LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

How we respond to change often defines the trajectory of people, organizations, communities, and governments. For some rural communities in the southern United States, 2017 brought about new situations while for many others, changing economies, demographics and resources from the past were the order of the day. Regardless, adapting to change with a strategy for success is a necessary component in an evolving environment. The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) has been assisting rural communities adapt to change for over 40 years through its partnership with the Cooperative Extension Service (outreach) and Experiment Stations (research) at the Land-Grant Universities in the 13 southern states and territories of Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

A major change in 2017 was the change in the nation’s executive branch administration and the consequent changes in personnel and policies. Although many of these changes are awaiting implementation, it appears that rural America will be a focus area, both in infrastructure and technical assistance. This latter area is especially relevant to the Land-Grant and SRDC missions. Recently, several areas have emerged (or reemerged) as priorities, all of which fall into the SRDC’s wheelhouse. These include broadband access and adoption, workforce development, local community decision-making, and improving the quality of life in rural communities.

We often hear about the challenges faced by rural communities, but here at SRDC we are fortunate to see many of the successful programs, initiatives, and activities in rural places throughout the South. We have found that communities can improve their situation and Land-Grant University partners are often the catalyst for these improvements. As I continue to work with these colleagues and other organizations in the South, I am impressed with the breadth and depth of knowledge and experience throughout the region. I am also struck by the commitment and passion they exhibit in their work. It is apparent that each institution/organization is addressing local, state, regional, and national needs with a tailored approach based on their resources and targeted population.

A sampling of the SRDC’s activities in 2017 are presented in this calendar. As you progress through 2018, I encourage you to focus on what you can do for your local community. We know that the social capital of a community is an important ingredient to growth, resilience, and prosperity. In closing, the SRDC thanks its Board of Directors, Technical Operation and Advisory Committee, and USDA’s National Institute for Food and Agriculture for their leadership and investments. And strong partnerships with USDA Rural Development, Agricultural Marketing Service, Economic Research Service, and other agencies provide the SRDC access to relationships that further the mission of our Land-Grant University partners. The SRDC, along with the other three Regional Rural Development Centers, continues to be a vital resource for rural communities in America. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Steve Turner
Director, SRDC
The Southern Rural Development Center seeks to strengthen the capacity of the region’s 30 Land-Grant institutions to address critical contemporary rural development issues impacting the well-being of people and communities in the rural South.

Priorities:
- Develop Pathways to Resilient Communities
- Build Strategic Partnerships
- Mobilize Resources around Emerging Issues and Opportunities

**MISSION**

**CONTACT US**

P.O. Box 5187 | 150 Lloyd-Ricks-Watson
Mississippi State, MS 39762
Phone: 662.325.3207 | Fax: 662.325.8777

**Websites**

Southern Rural Development Center
srdc.msstate.edu

Regional Rural Development Centers
rrdc.info
**RURAL AMERICA COUNTS**

14% of U.S. residents care for the nation’s rural lands, which comprise 72% of the U.S. land mass.

**RURAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

- **Agriculture and Food**
  74% of US farm land is rural.

- **Water**
  72% of the nation’s water is in rural areas.

- **Raw Materials**
  50% of employment related to vital raw materials is in rural places (gold, silver, clay, sand).

- **Energy Economy**
  55% of geothermal electric power generation is rural.

- **Recreation Economy**
  67% of all forest land is in rural areas.

**RURAL CHALLENGES**

**Migration, 2000-2010**

- 20-30 year olds: -30%
- 30-35 year olds: +10%

**Education**

- Distance traveled to school: Increased
- Transportation costs: Decreased

**Health Outcomes**

- Traumatic injury: Increased
- Deaths from top 5 causes: Increased
- Distance to emergency services: Increased

**Poverty in Rural Places**

85.3% of persistent-poverty counties are rural.

**Broadband Access**

For every 1 urban resident without broadband, 10 rural residents lack access.

Learn more: [http://srdc.msstate.edu/ruralamerica/index.html](http://srdc.msstate.edu/ruralamerica/index.html)
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The overall goal of the SERA 47 project is to build capacity within the local food system across the Southern region. To guide efforts, a Delphi Study was conducted to identify the ten most pressing issues facing local foods systems. The study, led by Quisto Settle engaged university experts (faculty, county agents, administrators, etc.) with questions about local food systems over three rounds. The resulting top ten concerns are depicted below.

