

# Network News

Laughter is the best form of medicine. For when we laugh, we  
neither think, grieve, or feel ~Eugene Lam

## *NRHA Rural Health Fellows Program Offers Opportunities for Leadership Growth and Development*

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The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) facilitates the Rural Health Fellows Program, a year long intensive program that aims to develop leaders who can articulate a clear and compelling vision for rural America. Kelly J. Johnson, HRHN's Health Planning Director, was one of 14 individuals selected nationwide to participate in this inaugural Rural Health Fellowship program. Participation in this program helps Fellows gain valuable insights and build critical skills in three primary domains: 1) personal, team, and organizational leadership; 2) Health policy analysis and advocacy; 3) NRHA governance and structure. These three domains of learning are accomplished through a combination of experimental and action learning, exposure to premier faculty and seasoned practitioners, and reinforcement through executive coaching and structured team assignments. Fellows are assigned two projects to work on with groups throughout their year-long program. In addition to the projects the Fellows are able to attend NRHA's Rural Health Policy Institute conference and the Annual Conference. NRHA's 18th Annual



*A Beautiful view of downtown Anchorage, Alaska*

Rural Health Policy Institute was held in Washington, DC. February 26-28, 2007. Approximately 400 rural health care providers, educators, administrators as well as rural community leaders attended this year's Policy Institute. During the Institute, rural health advocates learned about the development and implementation of health care policy in informative, policy relevant sessions. Most importantly, attendees met with members of Congress and their staffs, sharing with them the NRHA's 2007 advocacy requests and priorities to strengthen the nation's rural health care delivery system.

The 30th Annual NRHA Annual Conference was held May 16-18th in Anchorage, Alaska. Kelly was able to attend both of these meetings as a NRHA Rural Health Fellow. Alaska was amazing and beautiful and the conference activities were extremely educational. The Fellows will have an opportunity to present their projects to NRHA leadership in November. If you are interested in learning more about NRHA's Rural Health Fellows program or applying to the program please contact Amy Elizondo, NRHA's Vice President of Program Services at (703) 519-7910 or visit [www.nrha.org](http://www.nrha.org) for more information.

## *Nation's Rural Leaders Meet with 21st Century Town Meeting— Network staff Member Attends*



*“Participants represented the breadth of rural America with 43 states and over 250 organizations actively involved in the Assembly”*

Nearly 300 advocates and leaders from the nonprofit sector, tribal, state and local officials, health care providers, and others gathered together on June 25-27 at the first National Rural Assembly in Chantilly, Virginia to raise the visibility of rural issues, to organize a national network of rural interests, and to develop rural policy initiatives. Participants represented the breadth of rural America with 43 states and over 250 different organizations focused on various rural interests. Kelly J. Johnson, Health Planning Director for Heartland Rural Health Network, was invited and attended this event. Some of the highlights of events included:

- Congressional summit with members of the House Appropriations Agriculture Subcommittee.
- Release of new polling and public opinion in rural America. Topics included voter preferences in the 2008 presidential election and views on some of the most pressing issues facing rural communities.
- A lively and entertaining panel discussion by journalists Bob Edwards (XM Radio), Ray Suarez (PBS' News Hour), Bill Bishop (DailyYounder.com) and Susan Milligan (Boston Globe), who discussed the significance of the rural vote in 2008
- A 21st Century Town Hall Meeting which helped rural leaders articulate their vision for communities, identify opportunities for new rural policy, and outline areas for action.
- All current presidential candi-

dates were invited to address the Assembly in a variety of ways. The candidates could have addressed the Assembly in person, through satellite hook-up, or through a pre-made video. Three presidential candidates accepted this invitation. A live video meeting with presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. A satellite feed allowed participants to ask the candidate about her views and plans for rural America and share their ideas and concerns. Candidates John Edwards and Congressman Dennis Kucinich also sent stand-alone videos in which they addressed the gathering.

The Assembly was sponsored by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Ford Foundation with more than 100 supporting organizations.

