

Network News

"Great works are performed, not by strength, but by perseverance"- Samuel Johnson

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Network Awarded \$498,000 Abstinence Education Grant ~ 2.5 million in funding over 5 years

The Heartland Rural Health Network, Inc. received notification from **Senator Bill Nelson's** office that they have been awarded a grant from the **United States Department of Health and Human Services' Administration for Children & Families** in the amount of \$497,830.00. This is a five year grant, with a potential total funding of 2.5 million dollars. This Community Based Abstinence Education Program Grant will help address the alarmingly high teen pregnancy rates in rural Highlands, DeSoto, and Hardee Counties. According to the Florida Department of Health, out of Florida's 67 counties, Highlands, DeSoto, and Hardee Counties rank 29th highest, 3rd highest, and 2nd highest, respectively, for births to girls under 18.

"The Heartland Rural Health Network is enormously pleased with the support and financial assistance being provided by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services by funding of this grant," said **J. Rudy Reinhardt**, Executive Director of the Heartland Rural Health Network.

According to the Florida Department of Health's data registry, there were 138 births to girls under 18 in these three rural counties in 2006 (latest data avail-

able). The National Campaign to Prevent Teenage Pregnancy estimates that these 138 babies born to teen parents equal a \$2,835,000 cost to our local communities.

The grant provides funding to implement in-class abstinence education, after-school "Go Girls" groups, and middle and high school Teen Panel Summits. "Go Girls" is an 8 week after school program (once per week) that really gets girls involved in their community and learning the values of abstinence while having fun," **Susie Buelow**, Highlands County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Coordinator stated.

"The real purpose of these programs is to educate our youth and create an environment within our own rural communities that supports teen decisions to postpone sexual activity until marriage. We want to reduce the number of



Highlands County "Go Girls" enjoy an outdoor activity during last year's program. Grant funding will expand this program to neighboring DeSoto and Hardee Counties.

teens having babies and these community based programs will really support this effort." **Kelly J. Johnson**, the Network's health planning director commented. The Network will be working closely with invaluable community agencies including the Highlands, DeSoto, and Hardee County Health Departments, Teen Pregnancy Prevention Alliances, each of the county's School Boards, and several faith based organizations to implement abstinence education programs that focus on youth 12-18 years of age. It is anticipated that through these programs 3,410 youth will be served. The Network will contract with **The University of Florida** to evaluate this project over the five year grant period.

LEAD Education & Awareness Project Targets Polk, Highlands & Hardee Counties

"...The age of the housing stock, rates of elevated blood levels and immigrant populations make these counties targets for lead poisoning prevention efforts"

The Health Council of West Central Florida, Inc. received a one year grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to raise community awareness and reduce the incidence of childhood lead poisoning in Hardee, Highlands, and Polk Counties. The age of the housing stock, rates of elevated blood levels and immigrant populations present in these counties made them targets for lead poisoning prevention efforts. Additionally, the 2004 hurricanes may have caused lead hazards due to improper work practices during repairs. The Lead Education and Awareness Project's (LEAP) activities were guided by a local Task Force whose members included:

-**Cynthia Goldstein-Hart**, Epidemiologist, Polk County Health Department

-**Kelly Johnson**, Planning Director, Heartland Rural Health Network, Inc.

-**Timothy Mitchell**, Environment Supervisor, Polk County Health Department



-**Donna Stayton**, Health Educator, Highlands County Health Department

-**Carolyn Wyatt**, Extension Agent III, UF IFAS Hardee Co. Extension.

