

ADVANCER

Volume VIII, FY26

NEWS BULLETIN

**MEET MS. ABESSIE THOMPSON
AND THE TWIN GROVES
COMMUNITY—WHERE A
COMMUNITY VISION TURNS INTO
REALITY.**

TALK OF THE
LAND
SPOTLIGHT



SOWING SEEDS OF RURAL COMMUNITY HERITAGE

The Garden in Twin Groves
shows how conservation
helps small towns protect
nature, honor history, and
thrive.



INSIDE THIS EDITION:

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Members, Friends, Partners, and Supporters:

Message from the President and CEO

"This conference is more than an annual gathering. It is a call to action. It is an invitation to learn, connect, serve, and grow."

Dr. Calvin R. King, President/CEO



As we continue to develop plans for Arkansas Land and Farm Development Corporation's (ALCDC) **46th Annual Conference**, hosted by the Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC), we are doing so with a focus on this year's theme, **Sowing Seeds of Rural and Urban Community Heritage — Rooted in Resource Opportunities for Prosperity**. With you in mind, this theme speaks to the heart of our mission: honoring the legacy of family farms and community leadership while preparing the next generation to build stronger, more resilient rural and urban communities. The Conference is set for Thursday and Friday, October 29-30, 2026, at the Brinkley Convention Center, 1501 Weatherby Dr., Brinkley, AR 72021.

For more than four decades, ALFDC, our affiliate, has worked to advance land retention, family farm development, community education, housing, youth training, and land-based

economic development for limited-resource and socially disadvantaged families. As ALCDC continues this proud tradition of service, this conference will bring together farmers, families, youth, educators, faith leaders, business owners, public officials, and resource partners to share practical tools, proven strategies, and fresh inspiration for community prosperity.

Seeds of Success celebrates the strength of family farms, faith, leadership, education, and shared purpose. Through workshops and resource speakers, participants will explore how agricultural heritage can continue to grow into opportunities for stronger families, more informed landowners, and thriving rural communities. These sessions highlight that success is planted through vision, cultivated through knowledge, and harvested through unity.

Stewards of Service will focus on our faith-based responsibility to serve

families, strengthen local economies, and prepare youth to lead with integrity. Resource speakers will address the importance of servant leadership, community partnerships, ethical decision making, and intergenerational mentorship. In every discussion, we will emphasize the vital message: that service is not only what we do; it is who we are called to be.

Sowing Opportunity Together will highlight the economic development pathways that connect agriculture, entrepreneurship, workforce readiness, and professional growth across generations. Conference workshops will help participants identify resources for farm financing, cooperative development, small business growth, market access, career preparation, and community-based enterprise. By sowing opportunities together, we affirm that prosperity is strongest when it is shared, inclusive, and rooted in local assets.

Strengthening Our Soil will focus on the foundation for sustainable community development.

PRESIDENT'S LETTER CONTINUED

These sessions will connect family farm heritage, heirs' property, conservation program opportunities, leadership training, land stewardship, resource education, and the values of faith and service. Just as healthy soil sustains a fruitful harvest, strong values, informed families, and prepared community leaders sustain the future of our communities. This conference is more than an annual gathering. It is a call to action. It is an invitation to learn, connect, serve, and grow.

It is a reminder that our heritage is not behind us; it is beneath us, like roots that nourish every new season of possibility. As we gather for the 46th Annual Conference, may we honor those who planted before us, support those who labor among us, and invest in those who will lead after us. On behalf of ALFDC and ALCDC, I thank each participant, partner, sponsor, presenter, and community member who continue to believe in the power of land, family, faith, education, and service.

Together, we will continue sowing seeds of rural and urban community heritage, rooted in resource opportunities for prosperity.