\*Photo used from W.K. Kellogg Foundation



## *Access to Health Care Continues through Grant*

The Network was awarded a \$15,000.00 grant from the Srs. Of Bon Secours USA in February, 2007. This grant has helped individuals who are uninsured and/or indigent obtain needed health care services by providing

them with a voucher for health care services at a participating health care provider.s This grant has carried on the Outreach program after the Blue Foundation grant funding ended in July, 2007. HRHN is very

grateful for the Srs. Of Bon Secours USA support and commitment to the services provided to the underserved populations in Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto Counties.

# Collaborations = To Success

## HOPE GRANT

HRHN, in partnership with the Highlands County Health Department and the Community Health Improvement Planning Council (CHIP), was recently awarded a \$10,250.00 grant through the Florida Department of Health's Hispanic Obesity Prevention and Education (HOPE) Grant. The purpose of the HOPE grant is to address any of the following: implementing and expanding physical activity, healthy nutrition, knowledge of appropriate portion size, and reduced screen time interventions aimed at Hispanic individuals and families in order to increase quality of life and reduce or eliminate chronic diseases linked to obesity. The HOPE grant complements the Closing the Gap Grant from the Health Department which focuses on diabetes as well as CHIP's current focus of obesity and diabetes in Highlands County. The Network's

HOPE grant focuses on a fall media campaign utilizing radio and television evidence based educational message outlets that encourages families to participate in physical activities together. This family-oriented media campaign will coincide with and enhance the 5K Awareness Run/Walk at the Community Arts & Crafts Festival held in Sebring in November, 2007. Additionally there will be a Farmer's Market available during the Festival highlighting healthy eating in conjunction with family-friendly physical activities. The Awareness Run/Walk will also be the "grand-opening" introducing the newly marked fitness trail around Sebring's beautiful Lake Jackson. The trail is 10 miles long and will be marked every 1/2 mile. Signage will also be displayed around the trail. This enhancement to the walking trail makes it more user friendly and a free year-round activity for the

general public to utilize. The grant funding ends December, 2007.

## FBCCRF GRANT

HRHN recently entered into a collaborative relationship with it's sister Network, the Northwest Florida Rural Health Network, Inc. (NFRHN). Through this relationship, the Networks received a Florida Breast Cancer Coalition Research Foundation (FBCCRF) grant in the amount of \$8,913.92 which will be used to implement a community based breast health educational program targeting the low income rural areas of Santa Rosa and Escambia counties. Women will be educated on breast health and breast cancer. Additionally, the funding will provide for the printing of local resource/educational guides developed specifically for Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties. This is an exciting opportunity for NFRHN and HRHN.

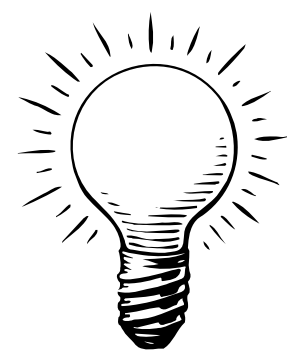


## *Powering Up With the Local Homeless Coalition*

It's hard to imagine having to choose between buying food and medicines or paying the electric bill due to financial difficulties that sometimes occurs in families. With the rising costs of everything from gas to food to prescriptions to insurance it seems like more people have to keep

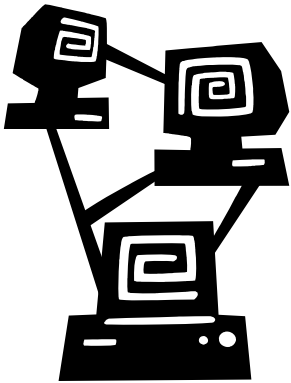
making these difficult choices on a regular basis. The Highlands County Coalition for the Homeless, Inc. (HCCH), recently received a \$275,000 allocation from the State to manage the Low Income Housing Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) in Highlands and Hardee Counties. LIHEAP helps eligible low-

income households in meeting the costs of heating and cooling. To apply for assistance individuals must contact their local program. To find out more about LIHEAP and eligibility criteria please visit: [www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/liheap](http://www.floridacommunitydevelopment.org/liheap) or call 863-402-0073.





