

NEWS RELEASE

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BCEDC HONORED FOR ECONOMIC WORK

Since its inception in 1992, the Belknap County Economic Development Council has worked hard at their mission to keep this county economically healthy, and this year they have been recognized and awarded for all their tireless efforts.

Members of the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development met with the staff of the BCEDC to award them with the 2006 Partner of the Year Award.

This award was something that everyone could be proud of. State and local dignitaries made the trek out to see the award presented and offer their congratulations.

Representatives for U.S. Sen. John E. Sununu and U.S. Rep. Paul Hodes were present and offered a few words on behalf of their bosses, congratulating and praising the BCEDC for all their success and hard work.

Gov. John Lynch even issued an official citation to the BCEDC, extending his personal best and sincerest congratulations.

The BCEDC was created after the economic hardships experienced in the late 1980s and early 1990s created the need for a group to create some economic stability in New Hampshire, and that is exactly what the BCEDC has done over the years.

In fact the BCEDC was the first of its kind to be incorporated in this state, and since then there have been 12 other regional groups like it formed all over the state.

All those speaking at the awards ceremony on Friday morning gave considerable credit to the BCEDC's Executive Director Eliza Leadbeater.

Leadbeater was instrumental in attaining the funding for the first Intermediary Relending Program back in 1994, for the sum of \$500,000. Since then the BCEDC has received an additional \$840,000 in federal moneys to serve the same purpose.

"We took that money and leveraged it into millions of dollars," said BCEDC Chairman Greg Dickinson. He went on to explain that these funds have been used to save and create, not only the 500 jobs that can be directly attributed to their work, but thousands more in building a stronger economy for Belknap County.

"This is just one way local groups can take a federal dollar and stretch it into ten," said Executive Councilor Ray Burton.

Steve Epstein, a Belknap County resident and Business Program Specialist for the USDA Rural Development, said that all the hard work by this agency has allowed entrepreneurs and other business to thrive in this area, making it truly a great place to live, work, and do business.

Overall the USDA Rural Development agency has invested \$36 million in various programs all through out the state. All of these programs have been designed to help in the three key areas, housing, business, and community.

"This organization would not be here, and a lot of businesses, without Rural Development. You're the greatest organization out there," said Leadbeater as she thanked the agency for the award.

The Partnership of the Year Award is given to those groups that have truly lead the way for their region.

"The partnership with government and Rural Development makes all the difference for thousands of lives and families in Belknap County," said State Rep. Jane Wood, D-Laconia.

Wood went on to say that have an agency such as the BCEDC, with the leadership of these individuals, is truly a blessing for all residents in the county.

Over the 14-plus years the organization has been in operation, Leadbeater said it has managed to turn the 30 year federal loans given by the federal

government into an Intermediary Relending Program which has lent out over \$6,000,000 to local business and organizations, ranging from as small as \$15,000 to as large as \$1,000,000.

"It's not about one person or program, it's about an entire organization," said Leadbeater as she congratulated her colleagues on the award.