



For Immediate Release

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2009 Virginia Rural Summit Draws National State and Local Leaders

The Spirit of Rural Virginia / New Strategies ~ New Solutions

Virginia Gubernatorial Candidate – On Monday, September 14 at the 2009 Virginia Rural Summit, Bob McDonnell outlined his *Economic Vision for Rural Virginia*. On Tuesday, former House of Delegates member, Dickie Cranwell, spoke on behalf of Candidate Creigh Deeds. Congressman Bob Goodlatte addressed economic recovery, and the impact of stimulus funding in the Commonwealth. An excellent line up of national, state and local leaders, and rural success stories covered topics such as: Building Community Capacity through Regional Alliances, New Directions for Energy Systems and Food and Natural Resource Systems. Gary R. Christie, Region 2000 Partnership facilitated the Capital Access Forum – *Financial Status of the Commonwealth, Today and for the Future*. Ann Battle Macheras, Federal Reserve Bank, Richmond talked about Virginia's Rural Economy, National Economic Trends, Virginia Economic Trends and Models for Success.

Dr. Oliver A. McBride, Council for Rural Virginia Chairman, opened the event and set the stage to address Virginia's Rural Course of Action. Glen C. Sink, Rural Center Executive Director gave the Center's annual report, and the Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr., introduced fellow state legislators who were in the audience and then introduced Bob McDonnell. The Summit, an annual event, took place September 14-15 at the Kirkley Hotel & Conference Center, Lynchburg, VA.

Stake Holder Forum - Finding Common Ground-Creating Partnerships to Provide Services in Rural Places was facilitated by F. Woodrow "Woody" Harris, Emporia City Council and Rural Center Trustee. Local areas engaged as the Catalysts for Community Improvement - Fostering public support and connecting with the community through building networks based on trust among stakeholders was the overarching theme for R. Bryan David, Executive Director of Virginia's Region 2000 Economic Development Council and Rural Center Director. Jerry Gwaltney, Gwaltney & Associates Consulting and retired Danville City Manager, talked about how he set the standard in Danville for what a city manager could accomplish.

Candidates Forum - Jack Reasor, President Old Dominion Electric Coop and Rural Center Trustee, introduced former House of Delegates member, Dickie Cranwell who spoke on behalf of Gubernatorial Candidate, Creigh Deeds.

Energy Systems - The Honorable Frank W. Wagner, District 7, addressed the Energy Systems Vision: *Energy for the Commonwealth* followed by Bill Murray, Dominion, Managing Director Corporate Public Policy who enlightened attendees on *New Directions in Energy* and Dominion's current and proposed plan for energy production in Virginia including a commitment to meet VA's goal of 15 percent renewable power by 2025. Tim Pfohl of the Virginia Tobacco Commission talked about resources available through the Virginia Tobacco Commission to *Promote Economic Growth and Development*. John Thomas of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Policy talked about how communities can meet *Challenges in Tough Economic Times*.

Food & Natural Resource Systems was facilitated by Jay Poole, Jay S. Poole, Common Sense Strategies and Rural Center Trustee introduced the Honorable Edward "Ed" Scott, Virginia House of Delegates, also a Rural Center

Board of Trustee. He addressed the *Vision: Food for the Commonwealth* and the role of rural places. Jim Saunders, Saunders Brothers, a local producer in Amherst County, a teacher and Chairman of Virginia Agribusiness Council talked about his families *Strategy as a Local Producer and the Local Market* they have served since 1915. With a focus on the *Strategic Course of Action to Achieve the Commonwealth's Food Systems Vision* presentations enlightened the audience on the importance of local partnerships to the producer and to the consumer.

Under Secretary of Rural Development, Victor Vasquez, commended the Virginia Rural Council's collaboration and network building. He said it serves as a *role model*. Further, "What the Virginia Council is doing to revitalize Rural Virginia is an example to Councils across the Nation on how to do a better job through collaboration and strategic partnerships." **Ellen Matthews Davis, Virginia State Director**, announced the availability of Rural Development funds and encouraged Virginians to "*Dream*" as they plan projects and to apply for the funding. She said, "Rural Development can help!"

Council for Rural Virginia Annual Awards - Dr. McBride opened the annual awards luncheon followed by Awards Committee Chair, Basil Gooden, Principal Deputy Director, Virginia Department of Housing & Community Development (DHCD), and Mary C. Terry, Southeast Rural Community Assistance, Inc., (Retired), and Gary S. Keener, Vice President Continuing Education & Workforce Services, Dabney S. Lancaster Community College made up the 2009 Awards.

The Council for Rural Virginia Award recognizes outstanding individual commitment service to the advancement of rural communities and/or issues in Virginia. The 2009 recipient is **Randal E. "Randy" Arno**, Director, Cooper Center Southside Office in Danville. Visit the Cooper Center website to learn more.

The Best Practices Award recognizes a program/institution that exemplifies commitment and service to the advancement of rural communities or issues in Virginia. **Blue Ridge Crossroads Economic Development Authority** is the 2009 award recipient. BRCEDA works to develop a more stable economic environment through assisting individuals develop their own small business and in turn, enhances the philosophy of purchasing local items, goods and services in the Twin Counties.

Friend of the Council Award recognizes a program, institution or individual that has advocated for and/or aided the Council in support of the Council's mission. The 2009 recipient is **George Mason University** and their work with the Virginia Small Business Development Centers (SBDC) network. SBDC is the most extensive business development program in the Commonwealth, and a partnership between the [U.S. Small Business Administration](#), [George Mason University-Mason Enterprise Center](#) at the [School of Public Policy](#) and premier local host organizations throughout Virginia.

Following the Summit, Sink, McBride and Ruff facilitated a meeting with board members and staff to define the next steps for *Virginia's Rural Strategic Action Processes*. Discussion centered around education, healthcare and how they relate to job creation in rural places. The discussion, regarding policy positions for the 2010 General Assembly, will continue at the full board meeting in November.

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