

Santicola shares San Pierre story with Clinton



At a national conference on Rural Philanthropy in Little Rock, Arkansas last week, Beverly Santicola, Executive Director of the Center for Rural Outreach & Public Services, Inc. (or CROPS), had the opportunity to meet former President Bill Clinton and give him a Growing Rural DVD that features the San Pierre Revitalization Project. The conference, held at the William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum and hosted by the Virginia-based Council of Foundations, was attended by approximately 150 leaders from philanthropic foundations, federal government agencies, and nonprofit organizations from throughout the United States. "I found out about the conference from the Ball Brothers Foundation only about a week before the event" said Santicola "and signed up at my own expense in hopes that I could garner some financial support for San Pierre. I had no idea President Clinton was going to be there until I arrived in the conference hall the morning of his speech."

In his speech, Clinton said he thought that rural areas could end up benefiting more than larger cities from the federal stimulus package, specifically mentioning funds that have been set aside to deliver broadband Internet to underserved areas. He also recommended that rural areas focus on ways to invest in alternative energy, such as wind and solar power. Clinton said, "Investments in alternative energy could spark one of the largest job booms since World War II and we wouldn't have to shoot anyone to do it."

The 42nd president said that he believed that charities that work in rural areas should find more ways to work with charities in urban areas. When asked about the state of rural areas, Clinton said that charities in those areas should find ways to create hope for the people living there.

When asked, "Why do you think people in rural America are so dismal? He quickly responded, "Because they think that tomorrow is going to be just like yesterday. It's not because they're poor, but because they're stuck in a rut they can't get out of."

Positioning herself in a front row seat, Santicola had the opportunity to shake Clinton's hand before he took the stage, take many photos, and get a copy of Growing Rural in his hands. "While he may never take the time to look at the Growing Rural DVD, it was my one big chance to tout the work we are doing with our urban and rural youth volunteers in San Pierre and I went for it!" For more information on the San Pierre Revitalization Project or CROPS, and how you can get involved contact Beverly Santicola at 866-843-3493 or visit our websites at www.ruralgrants.org and www.healthnetworkcenter.org.