

The Virginia Rural Center Announces the Inaugural Cohort of the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute (VRLI)

Rural Leaders from across VA will take part in the first program that focuses on retaining & attracting rural Virginians to build strong regional communities.



Virginia Rural Leadership Institute
PRESENTED BY THE VIRGINIA RURAL CENTER

VIRGINIA, UNITED STATES, April 27, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- April 27, 2022 (Richmond, VA) The Virginia Rural Center is pleased to announce that 30 individuals have been chosen to make up the Inaugural Cohort of the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute (VRLI). VRLI is a leadership

program that develops and supports highly skilled, highly motivated leaders who are committed to revitalizing their communities across rural Virginia.

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Senator Frank Ruff

“The Virginia Rural Center recognizes the declining population we are seeing across many of our rural areas, and we are excited and optimistic that VRLI, a program we developed, will directly address this pressing issue. VRLI will focus on leadership data and the skills citizens need to lead long-term economic and community development

initiatives in their rural communities.” said Kristie Proctor, Executive Director of the Virginia Rural Center.

This four Session Program, through the course of 2022, will allow the VRLI Cohort Members to learn from Virginia’s top experts on economic and community development as well as thorough review of rural issues, and apply their improved skills by working on Community Impact Projects, and visit five different rural regions across the Commonwealth, including: Southside Virginia, Middle Peninsula/Northern Neck, New River Valley, Shenandoah Valley, and Southwest Virginia. The program also seeks to increase cooperation, collaboration, and coordination across a broad array of rural localities.

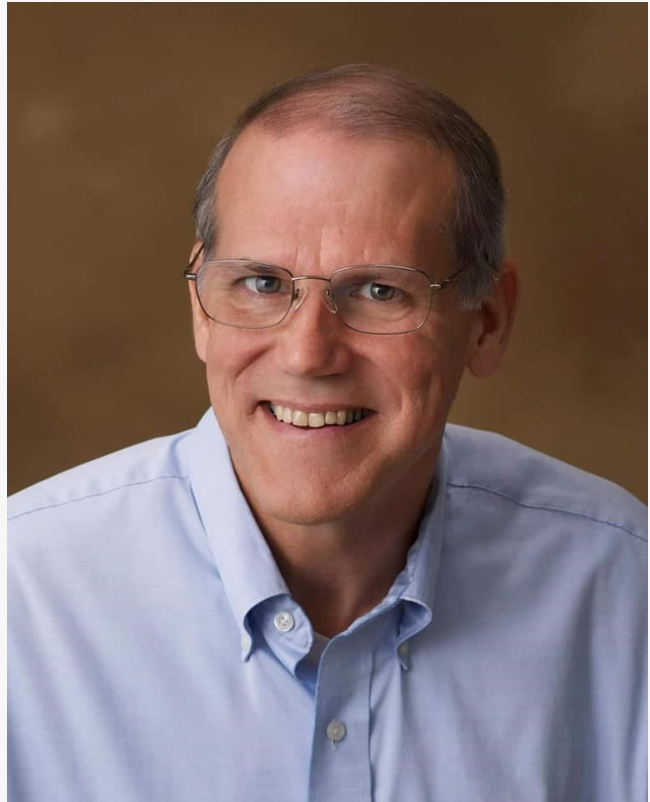
Senator Frank Ruff, a founding member at the Center for Rural Virginia (CFRV) and current Chairman of CFRV, said “We are pleased to develop and launch the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute, and believe this program will build on the success we have created at The Virginia Rural

Center. We are optimistic that VRLI will elevate our rural leaders and work to ensure prosperity across the Commonwealth for many years to come.”

A resident of Clarksville, Senator Ruff represents the state’s 15th Senate District, one of the largest and most rural districts in Virginia. “Rural communities have unique challenges that urban or suburban communities do not face. With each rural community being different, VRLI will help address these unique challenges for each community and build the next generation of rural leaders.”

The Virginia Rural Center’s success with the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute is because of the partners who have worked tirelessly with the Center to bring together the best and brightest for the VRLI Curriculum, supporting and providing funding for the program, and recruiting rural leaders in every region of Virginia. Current sponsors are Appalachian Power Foundation, Appalachian Regional Commission, Dominion Energy Foundation, Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, Liz Povar of RiverLink Group, Microsoft, Mid Atlantic Broadband Corporation, Virginia Community Capital, Virginia Tobacco Revitalization Commission, and Virginia Housing. The Center is continuing to build its list of partners as excitement and interest grow for VRLI.

“The overwhelming interest for this program confirmed the need and desire for leadership training for rural communities across the entire Commonwealth.” said Bryan David, Chair of the Council for Rural Virginia, “We had an



Senator Frank Ruff



Chris Atkins Virginia Rural Center Program Director

extremely competitive selection process this year and look forward to the outcomes from this Cohort.”

The Inaugural Cohort of VRLI consists of 30 individuals from the non-profit, public, and private sectors. These leaders span 21 different rural communities across the Commonwealth with diverse backgrounds, ages, employers, and skill sets that will assist the Cohort to address the issues they face in their communities.

The Inaugural Cohort of VRLI includes:

Richelle Alexander - Lexington, VA
Luke Allison - Pulaski County, VA
Garrett Blaize - Wise County, VA
Neva Bryan - Wise County, VA
Rebekah Castle - Augusta County, VA
James Clements - Prince George County, VA
Stacey English - Hopewell, VA
Jenna French - Shenandoah County, VA
Jessi Fritz - Washington County, VA
Lydia Gilmer - Pulaski County, Va
Shannon Hair - Danville, VA
Debbie Irwin - Augusta County, VA
Michelle Johnson - Charles City County, VA
Lisa Jordan - Mecklenburg County, Va
Zachary King - Rockingham County, VA
Lachanda Lee - Dinwiddie County, VA
Maggie Beal Longest - Hanover County, VA
John Matthews - Wythe County, VA
Joseph Mengedoth - Henrico County, VA
Allison Moore - Pittsylvania County, VA
Hope Mothershead - Richmond County, VA
Julia Pilipenko - Augusta County, VA
French Price - Shenandoah County, VA
Billie Roberts - Tazewell County, VA
Joy Rumley - Washington County, VA
Logan Ryan - Mechanicsville, VA
Joshua Sharitz - Wythe County, VA
Lauren Stuhldreher - Chesterfield County, VA
Wendy Welch - Wythe County, VA
James Werth - Washington County, VA

About the Virginia Rural Center:

The Virginia Rural Center is a collaborative partnership of the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia. These two organizations established a collective services agreement to

work jointly toward the mission of economic prosperity for rural communities throughout Virginia. Together, the Center for Rural Virginia and the Council for Rural Virginia work with federal, state, and local policymakers and regulators as well private sector stakeholders to improve economic opportunities and preserve the quality of life throughout rural Virginia. Learn more about the Virginia Rural Center or the Virginia Rural Leadership Institute online at www.cfrv.org or on Facebook at @VirginiaRuralCenter and Twitter at @VARuralCenter or using the hashtag #GrowRuralVA.

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