



Rural Center

Partnership of the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia

2017-2018

Center for Rural Virginia Annual Report

Our Mission

The Center is a partnership of the Center for Rural Virginia, a Virginia legislative entity advocating for rural policy, and the Council for Rural Virginia, an entity organized by federal statute that is a conduit for building rural capacity by facilitating the collaboration and creation of coalitions of the key economic regions and sectors of the Commonwealth.

Our History

Created by the General Assembly in 2004, the Center for Rural Virginia works to advance economic development, job creation, workforce development, education, infrastructure, healthcare and other vital initiatives for the prosperity of rural Virginia.

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Dear Friends,

Thank you to our many partners for working with us to make the 2017-2018 operating year of the Center for Rural Virginia a success focusing on initiatives aimed at increasing economic prosperity across rural communities. During this year, the Center, underwent new leadership as the board hired Kristie Helmick Proctor to serve as Executive Director. The Center would like to express its sincere appreciation and gratitude to our former director Christy Morton, for all the work she put in as Executive Director, as well as the vital assistance she played in the ease of the transition for the new executive director.

The Center focused on continuing its role to serve as an advocate, facilitator, and producer of projects, programs, and collaborative initiatives to enhance rural prosperity. In addition, the Center continued its focus on advocacy and initiatives around priority program areas including: broadband and infrastructure, rural economic development, leadership and community capacity, education and workforce development, access to rural housing, entrepreneurship and small business, and regional assets and opportunities.

Accomplishing its mission, the Center continued existing efforts, as well as took on new initiatives and programs to promote rural prosperity across the Commonwealth. Highlights of the past year include: The Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity, the Virginia General Assembly Rural Caucus weekly meetings during the legislative session which the executive director serves as staff for, The Rural Caucus Reception and Dinner, area meetings throughout rural Virginia; which included an area meeting in Farmville that focused on rural housing and the other area meeting being held in Disputanta highlighting rural broadband efforts; as well as engaging in many other partnerships and collaborative efforts.

Through these and other partnerships and collaborative projects, the Center continues its efforts to ensure rural prosperity for all areas of the Commonwealth. Fueled by the Center's and partners' efforts, rural communities are growing through collaboration, entrepreneurship, and innovation in various sector drawn to the scenic beauty, quality of life, and skilled workforce that employers desire for their companies and employees.

Enclosed in this report, you will find a detailed summary of the Center's activities throughout the previous year. It has been a great honor to work and meet with many of you as I traveled around the state visiting rural communities throughout Virginia. It is the dedication and hard work of our board members that make the impact of the Center for Rural Virginia possible. I look forward to another stellar year of innovation, collaboration, and new initiatives to promote and enhance rural Virginia.

Best regards,

Kristie Helmick Proctor

Organizational Structure

Executive Director

The 2017-2018 operational year of the Center was one of transition and change. The Center's Executive Director Christy Morton departed in September 2017 and the Center's board appointed Kristie Helmick Proctor as the new Executive Director effective December 1, 2017. With new leadership naturally comes an opportunity to review previous operations and set forth a path forward with the direction and commitment of the board.

Collective Services Agreement

The Center for Rural Virginia currently operates in a collaborative partnership with the Council for Rural Virginia through a collective services agreement as the Virginia Rural Center. The two organizations operate independently, but share an executive director and operate in conjunction to fulfill their joint mission of economic prosperity for rural communities throughout Virginia.

The Center for Rural Virginia is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization established by the Virginia General Assembly in 2004. The creation of the Center was a recommendation of the Rural Prosperity Commission, created by the General Assembly in 2000. The goal of the Commission was "Prosperity for all Virginians". The 18-member Commission was instructed by the General Assembly to "undertake a detailed analysis of rural Virginia economies and recommend flexible but targeted state policies which, combined with local efforts, will help foster sustainable economic growth in Virginia's rural areas."

The final report of the Rural Prosperity Commission was issued in December 2001 and featured specific policy recommendations, including the creation of the Center for Rural Virginia to address the obstacles and capitalize on the many opportunities of Rural Virginia. In 2004, founding board members Senator Frank Ruff and Delegate Steve Landes, sponsored the enabling legislation, creating the Center.