Some of LEAP's accomplishments include:

- Forming a local Task Force to provide guidance on community education and development of a Strategic Plan
- Designing and distributing a

Physician's Toll Kit to 200 family practice physicians and pediatricians

- Conducting four Train the Trainer sessions on lead poisoning prevention for 48 people who can serve as community trainers
- -Providing 2 two Lead Safe Work Practices Training sessions for 36 city/county code enforcement and health department staff, housing and weatherization providers and home renovators
- Provided CEU training to 28 Parish Nurses
- Developed a training video
- Placed educational ads on 9 radio stations
- Developed and distributed a long term Strategic Plan
- Posted LEAP materials on www.healthcouncils.org

Article submitted by the Health Council of West Central Florida

Homeless Coalition Providers Making Strides Towards Ending Homelessness



Several organizations involved with the **Hardee and Highlands County Homeless Coalitions** have recently received some great news as it relates to funding their homeless housing projects. The Florida Housing Finance Corporation announced awards totaling \$12.6 million to assist with the development of seven special needs housing projects across the state of Florida. **Hannah's House**, a domes-

tic violence shelter, operated by **Alpha & Omega Freedom Ministries** of Hardee County and **Lakeside Park** operated by the **Avon Park Housing Authority of Highlands County** received funding to fund renovations to their homeless housing programs. Additionally, **Alpha & Omega Freedom Ministries** received \$150,000 from the Florida Department of Children & Families for an Emergency Shel-

ter grant which supports shelter improvement activities, shelter operations, and essential services for their shelter. **The Hardee Help Center** also received \$100,000 under the same Florida granting agency to help support homeless prevention activities such as rental assistance and case management. Congratulations to these three organizations who are really making strides towards ending homelessness in our rural counties.

Network Values Membership ~

Grants help members with various health programs

In 1993, the State of Florida passed enabling legislation authorizing the creation of rural health networks. Heartland Rural Health Network, Inc. (HRHN) is a not-for-profit entity that was incorporated in that same year, and in July 1995, became the first rural health network in Florida to be certified by the State of Florida Agency for Healthcare Administration (AHCA). Today it is the largest of nine state networks and covers an area of 4,780 square miles and includes rural Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto Counties and the rural portions of Polk and Charlotte Counties. HRHN is a member-driven organization. Our membership includes a variety of hospitals, private providers, federally qualified health centers, an area health education center, a local healthy start coalition, mental health/substance abuse providers, health departments, and emergency service providers. Over the last 10 years the Network has provided it's members with value added services totaling over \$ 3 million dollars. 77% of the Network's revenue comes from private, foundation, and federal grants; 15% from a state contract, and 5% from membership dues with the remaining 3% received from donations and in-kind services. **J. Rudy Reinhardt, Executive Director of**



Heartland Rural Health Network aims to provide value added benefits to it's members. Members are encouraged to contact the Network staff to discuss ways to collaborate on health projects and funding opportunities.

HRHN, invites members to contact the Network to discuss potential projects or programs members might be interested in pursuing. "One of our goals is to provide value added benefits to our members," he tells members at a recent Board meeting. "Through our members' interests the Network can seek out grant funding for potential projects. It's through this open communication with Network staff that we have been able to secure various health related grants to serve our members' interests." Some of the more recent grants involving the Network's membership includes, but is not limited to, vision safety education and screenings in partnership with the **Redlands Christian Migrant Association;**

teenage pregnancy prevention with the **Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto County Health Departments** and **Teen Pregnancy Prevention Alliance;** a health care voucher program with **Central Florida Health Care, Highlands and Hardee County Health Departments, Marge Brewster Center, Tri-County Human Services and Samaritan's Touch Care Center;** mammography screenings with **Florida Hospital Heartland Seascape Imaging and DeSoto Memorial Hospital;** development of a homeless management information system network with **Florida's Heartland Rural Consortia for the Homeless, Inc. and the Highlands County Coalition for the Homeless;** telecommunication discounts through the Universal Service program for **Florida Hospital Heartland, Lake Placid & Wauchula and DeSoto Memorial Hospital;** and the Diabetes Master Clinician Program in cooperation with 18 local providers and **Dr. Edward Shahady, Medical Director, Florida Academy of Family Physicians Foundation.** Members are encouraged to contact the Network to discuss potential future projects and grant opportunities. If you are currently not a member but are interested in joining the Network please contact **J. Rudy Reinhardt, Executive Director,** at 863-452-6530. Please visit www.hrhcn.org for updates on grant projects and other valuable information.