1. Marketing & Promotion
2. Profitability
3. Support for Local Food Systems
4. Regulations
5. Infrastructure
6. Education of the Public
7. Coordination of Efforts
8. Farming Practices/Knowledge
9. Accessibility/Affordability
10. Lack of Farms & Farmers

Learn more: http://srdc.msstate.edu/foods/index.html
SOUTHERN REGION COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT EXTENSION IMPACTS

Land Grant Universities throughout the South report on indicators of community development Extension efforts annually. These are the 2017 impacts.

- **143** Number of new alliances or networks formed through some type of formal agreement or MOU
- **28,554** Number of jobs created/retained
- **2,601** Number of new businesses created, retained, or expanded
- **341** Number of plans adopted and implemented in community, agency, local government, business, or disaster
- **7,260** Number of participants who report new leadership roles & opportunities undertaken

**LEVERAGING EXTENSION INVESTMENTS**

- **$1,130,798** Value of in-kind resources contributed by organizations or communities
- **$232,008,688** Grants acquired by organizations or communities
- **124** Full Time Equivalents
- **12** Universities Reporting

Learn more: http://rrdc.info/srdcindicators.html
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- **Saint Patrick’s Day**
- **Daylight Savings Begins**
Partnered with four rural libraries to allow patrons to check out hotspot devices for one week. Libraries are averaging 16 checkouts per month and waitlists range from eight to 20 people.
Contact: Dave Shideler
dave.shideler@okstate.edu

Supported resiliency and hazard mitigation workshops in nine Texas counties with nearly 300 key stakeholders.
Contact: Mark Waller
mwaller@tamu.edu

Provided education on statewide ballot initiatives to 11,775 people through educational classes, meetings, one-on-one consultations, displays and distribution of nearly 23,000 printed copies of the Ballot Issue Voter Guide.
Contact: Stacey McCullough
smccullough@uaex.edu

Joined a multi-agency partnership that helped Washington County secure funding, replace a library roof, repave a thoroughfare, address blighted properties, and initiate a cleanup campaign.
Contact: Keith Coble
keith.coble@msstate.edu

Offered two series of agritourism workshops on legal and financial liabilities, emergency planning, and safety management, which were attended by 100 people.
Contact: Matt Fannin
mfannin@lsu.edu

Facilitated community workshops on 504 eligibility requirements and awarded 75 repair grants of $7,500 each to low-income families for a total of $562,500.
Contact: Jimmy Henry
jheenry@pvamu.edu

To read the full stories go to rrdc.info/srdcindicators.html
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Partnered with Operation HOPE in Birmingham, AL and successfully conducted a 12-week small business workshop to over 30 current and aspiring entrepreneurs.

Contact: Jazmine Brantley
jnbo035@auburn.edu

Increased access to healthy food and physical activity in two counties with above 40% obesity by starting community gardens, creating walking trails, addressing healthy food retail, increasing youth development, and improving school nutrition.

Contact: Andrea Scarrow
ascarrow@uga.edu

Led First Impressions in Pulaski County resulting in rebranding the golf courses, launching new marketing campaigns, refocusing the local realtors’ association’s marketing strategy, and exploring ways to communicate the community’s identity through public art.

Contact: Alison Davis
alison.davis@uky.edu

Worked to increase farm viability by exploring a possible milk condensing plant, generating $310,000 in USDA grants, supporting development of an area wine trail and American Viticulture Area application, and saved $200,000 based on feasibility study.

Contact: Sreedhar Upendram
supendra@utk.edu

Six homes were rehabilitated, saving 11 residents approximately $22,786 in rehab services, plus $9,798 by using volunteer labor, providing an average cost savings of 33% per home.

Contact: Joy Moten-Thomas
thomasb@fvsu.edu

Increased access to healthy food and physical activity in two counties with above 40% obesity by starting community gardens, creating walking trails, addressing healthy food retail, increasing youth development, and improving school nutrition.

Contact: Andrea Scarrow
ascarrow@uga.edu

Implemented a new economic development model by establishing structured mentorship opportunities for undergraduate students, by bringing prospective entrepreneurs for lectures, and creating and expanding strategic relationships with municipalities.

