

Members In Action

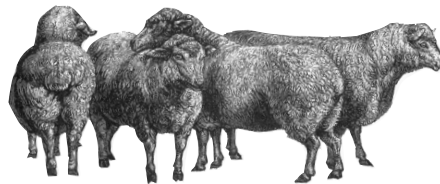
(cont. from previous page) produced on their farmland. The credit could only be applied after all other credits available to the taxpayer for the taxable year are applied. This became law in 2007.

He also introduced a second piece of legislation aimed at encouraging eating and drinking establishments in the state (subject to the 1 percent meals tax) to patronize local farmers by giving the restaurants a five percent income tax break on the cost of farm products grown and produced in Rhode Island that they serve, up to \$1,000. Though this legislation has not passed, it is up for review in 2009. "Rural Rhode Island has many family farms that generate everything from strawberries to vegetables, apples to corn and honey," said Representative Gorham. "But Rhode Island has neglected its agrarian economy, and most family farms

continue to exist because of tradition and not economics. Truth be told, with escalating property taxes, many of our state's farmers are finding it hard to make money at farming, barely making what it costs to keep the farms operating."

Rhode Island's farmers deserve better than that and all Rhode Islanders are beneficiaries of local farms, not only because of the produce, but also because farms provide open space and promote tourism.

Thanks again to our members, Senator Sue Sosnowski and Representative Nick Gorham, for their efforts on behalf of the RI Raised Livestock Association and RI's farmers.



Calendar

Steering Committee Meeting

Monday November 24, 7:00 p.m.
Gregg's Restaurant, North Kingstown

Upcoming Events

RI Farm Bureau Annual Meeting

November 20, 2008

Alpine Country Club, Cranston

Informational Meeting: 2:30

Business Meeting: 4:30

Dinner 6:30

P.O. Box 640, N. Scituate, RI 02857





NEWS

Fall 2008

Volume 2 Issue 3

A Message from the President of RIRLA

from Bill Coulter, President, RIRLA

Hello All!
I hope everyone had a profitable summer season. As we all know, it is one of our busiest times of the year. We are pleased to announce that our association has been very busy as well. Our membership has been growing steadily, which we feel is very positive for everyone. We have also had to tackle some difficult issues as well - one of which is obtaining our non-profit status. Now that we have an

Executive Director, Kim Ziegelmayer, she will be able to devote the time needed to accomplish this task. We also hired a CPA who is knowledgeable in this field, and together with Kim, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I would also like to report that the Department of Health and DEM Division of Agriculture have a Memorandum of Understanding that is almost finalized. This would allow the Division of Agriculture to do inspections for farm

related licenses, i.e. Market Peddler's License, etc. Once in place, we hope it will be more user friendly for farmers involved with direct marketing.

Now that we are heading into the fall season, which typically is the busiest time for slaughtering, please be sure to contact Kim Ziegelmayer for your appointments. She can be reached at (401) 575-3348. Thank you for your continued support, and enjoy the colors of autumn.

Bill

Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP)

U.S. Department of Agriculture

The Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) was created through a recent amendment of the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976. The grants, authorized by the FMPP, are targeted to help improve and expand domestic farmers markets, roadside stands, community-supported agriculture programs, agri-tourism activities, and other direct producer-to-consumer market opportunities.

"Farmers markets are an increasingly popular source of fruits and vegetables," said Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer. "Locally grown and locally known sales of fresh produce strengthen the connection between farmers and the community."

On September 19, 2008, Secretary Schafer announced 85 grants totaling \$3,445,000 directed by the new farm bill to spread the use of farmers markets. Eighteen of the 85 grants promote a new electronic benefit transfers (EBT) system to help low-income consumers buy

locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables. USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service helps increase domestic consumption of agricultural commodities and improve farmers' income.

In Rhode Island, the RI Rural Development Council, North Kingstown,



R.I. received a USDA FMPP award of \$50,000 to conduct educational seminars for new vendors to sell at farmers markets and other direct-marketing venues; and, to support a new statewide "Rhode Island Grown" marketing campaign to promote

local agricultural products. Program plans are now being organized, and full announcements will be forthcoming through the partnering farmer's market groups. Entities eligible to apply include agricultural cooperatives, producer networks, producer associations, local governments, nonprofit corporations, public health corporations, economic development corporations, regional farmers market authorities and Tribal governments. The maximum amount awarded for any one proposal cannot exceed \$75,000.