Network's Diabetes Master Clinician Program Moving Full Speed Ahead: 18 local practitioners on board and more expected to join soon

Heartland Rural Health Network, Inc. received a **United States Department of Health & Human Services, Health Resources and Services Rural Health Network Development grant** in the amount of \$169,530.00. This is a three year grant with total programmatic funding of \$ 524,590.00, based on the availability of funds in subsequent program years. The significant increase in the prevalence of diabetes across the United States, including all of our rural communities has been a source of concern to our health care providers for several years now. Diabetes is now the fifth leading cause of death in the United States. To combat the escalating rates of diabetes in our own rural communities the Network is working closely with local health care providers and **Dr. Edward Shahady, Medical Director of the Diabetes Master Clinician Program (DMCP)**, to implement this model of care in rural Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto Counties. The DMCP's goal is to facilitate diabetes care excellence in the outpatient setting. **Kathy MacNeill, the Network's Associate Director of the DMCP program**, has been meeting with local practitioner's to introduce the program, explain the benefits this program brings to their diabetic patients, and encourages physicians to implement the program in their own practices. Each practice team of a clinician and medical assistant (MA) or nurse receives evidence-based training through interactive group seminars, visits to the clinician's office, and educational e-mails during an 8- to 12-month period. Alumni meetings are held yearly. The office manager and other office staff also receive an orientation to the project. Training includes information about current published clinical standards of



care, how to enter data into the Internet-based electronic diabetes registry, how to produce and interpret quality assessment reports, and how to conduct group visits. The Internet-based diabetes registry is a critical piece of this program. Evidence-based quality indicators were used in the creation of the database fields. The diabetes registry provides excellent reports that enhance care for one-on-one office visits and facilitate population management of all diabetic patients in the participating practices. The diabetes registry provides a report that saves physicians up to 5 minutes by organizing all of the pertinent diabetes information for physician review. The most valuable report is the patient report card. This is given to patients by the MA or nurse. The language that is used to explain the items is intended to empower and educate patients and encourage self-management. The other reports in the diabetes registry focus on population management. Population management tools aid physicians with identifying patients who have not returned to the office for periodic diabetes evaluations, as well as those who may have been to the office but have not had the recommended periodic evaluations. At time of this newslet-

ter publication the Network has 18 local practitioners on board and implementing the program into their own practices. These 18 practitioners include: **Dr. Kendra Hall** (Highlands); **Dr. Joseph Toulouse** (Hardee); **Dr. Kathleen Welch-Wilson** (Hardee); **Dr. Miguel Beltre** (Highlands); **Stacey Berrios, PA-C** (Highlands); **Gary Gossman, PA-C** (Hardee); **Keith Coker, PA-C** (Hardee); **John Gill, PA-C** (Hardee); **Lauren Canary, PA-C** (Hardee); **Dr. Shailesh Joshi** (Highlands); **Kathy Smehyl, PA-C** (Highlands); **Dianna Chizmas, ARNP** (Highlands); **Dr. Mirza Gagot-Rivera** (DeSoto); **Dr. Michael Krzyzkowski** (DeSoto); **Dr. Felix Perez** (DeSoto); **Dr. Priyamvada Gujjar** (Highlands); **Laurie Cyril, ARNP** (Highlands). The Network's Associate Director of the DMCP is also providing program oversight for four (4) practitioners in Citrus County, Florida. "The Network is seeking additional practitioners who may be interested in this program. We'd like to see the number of practitioners in our rural communities using the DMCP model increase even more over the next year," **Kathy MacNeill** stated. Anyone interested in learning more about the DMCP model is encouraged to contact **Kathy MacNeill** at 863-452-6530.

