



# RURAL PARTNERS

The Rural Development Council of Michigan

*"Building Partnerships to Create Rural Opportunities"*

P.O. Box 30017, Lansing, MI 48909, 517-373-4550, Fax: 517-335-0628

## ***Rural Michigan - A Millennial Opportunity: 2000 and Beyond*** **April 14-15, 1999**

Mark your calendar! The 1999 Rural Partnership Conference, *Rural Michigan - A Millennial Opportunity: 2000 and Beyond*, sponsored by the Rural Development Council of Michigan (RDCM) as well as other state-wide organizations, will be held on April 14th and 15th at the Amway Grand Plaza, in Grand Rapids.

*Rural Michigan - A Millennial Opportunity: 2000 and Beyond* is sure to serve as a beneficial experience to any person interested in the future growth and economic success of rural Michigan. The conference sessions will highlight growing rural Michigan through "barrier reduction," with a focus on rural opportunities and positive, forward thinking.

Workshop sessions will be held on economic development and entrepreneurial training, financing local infrastructure projects, the use of technology in rural areas, implementing successful land use practices, accessing funding opportunities through state and local agencies and private foundations, as well as barrier reduction in the rural health care arena.

Elections of the 1999-2000 RDCM Governing Board Members will take place on April 15, 1999, during the conference. Governing Board Members include representatives from federal, state, local and tribal governments, private business, and non-profit organizations. Positions will be opening in each sector. In order to run for an open position on the Governing Board, you must submit an election application to the Council by March 26, 1999.

Watch for more information on the 1999 Rural Partners Conference: *Rural Michigan - A Millennial Opportunity: 2000 and Beyond*, sponsored by RDCM, in the months to come.

For more information, please contact Lorna Lynn, RDCM Communications Representative, at 517/373-6928.

## **RDCM Infrastructure and Community Services Committee**

The Rural Development Council of Michigan established the Infrastructure and Community Services Committee as one of the five issue committees addressing important needs for development of rural Michigan. The assignment of the Infrastructure Committee was to:

- Identify issues and obstacles to rural development related to infrastructure needs in rural Michigan.
- Promote public and policy leader awareness of rural infrastructure needs and potential solutions.
- Promote partnership approaches to resolving rural Michigan infrastructure needs.

In rural Michigan, infrastructure has been generally defined to include the physical facilities, operational procedures and employee training requirements needed to provide adequate and quality transportation, water, wastewater treatment, storm water management, public buildings and community facilities, telecommunications, electric, gas and similar services. The Infrastructure Committee has identified six primary concerns for Rural Michigan infrastructure: Those concerns include:

- 1) A general lack of infrastructure development throughout rural Michigan. Outside established municipalities, rural Michigan is nearly universally lacking in water, sewer, storm water/drainage, transportation, natural gas and electrical service required to support major industrial and commercial operations. Selected areas may be able to provide these services but often are in need of capital investment to meet development opportunities.
- 2) A general lack of facility planning activities in rural communities that would provide the strategic development direction for infrastructure facility investment. Without such planning, it is difficult to provide the infrastructure needed for commercial, industrial and residential developments that would enhance the quality of rural life and rural citizen opportunities. Few utility operations provide funding for significant future plan-

***Infrastructure continued on page 2***

## RDCM Infrastructure and Community Services Committee cont.

ning needs. Very few governmental grant programs provide general planning assistance as part of their infrastructure investment programs.

3) There is a gross inadequacy of public funds to address the planning and construction costs for needed rural infrastructure facilities. Private sector funding is also limited often as a result of the increased per capita cost resulting from the vast investment required for serving long distances and large geographic areas with small populations. It is often easier and more profitable for private sector companies to serve more urbanized areas.

4) There is a need for adequate and realistic rate and charge structures for publicly operated utility systems. The politicized process normally used for establishing rates and charges, and the lack of sophisticated management systems often result in under funded rural utility operations. Little attention is given to the future capacity requirements needed for rural growth opportunities.

5) Rural infrastructure operations are often characterized by far less than optimum or best practice maintenance procedures, plant reinvestment, and employee training. Employee training and preventive maintenance procedures that could protect and extend the long term vitality of rural infrastructure facilities are often sacrificed by system managers as a result of their not knowing the best practice procedures or their failure to provide adequate system funding.

6) The economy of scale in infrastructure facility operations is either not sought nor attainable in rural areas. Rural areas consist of many low use miles of roads, small wastewater, water systems, gas and electric and telecommunications services distributed over large distances and areas serving small populations.