Calvin R. King, Sr.
President /CEO

Talk of the Land

How The Twin Groves Community Uses NRCS Support to Cultivate a Sustainable Future

ALCDC TWIN GROVES, Ark. — A new Memorial Urban Small/Micro Farm and Garden in Twin Groves is showing how conservation programs can help small communities protect natural resources, preserve local history, and improve access

to fresh food. With technical and financial assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, Twin Groves has begun establishing land conservation practices

through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, commonly known as EQIP. NRCS describes EQIP as its flagship conservation program, offering one-on-one planning support and financial assistance to help producers address soil and



Ms. Abessie with the NRCS Staff

TALK OF THE LAND CONTINUED

health, water quality, irrigation, erosion, habitat, and other natural resource concerns.

For Twin Groves, that assistance is helping turn a community vision into a working demonstration site: a garden that produces fresh vegetables, teaches conservation, and honors the people and places that shaped Walker Township.

A Farm Rooted in Local History

The Memorial Urban Farm/Garden preserves and interprets the history of Walker Township, with special attention to the intertwined legacies of Solomon Grove and Zion Grove. Those two historic communities were later incorporated to form the city of Twin Groves.

The garden honors early settlers including Frank Walker and George Walker, along with families who arrived after 1879 through railroad land deeds and opportunities connected to the Homestead Act of 1862. It also highlights founding families such as the Owenses, the Ealys, and the Thompsons, whose names remain part of the community's story.

Conservation Practices for Small and Micro-Urban Farms

The project also reflects a growing opportunity for small, micro-urban, and community-based growers. NRCS urban agriculture resources note that assistance may support practices such as high tunnels, soil health improvements, weed and pest management, composting facilities, irrigation, micro-irrigation, mulching, nutrient management, raised beds, and cover crops.

Those practices can be especially important for small towns and neighborhoods where growers are working with limited acreage, limited water access, compacted soils, or higher production costs. By applying conservation planning at a small scale, community gardens and beginning farmers can build healthier soil, use water more efficiently, reduce erosion, and make local food production more resilient.

Fresh Food, Education, and Community Renewal

In addition to honoring history, the Memorial Urban

Farm/Garden is designed to serve residents in an area where access to fresh vegetables is limited. The garden offers a local response to food desert conditions while creating a place where youth, families, elders, gardeners, and beginning producers can learn by observation.

As an educational model, the site can help other rural small towns see how urban agriculture concepts can be adapted beyond large cities. USDA urban agriculture materials recognize that community gardens, small towns, and small-scale producers are part of the broader urban agriculture landscape, and that these operations can improve healthy food access, expand green space, strengthen community ties, and support local food systems.

Program Opportunities for Local Growers

For beginning micro-urban farmers and gardeners, the Twin Groves project points to a practical first step: contact the local USDA Service Center or NRCS office to discuss goals, land conditions, eligibility, and conservation needs.

TALK OF THE LAND CONTINUED

NRCS provides free technical assistance and can help producers develop a conservation plan before applying for financial assistance through programs such as EQIP.

The message from Twin Groves is clear: conservation is not only for large farms. With the right planning and support, small gardens and micro-farms can protect natural resources, grow fresh

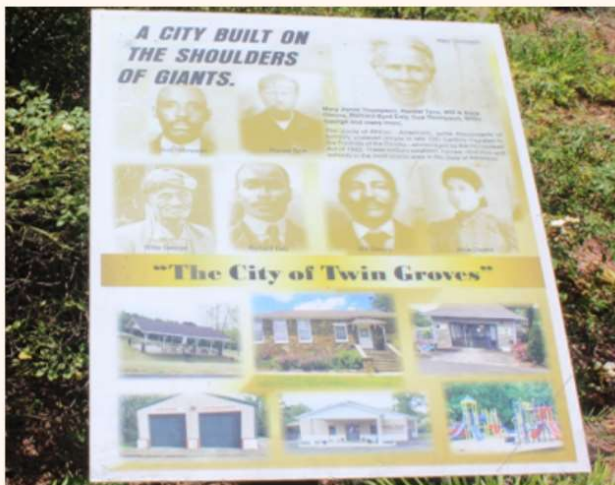
food, teach local history, and become anchors for community renewal.