The 21-member board of the Center for Rural Virginia works in partnership with the 21-member board of the Council for Rural Virginia. The Council is associated with the National Rural Development Partnership, created out of the 2002 Farm Bill.

The Council is a member of Partners for Rural America, whose mission is to support the efforts of its member State Rural Development Councils (SRDC's), which are uniquely positioned:

- To expand economic and social opportunities for America's rural communities and their residents;
- To promote equal treatment of rural America by government agencies and the private sector;
- To provide a collective voice for rural America.

Together, the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia work with federal, state and local policymakers and regulators as well private sector stakeholders to improve economic opportunities and preserve the quality of life throughout rural Virginia.

Institutional Partners

In addition to the support of the Virginia General Assembly and the Governor's Office, the Virginia Rural Center enjoys partnerships with two other entities that make the daily operations of the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia efficient, effective and successful.

The first is the Department of Housing and Community Development. DHCD provides office space and back office assistance that enhances the productivity, accessibility to stakeholders in the Capital region and partnership opportunities that enrich the work the Center is able to conduct.

The second is the Edward Via School of Osteopathic Medicine in Blacksburg. The Virginia Rural Center's partnership with VCOM, through the Council for Rural Virginia, provides assets and operational efficiencies that greatly enhance the cost-effective operation for both entities of the Virginia Rural Center.

Project Overview & Status Updates

During the 2017-2018 operating year of the Virginia Rural Center, the collective organization and its individual entities entered several projects, partnerships, and initiatives that will enhance the Center's profile and work in rural communities throughout the Commonwealth.

2017 Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity

Continuing the Center's partnership with the Governor's office, the *Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity, hosted by the Virginia Rural Center*, was held in September 2017 at Berryhill Resort in South Boston, Virginia. Although not within the 2017-2018 operating year, the annual event significantly contributes to building the Rural Center's profile and accomplishing its mission. The event brought together administration officials, members of the Virginia General Assembly, local government representatives, private business leaders and other stakeholders committed to rural prosperity across Virginia. Focused topics of the event included broadband access, clean energy, regional entrepreneurship, and state economic development initiatives. Addressing these topics, the event featured numerous speakers and panelists, including:

- Governor Terry McAuliffe spoke on his administration's investment in rural Virginia, while noting a decrease in unemployment in several Virginia counties. Governor McAuliffe also explained the need to fill 36,000 cyber job openings in Virginia and credentialing programs to meet that need.
 - Panel on State Economic Development Initiatives, moderated by Todd Haymore, Secretary of Commerce and Trade
 - Jim Dyke, a panelist and a member of the Virginia Research Investment Committee and GO (Growth and Opportunity) Virginia, voiced the need for certifications and associate program completers more so than four-year program graduates.
 - Bill Shelton, Director of the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development hosted a panel discussion to explore another conference theme: broadband internet access.
 - Tad Deriso, President and CEO of Mid-Atlantic Broadband Communities Corporation, and broadband access focused panelist discussed how lack of internet access deters large businesses from investing in an area.
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- Ed Gillespie, Republican Candidate for Governor, who's remarks kicked off the Summit, also explained the significance of expanding broadband access to all Virginians.
- Basil Gooden, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, explaining the role technology will play in revolutionizing the agriculture and forestry industries, called on Virginia to be the leader of such innovation.
- Marcus Scarborough, Vice President of Honor Capital, talked about tackling the problem of “food deserts” in rural areas, comparing the grocery business model of large retailers to the more favorable pricing of the model the smaller local stores supported by his firm.
- Several other speakers and panelists contributed to the event's success in elevating rural Virginia issues.