A Message from the Director of RIRLA, Kim Ziegelmayer



Greetings once again to RI Raised Livestock members. I hope you all have enjoyed the summer, are enjoying the fall and getting ready for winter. It has been a busy three months since the last newsletter went out in July and the RI Raised Livestock Association continues to grow and improve.

RIRLA's Processing Scheduling Service is up and running at full steam. I have taken over the scheduling from the able hands of Bill Coulter. Thanks Bill, for paving the way for me and making my transition smooth and easy. A total of 18 beef, 12 hog and 7 lamb have been processed in the month of September. All members should have received a packet, either by email or U.S. mail with all the information and forms needed to get your animals processed. We have dates open in October, November and December. Please give me a call (401-575-3348) or send me an email director-rirla@cox.net to schedule your animals or if you need assistance with the forms.

Big news! The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Health and DEM/Department of Agriculture has been signed. This MOU will have the end result of making the process of getting permits faster and speed up the time line. These permits allow you to legally sell your meat on-farm/direct to the public (market cash register permit), at farmers markets (peddlers permit), and to restaurants and institutions (wholesale permit).

The demand for locally grown food is skyrocketing, as is the desire in RI communities to preserve agricultural lands and working farms. Permits will allow RI farmers to access this large and growing market sector. Permits are vital to the ability of RI farmers to increase the economic viability of their farms. The end result is multiple benefits for farmers, their local communities and the state as a whole.

Our membership is increasing at a steady pace. We now have 62 members with the vast majority from RI but a few members in Connecticut and Massachusetts. There has been a significant amount of discussion recently about out of state members and the concern that out of staters would overwhelm our RI Association. The Board of Directors came to the decision that RIRLA is open to Massachusetts and Connecticut farmers. However, there are two differences between RI resident and out of state memberships. Out of state are non-voting members, whereas in-state members have voting rights; and the out of state membership fee is \$100 for 2008-2009 membership whereas RI membership dues are \$30. All members are welcome to come to the monthly steering committee meetings and can request to have items put on the agenda for discussion.

The behind the scenes work of the organization has been moving along smoothly. The Executive Committee (Officers of the Board), Steering, Budget and Grant Committees are all meeting regularly and working on their various

topics. Though this work never moves as fast as we would like it to, and the fact that it is far from glamorous has not deterred the dedicated group of volunteers who have helped build the Association into the successful organization that it is.

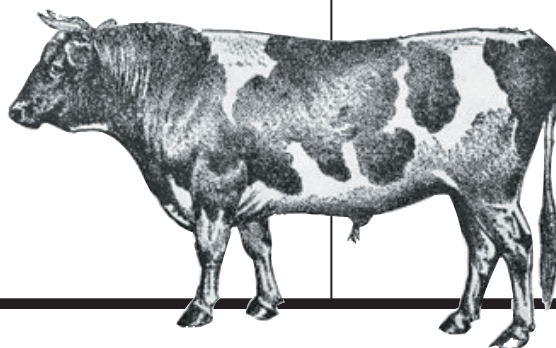
One of the things that I personally am very excited to be working on is the development of a list of potential workshops and/or seminars for Association members. Topics that have been suggested include: Processing seminar at Westerly Packing; How to Obtain Sales Permits; How to Price Your Meat Products; and Figuring the Cost of Raising,

Processing and Selling Livestock. It is my hope that we will be able to offer at least one seminar to our members during this coming winter. If you have an idea for a workshop that you would like to attend, or if you have an area of expertise that you would like to share

with other members, please call or email me with your ideas.

Well, that is about it for now. I would like to extend a huge THANK YOU to all of the dedicated volunteers who make this the great organization that it is, with a special THANKS to the Officers of the Board and Jane Christopher and Chris Ulrich, who put so much time and wonderful energy into the production of this newsletter. Please don't hesitate to call (401-575-3348) or email me at ***director-rirla@cox.net*** to schedule your animals, discuss an idea or voice any concerns you may have.

