Rural CONNECTIONS

The magazine of the Western Rural Development Center

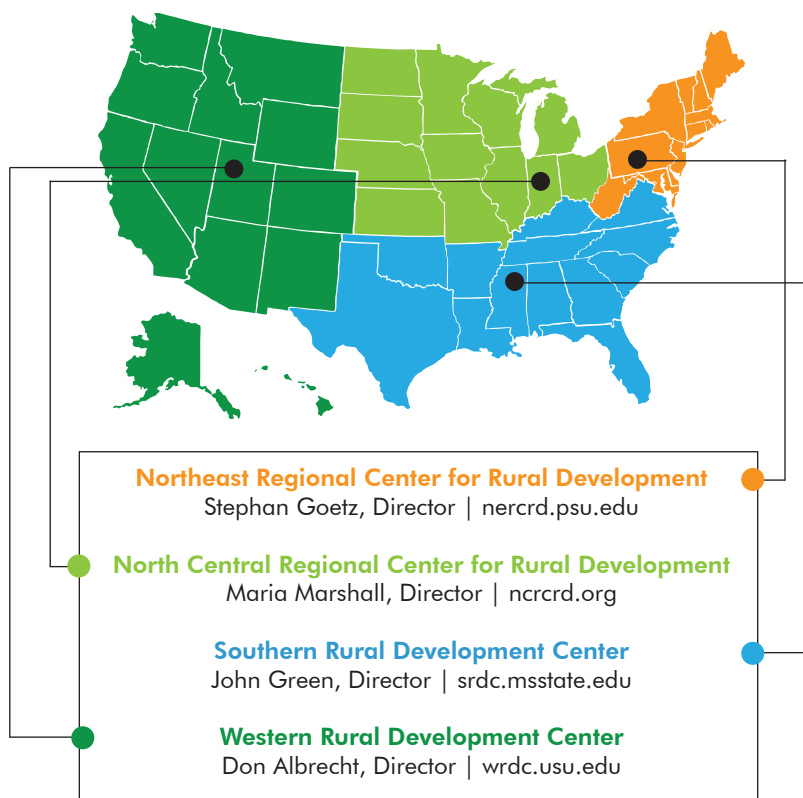### RESEARCH-INFORMED INSPIRATION

COVER STORY

Remote Work

A New Opportunity for Economic Prosperity in Rural America

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"The Western Rural Development Center and our partners seek to provide accurate and timely information to help individuals and communities make informed decisions as they seek to adapt to our rapidly changing world. Each of the articles in this issue of Rural Connections provide extremely helpful information about important changes that have occurred or for which awareness has recently grown. "

Don E. Albrecht, WRDC Executive Director

Introduction

By Don E. Albrecht
Executive Director, Western Rural Development Center

Change is a constant and the one thing that is assured in life. The changes that have impacted rural America in recent decades are profound and include significant economic structure changes and calls for justice by disadvantaged populations. To thrive in a changing world, it is essential that individuals and communities be able to adapt to the inevitable changes around them. The Western Rural Development Center and our partners seek to provide accurate and timely information to help individuals and communities make informed decisions as they seek to adapt to our rapidly changing world. Each of the articles in this issue of Rural Connections provide extremely helpful information about important changes that have occurred or for which awareness has recently grown. The articles also provide ideas about how to address these changes.

Paul Hill from Utah State University Extension describes how recent technological changes have created growing opportunities for people to work remotely. He then describes how remote work benefits both families and society. This is especially true in rural communities as it is increasingly less necessary for people to live near where their employment is located. This means that more and more people are in a position to live where they choose since many may choose to live in a rural community.

Jennifer Rogerson Cook and Bradley J. Cook of Snow College (in Utah) discuss growing awareness of problems related to Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). These problems are especially troubling in rural areas because programs are limited. Recently developed programs and efforts to increase awareness have been advanced to help rural communities provide better services.

Another dramatic change impacting the U.S. is the growth in the number and the proportion of elderly people. Leacey E. Brown and Gene Fennell of South Dakota discuss the housing concerns this change presents to rural communities. A number of studies have found that elderly people do better when they are able to 'age in place.' Unfortunately, many homes in rural communities are not conducive to aging in place. Problems associated with rural housing are complicated because many rural communities lack the capacity to remodel homes to make them more conducive for the elderly. Ways to address these housing concerns are discussed.

Another important change is the increasing number of people who identify as LGBTQ+. Many LGBTQ+ people are struggling with severe mental health problems, and attempted suicide is common. Dani Castillo-Davalos (Oregon), Paul Lachapelle and Deborah Albin (Montana) describe the 2021 *Virtual Rainbows Summit* which provides an opportunity for people to come together and learn.

The Braceros Program operated in the U.S. from 1942 until 1964. These programs consisted of Bracero workers from Mexico coming to the U.S. to work in agriculture. After the work was complete, workers would return to their homes in Mexico. Over the years, thousands of people participated in the program. Policy changes and changes in labor requirements have resulted in significant adjustments in how agriculture labor needs are met. Our nation still struggles with developing a coherent immigration policy and addressing labor issues. An article by Refugio I. Rochin (University of California-Davis), describes the Bracero Program and the consequences for the lives of the persons involved.

All of these articles provide exceptional insights on difficult issues and should be of benefit to colleagues everywhere. I greatly appreciate the exceptional work of Betsy Newman, Rural Connections editor, in bringing this issue of Rural Connections together promoting our efforts to benefit the residents and communities of rural America. ✳

Remote Work

A New Opportunity for Economic Prosperity in Rural America

By Paul Hill

Introduction

Since the industrial revolution, where we live has been determined by where we work. Today, this condition has driven most of our population to reside in urban centers where higher paying jobs have clustered (Demsas, 2022). The traditional office environment emerged around the processing of copious amounts of paper, and "the fact that it remained so dominant for so long may reflect a market failure" (The Economist, 2020). Considering how the nature of work has evolved away from place (i.e., gathering in a central location) and towards task facilitation (i.e., how work gets done), Dingel and Neiman (2020) found that nearly 40% of jobs in the U.S. can be performed entirely at home or anywhere there is an internet connection and access to information and communication technologies.

> **"We are only beginning to see the sweeping societal impacts of remote work, but the geographic influence of the practice has already demonstrated that change is well underway."**

The Diffusion of Remote Work

Despite being introduced in the late 1970s, multiple studies report the adoption of remote work occurring slowly over time, (Bailey & Kurland, 2002; Dutton et al., 1987; Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Hamilton, 2011; Martin, 2012; Mokhtarian, 1991; Useem, 2017). In my own study of remote work adoption, conducted in the U.S. in November 2020, results showed an increase in remote work implementation in response to COVID-19 (Hill, 2021). Most organizational leaders who implemented the practice during this time considered the experience favorable and estimated that some employees would continue to work remotely after COVID-19. However, according to Everitt Rogers' (2003) theory of Diffusion of Innovations, the unanticipated implementation of remote work does not represent true adoption of the practice, but a positive experience with the practice on a trial basis increases the likelihood of adoption in the future.

