

Virginia Foundation for Cooperative Education

To further support the cause of cooperative education, Dr. Dixie Watts Reaves reported that she's been on a one-year leave of absence from Virginia Tech to help establish an agribusiness curriculum at Southside Community College. She's developing an associate's degree program in agribusiness, one where graduates will be eligible to transfer right into Va. Tech's four-year program if they wish.

She's also hoping SCC will soon have a cooperative education course for freshman.

"I'm glad so many of you got to see this morning a little bit of what those students do," at the VICE, she said. "It really is a tremendous introduction to the basic principles of cooperative business."

Meanwhile, the introduction to cooperatives class Reaves initiated at Va. Tech continues to be popular. It's

a core class in the Humanities curriculum, and a "real success story," she said, "One I hope will continue." Every semester students from every college at the university are exposed to the principles of cooperatives. She's hoping to convince her dean to make it available on-line as well soon.

She also read several excerpts from students who've benefited from scholarships distributed by the foundation. "If it were not for the Luther Raper scholarship, I wouldn't be able to attend college," wrote Brittany Truxell. "Cooperatives are a big part of my family-run dairy farm, and receiving a scholarship really means a lot to me," added Jamie Kerr. Both are students at Virginia Tech, and Reaves read their comments aloud.

"Look at the students you're supporting, and what they're achieving. We thank you again for your support."

Brian Wolfe, VCC President, talked about the youth conference and why it's being renamed the Virginia Institute for Cooperative Education



Jim Belfield of Colonial Farm Credit reads his own humorous declaration honoring Jeb Hockman with a Special Recognition Award from the Virginia Agribusiness Council



Virginia
Cooperative Council
www.vcfc.net

New conference name, website announced



Cooperative computer guru Adam Shiflet explains the basics of "Who's Minding the Store" at the VCC annual meeting. Story on Pg. 2

It's the same youth conference, but as the Virginia Cooperative Council approaches half a century of service to the cooperative industry, it's got a new name and a modern outreach effort.

"Our primary mission is educating youth about the cooperative business model. With that in mind, the annual youth conference has been renamed the Virginia Institute of Cooperative Education (VICE) It's a new name and a new marketing tool for the conference," said Brian Wolfe of Rappahannock Electric Cooperative, 2011 VCC president.

At the 49th VCC annual meet-

ing, Wolfe and VCC Executive Director Phil Miller talked about the hard work that has been done in the past year, both in staging the 2010 youth conference and taking steps to reboot the program.

"We had 45 kids attend the youth conference in 2009, but only 32 kids last year," Miller said. "So we're putting on a full-court press to build interest back up again. For instance, Dr. Glenn Anderson in the Virginia Dept of Education is sharing information about the conference with every Ag Education teacher in the state."

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Council, Foundation finances in good shape

According to the financial report delivered and audited at the 2011 VCC annual meeting, both organizations remain financially strong thanks to faithful membership dues, prudent fiscal management and the generous contributions of the estate of Dr.

Claude Scroggs.

As of Dec. 31, 2010 the Virginia Cooperative Council had a total of \$420,452 in cash and investments. A large chunk of those assets came from the Scroggs estate, and will be set aside for future scholarship programs.

The Virginia Foundation of Cooperation, Inc. also had a healthy year in 2010, finishing with \$121,625 in investment assets as of Dec. 31. That compared favorably to the ending balance of \$118,415 in 2009.

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And the council will be attending several 4H and FFA state activities as well to promote the conference.”

“We had a smaller crowd last year, but still had a great program,” Miller said. “And the good news is that even during these tough economic times, VCC membership and scholarships have continued to come in.”

“We were extremely fortunate to have Claude Scroggs in our organization for all of those years,” Miller said gratefully.

Using the acronym of VICE allows the Virginia conference to tie its outreach and recruiting efforts closer to the National Institute of Cooperative Education, or NICE, Miller said. And the students think VICE is a cool name, for obvious reasons, he added. The VCC Public Relations Committee is working to build the identity and brand of the Virginia conference as well. For instance, NICE will have a new logo soon, and VICE will have a similar one.

The Virginia cooperative community lost a friend and a giant when Dr. Claude Scroggs passed away in 2009. He was a cofounder of the Council and the Youth Program. Wolfe announced that Scroggs had

left one-third of his estate to the VCC and the balance to the Virginia FFA Association. Approximately \$650,000 will be distributed to the Virginia Cooperative Council for its programs. The VCC board of directors has already decided to set aside the bulk of the bequest to fund scholarships for future students, Wolfe said.

“Knowing Claude’s love for youth programs, we formed a committee to create a scholarship endowment fund,” Miller added. “That will become a permanent part of the VCC, but we will not be using it for our operating budget.”

“It is a challenge to get the attention of today’s busy students, but to be honest its always been a challenge to get youth in leadership training programs,” Wolfe added. “So what we’re facing is nothing new, we just need to re-energize our efforts.”

However \$10,000 of the bequest was allocated to build a new website, which is almost ready to launch. “We were extremely fortunate to have had Claude Scroggs in our organization for all those years” Miller said gratefully.

The new council website is almost ready to go live, Miller said. After a bidding process, the VCC Public

Relations Committee selected Data Directions of Richmond to design it. This is the same firm that designed the Old Dominion Electric Cooperative website.

“We want to bring the kids to the site,” so they’ll also be using social media tools like Facebook and LinkedIn to generate interest in the conference and the council, Miller said. “We want VCC members to know about the site and to use it as well, but also to attract students to it.”

“It’s fresh, it’s new, but we’re not going to get too far away from our cooperative heritage.”

The meeting concluded with a request for VCC members to search their records and scrapbooks for pictures and stories about past participants in the youth program, so Miller can plan a celebration for the 50th annual meeting.

