



## Items of Interest

### SRDC and Delta Scholars Collaborate with Penn State to Strengthen Rural Research Partnerships

John J. Green, Director of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) and Professor at Mississippi State University (MSU), and Eleanor Green, Director of the [Delta Scholars Program](#) in the Judy and Bobby Shackouls Honors College at MSU, recently visited The Pennsylvania State University. During their visit, they met with collaborators from the [Northeast Regional Center for Rural Development](#) as well as faculty and students in the [Department of Agricultural Economics, Sociology, and Education](#).

Dr. Green traveled to Penn State to deliver his seminar, *"From Informing to Engaging: Lessons Learned Through Data Leadership for Community and Regional Development."* Penn State holds a significant place in the fields of rural sociology and demography, both nationally and globally. Dr. Green also maintains ongoing collaborations with Penn State faculty through the [Interdisciplinary Network on Rural Population Health and Aging](#) (INRPHA), the [Rural Population Research Network](#), and the [Rural Sociological Society](#).



**Left photo:** Dr. John J. Green presenting on data leadership for community and regional development to an audience of Penn State faculty and students. **Right photo:** Dr. Green (center) pictured with Penn State faculty members, Dr. Leif Jensen, Professor of Rural Sociology and Demography (left), and Dr. Leland Glenna (right), Professor of Rural Sociology and Science, Technology, and Society.

## 2025 Excellence in Extension Awards presented at the SR-PLN, AEA, and ASRED Joint Annual Meeting



The Southern Region Program Leaders Network (SR-PLN) held its annual meeting in August in Atlanta, Georgia, bringing together over 300 participants, including state program leaders from eight committees, as well as representatives from the Association of Extension Administrators (AEA) and the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED). The event highlighted SR-PLN's mission to strengthen Extension education across the southern region by fostering multi-state collaboration, anticipating emerging program needs, and implementing timely solutions. During the meeting, several distinguished awards from AEA and ASRED were presented, recognizing exceptional leadership and contributions to Extension programming.

### Awards presented by the Association of Extension Administrators (AEA), Southern Region:

**Dr. Kristin Woods**, Food Systems Resource Specialist at Tuskegee University, was recognized for her visionary leadership at the Carver Integrative Sustainability Center, securing over \$9.5 million to support sustainable agriculture and empower communities in the Alabama Black Belt Food Corridor.

**Dr. Lindsey Lunsford**, Assistant Professor of Food Systems Education and Policy at Tuskegee University, received the Excellence in Extension Award for expanding student opportunities and national partnerships through the Carver Integrative Sustainability Center HBCU Fellowship Program.



**Dr. Rukeia Draw**, Program Leader for 4-H Youth Development at Prairie View A&M University, was honored for her transformative leadership, securing over \$17 million to elevate youth engagement and mentorship statewide.

### Awards presented by the Association of Southern Region Extension Directors (ASRED):

#### Excellence in Extension Southern Region Individual Winner:

**Nelly Nelson**, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences

#### Excellence in Extension Team Award Winner:

##### The Arkansas Discovery Farm Program (ARDF):

**Dr. Mike Daniels**, Team Leader

Team Members: Dr. Kris Brye, Trent Roberts, Dr. Shannon Speir, Dr. Amanda McWhirt, Dr. Bronc Finch, Dr. Mike Daniels, Mike Hamilton, Jared Rushing, Dr. Julie Robinson, and Dr. Tomekia White.



#### Excellence in Extension Team Award Runner Up:

##### Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's Promoting Early Education Quality (PEEQ) Online Training Program:

**Dr. Stephen Green**, Team Leader

Team Members: Dr. Jodi Nerren, Amy Foster-Palmer, Beverly Reed, Gabriela Mayer, Shawna Manning, Treye Rice, and Brian Faries.

## SRDC Director Awarded 2025 Rural Renewal Research Prize

Dr. John J. Green, Director of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) and Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Mississippi State University, has been named the recipient of the 2025 Rural Renewal Research Prize. The honor was presented during the annual Rural Renewal Initiative symposium hosted by Oklahoma State University (OSU) and held in Woodward, Oklahoma.