In a more recent Pew Research Center survey conducted in January 2022, 59% of U.S. workers who reported that their job duties could be performed from home were still working from home all or most of the time (Parker et al., 2022). While this metric is down from 71% at the height of the coronavirus pandemic in October 2020, it is substantially higher than the 23% of U.S. workers who reported working from home frequently before COVID-19 (Parker et al., 2020). Based on the prevailing practice of remote work and high favorability levels in response to COVID-19, it is expected that organizations will continue to progress through the process of remote work adoption until it becomes standard practice (Rogers, 2003).

We are now witnessing the widespread adoption of remote work, attributable to advances in technology and economic shifts to more service and knowledge-based industries, but primarily accelerated by COVID-19 (Hill, 2021; Shreedhar et al., 2022). Prior to the pandemic, the practice of remote work was more uncommon than it should have been. The unexpected rise of remote work was not a one-time event, but the perpetuation of a decades long trend of an increasing segment of the workforce working remotely (Rembert, 2021). The diffusion of remote work as a modern workplace practice is changing the landscape of business operations, but it also has the potential to fundamentally reshape the economies of rural America (Demsas, 2022).

Irregular Migration Trends

While more people are working remotely than ever before, new studies reveal that they are also planning to move (Haslag & Weagley, 2021; Ozimek, 2022). This is because "for the first time, remote work allowed many people across the country to see a life in which the location of their job and where they live did not have to be one and the same" (Ozimek, 2022). We are only beginning to see the sweeping societal impacts of remote work, but the geographic influence of the practice has already demonstrated that change is well underway.

In a 2022 study of over 23,000 people in the U.S., Upwork, a freelance talent marketplace, identified remote work as a primary factor influencing Americans' plans to relocate (Ozimek, 2022). The study estimates between 14 to 23 million Americans are planning to move

as a result of remote work. Of those planning to move, 21% lived in major cities and 53% were seeking more affordable housing. These metrics combined with those already planning to move (regardless of remote work), signals that near-term migration levels could increase three to four times their typical rate.

The widespread adoption of remote work is not expected to be fleeting. Barrero et al. (2021) provided several pieces of evidence and analysis supporting why remote work will endure beyond the pandemic. In particular, their research uncovered how U.S. patent applications for technologies that facilitate remote work more than doubled from January to September 2020. This development is expected to raise the effectiveness and quality of remote work over time, thus reinforcing the shift to remote work as a modern workplace practice. Overall, the pandemic's forced implementation of remote work removed hesitations related to biased expectations, experimentation costs, and coordination within business networks that had previously restrained the practice. With remote work expected to stick, we should expect migration trends to persist.

Positioning Rural America for Economic Prosperity

Migration trends stimulated by remote work have unique implications for rural areas. As rural leaders we must anticipate these trends and appropriately position our communities to respond proactively. To this end, the Center on Rural Innovation provided six practical and creative recommendations for rural leaders to consider when creating economic and workforce development strategies and programs (Rembert, 2021). The following recommendations were based on extensive analysis of trends for rural America:

1. Build the broadband infrastructure of the future, and make sure people know where it is.

2. When attracting remote workers, incorporate housing into your economic development strategy.

3. Create spaces, places, and programs where remote workers can meet and network.

4. When working to increase remote employment for local workers, focus workforce development efforts on skills aligned with remote work professions.

5. When attracting remote workers, target workers that already have connections to your community.

6. Invest in quality of life. (Rembert, 2021, pp. 12-15)

The widespread adoption of remote work is a special occasion for rural areas to (1) leverage their community assets and distinct strengths to attract new residents with remote jobs, and (2) expand the local job market for current residents (Rembert, 2021). After years of stagnant or declining economic growth in rural America, the potential opportunities remote work can bring should excite rural leaders who recognize the chance they have to spur employment levels and cultivate a base of local talent in new ways.

Utah State University Extension's Rural Online Initiative (ROI) provides specialized remote work training to individuals for success in a rapidly changing economy (Rural Online Initiative, 2022). The program allows rural communities to provide on-going education, leverage existing talent and infrastructure, and strengthen county economic bases without requiring residents or new businesses to relocate. The ROI program takes an innovative approach to economic development for rural communities as remote work applies to more than just high-tech industries. It is a unique strategy for reducing unemployment, diversifying economies, and increasing median incomes throughout rural Utah.

> **"After years of stagnant or declining economic growth in rural America, the potential opportunities remote work can bring should excite rural leaders who recognize the chance they have to spur employment levels and cultivate a base of local talent in new ways."**

When embracing remote work as an economic development strategy, like Utah State University Extension has done, it is important to consider the approach that is most suitable for your community's needs. Ultimately, there are many aspects to a remote work strategy because it integrates quality of life, broadband infrastructure, workforce development, placemaking, and housing. In most cases there are two types of remote work strategies, with each requiring a distinct emphasis. One strategy focuses on (1) attracting and retaining remote workers, while the other focuses on (2) increasing demand for remote jobs by expanding employment opportunities for the local workforce. Regardless, the outcome is the same for both: increasing employment in remote jobs.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic prompted the largest remote work experiment in history, while also setting in motion an accelerated rate of adoption for the innovative practice that shows significant signs of enduring. We are no longer limited to where we live by where we work and remote work is now a primary factor influencing Americans' plans to relocate. Given this societal shift, rural areas are well positioned to embrace remote work strategies that leverage their assets and strengths to retain and attract new residents with remote jobs, thus expanding local job markets for residents. Following decades of economic distress in rural America, remote work brings exciting new opportunities that were unimaginable before the pandemic. Rural leaders now have an extraordinary chance to stimulate the economies of their rural communities in ways they never have before.✳

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MAKING REMOTE WORK

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY EXTNESION'S RURAL ONLINE INITIATIVE

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Provide Education - Change attitudes, knowledge, and behavior regarding remote work opportunities.

Job Creation - Reduce local unemployment rates without the expense of recruiting new businesses.

Retain Local Talent - Reduce post high school relocation.

Improve Rural Viability - Fortify rural businesses through online expansion.

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Click here to visit ROI's website.

Intimate Partner Violence and Rural America

*How the Complexities of Rural Communities Impact
Intimate Partner Violence*

By Jennifer Rogerson Cook and Bradley J. Cook

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a devastating and prevalent problem negatively impacting millions of individuals and families in the United States. Lawmakers, educators, and health care providers face unique challenges as they work to implement prevention programs and to provide support for survivors and families of victims. While there is no doubt urban communities face similar challenges while dealing with IVP, rural communities have additional complexities and obstacles.

