



## Message From State Director Rob Steptoe

West Virginia’s rural areas face both challenges and opportunities. USDA Rural Development can help our small towns and rural communities take on those challenges and seize those opportunities. Simply contact your local Rural Development office for your community’s needs.

On another note, our present strategic plan includes more outreach that will focus on improving rural access to Broadband technology and increasing the awareness of and utilizing available Renewable Energy funding.



West Virginia USDA Rural Development employees are committed to their mission and strive to make West Virginia a Healthy, Safe & Prosperous place to live and work!

What makes us work? Dedicated staff, cooperative partners and innovate programs. Plain and simple, we are “Committed to the Future of Rural Communities.”

We are proud to share with you the many Success Stories and news coming to you in this edition of our newsletter. Please enjoy the newsletter and feel free to share it with others.

## First-Of-Its-Kind Funding for Rural Development

On January 18, 2007, a groundbreaking and check presentation ceremony was held for the new mausoleum to be constructed at Huse Memorial Park in Fayetteville, Fayette County, WV.

Initial planning of the project started in June 2003. Mayor Akers had attended a service at a mausoleum in a nearby community and thought, “what a wonderful addition this would be for Huse Memorial Park.”

The Town contacted Rural Development to see what type of

funding would be available to assist a small rural community for such a project. The Town of Fayetteville quickly took the necessary steps to become eligible for the Community Facilities program.

Over the next two years, brainstorming sessions were held involving town officials, the public, architects, attorneys, and Rural Development.

The Town of Fayetteville received notice from USDA Rural Development on June 22, 2006,

that their funding request was approved for the new mausoleum.

During groundbreaking activities, Rural Development State Director Rob Steptoe was excited to announce the construction of the mausoleum would be the first of its kind nationwide for Rural Development.

The new mausoleum will have 312 crypts and 188 niches for cremated remains. Construction is set to begin in late Winter and completion is expected by Fall.

Community Programs administers programs designed to develop essential community facilities for public use in rural areas. These facilities include schools, libraries, childcare, hospitals, medical clinics, assisted living facilities, fire and rescue stations, police stations, community centers, public buildings and transportation.

Through its Community Programs, the Department of Agriculture is striving to ensure that such facilities are readily available to all rural communities.



**Pictured above (l to r):** Bill Lanham, Town Manager; Nancy McKown, Cemetery Board; Mayor Jim Akers; and Rob Steptoe, USDA Rural Development State Director.

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## Federal Women's Program Manager Recognized For Awareness Efforts



Nancy Taylor (*pictured to the left* with USDA Rural Development State Director Rob Step-toe) was recognized for her diligent awareness efforts of National Women's History on behalf of USDA Rural Development employees statewide.

March is National Federal Women's History Month and Nancy took advantage of today's technology and emailed her co-workers each day during the month with some interesting trivia, quizzes, photos, etc., pertaining to Women's History.

In past years, Rural Development has commemorated Women's History Month in

many different ways. From speakers to slideshows in former times, the electronic message board played its role in this year's celebration.

The 2007 Theme... "Generations of Women Moving History Forward"... was cited by Nancy's sharing of the Presidential Proclamation, March Highlights in US Women's History, Honored Latinas in Women's History, Women's History Month Calendar, Women's Statues, Women Who Left Their "Stamp" on History, Famous Firsts by American Women, Women's Suffrage Timeline, Women's Museums, The Wage Gap, Mothers of Invention, and The First Ladies' Photo Gallery.

"Throughout our history, the vision and determination of women have strengthened and transformed America. As we celebrate Women's History Month, we recognize the vital contributions women have made to our country."

—President George W. Bush, Proclamation 8109

## The Sheltered Workshop of Nicholas County Enjoys New Space

The Sheltered Workshop of Nicholas County, Inc., is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. It was established in 1979 as a work-oriented rehabilitation facility, with a controlled working environment.

The workshop strives to reinforce individual vocational goals utilizing work experience and related services for assisting individuals to progress toward functional living goals and a productive vocational status.

During the past several years, the workshop has realized a tremendous increase in product offerings.

