

New Director of Community Engagement Creates Connections for Rural Alberta

Rural Albertans and others involved in rural development will have a new person to turn to for information and assistance in connecting with potential post-secondary partners. Judy Ferguson joined the Alberta Rural Development Network (ARDN) as its first Director of Community and Member Engagement on August 23, 2010.

The position was created to strengthen the connections among ARDN's post-secondary members, and the rural communities and organizations they serve. ARDN collects and shares research and information related to rural development in Alberta, and facilitates networking and collaboration through conferences, events and funding programs.

"Having a person dedicated to community and member engagement heightens our exposure in rural Alberta," says ARDN's interim chair, Rick Neidig. "Ferguson will help individuals and organizations make connections with each other. This presence in rural communities will give people a better understanding of ARDN and more access to the opportunities that we offer." Neidig is also the President and CEO of Northern Lakes College.

Ferguson will strengthen ARDN's connections with rural stakeholders by:

- Building stronger relationships with ARDN's post-secondary members
- Identifying and recruiting potential new members to participate in ARDN initiatives
- Connecting with rural Alberta's communities and local organizations
- Communicating the benefits of participating in the Network
- Answering inquiries from people who want to connect with ARDN and other organizations working to strengthen rural Alberta's way of life.

Much of Ferguson's career has been spent in leadership positions helping small not-for-profit organizations grow and become more effective through the development of stakeholder relations and communications strategies. She was program director for Rural Alberta's Development Fund for just over three years, where she oversaw the development, implementation and administration of the funding program and led a task force to facilitate the decision making process and provide clear expectations to rural Albertans seeking funding for their innovative, capacity building projects.

"We are extremely fortunate to have Judy Ferguson on our team," says Benard. "She has wonderful and extensive connections to rural Alberta and community organizations, and she already understands and supports ARDN's mission to support rural development through educational partnerships. We couldn't have found a better person for this role."

ARDN is a partnership of Alberta's 21 publicly-funded, publicly-governed post-secondary institutions. The Network supports and enhances rural development through research, education, networking and collaboration. ARDN is funded in part by Rural Alberta's Development Fund whose funding is provided by the Government of Alberta. To learn more, visit www.ardn.ca or call toll-free 1-877-987-1006.

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Contact:

Dee Ann Benard, Executive Director
Alberta Rural Development Network
780-449-1006 ext 223
exec.dir@ardn.ca