"In comparison to urban communities, rural communities are unique in social structure and resource availability, heightening the vulnerability of victims and contributing to the increase in incidents and severity of IPV."

In the United States, 19.3% of the population live in an area classified as rural. These communities often have few options for higher education and employment. Residents of rural communities also often have limited medical care and usually need to travel long distances for specialized or hospital care. Social services such as mental health services, unemployment offices, homeless or domestic violence crisis centers and shelters are scarce. Individuals in rural contexts can often feel very physically and emotionally isolated. Each of these challenges found in rural places can contribute to an increased risk and severity of Intimate Partner Violence.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention defines Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) as "physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse." The CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey found that 25% of women and 10% of men have experienced sexual or physical violence and/ or stalking by an intimate partner. In addition, over 43 million women and 38 million men have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner (CDC, 2021).

The consequences of IPV can be devastating wherever it is found. One in five homicide victims in the United States are killed by an intimate partner. For female homicide victims, the statistics are even more alarming as over half of female murders are committed by a current or former intimate partner. Of those who survive IPV, 35% of females and 11% of males reported having experienced serious physical injury inflicted by their abuser (CDC,

2021). All survivors are at heightened risk for various chronic physical health and mental health conditions such as depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

In comparison to urban communities, rural communities are unique in social structure and resource availability, heightening the vulnerability of victims and contributing to the increase in incidents and severity of IPV. Rural communities have higher rates of unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, and family problems but have fewer resources to address these issues, all of which are identifiable risk factors for IPV.

Rural communities are at a further disadvantage since in times of economic prosperity, the positive effects felt in urban communities do not always reach those in rural regions. While all U.S. communities saw an increase in job creation in 2018, rural counties added jobs at less than half the rate of urban counties. During 2018-19, Americans saw 0.6% growth in rural counties compared with 1.4% growth in urban counties. Rural poverty rates dropped from 18.45 in 2013 to 16.1% in 2018, but are still well above the urban rate of 12.6% (Cromartie et al., 2020).

Rural residents also tend to be older on average than urban populations. More than 23% of rural adults have underlying health conditions compared to 3% of individuals living in urban regions. This may be attributed to the greater distance to medical facilities that provide advanced care and the fact that 20.2% of adults living in rural areas do not have health insurance compared to 10.5% of urban residents who are uninsured (Cromartie et al., 2020). Rural

individuals may also wait longer to seek health care due to the lack of convenient medical facilities and the higher out-of-pocket costs resulting in health conditions becoming more serious due to lack of treatment.

The deterioration of physical and mental health occurs at higher rates due to higher poverty and limited access to quality, affordable medical care. There is a general resignation and/or lack of knowledge for many rural residents when it comes to health and human services. A culture of independence and "toughness" or a "survivalist" mentality is not uncommon.

As a result of this cycle of stagnation with community members remaining in their own "echo chambers," it is difficult for rural communities to keep up with the needs of their members which are growing increasingly more complicated. Many community leaders who propose new ideas or implement more progressive practices within rural communities are met with strong opposition and resistance to change. Being the minority, these leaders often become frustrated and give up.

This culture, supported by individuals who are often highly conservative and male dominant, continues to persevere. As a result, it is difficult to appropriately and sufficiently address the growing problem of IPV in rural America which tends to be a sensitive and controversial subject in this context. Amnesty International (2005) describes this complicated issue by explaining that in rural communities "women experience 'double jeopardy' as they are over-represented in the private sphere as victims and under-represented in the public sphere as decision-makers. They are more likely injured and less likely to receive justice, compared to other victims."

The Utah Statewide Domestic Violence Needs Assessment 2016-2017, lists several challenges to providing support to victims in rural communities including "small town stigma," which means that "incidents of domestic violence often become public. Additionally, perpetrators may have personal relationships with law enforcement officials in these rural communities, complicating survivors' mindsets toward seeking assistance from law enforcement and affecting the response of law enforcement (Gezinski, 2017). Law enforcement is often viewed as out of reach, supportive of the abusers, or may, in fact, be the abusers themselves.

K. Edwards (2015) observes that "IPV perpetrators in rural locales, compared with those in urban locales, may perpetrate more chronic and severe IPV, which could be due to the higher rates of substance abuse and unemployment documented among rural perpetrators." We know that the combination of food and housing insecurity, mental and physical health challenges, substance abuse, chronic stress, male dominant culture, and small town stigma are all interrelated and create the perfect storm for IPV to develop and persist. Each risk factor contributes to and in some cases exacerbates the others and the vicious cycle continues. When we consider the lack of IPV education and prevention in rural communities in combination with the lack of appropriate emergency response, community support, and treatment resources, it becomes clear why IPV is so prevalent in rural communities.

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We have identified many consistent risk factors that contribute to higher levels of IPV and all of these factors must be considered as we look toward solutions. Addressing these issues only in part will not sufficiently solve the devastating problem of IPV in rural communities.

We might begin by increasing access to mental health services for those living in rural areas while taking into consideration the "unique barriers to receiving behavioral health services like a lack of privacy and the desire to avoid being the subject of local gossip or feeling ostracized for seeking behavioral health services locally" (Roach-Moore, 2020).

Telehealth services could be a good start in helping to provide confidential, expert care to those in need of mental health services while protecting the client's privacy.

Increasing poverty rates in rural communities must also be addressed since we know there is an association between socioeconomic status and rates of IPV. This is a complicated issue and may require a multi-agency, long term approach. In the short term however, local strategies that address food and housing insecurity in rural communities can help to bring relief to heads of household. In turn, substance abuse and domestic violence incidents within chronically stressed families may decrease.

Education with a focus on prevention could provide solutions to many of the problems that contribute to IPV in rural communities. An awareness and understanding of the devastating consequences of IPV leads to a drop in incidents, greater support for community education and support services. If the goal is a significant overall cultural shift, it will only come with persistent education and awareness. The damaging effects of gender inequality must be brought to light. Education and prevention programs are critical while at the same time increasing support for survivors and families of victims.

In conclusion, the issue of IPV in rural communities is a complicated one. Solving the problems that directly or indirectly increase risk factors for IPV by addressing the most basic needs of rural communities including food, housing, and mental and physical health care is critical. Increasing services for those who are most vulnerable including those dealing with substance abuse or domestic violence is an immediate need. And lastly, we must increase awareness of the causes and consequences of Intimate Partner Violence by implementing education and prevention programs so that communities can create a cultural shift toward equity and safety for all rural individuals. ✳

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Are Adaptable Homes the Innovation Needed in Your Community?

