

RURAL ROUTES

The North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center, Inc.

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"It will be a tremendous relief," says Ruth Mayor Don Baynard of the new water lines for Mt. Vernon-Ruth Elementary School made possible by a Rural Center grant.

Center awards last of '98 Clean Water Bond funds

Ruth Mayor Don Baynard says life in the small Rutherford County town where he was born and raised hasn't changed much since it sprang up as a railroad stop for merchants on their way to Asheville in the mid-1800s. Located in the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains near the county seat of Rutherfordton, Ruth is a small town that relishes its smallness, whose 380 residents don't necessarily want big city developments like shopping malls, and where on a typical day the mayor's toughest job is being able to put a name with every face in town. Major problems are few and far between, and Baynard can remember only a few times that the town has looked beyond its borders for help, including last fall when well tests revealed the local elementary school's drinking water was contaminated.

"We're small, but we're proud," Baynard said. "People around here are what you'd call independent, and we wouldn't have reached out to the Rural Center unless we really needed help. When the state Department of Environment and Natural Resources told us our school children's health and well-being was at stake, we had to do something."

County school board officials helped Baynard write the town's first-ever application to the Rural Center's Water and Sewer Grants Program, and on Feb. 22 Ruth was awarded a \$375,000 grant to run water lines to the school and about 70 homes in the area. The grant was one of 64 awarded as part of the center's final round of investments made from the Clean Water Bonds approved by state voters in 1998. The \$800 million bond referendum was designed to help small and economically distressed communities across the state pay for critical water and wastewater infrastructure projects at a time when federal grant programs are shrinking or being eliminated altogether. Baynard calls his town 'incredibly fortunate' to have received funding when it did.

"If we hadn't gotten funding when we did, I don't know what we would have done," Baynard said. "There's very few programs out there for small towns like Ruth that don't have the tax base to pay for these projects on their own."

State Senate leader Marc Basnight, who called the bonds 'one of the most important pieces of legislation in state history,' shares those concerns. Basnight joined Rural

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Clean Water Bonds

Economic Impact

43,042 jobs created or saved

104 economic development projects

703 construction projects

Environmental Impact

169 projects employed water reuse technology

152 reduced effluent flow to environment

88 targeted inflow and infiltration

Community Impact

548 projects in rural, distressed areas

236 projects in communities with persistent poverty

1,920,682 water customers served

725,934 wastewater customers served

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Board approves Economic Infrastructure Fund Grants

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Water 2030: State facing \$15 billion in water and sewer needs

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Clean Water Bond *from page 1*

Center President Billy Ray Hall and the center's board of directors in announcing the final \$12.8 million in Clean Water Bond funds at a special event at the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh on Feb. 22. The closing out of the bond package – which funded 1,069 projects in rural and distressed areas – has lawmakers reflecting on the impact of the bond issue and initiating a new round of discussion on how to meet the critical infrastructure needs of small towns like Ruth in the future.

"This state needs to have that kind of discussion, to build the infrastructure to bring opportunity to all areas of our state," said Basnight. "It is incumbent upon us to do more than we've ever done before."

More than 2.6 million businesses and households have been served by the Clean Water Bonds, which were administered by the center, the N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources and the N.C. Department of Commerce as part of the \$1 billion Critical Needs Bond Act – \$200 million of which was set aside to run natural gas lines to 22 counties.

Hall recalled the events in 1998 that created a dire need for clean water and safe wastewater disposal in hundreds of communities across the state and led to passage of one of the largest bond issues in state history.

"More than 100 public sewer systems were on moratoria and special orders of consent, thousands of wells had become contaminated due to hurricane damage, and a center-led inventory of public water and sewer systems told us we were facing \$11.34 billion in capital needs," Hall said. "That was a troubling time for the state and for rural people in particular, but the Clean Water Bonds led us in a new direction. It was the right action at the right time."

Since 1999, the center's Water and Sewer Grants Program has awarded bond-funded grants twice each year under three project categories: Supplemental Grants of up to \$400,000 to match funds already dedicated to a water or sewer project; Capacity Building Grants of up to \$40,000 to conduct the planning phase of water and wastewater projects; and Unsewered Communities Grants, to help small towns build a central wastewater treatment facility. The Unsewered program was fully invested in February 2004, providing \$116.5 million in funding to build sewer facilities in 51 small towns.