OUR MEMBERSHIP IS INCREASING AT A STEADY PACE.



Resource Spotlight:

RIRLA Grants Committee

Kim Ziegelmayer, at the request of the RIRLA Board of Directors, has organized a group of RIRLA members to investigate and research potential grant opportunities for the RI Raised Livestock Association in carrying out its mission.

The meetings are held as evening conference calls. The first meeting was held in September, 2008. At the first session, the group discussed the topics of need for grants to include working capital for the Association, future funding for operating expenses, and monies for training, technical assistance and professional services.

Currently the RIRLA association is operating under two grants. The first is a USDA-Rural Development Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG) that provides funding for technical assistance, training and professional services. And, a second grant awarded by the RI Foundation is being used for processing services and director compensation.

Both grants have been open for over 2 years, and the Association is researching other potential funds for capital improvement and operational funds. Some mentioned in the first meeting included:

- USDA Rural Development
- USDA RD - Rhode Island Svc Ctr
- The Rhode Island Foundation
- The Champlin Foundations
- The Van Beuren Charitable Foundation
- Orton Family Foundation
- Prince Foundation
- June Rockwell Levy Foundation
- Jessie B. Cox Foundation
- USDA SARE
- Value Added Producer Grant
- Rural Business Enterprise Grant (RBEG)
- Strategy Grant - Innovative Model
- Mini Grant - Community Development
- Economic Development - Non Profits directly benefit Newport County, RI

- Community Planning Preserve & Protect Open Space-Aquidneck Island only
- Economic Development - Non Profits low income and underserved communities
- Educational / Multi-State Livestock

The grants committee is seeking input for further ideas and leads on grants that may benefit the Association. Please submit your ideas to Jerry Bertrand, RI Rural Development Council at (401) 667-0071 or email Director@ruralri.org. And, you can always send your comments to Kim Ziegelmayer at 401-575-3348 or email at director-rirla@cox.net.

Editor's note: We neglected to credit Cornell Small Farms Program and Lee Publications for use of the NESARE Resource Spotlight in the summer issue.



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Prescribed Grazing with the Natural Resources Conservation Service

Livestock owners who utilize pastureland are important managers of RI's working landscape. The USDA NRCS has provided assistance to RI's livestock managers and farmers for many years. Through the 2002 Farm Bill, NRCS has provided technical and financial assistance through voluntary programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Many RI Raised Livestock Association members are currently working with NRCS on conservation projects within their "Prescribed Grazing" plan which could include better fencing (both temporary and permanent), watering troughs, overseeding pastures, invasives management, and nutrient and pest management (e.g., soil fertility and weeds). The new 2008 Farm Bill was recently passed and has the potential to provide even more money to assist farmers and landowners with good conservation to meet our mission of 'Helping People Help the Land'.

"Prescribed Grazing" is one of our conservation practices where landowners work with NRCS and other partners to develop grazing and pasture management plans which allow the landowner to plan for the best use of pastures, keep sensitive resources conserved, and keep the livestock in a healthy condition.

One important tool to evaluate the condition of pastures is the Pasture Condition Score, which landowners and the NRCS staff use. A well managed pasture is one whose productivity (plant and animal) is optimized while it does no harm to soil, water, and air quality. Pasture condition scoring is a systematic way to check how well a pasture is managed. If the pasture is located on the proper site and well managed, it will have a good to excellent overall pasture condition score. By rating key indicators and causative factors common to all pastures, pasture condition can be evaluated and the primary reasons for a low condition score identified. Conditions that typically express themselves as pasture resource concerns

are poor plant growth, weedy species invasion, poor animal performance, visible soil loss, increased runoff, and impaired water quality.

