



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Virginia Department of Housing
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Council for Rural Virginia announces 2009 award winners

Richmond, VA - This week at the fifth-annual Virginia Rural Summit held in Lynchburg, Virginia, the Council for Rural Virginia announced the winners of the 2009 Council Awards. Council Chairman, Dr. Oliver A. McBride set the stage for the Summit by noting, "Virginia's Rural Course of Action is focused on the next administration. Presentations will define the role rural areas play in Community Capacity, Energy Systems and Food and Natural Resource Systems as we recognize the impact of policy on rural regions."

"I am pleased to see that this year's award winners emphasized productive collaboration and partnerships across counties, jurisdictions, regions and localities" stated Senator Frank Ruff, Chairman of the Center for Rural Virginia.

"Equally important, the recipients recognized the significant role that small businesses and the entrepreneurial spirit play in the economic development of rural Virginia. These are key components of the mission of the Center and Council for Rural Virginia."

The Council for Rural Virginia recognizes three award winners each year. Basil I. Gooden, Ph.D., Principal Deputy Director, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development was the 2009 Awards Committee Chairman. Mary C. Terry, retired, and Gary Keenor, Dabney Lancaster Community College served on the committee. This year the winners are:

- **The Council for Rural Virginia Award: George Mason University**
The Council for Rural Virginia Award is given annually to recognize outstanding commitment and service to the advancement of rural communities and/or issues in Virginia.

George Mason University received this year's award for work that began in 1997 with the establishment of the Virginia Economic Bridge (VEB), a vital link between two economically important regions of the Commonwealth. Since that time, the university has become the coordinator for the Commonwealth's 29 state Small Business Development Centers; has offered advanced studies to Virginia's rural high schools through the Online Academy; and has used the VEB to collaborate with the Regional Geographic Information Systems Technology Infrastructure Project, mapping fiber and technology infrastructure to attract new businesses into Virginia's rural regions.

- **Best Practices Award: Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority**
This award is given annually by the Council for Rural Virginia to recognize a program or institution that exemplifies commitment and service to the advancement of rural communities and/or issues in Virginia.

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The counties of Carroll and Grayson, along with the City of Galax are known as the Blue Ridge Crossroads Region. With the decline in factories and more than 25 percent of the labor force commuting out of the region, region instituted the Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority (BRCEDA), which immediately recognized the barrier to small business growth as a lack of Internet access. The BRCEDA then spurred the creation of The Wired Road, which has already expanded the region's broadband Internet service by more than 25 percent. The authority has also seen the opening of the Virginia Small Business Development Center, which has assisted in the formation of 116 businesses and more than \$35 million in investment. Since its inception, the center has seen more than 500 jobs created and retained in the region.

- **Friend of the Council Award – Randy Arno**

This award is given to recognize a program, institution or individual that has advocated for or aided the council in support of the council's mission.

Randall Arno was a friend and advocate of the Council on Rural Virginia before its inception - - working with Delegate Landes and other legislatures of the General Assembly to secure the initial funding needed to start the council. Throughout his career Arno has worked as an advocate for the Institute of Advanced Learning and Research, the Southern Virginia Higher Education Center, the New College Initiative, and the regional Center for Applied Training and Technology – all of which have been vital to Southside Virginia. His work has focused on land use policy, water and sewer infrastructure, broadband, philanthropy, entrepreneurial centers, tourism, economic development, and much, much more. He has been called a “virtual knowledge centers” for many individuals working for rural Virginia, and is a true friend of the Council for Rural Virginia.

The Rural Summit is sponsored each year by the Council for Rural Virginia, one of 37 State Rural Development Councils nationwide. The summit draws attendance from a statewide audience representing rural localities, including gubernatorial candidates, elected legislators, county, town, city and business leaders.

Established in 1992 with the assistance of the United States Department of Agriculture, the Council for Rural Virginia is governed by a board of directors generated from its grassroots partners and membership, and is structured as a private public partnership.

As an advocate and catalyst for economic growth, the Council for Rural Virginia works as a link between government - federal, state and local - and private-sector partners to leverage resources to best meet the needs of the citizens of rural Virginia. For more information, visit: <http://www.cfrv.org/>.

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