

Beyond the Beltways

Summer 2006

A periodic update from the RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL —
Serving people and communities outside the Baltimore-Washington Corridor

Maryland Rural Summit, October 25-27, 2006

Rural Maryland Leaders to Discuss Challenges of Growth

Rural Maryland Communities in Transition is the theme of the 9th Annual Maryland Rural Summit, which will be held October 25-27 at the Sandy Cove Conference Center in Cecil County. The Summit is an annual gathering of elected and appointed federal, state and local officials, as well as representatives from the non-profit and for-profit sectors, who come together to discuss the major issues confronting rural and semi-rural communities.

The first day of the Summit will feature mobile workshops traveling through Cecil and Kent counties and highlighting the region's agriculture, economic development, and health care amenities. The second day will feature a keynote address by economist, popular lecturer, and radio host Anirban Basu, who will speak to



Maryland Rural Summit
October 25-27, 2006 in Cecil County
See: www.rural.state.md.us



Popular Radio Host and Lecturer Anirban Basu will Deliver the Opening Keynote at the 2006 Maryland Rural Summit.

the unique challenges facing each of Maryland's regions and how individual communities are responding (or not responding) to the threats and pressures coming their way. Also on the second day, the Summit will offer several interdisciplinary workshops, the Rural Impact Awards Luncheon, and the always popular Legislative Forum. On Thursday night, A Taste of the Upper Shore will serve up the unique cuisine of the upper Eastern Shore. The Summit closes on Friday with two 90-minute plenary forums, which will take an in-depth look at rural emergency preparedness and land use pressures in small, growing communities. An agenda and registration forms for individuals and exhibitors is available at: www.rural.state.md.us/Summit/index.html

The Summit is hosted by: the **RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL**, the Upper Shore Regional Council, the Maryland Rural Health Association and the State Office of Rural Health in partnership with the Midshore Regional Council, the Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore, the Tri-County Council of Southern Maryland and the Tri-County Council of Western Maryland.

The **RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL** will hold its Annual Membership Meeting on Oct. 26, 2006 in Cecil County in conjunction with the Maryland Rural Summit.

If you are interested in serving with the RMC Board, please contact Steve McHenry at 410-841-5772 or any RMC Board officer.

Recipients announced at Maryland Rural Summit

Rural Impact Award Nominations Open Until Sept. 1

The Maryland Rural Impact Awards recognize individuals and organizations for outstanding rural development and health efforts. Nominations are being accepted now through September 1, 2006. Awards will be presented on October 26 at the Rural Impact Awards Luncheon at the Maryland Rural Summit in Cecil County.

The awards are sponsored by the **RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL**, the Maryland Rural Health Association, the State Office of Rural Health, and the five rural regional councils. Awards will be given for outstanding service in the following categories:

- Rural Economic Development
- Rural Community Development

- Outstanding State Legislator
- Rural Health Program
- Rural Health Achievement
- Rural Health Practitioner
- Rural Volunteer

For more information, see:
www.rural.state.md.us/Summit/awards.html

MARBIDCO: Taking Care of Business (& Working Overtime)

The Board of the Maryland Agricultural and Resource-Based Industry Development Corporation (MARBIDCO) — with staff support from the **RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL** — has been working diligently the last few months to handle the many details necessary to create an organization that now stands ready to begin one of the most important undertakings in Maryland: To help preserve our agricultural and resource-based industries by providing innovative rural enterprises and those producers transitioning to niche-market and value-added endeavors with the financial and business development assistance they need to survive and thrive.

Toward that end, MARBIDCO will begin offering four low-interest loan and business assistance programs later this year.

- **Maryland Resource-Based Industry Financing Fund** will offer low-interest loans to established ag and resource-based industry firms for the purchase of land and capital equipment for production and processing activities. Priority will be given to value-added and niche market-oriented projects as well as beginning or transitioning producers and processors. MARBIDCO

may provide up to 45 percent of needed financing.

- **The Rural Business Energy Efficiency Loan Program** will make low-interest loans to established firms and producers to purchase equipment or technology that lowers farm and business-related energy consumption. MARBIDCO may provide up to 90 percent of needed financing.