The per capita development and operations costs are usually much higher than large urban systems. Distances between communities have often promoted parochial approaches to facility development that nearby large urbanized communities have approached in common. Prioritization, joint ventures and partnership arrangements are absolutely necessary for rural infrastructure development. It is imperative that new technologies be available and applied in order to provide adequate and affordable rural infrastructure facilities.

In pursuit of solutions to the identified rural infrastructure issues, the Infrastructure and Community Services Commit-

tee has supported and assisted community partnership approaches to infrastructure efforts for significant rural facility projects. Additionally, the committee has sponsored in cooperation with numerous other agencies, infrastructure educational forums targeted to rural policy leaders, funding agencies, consultants and facility operators. Communities seeking the assistance for partnership approaches to rural infrastructure needs may contact the Rural Development Council of Michigan.

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### Innovative Approaches to Transportation Issues Highlighted at 1998 Rural Michigan Transportation Forums

The Rural Development Council of Michigan (RDCM) recently hosted four Rural Michigan Transportation Forums across the state. Almost 300 people attended the meetings which were held in Marquette, Battle Creek, Gaylord, and Mt. Pleasant during October.

Transportation is a critical part of any rural community's infrastructure. However, many rural communities are often faced with the difficulty of financing expensive projects servicing a smaller population base with limited resources. Also, the current need for infrastructure improvements far exceeds the current funding available through state and federal agencies.

The objective of the Rural Michigan Transportation Forums was to help facilitate infrastructure improvements in more rural communities and to highlight funding resources by providing information on current funding programs and innovative approaches to transportation needs.

In partnership with the RDCM, these one-day workshops were co-sponsored by Michigan Association of Regions, USDA - Rural Development, Michigan Township Association, Michigan Municipal League, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan State University, Michigan Timber Bridge Initiative, Michigan Association of RC & D Councils, Michigan Bureau of Aeronautics, Michigan's Local Technical Assistance Program, and the Technology Development Group - Michigan Technological University.

For further information on the RDCM or on the Rural Michigan Transportation Forums, contact Lorna Lynn, RDCM Communications Representative, at 517/373-6928.

## Urban Core Mayors and Farm Leaders Find Common Ground on Farmland Preservation and Urban Sprawl Issues

The land use/farmland preservation issue is turning out to be a common denominator between two very different groups. The Urban Core Mayors Association, a group of 12 major city mayors, and members of the Michigan Farm Bureau (MFB) board met recently to discuss a common goal -- redevelopment of inner cities and farmland preservation.

Detroit Mayor Dennis Archer, Urban Core Mayors Association co-chair, says he and 11 other large-city mayors, who have joined to form the Urban Core Mayors Association, need to look beyond their inner cities to find support for redevelopment. Jack Laurie, MFB President and a Tuscola County dairy farmer, says farmers are beginning to understand that urban redevelopment and farmland preservation go hand-in-hand.

“We can’t save our farms without also saving our cities,” Laurie said. “Making cities attractive places to live and work will help relieve urban pressures on farmland. Through farmland protection tools, such as Purchase of Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights, we can work together with urban revitalization to preserve agriculture’s economic base, creating a win-win situation for rural and urban Michigan.”

During the meeting, the two organizations discussed a possible working relationship to address common concerns, including public policies that promote sustainable development to curb urban sprawl, programs to protect farm land and natural resources, and rural/urban education. “We have a great interest in sustainable development,” said Grand Rapids Mayor John Logie, who serves also as co-chair. “Sprawl is costing Michigan citizens millions of dollars for additional infrastructure including water, sewer and roads. Land-use trends make this an ideal opportunity for a strong urban and rural partnership.”

As part of that partnership effort, every member of the Urban Core Mayors Association agreed to spend a day on a farm during the fall harvest activities. Mayor Archer, who visited the farm of Michigan Farm Bureau Vice President Wayne Wood in Marlette, Sanilac County, commented during the day long outing, “We can have the best-run city in America, with the smoothest freeways, great recreational facilities and top sports teams, but we all need to eat. What



Rural leaders meet with Detroit Mayor Archer to discuss a unique land use partnership

happens when we start asphalt paving over farmland ... what are we going to feed our great-grandchildren.?”

Other members of the Urban Core Mayors Association include: John Logie, Grand Rapids; Ingrid Sheldon, Ann Arbor; Ted Dearing, Battle Creek; Kathleen Newsham, Bay City; Woodrow Stanley, Flint; Martin Griffin, Jackson; Robert Jones Sr., Kalamazoo; David Hollister, Lansing; Fred Nielson Sr., Muskegon; Walter Moore, Pontiac; and Gary Loster, Saginaw.

