

NC CONSERVATIONIST RECEIVES “A MAN CALLED MATTHEW AWARD”

Tillery, NC – Mikki Sager, the North Carolina Representative of the National Conservation Fund, received the 2005 “A Man Called Matthew Award,” presented during the Awards Luncheon at the 7th National Black Land Loss Summit, February 19-20, 2005. “A Man Called Matthew Award” was created in 1988 by the Concerned Citizens of Tillery (CCT) in honor of Matthew Grant, a founding member of CCT and the impetus for the group to create the CCT Land Loss Fund. The late Matthew Grant (1918-2001), beloved husband of Florenza Moore Grant, was a veteran farmer and entrepreneur, and was a resident of the historic Tillery Resettlement Farm community. Besides establishing several businesses, including the Tillery Casket Company (1965), he and his wife filed a law suit against the USDA in 1981. They led a struggle for justice and reform at the USDA until their deaths in 2001. The award is designed to pay tribute to other outstanding individuals who support community based economic development through African American land retention, family farm sustainability, and the development of youth entrepreneurial leadership.

In presenting the award to Mikki Sager, Gary R. Grant, son of Matthew and Florenza Moore Grant and executive director of CCT said, “Mikki Sager has lived up to the award’s design through the Conservation Fund’s Resourceful Communities Program to blend poverty alleviation, heritage preservation and community capacity-building with land and water protection, sustainable forestry, hazard mitigation, and watershed-based planning. Sager currently serves on the “Founding Board” of the Black Family Land Trust (BFLT), and is working to help rural North Carolina communities promote community forestry, eco- and heritage tourism, entrepreneurship and re-use of lands and buildings to create businesses and jobs that protect, enhance and restore the natural resources while promoting social and economic justice and growth. Sager has worked with the CCT and its Land Loss Fund for the past eight years and brought in new thinking on community development through conservation and sustainable land retention and cultural tourism.”

Sager, who was completely caught off guard said, “I am so honored that the Grant Family and the CCT Family think I am worthy of this recognition. After all, Mr. Grant was a man who was a true visionary and lived each day to make life better for all.”

Mikki Sager joins the distinguish list of past recipients of the award: The Honorable Frank. W. Ballance, former NC State Senator and Congressman-NC 1st District; Anita Earp, former staff attorney with the Land Loss Prevention Project (LLPP); Steve Wing, PhD, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Public Health; Timothy Pigford, lead plaintiff in the now historic Pigford vs. Glickman, Secretary USDA Class Action by Black Farmers; Eddie Slaughter, farmer and founding vice-president of the Black Farmers & Agriculturalists Association (BFAA); and

Stephon Bowens, Esq., Executive Director of the North Carolina's Black Lawyers Association Land Loss Prevention Project.

Three generations of Matthew and Florenza Moore Grant were present for the presentation of "A Man Called Matthew Award": children Evangeline Grant Briley, Gary R. Grant, and Bruce K. Grant; grandson Gary R. Redding; and great grandsons Ellington Blalock and Sky Cameron Myers. Besides the 100 plus attendees, representing eleven states, the District of Columbia and Canada at the 7th National Black Land Loss Summit, on hand for the presentation of the award were Congressman G. K. Butterfield (NC 1st District); Senator Robert Holloman (NC 4th Senate District); Representative John D. Hall (NC 7th House District); and Alton Thompson, Dean of the NC A&T State University School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences, Greensboro, NC.



Photo Caption:

Pictured left to right – “A Man Called Matthew” award winner Mikki Sager NC representative of the National Conservation Fund, Gary R. Grant, son of Matthew Grant (in whose honor the award is named), Executive Director of Concerned Citizens of Tillery (CCT) and President of the Black Farmers & Agriculturalists Association (BFAA); and Congressman G. K. Butterfield, NC 1st Congressional District. The award was presented during the Awards’ Luncheon at the 7th National Black Land Loss Summit held in the historic communities of the Tillery Resettlement Farm, Tillery, NC and Franklinton Center at Bricks, Whitakers, NC, February 19-20, 2005.