Adaptable Home Certification

By Leacey E. Brown and Gene Fennell

As a result of health advancements and changing fertility patterns, communities across the globe are increasingly inhabited by older adults (U.S. Census, 2021). By 2030, one in five Americans will be age 65 or older (U.S. Census, 2021). This is a remarkable first in human history. In the past, most community residents were younger (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002). As a result, communities were built for the needs of younger people (child care, employment, business opportunities, etc.). Now is the time to re-imagine how communities might be built with the needs of aging and older adults in mind.

A reality that all adults must face is that decline and disability are part of human life. For example, 40% of people age 65 and older reported trouble with mobility (Administration on Aging, 2021). Even if you live your whole life healthy, without accident or significant disability, you will likely develop major, life-altering limitations prior to death (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). Adults also have risk factors associated with developing chronic disease and disability in older age. For example, recent research suggests increasing trends in obesity rates among adults (Liu et al., 2021). Obesity is associated with chronic disease and disability. One example is peripheral vascular disease which may

"Now is the time to re-imagine how communities might be built with the needs of aging and older adults in mind."

lead to loss of limbs (Parvizi, 2010). Therefore, community leaders who are not planning for mobility limitations among community members are making a significant oversight that may impact the economic security of their community.

Aging in place is a highly reported preference (AARP, 2018). By 2030, all baby boomers will be age 65 or older (U.S. Census, 2021). The unfortunate news is that many baby boomers will not be able to successfully age in place. The National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services (2018) found that, "rural older adults living in the United States face unique and persistent challenges—such as transportation, fragmented delivery and financing of care, and social isolation—which affect their ability to receive necessary supportive services and caregiving." In addition, social economic status plays an important role in an older adult's ability to age in place. The median income for older persons in 2019 was $27,398 (Administration on Aging, 2021). Older adults with more financial resources are more able to renovate their home to account for mobility limitations they may develop, while those with less resources are often stuck with the design of their current home.

While these barriers to aging in place are significant, particularly for rural audiences, home design may become a critical issue. Rural communities face unique challenges constructing new housing (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2021a). How will rural communities find the resources to modify existing units? Research indicates most of the existing homes are not appropriate for occupants with mobility limitations (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard, 2016;

2019). For example, many homes have narrow hallways and doors, as well as small bathrooms that are inappropriate for anyone with mobility limitations. These glaring deficiencies remain undetected. With good reason, affordable housing is an alarming issue across the country (National Low Income Housing Coalition, 2021b). Unfortunately, many advocates seem to overlook that older adults and people with disabilities are sometimes in the greatest need for affordable housing and these individuals are also likely to have mobility limitations. People without disabilities have higher median earnings than people with disabilities (Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics, 2020).

Beyond the preference of older adults to remain in their homes, there is also the issue of who pays for long-term services and supports (LTSS; i.e., help older adults and people with disabilities need with routine task such meal preparation or running errands; may also include medical services). Medicaid accounted for 42.9% of total spending ($426.1 Billion) on LTSS in 2019 (Colello, 2021). Two-thirds (69.5%) of LTSS spending comes from public sources, including Medicaid, Medicare, and other public payers (Colello, 2021). Efforts are being made to offer those services in home and community-based settings, such as a home or adult day center. Home and Community-Based Waivers allow state Medicaid programs to meet the needs of people who prefer to receive LTSS in the home, rather than institutional settings (Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services, n.d.). The transition to home and community settings is critical given the cost of LTSS options. Genworth (2022) estimates the national average cost of a private room in a nursing facility is $9,034 per month in 2021. In contrast, in home

services (Homemaker and Home Health) entail hourly costs that can be customized to the need of the beneficiary (Genworth, 2021). For example, the 2021 national median average of 40 hours of in-home care is $4,500 (Homemaker) to $4,680 (Home Care). These services may be difficult to provide in existing homes.

Elements of homes that interfere with aging in place and long-term services and support are narrow halls and doors, entrance steps, small bathrooms, and the lack of an entry level bedroom (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard, 2016; 2019). Not only do these features interfere with aging in place and provision of long-term services and support, these features hinder emergency medical services who may be called to assist adults in need. It is also important to understand some professional care providers may not work with clients who have a bathroom they deem insufficiently sized to provide personal cares (bathing, toileting, etc.) because of staff injury risk.
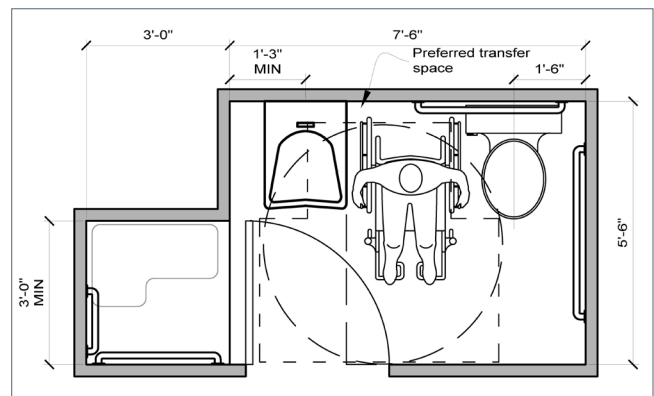
What is needed is a simple way to communicate the essential elements that need to be included in a home to make it appropriate for someone with mobility limitations. The Adaptable Home Certification was developed by South Dakota State University Extension and Fennell Design Inc. (https://extension.sdstate.edu/adaptable-home-certification-overview) to meet this need. This certification focuses on four physical features to include in the construction or renovation of a home.

These features include wide halls and doors, a no-step or adaptable entrance, a bathroom that has transfer and approach space for wheelchair users, and a bedroom on the same level as the no-step entrance (Brown & Fennell, 2021). The certification materials include a rack card and five web pages that provide expanded details about each of the four elements and how they might be implemented. These materials are designed to be a communication tool between consumers and building professionals. For

example, a consumer could use the materials to communicate with a designer/drafter about including the four elements in plans for their home or an entrepreneur could use the materials to communicate with their customers about how to age in place.

Objections to adaptable homes are profound. Cost is top of the list. For example, adaptable homes call for additional blocking/backer lumber in key areas of the bathroom (commode, shower, etc.) to allow for the installation of grab bars at a later time. A second objection is related to whom community leaders hope to attract to a community. Many are focused on developing areas of the community that attract and retain employers and employees. Some leaders may be opposed to becoming a 'retirement' destination. A third objection revolves around concerns about appearance. No one wants residential settings to look like institutions. Adaptability is mostly about increasing space in key areas (e.g., bathroom). Adaptability does not call for the installation of lowered counters or any other accessibility modification.