Infrastructure grants recipients announced

Feb. 22, 2005

Alexander	\$400,000, Town of Taylorsville
Anson	\$400,000, Town of Morven
Beaufort	\$40,000, Town of Belhaven
Bertie	\$400,000, Town of Aulander
Bladen	\$350,000, Town of White Lake \$40,000, Town of Elizabethtown
Brunswick	\$75,000, Town of Navassa
Camden	\$400,000, South Camden Water and Sewer District
Chatham	\$333,780, Town of Siler City \$40,000, Chatham County \$40,000, Town of Pittsboro
Chowan	\$326,850, Chowan County
Cleveland	\$40,000, Cleveland County Sanitary District
Cleveland	\$40,000, Town of Boiling Springs
Columbus	\$385,214, Columbus County Water District V \$300,000, Town of Lake Waccamaw
Duplin	\$300,000, Town of Wallace
Edgecombe	\$350,000, Edgecombe Water and Sewer District I
Franklin	\$40,000, Franklin County
Greene	\$40,000, Town of Snow Hill



Local officials from across North Carolina were on hand at the N.C. Museum of History on Feb. 22 as the Rural Center announced the final round of grant awards from the Clean Water Bond Fund and the center's N.C. Economic Infrastructure Fund.

Halifax

\$40,000, Meadows Sewer District
\$400,000, Town of Enfield
\$400,000, Town of Hobgood

Haywood

\$400,000, Haywood County
\$25,000, Town of Canton
\$22,250, Town of Waynesville

Hyde

\$400,000, Hyde County

Iredell

\$40,000, Town of Mooresville

Jackson

\$400,000, Tuckaseegee Water and Sewer Authority
\$40,000, Tuckaseegee Water and Sewer Authority

Jones

\$398,448, Town of Maysville

Lenoir

\$350,000, Town of Pink Hill

Montgomery

\$375,000, Handy Sanitary District
\$400,000, Town of Star

Nash

\$400,000, Nash County
\$24,000, Nash County

Northampton

\$400,000, Town of Jackson
\$29,510, Town of Woodland

Pamlico

\$36,000, Bay River Metropolitan
Sewer District

Pender

\$350,000, Town of Surf City

Perquimans

\$40,000, Perquimans County

Person

\$40,000, City of Roxboro
\$40,000, City of Roxboro

Pitt

\$400,000, Town of Farmville
\$40,000, Town of Farmville
\$400,000, Town of Fountain

Polk

\$31,000, City of Saluda

Robeson

\$40,000, Town of Fairmont
\$40,000, Town of Pembroke

Rutherford

\$375,000, Town of Ruth
\$32,000, Broad River Water
Authority
\$40,000, Town of Bostic
\$40,000, Town of Forest City
\$40,000, Town of Rutherfordton
\$40,000, Town of Spindale

Sampson

\$40,000, Sampson County

Surry

\$35,200, Surry County

Warren

\$400,000, Warren County Water
and Sewer District II
\$350,000, Warren County

Washington

\$300,000, Town of Creswell

Wayne

\$350,000, Wayne County

Wilson

\$400,000, Town of Elm City

Transylvania

\$40,000, Town of Rosman
\$40,000, Transylvania County

Watauga

\$40,000, Town of Boone

Center's board of directors approves \$4.8 million in Economic Infrastructure Grants

In addition to the final round of Clean Water Bond grants awarded Feb. 22, the center's board of directors approved 33 grants under the N.C. Economic Infrastructure Fund program totaling \$4.8 million. North Carolina lawmakers created the program in July 2004 as part of a comprehensive effort to help rural and low-wealth communities struggling with job losses by boosting the infrastructure needed to attract and sustain business development. The board approved nine water and sewer infrastructure grants totaling \$3.25 million to run water and sewer lines to new and expanding businesses and industrial sites, and 24 economic innovation grants totaling \$1.55 million to stimulate new jobs and economic growth through promising research and demonstration projects.