Contact: Kathy Coleman
kclmn@clemson.edu

Six homes were rehabilitated, saving 11 residents approximately $22,786 in rehab services, plus $9,798 by using volunteer labor, providing an average cost savings of 33% per home.

Contact: Joy Moten-Thomas
thomasb@fvsu.edu

Built the capacity of more than 700 locally-elected, community-based and emerging leaders in 2016.

Contact: Crystal Tyler-Macey
cmtley@vt.edu

To read the full stories go to rrdc.info/srdcindicators.html
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- May 13: Mother's Day
- May 25: Memorial Day
- May 8-10: National Health Outreach Conference: Bloomington, MN
In 2017, the Community Resource Development (CRD) specialists in the Southern region continued their successful webinar series aimed at showcasing some of the best community development programs the region has to offer. The series will continue throughout 2018.

**January**
Community-Centered Design: How to Empower Residents to Shape the Development of their Communities
Dan Parham, Neighborland
Michelle Eley, North Carolina A&T State University

**March**
How Latino-Owned Businesses Thrive: Comprehensive Findings from Limited-Access Microdata
Craig Wesley Carpenter, Texas A&M University
Scott Loveridge, Michigan State University

**April**
Show Me the Money: Funding and Financing for Community and Economic Development
Mark Peterson, University of Arkansas

**May**
A Comprehensive Downtown Revitalization Program for Rural Kentucky
Alison Davis, University of Kentucky

**June**
Utilizing Extension as a Tool to Preserve Your Community’s Housing Stock
Joy Moten-Thomas, Fort Valley State University

**July**
The Development of Utility-Scale Solar: Tales of Local Government
Jonah Fogel, Virginia Tech University

**August**
Choosing the Best Legal Structure for Your 21st Century Small Business
Becky Bowen, North Carolina State Cooperative Extension

**October**
The Role of Arts in Cooperative Extension
Melissa Bond & Sky Marietta, University of Kentucky

**November**
Crowdfunding Your Startup: Capital for Today's Entrepreneur
Talia Washington, Prairie View A&M University

**December**
Starting a Rural Library Hotspot Lending Program
Brian Whitacre, Oklahoma State University

To view archives and explore the 2018 webinar slate, go to: srdc.msstate.edu/trainings/crdwebinars.html
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- **Father's Day**
- **National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals Conference: Cleveland, OH**
Stronger Economies Together (SET)

SUCCESS STORIES

BROADBAND

Southwest New Mexico

New Mexico Broadband Program invested $150,000 to help expand broadband access in the region.

QUALITY OF LIFE

Central Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Regional Commission, Michigan

received a $460,000 grant from ArtPlace America to promote local arts and culture across upper Michigan to help increase tourism.

WORKFORCE

Rivers Confluence Region, Iowa

completed the Confluence Region Workforce Development Resource Database that will inform businesses and possible employees in the region about opportunities.

Impact Study Team:
Dr. Alison Davis, Simona Balazs, Joe Kercsmar, Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky, University of Kentucky
Dr. Kasey Martin, USDA Rural Development

Top 3 Elements Contributing to the Value of SET

1. Extension & USDA Rural Development Partnership
2. Emphasis on regional approaches
3. Civic Forum as a launching point

Regions reported strengthening relationships toward collaboration as the process unfolded.

77% of respondents believe that Economic Growth is the #1 long-term benefit of SET to their region.

Learn more:
http://srdc.msstate.edu/set/
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**Community Development Society's Annual International Conference: Detroit, MI**

**Rural Sociological Society Annual Meeting: Portland, OR**

**Independence Day**

JULY 2018
RAPID RESPONSE TEAM: CIVIL DIALOGUE ON RACE RELATIONS

In September, 2016, the Extension Committee on Organization and Policy (ECOP) established the Rapid Response Team (RRT) on Civil Discourse on Race Relations. Concerns around racial tensions resulting in civil unrest evidenced by riots, arrests, and shootings underscored the need for this important emphasis.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

• Scanned the Land-Grant University System to identify people and resources engaged in this work
• Established a website with links to resources and partners
• Developed a competencies framework

“...is convinced that the time is right for Cooperative Extension to step into this vital space to help promote peace, resilience and healing within and among the communities we serve.”

