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Symposium and Rural Summit in June

Summary: Minnesota's small towns and rural areas will show how they are "Working Better Together for the Common Good" - the theme for the combined Symposium on Small Towns and Minnesota Rural Summit, June 6 - 7 at UMM. Registration deadline is May 30.

(May 17, 2006)-Minnesota's small towns and rural areas will take center stage to show how they are "Working Better Together for the Common Good" – the theme for the combined Symposium on Small Towns and Minnesota Rural Summit, June 6 - 7 at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Registration deadline for the Symposium is May 30.

This will be the fourth annual Symposium sponsored and held at UMM, and the 9th annual Summit held in a different location each year. It is the first time these events have combined. The event will showcase actions underway by people who recognize the changing demographics and landscape of rural Minnesota, the evolving economic opportunities, and who work together to sustain their communities. Organizers are also planning a legislative forum and are inviting the gubernatorial candidates to share their ideas.

"It was time to bring all the voices together," said Jane Leonard, president of Minnesota Rural Partners and a co-host of the combined Symposium-Summit. "It's clear that rural America is getting shut out of most policy decisions, unless there is a compelling economic interest, such as renewable energy, especially within the federal arena."

Co-hosting the Rural Summit with the Symposium brings the annual summit for the first time ever to western Minnesota, said Leonard, who has worked in rural development for more than 20 years. "The Morris area is a model." She noted. "It's demonstrating the promise of 21st-century rural life: renewable energy value-added agriculture small, diverse business development higher education and creativity through arts and culture."

The symposium and summit will identify programs and services that can help communities work better together. Among the sessions will be one which Winchester has dubbed, "speed dating" – an opportunity to provide participants with quick one-on-one networking with resource providers. The Summit's second annual Storytelling Contest will also be held, preceded by regional contests across the state in advance of the June meeting.

Partners in the combined event this year include Minnesota Public Radio and the University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships. Minnesota Power and the West Central Initiative have signed on as sponsors thus far and organizers are looking for additional sponsors. The registration fee is \$60 Minnesota Public Radio members receive a 10 percent discount. Registration is up and running and open to anyone. Children's activities are planned and housing is available on or off-campus.

In honor of the upcoming Symposium and Rural Summit, Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty has issued a proclamation, which declares Tuesday, June 6, 2006, as "Celebrate Small Towns Day."

For more program information and to register visit [Center for Small Towns](#) or [Minnesota Rural Partners](#), or call (320)

589-6451.

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