With the conclusion of the Section 8 MSHDA Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program, WUPPDR is sad to say goodbye to two staff members. Program director Courtney Archambeau resigned in November to accept a position at Michigan Technological University. Courtney started part-time with WUPPDR in 2007 and became full-time staff in 2008. She will be missed for her dedication, hard-work ethic and outgoing personality. WUPPDR wishes her the best in her new position at Michigan Tech.

Part-time HCV program staff member MaryEllen Hytinen resigned in October of this year to accept a position elsewhere. Although MaryEllen was with us for just under a year, she became a familiar face at the WUPPDR office and quickly displayed her talent and motivation. WUPPDR wishes her good luck!

Staff Goodbyes...

MSHDA Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program

Administration of the MSHDA Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) Program in Baraga, Gogebic, Houghton, Keweenaw and Ontonagon has come to an end at WUPPDR. The HCV Program provides assistance in the form of a rental subsidy from MSHDA for people to locate their own housing in private homes and apartment buildings. As of 2012, WUPPDR was assisting approximately 340 tenants in our service area with one full time and one part time employee dedicated to the HCV Program. WUPPDR applied for but was not selected to continue the administration of the program into 2013 for an expanded MSHDA-delineated eight-county service area. As of December 1, 2012 the new provider is Dickinson Housing Assistance LLC, 900 E. Breen Avenue, Kingsford, MI 49802, 906-774-4325.

Season’s Greetings

We feel privileged to work with you towards our Region’s goals and achievements. We wish you a happy, safe and peaceful holiday season.

We look forward to serving the Region in the New Year!

The WUPPDR Staff

U.P. Link: Do Business Smarter with High-Definition Video

Shrinking budgets. Calendar bursting with meetings near and far. Spinning wheels, wasting time. Sound familiar?

Upper Peninsula businesses and organizations are growing, even under increasing financial constraints – with customers, vendors and associates across the globe. Is there a solution to the high costs and reduced efficiency of business travel? Yes! U.P. Link High-Definition (HD) Video Conferencing Network.

U.P. Link HD is a proposed high-definition video conferencing network that will span the entire Upper Peninsula and part of Wisconsin. The project was initiated with state and federal funding by WUPPDR. The results of a comprehensive feasibility study demonstrated that sixty-nine percent (69%) of survey participants would rather utilize a nearby video conferencing center than travel to an out-of-town meeting. When complete, U.P. Link will offer users, including individuals and groups from public and private sectors, eighteen easily accessible HD video conference locations. Users will reserve the conference centers with an online reservation system. Conferences scheduled using this system will provide revenue to sustain equipment replacement every five years. Data collected will track cost savings associated with the program.

When physical face-to-face contact is not absolutely necessary, U.P. Link HD is a virtual option for businesses and government organizations determined to cut costs. Cutting travel costs by one-third to one-half allows precious financial resources to be used in more critical areas. Estimates for the U.P. Link system show that HD video conferencing saves an average of $905,000 per year in travel costs and 1.4 million pounds per year of carbon footprint! In addition, HD video conferencing increases employee safety and improves risk management by facilitating business communications even in hazardous weather.

Find us on the web at www.wuppdr.org and on Facebook Follow us on Twitter
WUPPDR’s 44th Annual Meeting: Jenich Honored

The Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region (WUPPDR) held their 44th Annual Meeting in Baraga County at the American Legion Post 444 on September 17, 2012.

Mike Koskinen, Baraga County Board Chairman, welcomed approximately 45 attendees to Baraga County. WUPPDR Associate Planner Lori Haushwirth introduced attending political representatives and guests, including Amy Berglund (Senator Levin), Dr. Kirk Hauswirth presented the agency’s Year in Review.

Ed Jenich of Houghton County, Houghton County Commissioner Paul Lehto honored Jenich for his decades of exemplary service to the Western Region serving on numerous boards in multiple capacities, including: Houghton County Board of Commissioners since 1999, Nutrition Director for BHK Community Action, WUPPDR Commission from 1999-2010, Chairman of Main Street Calumet, and Vice Chairman on the Aspirus Keweenaw Hospital Board.

Following the Chiantello Award, WUPPDR staff also recognized Administrative Assistant Mary Taddeucci for her 40 years of dedicated service to the organization.

Chip Chiantello Award Recipient

Ed Jenich, recipient of the 2012 Oreste “Chip” Chiantello Public Service Award, is a lifelong resident of the Calumet-Laurium area. He first ran for public office in 1972 and served on the Laurium Village council for 17 years. In 1999, he ran for and was elected to the unexpired term for the Laurium Village council. In 1999, he served on the WUPPDR Commission from 1999 thru 2010 and was Chairman in 2007-2008. He also served as Chairman of Main Street Calumet and the Commission of Aging, Secretary for the Western U.P. Health Board, and a board member for UPCAP. Jenich currently serves as Vice Chairman of the Aspirus Keweenaw Hospital Board, an advisory board member of the Keweenaw National Historical Park, and several other committees, fraternal and social organizations. Congratulations and thank you for your service Mr. Jenich!

Transportation Resources Website Launched

Information about transportation in the Western U.P. was difficult to come by until recently, when WUPPDR’s Get Around the Western U.P. website (getaroundwup.org) was launched. The website’s primary goal is to increase accessibility to information about how to use public and private transit in the Region. Consolidating information, such as fares, routes, and days and hours of service, will eliminate the need for riders to contact each transit provider separately. It will also familiarize website visitors with providers they were not even aware existed.

Information about opportunities other than transit is also available. Using a ride-matching application, website visitors can set up carpools with others who have similar commutes and habits. Tips about etiquette and how to carpool are available. Printable maps of routes and resources for non-motorized transportation, including walking, jogging, and bicycling are also available.

The website, along with a widely distributed brochure listing transit provider information, will be regularly updated. Through this effort, residents of the Western U.P. can broaden their horizons, make more efficient trips, and maybe even take a few cars off the road.

Progress Made on Baraga County Strategic Plan

In August, Baraga County was awarded U.S. Economic Development Administration funding to develop a strategic plan for economic turnaround. The project is branded as “Go! Baraga County.” The effort was publicly kicked off on October 25 with a public forum held at L’Anse Junior/Senior High School.

At the forum, enthusiastic community members were presented with a one-year project timeline. The project was to begin with research, the major component of which would be a public survey launched that day.

The survey received 835 responses. Research has now moved into a second phase: focus groups geared toward different functional areas and occupations, such as education, health-care, and government, as well as some for the general public. The next part of the project will be a research summary, followed by strategy development.

Community volunteers have played an important role thus far, with particular generous assistance and guidance from a group of leaders termed the “Java Group” (for its morning meetings). This involvement reflects a high level of community ownership, which will eventually aid in implementation of the plan.

Baraga County is becoming increasingly motivated to make real change in its economy, and the Go! Baraga County plan will translate that motivation into results.

WUPPDR Commission Meeting Schedule

December 17 2012 Full Commission
January 21 2013 Full Commission
February 18 2013 Executive Committee
March 18 2013 Full Commission
May 20 2013 Executive Committee
June 17 2013 Full Commission
August 19 2013 Executive Committee
September 16 2013 Full Commission (Annual Meeting)
October 21 2013 Executive Committee
December 16 2013 Full Commission