

**Scientists & Innovators Captivate Rural Audience**

A capacity crowd of more than 200 was on hand March 10 for the second annual Forum for Rural Innovation in Winchester, Virginia. The day-long event provided current and prospective rural farmers and businesses with a showcase of innovative ideas, projects, and programs to enhance farm profitability, conserve farm land and natural resources, and develop new approaches to rural prosperity in the region.

As with the inaugural Forum for Rural Innovation last year, this year's event was a partnership among the Offices of Agricultural Economic Development and Cooperative Extensions from Loudoun, Fauquier, Clarke, and Frederick Counties, Virginia; Jefferson & Berkeley Counties, West Virginia; the Potomac Headwaters Resource Conservation & Development; and the Virginia Cooperative Extension.

While the nine speakers presenting at the forum each spoke on a different topic, one key theme was demonstrated throughout the day: the region can no longer depend on large-scale commodities farming for a profitable existence, and that diverse, value-added, and niche agricultural products are instead revolutionizing regional farming. A few examples of these innovative products and concepts highlighted by the speakers included:

- ◆ "Functional foods." Dr. Sharron Quisenberry of Virginia Tech explained that a competitive farming edge may be gained by focusing on the country's desire for increased health and creating nutritionally-enhanced foods.
- ◆ High tunnels and plasticulture— "the wave of the future," as shown by Penn State Cooperative Extension's Steve Bogash. This use of protective plastic tunnels and plastic sheeting underlayment for crops results in bringing valuable crops like arugula, eggplant, sweet corn and others to market four to six weeks early, allowing farmers a head start selling top quality products to city dwellers willing to pay top dollar for them.
- ◆ "Food with a face, a place, and a taste." Bernadine Prince of the D.C.-area FRESHFARM Markets cited the doubling in the number of farmers markets in the last decade, and stated that this "delicious revolution" is contributing to the movement for sustainable agriculture. "Customers come [to markets] for the quality, the authenticity, and the contact," explained Prince, "Buying locally and seasonally is not just a culinary decision, it may be one of the most important environment decisions they ever make."
- ◆ Wool-less sheep providing farm-fresh Virginia lamb—Dr. David Redwine of



DED's Lou Nichols explains his use of the Smart Pot system for growing ornamental trees.



Plasticulture used on an onion crop.

**Department's Prospect Activity—March:**

- Responded to 406 general information requests
- Distributed 11 marketing packages, 12 maps and 27 business guides
- Conducted 8 business visits and 2 tours
- Issued 1 Open Door Certificate
- Worked with 9 new and 58 on-going prospects
- Received 67,649 hits on www.loudoun.gov, with 18,759 user sessions

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## Announcements and Expansions

### New & Existing Business



Southwest Airlines makes its Virginia debut this fall. 40 employees will be hired for the Dulles Airport operations.



- ◆ Southwest Airlines ([www.southwest.com](http://www.southwest.com)) announced April 4 that it has requested two gates at Washington Dulles International Airport for service the carrier intends to start in the fall of 2006. The expansion into Loudoun County marks the company's first venture into a Virginia airport.

"The population and business growth in Northern Virginia means a great opportunity is rapidly getting even better," said Southwest CEO Gary Kelly. "As the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area continues to expand, the need to serve our customers in Northern Virginia becomes more urgent. The sheer size and scope of the Washington, D.C. metro area makes Washington Dulles International Airport an exceptional market opportunity."

Southwest expects to announce specific flights and fare informa-

tion in July, but anticipates operating about 10 flights per day on start-up. The airline was just ranked third for overall quality (behind JetBlue and Alaska Airlines) among the nation's 14 largest air carriers in the April 2006 *Airline Quality Ranking* report. The report annually tracks measures of quality and consumer satisfaction such as on-time arrivals, mishandled baggage, involuntary denied boardings, and other customer complaint areas from U.S. Department of Transportation data. In its review, the report also stated that "Southwest Airlines is consistently the airline with the lowest customer complaint rate in the industry."