N.C. Economic Infrastructure Fund Grants

awarded Feb. 22, 2005

Water and Sewer Grants

Avery

\$500,000, Town of Banner Elk

Brunswick

\$500,000, Brunswick County

Catawba

\$500,000, City of Conover

Haywood

\$360,000, Haywood County
\$125,000, Town of Waynesville

Iredell

\$200,000, Town of Troutman

Johnston

\$500,000, Town of Selma

Lenoir

\$500,000, City of Kinston

Stanly

\$65,000, Town of Richfield

Economic Innovation Grants

Alexander

\$45,000, Hiddenite Center

Ashe

\$90,000, Ashe County Partnership for Children

Beaufort

\$61,500, Beaufort County Committee of 100

Brunswick

\$25,000, City Works Foundation

Buncombe

\$45,000, Handmade in America
\$250,000, Land-of-Sky Regional Council

Carteret

\$120,000, Carteret Community College
\$24,000, Carteret County Economic
Development Council
\$35,000, Core Sound Waterfowl
Museum

Chowan

\$25,000, North Carolina's Northeast
Economic Development Foundation

Graham

\$45,000, Smoky Mountain Native
Plants Association
\$90,000, Stecoah Valley Arts Crafts and
Educational Center, Inc.

Greene

\$25,000, Town of Hookerton

Halifax

\$30,000, Town of Scotland Neck

Hyde

\$45,000, Hyde County Community
Development Corp.

Jackson

\$120,000, Jackson County

Madison

\$90,000, Madison County
\$122,250, Madison County/Spring
Creek Community Center

Northampton

\$25,000, Choanoke Area Development
Association
\$25,000, Town of Seaboard

Tyrrell

\$25,000, Pocosin Arts

Wayne

\$95,000, N.C. Department of
Agriculture and Consumer Services

Wilkes

50,000, Wilkes Community College

Yancey

\$45,000, Town of Burnsville



Billie Albritton is working to bring new businesses to Hookerton.

Resurrecting rural North Carolina's once-vibrant small towns, one abandoned building at a time

When Billie Albritton closes her eyes she sees the Hookerton of her youth, the thriving little town just outside Greenville where she moved with her new husband in 1947 just after his return from the war in Europe. She can still see the bustling downtown with its many stores, banks and offices, the lively streets dotted with modest homes and young people who, like her, were eager to start families, establish careers and put down roots.

She prefers not to think of the downfall that began about a decade later, when a new era of big business drew small town families to cities like Raleigh and Greenville, where the promise of a more modern lifestyle beckoned with subdivisions and shopping malls and indelibly changed the landscape of towns like Hookerton. Today, abandoned buildings and storefronts have become the hallmark of the town 'Ms. Billie,' as she's known here, is still proud to call home.

"It is a shame to see what's happened in Hookerton over the years, but I know it's happening all over North Carolina," Albritton said. "This is the oldest town in Greene County, and there's so much history here that I worry is getting lost.

We used to have a lot of young people living here, but now it's mostly widows like me. We don't even have a doctor here anymore, and with so many older people who can't drive the six miles into Snow Hill, that's a real hardship."

Albritton, the self-described matriarch of the town, joined with the mayor and local economic development officials a few years ago to launch the Hookerton Downtown Revitalization Project, which aims to redevelop the area around Main Street with new retail, medical and office space using some of the 1920s-era buildings that have been vacant for more than a decade. Federal grants helped to pay for long-range plans needed to move the effort forward, but finding the money to pay for extensive renovation work on the slowly deteriorating, yet still structurally sound buildings proved more difficult.

When Albritton and project leaders heard that the economic stimulus package passed by state lawmakers last session included a grants program to renovate and reuse vacant buildings in small towns, it almost seemed too good to be true.

"It was what we had been hoping for; it was a godsend, to tell you the truth," said Albritton, who with her children still runs the furniture wholesale business her husband started in the early 1950s.

Lawmakers established the N.C. Economic Infrastructure Fund in July 2004 as a comprehensive program to boost the infrastructure needed to attract and sustain business development across rural and distressed areas of North Carolina. Lawmakers directed the Rural Center to administer the fund through four programs that would improve water and sewer facilities, add new business and technology telecenters, rehabilitate vacant buildings to support business development efforts in small towns, and invest in major research and demonstration projects with job-creating potential.

