

RMJ

Rural Minnesota Journal

Taking the Helm:
How rural Minnesota's next
generation sees the future

2011



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Seeking solutions for Greater Minnesota's future

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The Center for Rural Policy and Development, based in St. Peter, Minn., is a private, not-for-profit policy research organization dedicated to benefiting Minnesota by providing its policy makers with an unbiased evaluation of issues from a rural perspective.

Any opinions voiced in the Journal are those solely of the authors and not necessarily of the Center.

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Acknowledgements

The Center for Rural Policy & Development gratefully acknowledges our friends who have made this issue of RMJ possible.



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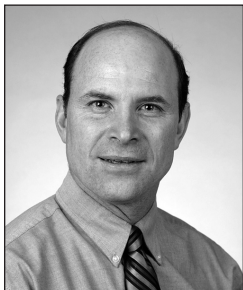
About the Authors



BEN WINCHESTER has been blessed with opportunities to work in and for small towns across the Midwest for the past 15 years, with a focus on his home state of Minnesota. He is currently a Research Fellow for the University of Minnesota Extension, Center for Community Vitality, where he concentrates his research efforts on two topics that are

vital to rural Minnesota: documenting “newcomers” – the influx of 30-49 year old people – to identify the social and economic opportunities of this migration; and analyzing rural community leadership, specifically examining the communitywide requirements to “keep the town running” through the public sector. Overall, he works on cultivating connections between institutions of higher education and rural places by involving university faculty, staff, students, and programs in everyday community life.

Before joining Extension, he worked at the Center for Small Towns at the University of Minnesota, Morris. Ben’s work included building a “consumable” infrastructure of rural data sources to be utilized by local decision makers, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) visualization of data, conducting and reporting surveys, providing research resources to small towns, implementing community development initiatives, and evaluating community-based programming.



ART NASH began his career in the late 1980s as a junior/senior high school social studies teacher. He has since written educational materials and taught various levels of learners (elementary to adult) during the past two decades in rural schools, community settings and overseas. Various professional presentations have been delivered at conferences, trainings, and American Indian/Alaskan Native tribal venues. Art has extensively used Geographic Information Systems and databases for various economic analysis and research projects. Art is currently a steering committee member with the Northwest Minnesota Clean Energy Resource Team and a member of the American Indian Task Force.

TOBY SPANIER is an Associate Extension Professor and Educator at the University of Minnesota Extension's Center for Community Vitality in Marshall, Minnesota. He has spent the last 20 years working to make improvements in communities through educational experiences. Toby began his educational career in the non-profit sector and the Peace Corps. Toby worked internationally as an educational development specialist in Central and South America and in the Maryland and Minnesota public school systems before beginning work with the University of Minnesota Extension. Within Extension, Toby has worked in the Community Youth Development Area and Leadership and Civic Engagement Area of Expertise using his skills and knowledge to build leadership capacity, communication, facilitation and a common vision for organizations, agencies and community groups. He possesses extensive experience in program design, curriculum development, teacher professional development and evaluation. He is a trained administrator in several assessment instruments, including Intercultural Development Inventory and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Toby holds



an M.A. in teaching from Towson State University in Maryland.

LAURISSA STIGEN is the Executive Director of Central Minnesota Area Health Education Center (AHEC), where she enjoys bringing together the worlds of healthcare and education and fulfilling her passion for improving rural places. She is President-Elect of the Minnesota Rural Health Association and has been a Fellow for the Minnesota Area Geriatric Education Center and the National Rural Health Association.



Laurissa graduated from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis where she designed her own degree, Rural Health and Wellness. Upon graduation she, moved to Montana where she learned first-hand the challenges of living and thriving in a frontier community. While in Montana she also completed her master's degree in community health at Montana State University, Bozeman. After spending ten amazing years in Montana, Laurissa returned to her hometown, Fergus Falls, Minnesota, where she is happy to be reliving some of her childhood memories with her two young boys.



