

Editor's Note

Jack Geller

Welcome to the autumn issue of the *Rural Minnesota Journal*. With this second issue of *RMJ* come several significant changes that are worth pointing out. Of course, the most noteworthy change is the thematic approach to this second issue. Unlike the inaugural issue, which contained articles on a variety of important rural policy issues, this autumn issue is all about "Educating Rural Minnesota's Children." So in this issue you will read thoughtful, research-based manuscripts on changing K-12 enrollment patterns, early childhood education, school funding, agricultural education and educational disparities. This thematic approach is one that we will incorporate into all future issues of *RMJ*.

So a logical question might be, what's the next journal theme? Rural health care? Rural poverty? Rural economic development? That question brings me to the next change in the journal, that being the establishment of an *RMJ* editorial board. Here at the Center for Rural Policy and Development, our board of directors strongly believes that to establish the *Rural Minnesota Journal* as an enduring component of the rural policy landscape, the creation of a highly respected editorial board is a must. Accordingly, such an editorial board is now being established and will have the task of setting journal policy, deciding upon future thematic topics, and continuing to recruit well-established and thought-provoking authors to write for the journal. Needless to say, we are pretty excited about this change. Look for an announcement on the members of the editorial board soon.

Another new development is the establishment of the *Rural Minnesota Forum*, a regular follow-up feature to the *Rural Minnesota Journal*. Beginning with this autumn issue, we will regularly follow the dissemination of each issue of the journal with an opportunity to come together to thoughtfully discuss and debate the topics and ideas surrounding the issues addressed in the journal. So on

November 15 in Saint Paul we will host the first *Rural Minnesota Forum* to discuss the topic of “Educating Rural Minnesota’s Children.” I have to admit that the idea of disseminating a thematic journal and following it 8 to 10 weeks later with a policy forum on the same topic is a format that appeals to me, as it gives me an opportunity to read the articles and form my own opinions before coming to the forum. I somehow think that such a format will bring people together more prepared to discuss the question, “So what are we going to do about it?” I think of it as an opportunity to have a statewide conversation on issues important to rural Minnesotans and the communities they reside in.

With these enhancements we have taken on the task of elevating the statewide awareness and level of civic engagement around issues important to rural Minnesota’s future. It is a task that we will not take lightly, but at the same time, it feels like a natural extension of what we do at the Center for Rural Policy and Development. So after reading the articles in this autumn issue of *RMJ*, if you are prepared to add your voice to the discussion, make it a point to attend the *Rural Minnesota Forum* on November 15. Registration information can be found on the back pages of the journal, or register online from our website at www.ruralmn.org.

Lastly, since the release of the inaugural issue of *RMJ* we have been inundated with one question more than any other, that being how do I subscribe, or ensure that I continue to get a copy of future issues of the *Rural Minnesota Journal*? Currently there are three ways we disseminate the journal. The first is through our distribution partners, a variety of organizations that agree to distribute the journal to their members. So organizations like the Association of Minnesota Counties, Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, Education Minnesota, Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation and the Minnesota Rural Education Association all take on this task to ensure that the journal gets widely distributed across the state.

Our second distribution method is electronically through our website. Just go to www.ruralmn.org and you can download an article or the entire issue of the journal. It’s free, available 24/7, and as close as your nearest Internet connection.

Our final distribution method is the direct mailing of hard copies of the journal. While we do not charge for the journal itself, we do ask those requesting hardcopies to pay \$3 to cover postage and handling. This is true with one exception: contributing members of the Center for Rural Policy and Development automatically receive hard copies of all the Center’s research reports and newsletters,

including the *Rural Minnesota Journal*. So if you want to ensure that you always receive your individual copy of the journal, consider becoming a contributing member of the Center for Rural Policy and Development. For as little as \$50 per year you will be assured of receiving the journal and a whole lot more! You can find membership information on the back pages of the journal also.

Until next time, I hope you find this issue of the *Rural Minnesota Journal* informative, useful and a little provocative. If you have comments or suggestions on the journal, please feel free to email us at crpd@ruralmn.org. Or better yet, come to the *Rural Minnesota Forum* on November 15 and add your voice. We all have a stake in "Educating Rural Minnesota's Children."