## *Local Hospitals Save Big \$\$ on Telecommunication Costs through Federal Program*



Four local non-profit rural hospitals in Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto Counties saved a total of \$23,887.53 in 2006-2007 for costs associated with their telecommunication services through the federal Universal Services program. Over the last three years these four hospitals have saved a combined total of \$127,342.28 (2004-2007). Heartland Rural Health Network assists Florida Hospital Heartland Division, Florida Hospital Wauchula, Florida Hospital Lake Placid, and DeSoto Memorial Hospital in the application process that occurs on a yearly basis for their telecommunications cost savings. The Rural

Health Care Program of Universal Services is responsible for ensuring that health care providers in rural areas obtain the benefits of the Internet and current telecommunication technology through universal service support. This is accomplished through four fund programs—one of the fund programs being the Rural Health Care Program. This program helps equalize rates between urban and rural for Internet services and telecommunication services. Up to 400 million dollars is available just for the Rural Health Care Program of Universal Services with most of this money not being utilized by rural health care providers due to various factors such as confusion with the application process, length of the application process,

and other process requirements. Many facilities may only have a few telecommunication or Internet lines while some larger rural facilities have multiple lines. Having more lines does contribute to more time needed to complete the application process. Whether a facility has one or ten lines the savings can add up. The level of support a facility receives depends on the location and types of services chosen and is calculated for each individual entity. For more information on the RHCD program or to find out if your organization or facility is eligible visit [www.usac.org/rhc/](http://www.usac.org/rhc/) If eligible, HRHN is available for consulting in the application process. Call 863-452-6530 for more information.

## *Network Thanks the Blue Foundation for Program Support*

In July, 2006, Heartland Rural Health Network received a \$35,000.00 grant from the Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, Inc., the philanthropic affiliate of Blue Cross, Blue Shield of Florida. This grant provided health and social outreach services to the rural homeless and uninsured of Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto Counties. This was a one year grant which ended in July, 2007. The grant provided individuals who may have had difficulties accessing local health care and social services an opportunity to do so through the Network's Outreach Program. HRHN has developed a



very effective network of health and social service providers who made this program successful. HRHN's network of providers included 10 providers of primary care services, two volunteer free medical clinics, two providers of

mental health services and a substance abuse treatment provider with three locations. A total of 1,248 patients (children & adults) were referred to these providers within the grant year. 671 patients were from Highlands County, 170 patients were from Hardee County, 380 patients were from DeSoto County and 27 patients were from other adjacent counties. HRHN would like to extend a heartfelt appreciation for the financial assistance provided by the Blue Foundation through this grant year. These grant dollars have helped solidify the foundation of the Network's Outreach Program which continues to serve the three counties as additional grant funds permit.

## *Grant Brings Breast Health Education to the Heartland's Rural Women*

The Florida Department of Health, Division of Family Health Services awarded a total of \$316,893 to community demonstration projects focused on enhancing breast cancer awareness, informing women about availability of mammography services and assisting with the coordination of breast cancer treatment services. The need for these community demonstration projects is established from data found in the Florida Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, which indicates that Black and Hispanic women have a significantly lower rate of ever having a mammogram compared to their white counterparts. These demonstration projects focused on women ages 40-49 and/or racial and ethnic minorities affected disproportionately by breast cancer. HRHN received \$23,321.15 in grant funds to bring awareness to the importance of pro-active breast health in the black and Hispanic communities in High-

lands, Hardee, and DeSoto Counties. This was achieved through evidence-based literature, creation of a local breast health resource and educational pamphlet tailored to the local area—this pamphlet also highlighted the Florida Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program which provides free mammograms and pap smears to eligible women between 50-64, and a web site developed for women who do have access to the computer. Although the main target population of the project was on low-income black and Hispanic women, the Network felt it was necessary to develop education that can be far reaching to other women outside of the target population. The website provides current costs on mammograms at local facilities, detailed resources not included in the brief resource pamphlet, a forum and chat area for women to discuss health issues, and current news on breast health. The literature, promotional items,

