

On the last day of the PAWC, three men with more than a hundred years of combined experience in agriculture spoke during the James Hill Memorial Plenary Session, highlighting accomplishments made during their tenures and offering words of encouragement for those concerned about the future of farming, especially for minorities.

Each director emphasized some variation of this point: the Farm Service Agency must never forget that “service” is its middle name.

Wilfred L. Pace, State Executive Director of the South Carolina Farm Service Agency, addressed the “responsibility as a citizen and as a public servant” that every agency director must have, and Daniel Robinson, State Executive Director of the Alabama Farm Service Agency, said he challenged his staff “to go the extra mile” and be more diligent in providing aid, especially to distressed farmers. “Our job is to try to find a way to ensure that those farmers can benefit from us,” he said, and apparently his focus on service has paid off, as he reported that the agency increased the number of loans awarded since 2012 by 150 percent.

As for what lies ahead for those wishing to enter into the agricultural field, Fred Harrison, State Executive Director of the Georgia Farm Service Agency, was optimistic: “There’s a future in agriculture for young people,” he said. “We’re not going to quit eating.” Still, he admitted more had to be done to cultivate new talent. “We’ve got to graduate more young people to take these jobs, especially at the FSA.”

Planting the Seed Early: Community Leaders on Making Gardening Cool



(L-R) Lindsey Lunsford, Daniel Sullen, Lillie Webb



BeLinda Hart

Tip of the Day:

Addressing how to get support from potential sponsors and community partners:

“Always ask for advice. If you ask for advice, they’ll give you money. If you just ask for money, you might just end up with advice.”

--Lunsford

Lillie Webb—a teacher at M.E. Lewis Elementary School in Sparta, Georgia—was one of the speakers in the session titled “Community and School Gardens: Different Approaches Across the Black Belt Region.” In 2004, Webb was instrumental in creating a summer program that introduced children to gardening, while also improving their critical thinking skills. The program, which is still going strong, requires students to write about what they’re doing in order to see that through gardening they’re learning to love nature, enjoy healthful foods, and respect their bodies.

Lindsey Lunsford, the outgoing project coordinator for Tuskegee United Leadership and Innovation Program (TULIP) works with the young and old alike. Everyone, she said, from “PhDs to parolees.” Lunsford urged those seeking to change their communities to not sit back and wait for a big sponsor to show up with “a \$10,000 donation or...a ribbon and a check,” but, instead, to focus on the assets within a community: people with a fire to change their surroundings and “centuries of agricultural knowhow.”

Daniel Sullen, a 4-H foundation agent, is also used to having limited resources, but he is still able to engage the youth he works with in various Alabama counties. In fact, he’s been heartened by how attached they become to the gardens he helps them to plant and the number of life lessons they learn in the process.

All the speakers said their projects have value that extends beyond nutrition. BeLinda Hart, an eighth-grade physical science teacher at Tuskegee Institute Middle School who supervises a garden there that’s maintained by the students, states she can already see a difference in their attitudes since the project began. “If we keep on,” she said, “we’re going to have some very conscious-minded students, some conscious-minded citizens.”

Dr. Walker Receives Tribute



Sharon Wade-Byrd of South Carolina State University

The late Dr. James H. Walker, Jr., who for many years was “the engine that drove the 1890 program” at South Carolina State University, was honored at the Memorial Luncheon & Lecture. Sharon Wade-Byrd described Dr. Walker as “a true leader and advocate for the people” concerned about passing the torch and helping others discover their leadership potential. His death, she said, “left a void in our organization; however, we’re better because we knew him and we’re wiser because of his wisdom.”

Reflections: The Value of the PAWC



Masego Moobi (University of Pretoria)

Moobi, along with a group of other fellowship students traveled from South Africa to attend a conference at Cornell in Ithaca, New York, before coming to the PAWC, which she said has been a “very interesting” conference. In the past three days, Moobi, a second-year master’s student, has learned a lot to take back with her especially in her area of interest: agricultural economics.



Laura Rogers (Kentucky State University)

A small farm area agent at KSU’s extension program, beekeeper Laura Rogers has been inspired by the PAWC. She’s also taken a lot of notes in order to have more information to share with her classes: “There are people that make different comments and I write down what they say and use it in my success stories.”



Catherine Barnett (Restaurant Opportunities Centers United)

Catherine Barnett, the Executive Director of ROC-NY, said she has gained a lot of insight while at the PAWC. Restaurant Opportunities Centers United’s mission is to improve conditions and wages for restaurant workers, so the discussions that have dealt with the intersection of food and politics have been particularly enlightening.