

North Country Public Radio

[A \(not so\) secret formula to growing entrepreneurs in the North Country's small towns](#)

by [David Sommerstein \(Reporter/Asst. News Director\)](#), in Canton, NY



Deborah Markley, Center for Rural Entrepreneurship. Photo provided.

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Apr 19, 2016 — On campaign trails, on Main Street, and wherever we gather, the economy continues to be among the biggest issues in the North Country.

At its core, that conversation is about entrepreneurship, people starting businesses and growing them. Entrepreneurship is the topic of the 14th Annual North Country Symposium next Monday at St. Lawrence University.

Deborah Markley, co-founder of the [Center for Rural Entrepreneurship](#), will be the keynote speaker. She believes rural communities across the country are trying to rebound from so-called "brain drain," the loss of some of their most entrepreneurial people to bigger cities over decades, and places like the North Country are trying to remember the time, sometimes generations ago, when their towns were booming.

Markley maintains that entrepreneurship isn't just an innate talent; it's something anyone can learn. "People who you wouldn't necessarily define as 'entrepreneurial' certainly can learn to build those skills over time," she said.

One of the biggest economic issues - and potential opportunities - facing rural towns today is finding the next generation of business owners as people retire, Markley said. "You're actively reaching out to alumni and the kids who have gone on someplace else, and letting them know that there are opportunities to take over a business that exists in the community, so that if you've got something that's viable, you're not losing it."

Click listen to hear Deborah Markley's conversation with David Sommerstein. You can still register to attend next Monday's North Country Symposium at St. Lawrence University by going [here](#). Attendance is free and open to the public.