Hookerton was awarded a \$113,500 grant under the fund's Building Reuse and Restoration Grants Program. The grant will help renovate two old buildings that by later this year will house a medical center and a retail store. Together, the businesses will create 10 new jobs for the town, where for years residents had to travel miles just to buy a loaf of bread or visit the doctor.

With construction on the two projects eminent, Albritton is already looking ahead to other development

opportunities. As the nearby Global Transpark – just five miles away – accelerates interstate commerce activities in the area, and as neighboring Greenville continues to grow into the countryside around Hookerton, Albritton expects the town to reap the benefits. Who's to say that Hookerton's best days aren't still to come, she says.



This 1920's structure, abandoned for more than a decade, will soon house a retail center.

Building Reuse and Restoration Grant Program

Purpose: To spur economic activity and job creation by assisting in the productive reuse of vacant buildings in small towns.

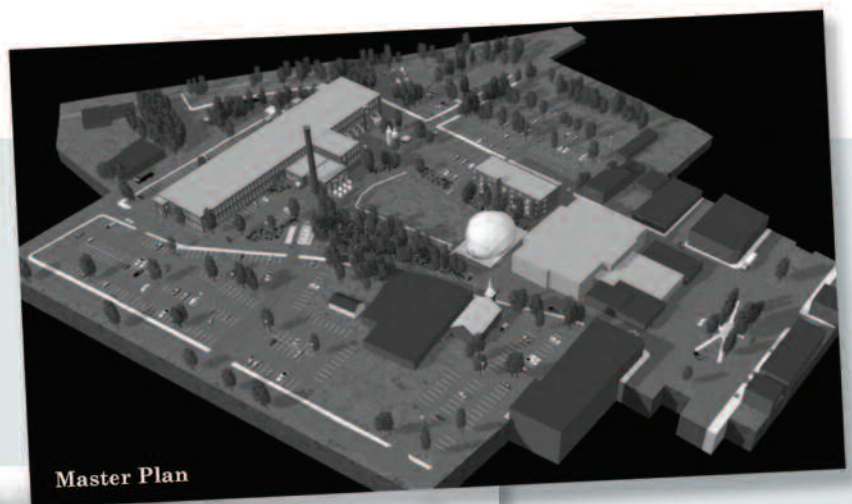
Availability: Two types of grants are available under the program: predevelopment grants of \$25,000 to help cover the cost of an initial study or other activity necessary to secure business and investment commitments; and development grants, which require a 50 percent local match, to projects ready to begin renovation. Program funds are fully invested at this time, though the Rural Center is currently seeking addition funds to expand building reuse opportunities to other communities.

Eligibility: Limited to local governments in rural counties or urban counties with considerable economic distress, with priority given to towns with fewer than 5,000 residents.

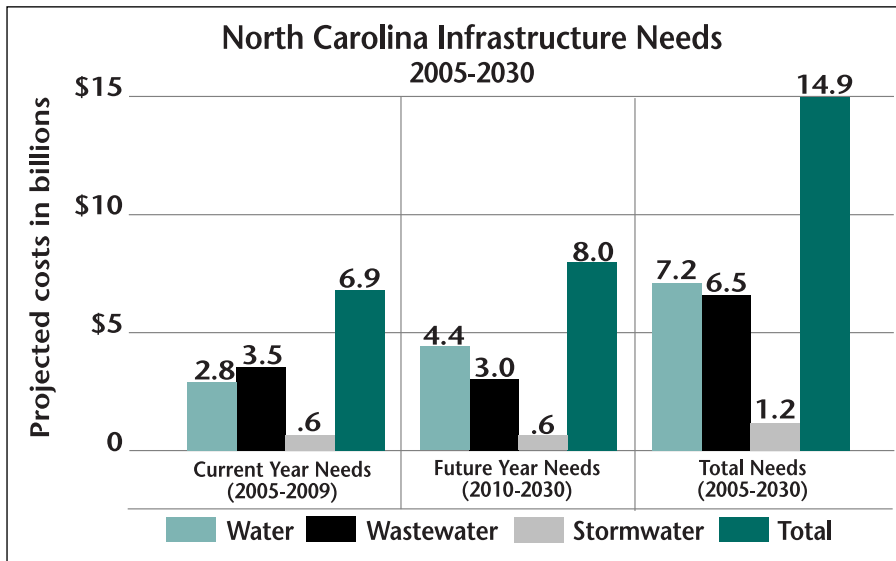
Program to Date: Initial funding of \$3 million was set aside as part of the N.C. Economic Infrastructure Fund. The Rural Center invested that funding in 17 small towns in 2004. Five predevelopment grants were awarded to projects in Franklin, Halifax, Montgomery, Pitt and Robeson counties. Twelve development projects were funded in Alleghany, Bladen, Greene, Harnett, Mitchell, Nash, Robeson, Rockingham, Rutherford, Stanly and Yancey counties. All together, the projects in 16 counties are expected to create nearly 1,200 jobs and leverage \$66 million in private investment.

