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*The Honorable Phyllis Kilby, Chair  
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### **2006 Rural Impact Award Winners Announced**

Nine rural leaders and organizations (including one state legislator) were recognized for their outstanding efforts to improve the quality of life in rural Maryland during the Annual Rural Awards Luncheon held during the 9th Annual Maryland Rural Summit on Thursday, October 26. The Rural Impact Awards and the Annual Maryland Rural Summit are sponsored by the Rural Maryland Council, the Maryland Rural Health Association, the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene State Office of Rural Health, and the state's five rural regional planning and development councils. Award winners – all of whom are nominated by their colleagues across the state – are listed below:

**The Outstanding Rural Volunteer Award** is given for leadership, dedication, and noteworthy volunteer achievement beyond the call of one's professional duties. This was a particularly competitive category and two nominees were selected.

**The first recipient is John W. Lee Jr., a veterinarian from Rising Sun.** Dr. Lee runs an equine practice serving Maryland, Delaware and Pennsylvania, and he breeds Arabian horses with his wife who is also a veterinarian; yet he still finds time to do extensive volunteer work. Dr. Lee serves as the volunteer chairman of the Cecil County Agricultural Advisory Board and a member of the Cecil County Equine Industry Task Force. He is also the volunteer chair of the Maryland Horse Industry Board's Health Advisory Committee. He has also volunteered to serve in the Agriculture Booth at the Cecil County Fair, with the Cecil County Farm Bureau, and with many horse shows in the region, and on all levels of veterinarian associations. Dr. Lee also spends a week each fall on Indian reservations around the country, helping with the care of horses.

**The second recipient is George "Lanny" McClary, who has been a volunteer with the American Heart Association since 1990** when he began serving as the chair of the AHA's Kent County Heart Walk – an event dedicated to the memory of his friend Frank Embert, who was the first recipient of a heart transplant on the Eastern Shore. He will be stepping down from the chair's role after 16 years, although he intends to remain active in the event. Mr. McClary, a heart disease survivor himself, also holds an annual five-course gourmet dinner fundraiser for the AHA, working with the nutritionist at Heron Point to set a heart healthy menu. Through the years, he has helped raised thousands of dollars for the AHA, including \$17,000 raised just this year. Mr. McClary has also served on the AHA State Board, representing the Eastern Shore.

**The Outstanding Rural Legislator Award** is given to a Maryland Delegate or Senator for outstanding leadership in promoting legislation to benefit rural communities. This year's recipient is **Senator E.J. Pipkin**, who represents Caroline, Cecil, Kent and Queen Anne's Counties. Sen. Pipkin is being honored for spearheading legislation during the 2006 General Assembly session

which will result in widespread broadband deployment and high speed internet service capabilities on the Eastern Shore and in Southern Maryland. Prior to introducing this legislation, he chaired the Task Force on Broadband Communications Deployment in Underserved Rural Areas, which was created in 2003 to examine best practices of broadband deployment in sparsely populated areas and to expand broadband communications to rural Maryland.

**The Outstanding Rural Economic Development Award** is presented to a program, project or organization that successfully attracts, retains or creates jobs in at least one rural county or leads to future sustainable economic development. The 2006 recipient is the **Garrett County Board of Commissioners Scholarship Program**, which was created in March 2006 to help develop an educated and skilled local workforce. The program provides all Garrett County graduating high school seniors with two years of tuition free education at Garrett College. This fall, 137 students enrolled. This represents nearly 20 percent of the college's enrollment and is the single most significant factor in Garrett College achieving an all time record for enrollment. That number is expected to double next fall. There is no comparable program in Maryland and only a handful of similar efforts in the country. For this visionary program to help retain the best and brightest young people in rural communities to become the business and civic leaders of tomorrow, we recognize the Garrett County Commissioners.

**The Outstanding Rural Community Development Awards** is given to a program, project or organization that substantially improves the quality of life in at least one rural community. This was a very competitive category and **two winners were selected**.