Virginia General Assembly's Rural Caucus

The Virginia Rural Center organized and staffed weekly meetings of the Virginia General Assembly's Rural Caucus. During the 2018 General Assembly Session, the Rural Caucus met weekly to discuss legislative issues of interest to rural Virginia, as well as hear from Cabinet members, stakeholders, and others with valuable information on rural Virginia issues and legislative implications. Speakers from 2018 General Assembly Rural Caucus meetings include:

- The Honorable Atif Qarni, Secretary of Education
- The Honorable Bettina Ring, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry
- The Honorable Megan Healy, Ph.D., Chief Workforce Development Advisor to the Governor
- The Honorable Matt Strickler, Secretary of Natural Resources
- The Honorable Dr. Daniel Cary, Secretary of Health and Human Resources
- Stephen Moret, Ed.D., President & CEO, Virginia Economic Development Partnership
- Dr. Edwin Jones, Extension Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension
- Erik Johnston, Director, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)
- Jason El Koubi, Vice President, Virginia Economic Development Partnership Executive
- Katie Frazier, President of the Virginia Agribusiness Council
- Martha Moore, Vice President of Governmental Relations at the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation
- Shelly Smith, DNP, APRN-BC, Clinical Assistant Professor and Director of the DNP Program in the Department of Adult Health and Nursing Systems at Virginia Commonwealth University
- John “Dubby” Wynne, Growth and Opportunity Virginia Chairman

During the 2018 General Assembly Session, Senator Frank Ruff was elected to serve as Chairman of the Rural Caucus, with Delegate Keith Hodges elected to serve as Vice Chairman.

The Annual Rural Caucus Reception and Dinner

A joint effort between the Center for Rural Virginia, the General Assembly's Rural Caucus, and the Virginia Association of Counties, the annual Rural Caucus Reception and Dinner assembled nearly 200 business and government leaders from across the state, including administration officials, General Assembly members, and local elected officials. The event featured Governor Ralph

Northam, a rural Virginia native, as the keynote speaker. During his remarks, Northam stressed the importance of promoting economic development, stating it as his administration's number one priority. To accomplish this, Northam articulated his ultimate goal of returning Virginia to its former ranking as the top state in the country to do business, a mission which will include boosting economic growth across the entire Commonwealth, including rural Virginia.

Rural Housing Roundtable

Organized and hosted by the Virginia Rural Center, the Virginia Rural Housing Roundtable Luncheon, held at Longwood University in Farmville, Virginia gathered 80 people. At the event, private sector stakeholders, as well as state, local, and federal officials held dialogue around affordability, availability, and other issues affecting rural housing across the Commonwealth. Conversation at the event designed to spark and continue dialogue surrounding rural housing issues ranged across multiple subject areas. Topics discussed included: tax credits towards the development of historic building rehabilitation projects, the linkages between housing and other policy issues, housing development issues, and future housing issues such as starter home affordability.

After the panel discussion, attendees participated in a walking tour in downtown Farmville exploring recent rural development, including the newly constructed Hotel Weyanoke. The tour included commentary directly from the developers involved in the projects.

Innovation in Broadband Roundtable

The Virginia Rural Center's Innovation in Rural Broadband Roundtable Breakfast, held at the Prince George County Central Wellness Center, was designed to share updates on the tangible successes and ongoing challenges faced by rural Virginians lacking increasingly vital high-speed internet access. The event gathered legislators, Administration officials, local government representatives, internet service providers, and broadband stakeholders to heighten the importance of high-speed internet access and address the inefficiencies surrounding broadband expansion. Strategically located, the event featured Prince George County as a real-world case study, showcasing their successes and issues in broadband expansion. Several internet service providers and public officials also voiced their observations and suggestions for future efforts of broadband expansion.

The roundtable concluded with a live demonstration led by John Tyler Community College President, Edward "Ted" Raspiller, which highlighted the power of broadband when he established a videoconference connection with a former distance learning student who described the tremendous impact broadband had on her life, and went onto explain how online classes, enabled by broadband, offered a solution.

Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts

The Virginia Rural Center engages in numerous partnerships and collaborative efforts with other organizations. These partners, often sharing aligned missions, exponentially strengthen the Rural Center's efforts and provide a platform to elevate the Commonwealth's rural issues.

