

MMFA news

The Official Newsletter of the
Mississippi Minority Farmers Alliance Inc.



SPRING | MARCH 2017 | 1ST EDITION | OKOLONA, MISSISSIPPI | WWW.MSMINORITYFARMERS.ORG

MMFA Members, Hold Onto Community Values



Country stores like this one was prevalent in small communities in rural America.

By John H. Jones, Agribusiness Specialist

We all are members of a community. A community can be small as a family, or large as a city. Throughout Mississippi and America many communities are in a transition. When I was growing up in south Mississippi in the 50's and 60's, many communities were fairly stable. They could be identified as having three basic institutions that made up strong communities. Those institutions were a strong family, a strong religious (church) belief, and a proud support for their schools. Furthermore they also had businesses that supplied their basic needs. There was a small country store where members of the community could buy grocery and other

staples the family needed. I remembered that my mom had a credit with the store and didn't need plastic. During this time credit was a valued commodity and was used wisely.

Many members from the community served in the armed forces of America, leaving family, the farm, and their jobs in order to serve their country during World War II, Korea, Viet Nam, and the most recent Middle East Wars. They returned home from the military with new skills, knowledge, leadership abilities, and confidence. They were model citizens and became leaders

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How to Become a Farmers Market Vendor



By Patty Tucker

Farmers markets have grown to become an important part of local community food shopping. They're the place to find fresh local produce, catch up with people from the community, share great food and take home seasonal treats that the supermarkets aren't necessarily going to be selling. And if you want to become part of a local farmers market, and sell your own homegrown vegetables, then you'll need to do some planning to ensure that your efforts are as effective, as they are lucrative.

Steps

Make a checklist of everything that you will need, in order to be prepared. This makes it easier to ensure that everything has been picked, and packed up to prevent

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and role models in their communities for others. They displayed a sense of pride and self confidence that made you want to be like them and not like Mike.

Many communities in Mississippi have experienced many changes over the past decades. New people come from outside have moved into the community, however the value system remain constant. The sense of belonging still exist and the nurturing and caring for it members are strong. The old saying, when one hurt all hurt.

However; in more recent years we can see

the family structure being in disarray. The religious community is not viewed in the same light and the community schools have been removed for more centralized locations serving large groups of students. Also within the community, its members have similar interest, values, morals, principles, and norms. The community's make up and characteristics may change, but its core value system remains intact.

There are some great things happening in communities that often are not reported in the mass media. We have a large number of families providing care for their love ones, i.e. parents and grandchildren. In numerous instances, the presence of a male is absent in

the home therefore; other family members are filling the void and assisting in the rearing of the children. Our families are educating their children by sending them to school and enrolling into institutions of higher learning, community colleges, and trade schools. Our members are holding on to the family farm and earning an honest living.

Throughout rural America organizations such as, The Mississippi Minority Farmers Alliance are still helping each other when there is a need. The MMFA membership is filling a void throughout Northeast Mississippi in serving their fellow community members, for we knew a long time ago that it does take a Community to Raise a Child.

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last-minute panic. Being part of a farmers market means hard work. You will need to prepare produce leading up to the day, transport it safely and set up very early in the morning before customers arrive. You may also need to carry your own stand or display, depending on what the local market provides. During the day, you will need to be present and charming throughout the day. It's a good idea to make friends quickly at the market, as these people will cover for you when you need a bathroom break or need to dash off to get change. In turn, they'll expect the same cover from you.

Decide what you're going to sell. Farmers markets tend to sell fresh grown produce (all sorts of vegetables and fruit, etc.), and homemade foods such as jams and jellies.

• **Advertise that you grow food in a special way** to increase its appeal and value to customers. Such as, are you an organic or conventional grower?

• **Arrange for the appropriate**

transportation for getting your food to market. It's no good growing a lovely crop of peas and corn and not being able to get them to market.

• **Get in touch with the owner or organizer of the market.** This person will tell you what the rules are for becoming a part of the market. In some cases, it will be quite formal, and you'll need to submit to an interview to convince the other owners and operators that you are a worthy participant, likely to sell quality produce.

• Expect the market to provide you with some information. Ask how many customers there are, what seasonal fluctuations exist, whether there are costs to maintaining a stall (such as having to pay, even if you don't turn up one time) and what insurance is provided to cover public liability.

• Is the market under cover or outdoors? Some markets have a system of being outdoors when the weather is fine but moving under cover, if it is inclement. A lack of cover may affect your decision to participate.

Once you're accepted as part of the farmers market, plan how your setting will look. Will you have a table with chairs, a stand, a tent or just your product sitting on something simple like a trailer or bales of hay? Depending on what you decide, you will need to purchase certain items, such as: folding chairs, table, display tent, canopy or large umbrella, stands, tablecloths, money holder and a calculator. Whatever you choose to keep your money in, make sure it is secure and always in your sight. Many vendors choose to carry cash in a bag worn around the waist.

