

## **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture - Rural Development

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October 10, 2006

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### **BELKNAP COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL RECEIVES \$90,000 USDA GRANT FOR NEW MEDIA CENTER**

Montpelier, VT: The Belknap County Economic Development Council was awarded a \$90,000 Rural Business Enterprise Grant for use at the Granite Media Center in Tilton. Since 2001, USDA Rural Development has invested over \$34.2 million in Belknap County and over \$12.5 million in Tilton alone.

Rural Development funds will be used to purchase specialized equipment for the Granite Media Center, a commercial facility designed to provide tenants access to amenities required for the development and production of various forms of media. When fully completed, the facility will be leased to existing businesses and individuals who provide media services, such as animation studios, cinematographers and screenwriters. The Media Center will have the capacity to accommodate 10-15 tenant businesses and by clustering these specialists under one roof, tenants and their clients will benefit from shared resources and supportive services. The reduced costs of working together with other specialists and shared amenities will provide a setting that creates future opportunities.

“It is no longer necessary for media specialists to live in large media cities like New York or Los Angeles due to a constantly shrinking world with technology like broadband internet and more efficient air travel,” said Jolinda H. LaClair, State Director of USDA Rural Development for Vermont and New Hampshire. “This grant will allow these specialists to find homes more conducive to their families as well as strongly impact the economy of our rural communities.”

These businesses will be able to lease the equipment purchased with USDA funds to improve the quality of their work. The money gained from leasing the equipment will provide funds for new technology and replacements as the equipment ages.

In the future, the Granite Media Center hopes to cooperate with local colleges to be a site for specialty courses in media arts. Professionals located at the facility will work as adjunct faculty and the screening and conference rooms can double as classrooms.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life in Rural America. This is done by providing financial and technical assistance to foster growth and new opportunities for business development, home ownership, and critical community and technology infrastructure. To learn more about USDA Rural Development programs visit the web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/vt>.