

Cooperative educational program continues to thrive

The annual Virginia Council of Cooperatives Youth Leadership Conference continues to generate interest in agricultural economics and cooperative business models among Virginia Tech freshman, according to Dr. Dixie Watts Reaves. "I usually get one or two students in my ag economics classes who tell me they attended the youth conference," Reaves said. "So it's a built-in recruiting program for me."

Reaves thanked the council for its continued financial support for the program, noting it was one of the largest and most successful of similar programs in other states. She also shared some comments from former conference attendees who are now at Tech.

"To get a scholarship from an organization that has an interest in agriculture means a lot to me," wrote Evan Shiflett. "It shows that they have an interest in the next generation of agriculturalists. Attending the VCFC conference was a highlight of my high school career. I met people I am still friends with today and learned a lot about co-ops."

Mary Elmer wrote, "This scholarship has allowed me to understand and appreciate the vital role that cooperatives play in the economic structure of rural, suburban, and urban communities. I feel extremely honored to be supported by one of Virginia's largest agricultural organizations. As I move forward in my educational endeavors, I will continue to acknowledge the enormous contribution that the Virginia Council of Farmer Cooperatives has given to me and Virginia."

And Christy Huffman said, "My career aspirations and higher education could not have been possible without generous support from agriculture organizations such as yourself. You have given me so much, from the Luther Raper Scholarship to being selected to attend the VCFC Youth Conference at Graves Mountain Lodge in 2003. The conference confirmed my place in the agricultural industry."

The annual youth conference is set for April 2009 at Graves Mountain, and council members were encouraged to recruit candidates to attend for a weekend of fun, fellowship and cooperative education.