Prepare the day before the market. You won't have time to pack or pick on the day of the market—usually it'll be all you can do

to tumble out of bed and get there nice and early. The best approach is to prepare all the produce and pack the car or van by the night before, ready for an early leave.

• Pick produce the day before and have it loaded into boxes or other containers ready to go. Keep in a cool place ready for quick loading just before you leave.

• Organize the change. You'll need plenty of change, so head to the bank, if you haven't enough already.

Get to bed early! Farmers markets are usually on a Friday or Saturday. You're going to need all of the energy you can get by the time morning comes.

Wake up early the morning of the market. Go extra early, so that you can get everything set up.

Engage your customers. Always say a friendly "Hi" or "Good morning!" to people who walk in front of your booth. Be ready to discuss your produce in details, your passion for it and how fresh it is. The purpose of a farmers market is the ability to cut out the middleman and engage directly with customers so that they can grasp the love and care that has gone into producing the products you're offering. Be prepared to spend time chatting—it's part of being involved in a farmers market.

• Smile, even if there are no cameras around. Customers like to come into a booth that has **friendly people** staffing it.

• Be proud of what you're doing. You are part of the restoration of local foods being produced and sold directly to consumers without all the ineffectiveness and distancing the larger food sales chain has brought into play. You are helping to build community, create a livelihood for yourself and maybe for others, and you are helping people eat the healthy food that they deserve.

February is American Heart Month



African-Americans and Heart Disease, Stroke

Heart disease is the No. 1 killer for all Americans, and stroke is also a leading cause of death. As frightening as those statistics are the risks of getting those diseases are even higher for African-Americans.

The good news is, African-Americans can improve their odds of preventing and beating these diseases by understanding the risks and taking simple steps to address them.

“Get checked, then work with your medical professional on your specific risk factors and the things that you need to do to take care of your personal health,” said Winston Gandy, M.D., a cardiologist and chief medical marketing officer with the Piedmont Heart Institute in Atlanta and a volunteer with the American Heart Association.

High blood pressure, obesity and diabetes are the most common conditions that increase the risk of heart disease and stroke. Here’s how they affect African-Americans and some tips to lower your risk.

High Blood Pressure

The prevalence of high blood pressure in African-Americans is the highest in the world. Also known as hypertension, high blood pressure increases your risk of heart disease and stroke, and it can cause permanent damage to the heart before you even notice any symptoms that’s why it is often referred to as the “silent killer.” Not only is HBP more

severe in blacks than whites, but it also develops earlier in life.

Research suggests African-Americans may carry a gene that makes them more salt sensitive, increasing the risk of high blood pressure. Your healthcare provider can help you find the right medication, and lifestyle changes can also have a big impact.

“You can’t do anything about your family history, but you can control your blood pressure,” Dr. Gandy said.

If you know your blood pressure is high, keeping track of changes is important. Check it regularly, and notify your doctor of changes in case treatment needs to be adjusted, Dr. Gandy said. Even if you don’t have high blood pressure, he recommends checking it every two years.

“The No. 1 thing you can do is check your blood pressure regularly,” he said.

Obesity

African-Americans are disproportionately affected by obesity. Among non-Hispanic blacks age 20 and older, 63 percent of men and 77 percent of women are overweight or obese.

If you’re carrying extra weight, Dr. Gandy suggests focusing on the quality of your diet throughout the day, not just during mealtime.

“You can add hundreds of calories to your



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*“Farming is the way we GROW!”
(God, Resources, Opportunity, Willpower)*

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February is American Heart Month
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diet just on snacking," he said. Choosing wise snacks can be part of a healthy diet.

Dr. Gandy knows all too well how challenging it can be to lose weight. After years of prescribing diet changes for his patients, he decided it was time to follow his own advice by walking at least 30 minutes a day and eliminating sugary drinks and desserts. The hard work paid off. Dr. Gandy lost 25 pounds in six months and feels much better.

He also suggests limiting red meat in favor of lean meats such as chicken or fish, and watching portions on carbohydrate-heavy foods, such as pasta and rice.

"Make vegetables the main part of the meal and fill up with those rather than other foods," he said.

Dr. Gandy cautioned that even things that are healthy can pack in calories.

"If you're thirsty, drink water, not juice," Dr. Gandy said.

Diabetes

African-Americans are more likely to have diabetes than non-Hispanic whites.

Diabetes is treatable and preventable, but many people don't recognize early warning signs. Or, they avoid seeking treatment out of fear of complications.

Dr. Gandy said many people associate the disease with older relatives who were diagnosed too late and suffered preventable complications such as blindness, amputations, or renal failure.

For diabetes and other heart disease risks, regular exercise also plays a key role – both in strengthening the cardiovascular system and burning extra calories.