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## Grassroots Organization Focuses on Sustainable Land Use

Lenawee Citizens for Land Stewardship (LCLS) a grassroots organization, organized in 1997 to discuss, educate, and promote sustainable land use in Lenawee County. The group formed as a result of a common concern that Lenawee is losing prime agricultural land and jeopardizing its future through an overall lack of organized growth and development. From 1982 to 1992, Lenawee County lost 40,000 acres of farmland, the greatest loss by any county in the state.

LCLS actually has its roots from 1995 when Brian Ehlert and others noticed that many groups were talking about land use but not necessarily talking to one another. Dr. Kurt Norgaard, MSU Extension Land Use Specialist working with the Rural Development Council of Michigan, and Dr. David Skjaerlund assisted in helping to facilitate the community work with land issues. The first meeting was held in October 1997 and at this meeting, land use issues were addressed.

*Grassroots continued on page 4*

## Grassroots Organization Focuses on Land Use cont.

This allowed each group to know the focus of the other groups. The farmers heard the realtors who heard the municipalities who heard the developers who heard the citizens who heard the townships, and so on. After several meetings the key land use issues were identified and prioritized.

Identified Issues:

1. Proper use of Land (use science-based decision making).
2. Coordination of planning between government bodies.
3. Rejuvenation of the county planning commission's role.
4. Loss of farmland.
5. Incentive based planning.
6. Citizenry involvement.
7. Land use planning tools - Brownfield re-development.
8. Changes in the platting process - Lack of relevant data.
9. Changes in the drain code.

The three months of discussion about the land use issues in Lenawee County, Michigan culminated in three community forums. "The purpose of the forums was to educate the greater community about land issues in and around Lenawee County," says Brian Ehlert, formerly of the Lenawee Co. MSU Extension Office. The three events presented the broad picture of land use patterns in the state and in the southeast region, and the effect of those patterns on Lenawee County. The first forum was March 12, 1998 and focused on state-wide and region-wide trends. Specifically, it addressed how those trends have affected Lenawee County and how those trends will continue to affect Lenawee County into the future. The second forum on March 25, 1998 focused on the industry of agriculture in Lenawee County and how, as the oldest economic activity in the area, it is still economically viable, but is greatly impacted by the current land use patterns.

The third forum on April 8, 1998 focused on Lenawee County itself; the patterns and pockets of development and the driving forces. There were opportunities for community input at this forum as the group tries to examine the community of the future. The original group continues to meet and discuss how to better involve the community in land use decisions. The presentations were motivating and sometimes startling. The key to the success of this group has been the diversity and the active participation of the involved organizations.

Lenawee Citizens for Land Stewardship partners include: Blissfield Citizens (various), City of Adrian, City of Tecumseh, Deerfield Township, Farm Service Agency, Lenawee Chamber of Commerce, Lenawee Chapter of the Michigan Association of Realtors, Lenawee Chapter of the Michigan Township Association, Lenawee County Agricultural Council, Lenawee County Board of Health Lenawee County Commissioner(s), Lenawee County Planning Commission, Lenawee Farm Bureau, Michigan State University, Michigan State University Extension, Raisin Township, Raisin Valley Land Trust, Region II Planning Authority, Riga Township, Rural Development Council of Michigan, The Daily Telegram, and USDA-Rural Development

For their efforts, the Lenawee Citizens for Land Stewardship was awarded the "1998 Outstanding Rural Partnership Award." This annual award from the RDCM is presented to a project or community that exemplifies outstanding partnership building and collaboration between various governmental agencies and diverse organizations. The award recognizes communities that are successfully working together towards a common goal especially in those same communities or organizations which may not have a history of collaborating.

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## Health Care for Children - "MICHild"

In late August, 1998, Michigan Governor John Engler announced a new statewide program to provide health care coverage to uninsured children of working families - **MICHild** (Pronounced, "my child"). The Michigan program is part of the federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) initiative. The program is currently, as of November of 1998, available in all of Michigan's eighty-three counties.

The MICHild program provides health care coverage to children, up to age 19, in families who are at or below 200% of the federal poverty guidelines, who do not have health insurance through an employer, and who are not eligible for Medicaid. The cost of the insurance is only \$5 per family per month, for a total of \$60 per year. There are no co-pays or deductibles. Families will have a choice of medical and dental plans serving their region.