Congratulations!

Diabetes Master Clinician Program

Selected as the winner of the
2008 Medical Economics
Award for Innovation in
Practice Improvement.

***Baby Think It Over...** Simulators teach teens the realities of caring for a baby*

The Heartland Rural Health Network is proud to announce the new arrival of six "Baby Think It Over" Simulator dolls from Realityworks, the creator of the world's first and only computerized infant simulators. These dolls were purchased for the Network by the **Central Florida Area Health Education Center** and will be used in the efforts to combat teenage pregnancy in the Network's rural communities. These baby simulators provide girls and boys "hands-on" experience with feeding, diapering, rocking, burping, and other nurturing requirements of a baby. They also monitor for the kind of behavior that would result in Shaken Baby Syndrome. More than one million teens have used Baby Think It Over since its creation in 1993. "I don't want babies; I'm gonna wait," is a fairly typical response of those who have experienced caring for Baby. The infant simulator is a lifelike, life-size (20 1/2

inches) vinyl baby weighing 6.5 pounds. It is anatomically correct and available in both sexes and five different ethnicities. An internal computer simulates an infant crying at realistic, random intervals 24 hours a day. Intervals can be adjusted from 15 minutes to 6 hours for a normal, cranky, or particularly easy to care for baby. Real Care Babies must be fed bottles and have their diapers changed. Care sessions last from 5 to 35 minutes. If the "baby" has been properly cared for, it will coo to signal the end of the session. If it is neglected (allowed to cry for more than one minute) or handled roughly (dropped, thrown or struck), tamper-proof indicators on the computer will alert the instructor. Recent studies have shown that the use of the Baby Think It Over Program is more effective in changing the attitudes of adolescents toward parenting than other popular

strategies such as shadowing a teen parent for a day or carrying around a sack of flour representing a baby. Reductions of up to 50% in the rate of teen pregnancy have been reported by some schools and teachers who have used the infant simulator. Baby Think It Over has received several major awards and evidence based studies continue to be done on the outcomes of using this program to teach the realities of teenage pregnancy. These simulators will be used in conjunction with abstinence education efforts in Highlands, DeSoto, and Hardee Counties. The Network would



Baby Think It Over Simulators are lifelike weighing 6.5 pounds. They simulate a real baby and are available in 5 ethnicities.

like to thank the **Central Florida Area Health Education Center** for purchasing these infant simulators. These simulators will help enhance the messages on just how difficult it is to be a teen parent.

Kids Smiling Bright in Hardee County

With the stroke of a brush, Hardee County children under the age of 3 can now have a fluoride varnish treatment provided by a dentist at the **Hardee County Health Department**. The treatment is free to Medicaid patients and costs only \$16 for self-pay clients who qualify. To qualify, you must be a Hardee County resident with no dental insurance and have a household income below 125% poverty level.



The topical, painless fluoride treatment allows a dentist to paint a lasting smile within a matter of 5 minutes. Since the fluoride varnish is applied directly to the child's teeth less of the product is swallowed, making it very safe for children. One hour after treatment, children can rinse their mouth but should not brush their teeth that evening. The next morning, children can resume their normal brushing routine. For more information call 863-773-4161.

TPPA Introduces New Logo!

The **Highlands County Teen Pregnancy Prevention Alliance (TPPA)** introduced their newly designed logo over the summer. This logo was designed to have a more positive message for teens. The powerful phrase "Why Risk It!" means don't get involved in risky behaviors that leads to Sexually Transmitted Infections and Teenage Pregnancies. "We are really excited to have this newly



designed logo," **Susan Buelow, Highlands TPPA Coordinator** stated. "Teens gave us their feedback on the logo and it was very positive."