Commenting on receiving this recognition, Green stated, "I am honored to receive the Rural Renewal Research prize. Presented through an innovative effort led by Oklahoma State University, it recognizes the work that I have been fortunate to be involved with through the Southern Rural Development Center in collaboration with our many partners at Land-Grant Universities, community organizations, and beyond."

The prestigious recognition is given to individuals who demonstrate exceptional leadership and contributions in research, education, and engagement that advance the future vitality of rural communities.

In addition to receiving the award, Green delivered a speech entitled "Exploring Pathways for Rural Renewal: Conversations About Development." In his remarks, he discussed the importance of reflection on collaborative efforts and innovative strategies to strengthen rural economies, support community resilience, and enhance the quality of life for rural residents.

Green is widely recognized for his work in rural demographic and community research. Throughout his career, he has championed the needs as well as highlighted the challenges, opportunities, and strategies for the development of rural communities. Under his leadership, the SRDC works to establish and expand its networks connecting universities with community, state, and national organizations to support research-informed solutions to these rural challenges.

These contributions align well with the mission of the Rural Renewal Initiative led through OSU, which promotes interdisciplinary efforts that connect community residents and local leaders to higher education faculty and students to collaboratively support rural development.



**Pictured (from left):** Dr. Anna Kleiner, nominator, Consultant, Community-Based Research and Evaluation; Dr. John J. Green, award recipient, Director of the Southern Rural Development Center and Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Mississippi State University; Dr. Scott Senseman, Associate Vice President for the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at Oklahoma State University; and Dr. E. Helen Berry, nominator, Emerita Professor of Sociology at Utah State University.

## 2026 Southern Rural Sociological Society (SRSA) Conference: Providing Opportunities to Explore, Present, and Collaborate on Rural Change in the New South

The Southern Rural Sociological Association (SRSA) is pleased to announce that registration and the Call for Abstracts are now open for its 2026 Annual Conference, themed “Distilling Change: Rural Roots & River Currents in the New South.”



### Accommodations & Registration

The conference will be held at the Omni Louisville, 400 S 2nd St., Louisville, KY 40202. Attendees are encouraged to book early as space is limited.

**Early bird registration is available until December 19, 2025.**

### Call for Abstracts & Awards

Scholars, practitioners, and students are invited to submit abstracts for presentation. The deadline for submissions has been extended to **December 8, 2025**.

SRSA also invites nominations for annual awards in Teaching, Research, Extension, and Public Service, as well as Outstanding Student and Professional Paper Awards, all **due January 5, 2026**.

Questions regarding abstracts or awards can be directed to **Kara Woods, President-Elect**, at [kawoods@alcorn.edu](mailto:kawoods@alcorn.edu).

### Post-Conference Opportunity: SERA 49

On February 3, 2026, in conjunction with the annual meeting, SRSA will host the in-person Southern Extension and Research Activity (SERA) 49: Heirs' Property – Impacts at Family, Community, and Regional Levels meeting at the Omni Louisville. Open to researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders, this session aims to strengthen regional capacity, foster collaboration, and introduce new practices and methodologies to reduce involuntary land loss. The participation fee is \$50, waived for those already registered for the SRSA conference.

[Access the one-pager for more information about the SERA 49 meeting](#). Questions regarding this meeting, contact **Kara Woods**, [kawoods@alcorn.edu](mailto:kawoods@alcorn.edu) and **John Green**, [jjg8@msstate.edu](mailto:jjg8@msstate.edu) for more information.

### Program Questions & Information

For questions regarding the conference program, contact Ryan Thomson, SRSA 2026 Program Chair, at [southernruralsocasn@gmail.com](mailto:southernruralsocasn@gmail.com).

Learn more and register at the [SRSA 2026 Conference Landing Page](#).

## Call for Abstracts: Special Issue on Local and Regional Food Systems, *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*

Local and regional food systems have received renewed interest in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated supply chain problems along with concerns over extreme weather events and farm community vitality. Furthermore, there have been efforts in the southern region of the U.S. to build local and regional food systems as part of development efforts across the rural-urban continuum. Thus, there is a need for scholarship on these and related issues to expand knowledge, guide practice, and inform policy.