Some of the products and services they offer include: lawn maintenance, janitorial services, mass mailing, document shredding, silk screening, wood products, etc.

With the increased number of product lines, space at the old facility had become a concern. To gain additional working space, administrative personnel had moved in to inadequate mobile offices.

Mr. James Gamble, Executive Director, decided that a change was needed and started seeking funds for a new facility that would house the administrative staff and provide additional work space.

The workshop was able to secure funding from Appalachian Regional Commission, the USDA Rural Development Community Facilities program, and a local bank.



Construction began in May 2006 and was completed in March 2007.

The employees and staff are ecstatic about their new space. Administrative personnel were able to pick the wall colors of their offices and have decorated to add their own personal touches. Employees are now offered state-of-the-art work space with proper ventilation and safety precautions installed. They are also enjoying their lunch in the new kitchen.

For Rural Development personnel involved with the project, it has been a very rewarding and enjoyable experience.

**Pictured above:** Employees of The Sheltered Workshop of Nicholas County working in their new facility.

**Pictured to the left:** The new Sheltered Workshop of Nicholas County, Inc., facility, Craigsville, Nicholas County, WV.



## USDA Announces \$990 Thousand For Household Water Well System Grants

Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr announced the availability of \$990,000 in funds to help qualified non-profit organizations establish lending programs for rural household water wells.

"The Household Water Well System Grants complement our community water loan and grant program by funding individuals

who receive their water from wells," said Dorr. "Many who live in rural America do not live in towns and communities where a centralized water system is feasible. This program helps to meet that basic human need: access to clean, safe drinking water."

The Household Water Well System Grant Program (HWWS) provides funds to private non-

profit organizations for them to make loans to individual homeowners to construct or upgrade household water well systems.

The applicant must contribute a matching amount equal to at least 10 percent of the grant request to capitalize the loan fund. Since the program was created in the 2002 Farm Bill, Rural Development has made 5 grants for \$2,286,100.

The deadline for application to be submitted is May 31, 2007. Applications may be submitted electronically through <http://www.grants.gov>. Paper applications may be submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, USDA Rural Development Utilities Programs, Mail STOP 1570, Room 2233 - South Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-1570.

## Rural Development Seeking Proposals

### Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing

Robert M. Steptoe, III, State Director of West Virginia USDA Rural Development, is requesting proposals for guaranteed loans under the Section 538 Guaranteed Rural Rental Housing Program (GRRHP) for Fiscal Year 2007, subject to the availability of funding.

Fiscal Year 2006 funding for the Section 538 program was \$99 Million. A Notice of Funding Availability will be published announcing the funding level for this program for Fiscal Year 2007.

The GRRHP operates under CFR, part 3565. The GRRHP Origination and Servicing Handbook (HB-1-3565) is available to provide lenders and the general public with guidance on program administration. HB-1-3565, which contains a copy of 7 CFR, part 3565 in Appendix I, can be found at the Rural Development Instructions web site address at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/regs/hblist.html#>.

Eligible lenders are invited to submit responses for the development of affordable rural rental housing, the acquisition

with rehabilitation of affordable rural rental housing, and the revitalization, repair, and transfer of existing direct Section 515 housing. In order to be considered, direct Section 515 housing projects must need repairs and/or undergo revitalization of a minimum of \$6,500 per unit.

All responses received through April 27, 2007, will be reviewed and scored. Those responses that are selected that subsequently submit complete applications and meet all Federal environmental requirements will receive commitments to the extent an appropriation act provides funding for GRRHP for Fiscal Year 2007 until all funds are expended.

Rural Development will continue to accept applications after April 27, 2007, utilizing the procedure at <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/242/2/01jan20071800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2007/E7-3172.htm>.

Further information may also be obtained by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>. In West Virginia, call 1-800-295-8228.

### Renewable Energy/Energy Efficiency

Also announced was the availability of \$176.5 million in loan guarantees and \$11.4 million in grants to support investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency improvements by agricultural producers and small businesses.

The Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency loan and grant program was established under Section 9006 of the 2002 Farm Bill. It provides loan guarantees and grants to agricultural producers and rural small businesses for the purchase and installation of renewable energy systems or for energy efficiency improvements.

Loan guarantees cover up to 50 percent of a project's cost, not to exceed \$10 million. Grants are available for up to 25 percent of a project's cost, not to exceed \$250,000 for energy efficiency improvements and \$500,000 for renewable energy systems.

These loans and grants are expected to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 0.97 million metric tons, replace 821 million barrels of foreign oil and generate almost 2 million kilowatt hours of

electricity annually. USDA has funded more than 800 loans and grants since the renewable energy program began in Fiscal Year 2003.

The Administration's Farm Bill proposals recommend a more than \$1.6 billion increase in renewable energy related funding. This includes a \$2.1 billion loan guarantee program, a \$500 million bioenergy and bioproducts research program, \$500 million for alternative energy and energy efficiency grants, and other initiatives. Details are available at [www.usda.gov/farmbill](http://www.usda.gov/farmbill).

Applications for grants must be completed and submitted to USDA Rural Development, Federal Building, Room 320, 75 High Street, Morgantown, WV 26505-7500 postmarked no later than May 18. The deadline for submitting loan applications, as well as for loan and grant combinations, is July 2.

For more information, refer to the announcement in the March 22 Federal Register or contact the Rural Development State Office at 1-800-295-8228.

## Johanns Discusses USDA's 2007 Farm Bill Proposals For Rural Development

On April 5, 2007, Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns discussed details of several proposed 2007 Farm Bill changes that will streamline USDA's Rural Development programs and expand funding for rural healthcare and community facilities.

"During the Farm Bill Forums, our rural development programs got top grades across the country, but we think we can do even better," said Johanns. "Our proposals would bolster the efficiency of our rural development programs and infuse funding needed to ensure our Rural Critical Access Hospitals, which are essential to the communities they serve, are able to provide top notch care. Additional funding would go to broader community needs, ranging from water systems to distance learning capabilities in schools."

USDA is proposing funding to support a \$1.6 billion loan program to help rehabilitate as well as update facilities and equipment at Rural Critical Access Hospitals. There are more than 1,200 such hospitals, many of which have pending loan applications. These hospitals are located in exceedingly rural areas where hospital care is desperately needed because of distances between population centers.

To enhance basic rural infrastructure, the Administration proposes infusing an additional \$500 million to reduce the backlog of applications for rural development water and waste disposal grants and loans, emergency community assistance grants, community facilities loan and grant programs that assist

rural first responders, broadband access loans, and distance learning and telemedicine grants.

The Administration also proposes consolidating several rural development legislative authorities to increase flexibility and efficiency. Currently, approximately 45 programs are operated under the rural development umbrella.

These programs utilize one of three funding mechanisms, including grants, loans and loan guarantees. Yet, currently two loan guarantee programs provide similar renewable energy assistance, each under unique rules, six grant programs facilitate commercial business development under varying rules and there are two separate program areas designed to assist rural communities in developing infrastructure and community assets.

The Administration proposes grouping statutory authorities to reflect the customers that either directly benefit from the programs or are essential to their operation as follows:

**Create a Multi-Department Energy Grants Platform.** This would start the process of consolidating the renewable energy grant and research programs of USDA into one platform and increase interagency coordination. The first step of this consolidation would be to move USDA Rural Development renewable energy grant and research program authorities into the Biomass Research and Development Act of 2000. This Act has an existing coordinating forum that includes USDA, the Department of Energy (DOE), and other Federal agencies. By moving these programs into this

Act, USDA and DOE can more effectively coordinate their research and development activities to better serve the needs of rural America. Key Rural Development Programs that would be consolidated under this authority include the Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements grant program, with proposed mandatory funding of \$500 million over ten years. In addition, mandatory funding for the competitive grant program under the Biomass Research and Development Act of 2000 would be increased to \$150 million over ten years.