Pasture condition scoring, to be most useful, should occur several times a year during key critical management periods throughout the grazing season. Scoring should be performed:

- At peak forage supply periods
- At the start before placing livestock on pasture
- At low forage supply periods
- As plant stress appears
- Near the end to help decide when to remove livestock

In addition, pastures used for year-round grazing benefit from pasture condition scoring:

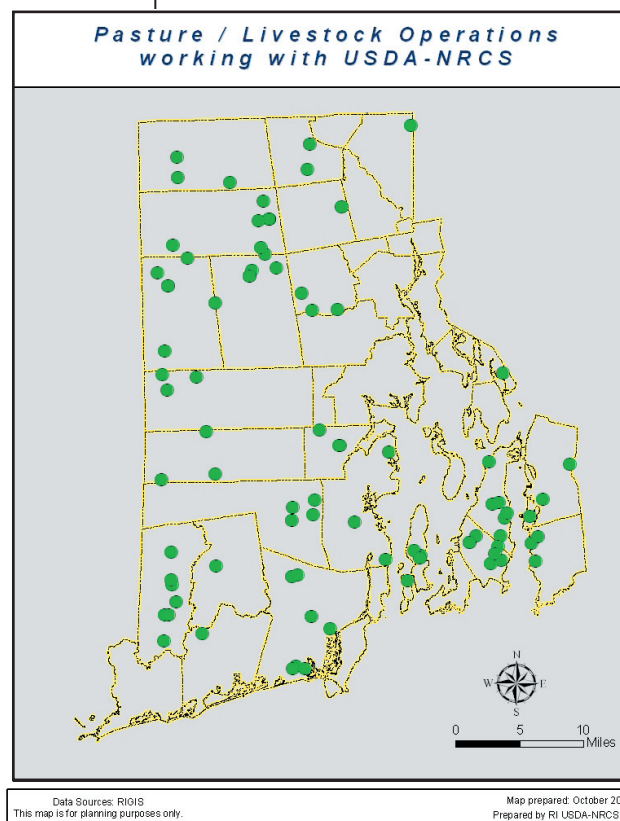
- Going into the winter season
- Late in winter
- During thaws or wet periods

Pasture condition scoring can be useful in deciding when to move livestock or planning other management actions. It sorts out which improvements are most likely to improve pasture condition or livestock performance. Pasture condition scoring involves the visual evaluation of 10 indicators, listed and described below, which rate pasture condition. In the Pasture Condition Score Sheet, each indicator or factor has five conditions described for it, ranging from very poor to excellent. This objectively ranks the extent of any problem(s) and helps sort out the likely cause(s). Evaluate each indicator separately. They may be combined into an overall score for the pasture unit or left as an individual score and compared with the other nine indicators. Indicators receiving the

lowest scores can be targeted for corrective action as warranted. The plant vigor indicator is broken down further into six possible causes that affect plant vigor. As one or more erosion indicators may exist on a site, they are split into four types: sheet and rill, gully, stream bank or shoreline, and wind.

The map shows the RI landowners who currently have pasture based projects to improve resources on their land. These conservation practices could include: Pasture and hayland planting, watering facilities, pipeline for water distribution, prescribed grazing, nutrient and pest management plans on pasture, animal trails and walkways, and fencing, and brush management for invasive.

As mentioned, the 2008 Farm Bill was recently passed with the potential to provide additional money to assist farmers and landowners in improving conservation efforts. Please contact NRCS @ 401-828-1300, or visit www.ri.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/eqip.html for more information and an application on these voluntary programs.



RI State Sales Permits

Sales permits may not sound like an exciting topic to RI farmers but being able to legally sell their meat products to the public is a subject that may cause more than a few farmers to prick up their ears. The RI Raised Livestock Association is very excited about some recent developments in the permitting process. The end result will be easier and faster access to permits which in turn means greater opportunities for sales and marketing of farmers' products.

The state of Rhode Island issues permits that allow RI farmers to legally sell their USDA inspected packaged meat to the public. The RI Raised Livestock Association has been working hard, in partnership with Scott Marshall and Ken Ayars of the Department of Agriculture, to make the permitting process faster, easier and more efficient. RIRLA is very pleased to report that the first piece of the puzzle has been put in place! A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Health and DEM/Department of Agriculture has been signed.

Previously there has been some confusion and overlap between the roles and responsibilities of the RI Department of Agriculture and RI Department of Health related to the (internal) agency processing and delivery of permits for on-farm/direct to the public (market cash register permit); farmers markets (peddlers permit); and to restaurants and institutions (wholesale permit). This MOU will have the end result of making the process of getting permits easier and speed up the timeline.

