

Rural Partners of Michigan Presents the 4th Annual

Small Town and Rural Development Conference



April 15 – 17, 2008

**Crystal Mountain
Thompsonville, MI**

www.ruralmich.org

Despite the challenges we face, small towns and rural areas still have an attraction, and many of these communities are responding with a new approach to economic and community development. They are focusing on creating businesses and jobs rather than just hoping to attract them, and doing the most with what they have rather than fret about their deficiencies. From these approaches, communities are finding ways to make their towns unique and inviting as places to live and work.

Tuesday, April 15

3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. **Registration**

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. **Networking Reception**

Wednesday, April 16

7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Registration and Continental Breakfast

8:00 a.m. – 8:15 a.m. Welcoming Remarks
Allan Hooper, Conference Moderator, Rural Partners of Michigan

8:15 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Opening Remarks



8:30 a.m. - 9:30 a.m.

Energizing Entrepreneurs

Don Macke, Director of Practitioner Programs, Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) Center for Rural Entrepreneurship <http://www.energizingentrepreneurs.org/>

Don manages the new National Practitioners Network where his mission is to help community economic developers build better strategies to energize their communities' entrepreneurs. Don will address what are the most promising sectors for rural entrepreneurs and the best practices for encouraging the creation of new firms in a community?

9:30 a.m. – 9:40 a.m. Break

Local Foods – Food security, freshness, organics, specialty products and the general satisfaction of having locally sourced foods all contribute to greater opportunities for local growers and producers.

Breakout Schedules

Session 1
9:40 – 10:20

Money on the Table – Many eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) are not filing for it. In Barry County alone (pop. 58,000), nearly \$15,000,000 in EITC goes unclaimed annually. What are the unclaimed levels for other rural communities? What strategies will get a greater portion of this money to families in need of financial stability?

Break: 10:20 – 10:30

Session 2
10:30 – 11:10

Creating Entrepreneurial Communities (CEC) Update – How are the 11 participating communities faring? What are the plans for the expansion of this program?

Break: 11:10 -11:20

Session 3
11:20 – Noon

Update on Enterprise Facilitation and HomeTown Competitiveness Communities – A number of our communities are actively pursuing these two approaches to small town development. Learn what they are doing to implement these techniques.

“Brick and Click” Retail – Main Street businesses can compete with big box stores and e-commerce by supplementing storefront retail with complementary and robust internet sales. Learn from those who are practicing this technique.

Virtual Incubators – Accelerating Michigan Entrepreneurs (AME) is a virtual incubator offering a range of services to subscribing firms. It is a partnership between the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) and the Michigan Small Business & Technology Development Center (MI-SBTDC).



Noon – 1:30 p.m.

Transfer of Wealth

Don Macke, Rural Policy Research Institute (RUPRI) Project Director for Home Town Competitiveness, <http://www.htccommunity.org/>

Wearing his other hat as the leader of the Transfer of Wealth (TOW) studies for the HomeTown Competitiveness initiative, Don will present the findings for Michigan's counties. These are the generation-to-generation transfers of wealth expected to occur over the next 50 years. Capturing just a small portion of these estates for community foundations has the potential to significantly improve the prospects for our smaller communities.

Young Professional Organizations (YPO's) – Can this concept to network and engage young professionals work in smaller communities? If so, how should it be organized?

Breakout Schedules

Session 1
2:00 – 2:45

Break: 2:45 – 2:55

Session 2
2:55 – 3:40

Break: 3:40 – 3:50

Session 3
3:50 – 4:35

Asset-Based Community Development, the Michigan Resource – Michigan has its own accredited faculty in Asset-Based Community Development. Learn how ABCD can be brought to and implemented in your community.

Applying the Principles of Transfer of Wealth – Armed now with the estimates of the wealth transfer in our counties, how can this information be used to start a proactive effort to secure funds for our community foundations? Learn from those who have started this process of creating endowments for the future of their communities.

Grant Writing – While it is hoped that small communities don't always wait to get a grant to take action, having funding can certainly make an initiative more successful. Preparing winning grant applications is part of helping a small community address its needs and pursue new opportunities.

"The New and Improved Michigan Main Street Program" – What's new about these programs from MSHDA?

Youth Entrepreneurship Education – Youth entrepreneurship education needs to be integrated with other small business assistance programs to build long term relationships between your youth and community/business leaders.

5:30 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Networking Reception



6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Dinner with Keynote Speaker

Phil Power, President, The Center for Michigan, <http://thecenterformichigan.net/>

The Center for Michigan is described as a "think-and-do-tank" focused on helping the state work through its current economic struggles as well as lay a foundation for a better future. Phil sees Michigan's Re-ruralization as being a key to our future. The internet is making businesses "virtual" and distributed information technologies should make it possible for people to enjoy the quality of life they prefer while earning a respectable living in the small and rural communities of their choice.

Thursday, April 17

7:00 a.m. – 8:00 a.m. Continental Breakfast

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Welcome and Opening Remarks



8:15 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Leveraging Networks in Small Towns and Rural Areas

Oscar Rodriguez, Co-Author, *Connections Matter*

We're often locked into thinking of our communities as the "here and now"... a community fixed in a place and time with a defined population and set of leaders. Thinking about an "extended community" can expand our potential by bringing in and connecting with those who are still emotionally tied to your community, yet may have moved away. These "community alumni" have contacts and resources and most likely retain a special interest in their hometown. Linking with these alumni can make a significant positive contribution to your community.

9:15 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Break



9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Appreciative Inquiry

Kurt Mantonya, Senior Associate, Heartland Center for Leadership Development
<http://heartlandcenter.info/>

This technique in developing useable strategies emphasizes what has worked in the past and how it might be applied in the future. Following last year's popular group session on Asset-Based Community Development, a working session on how to conduct a Town Hall Meeting using Appreciative Inquiry will be held to demonstrate another means to get your community moving forward.