**Create a Business Loan and Loan Guarantee Platform.**

Such a consolidation would make it easier for guaranteed lenders to participate in these programs and eliminate confusion. This proposal would consolidate into the existing Business and Industry authority, the authorities to carry out NADBank, Intermediate Relending Program; prioritize funding for the construction of biorefinery projects in the Business and Industry loan guarantee program; and consolidate the Section 9006 energy loan and loan guarantee program. Additionally, USDA recommends expanding the 9006 loan guarantee limits for cellulosic ethanol projects to \$100 million with additional authority to exempt these cellulosic projects from the cap on guarantee loan fees and investing \$210 million to support \$2.17 billion in guaranteed loans for the construction of cellulosic ethanol facilities over ten years.

**Create a Business Grants Platform.** This proposal would consolidate the authorities for

the Rural Business Opportunity Grants, Rural Business Enterprise Grants, Value-Added Grants, Rural Economic Development Loans and Grants, and the Rural Cooperatives Development Grants programs into one legislative authority. Specialty crops projects would receive priority in the Value-Added Grants portion of this platform.

**Create a Community Programs Platform.** This proposal would consolidate the authorities for the water and waste loans, loan guarantees, and grants (including the assorted supplemental authorities such as the Emergency and Imminent Water Assistance Grants), the Community Facilities loan, loan guarantees and grants, High Cost Energy Grants, Tribal College Grants, Economic Impact Grants, and the Rural Community Development Initiative Grants programs.

The Administration also proposes reauthorizing the Broadband Access Program and the Distance Learning & Telemedicine Program.

The Farm Bill proposals released January 31, 2007, are based on comments and suggestions received from farmers, ranchers and other stakeholders during 52 USDA Farm Bill Forums across the nation and received via mail and the Internet. These proposals represent the final phase of a nearly two year process. To access the full 183-page document or to access the proposals by title, go to [www.USDA.gov/farmbill](http://www.USDA.gov/farmbill).

**USDA Rural Development's Mission: To Increase Economic Opportunity and Improve The Quality of Life for All Rural Americans.**

## Raleigh Regional Cancer Center Continues to Expand Services

There was a continuing need for state-of-the-art, comprehensive cancer treatment to serve the Beckley, Raleigh County, West Virginia regional area.

The Raleigh Regional Cancer Center and Raleigh X-Ray Diagnostics opened on November 10, 1986. However, by 1994, there was a need for a change in ownership for the facility.

Through a \$2,450,000 Guaranteed Business & Industrial loan with City National Bank, Beckley Oncology Associates, Inc., became the owner of a modern facility offering chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and diagnostic imaging to serve a 30 - 45 mile area in southern West Virginia.

In 2003, a subsequent \$2.7 million guaranteed loan, also through City National Bank, was used to expand the building and to purchase and install a new linear accelerator capable of vastly improving the quality of cancer treatment in southern West Virginia.

With a staff of 60 employees, the care center provides diagnostic, treatment and family support services for complete cancer care close to home. Patients travel from a six-county area with a total population of approximately 230,000 to receive treatment.

In 2005, the center treated over 700 new medical oncology patients, provided approximately

12,000 follow-up visits, administered over 7,500 chemotherapy treatments, and treated nearly 500 patients with radiation therapy.

Raleigh Regional Cancer Center continues to expand its level of service which includes 19 chemotherapy chairs, 15 exam rooms, a procedure room, and on-site chemotherapy mixing services.

The Center is staffed by three board-certified medical oncologists and two nurse practitioners, as well as a clinical pharmacist and nursing staff.

The Radiation Oncology Department is staffed by

a board-certified radiation oncologist and a PhD radiation physicist along with other technological staff.

As a result of Beckley Oncology's dedication to providing an essential service, they will continue to offer high quality care to the local community.



## USDA Announces Nearly \$128 Million Available For Distance Learning & Telemedicine in Rural Communities

Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr announced that USDA is making available \$62.9 million in Distance Learning and Telemedicine loans, \$50 million in loan and grant combinations, and \$15 million in grants.

"Telemedicine and Distance Learning are the foundation on which the quality of education and healthcare in rural America can and will improve," Dorr said via a video teleconference with healthcare providers in five states over a USDA-financed telemedicine network. "With these systems in place, rural residents will be able to take advantage of the wide variety of healthcare services and education programs available now and into the future."