These sales permits are a vital piece to the puzzle of economic viability for RI farmers. The demand for locally grown food is skyrocketing, as is the desire in local communities to preserve agricultural lands and working farms. Permits are essential to the ability of RI farmers to access this market and increase the economic viability of their farms.

The second piece of the puzzle, putting together a technical assistance/permitting information package that will help farmers navigate the process of obtaining permits, is one of the Association's

next priorities. The third piece of the puzzle, a workshop or seminar on the permitting process, is also in the works. The Association believes the fact sheets and the permitting seminar will be very helpful to our members and other RI farmers. Easier access to permits will increase RI farmers' options to reach the significant market sector of individuals that want to buy local food. The end result is multiple benefits for RI farmers, their local communities and the state as a whole.

The RI Raised Livestock Association would like to thank our members, Representative Nick Gorham of Coventry, and Senator Sue Sosnowski of South Kingston for their recent efforts in helping to clarify and streamline the permit process. Many thanks to Ken Ayars and Scott Marshall of the Dept. of Agriculture for their responsiveness to our concerns and their assistance in getting the MOU signed, as well as Dr. Julian and the staff at the Department of Health.

Opportunities for RIRLA Members

RI Local Food Guide

List your farm on the RI Local Food Guide at Farm Fresh RI's website www.farmfreshri.org.

The RI Local Food Guide is an atlas of RI farms that seeks to educate people about agriculture and the food produced in all corners of our state. There are 600 farms currently on the website but not enough RI Raised Livestock Association members are listed! The Guide is a great tool to reach consumers, chefs, food service, distributors, interns and others in the RI community. Farmers can create a free listing at www.farmfreshri.org/manage or contact noah@farmfreshri.org and the folks at Farm Fresh RI will help you set it up.

Small Farms Quarterly

Subscribe to Small Farms Quarterly for just \$2.50 a year (4 issues)

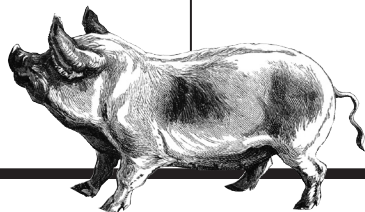
Are you looking for ways to farm profitably without getting bigger? Do you like to read about families who are living a good life on a small farm? Are you looking for new ideas, tips and resources to help you reach your farm and family goals? If so, you'll enjoy Small Farm Quarterly. It's for full-time and part-time farmers, experienced and beginning farmers, and even folks who are just thinking about getting into farming. Just send your check for \$2.50 to RIRLA, P.O. Box 640, N. Scituate, RI 02857. You can check out past issues on line at

<http://www.smallfarms.cornell.edu/pages/quarterly/index.cfm> or subscribe for a free e-newsletter Small Farms Update by sending an email to smallfarmsprogram@cornell.edu.

RIRLA wishes to thank our funders, the RI Foundation and the USDA for their support.



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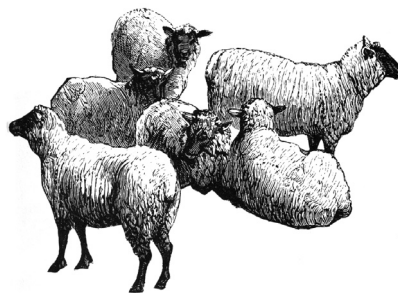
Organic Livestock Certification Program

RI Department of Agriculture

The USDA recently approved the RI Department of Agriculture's request to be accredited as a certifying agent for organic livestock. Scott Marshall, RI Department of Agriculture's staff veterinarian will have a role in coordination with the Organic Certification Program that is headed up by Matt Green. The goal is to have the program in place for the 2009 season. The process for organic livestock certification will be similar to that administratively for fruits and vegetables. This certification program will likely be an agenda item for the next meeting of the RI Organic

Advisory Committee. Members of the RI Raised Livestock Association are welcome to attend.

Please contact Kim for more information: director-rirla@cox.net or 401-575-3348.

