

## Outreach Field Day Successes



l to r: CED Bill Trado, SED Laurie Lawson, Landowner David Williams & son

(Williamsburg County, SC) - Rows of bright green grape vines provided an appropriate backdrop for the recent USDA Field held at Williams Muscadine Farm in Nesmith, South Carolina.

Bill Trado, County Executive Director (CED) of Williamsburg FSA, led what is being called one of the most diverse and successful outreach events in South Carolina! Over 100 gathered to hear about USDA programs at the site of the vineyard and to honor the landowner, eighty-four year old David Williams, for his outstanding accomplishments in Agriculture.

Among those in attendance were FSA State Executive Director (SED) Laurie Lawson, South Carolina Senator Yancey McGill, and representatives from Senator Lindsey Graham and Congressman Jim Clyburn's offices. Others in attendance were local county councilmen, judges, heads of government agencies, and most important the small and limited resource farmers.

Lawson offered FSA assistance in enhancing the family's continued success. "We're here to serve you," said Lawson. "We're here to do things right. Every time you come in there (FSA Office) we want to make every effort we can to do something for you."

Williams, a former educator, planted the first grape vine on his parent's land in Nesmith, which was purchased by his father Rev. Gabriel Williams in 1924. Today, Williams and his wife Edith are joined by their seven children, spouses, grandchildren and great grandchildren in making the vineyard and farm a place to experience the Black farm life of the rural south.

Williams is included in the 2012 AT&T African American History Calendar. He was honored, along with twelve additional individuals whose remarkable accomplishments are memorialized within its pages. Senator McGill, who endorsed Williams, attended the gala that took place in October in Columbia. "It was standing room only," said McGill. "When David Williams was recognized, the applause and cheers was second to none. I have never heard such an outburst of pride all over that building. It's amazing, this man knows everybody."

Williams also has been the recipient of several other awards that include 2009 South Carolina African American Commission's Preserving Our Place in History award and 2010 Williamsburg Home Town Chamber Agriculturalist of the Year.

The Farm has been featured in several publications that include Minority Landowner magazine and the Greater Pee Dee/Grand Strand Business Journal and reached beyond the borders of South Carolina in an August 2010 Philadelphia Sun article titled "Smooth Traveler, South Carolina's Heritage Corridor" where the farm was recognized in a brief of activities in which guests are involved upon visiting.

"Farming is a blessing to me. I just love it," said Williams as he addressed the group. "When I come here I get a different spirit. I see things and feel things that I never felt before. I call it Blessed Land."

The USDA Field Day included tours of the farm, information booths and a BBQ lunch. The family produces four types of what may be the best



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## Fast Facts

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**Program:** Outreach Field Day

Muscadine grapes this side of the Mississippi. Besides Muscadine wine, the family also produces grape infused delicacies such as jams and jellies. The farm provides scheduled demonstrations, activities, and hands-on farming experiences for school groups, church youth organizations, senior groups, as well as other groups. Each Labor Day weekend the family hosts the Muscadine Festival and You-Pick during the harvest season.

FSA exhibits were displayed including fliers and information concerning the Hispanic and Women's Claims Process. USDA Officials spoke on farm programs and remained available to answer program related questions. According to Trado, "It was a great turnout and there was a lot of interest in FSA's programs."

Kudos to Bill Trado & the South Carolina team for a successful outreach event!

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