PRISCILLA A. DAY, MSW, Ed.D., is a tenured full professor at the Department of Social Work at the University of Minnesota Duluth, where she has taught since 1993. She is the Director for the Center for Regional and Tribal Child Welfare Studies whose mission is “to advance the well-being of children by strengthening families and communities through social work education, research, and outreach in the region.” The Center offers scholarships to MSW students interested in providing social work practice at county and tribal child welfare programs. Dr. Day's areas of research are American Indian family preservation and cultural competence. She

is a curriculum developer and trainer for the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the author of many published scholarly articles, and she has made numerous presentations regionally and nationally on working with American Indian communities. Dr. Day is an Anishinaabe and an enrolled tribal member of the Leech Lake Reservation. She has lived and worked her entire life in northern Minnesota.



BRYAN JOYCE calls Janesville, Minnesota, home. Bryan graduated from Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton High School in 2001 and from Minnesota State University, Mankato, in 2005 with a degree in secondary education with an emphasis social studies. He has taught at Windom Area Schools in Windom, Minnesota, for five years and is currently finishing

a master's degree in educational leadership through the University of Sioux Falls. Bryan and his wife, Amy, live in Windom with their two children, Jackson and Olivia. In addition to teaching, Bryan is an assistant boy's basketball coach and the seventh-grade baseball coach.

NEIL LINSCHIED is an extension educator, specializing in community economics, in the University of Minnesota Extension's Center for Community Vitality. As an extension educator, his work focuses on applying research-based concepts to real-world situations. His primary area of research and teaching interest is in creating tools to assist local economic development groups make more informed decisions. He received a master's in public policy with an emphasis on community and economic development from the University of Minnesota, Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs and a B.A. in political science from the University of Minnesota, Morris. He currently lives in Clarkfield, Minnesota, where he also serves on the Clarkfield City Council.



MICHAEL NOLAN is a serial entrepreneur with a long history of successes, instructive failures and adventures in the broadcast industry, e-commerce, consulting, angel investing, world travel, local community leadership, fundraising, nonprofit management, continuing education, adjunct instruction, SCUBA diving, and parenting three children with his wife, Julene. He has an MBA from the Melbourne Business School, and he is currently the director of the Small Business Development Center, a grant-funded non-profit housed at Minnesota State University, Mankato.



TRACY GAALSWYK has been involved in agriculture her entire life. She grew up on a farm and now farms with her husband, Richard, where they raise mainly corn, along with some soybeans. They also operate a custom silage and trucking business and are contract growers of approximately 1 million laying chickens a year. Before she and her husband were married, Tracy was a hairstylist for 15 years. Her experience owning and managing salons served her well when she took over management of the farm office. Besides managing the operation, she also drives the tractor and the semi-truck, and during their busy season pulls double duty and long hours cooking for all the help.

When she is not busy with her farm duties, she stays busy rounding out her agricultural knowledge with agribusiness classes in Farm Works Software, Apex Mapping and prescription planting. She also stays active in industry-related organizations.

JESSICA BEYER currently serves as public information director for Blue Earth County, Minnesota, where she manages all public relations and marketing initiatives. She also works directly with the board of commissioners and county departments to



execute special projects and bring forward legislative issues. Her previous career experience includes time in the private sector within the publishing industry. Part of her service includes representing Blue Earth County at the national, state, and local levels on several committees and boards. Most recently she was selected as a 2011-2012 Humphrey Policy Fellow.

Jessica holds bachelor's degrees in communications and business administration. She has a master's degree in business with an emphasis in organizational leadership from Minnesota State University, Mankato. Jessica enjoys outdoor activities, traveling and volunteering for several community organizations. She resides in Mankato with her husband and immediate family.

About the Center for Rural Policy & Development

In 1997, a group of rural Minnesota advocates came together around a bold idea: to create a rural policy think tank that would provide policy makers, rural advocates and concerned citizens with an objective, unbiased and politically “unspun” examination of contemporary rural issues.

Funded through a public-private partnership, the Center for Rural Policy and Development today is an independent non-profit research organization dedicated to the objective study of the economic, social and cultural forces that are impacting rural Minnesotans and the communities they reside in. Over the years, our audience has grown to include state legislators, city and county officials, community leaders, business executives, college presidents, school superintendents and everyday citizens concerned about rural Minnesota and its future.

Hopefully, you will agree that RMJ is one of those resources worth having. To that end, we invite you to visit our web site at www.ruralmn.org to learn more about the Center for Rural Policy and Development, our resources and programs, and ways you can support RMJ.