

## LSU AgCenter among efforts to turn tide on poverty

Tensas Parish is one of eight parishes/counties in five states participating in a pilot program aimed at turning the tide on poverty by recruiting community members to work together on unique solutions.

“Turning the Tide on Poverty” is an initiative of the Southern Rural Development Center that is being piloted in five of the southern region’s 13 states. Support for the initiative comes from Everyday Democracy, the Farm Foundation and the Kettering Foundation.

“The Study Circle approach is a community decision-making process that can be used to address any community issues,” said Dr. Cynthia Pilcher, LSU AgCenter Community Rural Development agent. “This approach allows an entire community to come together to walk through a guided process leading to solutions that best fit their own community needs and interests.”

Pilcher said the Study Circles approach empowers communities to build on their own strengths and abilities to find a direction for change that has

high community support.

“Study Circles encourage community members to share their voices around a set topic,” Pilcher said. “The process itself fosters civic-minded communities in that it encourages people to take an active role in community problem-solving.

James Hendrix, LSU AgCenter Parish Chair and County Agent said the Tensas Parish kick-off will begin January 26 as the educational program at the Tensas Revitalization Alliance meeting, 5 p.m., Tensas Community Center. The purpose of the kick-off meeting is to explain how Tensas Parish will benefit from a community-wide dialogue on poverty and its underlying issues.

“Tensas Parish already has a core planning group,” Pilcher said. “We are recruiting community members to participate in the Study Circles.”

“We want the entire face of the community represented in the Study Circles. We want people from all socioeconomic groups, young adults to retirees, unemployed, underemployed, self-employed, business people, entrepre-

neurs, elected officials, pastors, teachers, homemakers, and more to participate,” Hendrix said.

Tensas Parish was chosen for its high rate of poverty and the significant problems associated with populations living in poverty.

Study Circles, diverse groups of 8-12 people, will meet once a week in two-hour sessions for five weeks, beginning February 1.

They will share their experiences, listen to one another, and build the kind of trust that is necessary for long-term change. The topic for these pilot Stud

y Circles in Turning the Tide on Poverty, which is a common concern facing many rural communities.

The goal of the Study Circles is the development of a clear community action plan that will help address the issue of poverty. All types of volunteers from each community are needed to make the process successful.

For more information about Tensas Parish Study Circles, please contact James Hendrix, LSU AgCenter, 766-3320.



*Date set*