Ozark Foothills African American History Museum in Twin Groves

CONSERVATION IS NOT ONLY FOR LARGE FARMS



A FARM ROOTED IN LOCAL HISTORY



HEIRS' PROPERTY

Helping Families Move Past Heirs' Property Barriers and Toward Program Benefits



For many rural families, land is more than property. It is a legacy, a source of identity, and a connection to generations who worked, lived, and built their futures on the same soil. Yet when land is passed down without a clear title or estate plan, families can face a serious challenge known as heirs' property. This situation can make it difficult to access government programs that support farming, conservation, housing, disaster recovery, rural business development, and long-term land retention.

The four-step process—Assess, Plan, Implement, and Optimize—offers a simple and practical way for families to begin addressing these barriers. It is designed to help landowners, heirs, community partners, and service providers move from confusion to action while keeping the family's land, goals, and future at the center of the conversation.

Assess: Start by Understanding the Ownership Situation

The first step is to take a careful look at the family's current ownership status. Families can begin by gathering deeds, tax records, wills, death certificates, probate documents, leases, maps, farm numbers, and past letters from government agencies. This information helps identify who may have an ownership interest, whether property taxes are current, what documents are missing, and what issues may need legal or technical support before a program application can move forward.

Plan: Bring the Family and Support Network Together

After the barrier is identified, the next step is to develop a clear plan. That may include contacting known heirs, holding a family meeting, naming a lead family representative, reaching out to a trusted community-

based organization, and seeking guidance from an attorney or heirs' property specialist. The plan should also connect the family's needs with available programs, such as USDA Farm Service Agency loans, Natural Resources Conservation Service conservation assistance, USDA Rural Development opportunities, disaster assistance, and other local, state, or federal resources.

Implement: Take the Next Practical Steps

Implementation happens when the family begins turning the plan into action. This may involve updating tax payments, collecting signatures or written agreements, filing probate or other legal documents, establishing authority for someone to act on behalf of the ownership group, completing agency records, applying for a farm number, and submitting program applications. Community

HEIRS' PROPERTY CONTINUED

partners can play an important role by helping families prepare paperwork, understand program requirements, meet deadlines, and communicate with agency staff.

Optimize: Build Long-Term Land Security

The final step is to strengthen what has already been started. Once a family gains access to one benefit or resolves one barrier, they can continue improving records, updating estate plans, maintaining communication among heirs, and exploring additional opportunities. Over time, this can support conservation practices, credit access, housing improvements, forestry management, business development, and generational wealth-building.

Heirs' property challenges are often complex, but families do not have to face them alone. With the right information, trusted assistance, and a step-by-step process, landowners can better understand their options and move closer to the government program benefits that may help them protect and improve their land.

Take Action Steps

Foreword: Families who believe they may own heirs' property are encouraged to begin by gathering available land records and speaking with a trusted community partner, legal professional, or local USDA office. Taking the first step can open the door to clearer ownership, stronger family decision-making, and better access to programs designed to support rural families and landowners.

“With the right documents, trusted support, and a clear step-by-step plan, heirs' property families can move from uncertainty to action—and closer to the benefits that help protect their land for future generations.”



PANEL MEMBERS



MAYOR BROWN

By staff writer
TWIN GROVES, Ark. – The Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation, in partnership with the City of Twin Groves, hosted a workshop aimed at helping small farmers, urban growers, landowners and community residents connect with agriculture resources and economic development opportunities. The meeting, titled “Empowering Growers and Producers: Small & Urban Agriculture Initiatives,” focused on leveraging the resources of USDA and AR Department of Agriculture resources to promote prosperity and sustainable economic growth in underserved communities. “This workshop was about making sure growers and producers know where to turn for help and how to use available resources to strengthen their operations,” said Dr. Calvin R. King Sr., President/CEO of ALCDC.