Since 2002, USDA has invested more than \$166 million in its Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) program, allowing

3,796 rural educational facilities to expand their access to modern telecommunications technology, and 2,226 healthcare institutions to develop technologies needed to enhance local medical care.

The Administration proposes additional funding for improvements to both rural Critical Access Hospitals and key community facilities improvements, including DLT linkages.

Telemedicine technology makes it possible for doctors to examine and direct the treatment of patients from remote treatment centers. The technology gives rural residents access to medical specialists not often available in remote areas.

The Distance Learning program finances equipment to expand educational resources to students and educational institutions in isolated rural areas.

Of the 103 selected recipients nationwide, West Virginia was awarded one Distance Learning Grant and two Telemedicine Grants, totaling \$1,051,652, during Fiscal Year 2006.

During Fiscal Year 2005, 79 projects were selected nationwide and West Virginia was awarded three Distance Learning Grants promoting educational opportunities, totaling \$1,335,760.

West Virginia was awarded one Distance Learning Grant in Fiscal Year 2004, two Distance Learning Grants in Fiscal Year 2003, and one Distance Learning Grant in the amount of \$210,890 during Fiscal Year 2002.

Prior to Fiscal Year 2002, West Virginia received one Distance Learning Grant and one Telemedicine Grant in 1999, one Telemedicine Grant in 1998, and in Fiscal Year 1997 two Telemedicine Grant/Loan combinations.

Applications for the \$15 million in Distance Learning and Telemedicine grants must be received by June 8, 2007 and will compete nationally for funding.

Applications for loans and loan and grant combinations will be accepted year round.

Interested parties should contact the Rural Development State Office, Federal Building, Room 320, 75 High Street, Morgantown, WV 26505-7500; (304) 284-4860 or (800) 295-8228; fax (304) 284-4893; or TTY/TDD (304) 284-4836.

View the Rural Development DLT web site, <http://www.usda.gov/rus/telecom/dlt/dlt.htm>, for additional information on the Distance Learning and Telemedicine program.

## NEWS FLASH

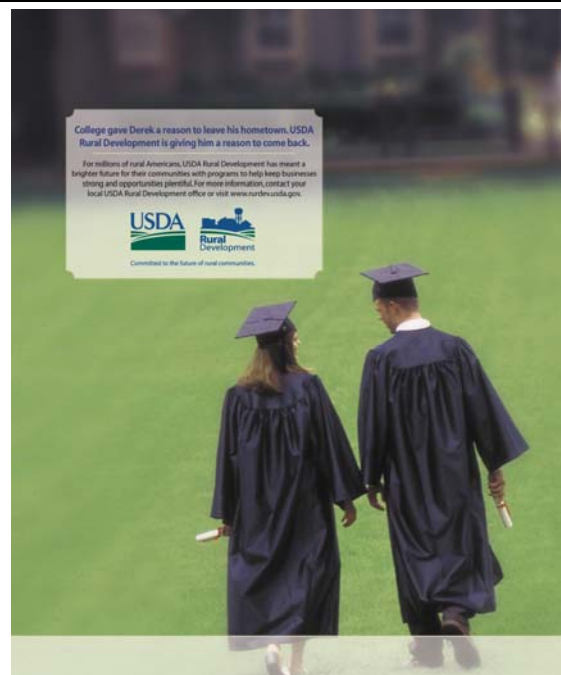
### SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSING GUARANTEED PROGRAM