A common misconception is that a home needs to be one-level to support aging in place which may lead to objections because of the large space required for one-level units. However, that is a misperception. Adaptable homes can be multi-story. The key is having essential

Adaptable bathroom with accessible shower - preferred

elements (bedroom and bathroom) accessible through the no-step or adaptable entrance. The final objection is related to the emphasis on affordable housing. Affordable home advocates insist the affordable housing need outweighs the adaptable housing need. Therefore, the cost of adaptable homes cannot be justified. Adaptable homes are about upstream prevention. Most adults who need to renovate their home because of mobility limitations simply cannot afford the expense. For example, 46% of older persons with income received less than $25,000 in 2019 (Administration on Aging, 2021). How can a home be affordable if occupants are expected to implement costly and significant renovations to live there after developing mobility limitations?

Overcoming objections to adaptable homes will take a multi-pronged approach. First, a public awareness campaign could be used to reach owner-builders and others involved in the real-estate construction industry. Second, building professionals and real-estate professionals could be incentivized to attend educational opportunities to learn about adaptable homes and how they might advocate for adaptability with their clients. Third, coalitions can be established to connect stakeholders interested in housing for older adults and people with disabilities. Finally, government organizations might identify strategies to encourage the development of adaptable homes in their communities. For example, a city council might explore how Tax Increment Financing (public financing method that allows companies to use their taxes to help finance the project) might be used as a tool to encourage developers to construct adaptable units.

The limitations of adaptable home certification must be highlighted. Adaptable homes account for the unusual trajectory of decline and disability that occurs in life and prior to death. People who acquire disabilities that require specialized lifts or other equipment may need additional elements in their home (e.g., structural supports in the ceiling). The second limitation is that

adaptable homes require home modifications for occupations with disabilities. Examples of these home modifications include installation of grab bars or renovating the bathroom to replace the tub and vanity with accessible options. The goal of adaptability is to make those renovations more affordable by eliminating the need for structural renovations. Despite these limitations, adaptable homes may be the innovation needed to keep rural communities strong.

No longer can we rely on 20th century solutions to home design. We must implement innovations that account for mobility limitations that occur during the human lifespan. Sometimes mobility limitations are the result of an accident, chronic disease, aging or end-of-life. Mobility limitations may be permanent, temporary, or life-ending. In all cases, environmental interventions are the key to reducing the magnitude of mobility limitations on the individual, their family, and their community, as well as facilitating in-home care by paid professionals or help by emergency medical service providers. The adaptable home certification series is a tool to help simplify the discussion about critical changes that need to occur in home construction. Please visit the South Dakota State University Extension website at https://extension.sdstate.edu/adaptable-home-certification-overview to access the full series. Small quantities of the rack cards are available at no cost. ✳

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The Virtual Rainbow Summit Supports LGBTQ+ Young People Nationwide

By Dani Castillo-Dávalos, Paul Lachapelle, and Deborah Albin

In the 45 seconds you took to scan the table of contents of this publication and turn to this article, at least one LGBTQ+ young person attempted suicide. In fact, in the United States more than 1.8 million young people ages 13-24 who identify as LGBTQ+ seriously consider suicide each year. (The Trevor Project, 2021.) These statistics are just a small sample of the results of years of research that reveal the risk factors for suicide by this group: rejection of friends and family, lack of affirming support and spaces, discrimination, and physical harm.

In early 2020, a small group of concerned educators at Montana State University, in collaboration with the Western Rural Development Center, came together to see if they could mitigate those factors just a bit by offering LGBTQ+ young people the opportunity to network and learn – and have a whole lot of fun with their peers, allies, and knowledgeable and caring adults. But, like every other plan at the time, the arrival of Covid-19 blew it to dust. Or, more accurately, blew it up, because the originally envisioned one-day, face-to-face event for young people in Montana, became a three-day, virtual event with hundreds of participants and dozens of presenters from throughout the United States.

> **"While the opportunities to learn and network were the reasons to attend the daily sessions, the crown jewel of the Virtual Rainbow Summit was the Youth Leadership in Action Awards."**

Then in 2021, and still under a pandemic pall, the same formula was used, resulting in another three-day event that reached many more participants throughout the country and featured presenters of every age and expertise.

While the opportunities to learn and network were the reasons to attend the daily sessions, the crown jewel of the Virtual Rainbow Summit was the Youth Leadership in Action Awards. Born of the need to spend sponsorship funds in 2020 that were not used for food, travel, and the other logistics of an in-person event, the Awards became a way to impact communities far and wide.

The Youth Leadership in Action Awards application was open to all individuals or organizations that were either youth-led or serve youth and wanted to use the funds to increase LGBTQ+ inclusivity in their community, school, or family and friend groups. They were such a hit in 2020 that funds were raised in 2021 to continue these community-based leadership efforts. In two years, $16,400.00 was awarded to 30 individuals and organizations for their grass-roots LGBTQ+ education and advocacy efforts.

Some notable proposals and outcomes from the 2020 and 2021 Awards are presented here in the recipients own words, and you can see all the awardees at www.virtualrainbowsummit.org/leadership-awards.

Washington State 4-H Teen Equity and Inclusion Task Force
"We would like to facilitate and support an inclusive 4-H youth organization. Using compassion and empathy, our teen task force strives to create an open and safe environment to celebrate and embrace our diversity. We hope to work towards our goals through curating and presenting workshops to leaders in our state…provide training for our youth task force members…create materials and provide information to distribute around Washington state regarding best practices and how to support participation for diverse youth."

Arizona 4-H Healthy Living Ambassadors – Youth Action Project
"Our Youth Action Teams has been working on ways to tackle student mental health issues in our community, specifically amongst LGBTQ+ students. We are aiming to hold workshops with 4-H volunteers, 4-H staff, teachers, parents, and anyone who would like to learn more about best practices for inclusivity when working with youth, specifically, those in the LGBTQ+ community."

Sidney LGBTQ Youth (Montana)
"Sidney LGBTQ Youth is a student organization started by a few wonderful and brave high schoolers who recognized the need for a safe space for LGBTQ young people growing up in rural Montana. Over the past year, young adult leaders from the community have built up this program to not only be a safe space for LGBTQ youth to exist, but also aims to improve the mental and physical health of young LGBTQ people. In an area with a high youth suicide rate, limited mental health services, and few mental health resources for LGBTQ youth specifically, this is a much-needed service."

Mercy Health Project (Michigan)
"The Muskegon County Homeless Continuum of Care Network (MCHCCN) has developed a task force to address the homeless youth crisis we

face in our community. This program requires an active Youth Action Board, comprised of youths aged eighteen to twenty-four who are at risk or have current or previous lived homeless experience. There is a growing concern with the LGBTQ+ community and youth homelessness. The network would like to increase the access to homeless services for the youth LGBTQ+ population and give them a voice as well as leadership opportunities."

