

# 48 cooperative representatives among Young Leaders Conference attendees

## *Statewide event stresses ‘Communicating Leadership in America’*

The 2007 Young Leaders Conference Feb. 23 and 24 in Nashville had 48 participants representing cooperatives across Tennessee among its 263 attendees.

The conference at the Music City Sheraton was sponsored by the Tennessee Council of Cooperatives (TCC) and Tennessee Farm Bureau Federation’s Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R). Theme for the two-day meeting was “Communicating Leadership in America.”

The program, which focused on cooperative education and leadership initiatives, had a variety of highlights – from a cleverly structured “Jeopardy”-style game to a fiery challenge from an imposing keynote speaker whose specialty is motivating co-op members to become leaders in their organizations.

Former National Football League All-Pro defensive tackle Dave Rowe, now manager of member and public relations with Radolph Electric Membership Corporation in Asheboro, N.C., stressed that cooperatives are still “people-helping-people” businesses.

“We need people like you to step forward and say, ‘Hey, I’d like to be a part of that!’ Give something back to your community,” said Rowe, who’s familiar to southern football fans as an analyst on Lincoln Financial Sports’ Southeastern Conference football telecasts. “In a cooperative, every member has a say in the operation of the business, and

your selection to attend this conference says your voice is that of a leader. I urge you to go home and get to work.”

Tennessee Electric Cooperative Association’s Joe Jackson, who serves as TCC’s vice president for education, also urged participants to assume leadership roles with their local co-ops.

“You are our members, our owners, and our cooperatives exist to serve you,” Jackson said. “The challenge now is for you, as leaders in your communities, to put your abilities to work at home by serving on co-op committees and assuming leadership responsibilities wherever you can.”

The conference program also featured discussions of farm-based issues, including a general session on misconceptions of agriculture. Ag enhancements, animal identification, agri-tourism, value-added initiatives, current ag issues, and the Tennessee Beef Alliance were discussed in detail in break-out sessions.

Participants representing the Tennessee Council of Cooperatives at the conference, listed with their sponsors, were Jerry Barr, Madisonville, Tennessee Farm Bureau; John and Charissa Baskette, Talbott, Cocke Farmers Cooperative; Brent and Holly Davis, McEwen, Meriwether Lewis Electric Cooperative; Jason and Kim Dossett, Pulaski, Duck River Electric Membership Corporation; Shawn Duren, Crump, Tennessee Valley Electric Cooperative; Paul and Christy Fugate, Tazewell, Tennessee Farm Bureau; Will and Lydia Gunn, Clarksville, Tennessee Farmers Cooperative; Justin Harwell, Cookeville, Farm Credit Services of Mid-America; Josh and Jennifer Johnson, Huntingdon, Tennessee Farmers Cooperative; Lamar and Vivian Johnson, Pikeville, Bledsoe Telephone Cooperative; Jerry and Penny Lawson, Rogersville, Holston Electric

Cooperative; Bill Martin, Knoxville, Farm Credit Services of Mid-America; Eric Maupin and JoAnn Parker, Dyersburg, Tennessee Farm Bureau; John and Amanda Neal, Tazewell, Powell Valley Electric Cooperative; Michele and Mike Nixon, Carthage, Upper Cumberland Electric Membership Corporation; Stephanie and Mike Patterson, Pikeville, AgCredit; Daniel and Katie Pigue, Bells, Gibson Electric Membership Corporation; Brad and Melanie Porter, Ripley, Forked Deer Electric Cooperative; Ryan and Melissa Raby, Fayetteville, Fayetteville Public Utilities; Joshua Samples, Dyer, Dairy Farmers of America; David and Tiffany Simpson, McMinnville, Caney Fork Electric Cooperative; Sarah Stafford and Shannon Tull, Friendship, Farm Credit Services of Mid-America; Sam and Beth Tays, Monterey, Volunteer Energy Cooperative; Adam Thompson, Corryton, Tennessee Farm Bureau; Amy and Jamie Tuck, Martin, Tennessee Farm Bureau; Skp and Brittany Turner, McMinnville, Warren Farmers Cooperative; Katherine and Patrick Walk, Spring Hill, Farm Credit Services of Mid-America; and Brandon and Katherine Whitt, Murfreesboro, Rutherford Farmers Cooperative.

TCC, which is observing its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year, is comprised of 93 organizations that serve farmers and rural residents across the state. Membership in the council includes electric, telephone, farm supply, dairy, tobacco, artificial insemination, and financial cooperatives as well as the Tennessee Farm Bureau.