and resource pamphlets are available in over 55 locations throughout Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto Counties. HRHN was very pleased to have reached out to social service and health care agencies, businesses, public libraries, banks, housing authorities, sheriff's office, and other places throughout the three county area that all agreed to display the educational information. Don't forget October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month! If your agency would like educational materials (available in English and Spanish), or copies of the professionally designed Resource Pamphlet on Breast Health please contact HRHN at 863-452-6530. Materials are free of charge. The website designed through this grant opportunity is [www.heartlandbreasthealth.org](http://www.heartlandbreasthealth.org) Please take a moment to visit, register, and promote the site for other women to join.



### *Welcome....*

HRHN would like to welcome new member, Dr. D.M. Upadhyaya, to the Network. The Network would also like to welcome Diana Hayles, Health Specialist at Redlands Christian Migrant Association, as a new Network Board Member!

### *And Farewell....*

HRHN would like to congratulate Victor Alvarez, HRHN's Case Manager, on his graduation from the Public Service Academy at South Florida Community College with a focus on Criminal Jus-

tice. Victor will be taking his law enforcement state exam in August and plans on becoming a police officer. The Network wishes him a successful future in his law enforcement career!

## *Hardee County Health Department Announces New Executive Medical Director*



The Hardee County Health Department announced the addition of Stephen L. Gordon, M.D., as Executive Medical Director. Dr. Gordon comes to the Department with more than 20 years experience in clinical and academic medicine. He is board certified in Internal Medicine and Infectious Disease with a special interest in travel medicine. “We are delighted to have this talented individual working on behalf of the Hardee County Health Department,” Administrator Marsha F. Rau, RN, BSN, MPH said.

“Dr. Gordon brings a wealth of knowledge and experience and will assist the Department in continuing to positively impact the health of all residents in Hardee County.” Along with the administrative duties, Dr. Gordon will be seeing patients with infectious diseases and be available to patients who are in need of specialty medical care. Additionally, Dr. Gordon will begin a travel medical clinic. This will be a new service to the community and will offer advice, prescriptions, and vac-

cinations for travelers. The clinic will also see travelers who are ill upon their return. “I’m excited to have the opportunity to assume this new role as a leader in public health and to accept the many challenges it will bring,” Dr. Gordon said. “I look forward to making a difference in Hardee County and working with the wonderful team at the County Health Department.”

Article contributed by Erin E. Hess, Public Information Officer, Hardee County Health Department

## *Tri-County Human Services Receives CARF Accreditation*

*“TCHS received an award of a 3 year accreditation, the highest level awarded”*

Tri County Human Services, Inc. (TCHS), with locations in Polk, Hardee, and Highlands Counties, received the final determination of the CARF Accreditation review in April, 2007. TCHS received an award of a three year accreditation, the highest level awarded. In addition, the accreditation was accompanied by three notes of commendation to Tri-County and its staff: 1) the processes and protocols used at Tri-County are used to create an environment that supports excellence, but also identifies remedies for areas of concern; 2) the organization has made efforts to develop housing pro-

grams that continue to provide support for the persons served. Tri-County also works with the local faith-based organizations to add additional beds for its previously incarcerated population that has embraced recovery and hopes to return home and be reintroduced to the mainstream community; and 3) The JASA program and the Triad Women’s Project are models of best practice services, and each provides a tremendous source of direct and indirect support to persons served and their families. Tri-County is a well-established organization and recognized leader in behavioral health

service in Central Florida as well as around the state. The staff and Board members are extremely dedicated to the organization and the communities they serve. Tri-County Human Services, Inc. congratulates the Board of Directors, management and staff for this achievement and compliments for the quality of services provided. The organization is encouraged to continue using the CARF standards as guidelines for improving the quality and effectiveness of the services provided and for improving the overall efficiency of its operations.