Box Elder School Two-Spirit Youth Club (Montana)

"We would like to increase awareness around issues faced by LGBTQIA+ in our schools, families, and community. We would like to invite local tribal schools to participate in events such as hikes, pow-wows, gatherings, and eventually begin working toward locating families in our community that would be open to housing our transgender and LBGTQ+ youth who need a safe place to stay either from family, abusive relationships, or homelessness."

Monmouth City Has Pride (Oregon)

"Even for a small town, Monmouth has managed to accomplish so much by making its support of LGBTQ+ people known. A city-wide leadership committee has since developed to help plan significant events such as the Monmouth Pride Picnic and the Aids Awareness event that happened October 2021. With the help of two city counselors and a supportive cast of businesses, the small college town of Monmouth will work towards becoming a haven for inclusion and belonging for generations of university students to come."

Now, more than ever, it is important to offer resources, support, and fellowship to LGBTQ+ young people. As of this writing, there are 113 bills moving through 35 state legislatures that will halt or greatly reduce educators' ability to talk about LGBTQ+ issues (Pen America, 2022.) and, already in 2022 in the United States, 18 LGBTQ+-themed books have been banned or are facing bans. (Masters, J., 2022.) With yet another social institution – joining government, religion, and athletics – failing to offer affirmation and representation, projects like the Virtual Rainbow Summit and its participants, presenters, and sponsors, must step forward to fill these ever-expanding voids.

So, our work goes on. In 2022, we will continue this work with a national focus involving the

PHOTO: 2021 awardee, Monmouth City has Pride, displays 200 pride flags and a large cross-street banner purchased for the city's first ever "Pride Month" and Pride event.

Like previous years, the event will remain a no-cost conference aimed at reaching youth, families, and professionals with a variety of presenters from around the country and from all walks of life.

4-H Program Leaders Working Group (PLWG) Access, Equity, and Belonging Committee and the 4-H Champions Group: LGBTQ+ Youth and Community. We plan to offer another multi-day, virtual event focusing on the various social intersections of LGBTQ+ individuals. With plans to address topics like the roles of visible and invisible disabilities, racial bias, ethnic background, age, lifestyle, and socioeconomic status, the Virtual Rainbow Summit will provide collaborative approaches to spread knowledge and awareness to all populations.

Like previous years, the event will remain a no-cost conference aimed at reaching youth, families, and professionals with a variety of presenters from around the country and from all walks of life. And what began as a necessity and a nuisance – a virtual summit delivered via video conferencing software – is now the desired way to reach the largest possible audience extending past the Rockies, into the Plains, and out to the coasts.

Keep checking the official website – www. virtualrainbowsummit.org/ – for more information as planning progresses. We can't wait to see you in 2022! ✳

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PHOTO: A board member of 2020 awardee, Gender Equality Montana, dedicates eight rainbow crosswalks in downtown Bozeman.

Bracero Workers and Programs

An Important Aspect of America's Agricultural History
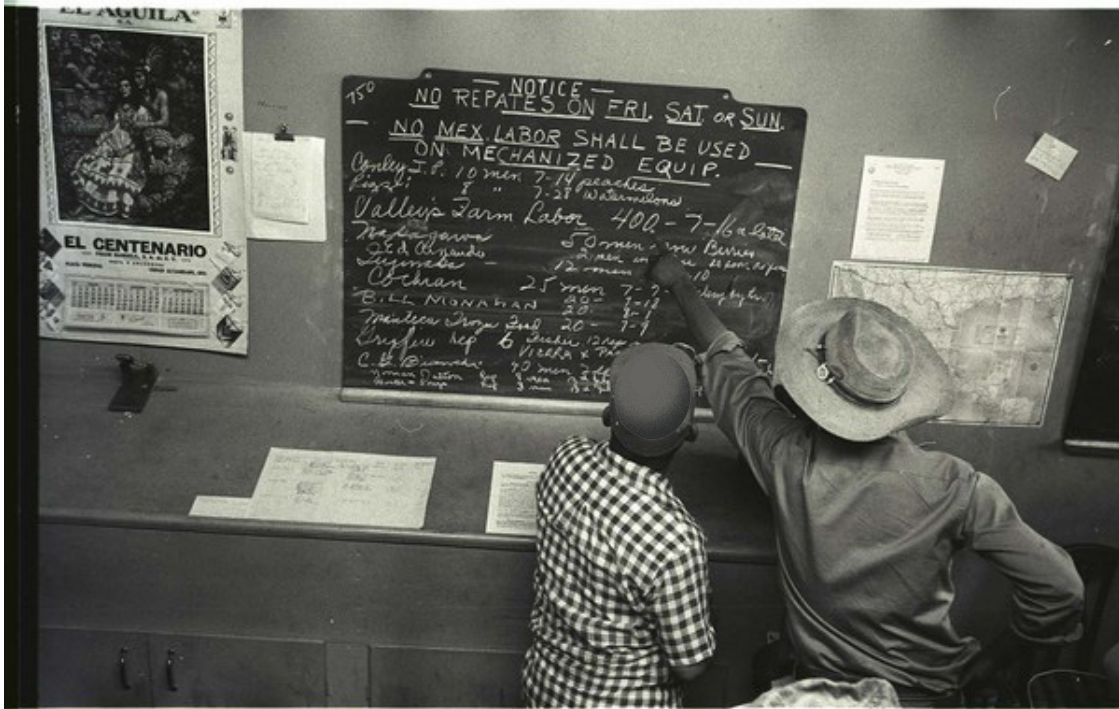
By Refugio I. Rochin

PHOTO: Two braceros have a look at a notice board in an office in Stockton, California, which shows how many braceros were needed from which growers association. The notice board reads, "No Mex labor shall be used on mechanized equip." This rule, however, was very loosely enforced and braceros often found themselves doing a variety of tasks not provided for in their contracts. L. Nadel. 1956. Accessed: Bracero History Archive, https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/1965.

My father Refugio Rochin was born in 1908 and immigrated to California from Mexico in 1924. My mother Juanita Rodriguez was born in 1913 in Colton California. They married in 1929. I am a proud native of San Diego, California, born in 1941.

When I was 16 years old, I worked with my father who was under contract to provide food and related provisions to bracero labor camps in San Diego County. It had been a program established between the United States and Mexico that began during WWII. Bracero workers from Mexico were a significant part of American agriculture from 1942 to the end of 1964.

Today "braceros" enrolled and employed until 1964 would be upwards of 80 years old. It is very likely that "braceros" are deceased or very old. My interest in this topic is personal. My memories and relationships with braceros have been a formative part of my life. My role was to deliver supplies of food and provisions for labor camps within the largely rural landscape of San Diego County.