Next Steps

Develop and launch a train-the-trainer workshop for Extension professionals to build capacity for civil dialogue on race relations in 2018

TEAM MEMBERS

Carolyne Abdullah, Everyday Democracy
Manami Brown, University of Maryland
Ron Brown, Association of Southern Region Extension Directors
Alice Diebel, Kettering Foundation
Laura Downey, Mississippi State University
Michelle Eley, North Carolina A&T University
Brent Elrod, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture
Chris Geith, eXtension
Bill Hare, University of the District of Columbia
Paul Lachapelle, Montana State University
Sally Miske, National 4-H Council
Richard Pirog, Michigan State University
Timothy Shaffer, Kansas State University
Rachel Welborn, Southern Rural Development Center

Learn more: https://publish.extension.org/civildialogue/
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Southern Region Program Leadership Network, Association of Extension Administrators & Association of Southern Region Extension Directors Joint Meeting: Orlando, FL
CAPE is a partnership of the four Regional Rural Development Centers, led by the North Central Regional Center for Rural Development, and Human Service’s Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, and facilitated by the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Throughout the project, emphasis has been given to how communities can better identify and support individuals struggling with mental health issues. During 2017, five states participated in a pilot training to help build capacity on this important topic. The training series is outlined below.

**Initial Webinars:**
I. Introduction and Overview
II. Community Needs Assessment

**Face-to-Face Workshop: Mental Health and First Aid**

**Concluding Webinars:**
III. Assessing Community Preparedness
IV. Engaging the Community & Consensus Building
V. Creating a Strategic Action Plan
VI. Keeping the Drive Alive - Six month follow-up

---

**WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING**

“This was a **fantastic first exposure** to an **action-oriented** program addressing mental health issues.”

“This is a great course to **educate** community members on reacting to and **appropriately helping** those with mental illnesses.”

“It is very helpful to have a **foundation to assist** someone in need of mental health first aid.”

---

**PILOT STATES**

![Colorado](#)  ![Michigan](#)  ![Ohio](#)  ![Oklahoma](#)  ![West Virginia](#)

Learn more: healthbench.info
Bonnie Teater is a special individual to friends of the Southern Rural Development Center. For 30 years, she provided valuable support and day-to-day assistance to the Center as a member of its staff. She served as an inspiration to all because of the dedication she brought to her work and her passion for the rural development research and Extension outreach mission of the region’s Land-Grant Universities. She currently is enjoying retirement in her home state of Kentucky.

The Early Career Achievement Award is awarded on odd number years and honors the work of a rising star who has already achieved great things in his/her early career in community development. Below are this year’s co-recipients.

**REBEKKA DUDENSING**

Dudensing is an Associate Professor and Extension Economist for the Department of Agricultural Economics at Texas A&M University. Dr. Dudensing has performed many annual economic impact analyses for various organizations including the Brazos County Exposition Complex and the Elgin Local Food Center. She also worked to advance the methods in which economic development questions are answered. She created forward-linked models to reflect production and processing for High Plains corn, Texas rice, and Texas Gulf Coast shrimp, and created a framework for establishing economic linkages between actual consumer preferences and farm practices. Dr. Dudensing has also produced several insightful publications including The Food and Fiber System and Production Agriculture's Contributions to the Texas Economy as well as a Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) for severe drought in the San Antonio, Texas area.

Learn more: [http://agecon.tamu.edu/faculty-staff/faculty/dudensing-rebekka/](http://agecon.tamu.edu/faculty-staff/faculty/dudensing-rebekka/)

**SUSAN KELLY**

Kelly is the Richmond County Extension Director with North Carolina Cooperative Extension. Much of her work in this county has been with local food system development. She implemented the Green Fields Initiative in support of the Stronger Economies Together Initiative, which has been recognized as a success by the USDA. As part of this initiative, Kelly also took the lead on the development of a regional food hub, the Sandhills Ag Innovation Center. In support of these two projects, Kelly was able to secure over $650,000 in grants. In addition to foods, Kelly has focused her attention on the revitalization of downtown Rockingham, the county seat for Richmond County. A historic downtown property was donated in 2015 and several other new businesses have or will be relocating to the downtown area because of the assistance and expertise of Kelly. Also, as an Extension agent much of Kelly’s work has focused on program marketing and communication through a number of successful newsletters that she manages.