Article contributed by: Robert Rihn, Executive Director TCHS

## FRHA Announces New Executive Director

The Florida Rural Health Association (FRHA) was developed to bring together individuals with an interest in rural health care and human services. The Association is dedicated to ensuring that residents of rural communities have access to a continuum of affordable health care services; to advocate for public policy initiatives; to facilitate those services; and to strengthen rural communities. The top priority for the FRHA this year is to become an even louder and more forceful voice for rural health in both state and federal legislatures, in our communities, and within individual organizations. FRHA has grown tremen-

dously over the past 15 years and with this growth there was a significant need of an Executive Director to oversee daily activities of the Association. The FRHA Board reviewed several options and recently announced Mr. Robert Reinshuttle as FRHA's first executive director. Mr. Reinshuttle has formerly served as the Policy Chief of Staff and Director of Health Policy for the Florida Agency for Health Care Administration and as the National Director of Government Relations for the American Society of Extra-Corporeal Technology. In addition to serving as the Executive Director of FRHA, Bob is

also the Chief Operating Officer for the Florida Association of Community Health Centers. Mr. Reinshuttle's broad knowledge of intergovernmental processes and extensive experience in local, state and federal health programs and policies will be most valuable as FRHA continues its growth. As of July 1, the FRHA office location has moved from Alachua to Tallahassee. If your organization is interested in joining FRHA or learning more about FRHA's activities please contact Mr. Reinshuttle at [reinshuttle@fachc.org](mailto:reinshuttle@fachc.org) or call 850-942-2144.

*"...With this growth there was a significant need for an Executive Director to oversee the daily activities of the Association."*

## Hardee County Welcomes Several New Services

Hardee Family Medicine opened its doors to the public on August 1, 2007. Two full time physicians—Joseph Toulouse, MD and Kathleen Welch-Wilson, MD, both certified with the American Board of Family Medicine—are available Monday thru Friday. The office location is 522 West Carlton St. in Wauchula and the phone number is 863-773-2425.

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With the 2007 Capital Improvement Grant for Critical Access Hospitals, Flor-

ida Hospital Wauchula has purchased a new portable x-ray machine and 12 new Stryker beds for the medical unit.

Florida Hospital Wauchula has begun plans for renovation of its Emergency Department (ED). Improvements will include a separate waiting area for the ED and expanding the number of beds from 7 to 12. According to Linda Adler, Administrator of Florida Hospital Wauchula, they expect renovations to begin in September, 2007 with the entire project taking approximately

10 months to complete. With the separate waiting area, Florida Hospital will also have an enlarged triage room with access directly into the ED. The renovations will encompass the former surgery area which has been used for storage the last several years. This project will not only improve services provided to patients, but also improve the traffic flow through the department with better working space for staff and EMS.

*Article contributed by Linda Adler, Administrator Florida Hospital Wauchula*







1200 W. Avon Blvd.  
Suite 109  
Avon Park, FL 33825

Phone: 863-452-6530  
Fax: 863-452-6882  
Email: [rudy.reinhardt@hrhn.org](mailto:rudy.reinhardt@hrhn.org)  
[kelly.johnson@hrhn.org](mailto:kelly.johnson@hrhn.org)

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## Grant Brings Vision Safety Education to Heartland Area Children

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- Diana F. Hayles, Director
- J. Rudy Reinhardt, Network Executive Director

Heartland Rural Health Network, Inc. in collaboration with the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA), received a \$10,000.00 National Eye Institute Grant to provide vision safety education to children, ages 2-5, in RCMA's Head Start Schools in Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto Counties. Grant activities must address one or more of Healthy People 2010's Healthy Vision objectives (28-1 through 28-10). The objective that the Network



and RCMA are addressing through this grant is to reduce blindness and visual impairment in children by utilizing *Play It Safe With Your Eyes*, the only vision safety curriculum tailored for children five and under. The project began in

March, 2007 and will run through March, 2008. Children, ages 2-5, attending any of RCMA's Head Start schools in the three counties will learn about eyes, how to keep their eyes safe, and parent's will also be provided with basic eye safety tips. If you are interested in learning more about the curriculum or would like to view a copy of the curriculum please contact Kelly Johnson at 863-452-6530 or e-mail at [kelly.johnson@hrhn.org](mailto:kelly.johnson@hrhn.org)