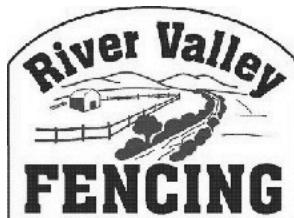


Historic New England's Watson Farm Hosts North American Devon Association Annual Meeting

Watson Farm hosted the Annual Meeting of the North American Devon Association on Oct 17-19. "Gourmet Beef on Grass" was the theme for the conference. Over 100 Red Devon Cattle Breeders from farms and ranches from all over America were treated to top notch speakers and a panel at the conference.

There was a full day's program and pasture walk at Watson Farm on Sunday to culminate the event. Heather and Don Minto, who organized the conference, led the walk and had the opportunity to share their work on fertility management, intensive grazing and their Red Devon Cattle Herd. A "Locavores Lunch" featuring local food from local area farms along with cider pressing and old time music provided a truly New England experience.

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Members In Action

The RI Raised Livestock Association would like to thank our members, Senator Sue Sosnowski of South Kingston, and Representative Nick Gorham of Coventry, for their recent efforts towards making the processing of getting sales permits into farmers hands faster and easier.

In the past there has been some confusion and overlap between the roles and responsibilities of the Departments of Agriculture and Health. In the past the (internal) agency processing and delivery of sale permits has been a slow and rather painful process for all involved.

Earlier this year Senator Sosnowski, long a champion of RI farmers and RI agriculture, introduced legislation in 2008 that was meant to help clarify the relationship between RI Departments of Agriculture and Health.



The legislation would have moved the authority of inspections and the issuing of permits to farms from the Dept. of Health to the DEM/Department of Agriculture. After discussions with the Agencies the legislation was withdrawn and a different approach to the problem was made.

Ken Ayars and Scott Marshall, Chief and State veterinarian, respectively, of the Department of Agriculture, sat down with members of the RI Raised Livestock Association at their steering committee meetings to hear the farmers' perspectives on the permitting process. The resulting new approach is the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the RI Departments of Agriculture and Health. The aim of the MOU is to clarify the roles and responsibilities and help to establish a more streamlined and efficient process for obtaining permits.

After several months of discussion between the agencies and some fine-tuning of the MOU the document was submitted to the agencies' legal departments for

review. Review can be a lengthy process. Representative Gorham inquired about the status of the MOU and shortly thereafter it was signed. The MOU represents the first step in making the process of getting permits quicker and easier. There are other pieces of the puzzle that RIRLA would like to put in place to further aid RI farmers including a technical assistance information packet and a seminar on obtaining permits. Stay tuned for more information as these develop.

Both Senator Sosnowski and Representative Gorham are strong advocates for rural RI and RI farmers. In 2008 Senator Sosnowski and Representative Gorham co-sponsored legislation aimed at preserving farmland around the state from development. Thanks to this legislation voters in November will be asked to approve a \$2.5 million bond for agricultural preservation.

"There are many reasons RI has an interest in keeping working farms working," said Senator Sosnowski, who runs her own organic farm and serves as chairwoman of the Senate Environment and Agriculture Committee. "They provide valuable green space and fresh food, close to home, for Rhode Islanders and contribute to our state's economy. They also preserve the character of rural areas and provide a link to a way of life that has all but disappeared from Rhode Island during the last century. We should be doing all we can to maintain the few farms we still have."

Representative Gorham has introduced several pieces of legislation on behalf of RI farmers. In 2006 he submitted a



bill to the General Assembly to help the state's farmers by giving RI farmers and vendors selling RI farm products a state income tax break, or tax credit, on food they sell to schools, equal to five percent of the cost of those products grown or produced on their farmland. The credit

(cont. on back page)

Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association

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Jane Christopher
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RIRLA News is published quarterly by the Rhode Island Raised Livestock Association. RIRLA's mission is "to promote the preservation of our agricultural lands, our rural economy, and our agrarian way of life by creating an organization that will secure a viable infrastructure and provide for the efficient and sustainable production, processing, and marketing of quality, value added, locally produced meats in the state of Rhode Island".

Annual membership is \$30 per farm, and includes the newsletter. We also accept unsolicited donations. RIRLA News welcomes articles, photographs, letters and classified advertising for possible publication. Publication of articles or advertisements is not necessarily an endorsement by RIRLA. Articles from this newsletter may not be reprinted without permission. ©RIRLA 2008

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