Casey’s Rural Story

Meet RuFES …
Why Take the Rural Road?
Margins to Mainstream: A Peer Exchange Workshop — October 24-25, 2003 — Baltimore, MD
Sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and co-organized by Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth (CCFY) and Rural Development Philanthropy Learning Network (RDPLN) — The Aspen Institute
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Vice President Gore won in 676 counties and Texas Gov. George W. Bush in 2,436 counties, according to preliminary results.

Note: County election data was not reported for Alaska. Counties in blue, indicating a vote for Gore, include Indian reservations in Montana, New Mexico and South Dakota.

Source: The Associated Press, ESRI Inc., USA TODAY analysis by Paul Overberg.
US Population
(2000 Census)

Central City
30%

Metro
50%

(Outside Central City)

Nonmetro
20%
The Journey

- From the wrong question to the right question
- From a whole range of possibilities to a focus on family economic success
- From having only urban models and resources in the suitcase to a bulging bag of rural ones.
Why Focus on Rural Family Economic Success?
Persistent Poverty

Nonmetro persistent poverty counties, 1990*

*Counties with 20 percent or more of persons in poverty in each of the years 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990.
Source: Economic Research Service, USDA.

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Rural Poverty is Working Poverty

Share of rural wage and salary workers earning low wages by sex and race/ethnicity, 2002

Women and minorities are more likely to be low-wage workers than are White men

“Red Belt” of Working Poverty

EITC Recipients as a Percentage of Total Returns, TY2001
Family Poverty

Rural families of all kinds are poorer than urban families; more than 1/3 female-headed families is poor.
Our Point of View

- Too many efforts to address “persistent poverty” have failed because the strategies have been unfocused, misdirected and unequal to the challenges.
  - A rising tide doesn’t lift all boats
  - Some people need a boat
  - Sometimes there is no tide
Working poverty is widespread but under attended to because its consequences for family success and community viability are underappreciated and because practical solutions have been unavailable.

- A rising tide doesn’t lift all boats
- Some boats are leaky
What Works?

- A set of strategies pursued simultaneously with families at the center, including those that help families:
  
  - Earn It – opportunities to earn, capacity to earn
  
  - Keep It – increasing financial stability, reducing expenses, increasing assets
  
  - Grow It – community investments and amenities that encourage, enable and reward families and businesses who locate and invest there
Public and Policy Relevance

- “Making work pay” is a frame that elicits broad public support

- The Tax Code is the single most important investment currently being made in low income working families (and in middle and upper income families)

- Private sector policy matters
Thank you.