



*For Immediate Release*

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## **Greater Delta Alliance for Health Awarded \$750K USDA Grant**

*Funds will provide expanded and advanced emergency training for rural healthcare workers*

**Lake Village, AR, March 28, 2016:** The Greater Delta Alliance for Health (GDAH), a non-profit organization of ten Arkansas Delta hospitals, was recently awarded a USDA Delta Health Care Services grant for \$752,832. The funds will go toward creating the Arkansas Delta Health Education for Local Providers (HELP) Expansion project and will partner the GDAH with University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) to provide free, on-site trauma simulation training for hospital teams, emergency department staff, first responders and nursing students throughout the Arkansas Delta.

"This generous grant will assist the GDAH with its efforts to improve the healthcare workforce in the Arkansas Delta," said Rex Jones, GDAH Chairman and Bradley County Medical Center CEO. He added, "Simulation training can recreate scenarios that are rarely experienced and test professionals in challenging situations. It is also an optimal method to sharpen teamwork and communications skills that are critical to patient safety."

The HELP Expansion project trainings will be provided by UAMS Centers for Simulation Education and include continuing education units and required certification training for advanced adult and pediatric trauma, advanced OB, stroke assessment and mock code for ICUs and emergency departments. All are designed to allow healthcare workers to gain cutting-edge knowledge and the hands-on proficiency needed to provide superior medical assistance in real-life settings to patients who have suffered traumatic injuries and to improve response time in emergency situations.

"The need for well-prepared hospital personnel and emergency response agencies is crucial in the Arkansas Delta where the 'rurality' of the environment demands more on those faced with emergency situations," said GDAH Executive Director Mellie Bridewell. "With the vast shortage of nurses and ambulance workers in the region, it is imperative that current staff be trained with the necessary skills needed to meet the challenges in providing lifesaving services."

The GDAH's HELP Expansion project will also include an important, first-time training opportunity by offering free EMT education and certification for up to thirty Arkansas Delta firefighters through the University of Arkansas Monticello College of Technology-McGehee. The GDAH will work with rural fire departments to recruit current firefighters that would like to return to school to become a certified EMT. By covering full tuition and fees, the project will increase the number of EMTs in the region, thereby strengthening the workforce in the local economy.

"Increasing the number of healthcare professionals and first responders with advanced training through this project will have a positive effect on the fiscal health of a community," said Bridewell. "Rural hospitals are often one of the largest employers, offering some of the best paying jobs. And by improving the capabilities and skills of the current workforce, these hospitals will thrive through increased utilization of their facility while also furthering their ability to attract healthcare professionals who would normally seek out work in more urban areas. The GDAH strives to develop a more skilled and trained workforce, knowing how vital it is to attract businesses, create jobs for its residents and achieve economic growth in the communities we serve throughout the Arkansas Delta."

Hospitals participating in the HELP/On-site Simulation Trainings include GDAH partners Ashley County Medical Center in Crossett, Baptist Health-Stuttgart, Bradley County Medical Center in Warren, Chicot Memorial Medical Center in Lake Village, Dallas County Medical Center in Fordyce, Delta Memorial Hospital in Dumas, DeWitt Hospital & Nursing Home, Drew Memorial Hospital in Monticello, Jefferson Regional Medical Center in Pine Bluff and McGehee Hospital. Other participating hospitals include Helena Regional Medical Center, Ouachita County Medical Center in Camden and Forrest City Medical Center. Jefferson Regional Medical Center School of Nursing in Pine Bluff will also provide on-site simulation training.

For more information on programs offered, contact the GDAH toll-free at (855) 390-9195.