SEEDS OF OPPORTUNITY: TWIN GROVES WORKSHOP CONNECTS GROWERS TO VITAL RESOURCES

MEETING PARTICIPANTS



Speakers and presenters discussed programs that support farm operations, conservation, rural development, housing, business growth, community facilities, water and sewer systems, internet access, and grant opportunities. Organizers said the goal was to improve outreach program delivery while giving participants practical information they can use in their farming businesses and communities. Janie Williams, Vice President of ALCDC and moderator for the meeting said, “Our goal is not only to share information, but to connect people with programs, technical assistance and follow-up support that can make a difference in their communities.” The agenda featured representatives and resource information from the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA

Rural Development, the Arkansas Department of Agriculture, the Small Business Administration, and ALCDC.

Topics included farm programs and loans, micro and urban farming opportunities, conservation programs, heirs’ property challenges, ranching, forestry and environmental stewardship. Mayor Theodore Brown Jr. welcomed the partnership with ALCDC, saying the workshop reflected Twin Grove’s commitment to supporting residents and local economic development. “Partnerships like this help bring important resources closer to the people who need them,” Brown said. The meeting was a great success. “When farmers, landowners and community residents have access to the right information, they are better positioned to build lasting economic opportunity,” stated Dr. King.

ALCDC/ALFDC

46TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP MEETING

**Theme: Sowing Seeds of Rural and Urban
Community Heritage – Rooted in Resource
Opportunities for Prosperity**



October 29-
30, 2026
At 8:30 a.m.
Both days

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2026 AGENDA AT A GLANCE

- 8:30 a.m. Registration
- 8:45 a.m. Opening Session
- 9:00 a.m. College and University Symposium
- 10:00 a.m. Oratorical Competition
- 11:30 a.m. Youth Luncheon

Invited Luncheon Speaker:

**Angelee Word, Natural Resources Conservation
Service, USDA and a former ALFDC YECAE Participant**

- 12:30 p.m. College Networking Opportunities



YOUTH DAY Day 1

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30, 2026 AGENDA AT A GLANCE

- 8:30 a.m. Registration
- 9:00 a.m. Morning Session
- 10:30 a.m. Concurrent Work Sessions
- 12:00 Noon Annual Luncheon

**Invited Luncheon Speaker: Representative from
the Office of the Secretary, United States
Department of Agriculture (USDA)**

Immediately Following Luncheon:

- Annual Membership Meeting
- Annual Board of Directors Meeting



ADULT DAY Day 2

Conference
Location:

Brinkley Convention
Center, 1501
Weatherby Drive
Brinkley, Arkansas

CONTACT:

***JANIE WILLIAMS AT 501-454-6206 *MARY HARRIS AT 870-734-1140 *WEBSITE: WWW.ARLCDC.ORG
THIS TWO-DAY EVENT CONNECTS PARTICIPANTS WITH EXPERTS AND PRACTICAL TOOLS FOR COMMUNITY
AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN ARKANSAS**

ALFDC 46TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE & MEMBERSHIP MEETING

CONFERENCE & EXHIBIT REGISTRATION FORM

Arkansas Land and
Farm Development
Corporation

Conference Location:
Brinkley Convention Ctr.
1501 Weatherby Drive
Brinkley, Arkansas

Please Check:

- ☐ I plan to attend Day I, Oct. 29, 2026 (Youth Day)
- ☐ I plan to attend Day II, Oct. 30, 2026 (Farming, Housing, Rural Dev. and Annual Membership Meeting)
- ☐ I plan to attend Both Days, Oct. 29-30, 2026

Date: MM, DD, YY

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Name: _____

Company's Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

ALCDC/ALFDC IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY PROVIDER OF PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Conference Registration Fee (Check One):

- | | |
|--|---|
| ☐ Adult \$15 | ☐ Displays (Organizations) \$250 |
| ☐ Senior Citizens \$0 | ☐ Displays (Individual) \$50 |
| ☐ Members \$0 | |

For Vendors and Exhibitors:

Number of Tables Needed: _____

Is Electrical Accommodation
Needed?