In partnership with the SERA-47 Local and Regional Food Systems Multistate Project and the Southern Rural Development Center, the Journal of Rural Social Sciences will publish a special issue on these and related topics. Submissions are welcomed and encouraged from a wide range of disciplines, as this is a multidisciplinary field of work. Authors should keep in mind the general social science (sociology, economics, geography, etc.) and Extension professional audiences, as they are the most common readers of this publication. Those writing from other disciplines can use this special issue as an avenue to present their work to these scholars and practitioners to advance multidisciplinary engagement. Manuscripts on general topics related to local and regional food systems are invited, especially those addressing original research, systematic research reviews, and development practices, including outreach and education. Papers should include some connection to/focus on the southern region of the U.S.

Authors are asked to submit abstracts (not to exceed 150 words) by **December 8, 2025**, for consideration. Following initial desk-review by the special issue editorial team, authors of selected abstracts will be invited to submit full-length papers (not to exceed 9,000 words) by **February 20, 2026**. After a second desk-review, selected manuscripts will be sent out for the journal's regular double-blind peer review process.

The Local and Regional Food Systems Special Issue Editors include John J. Green and Grace Langford (Southern Rural Development Center/Mississippi State University), Kenrett Jefferson-Moore (North Carolina A&T State University), Kaylee South (Virginia Tech), and Courtney Brown (Oklahoma State University).

Abstracts should be submitted as Word document in an email attachment to John J. Green, JRSS Editor (<mailto:jjg8@msstate.edu>) and Elizabeth Sweeney, JRSS Managing Editor ([eyoung@go.olemiss.edu](mailto:eyoung@go.olemiss.edu)).

The Journal of Rural Social Sciences (JRSS) is the official peer-reviewed publication of the Southern Rural Sociological Association, a member of the Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists. It is an open-access journal published in collaboration with Clemson University Press. For more information, including style requirements and submission processes, visit: <https://open.clemson.edu/jrss/>.

It is also recommended that authors submit an abstract for presentation of their work at the annual meeting of the Southern Rural Sociological Association, to be held jointly with the Southern Association of Agriculture Sciences, February 1-2, 2026 in Louisville, KY. Abstracts are due to the SRSA by **December 8, 2025** but authors submitting to the special issue should go ahead and submit their conference abstract at the same time as submitting for this special issue of the Journal of Rural Social Sciences (November 7). ([Annual Meeting | Southern Rural Sociological Association](#)).



## Job Opportunity

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### Director, Alabama Cooperative Extension System

Auburn University invites nominations and applications for the position of Director of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, who serves as Alabama Extension's chief academic and administrative officer, providing vision and leadership to enhance the system's tradition of excellence in education, research, service, and educational outreach. The director reports directly to the presidents of Auburn University and Alabama A&M University.

View more information and access the application for the director's position at

<https://ssl.acesag.auburn.edu/posannc/files/Alabama-Extension-Director-20250604.pdf>

## Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

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### The Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund: FORWARD National Heirs' Property Boot Camp

**In-person: December 4-6, 2025, Embassy Suites by Hilton Atlanta Airport, Atlanta, Georgia**

[VIEW 2025 EVENT INFORMATION](#)

### 2026 Southern Rural Sociological Association (SRSA) Conference

**In-person: February 1-2, 2026, Omni Louisville Hotel, Louisville, Kentucky**

[VIEW ANNUAL MEETING INFORMATION](#)

### 2026 Extension Leadership Conference (ELC)

**In-Person: February 4-5, 2026, Savannah, Georgia**

[ACCESS CONFERENCE INFORMATION](#)

### NeighborWorks Training Institute

**In-person: February 23-27, 2026, Chicago, Illinois**

[ACCESS TRAINING REGISTRATION INFORMATION](#)

### 2026 Public Issues Leadership Development (PILD) Conference

**In-person: April 20-21, 2026, in Bethesda, Maryland**

[CONFERENCE INFORMATION COMING SOON](#)

### 2026 National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP) Conference

**In-person: June 15-18, 2026, in Wichita, Kansas**

[ACCESS CONFERENCE INFORMATION](#)

## 2026 Community Development Society (CDS) Annual Conference

**In-person: July 19 – 22, 2026, Georgia Southern University, Savannah, Georgia**

[ACCESS CONFERENCE INFORMATION](#)

## 2026 Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) Summit East

**In-person: September 15-16, 2026, IALR Conference Center, Danville, VA**

[ACCESS SUMMIT INFORMATION](#)

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