Breast Health Education Program A Success

The Heartland Rural Health Network recently submitted their final report for a grant received from the **Florida Breast Cancer Research Coalition**. The purpose of this grant was to teach rural women just how important being pro-active in their breast health is as it relates to cancer. The Network worked in partnership with their sister Network, the **Northwest Florida Rural Health Network, Inc. (NFRHN)** to implement a breast health education program in the rural portions of Santa Rosa and Escambia Counties. Two lay health educators were recruited and trained by the **NFRHN Executive Director, Maxine Ivey**, to conduct breast health educational outreach sessions using the *Cultivando La Salud Breast Health Curriculum*. This curriculum is formatted so that individuals teaching the class do not have to have a health education background. Through training, these



Aside from non-melanoma skin cancer, breast cancer is the most common form of cancer in women. Women need to be pro-active in their breast health by following recommended screening guidelines.

health educators can conduct successful community education sessions using the materials provided. The curriculum is uniquely designed to influence participant's attitudes and increase the number of women regularly participating in breast self exams, clinical breast exams, and mammography's. Breast health models and breast health videos were also incorporated into the sessions. Participants really enjoyed the models

and videos utilized, as evidenced by the completed session evaluation surveys. The NFRHN conducted 13 educational sessions serving 111 women. The two-hour educational sessions were offered at a variety of locations accessible to the target population. Locations included vision centers, the local hospital, senior centers/meal sites, a medical clinic serving low-income individuals/families, local community centers, and several

local churches. Participants were asked to fill out a pre test before the educational session began and were then asked to fill out the same test (post test) at the end of their session. The instructor reviewed the answers to the post test after individuals submitted them for data analysis. The pre/post tests reflected an overall increase in participant's knowledge as it relates to the various breast health topics covered in the sessions. 100% of participants rated their instructors knowledge of the issues as "excellent" or "good." The Northwest Florida Rural Health Network plans to continue offering these educational sessions to women in their rural communities. Both Networks would like to thank the **Florida Breast Cancer Research Coalition** for this funding opportunity.

Health Care Vouchers Still Available Through Grants

The Heartland Rural Health Network has funding for health care vouchers made available through the **Florida Department of Children & Families, Office on Homelessness Grant-In-Aid** and the **Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice. Grant-In-Aid** provides funding to issue health care vouchers for homeless individuals and those at-risk

of becoming homeless through one of the Network's participating providers. This includes, but is not limited to, primary care, mental health/substance abuse care, some specialty care, prescrip-



tions, and dental services. Individuals are screened for eligibility. The Network also has limited funding provided by a grant from the

Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice to provide

mammography vouchers for women between 40-49; living at or below 200% Federal Poverty Level, who have not received a mammogram in the last two years, and have no health insurance. There is a Statewide program that is available for women 50-64 years of age. Please contact the Network at 863-452-6530.

RCMA Children Have A Healthy Eye On Education:

Children's Vision Safety Education Enhanced Through Grant

Heartland Rural Health Network, in collaboration with the **Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA)**, received a \$10,000 grant from the **National Eye Institute** in 2007 to implement the only vision safety education curriculum produced that is geared towards children ages 2-5. In 2007, RCMA successfully reached 350 low-income children in three rural counties (Highlands, Hardee, and DeSoto Counties) who attended one of RCMA's Head Start schools. A total of 145 parents received vision safety education at various parent

meetings and a total of 48 staff were involved in the implementation and/or teaching the curriculum. The successes achieved in the first year of the grant led to HRHN receiving a \$10,000 renewal of the grant for 2008-2009. This renewal grant has allowed RCMA to really expand their vision education efforts to include puppets, games, crafts, and books which are used to enhance the vision safety curriculum. 127 puppets, 197 books, a variety of games, and craft supplies have been distributed to each of RCMA's 15 schools in the tri-



Two RCMA children enjoy vision safety activities using goggles

county area. RCMA expects to serve the same number of children that were reached in the prior funding year. This new

grant funding ends December, 2008. For more information on the program contact the Network staff at 863-452-6530.

