



Our Mission:

*Rural Partners is a member-driven forum
that links individuals, businesses, organizations and communities
with public and private resources to maximize the potential of rural Illinois.*

www.ruralpartners.org

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Highlights from 2016

Building a Statewide Network

Illinois Rural Partners provides networking opportunities at conferences; shares information via the website; publishes a newsletter; shares success stories; identifies funding opportunities and ideas; and responds to individual initiatives across the state. Rural Partners acts as an intermediary between communities, not-for-profits, businesses, state and federal agencies, and others helping to create opportunities and resolve impediments to progress.

Supports the Illinois Rural Resource Directory, the Illinois Rural Life Poll, and Illinois SET

Rural Partners sponsors the update and online publishing of the Rural Illinois Resource Directory, and helps fund the Illinois Rural Life Poll. Rural Partners, along with other state partners, is instrumental in supporting the Stronger Economies Together (SET) program. SET is a University of Illinois Extension/USDA Rural Development program.

Sponsors, Plans and Participates in Conferences

Rural Partners co-sponsors and attracts exhibitors to conferences focused on business development, broadband, leadership and other topics to help rural leaders learn about and implement creative approaches to rural community development. Rural Partners co-sponsors the annual *Rural Community Economic Development Conference* and sponsored a keynote speaker in honor of founding Rural Partners Board Member Dr. Jerry W. Robinson, Jr.

Shares Information through the Newsletter and Website

The Rural Partners newsletter includes articles about funding, conferences, success stories and more. Members and others are encouraged to contribute articles and information which can help promote your company, your community, your cause or your ideas. The Rural Partners website is informative, responsive and interactive to better serve our members and others. Visit www.ruralpartners.org, or email info@ruralpartners.org for the latest!

Keeps You in Touch with State Government Leadership

As a member of the Governor's Rural Affairs Council, University of Illinois Extension Partners, and other task forces, Rural Partners follows state rural development initiatives and funding opportunities to share issues and address problems facing rural communities and businesses. Rural Partners provides a voice for rural communities and organizations through these and other statewide and regional organizations.

Provides Leadership and Input to the National Organization, Partners for Rural America (PRA)

Illinois Rural Partners is active in PRA, the national coalition of state councils, to have a national voice in rural policy, programming and legislation and to share and learn best practices from across the country. Jerry Townsend, Illinois Rural Partners, continues to serve on the PRA Board.

Asks for Feedback from Members

Rural Partners seeks input from its members and others to determine needs and priorities. Continuing services in this time of tight budgets, advocating for broadband, and supporting businesses and entrepreneurs, are currently high priority goals.

What's in store for 2017?

- Expand the work and effectiveness of community foundations.
- Continue to advocate for the rural agenda.
- Support the annual Rural Community Economic Development Conference, held in March in Springfield.
- Stay tuned . . . Illinois Rural Partners is making a bid to host the annual meeting and tour for the Partnership for Rural America.