- ☐ YES
- ☐ NO

ALCDC/ALFDC CONTACT INFORMATION

 870-734-1140

 www.arlcdc.org

 484 Floyd Brown Dr, P.O. 907, Brinkley, AR 72021



ALFDC/ALCDC Partnership Membership Renewal Form

October 1, 2026 - September 30, 2027

_____ Individual Membership \$25.00 _____ Partnership Membership \$40.00

_____ Organization Membership \$200.00

Check one of the following:

_____ Renewal Membership _____ New Membership _____ Contribution to Organization \$ _____

Total Amount Paid: \$ _____

Member Benefits

Advocacy and Public Relations -ALCDC/ALFDC participates in federal and state hearing sessions that focus on policy development for its members, farmers, youth, and rural and urban residents.

Member Opportunities -ALCDC/ALFDC offers leadership opportunities within the organization for our youth, farmers, and rural and urban residents. As a member you will have the opportunity to serve on advisory committees and serve as volunteer and form local volunteer working groups in support of the organization's service delivery program.

Marketing Opportunities -ALCDC/ALFDC offers cooperative marketing opportunities for rural and urban farmers, and businesses. As a member, we also offer the opportunity to present and set up an exhibition during our Regional Meetings and Annual Conferences, along with facility rental discounts.

Access to Housing, Farming, and Youth Services -ALCDC/ALFDC offers rural and urban residents technical support and training for access to affordable housing, homeownership education, business development, technical assistance and support in accessing farm financial resources for conservation practices, operating expense, youth leadership development, education enrichment, and workforce readiness.

Information and Communication -ALCDC/ALFDC members can communicate with an ALCDC representative via phone or website concerning their farming, housing, business and youth service's needs. Members receive ALCDC updates and news through our quarterly newsletters and weekly e-letters and website.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone Number: _____ **Email:** _____

Please return your application and tax-deductible contribution to:
ALCDC/ALFDC Membership P.O. Box 743 Brinkley, AR 72021

ALCDC/ALFDC programs and services are available without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, or familial status. On your compatible Android phone, Smart phone, or tablet-open the built-in camera app. Point the camera at the QR code. Tap the banner that appears on your Android phone, Smart phone, or tablet to join or renewmembership.





P.O. Box 907
Brinkley, AR72021

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The Advancer is a publication of the Arkansas Land and Community Development Corporation (ALCDC) printed quarterly and circulated as a public service and communication resources for our membership and constituents. The Advancer publication reaches a broad range of organizations and residents throughout the Delta and the United States.

The Advancer reflects the nature of our work-supplying self-help opportunities and support services to our farmers and others of limited Resources in our forty-two (42) county service area. ALCDC is committed to helping people become more productive and self-sufficient. We appreciate your comments and suggestions. Direct all comments and inquiries about this publication by phone to (870) 734-3005 or e-mail us at alcde1934@yahoo.com.

To update your mailing address, contact Mary Harris at (870) 734-3005.

Regional Community Economic Development Workshops 2026

Date	Event	Time	Location/County
Sept 17	Outreach Meeting	11-1:00 p.m.	Morrilton Chamber of Commerce, 115 East Broadway St., Morrilton, AR 72110
Oct 01	Outreach Meeting	11-1:00 p.m.	Lake View Municipal Fire Dept, 14264, Hwy. 44 Helena, AR 72342
Oct 29	46th Annual Conf	8:30-2p.m.	Brinkley Convention Center 1501 Weatherby Drive Brinkley, AR 72021
Oct 30	46th Annual Conf	8:30-2p.m.	Brinkley Convention Center 1501 Weatherby Drive Brinkley, AR 72021
Nov 5	Outreach Meeting	11-1:00p.m.	Lonoke Convention Center 1355 Front St SW Lonoke, AR 72086
Dec 3	Estate Planning	10-12:00 (Noon)	ALCDC 831 N. Washington St Forrest City, AR 72335

SAVE DATES

ALCDC MISSION



The mission of ALCDC is to supply advocacy outreach, technical aid, and training to limited Resources small farmers and all rural residents to alleviate poverty, enhance sustainable farming and strengthen communities' economic sustainability and workforce readiness.

ALCDC services and programs are available without regard to age, race, religion, gender, or physical handicap.

For Additional Information
Phone (870) 734-3005

Visit Our Website

www.arlcde.org