

# Smart growth leads to quality communities

By **ROBERT LEE LONG**

**Community Editor**

(Updated: Saturday, June 21, 2008 7:49 AM CDT)



(DeSoto Times Photo by Robert Lee Long) Paul Shahan with the Northwest Mississippi Association of Realtors, left, awarded scholarships on behalf of the organization to Elizabeth Sherard, William Robb, Cyndi Harvey, Lakira Wooten and Valerie Cox during the group's quarterly membership meeting. Kay Jefferies, NWMAR president, looks on from right.

**HERNANDO** – Smart growth leads to healthy communities and members of the Northwest Mississippi Association of Realtors say they are working with local city and county planners to ensure quality residential and commercial growth continues in the state's fastest growing county.

At the Northwest Mississippi Association of Realtors quarterly membership meeting, John Harrison, 2008 Mississippi Association of Realtors vice president presented Hernando City Planning Director Bob Barber with a \$3,000 Smart Growth Grant, one of 13 grants presented nationwide aimed at promoting quality growth and development.

Barber said the Smart Growth Grant will enable organizations like the A.W. Bouchillon Institute for Community Planning to fund seminars like the recent symposium on greenways held at the DeSoto Civic Center.

"Obviously, there is a need for better ways to grow," Barber said. "Smart growth, in general, creates resources for efficient communities that provide extremely high quality of life," he said. "These are communities that are not merely communities that over-consume the land or degrade the environment. We've got to determine how to grow communities smarter."

Gwen James, MAR president said "smart growth" will be important as the 21st century progresses.

"By the year 2020, the United States will have 57 million more Americans," James said. "We've got to revitalize our city neighborhoods."

James said the "smart growth" principles define quality growth as a result of good schools, low crime, efficient transportation and a protected natural environment. Historical preservation is also another major component.

Barber said organizations like the Northwest Mississippi Association of Realtors are leading the way for quality development.

"I salute you for what you do," Barber said. "That process of planning for over half a century has contributed greatly to our quality of life."

The Northwest Mississippi Association of Realtors on Thursday also awarded scholarships to five DeSoto County students. There were at least 69 applicants for the \$1,000 scholarships. Those awarded scholarships were Valerie Cox, Cyndi Harvey, Elizabeth Sherard, Lakira Wooten and William Robb.

Also Thursday, local realtor Paige Anderson was recognized as one of the "Top 30 Under 30 Realtors" in Mississippi.

Robert Lee Long can be contacted at [rlong@desototimes.com](mailto:rlong@desototimes.com) or at (662) 429-NEWS, Ext. 252.