Learn more: [https://richmond.ces.ncsu.edu/profile/susan-kelly/](https://richmond.ces.ncsu.edu/profile/susan-kelly/)
Health Insurance is Key to Farm & Ranch Economic Viability

In a 2017 National Farmer and Rancher Survey, health insurance was tied to farm and ranch risk management, farm viability and economic development.

Health Insurance is a National Farm Policy Issue

- 73% of farmers and ranchers report health insurance is an important or very important risk management strategy.

“You have to have insurance. We have a risky job.”

Farm & Ranch Succession and Land Transfer

- 45% of farmers and ranchers are concerned they will have to sell some/all of their farm or ranch assets to address health related costs.

- Farmers and ranchers are vulnerable to higher insurance premiums due to age rating bands.

Growing the Next Generation of Farmers

Young and beginning farmers and ranchers identify access to health insurance as one of the most significant issues impacting the future of their farm or ranch.

- 41% of 18-34 year olds were enrolled in a public insurance program.

Ex: Medicaid, TRICARE, CHIP

Rural Jobs and Health Insurance

Farmers and Ranchers:

- 65 years and older had Medicare or a public option.
- 73%
- 72%
- 24%

- 18-64 years old purchased a plan on the marketplace.
- had an off-farm job for additional income/health insurance.

Project Director: Shoshanah Inwood

The project was supported by the Agricultural and Food Research Initiative Competitive Program of the USDA National Institute of Food And Agriculture.

Learn more: hirednag.net
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The mission of the Southern Region Program Leadership Network (SR-PLN) is to foster and strengthen Extension education programming throughout the southern region by promoting multistate cooperation, anticipating emerging program issues and needs, and implementing action processes to address them in a timely manner.

In August 2018 all eight committees met for the annual Joint Meeting of SR-PLN, Association of Extension Administrators, and Association of Southern Region Extension Directors. Below are the committees and number of participants.

- 4-H Youth Development: 33 participants
- Family and Consumer Sciences: 19 participants
- Agriculture and Natural Resources: 29 participants
- Information Technology: 12 participants
- Communications: 26 participants
- Middle Managers: 34 participants
- Community Development: 20 participants
- Program and Staff Development: 17 participants

2017 EXPENDITURES

- Operating Costs: $531,409.18 (48.4%)
- Training: $140,730.68 (12.8%)
- Subcontracts: $426,083.87 (38.8%)
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- **New Year’s Eve** (31 December)
- **Christmas Day** (25 December)
2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ntam Baharanyi  
Tuskegee University | 1890 Extension

Rich Bonanno  
North Carolina State University | 1862 Extension

Gary Jackson  
Mississippi State University | 1862 Extension

Ed Jones, Chair Elect  
Virginia Tech University | 1862 Extension

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Deborah Markley  
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Brent Elrod  
USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture | Liaison

Carolyne Abdullah  
Everyday Democracy | Non Land-Grant

Savonala Horne  
Land Loss Prevention Project | Non Land-Grant

Josh Shumaker  
National Association of Development Organizations | Non Land-Grant

Ed Jones, Board Advisor  
Virginia Tech University | 1862 Extension

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Association of Extension Administrators
Association of Southern Region Extension Directors
Community Development Society
Economic Research Service, USDA
Everyday Democracy
Extension Committee on Organization and Policy
Farm Foundation, NFP
Food and Nutrition Service, USDA
HiredNAg Project
Joint Council of Extension Professionals
Kettering Foundation

National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals
National Association of Counties
National Association of Development Organizations
National Extension Initiative
National Institute of Civil Discourse
National Institute of Food and Agriculture, USDA
National Telecommunications and Information Administration
National Urban Extension Leaders
North Central Regional Center for Rural Development
Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development
New Partners for Smart Growth

Purdue Center for Regional Development
Rural Sociological Society
Rural Child Poverty Nutrition Center, University of Kentucky
Rural Development, USDA
Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors
Southern Extension Risk Management Education
Southern Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program
Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Agency
Western Center For Rural Development

This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.