- ◆ Brainware ([www.brainware.com](http://www.brainware.com)) recently announced the opening of its new U.S. headquarters in Dulles. The company is a provider of data capture, desktop and enterprise search and retrieval, and electronic document management solutions.

### Rural Forum, Continued from page 1



Loudoun-based Endless Summer Harvest produces gourmet varieties of lettuce with a pesticide and herbicide-free water-based system. Their products are sold at farmers markets throughout the D.C. region.

Scott County, Virginia presented his county's success in replacing tobacco production profits with a new product unique in the region – Virgin Island breeds of Katahdin and Dorper "hair sheep." Redwine and his county's Hair Sheep Association have gained a lucrative Food City store contract and are gaining market share over less fresh, imported lamb.

- ◆ Cultivated agritourism experiences — Kate Zurschmeide of Great Country Farms explained how her family-run farm business is thriving now that they have learned to "tell the story of their farm," make memorable farm experiences for customers, and build customer loyalty as a result.
- ◆ Hydroponics — Wallace Reed, Jr. of Loudoun's Endless Summer Harvest, and U.S. Department of Agriculture Research Scientist Dr. Fumioni Takeda both highlighted how greenhouse-protected hydroponic crops can lead to cleaner specialty foods that mature sooner & more predictably with longer shelf lives.
- ◆ Distinctive Trees & Smart Pots—DED's own Lou Nichols demonstrated how his use of above-ground Smart Pots for growing unusual ornamentals can lead to decreased business start-up costs and lower demands for extra hired labor.

In addition to the full slate of speakers, the forum also featured exhibitors from more than a dozen rural-related businesses.

## In the News

- ◆ The Commonwealth of Virginia accepted the Metrorail proposal from the **Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA)** and the two signed a Memorandum of Understanding in late March. The agreement gives MWAA the authority to operate the Dulles Toll Road and to complete the Dulles Corridor Metrorail Project by constructing rail to Dulles Airport and beyond into Loudoun County. More information is online at [www.mwaa.org](http://www.mwaa.org).
- ◆ **Has Loudoun's growth slowed down? Not likely!** A recent Bureau of the Census report showed that Loudoun County's population — at 255,518 — grew at the 8th fastest rate of counties in the nation between 2004 and 2005—down seven spots from its former #1 ranking. However, Loudoun's own growth rate during the time period was 11.4 percent, the largest one-year population increase since the county's boom began in the 1990s.
- ◆ Governor Tim Kaine announced this month that the Commonwealth of Virginia ranked second on the annual **Top Ten Pro-Business States 2006: America's Economy in the 21st Century** report by Pollina Corporate Real Estate, a national site selection firm. The report examines twenty-nine factors relative to states' efforts to be pro-business, including their tax rates, right-to-work legislation, energy costs, infrastructure spending, workers compensation legislation, and jobs lost or gained, as well as information on incentive programs and state economic development departments. The report concluded that "Virginia's overall business-friendly tax environment, location, market access, education, and infrastructure are especially enhanced by one of the strongest and most professional state economic development agencies in the nation."
- ◆ The Washington, D.C. metropolitan area was just ranked the "Best City for Teleworking in America." The research firm *Sperling's Best Places*, the creator of *Money Magazine's* annual "Best Places to Live" report, announced March 30 that of the 80 largest U.S. metro areas, the D.C. region has the most potential to benefit from telecommuting. Factors considered in the study included typical commuting times, fuel prices, availability of broadband Internet access and percentage of the population in telework friendly jobs. Washington, D.C. earned the top spot with high scores in all of these categories. According to the study, the D.C. region has one of the highest percentages of white-collar workers in the study, plus the daily commute is one of the most time-consuming and costly in the U.S. As a result, a single Washington office worker who teleworks just one day each week could see savings of \$488 in transportation costs and \$2,708 in time savings each year.
- ◆ Kevin Olivera, co-owner with wife Connie of Ashburn-based **Olivera Music Entertainment**, received the Capital Award for Entertainment Production from the International Special Events Society D.C. Chapter at its annual Awards Gala March 30. The awards, now in their eleventh year, honor the most distinguished professionals covering all aspects of the special events industry. Olivera Music has booked musical performances for dozens of Loudoun's most prominent businesses, as well as for the Loudoun County Economic Development Commission and for official 2001 & 2005 Presidential Inaugural Events.