Effective April 12, 2007

New Increased Income Limits

COUNTY	FAMILY SIZE/INCOME LIMIT							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
<b>JEFFERSON</b>	<b>53,250</b>	<b>60,900</b>	<b>68,500</b>	<b>76,100</b>	<b>82,200</b>	<b>88,300</b>	<b>94,350</b>	<b>100,450</b>
<b>MINERAL, MORGAN &amp; BERKELEY</b>	<b>57,650</b>	<b>65,900</b>	<b>74,100</b>	<b>82,350</b>	<b>88,950</b>	<b>95,550</b>	<b>102,100</b>	<b>108,700</b>
<b>HAMPSHIRE</b>	<b>49,000</b>	<b>56,000</b>	<b>63,000</b>	<b>70,000</b>	<b>75,600</b>	<b>81,200</b>	<b>86,800</b>	<b>92,400</b>
<b>ALL OTHER COUNTIES</b>	<b>48,000</b>	<b>54,850</b>	<b>61,700</b>	<b>68,550</b>	<b>74,050</b>	<b>79,500</b>	<b>85,000</b>	<b>90,500</b>

Note from USDA Rural Development Housing Program Director Dianne Crysler: In addition to the increased income limits for the Single-Family Housing Guaranteed Program, the Single-Family Housing Direct Loan Limits have also changed. Applicants will need to contact their local Rural Development office for the revised income limit in your area.



## Announcement of Value-Added Producer Grant Application Deadlines

The Business and Cooperative Programs of USDA Rural Development announces the availability of approximately \$19.3 million in competitive grant funds for Fiscal Year 2007 to help independent agricultural producers enter into value-added activities.

Awards may be made for planning activities or for working capital expenses, but not for both.

The maximum grant amount for a planning grant is \$100,000 and the maximum grant for a working capital grant is \$300,000.

Applications for grants must be submitted on paper or electronically. Paper copies must be post-marked and mailed, shipped, or sent overnight no later than May 16, 2007, to be eligible for Fiscal Year 2007 grant funding. Electronic copies must be received by May 16, 2007.

Late applications are not eligible for Fiscal Year 2007 funding.

An application guide and other materials may be obtained at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/coops/vadg.htm> or by contacting Business and Cooperative Programs Specialist John M. Comerci at 481 Ragland Road, Beckley, WV 25801; telephone (304) 253-9597, extension 146; fax (304) 252-5809; or TTY/TDD (304) 284-4836.

Paper applications must be submitted to: Cooperative Programs, ATTN: VAPG Program, Mail STOP 3250, Room 4016-South, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-3250. The telephone number that should be used for courier delivery is (202) 720-7558.

Electronic applications may be submitted through the Grants.gov web site at



<http://www.grants.gov>, following the instructions found on this web site.

The primary objective of this grant program is to help Independent Producers of Agricultural Commodities, Agriculture Producer Groups, Farmer and Rancher Cooperatives, and Majority-Controlled Producer-Based Business Ventures develop strategies to create marketing opportunities regarding production of biobased products from agricultural commodities.

Matching funds are required. Applicants must verify in their applications that matching funds are available for the time period of the grant and must be at least equal to the amount of grant funds requested.

The announcement of the Value-Added Producer Grant award selections is expected to occur on or about September 1, 2007.

The term “value-added agricultural product” includes any agricultural commodity or product that is used to produce renewable energy on a farm or ranch. For example, collecting and converting methane from animal waste to generate energy.

Value-Added includes four categories. They are the incremental value that is realized by the producer from an Agricultural Commodity or product as the result of:

- A change in its physical state;
- Differentiated production or marketing as demonstrated in a Business Plan;
- Product segregation; and
- Economic benefit realized from the production of Farm- or Ranch-based Renewable Energy.





## “Wild, Wonderful & Open For Business”

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Almost Heaven WV  
Mountain State Rural Express



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<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/wv>



Please forward your request to receive this newsletter via e-mail to Gail Bennett, Editor, at [Gail.Bennett@wv.usda.gov](mailto:Gail.Bennett@wv.usda.gov).

## Rural Development Programs Displayed at Martinsburg Home Show

Rural Development employees Howard Page, Scott Mullin, Wendell Alt, Ruth Ann Barron and Linda Smith participated in the annual Martinsburg Home Show in March 2007 by displaying Rural Development's programs at a home show booth, distributing pamphlets and providing information to the public.



**Pictured to the left** is Linda Smith, Rural Development Technician, sharing with “Bob the Builder” the importance of Rural Development financing in the Eastern Panhandle.