Samaritan's Touch Care Center Meeting a Community Need

A widower in his mid-fifties came to **Samaritan's Touch Care Center (STCC)** in Sebring, FL for care. Having been diagnosed ten years earlier with skin cancer on his chest he was referred to a surgeon at the time, but because he had no health insurance, no one would take care of him. As primary caretaker for his disabled daughter, he came to put her needs before his own and, consequently, saw no one for follow up for ten years. Then he heard about STCC and became qualified for care. By then the skin cancer had grown and deep-



ened. Once **Dr. Pena** did a biopsy that confirmed basal cell carcinoma, STCC facilitated the patient's acceptance by **Moffitt Cancer Center** in Tampa who subsequently donated the surgery

to remove the skin cancer. They believe they removed all of the cancer and want him to follow up with a dermatologist every 3-4 months. It's amazing what outcomes STCC has

brought to the Heartland. STCC, which opened in May, 2007, is a clinic for medically-indigent families and individuals with no health insurance. Many local and nearby health care facilities donate services and staff to STCC. Since opening their doors on May 14, 2007 STCC has served over 700 new patients through over 4,000 patient visits and provided donated medical care valued at over \$1,500,000.00! For more information on the clinic or to volunteer please contact **Diana Furr, Executive Director**, at 863-471-1870.

** Story submitted by STCC*

Central Florida Health Care Celebrates National Health Center Week

August 10th thru the 16th kicked off **National Health Center Week 2008 (NHCW)** a national campaign dedicated to recognizing the service and contributions of America's Community Health Centers. The special focus for this year's NHCW is a new health center plan to create more health care homes in the future for the medically underserved and to honor the health care "heroes" at existing health centers today. The health care heroes are health center doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals who have chosen to serve in communities in need, helping to expand the reach of primary care and preventive health services.

"Our health care heroes at **Central Florida Health Care** work hard every day, providing people in the community a health care home so they can stay healthy and out of hospitals," said **Barbara Gleeson**,



Chief Operations Officer. "National Health Center Week is a time that we set aside not only to recognize the work of health centers, but also to spread the message that America needs to invest in an accessible and affordable community health system that can reduce disparities, improve health, and achieve cost savings in health and prevention."

The annual celebration comes as health centers launch a collective effort to reach the goals of a bold new plan called ACCESS for All America to serve 30 million people by the year 2015. **Central Florida Health Care**,

Inc. is a proud supporter of National Health Center Week 2008 and the ACCESS for All America plan. Imagine the difference we can make by giving more people access to a health care home so they can stay healthy and out of hospitals. The payoff is lower health care costs, and healthier, more productive communities. **Central Florida Health Care** is committed to doing their part in seeing this plan become a reality in our communities.

Also, NHCW set aside a day to focus on a population who is often left outside of the mainstream health care system. The first ever Farm worker Health Day was observed on Thursday, August 14th, 2008. Visitors enjoyed refreshments and snacks as well as tours of **Central Florida Health Care's** facilities.

CFHC provides quality, affordable health care services at six locations throughout Highlands, Hardee, and Polk Counties.

Hardee County Health Department Recognized for Women's Programs

Out of the 67 county health departments in Florida, the Hardee County Health Department has been recognized by the Florida Department of Health, Women's Health Division, as the County Health Department of the Month for its innovative maternal health programs.

The Hardee County Health Department offers obstetrical care (both traditional and centering), family planning, breastfeeding support, parenting and childbirth education classes, inter-

conception and infertility counseling and teen pregnancy prevention.

With bilingual staff members, education, counseling and clinical appointments are available in both English and Spanish. This increases the ability of Hardee County to provide services to residents. From October 1, 2007-June 30, 2008, the Hardee County Health Department provided 96,058 services with over 5,000 of those being maternal health services to residents in the commu-

nity. "Our Centering programs for prenatal care and well baby checks are unique to both the county and the state. We are providing a service to our community that is not available elsewhere," stated **Dr. Stephen Gordon, medical director of the Hardee County Health Department.**

Centering, or group prenatal care, allows pregnant women due to deliver within the same month to receive their health-care in a group setting while

also providing time for education and for bonding with other women.