> **"The Bracero Programs between the United States and Mexico are important in our history. But also important in our understanding about the development of American agriculture, farm-labor relations, rural communities, and cross-cultural events all over the United States."**

I occasionally find references to families of braceros. Some in Facebook among family posts. Most described as grandparents or first generations of family within the United States. And recently the Bonita Museum and Cultural Center developed an exhibition with attention to bracero workers, entitled: "Nuestra Frontera: 250 Years of Spanish Speaking Families at the Border," referring to the border region of Baja California and San Diego.

The Bracero Programs between the United States and Mexico are important in our history. But also important in our understanding about the development of American agriculture, farm-labor relations, rural communities, and cross-cultural events all over the United States.

Back in the forties, fifties, and sixties, San Diego County enjoyed a population of family farms producing avocados, citrus [Valencia oranges and lemons], flowers [poinsettias], pole tomatoes, fruits, and vegetables for export and local markets. Some cattle and chicken/egg farms were labor intensive, especially the dairy and poultry farms. Growers and family farmers were producing during times of war, expanding urban areas, and for demand increasing from grocers like Piggly Wiggly, Safeway, and community MOM AND POP stores. Today that landscape is populated with shopping malls, suburban housing, tourist attractions [Legoland] and freeways. Yet, within these communities are agricultural farms and associations of growers that developed facilities for Bracero workers in San Diego county, such as housing and barracks with cafeterias. Braceros worked seasonally to harvest and process vegetables, avocados, oranges and lemons.

My father was both a grocer and a wholesaler of produce from Mexico. He had business relationships with farmers and other grocers who bought his produce from Mexico, acquired in the growing community of Tijuana, Mexico. He was one of the first contractors in San Diego County who worked successfully for Sunkist growers, serving Mexican food with fresh tortillas, lots of beans and rice, and meat.

The camps served by my father often had workers from other camps seeking "sanctuary" at the Sunkist camps. He developed his wholesale business called C&R Provisions in Oceanside. He learned from personal experience as an immigrant farmworker himself (beginning at 15 years of age) the importance of home cooking and service.

When I joined my father, I was included with five others who worked with C&R Provisions. I was the junior who was anxious to drive with my new driver's license. Clearly a relief for the regular deliverers.

The camps I went to were built of wood and appeared to be modeled like U.S. military barracks. There were barracks for 25 to 300 workers each. Relatively large camps were in Fallbrook, Vista, and Escondido California. The workers (all men) slept in bunkbeds, closely lined with boxes for personal items. Workers used open showers and did their laundry - much like soldiers of their day.

The kitchens and cafeterias of these camps were headed by a chief cook with crews of assistants for food preparation, cleaning, and washing food trays. Workers ate together in "mess-halls." They used metal trays for food and regular glasses for drinks. The quality of food varied by camp, cooks, and staples provided by the companies. Camps that specialized in "Mexican food" kept their worker's content. Camps that did not serve Mexican food experienced some protests and worker flight.

I learned and valued American agriculture, the systems of production, and the relationships over decades with family farmers so called Immigrant Workers or Braceros from Mexico. I also learned to recognize the symbiosis and relationships between my family heritage from Mexico and the populations of persons from diverse areas and communities.

"The Bracero"
The word BRACERO is a Spanish term meaning "manual laborer" or "one who works using his arms." The term has a long history and the records of data and references are available online.

There is the perception of one program for braceros that began in 1942 and ended in 1964. However, there were three phases of programs and policies governing the interests, rights, and responsibilities between American farmers and Mexican workers.

The first phase, the World War II period, lasted from 1942-1947. It began when a tight labor market led to an agreement with Mexico to important workers to work in U.S. agriculture. It was implemented under the authority of the Immigration Act of 1917. Phase one was also called The Emergency Labor Supply Program. Under the agreement with Mexico, the U.S. Government paid for recruiting and transporting Mexican farmworkers to U.S. farms. From 1945 to 1950, an average of 65,000 foreign agricultural workers entered the U.S. annually.

About 85% were from Mexico. Most of these workers worked primarily in cotton, sugar beets, fruits, and vegetables.

The second phase of the Bracero Program lasted from 1948-1950. It was again authorized under the Immigration Act of 1917. Under phase two, U.S. agricultural employers, not the U.S. Government, were the contractors and paid the transportation and recruiting expenses of the Mexican workers.

The third phase was from 1950 to 1964 under new legislation, Public Law 78 (PL78). It greatly expanded the numbers from Mexico during the Korean War from 1950-1953, and contributed to a greater immigration without documentation. The expanded flow of workers from Mexico resulted in an agreement between the U.S. and Mexico with these provisions:

- Under the third phase, U.S. employers could hire Mexicans only if no domestic workers were available to fill the jobs, AND employment of the Mexicans would not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of U.S. workers.
- U.S. farm employers had to make reasonable efforts to recruit domestic workers at the same wages and working conditions offered to the Mexicans.
- U.S. farm employers were required to pay foreign workers prevailing wages for domestic workers in employment and guarantee work for a specialized portion of the workers' contract period.
- For workers recruited under Public Law 78, U.S. employers paid for the transportation of workers from Mexico to U.S. reception centers and then to the centers' places of work.

During the third phase [from 1950-1964] the foreign workers grew from about 204,000 in 1951 to 460,000 in 1956 [its peak] and ended with about 200,000 workers on average to 1964.

> "I learned and valued American agriculture, the systems of production, and the relationships over decades with family farmers so called Immigrant Workers or Braceros from Mexico. I also learned to recognize the symbiosis and relationships between my family heritage from Mexico and the populations of persons from diverse areas and communities."

During Phase 3, tighter procedures were authorized via USDA County and State offices for certifying and verifying need, wages, and working conditions. USDA reports indicated a decrease in PL78 workers, reflecting a change in demand by U.S. employers and farm mechanization [especially in cotton].

When the Bracero Program ended in 1964, the Immigration Act of 1917 was used to initiate the H-2 Temporary Foreign Worker Program. This Act became the major legislative procedure for admitting foreign workers.

Unlike the three phases described herein, the H-2 program was a permanent part of the U.S. Immigration law under the Immigration Act of 1917. The H-2 program had provisions for contracts and payments that were like The Bracero Programs [especially under Phase 3], but legal authorizations were for 18,000 foreign workers annually from 1965 to 1990, compared to a peak of 242,000 from 1945 to 1964.

Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986
Recognizing the complexity for H-2 worker authorization, a modification of immigration law was created by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. It established the H-2A Program and required shorter periods in the certification process. Reforms from the H-2 to H-2A programs allowed farms to hire hundreds of thousands from Mexico, developed farming systems, and contract relationships for hiring and employing [without U.S. certification] Mexican workers.

