

**Advancing Creativity and Innovation in
Rural America**

**2008 Annual Conference
of the National Rural
Development Partnership
and Partners for Rural America**

Montpelier, Vermont

This year's 2008 Annual NRDP/PRA Conference was held in Montpelier, Vermont, and kindly hosted by Paul Costello, Executive Director of the Vermont Council on Rural Development and staff. The conference brought together State Rural Development Councils from all over the United States including representatives from Oregon, Nevada, Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska, Wisconsin, Illinois, Alabama, South Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Maine.

The conference opening included a welcome speech from Lieutenant Governor Brian Dubie, and a presentation of the PRA Rural Innovation Award to Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy. Throughout the four day conference, innovative sessions were presented by a panel of professionals discussing five main topics pertinent to the existence of rural America.

- The Innovative Agriculture Development
- The Expansion of Renewable Energy and Efficiency
- Advancing the Creative Economy
- The Generational Transfer of Rural Wealth, and
- Telecommunications

The sessions proved a great success and provided each state council the opportunity to share his or her state's successes and challenges relating to these areas.



In addition to the knowledge gained from the conference sessions, conference attendees were provided the opportunity to join in a guided tour around the state to experience a first-hand look at innovations being practiced throughout Vermont's rural communities.

The tour included stops to:

Hinesburg VT - NRG Systems Facility (a worldwide manufacturer of wind energy assessment equipment).

Middlebury VT - Foster Brothers Farm Inc. (a 5th generational family dairy incorporating innovative agricultural developments).

Shoreham VT - Golden Russet Farm (a family-run organic farm supported by the community).

Brandon VT - Brandon Artist Guild tour and presentation by America's best known living folk artist, Warren Kimble (Creative Economy Success).

Waitsfield VT - American Flatbread (Buy-local economy).

The conference concluded with the presentation of the Ron Shaffer Award to Paul Costello, Executive Director of the Vermont Council on Rural Development, and Connie Loden of the Wisconsin Rural Partners, Inc. for their overall leadership and collaboration to the partnership.

A special thanks to those of you who helped make the 2008 NRDP/PRA Conference such a great success!

Paul Costello
Margaret McCoy
Tom Stearns
Steve McHenry
Mark Sinclair
Jan Blittersdorf
Jeff Wolfe
Warren Kimble

Mary Hooper
Mary Ann Haynes
John Bramley
Scott McArdle
Laura Duey
Mary Evslen
Jody Levin
Dan Carmody

Mary Randolph
Clarke Becker
Sarah Waring
Roger Allbee
Catherine Dimitruk
Brian Dubie
Michael Dworkin
J. Barton (Tony) Elliot

Tom Hark
Helen Jordan
Jolinda LaClair
Chuck Ross

Congratulations 2008 Ron Shaffer Award



Paul Costello,
Executive Director of
Vermont Council on Rural
Development

Connie Loden,
Wisconsin Rural
Partners, Inc.

Congratulations PRA Rural Innovation Award



U.S. Senator
Patrick Leahy

(Presented to Chuck Ross,
Vermont Director,
U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy's
Office)

