

New RHCC Member Volunteers for Her Community

Susan Bender is new to the rural health game. Her husband, a dentist in Baker City, receives the Office of Rural Health newsletter. While looking through the newsletter, she saw the notice seeking a new Rural Health Coordinating Council (RHCC) member to represent a community of less than 3,500. She decided to volunteer for the position.

“I felt it was the best way to serve my community,” said Ms. Bender. “I’m new to rural health, and just getting my feet wet.”

The Rural Health Coordinating Council is the advisory body to the Office of Rural Health. It is made up of 18 voting members representing 17 different organizations and communities around the state. There are also two advisory, non-voting members from the Oregon Department of Human Services and the Oregon Primary Care Association.

Bender represents North Powder, a ranching community located between La Grande and Baker City, in Union County. The next nearest health care is 25 miles away from North Powder and involves crossing a mountain pass, which is often closed due to snow. North Powder has a population of 490, many of whom are uninsured. Their school based rural clinic is part of the Health Network for Rural

Schools program run by the Oregon Health & Science University School of Nursing. The clinic serves the entire community, both children and adults. A family nurse practitioner, school nurse, mental health counselor and family resource center coordinator make up the clinic staff.

Bender has two main concerns about health care in rural Oregon. The first is the number of physicians eliminating obstetrics from their practices in rural areas. “We need to find out what can be done to help (these physicians) to continue in their full practices.” Bender feels strongly about ensuring women have access to obstetric care when they need it. Her other concern is maintaining the highest quality health care possible for rural communities during tight financial times.

So far Bender has attended one RHCC meeting. “It was overwhelming, with the acronyms and all, however, everyone was very helpful and I enjoyed it very much.” She looks forward to attending the next RHCC meeting in April. To find out more about Rural Health Coordinating Council members, visit the Office of Rural Health’s web site at www.ohsu.edu/oregonruralhealth.

Federal Program Helps Rural Health Fair Well in Oregon *And now for some good news*

Federal funds for most rural health programs have been holding steady, some even increasing over the past three years. In fiscal year 2001 the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Programs awarded 110.6 million worth of grants. These programs included the Outreach and Network Grants, the state Flex (CAH) Grant, the State Offices of Rural Health grants, Policy Development and Research, and the Denali Commission (Alaska) grants. Two new grant programs appeared in 2002, the Small Hospital Improvement Program (SHIP) and the Rural Access to Emergency Devices (RAED) program.

“The good news”, says Scott Ekblad, Deputy Director of the Office of Rural Health, “is that both the RAED and SHIP grant programs were funded for a second year.”

The Office of Rural Health Policy’s Small Rural Hospital Improvement (SHIP) Grant Program provides funding to small rural hospitals to help them do any or all of the following: 1) pay for costs related to the implementation of PPS, 2) comply with provisions of HIPAA and 3) reduce medical errors and support quality improvement.

The federal Office of Rural Health Policy’s Rural Access to Emergency Devices (RAED) Grant Program provides funding to rural communities to purchase automated external defibrillators (AEDs) and provide training in their use.

Fiscal year 2002 saw an increase in funding appropriations for just about every federal Office of Rural Health Policy program. The

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total monies appropriated for rural health was \$148.8 million, with the addition of the SHIP and RAED grants.

An increase for Outreach and Network Grants and State Offices Grants has been appropriated for fiscal year 2003. The SHIP and RAED grants will receive the same amount as in fiscal year 2002. This puts the budget for rural health at 157.7 million, helping to ensure the continuation of rural health programs across the state.

New Zip Code for ORH

Please change your records

The Office of Rural Health has a new zip code. When sending mail to the ORH please use the zip code 97239-3098.

This new zip code applies not only to ORH, but to all of Oregon Health & Science University as well. As of June 1, 2003 mail using the old zip code will be returned.

The Rural Assistance Center

This new service offers many resources

The Rural Assistance Center (RAC) is a national information resource for rural residents and others seeking information on health and human services for rural communities. This online resource connects users to experts, organizations, and peers in other communities who can offer guidance and support on numerous rural health care issues.

RAC can assist you by finding print and electronic publications, doing web searches for online articles, or developing a web-based index to rural health and human services documents. RAC will find potential sources of funding for community program development, and identify federal and private foundation funding opportunities on a national, regional, or state level upon request.

RAC Information Guides provide concise summaries and useful facts on rural health and human services. Data and information supplied by RAC can be used to support decision-making, write grant proposals, and better understand rural health issues.

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The Rural Assistance Center was launched through a partnership with the University of North Dakota Center for Rural Health, the University of Nebraska Medical Center Rural Policy Research Institute, the University of Missouri-Columbia Rural Policy Research Institute, and the Welfare Information Network in Washington, D.C. RAC is supported by a grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration's Office of Rural Health Policy.

The Rural Assistance Center can be accessed online at www.raconline.org. To contact RAC staff with questions or a request for information, send an email to info@raconline.org, or call toll free, 1-800-270-1898.