Aim for at least 30 minutes of walking a day, Dr. Gandy said.

"That's enough to get the heart rate up," he said. "There's no need to do a marathon."

USDA News: Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) High Tunnel System



Introduction

The High Tunnel System is a conservation practice available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). This practice helps producers:

- Extend the growing season
- Improve plant quality and soil quality
- Reduce nutrient and pesticide transportation
- Improve air quality through reduced transportation inputs
- Reduce energy use by providing consumers with a local source of fresh produce

Accepting Applications

EQIP applications are accepted on a continuous basis, however, NRCS establishes application "cut-off" or submission deadline dates for evaluation, ranking and approval of eligible applications. EQIP is open to all eligible agricultural producers and submitted applications may be considered or evaluated in multiple funding pool opportunities.

To earn how to get started with NRCS, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted

Eligibility

Agricultural producers and owners of industrial private forestland and Tribes are eligible to apply for EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pastureland, non-industrial private forestland and other farm or ranch lands.

Applicants must:

- Control or own eligible land
- Comply with adjusted gross income limitation (AGI) provisions

- Be in compliance with the highly erodible land and wetland conservation requirements
- Develop a NRCS EQIP plan of operations. Additional restrictions and program requirements may apply.

Participant Responsibilities

Applicants are responsible for completing and filing all application and eligibility paperwork as required. If funded, participants are required to sign a contract and agree to implement the planned conservation practices to NRCS standards and specifications as scheduled.

Socially Disadvantaged, Beginning, and Limited Resource Farmers/Ranchers, Military Veteran Farmers

The 2014 Farm Bill continues to address the unique circumstances and concerns of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, as well as beginning and limited resource farmers and ranchers and Veteran Farmers. It provides for voluntary participation, offers incentives, and focuses on equity in accessing U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs and services. Enhancements include increased payment rates and advance payments of up to 50 percent to purchase materials and services needed to implement conservation practices included in their EQIP contract.

Mississippi is committed to reaching out to Historically Underserved individuals and groups. Historically Underserved participants may also receive higher payment rates in addition to being considered in high priority funding pools.



Why 4-H is Important



4-H member Teiryne Miller working in the field.

By Teiryne Miller, Reporter

I first would like to say, I love 4-H because everything I have been introduced too by 4-H has been positive for my life. 4-H has helped me overcome many of my fears. For example, I now can stand in front of a crowd and speak. 4-H is so important in that this program builds leaders and strengthens their personal development. As a direct result of my growth, many opportunities and awards have been presented to me. It takes hard work and dedication to achieve all that I have in 4-H.

4-H graduates individuals to another level of confidence, accountability, dedication and leadership. This leadership program sets you apart as you tackle challenges and manage your extracurricular academics by maintaining a high level of academics.

Most importantly, 4-H brings the

community together as a whole. For example, my club is in partnership with the Mississippi Minority Farmers Alliance and as members we volunteer on the Jones' farm. The plants that we help grow are distributed freely throughout the community at no cost. This is wonderful! All at the same time, we are learning how to garden so we can pass it along to the next generation.

I am just so grateful for 4-H because I really didn't focus on being a "helper" until I became involve in 4-H four years ago at the age of 13. I have changed for the better as 4-H Motto "Making the Best Better".



Chicken with Roasted Sweet Potato Salad



Prep Time 15 Mins **Other Time** 15 Mins
Yield Makes 4 Servings

Tossing the warm roasted vegetables with fresh spinach gently wilts and tenderizes the greens. In place of sweet potatoes, try butternut squash, rutabaga, carrots, or parsnips. This heart-healthy salad also pairs well with fish or lean beef.

Ingredients

- 2 sweet potatoes (about 1 pound), peeled and cut into thin wedges
- 1 red onion, thinly sliced
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Kosher salt and black pepper
- 4 6-ounce boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 bunch spinach, thick stems removed (about 4 cups)
- 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice

How to Make It

1. Heat oven to 425° F. On a rimmed baking sheet, toss the potatoes, onion, 2 tablespoons of the oil, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and 1/4 teaspoon pepper. Roast until tender, 20 to 25 minutes.

Meanwhile, heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Season the chicken with 1/2 teaspoon salt and 1/4 teaspoon pepper and cook until browned and cooked through, 5 to 6 minutes per side.

In a large bowl, toss the warm potato mixture with the spinach, lime juice, and 1/4 teaspoon salt. Serve with the chicken.

Substitutions: Tossing warm roasted vegetables with fresh spinach gently wilts and tenderizes the greens. In place of sweet potatoes, try butternut squash, rutabaga, carrots, or parsnips.

Nutrition Information

- calories 388
- protein 39 g
- carbohydrate 26 g
- sugars 7 g
- fiber 6 g
- fat 14 g
- satfat 3 g
- sodium 400 mg
- cholesterol 94 mg

Heir's Property Loss And Succession Planning



Estate and transition planning is an important part of maintaining land ownership and preserving your property.