"Virginia's aggressive and focused economic development efforts together with our positive business climate have earned this high praise," said Governor Kaine of the Pollina ranking.



Best "Extra Large Metro Areas" for Telecommuting:

1. Washington, D.C.
2. Boston, MA-RH-RI
3. Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA
4. Chicago, IL-IN
5. San Francisco-Oakland, CA



Connie & Kevin Olivera of Olivera Music Entertainment



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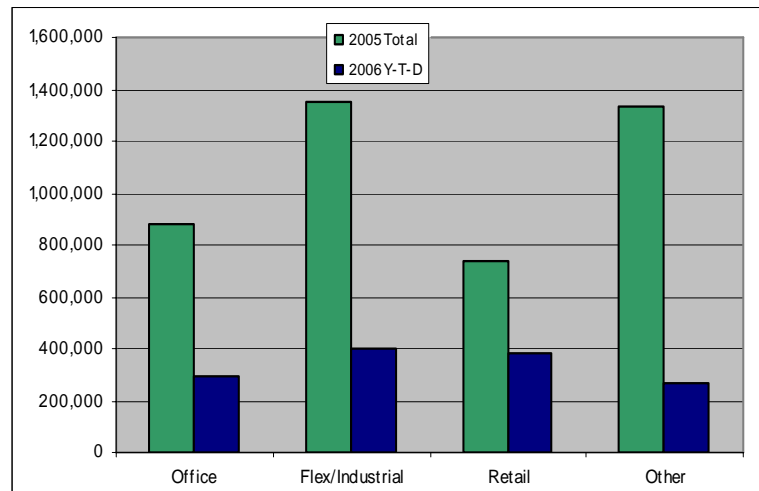
## Department and Commission News

- ◆ DED participated in a county tour for senior George Washington University (GWU) officials from the Washington, D.C. campus March 30. The event included a Loudoun County overview by Larry Rosenstrauch, an education discussion with Loudoun County Public Schools and Northern Virginia Community College officials at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Janelia Farm Research Campus, and a tour of Leesburg and eastern Loudoun from Robyn Bailey. "The entire event was very successful, and gave those GW officials unfamiliar with Loudoun a chance to better understand the county," said Bailey.
- ◆ The Department is currently recruiting for its **Manager of Strategic Initiatives** position. Complete information is available at [www.loudoun.gov/hr/jobs.htm](http://www.loudoun.gov/hr/jobs.htm). This senior level position will serve as the leader in economic development strategy with an emphasis on making things happen, including managing research, developing new initiatives, and handling strategic projects. Key responsibilities include leading the ongoing evolution and implementation of the economic development strategic plan, serving as staff director for the Economic Development Commission, linking economic development policy with the elected Board of Supervisors' vision, and managing communications and media relations to tell Loudoun's story to target markets.

## Construction Activity

In February 2006, Loudoun County permitted a total of 777,973 square feet (SF) of nonresidential construction:

- ◆ Office — 136,559 SF in February and 152,739 SF in January
- ◆ Flex/Industrial — 398,893 SF in February and 0 SF in January
- ◆ Retail — 209,532 SF in February and 170,198 SF in January
- ◆ Other — 32,989 SF in February and 231,844 SF in January
- ◆ Taxable — 744,984 SF in February and 397,261 in January
- ◆ Route 28 — 620,863 SF in February and 64,339 in January



**Nonresidential Construction — Square Feet Permitted  
2005 Total and 2006 Year-to-Date**