To find out more about the center's Building Reuse and Restoration Grants Program, contact project director Rick Bain at (919) 250-4314, rbain@ncruralcenter.org.

Forest City reuse project to boost local economy



The historic Cone Mills/Florence plant in Forest City, abandoned since 2001, will retain much of its 1897 architecture as developers convert the old textile mill into a \$20 million complex with retail, residential and office space. The complex, which will include a movie theater, meeting facilities, hotel and museum, will create 50 jobs and spur the redevelopment of other historic buildings near the mill.



State faces infrastructure needs of \$15 billion by 2030

Initial findings from a yearlong study of North Carolina's water resources reveal capital needs that will reach \$7 billion in five years and \$15 billion by 2030. The assessment of 1,243 public water, sewer and stormwater systems throughout the state was conducted as part of the Rural Center's Water 2030 Initiative, a comprehensive study launched in 2004 to measure the state's current water supply, estimate future demand and give state leaders the information needed to plan for short and long-term growth and address environmental issues.

Rural Center President Billy Ray Hall said the findings, released Dec. 15 at a briefing attended by more than 100 water resource leaders and professionals, are critical to understanding the scope of the water resource challenges facing North Carolina – one of the five fastest growing states in the nation.

"In the rural North Carolina that I grew up in, water was something we took for granted. We had an abundance of water that fed our growing communities, small businesses and industries, and we assumed it would continue to support that growth for future generations," said Hall. "This data is a wake-up call because it shows that we are growing faster than our water supplies, and it underscores the need for decisive action on the state and local levels."

With the initial infrastructure assessment complete, the center has turned its

attention to developing county-level infrastructure data along with creation of a water budget, a 25-year estimate of the state's water supply and demand. One thing is already clear: demands on North Carolina's public water systems are growing faster than communities and municipalities can pay for expensive system upgrades and expansions. Nearly 90 percent of the water systems and 83 percent of wastewater systems surveyed expect to grow over the next 25 years.

"Also troubling is the fact that only half of the systems have completed long-range capital planning, so many of them aren't really sure what their needs will be 25 years from now," said Water 2030 Project Director Jean Crews-Klein. "And that means we are likely to see even greater capital needs than our data now show."

The data also give new insight into how public water and sewer systems are being maintained and the effect new regulations are having on wastewater systems in particular, said Klein, the center's vice-president for business and natural resource development.

"For the first time, North Carolina's water needs are exceeding its wastewater needs," Klein said. "As a state, we've focused so much of our attention on improving wastewater that we've not kept up with the water systems. Also, the data show the remarkable effect new wastewater regulations are having. In

1998 less than 1 percent of public wastewater systems in the state had a monitoring system in place to guard against infrastructure deterioration and other serious problems, whereas 65 percent have such systems in place today."

The center conducted the state's first inventory and assessment of public water and sewer needs in 1996, revealing an \$11.3 billion infrastructure need statewide that served as the basis for the 1998 Clean Water Bond Act. The center invested \$240 million in bond-funded water and wastewater improvements in rural North Carolina from 1999 through Feb. 2005, when the bond funds were fully expended. With substantial infrastructure needs still unmet and demands on water resources expected to increase dramatically, state Sen. John Kerr believes a permanent revenue source might be the best way to ensure the state meets its water resource challenges in the years ahead.