At the beginning of the 20th century, African Americans owned over 15 million acres of rural land. Since that time, however, they have been losing their land rapidly and today African Americans own only about 2 million acres of farmland. One of the causes of this land loss is a form of land ownership called heirs' property.

WHAT IS HEIRS' PROPERTY?

Heirs' property is a term used to describe land that is owned by two or more people, where most of those people inherited, rather than purchased, their shares of the property.

MMFA 3rd SRAC



Dr. Elizabeth Myles (ASU), Frank Taylor (WCSHC), Carolyn Jones (MMFA) and Bennie Jones (MMFA)

By T'arie Todman, WCSHC Community Coord.

A severe thunderstorm had seized the state of MS in the early, early morning of January 21, 2017. As series of lighting strike struck Earth, the sounds of thunder followed each strike. The sounds were so loud that it caused the earth to rumble. Perhaps many individuals thought surely Mississippi Minority Farmers Alliance (MMFA) group would cancel their third annual Save Rural America Conference event. Faint not, MMFA consists of veteran farmers who have adapted to severe weather situations, that said, the event was held at MMFA's Market Building in Okolona, MS. Carolyn Jones, Director of MMFA, promptly began the session at 8 am with the event's purpose. Ms. Jones shared a beautiful opening that charged the participants to be helpful to their communities. Her opening statement resonated through the minds of the members and attendees during the entire meeting. Cliff Parker, AgRAEIS/USDA presented on the need for crop insurance in case of natural disaster, drought, etc. Esmeralda Dickinson, State Statistician, NASS conveyed to the audience the significance of completing 2017's census. After her presentation, a concerned farmer raised a question, "How can completing the census assist me?" Frank Taylor, asked for permission to answer the question. Frank asked, by a show of hands how many individuals have

received financial assistance through USDA. Many people across the room signaled they were recipients of funding. Frank concluded, sir this is how completing the census will help individuals like yourself.

If you were in the room, one would quickly realize MMFA's SRAC was well represented by 1890s universities, Alcorn State and Tuskegee University. These land grant institutions have done and are doing an outstanding job assisting our rural communities to thrive. Tuskegee University's Dean of Agriculture, Dr. Walter Hill shared how at first, he wasn't sure why he was present at the event but after hearing the opening remarks, understood his existence in the room. Dr. Hill recapped the necessity of being relevant to others. Dr. Hill and Miles Robinson shared highlights of Tuskegee Research Center in Selma, AL. Dr. Elizabeth Myles, Marketing Specialist, Alcorn State, recounted her personal account growing up on the family farm and how grateful, she was to her father for instilling strong work ethics. Dr. Myles also shared her role in assisting farmers to market their products for sale. David Watkins, Up in Farms Food Hub, discussed how he and his organization could help farmer's sale their products. Joshua Lundy, FSA, County Executive Director of Chickasaw County shared NRCS ranking system and Farm Service Agency's eligibility requirements. Jim Church, Commercial Loan Officer, Hope

Credit Union, highlighted their origins and their desire to assist the needs of small farmers and landowners. Sean Suggs, VP of Manufacturing, Toyota Plant, Blue Spring, MS discussed Toyota's desire to help save rural America through job opportunities and community grants. Cassandra Wilder, Policy Research Analyst, SDFR Policy Research introduced Eloise Speight, Director of the Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University.

Also, Cassandra recanted the words of Esmeralda to complete 2017's census forms, which will assist her significantly at the policy center. Eloise gave a detailed account of the origins and purpose of the research center located on Alcorn State Campus. The policy center mission is to make policy recommendations that will improve the success of socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers. Attorney Bennie Jones highlighted the necessity of leaving a clearly defined will for your loved ones to adhere. Mr. Jones recounted many scenarios he had encountered over the years. Establishing a legal document before your demise is the best course of action to prevent unnecessary legal cost and family disputes. Frank Taylor received a humanitarian award for his unending passion and selfless dedication to saving rural America. At first, Frank was at a loss for words, but after a few minutes he gathered himself and expressed his memories growing up in MS and his commitment to getting it done. Additionally, MMFA recognized their veterans who proudly served their country and now their communities. Ms. Jones closed the program with heartfelt words, followed by a delicious and healthy lunch.



MMFA MARCH 2017 PHOTO GALLERY



Alcorn State University Men's Chorale perform at MMFA meeting



Alcorn State University Men's Chorale arrives for MMFA meeting



Preparing logs for Shiitake Mushrooms workshop



Shiitake workshop



Future MMFA Farmer



Taxation workshop

MISSISSIPPI MINORITY FARMERS ALLIANCE 3RD ANNUAL SAVE RURAL AMERICA CONFERENCE PHOTO GALLERY