Michigan's MICHild program offers an excellent opportunity  
*MICHild continued on page 5*

## Health Care for Children - “MIChild” cont.

nity to help children who do not have access to regular and preventive health care. Covered services include well-child physicals, immunizations, diagnostic services, primary care and specialty physician services, inpatient and outpatient hospital services, prescriptions, emergency services, mental health and substance abuse services, vision and hearing screening, and dental care.

To enroll, families need only fill out a short MIChild application and send it with proof of income (for example copies of previous year’s W-2, a recent paycheck stub, or recent bank statements). Information about MIChild and applications are available from many local community service agencies or by calling 1-888-988-6300.

### What is MIChild?

- MIChild is a health insurance program.
- It is for uninsured children of Michigan’s working families.
- MIChild services are provided by many HMOs and other health care plans throughout Michigan.
- Call 1-888-988-6300 for more information.

### The health insurance you need - MIChild covers:

Regular checkups  
Shots  
Emergency care  
Dental care  
Pharmacy  
Hospital care  
Prenatal care and delivery  
Vision and hearing  
Mental health and substance abuse services

MICHild covers other services, too. Your health plan will give you the full list when your coverage begins.

### At a price you can afford.

If your child qualifies, you pay a monthly premium of only \$5. Even if you have more than one child you pay only \$5 a month. This may sound too good to be true, but it really is only \$5 a month per family. There are no co-pays and no deductibles.

### How can I get MIChild?

Call 1-888-988-6300 for an application. If you need an interpreter call 1-888-988-6300. TTY for persons with hearing disabilities: 1-888-263-5897. These calls are free.

### To qualify, children must:

- Be citizens of the U.S. (some legal immigrants qualify)
- Live in Michigan, even for a short time
- Be under 19 years old
- Have no health insurance
- Live in a family with monthly income under:
  - \$1,800 for a family of two
  - \$2,300 for a family of three
  - \$2,800 for a family of four
  - \$3,200 for a family of five

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## Who is the Michigan Rural Health Association?

The Michigan Rural Health Association (MRHA) is a membership association and was incorporated in February 1996. The MRHA is governed by a board of 17 volunteers and now has a state-wide membership of 176. The founding members of the MRHA were convinced it was necessary to form an association if we were to have any influence on the future configuration of rural health care and wellness. The MRHA truly believes that to preserve and improve rural health in Michigan it is necessary to develop a single unified voice addressing health care issues in rural Michigan.

The MRHA is a young but active association. The board of directors meets every other month in Lansing to discuss rural health items and plan action to those items. Additionally, the MRHA has:

- Planned and presented a rural health conference.
- Met with the State Senate Health Policy Advisor.
- Was asked to prepare and did present a policy paper on the top five health issues facing rural Michigan by the State Senate Health Policy Advisor.

*MRHA continued on page 6*

## Who is the Michigan Rural Health Association? cont.

- Prepared and distributed a “Health Professional Shortage Area” guide to rural communities and hospitals.
- Is preparing comments to submit to the federal government on the proposed rule changes on the Health Professional Shortage Area methodology.
- Has surveyed the membership asking for input into critical rural health issues.

For the MRHA to succeed we need a large membership with members who have diverse backgrounds and interests (membership is \$25.00 per year.). There are many policy makers who are eager to receive information and discuss rural health care issues. The success of the MRHA will not be predicated only on the number of members, but also with our diversity and participation in the organization. Dr. David Skjaerlund, RDCM Executive Director, also serves as a member of MRHA.

*Article submitted by, John E Barnas, Secretary,  
Michigan Rural Health Association  
Phone - 517/432-1066*

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## Ultimate Farmland Preservation Bus Tour 1998 a great success

The Rural Development Council of Michigan, in cooperation with the Michigan Farm Bureau, sponsored and organized the *Ultimate Farmland Preservation Tour '98 (UFP)*, a five day tour of eight counties in Maryland and Pennsylvania.

Over 90 individuals participated in the UFP Tour '98 and saw over 160,000 acres of farmland permanently protected from urban sprawl. The tour highlighted successful programs that utilized transfer of development rights, purchase of development rights, agricultural security areas, effective agricultural zoning and innovative urban development options.

The participants, which included urban officials, state legislators, realtors, farmers, county and township officials and other leaders, saw several blocks of farmland 10,000-15,000 acres in size which had been permanently preserved solely

for agricultural production. The participants were impressed with the impact the programs had made in those counties and saw how successful farmland preservation programs can make a really big difference for the economic future of agriculture.