**The Somerset County Whales Tales program** was started after the Somerset County Health Department found that more than half of all 4<sup>th</sup> graders in their county could not swim. This in a community surrounded by water. The health department then teamed up with the public schools and the local YMCA to create a two-pronged water safety program. A classroom portion teaches students to recognize hazardous water situations while the second component provides four 2-hour pool sessions to teach them swimming and water safety skills. The program began this year and so far 621 students have participated — 185 of those students (a shocking 30 percent of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade students) entered the program afraid of the water and unable to swim. By the end of the program, that percentage dropped to less than 1 percent (or 55 students), and those students were offered private swimming lessons.

The second honoree is the **Garrett County Chamber of Commerce Living History Program**. This program brings history to life, introducing both school children and adults to historical figures and colonial era life. With more than 1,000 catalogued historic sites, planners predict as many as 531 jobs could be created over time, generating \$44 million in gross sales in the county. To date, the Living History Project has designed, authored and presented to every fourth grader in the county for the last three years a full-day curriculum on the French and Indian War, created a 20-person corps of living history figures, including George Washington, and has preserved the Granary in Grantsville.

**The Outstanding Rural Health Achievement Award** is given for leadership and noteworthy initiative in the development of community-oriented rural health care delivery. This year's recipient is **Claudia R. Baquet, M.D.**, Associate Dean, Office of Policy and Planning, University of Maryland School of Medicine. During her career, Dr. Baquet has worked to eliminate health disparities in rural and minority populations and has successfully leveraged more than \$19 million in federal, state, and private funding to launch numerous innovative programs that expand resources to underserved populations in the Maryland. Among the efforts she has helped launch are the Special Population Networks for Cancer Research Awareness Training; the Maryland Area Health Education Program; the University of Maryland Statewide Health Network; Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing; as well as much tobacco-related disease research.

She is also known for fostering partnerships that bring together higher education and academic medicine, local health departments, health care practitioners, faith-based and community organizations, and other health advocacy groups.

**The Outstanding Rural Health Program Award** is given for promoting and providing effective community-oriented rural health care delivery and excels in service to rural people, directly or indirectly. **This year's recipient is the Partnership for a Healthier Carroll County.** After an extensive community health assessment project in the mid-1990s, Carroll Hospital Center proposed creating an innovative private, non-profit community led organization to address those areas which the community identified as priorities. That partnership was formed in 1999 and seeks to build capacity for both health and quality of life improvement in 11 core areas identified in that needs assessment. Since it was established, the partnership has created an outreach and reassurance program to isolated and vulnerable older adults; established Carroll County Neighbors Helping Neighbors; launched an antiviolence awareness campaign; established a free-standing, volunteer-driven primary care health care practice known as Access Carroll; and much more. The concept of the community-based health improvement effort was, perhaps, ahead of its time, but it was born in the rural traditions of America's cooperative spirit.

**The Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner Award** is given for providing direct service and exhibiting outstanding leadership in bringing and/or improving health services to rural populations. This year's recipient is **Dr. Robert McDonald**, who opened his family practice in Easton on the Eastern Shore 35 years ago and has earned a reputation for dedicated quality care. For the past six years, he has served as a Preceptor for students in the Eastern Shore Area Health Education Center program. His attention to detail combine with a desire to teach and willingness to share knowledge and experience has made him admired and respected among both patients and students. His enthusiasm for working with students is well known and students often request to be placed with him.

The Maryland Rural Impact Awards recognize individuals and organizations in rural communities for outstanding rural development and health efforts. For more information about the awards, see: <http://www.rural.state.md.us/Summit/awards.html>

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*The Rural Maryland Council brings together community-based organizations, federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify and seek solutions to the unique needs of Rural Maryland communities. Our goals are to: (1) Enable citizens in rural communities to achieve success in employment and have access to quality, affordable health care, and other services; (2) Preserve agriculture and other natural resource-based industry as an integral part of Maryland's rural economy and culture; (3) Advocate for a manageable regulatory process and reasonable and effective compliance; and (4) Address the impact of changing conditions on the environment, heritage and economic well-being of rural Maryland. As a collaborative partnership, the RMC operates in a nonpartisan and nondiscriminatory manner.*