

Council studies Vermont's priorities

DAWSON RASPUZZI

Posted: 07/16/2009 10:57:44 PM EDT

After two years spent interviewing Vermonters young and old, blue collar and white, the Council on the Future of Vermont shared its findings on the hopes, aspirations and visions for the state as voiced by nearly 4,000 people who know it best.

Founded as a two-year initiative in September 2007 by the Vermont Council on Rural Development to "examine the big picture trends, evaluate the opportunities and challenges ahead, and consider common Vermont priorities," the Council on the Future of Vermont is now touring the state sharing its conclusions.

Through the interviewing process, the Council held public forums in each county, visited schools, churches, jails and businesses and conducted surveys online and over the phone to connect with 3,900 Vermonters all over the state.

The group had just one qualification for its sources -- of living within the Green Mountain State. "We wanted to speak with people who don't normally have a voice," said Sarah Waring, who presented the Council's findings at an open forum held at Southern Vermont College Tuesday.

A brief summary of what Vermonters value includes community, environment, hard work, independence, privacy, being small scale and the state as a whole.

The study also outlines what people voiced as challenges and concerns -- including topics related to culture, population, environment, the working

landscape, land use and development, economy, education, human services, infrastructure and energy.

No matter the region, the study concluded, "Vermonters are the same around the state, with the same concerns and values," Waring said.

Distinctive because of its small size, the study shows Vermonters have a deep connection with their state and believe its important to protect its identity while at the same time creating more employment opportunities.

The people of the state also don't want separations in class.

"We don't want low income and wealthy ... we want us all to be able to continue to rub elbows," Waring said. "We need to rededicate ourselves to this."

People around the state expressed concerns about the threats to agriculture, including the rising costs of doing business and lack of a younger generation of farmers.

In the economy, Vermonters fear the increasing costs of living, the challenges of doing business in the state and workforce development.

"If we are not looking to support and sponsor small businesses today they will vanish," Waring said.

And although Vermont is rated the healthiest state, the costs and availability of health care are also major concerns, Waring said.

The problems Vermonters face, Waring said, must be faced by the state as a whole, and now that the information is available it is time for people to make changes.

Advertisement




Florida Tech
 UNIVERSITY ONLINE

Bring the Classroom to Your Home
 With a Degree Online From Florida Tech

 **APPLY TODAY!**
 FloridaTechOnline.com/FD | 1-888-253-5946

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™

"The Council feels today is the time to build a vision of what we want ... and then act on it," Waring said.

For a complete copy of the Council's study or to get involved, visit www.futureofvermont.org.

Contact Dawson Raspuzzi at draspuzzi@benningtonbanner.com

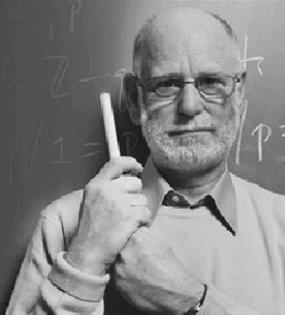
Advertisement



Florida Tech
UNIVERSITY ONLINE

**Bring the Classroom to Your Home
With a Degree Online From Florida Tech**

 **APPLY TODAY!**
FloridaTechOnline.com/FD | 1-888-253-5946



Print Powered By  **FormatDynamics™**