Center for Innovative Technology, Board of Directors Member

The Center for Innovative Technology, or CIT, seeks to close innovation gaps in the Commonwealth and the nation by focusing on new technologies, entrepreneurs and technology companies that make innovation happen. Appointed in September 2018, the Virginia Rural Center executive director contributes thought surrounding the equity of initiatives through the lens of rural Virginia. The CIT Board of Directors also serves as the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Investment Authority Board of Directors.

Broadband Advisory Council, Board of Directors Member

The Broadband Advisory Council was established to help determine the Commonwealth's goals for broadband and how best to achieve them. Confirmed in July 2018 by Governor Ralph Northam as a board member of the Broadband Advisory Council, the Rural Center's executive director gathers knowledge and contributes thought to further advocate for broadband expansion across the Commonwealth.

Virginia Housing Development Authority, Rural Housing Advisory Council Member

The Rural Housing Advisory Council (RHAC) is a cross-regional group that will provide guidance and expertise to VHDA regarding housing issues in rural Virginia. Beginning advisory council membership in August 2018, the Rural Center's executive director was pleased to take on this role and provide additional insight to the housing needs in rural Virginia.

Partners for Rural America, Board of Directors Member

Partners for Rural America (PRA) was founded in 1998 to support the efforts of its member State Rural Development Councils (SRDCs), which are uniquely positioned to expand economic and social opportunities for America's rural communities and their residents, promote equal treatment of rural America by government agencies and the private sector and provide a collective voice for rural America. The PRA Board of Directors provides a networking platform for other state rural center leaders to share successes and answer inquiries on best practices in member states.

Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Rural Think Tank Member

With membership beginning in June 2018, the Rural Think Tank, led by the Virginia Economic Development Partnership seeks to identify and address issues rural communities face in economic development. The Rural Center plays a key role in the group through contributing in-the-field knowledge and identifying opportunities in services and initiatives directed at serving rural areas of the Commonwealth.

Legislative Sportsmen Caucus, Participant and Organizer

Formed in 2004, the Virginia Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus is a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators, and is dedicated to protecting and advancing hunting, fishing, trapping and recreational shooting in Virginia. Regular involvement by the Rural Center in the Legislative Sportsmen Caucus includes participating in and recruitment for annual sportsman caucus retreat.

Southwest Virginia Veterans Coalition, Participant

The Southwest Virginia Veterans Coalition was formed by Secretary of Veterans Affairs, The Honorable Carlos Hopkins and regional leaders to promote regional collaboration on issues affecting veterans in the Southwest area of the Commonwealth. As an active participant of the coalitions, the Rural Center's executive director helped to recruit participants and regularly participates in dialogue.

Leadership

Board of Trustees – Center for Rural Virginia

Honorable Emmett W. Hanger, Jr., Member, Senate of Virginia (Chairman)
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Honorable Rob Bloxom, Member, Virginia House of Delegates
Hope F. Cupit, CPA, President & CEO, Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project
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Shannon C. Fedors, Director, Marketing Strategy & Development, Riverside Health System
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Dale Moore, Founder and President, Moore’s Electrical and Mechanical
Eddie Ramirez, Ramirez Consulting, LLC
Honorable Bettina Ring, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Commonwealth of Virginia
Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr., Member, Senate of Virginia
Honorable Roslyn Tyler, Member, Virginia House of Delegates
Greg White, President & CEO, Northern Neck Electric Cooperative
Amanda Jarratt, President and CEO of Franklin Southampton Economic Development, Inc.

In partnership with

Board of Directors – Council for Rural Virginia

Ward Stevens, MS, FACHE, Edward Via College of Osteopathic Medicine (Chairman)
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Bryan David, County Administrator, Orange County
Craig Herndon, Vice Chancellor for Workforce Development, Virginia’s Community Colleges
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Hugh Joyce, Owner, James River Air Conditioning
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Bill Tucker, Tucker Family Farms
Dumont "D." Walton, Virginia Telecommunications Industry Association
Brian T. Warner, Rolls Royce
Carlyle Wimbish, Hickory Hill Farm

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