- **MARBIDCO Rural Business Working Capital Fund** will offer low-interest loans to established resource-based businesses and producers for working capital. Loans may only be offered in Maryland's 18 rural counties.

- **Maryland Farm and Producer Viability Program** will provide specialized business planning assistance and preferred access to MARBIDCO's low-interest loan programs. This program will help early-stage enterprises with operational and market risk assessments as well as with formal business plan development.

Program planned for 2007 are:

- **Critical Farms Program:** Recent legislation requires the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Founda-

tion (MALPF) and the Maryland Department of Planning to recommend how the new Critical Farms Program should be implemented and funded. One aspect of the program will provide bridge or interim financing for the acquisition of agricultural preservation easements or fee simple purchases in cases where critical land is under an immediate development threat.

MARBIDCO has been assisting with this effort because of the program's potential relationship with this and other easement purchase programs.

- **Installment Purchase Agreements (IPAs):** IPAs will enable MARBIDCO to provide structured tax-advantaged financial arrangements to help purchase easements on agricultural property likely to be lost to development. IPAs typically have a term length between 15 and 40 years, although 25- to 30-year terms seem to be preferable. Because MALPF is legally constrained from issuing bonds with terms longer than 15 years, MARBIDCO has been approached about facilitating the implementation of this program. A consultant has been hired to develop the IPA program and an interagency workgroup is in the process of assisting. It is

hoped that the first IPAs will be made available in the fall of 2006 or early next year.

The first year of funding for MARBIDCO's programs comes from \$1 million the Governor and General Assembly appropriated earlier this year. The Agricultural Stewardship Act of 2006, which contains many important provisions for the long-term sustainability of Maryland agriculture, will also provide \$3-4 million annually during the next 14 years. The bill — which passed unanimously — strongly encourages, but does not require, an additional \$5 million a year be appropriated to MARBIDCO for rural land acquisition and easement programs, including the Next Generation Farmland Acquisition Program.

Help Wanted: Executive Director

With funding secured, the MARBIDCO Board has begun a nationwide search for a full-time, permanent Executive Director. Applications will be accepted through September 5. The complete job description (as well as the corporation's first ever Annual Report) can be found on www.marbidco.org.



MARBIDCO
growing rural ventures™

A newly launched website will have
the latest information available.

Visit: www.marbidco.org

*Annie E. Casey Foundation Continues Partnership***RMC Families Initiative Enters Second Year**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation – for the second year in a row – is partnering with the **RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL** to offer the Strengthening Rural Maryland Families Initiative. This is a direct service grant program that provides funding to a wide range of non-profit, community-based or community-serving organizations that work directly with disadvantaged rural families and children.

The Strengthening Rural Families Initiative operates on the premise that children do well when their families do well; and families do better when they live in supportive communities. However, many families living in rural areas are disconnected from the opportunities and supports they need to succeed. The initiative is committed to helping families in Rural Maryland gain access to economic opportunities, find support through formal and informal networks, and gain access to effective services that work for them.

In the first year of the initiative, five community-based organizations provided:

- Child cognitive development screenings, immunizations, and child care for 52 families;
- Transportation to and from parent education courses for 39 parents;
- Developmentally appropriate parent-

child activities and events for 48 families;

- Training in infant mental health for 41 family service workers and parents;
- In-home mental health services for 12 at-risk families with children ages 2-5;
- A bi-monthly support group, health family screening, referral to in-home support services, links to educational services, and assistance in accessing Maryland Children's Health Care for 33 pregnant or parenting teens;
- A 10-week life skills training course for 15 families, which included the role of parents in schools, fire safety and emergency services, accessing social services, dining etiquette, programs for seniors and individuals with disabilities, and preventative health care; and
- Training in advocacy and navigating service systems for 12 families affected by mental illness.

RMC Board member Bonnie Braun, an associate professor and extension family policy specialist at the University of Maryland Department of Family Studies, coordinates the program.