“There’s a lot of history out there – just the sheer number of students alone who’ve gone through the conference over the years shows how the council has had a huge impact,” Miller said.

Who’s Minding the Store?

The annual Youth Conference (now the VICE) has always had one central element – the actual business simulation that introduces students to many of the basic business concepts involved in running a cooperative business.

Called “Who’s Minding the Store,” it’s a computer simulation that allows students to get quick feedback on their management decisions made as part of their

business teams. And for anyone who’s attended past conferences, there’s great news – the old DOS-based computer program has finally been updated. At the VCC annual meeting, members learned that Purdue University has introduced a new Windows-based version that dramatically shortens the turn-around time for team results, from hours to minutes.

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Hockman gets surprise recognition

Je**J**eb Hockman was presented with the Virginia Agribusiness Council’s 2011 Special Recognition Award at the Virginia Council of Cooperatives annual meeting.

“It was a challenge to fashion the right words to honor one of our industry’s best speechwriters,” commented Donna Pugh Johnson, president of the agribusiness council.

Hockman is manager of Member and Public Relations at Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives in Glen Allen. But he’s also known as a premier host of Virginia agriculture events and special recognitions.

“I’ve probably given more awards than I can count, and not one of those did I not enjoy giving,” Hockman said. “I really appreciate the friendship and the feeling of family over the years we have shared over

the years.”

Hockman, a native of Front Royal, Va., is a 1973 graduate of the University of Richmond. He has made his career working for agricultural cooperatives and the agribusiness industry, serving more than 30 years in marketing and public relations roles. Hockman’s dedication to the cooperative model of business began right out of college with his employment at Southern States Cooperative in 1973 as advertising manager. He has served as Manager of Member and Public Relations at Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware Association of Electric Cooperatives since 2003.

In addition to his professional dedication to the agribusiness industry, Hockman is an active participant in industry organizations, assisting the Friends of the Industry of Agriculture, the Virginia Cooperative

Council, and the Virginia Agribusiness Council in marketing and public relations activities. When called upon by the Council or other organizations, he has been willing to share his expertise and experience in public relations, going above and beyond his work duties to serve the industry. Hockman is also on the Board of Directors for the Virginia Agriculture In the Classroom Foundation.

The Virginia Agribusiness Council represents agricultural and forestry producers, suppliers, marketers, processors and commodity associations in the Commonwealth with a unified voice through its government affairs activities. The Council has a combined membership of over 40,000. For more information on the Virginia Agribusiness Council, visit www.va-agribusiness.org.



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“This is just a taste of what it’s like,” said Adam Shiflet of Farm Credit of the Virginia’s in Harrisonburg. He’s been the computer guru for the Virginia Youth Conference for the past six years. VCC members broke into four groups, representing four different hypothetical farm supply cooperatives. They were told to form teams, select leaders and get cracking on filling in the worksheets, which focused on determining sales goals, calculating labor and advertising expenses and delivering various products to customers in the most efficient manner. Each team was given a different sales approach – one team was the bargain basement store, one catered to the most affluent farm customers and the other two were fighting for the middle ground of the market.

“The object of the game is to win! To make a profit and increase your

cooperative’s net worth,” Shiflet said as he explained the details. “Keep in mind, your goal is not just increased sales. You have to handle expenses well in order to make a profit.”

After 45 minutes of wrangling, all four teams turned in their worksheets to Shiflet, who plugged the numbers into the computer simulation. Results were announced after lunch.

“I can see how this would tie up a bunch of kids for hours,” commented Don Tindale, a retired Southern States Cooperative employee.

“Sticking with a consistent business strategy tends to be the reason a cooperative remains profitable,” Shiflet told participants after they’d finished their exercise. “And forecasting is fundamental to this game, along with cash management.

“This is just a little taste of what we put the students through. We normally do four or five turns, representing at least four business

quarters. And it’s really cool to see the students start to put it all together after a turn or two,” he said.

“It’s really fun to see the kids ‘dial-in’ during the course of the simulations,” added Allen Melton of Southern States Cooperative, a youth conference advisor. “They get the book the night before, and an hour talk about business strategy and selecting their leaders... then they hit it hard, just like we did.”

“We cannot emphasize enough how good it is for you, our council members, to come and witness the competition at the annual conference,” added Brian Wolfe. “It’s a great networking opportunity as well. The kids get to meet cooperative business leaders, such as Farm Credit and electric cooperatives. And you get a chance to meet some of the best and brightest students and potential new employees.”



Phil Miller, VCC Executive Director, reports on finances and activities from the past year.



Adam Shiflet of Farm Credit of the Virginias introduces VCC members to the challenges of "Who's Minding the Store?"



Dr. Dixie Watts Reaves addressed the meeting.

The 2011-2012 VCC Board of Directors: seated L to R: Brian Wolfe, President, Rappahannock Electric Cooperative; Allen Melton, Vice President, Southern States Cooperative; J.T. Anderson, Secretary, Colonial Farm Credit. Standing L to R: Margaret Crick, Augusta Co-op; David Durr, Culpeper Farmers Co-op; Jimmy Graves, Graves Mt. Lodge; Bette Brand, Farm Credit of the Virginias; Richard Johnstone, VA/MD/DE Association of Electric Cooperatives; Phil Miller, Virginia Co-op Council; Brian Mosier, Mecklenberg Electric Cooperative; Dr. Dixie Watts Dalton, Virginia Tech; Thomas Truitt, Mid-Atlantic Farm Credit. Missing from photo: Eric Paulson, Virginia State Dairymen's Association; Carl Privett, MD & VA Milk Producers Cooperative; Jennifer Cuthbertson; AgFirst, Dr. Glenn Anderson, VA Dept. of Education.