"We're the fourth fastest growing state in the nation and we've got 25,000 new students coming in this year alone," said Kerr, a Wayne County lawmaker instrumental in the bond act's passage. "Educating those kids is important, but providing clean water for them is just as critical and maybe more so. It's going to be hard for any size town in North Carolina to pick up a bill like this, yet somehow they have to provide water for expanding schools, business and industry. I think we need to establish a stream of income to protect our water resources."

The total cost of the Water 2030 Initiative is estimated at more than \$2 million. The Rural Center has received two grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, one for \$1 million and the second for \$200,000; a \$500,000 grant from the N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund; and a \$200,000 appropriation by the N.C. General Assembly. In addition, the center is contributing \$300,000 to the effort.

To learn more about the Rural Center's Water 2030 Initiative, contact project director Jean Crews-Klein at (919) 250-4314, jklein@ncruralcenter.org.



Carolyn Perry

Microenterprise Program offers lending model for entrepreneurs

The Rural Center's nationally recognized Microenterprise Loan Program is demonstrating a new lending model that will boost the number of small business loans made to aspiring entrepreneurs in rural North Carolina. The express loans model will target individuals who want to go into business for themselves and who have the potential – with the help of technical assistance, financial literacy training and start-up capital – to stimulate jobs in their communities down the road. Those that qualify will receive low-interest loans of up to \$5,000 to get their ventures up and running.

"With express loans, the center will invest \$250,000 in Microenterprise Loan Program funds in ventures that aren't quite ready for a larger business loan and in borrowers who carry slightly more risk than the average micro borrower," said program director Carolyn Perry. "Many of these loans will be made to people who are working a full-time job and do something they love as a side business, with the hope that someday they will be able to go into business for themselves full-time."

Perry said that by offering these smaller, low-interest loans the center will be able to stimulate a portion of the small business market that is currently unserved while helping promising small business people realize their potential. After the express loan funds are fully invested, the center will conduct an assessment of the demonstration to gauge its success and

Center awards grants for flood-damaged areas

The Rural Center has awarded the first round of grants under the Hurricane Recovery Business Area Redevelopment Program, a \$5 million initiative to redevelop commercial property and repair public infrastructure damaged in a series of 2004 storms. The initiative is part of the Hurricane Recovery Act of 2005, a \$247.5 million relief package passed unanimously by state lawmakers in February to help rural homeowners, businesses and local governments in half the counties in the state rebound from flooding and related storm damage.

Rural Center President Billy Ray Hall met with western lawmakers and other officials in Asheville on March 28 to announce planning redevelopment grants of \$20,000 to the hardest-hit western communities of Clyde, Canton, Newland and Asheville's Biltmore Village. On April 26, the center's board of directors awarded planning grants to an additional 13 projects ranging from \$5,000 to \$20,000. The communities have begun the process of assessing the structural condition of damaged buildings and infrastructure, determining restoration needs and evaluating repair costs. Once the plans are submitted in July, each community will be eligible for up to \$700,000 in implementation grants to carry out their projects. Implementation grants will be announced in mid-August. Funding for critical unmet needs will be awarded based on available funds and other factors.

Local governments in 28 of the 51 counties covered under the Hurricane Recovery Act are eligible for funding under the Hurricane Recovery Business Area Redevelopment Program, Hall said. They include: Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Beaufort, Buncombe, Burke, Brunswick, Caldwell, Columbus, Dare, Haywood, Henderson, Hyde, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Moore, New Hanover, Pender, Polk, Rutherford, Stokes, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, and Yancey.

For questions on the center's Hurricane Recovery Business Area Redevelopment Program, contact Bill McNeil at (919) 250-4314.