“As Vice-Mayor of a city, I have little contact with people who live in more rural settings,” commented Hannah McKinney, Vice-Mayor, City of Kalamazoo. “At the onset of the tour, I understood the need for urban growth boundaries and fair housing policies. I did not understand the mirroring issue of farmland preservation. After this tour, I have a new appreciation of the need for farmland preservation.”

The tour has resulted in many participants actively leading land use efforts in their local community.



Dwight Hess farm in Lancaster, PA and all the land in the picture is protected through a PDR program

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## Value-added Processing Conference Proves Profitable

Last September, the Rural Development Council of Michigan (RDCM) helped provide leadership for a one-day, state-wide conference, “Putting More Profit in Your Pocket through Value-added Agriculture,” highlighting the role of value-added processing in agriculture’s future. Other conference sponsors included the Michigan Department of Agriculture, USDA - Rural Development, Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan State University, Farm Credit Services, Michigan Bankers Association, Michigan Economic Developers Association.

*Value-added Conference continued on page 7*

## Value-added Processing Conference Proves Profitable cont.

tion, Michigan Cherry Committee, Michigan Corn Marketing Committee, Michigan Pork Producers Association, and Michigan Soybean Committee.

There were more than 250 farmers, bankers, extension, agricultural and community leaders in attendance. The conference focused on growers learning more about “value-added” and how best to put more profit in their pockets through organizing cooperatives themselves, raising grower equity, developing business plans and identifying customer demand for specific end user markets.

Michigan has lost several key agricultural processors over the last few years. This loss has had a direct fiscal impact on Michigan farmers. In addition, Michigan growers export a number of commodities to other states in a raw form, resulting in a lower price to the farmer and to smaller rural communities.

Conversely, the north-central region of the United States has seen explosive growth in agricultural processing with over \$1 billion in new processing ventures over the last few years. These new processing plants have been the result of farmer initiative and leadership, farmer investment, and farmer action and management. As a result of these grower-owned value-added processing cooperatives, the growers realize the added profit gained from processing the raw commodity and can realize a larger portion of the market share. These ventures pose an excellent opportunity to Michigan growers and rural communities.

The purpose of the conference was to increase awareness in Michigan of grower-owned value-added opportunities, to share the spirit and vision that is evident among north-central farmers, to provide a knowledge of steps important to establishing a successful and profitable value-added cooperative, and to strengthen farmer leadership which will hopefully result in new value-added processing plants for Michigan, benefiting both the growers and rural communities.

Evaluations from participants have rated the conference overall good to excellent. Representatives from the Northern Plains (Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota) provided excellent insight into their experiences in establishing and operating successful grower owned projects. In addition, there were several Michigan representatives on

hand to discuss their value-added projects, most of them beginning this year, and the progress made to date.

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## Muskegon County Commission Approves Funding for Feasibility Study cont.

The Muskegon County Commission has authorized \$90,000 to complete a site-specific engineering study on a large-scale cranberry-growing operation. The study will determine the feasibility of the cranberry growing operation at the Muskegon County Wastewater Management System site in Moorland Township.

Keiser & Associates, an engineering company, is conducting the study. The study will assess the 1,850 acre site for water availability and adequate soil conditions suitable for growing 1,000 acres of cranberries. In addition, Keiser & Associates will also complete a preliminary engineering design and layout for the site and the operation will allow the operation to be a low-cost producer of cranberries, thus insuring long-term profitability.

A market feasibility study, funded by MSU, has already been completed by Senechal, Jorgenson, Hale & Company. They concluded that there was a long-term and profitable future for growing cranberries in Michigan. They also stressed that the Muskegon site should be designed so as to position the operation as a low cost producer to remain the most competitive in the long term. They also recommended partnering with other fruit processors in the state to process the cranberries rather than building a brand new cranberry processing facility. Because the cranberries are frozen after harvest, they can be processed when other processors lie idle or are not processing fruit out of season.

The \$90,000 for the study will be a grant from Muskegon County’s economic development revolving loan fund. Already, the Michigan Jobs Commission has authorized use of that money for the project. If the study proves to be feasible and profitable, the Muskegon County Commission will have to decide whether or not to proceed with the project and find private investors to take over the project and make the \$25 million investment required for growing 1,000 acres of cranberries.

The Muskegon Cranberry Project is the result of the leadership of RDCM, Consumers Energy, Michigan State University and Muskegon County Commissioners.

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