Recruitment Services Has a New Coordinator

The Office of Rural Health is pleased to welcome its new Recruitment Services Coordinator, Sandra Assasnik. Sandra comes to Oregon from Salt Lake City, Utah where she worked for several years as Program Manager for the Utah State Office of Rural Health & Primary Care. She shaped the J-1 visa waiver program for Utah, managed the state loan repayment program, and developed a recruitment and retention program for practice sites.

Sandra also worked as consultant providing recruitment assistance, as well as cultural competency training for health clinics.

Please update your records to show Sandra Assasnik as the Office of Rural Health Recruitment Services Coordinator. She may be contacted at 503-494-4450, toll-free at 866-674-4376 or via email: assasnik@ohsu.edu.

Free Report from NWAFF

The Northwest Area Foundation recently released "Across the Great Divide: People, Places and Poverty in the Northwest Area Foundation's Region." The purpose of the report was to analyze U.S. Census Bureau data changes from 1990 to 2000. The report explores the demographic and economic realities faced by the people in the Northwest Area Foundation's Region, which includes Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa. The Foundation works with communities in the eight-state region to reduce poverty. The report is available on their web site at www.nwaf.org or by calling 1-800-904-9821.



Hermiston Hospital, circa 1950

National Rural Funders Collaborative Offers Best Practices, Funding New Potential Resource for Funding Opportunities

The National Rural Funders Collaborative (NRFC) was created in 2001 as a funding and learning initiative to support and expand the resource base for rural American communities and rural families, especially where persistent poverty exists. Seven private U.S. foundations, which are NRFC's initial members, are seeking to leverage \$100 million for rural reinvestment over the next ten years to support the NRFC initiative.

The Collaborative encourages its partners to invest in rural communities and to work with the community to determine strategies, outcomes and measures that are important in sustaining and enhancing rural vitality and viability. NRFC focuses on partnering regionally to create and sustain measurable changes.

The Collaborative seeks to expand thinking on rural policy, philanthropy and community building through partnerships and published documents that effectively communicate the importance and centrality of rural America. The Collaborative has put together a "Portfolio of Strategic & Learning Opportunities" which discusses distinctive strategic approaches to community-based transformation of rural areas. This publication, as well as others, is available on-line. To find out more about the Collaborative, and possible funding opportunities, visit their web site at www.nrfc.org.

NRHA On-line Job Bank

The National Rural Health Association now has an On-line Job Bank specifically for administrative positions in rural health facilities. The database contains job listings for CEOs, Executive Directors, Office Managers, CFOs, accounting personnel, billing and coding clerks, plus many more. Postings are not accepted for any medical positions.

The job bank is completely user-focused, allowing individuals to post listings without contacting the NRHA for assistance. Once individuals register on the site, they can post jobs, resumes, edit job descriptions, and delete the ads when a position has been filled. The Bureau of Primary Health Care funds the NRHA's On-line Job Bank. The Job Bank is a free resource and can be found at www.nrharural.org, click on the 'Job Bank' button.

National Health Service Corps Demonstration Pilot Program

The Health Care Safety Net Amendments reauthorizing the National Health Service Corp (NHSC) also authorized a demonstration pilot project to allow for participation of pharmacists and chiropractors in the NHSC Loan Repayment Program (LRP).

The NHSC is planning to implement this demonstration pilot in fiscal year 2003. In order to do this, sites that wish to participate must be identified. The legislation requires that a health professional licensed to prescribe drugs must provide NHSC obligated service at a site concurrently as the chiropractor or pharmacist who would participate in the pilot. However, nothing in this section should be construed to 1) require such health professionals to supervise the chiropractor or pharmacist, or 2) to supercede State licensure laws.

Please forward to Ssalter@hrsa.gov, the contact information for any sites that currently have NHSC clinicians licensed to prescribe drugs, and who have a desire to recruit or retain a pharmacist or chiropractor using the NHSC LRP.

For further local information contact Mr. Robert (Bob) Burns, NHSC Representative, at rburns12@aol.com, or at 757-220-0086.

TRAINING & CONFERENCE INFO

May 14 - 16, 2003

NRHA's 26th Annual Rural Health Conference
Grand America Hotel, Salt Lake City, Utah
National Rural Health Association, 816-756-3170, www.nrharural.org

May 16, 2003

"Grow Your Own" Conference
Umpqua Valley Arts Association Building, Roseburg Oregon
Area Health Education Center of Southwest Oregon, 1-800-501-1566,
ahec@healthyoregon.com

May 28 - 30, 2003

Western Region Flex Conference
Embassy Suites Gold Resort, Phoenix, Arizona
Arizona Rural Hospital Flexibility Program, Joyce Hospodar, 520-626-7946,
hospodar@u.arizona.edu

**The Office of Rural Health
would like to hear from you!**

Call us at:
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or 866-674-4376

Our full mailing address is:
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