



For Immediate Release

\$2.5 Million Grant Will Expand Healthcare Across Arkansas Delta

Funds will improve health outcomes through high quality service

Lake Village, AR, August 7, 2016: The Greater Delta Alliance for Health was recently awarded \$2,565,000 by the HRSA Delta States Rural Development Grant Program. It is the largest award ever bestowed on a non-profit, independently-owned hospital network in the state of Arkansas. The funds will establish the Healthy Communities Project, a multi-faceted program that will unite nineteen Arkansas Delta counties with one common purpose: Improve the health outcomes of all Delta residents through high quality service delivery. Arkansas counties served through this project include Arkansas, Monroe, Lonoke, Phillips, Ashley, Chicot, Drew, Bradley, Union, Calhoun, Desha, Drew, Dallas, Cleveland, Grant, Lincoln, St. Francis, Ouachita and Lee counties.

“Through innovative programs, including workforce development, increased accessibility to services in rural counties, and a funding initiative enabling Delta communities to implement local health campaigns, Healthy Communities will transform healthcare delivery into a patient-driven system,” stated Mellie Bridewell, executive director of the GDAH. “As a result, healthcare opportunities for all Arkansas Delta residents will be significantly broadened and greatly improved.”

The mission of the GDAH and its partners is to increase access to healthcare programs and resources for residents and healthcare providers. The Healthy Communities Project, according to GDAH Chairman and Bradley County Medical Center CEO Rex Jones will “create opportunities for increased services at the partnering organizations and provide additional training for GDAH staff to improve on the exceptional care already delivered. The GDAH also recognizes the vital role our patients play in their health, so the project will also be offering new educational opportunities for both our patients and the public.”

The Healthy Communities Project will provide funds to assist the hospitals, rural clinics and community health centers with compliance, skills training, continuing education and certification requirements for their employees as well as focus on two critical health issues that are widespread across the Arkansas Delta; diabetes and obesity.

In April of this year, the World Health Organization announced that the number of adults living with diabetes worldwide has nearly quadrupled since 1980 to 422 million. In Arkansas the disease has reached epidemic proportions and is the state’s 6th leading cause of death. To help curb the tide on diabetes as a prevalent chronic disease in the Delta, the grant will extend funds to increase the number of accredited diabetes educators to enhance the delivery of quality diabetes care.

“This project will offer Arkansas Delta hospitals, community health centers and rural health clinics assistance in becoming certified diabetes sites capable of providing qualified and reimbursable diabetes education services, cooking classes and service navigation for their patients,” said Bridewell. “GDAH educators will continue to present free diabetes self-management classes that will equip participants with the necessary tools to better manage their disease.” UAMS East in Helena will assist the GDAH in reaching residents and patients in Phillips, Chicot, and Desha counties.

The secondary focus for the Healthy Communities Project is based on the alarming rate of obesity, which is now a national epidemic that has been classified as a disease by the American Medical Association. With almost 50% of adult Arkansans faced with this life-threatening condition, a partnership with the Arkansas Coalition for Obesity Prevention (ArCOP) will provide assistance in funding sub-grants to be distributed by ArCOP to Arkansas Delta communities targeted in this project that meet the coalition’s Healthy Initiatives program criteria.

Funding will require the full participation of mayors and other city leaders and will be open to communities who design creative approaches to combating obesity as a shared health concern by recognizing the need for local policy changes as well as individual lifestyle changes that support healthy life practices.

The Healthy Communities Project will assist patients and health care providers in GDAH member hospitals including Ashley County Medical Center, Baptist Health-Stuttgart, Bradley County Medical Center, Chicot Memorial Medical Center, Dallas County Medical Center, Delta Memorial Hospital, DeWitt Hospital & Nursing Home, Drew Memorial Hospital, Jefferson Regional Medical Center and McGehee Hospital. Partnering hospitals include Ouachita County Medical Center, Helena Regional Medical Center and Forrest City Medical Center.

Partnering community health centers include Mainline Health Systems, Mid-Delta Health Systems, Inc., CABUN Rural Health Services, Lee County Cooperative Clinic, East Arkansas Family Health Center and Jefferson Comprehensive Care System. Rural health clinic partners include Lake Village Clinic, Pillow Clinic, Daughters of Charity and all health clinics associated with GDAH hospitals.

By promoting and connecting the development of an integrated health care network, furthering the quality of health care services by expanding free education for healthcare providers and improving the health outcomes of Arkansas Delta residents, the GDAH's Healthy Communities Project aligns closely with the Healthy People 2020 goal of "providing our society a vision for improving both the quantity and quality of life for all Americans."

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