For more information about the initiative, see: www.rural.state.md.us/News/Rural_Families.html

2005-06 Strengthening Rural Families Grant Recipients:

- The Family Support Center at the Human Services Program of Carroll County
- Charles County Infant Mental Health Project at the Center for Children
- Dorchester County Health Department Pregnant/Parenting Teens Program
- Harford Community Action Agency Highland Friends program
- Wicomico Partnership for Families and Children Family Advocacy program

2006-07 Recipients:

- Garrett County Community Action Committee
- Local Management Board of St. Mary's County
- Lower Shore Child Care Resource Center at Salisbury University
- Maryland Rural Development Corporation
- Shared Opportunity Service, Inc.
- University of Maryland Cooperative Extension, Worcester County

*MAERDAF's Back!***Grant Applications from Non-Profits Accepted through Sept. 1**

The Maryland Agricultural Education and Rural Development Assistance Fund (MAERDAF), which is administered by the **RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL**, will be distributing up to \$250,000 in grants this year to statewide and regional rural-serving nonprofits which promote economic and community development, and agricultural/forestry education. In addition, MAERDAF provides targeted funding to community colleges that provide training and technical assistance to ag and resource-based businesses.

Applications are now being accepted for grant proposals of \$5,000 to \$50,000, although grant awards are typically between \$10,000 and \$20,000. As in the past, the grant review board will give strong preference to organizations which have equal matching funds available from non-state sources.

The General Assembly created MAERDAF in 2000 to increase the overall capacity of rural-serving nonprofit organizations and community colleges to meet a variety of rural development challenges. In its five-year history, the program has awarded 73 grants totaling \$1.4 million.

Application materials are available on the Rural Maryland Council website at: www.rural.state.md.us/News/MAERDAF_2006.html.

Scholarships Available

The **RURAL MARYLAND FOUNDATION** will award a limited number of full need-based scholarships to Maryland **local government officials and nonprofit organizational leaders** to enable them to attend the 2006 Maryland Rural Summit. Please send a letter (no more than two pages) that summarizes the applicant's personal and professional background and interest in attending the Summit. Mail your request by **Sept. 8** to:

Rural Maryland Foundation,
P.O. Box 2087,
Annapolis, MD 21404.
Or fax it to: 410-841-5987.



Rural Broadband Deployment

Surfing Speeds to Increase in Underserved Areas

Affordable high speed internet service is coming to the Eastern Shore and Southern Maryland.

Many rural communities still do not have access to available or affordable high-speed internet services, which severely impedes economic development efforts to diversify existing manufacturing, agricultural and resource-industry based economies. State officials, business leaders, as well as rural development organizations, such as the **RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL**, have repeatedly articulated the need for broadband communications access to create economically competitive communities.

Earlier this year, the General Assembly adopted legislation which provides \$10 million over the next three years for broadband infrastructure deployment. Another \$2 million in federal money has been appropriated to construct a fiber optic network connecting federal facilities at the Patuxent River Naval Air Station in southern Maryland to those in Wallops Island, Virginia.

To get this done, the bill established the Rural Broadband Coordination Board, which the **RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL** will staff. This Board will oversee efforts to deploy broadband services in rural and under served areas and administer state funds. Its first meetings will be held August 14. A Rural Broadband Cooperative, formed by the state's five rural regional councils, will be responsible for overseeing the planning, construction, and management of this network. Once the backbone is in place, the private sector is expected to provide last-mile service to businesses and residents.

RMC has also been an on-going participant in the work of the Rural Broadband Community Deployment Task Force, which was created in August 2003 to examine best practices of broadband deployment and to expand broadband communications to rural Maryland. The task force completed its work this spring and a Final Report is due soon.

Coming This Fall: Statewide Forums on Rural Access to Pharmacists

The **RURAL MARYLAND COUNCIL** is partnering with the UM School of Pharmacy to conduct a series of lunchtime forums throughout the state and discuss ways to improve access to pharmaceuticals and pharmacists as well as ways to address workforce shortages in rural areas. **Forums will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on:**

■ **Mon., Sept. 18**, College of Southern Maryland, Center for Business and Industry, LaPlata
■ **Thurs., Sept. 21**, Allegany County Senior Citizen Community Center, Cumberland

■ **Mon., Sept. 25**, Eastern Shore Hospital Center, Cambridge

These forums will culminate in a statewide meeting on Nov. 15 to discuss recommendations, weigh options and develop action plans. To register, call 410-706-1753 or online at: www.oea.umaryland.edu/rural. There is no charge. *For more information see:* www.rural.state.md.us



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