Hurricane Recovery Business Area Redevelopment Program Planning Grants

County	Grant Recipient	Business Area Served	Amount
Ashe	Town of West Jefferson	West Jefferson Downtown	\$20,000
Avery	Avery County	County Complex in Newland	\$5,000
Avery	Town of Crossnore	Crossnore Business Center	\$5,000
Avery	Town of Newland	Newland Downtown	\$20,000
Buncombe	City of Asheville	East Swannanoa River Area	\$10,000
Buncombe	City of Asheville	French Broad River Area	\$10,000
Buncombe	City of Asheville	Biltmore Village Area	\$20,000
Haywood	Haywood County	Bethel Community	\$5,000
Haywood	Town of Canton	Canton Central Business District	\$20,000
Haywood	Town of Clyde	Town of Clyde	\$20,000
Jackson	Town of Dillsboro	Dillsboro Downtown	\$20,000
Madison	Madison County	County Property in Marshall	\$5,000
Madison	Town of Hot Springs	Hot Springs Downtown	\$10,000
Madison	Town of Marshall	Marshall Downtown	\$20,000
Mitchell	Mitchell County	Town of Bakersville	\$5,000
Mitchell	Town of Spruce Pine	Town of Spruce Pine	\$5,000
Rutherford	Chimney Rock Village	Chimney Rock Village	\$5,000

impact on the small business market, she said.

The center's Microenterprise Loan Program – one of the largest microenterprise loan funds in the nation – offers promising entrepreneurs the capital they need to start or expand their business coupled with sound, practical guidance to help make their ventures a success. Loans ranging from \$1,500 to \$25,000 are made to entrepreneurs who likely would not qualify for traditional bank credit, and preference is given to loans originating in rural and low-income areas as well as to female and minority borrowers.

The program operates under two mod-

els – group lending and individual lending. In a group lending program, a borrower partners with a group of four to 10 small businesses, each of which will receive a loan of \$1,500 to \$8,000. Individual lending programs are available in all 85 rural counties, and are primarily designed for entrepreneurs with more business experience. That program provides loans of up to \$25,000 in addition to comprehensive technical assistance.

For more information on the express loans available through the center's Microenterprise Loan Program, contact program director Carolyn Perry at (919) 250-4314, cperry@ncruralcenter.org

FUNDER'S CORNER

The Rural Center is pleased to welcome Hobbs and Associates, PBS&J, and Time Warner Cable to its Rural Partners Corporate Group, whose members support the work of the center through annual donations. Currently, 32 corporate partners are members of the group. They are listed below:

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 Duke Power • East Carolina Bank
 ElectriCities of North Carolina
 First Citizens Bank • Harvey Enterprises
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 Jordan Lumber • Macon Bank
 McGill Associates • Mechanics and Farmers Bank
 Miller Brewing, Eden N.C. • Murphy Brown LLC
 Murphy Electric Power Board • N.C. Farm Bureau
 N.C. Mutual Life Insurance Company
 N.C.'s Touchstone Energy Cooperatives • PBS&J
 Piedmont Natural Gas • Progress Energy
 RBC Centura • R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Company
 Sanford Holshouser • Sprint • Time Warner Cable
 Verizon • Wachovia Foundation

The center would also like to thank the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation for its generous \$450,000 challenge grant to support operating costs through 2008.

Every gift counts

Become a Rural Partner today!

Your personal donation to the Rural Center helps people in rural communities develop the resources they need for successful economic development. If you aren't sure of how much to give, know that any size gift is welcome and appreciated. Some people like to give a dollar for each of the 85 rural counties in our state.

Please make your check payable to: N.C. Rural Center, 4021 Carya Drive, Raleigh NC 27610.

Thank you!

Companies and businesses also make donations to the Rural Center to foster economic development in rural areas. If your company is interested, or you know of a company that might be interested, please call Shirley Robinson at 919.250.4314 ext 248 or email srobinson@ncruralcenter.org.

The North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center is a private, non-profit corporation whose mission is to improve the quality of life of rural North Carolinians. The center is governed by a 50-member board of directors. Officers are Tom Lambeth, chair; Valeria Lee, 1st vice chair; Bill Veeder, 2nd vice chair; Sandra Gambill, secretary; Edmund Aycock, treasurer; Billy Ray Hall, president. Editorial staff: Elaine Matthews, editor; Michelle Taylor, writer; Steve Gaj, design; Kelly Tucker Griffin, production manager. Inquiries should be directed to: Editor, 4021 Carya Drive, Raleigh, NC 27610: Tel.(919) 250-4314. **RURAL ROUTES** is a quarterly publication with a circulation of 4,500. All rights reserved.

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