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Tony Pipa brings “reimagining rural” message to Rural Maryland Summit on November 20th

ANNAPOLIS, MD – All too often, when rural communities are brought up in conversation, it is in the context of politics and voting, land use, and the plight of the family farmer. While these are all valid themes that play out every day in rural communities throughout Maryland and the United States, rural communities are also often places of resilience, economic development, and innovation.

So, what makes rural communities so resilient and innovative despite their many challenges? “Innovation is fueled by challenges,” says Charlotte Davis, Executive Director of the Rural Maryland Council (RMC). “Our farmers and other rural stakeholders typically have fewer resources than their suburban and urban counterparts and are sometimes at odds with public policy. They simply have to find different ways to tackle challenges to survive,” she adds.

Building stronger rural communities is at the heart of the upcoming biennial Rural Summit on Thursday, November 20th hosted by the RMC. The Summit, titled “Elevating Maryland through Stronger Rural Communities”, will take place from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. at the DoubleTree Hilton Hotel, 210 Holiday Court, Annapolis. Registration is \$75 per attendee. Meals are included. To register, visit rural.maryland.gov or contact RMC at (410) 841-5772 or rmc.mda@maryland.gov.

“This year’s Summit focuses on the singular premise that when we create stronger rural communities, we elevate Maryland as a whole,” says RMC Chair Susan O’Neill. “Our keynote speaker understands why rural matters and has been working to change the narrative around rural America from politics to policy,” she says.

Kicking off the Summit will be Tony Pipa, a senior fellow in the Center for Sustainable Development at the Brookings Institution. Pipa launched and leads the “Reimagining Rural Policy initiative”, an effort to modernize and transform U.S. rural policy. He also hosts the “Reimagine Rural” podcast, which shares stories of rural towns across America that are experiencing positive change.

“Rural America is full of innovation, creativity, and renewal,” says Pipa. “I look forward to the Summit and engaging with local rural leaders in Maryland; to elevate the work they are doing to enable their places – and Maryland as a whole – to thrive in the 21st century,” he adds.

In addition to the keynote address, the Summit will include guest speakers: Secretary Kevin Atticks, Maryland Department of Agriculture; Secretary Meena Seshamani, Maryland Department of Health; Secretary Josh Kurtz, Maryland Department of Natural Resources; a preview of the upcoming legislative sessions from Maryland legislators; and breakout sessions on Agriculture, Community Development, Economic Development, and Health Care.

Summit attendees may also participate in complimentary pre-event activities on Wednesday, November 19th. They are:

- Health-Focused Bus Tour from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. – This optional activity showcases innovative approaches to improving health and wellness in rural communities. Participants will visit Choptank Community Health System’s new Federalsburg Health Center, For All Seasons in Easton, and the University of Maryland’s new Easton Hospital building site. The bus departs and returns to DoubleTree Hilton Hotel.
- Annual Dinner & Rural Impact Awards from 6 to 8 p.m. - Highlights of the meeting and dinner include the election of Rural Maryland Council board members, a recap of RMC’s activities for 2025 and upcoming events for 2026, and the presentation of the 2025 Maryland Rural Impact Awards.

At press time, Summit sponsors include Maryland State Office of Rural Health, University of Maryland Extension, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development, MARBIDCO, Benedictine, Maryland Broadband Cooperative, Harford County Government, University of Maryland Eastern Shore Extension, Farm Credit, Maryland Rural Water Association, Woodvalley Community Services, Energy Select LLC, River & Roads Consulting, Beacon at Salisbury University, Tri-County Council for Western Maryland, Delmarva Chicken Association, Upper Shore Regional Council, Tri-County Council for Southern Maryland, Mid-Shore Regional Council, SMADC, ESRGC, Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology, Tri-County Council for the Lower Eastern Shore, Kent County Economic and Tourism Development, Maryland Department of Commerce, Maryland General Assembly, Beach to Bay Heritage Area, Maryland Agriculture Education Foundation, Aging at Home Solution, Comcast Business, Western Maryland Regional Library, Maryland State Library for the Blind and Print Disabled, AHEC West, Garrett County Health Department, Easton Utilities, Rural Health Information Hub, and Maryland Department of Agriculture.

Founded in 1994, the Rural Maryland Council operates under the direction of a 40-member executive board in a nonpartisan, nondiscriminatory manner. RMC is committed to creating real change by going directly to the rural stakeholders who understand their community’s challenges. The organization provides grants and opportunities to connect stakeholders with legislators and like-minded people in the state who can shape policy and drive real impact. To connect with the Rural Maryland Council at facebook.com/RuralMaryland or on Twitter @RuralMaryland.

PHOTO CAPTION (Headshot – Tony Pipa)

Tony Pipa

PHOTO CAPTION (Tony Pipa podcast photo)

Tony Pipa leads a discussion on the “Reimagine Rural” podcast.

Note: All photos were supplied to the Rural Maryland Council. We give consent for photos to be reprinted for publication purposes.