The 1986 Act attempted to reduce the flow of illegal aliens into this country by imposing strict hiring requirements on U.S. employers. Employers who knowingly hired illegal aliens faced fines of $250-$10,000 for each unauthorized alien employed and possible imprisonment of up to six months. However, the law does provide a way for illegal aliens who have been living in the United States continuously since January 1, 1982, to become legal residents and U.S. citizens.

In addition to revising the H-2 Program into the H-2A Program, the law created the Special Agricultural Worker (SAW) Program. The SAW provision of the law exempted agricultural workers.

Legacy for Rural Communities
The Bracero Program officially ended Dec. 31, 1964. However, many braceros were hired and worked on farms without the contract that assured them fixed salaries, healthy conditions, room, and board. Many worked and paid Social Security in the U.S. And many worked until the end of their lives here in the U.S. while several supported families and homes in Mexico.

Undocumented foreign workers left their native countries to work in the United States because of more jobs and higher wages. More workers without documents worked in agriculture than in any other employment sector in this country. Lack of education, work experience, and language fluency did not hinder foreign workers as much in agriculture as in many other types of jobs.

The impact and importance of Bracero workers has thousands of stories. Millions of families from Braceros have settled into rural communities, developed businesses and operations vital to the populations of many states. Their labor was crucial to many fruit and vegetable farms producing commodities that required hand harvesting or labor-intensive cultivation.

Less well documented are the families and contributions of bracero descendants. Time capsules are rare. An exceptional article, published in a magazine of the Smithsonian Museum of American History, described an event used to open an exhibition of the photographic images of Leonard Nadel, who spent several years photographing bracero communities throughout the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico. The author of the article, Mireya Loza, was hopeful of finding images with her uncle. She did not. But she wrote this about others in the audience:

Some of the men's voices would crack or their eyes would well up with tears as they pointed at the photographs and said things like, "I worked like that." Because the meetings were large, I imagined the possibility that some of the braceros depicted in the images might be in the audience. I wanted someone in the audience to stand up and say, "That's me." It never happened but it came close.

For the meeting in El Paso, several of Nadel's images were enlarged and placed around the room. The faces of the braceros in the photographs were almost life size. As families came in, they viewed the enlargements, and some even touched the images. It was there that an older gentleman pulled me aside and told me, "That is my brother, Santos, in that picture." He explained with sadness that his brother had passed away and he had no images of his brother. He asked for a copy of the photograph. My heart sank at the news his brother was no longer alive. But I was encouraged that at least I finally had a name to one of the men I had so often looked at. Santos was no longer another face in a sea of anonymous braceros. ✳

PHOTO: Braceros have lunch in the Monterey Processing Center dining hall, Mexico. L. Nadel. 1956. Accessed: Bracero History Archive, https://braceroarchive.org/items/show/1336.

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Braceros
Author Recommended Resources

References on Bracero workers and US Farm Labor Programs
This website has titles and links to 6,204 full-text reports.
Excellent resource for study:
https://www.hathitrust.org/help_digital_library#SearchTips

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**Putting names with the faces of braceros by Mireya Loza, a fellow at the National
Museum of American History**
Posted in Food History, From the Collections NMAH, October 28, 2009
https://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/2009/10/putting-names-with-faces-of-braceros.html

"Bittersweet Harvest: The Bracero Program, 1942–1964"
In October 2009, the Smithsonian National Museum of American History opened
this bilingual exhibition.
https://americanhistory.si.edu/bracero/introduction

Bracero History Archive
This is a project of the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, George
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Funding provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities.
http://braceroarchive.org/about

Regional Rural Development Center Listening Sessions Initiative

Rural Community, Economic, and Workforce Development
Identifying Needs and Opportunities in Rural Recovery

In the wake of multiple chronic challenges exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, rural communities and small towns across the United States are beginning to build back from the associated impacts on their economies, workforces, and communities. These recovery efforts pose critical questions of where and how to invest. To identify where stakeholders engaged in rural development see the greatest need, and the greatest opportunity, the Regional Rural Development Centers have embarked on a process to collect feedback through a year-long initiative. This feedback will be shared with with USDA NIFA and other federal partners as stakeholder feedback.

Phase 1: Assessing Stakeholder Priorities for Rural Development
The first step in this process was a survey through which key rural development implementers and other stakeholders could provide baseline feedback. Use the tools below to explore findings from this assessment, including a 48-page report, a series of infographics, and an interactive data tool.

Phase 2: National and Regional Listening Sessions to Identify Long-Range Strategies
In March - April 2022, the RRDCs hosted a series of facilitated listening sessions with invited stakeholders aimed at diving deeper into survey findings and identifying long-range strategies on key priorities. Each of the four RRDCs hosted one regionally focused listening session and one of national scope focused on a specific topic area. The topics for the four national discussions were Broadband and the Digital Divide, Community Planning and Engagement, Innovation and Entrepreneurship, and Workforce Development.

Phase 3: Analysis and Final Report
Now that all eight listening sessions have been conducted, the RRDCs are analyzing the data collected from stakeholder input and preparing a final report for publication in the late summer or early autumn of 2022. Once it is externally reviewed and finalized, it will be made available to our stakeholders and federal partners.

To review the data collected from the Phase One stakeholder survey and the associated infographics (as previewed below), and to stay up to date, visit the RRDC Listening Session web page at https://www.usu.edu/rrdc/listening-sessions. ✳
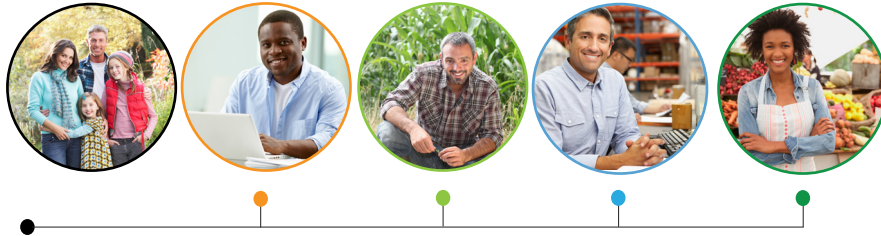

RRDC Infographic of takeholder input on Priority Ranks.

RRDC Infographic of takeholder input on Capacity Ranks.

REGIONAL RURAL DEVELOPMENT CENTERS

Advancing the Vibrancy of Rural America

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Stephan Goetz, Director | nercrd.psu.edu

North Central Regional Center for Rural Development
Maria Marshall, Director | ncrcrd.org

Southern Rural Development Center
John Green, Director | srdc.msstate.edu

Western Rural Development Center
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Regional Rural Development Centers

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