



# Rural Center

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

## 2019-2020

### 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,

The 2019-2020 operating year of the Center for Rural Virginia experienced tremendous success in new partnerships and innovative initiatives for rural Virginia. While the Center's operations were altered by implications presented by COVID-19, the Center maintained its impact on the economic prosperity of rural Virginia. Through this adversity, over the last year, the Center built upon existing programs, while continuing to foster relationships with new and existing partners, all contributing to accomplishing the Center's mission of building rural capacity by facilitating the collaboration and creation of coalitions.

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; as well as engaging in many other partnerships and collaborative efforts.

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 in-person and virtually 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 year of innovation, collaboration, and new initiatives to promote and enhance rural Virginia.

Best regards,

*Kristie Helmick Proctor*

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# Organizational Structure

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## **Executive Director**

The 2019-2020 operational year of the Center for Rural Virginia was the second full year for the new Executive Director, Kristie Proctor. Through nearly two years with the organization, Mrs. Proctor has taken the opportunity to build new partnerships and sponsorships to strengthen programming at the Center. Proctor continues to perform other organizational maintenance tasks, such as reviewing the organization's structure, bylaws, collective services agreement, operational practices, and other guiding documentation.

## **Statement on Organizational Implications of COVID-19**

The Center for Rural Virginia has kept safety as a priority throughout the the pandemic. Ensuring that our staff, Board members and stakeholders remain healthy is our priority.

## **Annual Summit on Rural Prosperity**

For the first time ever, we held our annual Governor's Summit on Rural Prosperity virtually. The Center for Rural Virginia co-hosts this event with the Governor's office. We had more than 200 attendees join us for this event. The Governor and many members of his Administration were able to participate remotely and it was a huge success, though we did miss seeing all of our rural stakeholders in person.

Additionally, we had national news coverage for the event including coverage from Bloomberg News!

## **Quarterly Board Meetings**

We gathered virtually for all of our Quarterly Board meetings throughout 2020. Participation was high and we used formats such as ZOOM to host these meetings.

## **Newly Elected Leadership**

At the October 2020 Board meeting, Delegate Roslyn Tyler was elected Chair and Senator Frank Ruff was elected Vice Chair.

## **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

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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 Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg, Virginia. The Virginia Rural Center's partnership with VCE, 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. Virginia Tech serves as the payroll agent to the Executive Director.

### **Organizational Sponsors**

The Center for Rural Virginia is fortunate have several organizational sponsors committed to the Center's mission and rural prosperity. These sponsors include: Virginia Housing, Dominion Energy, CenturyLink, Old Dominion Electric Cooperative, Rolls-Royce, Appalachian Power, Microsoft, Farm Credit, Verizon, the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission, We Work for Health, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, AT&T, the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources, Troutman Sanders Strategies, Farm Bureau of Virginia, Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Center for Innovative Technology, Virginia Resources Authority, and the Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project.

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# Project Overview & Status Updates

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During the 2019-2020 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.

## **2020 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 originally planned for September 2020, but held virtually in October 2020. 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. The overall theme of the event featured rural resiliency with focused topics including broadband expansion efforts and the rural economic recovery in Virginia. Addressing these topics, the event featured numerous speakers and panelists, including:

- Governor Ralph Northam spoke on his administration's efforts to place rural Virginia at the forefront of his administration's priorities.
- Discussion on Broadband, moderated by Evan Feinman, the Chief Broadband Advisor to the Governor, serving as moderator
  - Panelists included United States Congresswoman Abigail Spanberger and United States Congressman Rob Wittman
- Beth Ford, CEO of Land O'Lakes, a nationwide farmers' cooperative, through a fireside chat with Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Bettina Ring and Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Dr. Jewel Bronaugh.
- Panel on Rural Virginia's Economic Recovery, moderated by Larry Terry, Executive Director of the Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service at the University of Virginia
  - Featured panelists included: Tom Barkin, President and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond, Stephen Moret, President and CEO of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and Lisa Sturtevant, Chief Economist of Virginia Realtors

## **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 2020 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 2020 General Assembly Rural Caucus meetings include:

- The Honorable Atif Qarni, Virginia Secretary of Education
  - Erik Johnston, Director of the Department of Housing and Community Development
  - The Honorable Dr. Daniel Carey, Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources
  - The Honorable Brian Ball, Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade
  - Evan Feinman, Governor's Chief Broadband Advisor
  - The Honorable Bettina Ring, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry
  - The Honorable Dr. Megan Healy, Chief Workforce Development Advisor to the Governor
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- Dr. Keith Perrigan, President, Coalition of Small and Rural Schools
- Robin Sullenberger, Growth and Opportunity Virginia Board Member
- Dr. Stephen Moret, President and CEO, Virginia Economic Development Partnership

### **The Annual Rural Caucus Reception**

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 assembles nearly 200 business and government leaders from across the state, including administration officials, General Assembly members, and local elected officials. This year's event, the 12th annual event, brought together officials from more than 47 counties. Remarks at the event were provided by the Honorable Brian Ball, Virginia Secretary of Commerce and Trade, and the Honorable Bettina Ring, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry.

## **Partnerships and Collaborative Efforts**

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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.

### **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, Rural Housing Advisory Council Member**

The Rural Housing Advisory Council (RHAC) is a cross-regional group that will provide guidance and expertise to Virginia Housing regarding housing issues in rural Virginia. Beginning advisory council membership in August 2018, the Rural Center's executive director is 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. Joined in January 2018, 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.

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### **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 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 weekly legislative sportsman caucus meetings and the 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 coalition, the Rural Center's executive director helped to recruit participants and regularly participates in dialogue.

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# Leadership

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## **Board of Trustees – Center for Rural Virginia**

*Chair*, Honorable Roslyn Tyler, Member, Virginia House of Delegates  
*Vice-Chair*, Honorable Frank M. Ruff, Jr., Member, Senate of Virginia  
Honorable Les Adams, Member, Virginia House of Delegates  
Honorable Brian Ball, Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Commonwealth of Virginia  
Shannon R. Blevins, Associate Vice Chancellor for Economic Development and Engagement, UVA-Wise  
Hope F. Cupit, CPA, President & CEO, Southeast Rural Community Assistance Project  
Honorable Justin Fairfax, Lieutenant Governor, Commonwealth of Virginia  
Honorable Wendy Gooditis, Member, Virginia House of Delegates  
Honorable Chris Hurst, Member, Virginia House of Delegates  
Brian Istringhausen, CEO, Cranemasters, Inc.  
Amanda Jarratt, City Manager, City of Franklin, VA  
Ron Jefferson, Manager of External Affairs, APCo  
John A. King II, General Manager and Vice President of Sales, VA Poultry Growers Cooperative  
Mark S. Lawrence, Vice President, Governmental and External Affairs, Carilion Clinic  
Honorable Jennifer McClellan, Member, Senate of Virginia  
Dale Moore, Founder and President, Moore's Electrical and Mechanical  
Liz Povar, Principal Officer, The RiverLink Group  
Eddie Ramirez, Ramirez Consulting, LLC  
Honorable Bettina Ring, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Commonwealth of Virginia  
Shannon Shumate, Director, Marketing Strategy & Development, Riverside Health System

## ***In partnership with*** **Board of Directors – Council for Rural Virginia**

*Chair*, Bryan David, Program Director, Growth and Opportunity Virginia Region 3  
*Vice-Chair*, Dr. Edwin Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech  
John Bowers, Senior Vice President, First Bank & Trust  
The Honorable Ruby Brabo, Realtor  
Katie Frazier, Director, Farm Credit of the Virginias Knowledge Center  
Sharon Johnson, CEO of the Shenandoah Valley Workforce Investment Board  
Hugh Joyce, Owner, James River Air Conditioning  
Gary Keener, Dabney S. Lancaster Community College  
Caroline Lane, Director of Coaching Programs, Virginia's Community Colleges  
Patrick Mauney, Executive Director, Rappahannock-Rapidan Regional Commission  
Jay Poole, Owner, Common Sense Strategies  
Ward W. Stevens, EdD, DHsc, FACHE, Vice President for Academic Health, Virginia College of Medicine  
Robin Sullenberger, Retired, Shenandoah Valley Partnership  
Bill Tucker, Tucker Family Farms  
Brian T. Warner, Rolls Royce  
Carlyle Wimbish, Hickory Hill Farm

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## Contact Information

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