For more information on any of these programs please contact the health department at 863-773-4161.

Article submitted by Erin Hess, Hardee County Health Department



National LIHEAP Program Receives \$5.1 Billion: \$94.3 Million Allocated For Florida

President Bush signed a Continuing Resolution in September, 2008 that increases funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program to the congressionally authorized level of \$5.1 billion. This historic decision is the result of tireless work by the program's champions in the House and Senate who recognized the vital need for more money in this program and refused to accept "no" for an answer.

The 5.1 billion appropriation allocates \$4.5 billion into formula block grants to states, and \$590 million to the emergency contingency fund. The bill directs that the federal government obligate funds to states within 30 days of enactment.

The Highlands County Coalition for the Homeless, Inc. announces a significant increase for LIHEAP funding for the State of Florida and for the residents of Highlands and Hardee Counties.



For Fiscal Year 2008, Florida received \$ 30.4 million in funding. The continuing resolution increased this funding to \$ 94.3 million. This significant increase means more low income residents in both of these rural counties will be served. To be eligible, residents must be at or below 150% of the Federal Poverty Level.

The Coalition also serves individuals and families through their community services block grant program. This program targets individuals and families that includes members that are either under 5 years of age, over the age of 55 or are disabled. This block grant has enabled the Coalition to move approximately 40 families and individuals out of homelessness as well as assisting other low-income individuals become more self-sufficient.

For more information on the Highlands and Hardee LIHEAP programs you may contact the office at 863-452-1074. For more information regarding the community services block grant program in Highlands County please call 863-452-1079. You can also visit the Florida Department of Community Affairs website at www.dca.state.fl.us

*Article submitted by Highlands County Coalition for the Homeless, Inc.

"...For Fiscal Year 2008, Florida received 30.4 million in LIHEAP funding. The continuing resolution recently signed by President Bush increased this funding to 94.3 million!"

Community Development Grants Awarded: Highlands, Hardee, DeSoto Receive Funding

The Florida Office of Rural Health recently awarded grants to five rural health departments to conduct community needs assessment and development activities. The grants were provided via the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Program as part of efforts to promote local awareness and involvement in identifying and addressing priority health needs in rural communities

using the Mobilizing Action Through Planning & Partnership (MAPP) process.

Over the past four years a total of 21 of Florida's 33 rural counties have received funding under this program to identify local needs and priorities, and develop strategies to address community priorities. Those rural county Health Departments awarded a grant in the current funding cycle were Hardee, Glades, Jefferson

and Union Counties. Baker, DeSoto, Highlands, and Levy received an extension of their grant award from a previous funding cycle. The **Hardee County Health Department** plans on using funds to conduct a community planning meeting while **Highlands and DeSoto County Health Departments** will produce a community "report card" highlighting their community's health data.





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Florida Hospital Wauchula Celebrates Renovations

Florida Hospital Wauchula welcomed the newly renovated Emergency Department by holding a ribbon cutting ceremony on Tuesday, September 23rd. **Linda Adler**, Administrator, stated "We increased our Emergency Department from seven beds to 14 beds and more than doubled the floor space of the department."

Lyn Pollock of Burt Hill/Pollock Krieg Architects was the designer and construction was done by **Stevens Construction**. The project took place over a 10 month period of time at a cost of approximately \$1.1 million dollars. The community as-



Florida Hospital Wauchula welcomes expanded Emergency Department

sisted with donations in excess of \$200,000 with the first donation coming from Peace River Electric's community board. "Patients and staff are receptive and impressed with

the new environment which will greatly aid the flow of patients seeking care for their emergencies," **Linda Adler** stated.

Article submitted by Florida Hospital Wauchula

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