

The Oregon Office of Rural Health Announces New E-Newsletter!!



Scott Ekblad

The Oregon ORH is excited about the publication of its new and exciting E-Newsletter! The E-Newsletter is part of the ORH's move to the Electronic Age. According to Scott Ekblad, Director of the Office, "It is essential that people get the most up to date information in the most efficient manner. To provide information and stay within our budget, the new E-Newsletter was the logical solution."

The Office of Rural Health is proud of the work it does for the people of Oregon, says Scott Ekblad. "This is another opportunity to make sure people know who we are, what we do and how we might be able to serve them better." We hope you will share the new ORH E-Newsletter with your friends.

It is easy to sign up...just follow the link below. You have the opportunity to receive the ORHQN E-Newsletter, FlexNews and the ORH E-Newsletter. Each is full of the information that is important to people who care about rural health.

And don't forget the ORH website: <http://www.ohsu.edu/oregonruralhealth/>. You will find information on the programs offered, upcoming events, a staff directory and much more.

In the near future, you will see some exciting new changes to the website. But to make the website and the newsletters a success, we need your feedback! Please take the time to let us know what you think about the new format and content by dropping a line to ruralweb@ohsu.edu.

In This Issue:	Page
The 74th Oregon Legislature Commences	2
A New Way to Follow the Legislature	3
The CHIP Blip	4
Upcoming Events of Interest	5

For a free subscription to the Oregon Office of Rural Health's E-Newsletter, please visit <http://www.ohsu.edu/oregonruralhealth>. If you do not have email or require a printed copy, please call us at (503) 494-4450 and request to be placed on the printed mailing list.

The 74th Oregon Legislature Commences



The Oregon Legislature began its 74th session on January 8, 2007. After 16 years, the Democrats now control both chambers of the legislature as well as the Governor's office. Sen. Peter Courtney, D-Salem, will remain as Senate President and Rep. Jeff Merkley, D-Portland, will be the new speaker.

The Governor released his 2007/09 budget in early December. There was some good news for rural health advocates. The Governor is requesting an additional \$600K for the Oregon Rural Health Assistance Loan Repayment program. This new commitment will allow the ORH, in conjunction with the State Student Assistance Commission, to offer loan repayment to additional providers. The ORH will also work with the Governor's Office to make it easier for local communities to be involved in the loan repayment program and to get commitments from providers before the loan repayment is awarded.

In addition to the loan repayment program, the Governor has also highlighted the following aspects of his budget that will have impacts on health care in rural Oregon.

Currently, more than 117,000 children lack health insurance. The Healthy Kids Plan will offer affordable health insurance options that are expected to cover 95% of these children within three years. The program will also include coverage for mental health services, treatment for substance abuse, and dental care.

The Governor's Budget expands health coverage to an additional 10,000-15,000 low-income Oregonians through the Oregon Health Plan "Standard" program, above the 24,000 currently served. The budget also increases reimbursement to physicians and hospitals under the Oregon Health Plan.

An additional \$6 million is invested in the Healthy Start program that provides family support for at-risk families of first children during the pre-natal period through age 3. This will increase the number of at-risk families served by 7,600 - from about 41% of the eligible population to over 50%.

The impact of legislation on the rural areas is on the minds of the legislative leadership. Sen. President Peter Courtney, D-Salem, told the Oregonian on 1/2/07, "Neither chamber would be Democratic today without an ability to win seats in rural Oregon. I think we understand that." A key member of the Senate Democratic Caucus, Sen. Bill Morrisette, D-Springfield, has made rural health care one of his main priorities for this legislative session.

The Oregon Office of Rural Health E-Newsletter will keep you updated on what is happening in Salem. Issues affecting health care in rural areas are critical to the economic development of those areas. From provider shortages to reimbursements, the ORH E-Newsletter will keep you informed on what is happening in Salem.

More information on the Loan Repayment Program can be found by visiting the ORH website at:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/oregonruralhealth/loanrepaymentpg.html>

A New Way to Follow the Legislature

A new pilot project called “The Oregon Channel” will allow citizens to watch the legislature in action. “For the first time ever, Oregonians will have a television channel dedicated solely to covering the Legislature and state government. This new Oregon Channel will be a good resource for Oregonians to learn more about their government,” said Senate President Peter Courtney.

“Oregonians value an open, honest and accessible legislature. The Oregon Channel is one more way we can involve citizens in the process, and promote transparency and accountability in government,” said House Speaker Jeff Merkley.

The Oregon Channel programming will include unedited, gavel-to-gavel coverage of Senate and House floor sessions, committee hearings, Capitol news conferences, and other state government and public affairs events of statewide interest.

The Oregon Legislature joined forces with Oregon Public Broadcasting, Southern Oregon Public Television, the Oregon University System and the Oregon Public Affairs Network to create the pilot television channel.

The Oregon Channel will be broadcast over the airwaves on a digital television channel available in most of the state’s largest cities served by OPB and SOPTV. The channel also will be available on participating digital cable systems, including Comcast, Charter, Bend Broadband and Clear Creek Cable. More information about how and where to watch the Oregon Channel can be found at <http://www.oregonchannel.org/>. Viewers can also watch the channel online, look up program schedules and access live streaming video feeds from Capitol hearing rooms and House and Senate chambers.

Additional leadership and committee assignments can be found at http://www.leg.state.or.us/press_releases/courtney_122206.pdf and http://www.leg.state.or.us/press_releases/merkley_121506.pdf.

The Governor’s Budget can be found at <http://www.oregon.gov/DAS/BAM/GRB0709.shtml>.

Other important links for the upcoming legislative session:

<http://www.governor.state.or.us/>
<http://www.leg.state.or.us/>
<http://www.sos.state.or.us/>

The CHIP Blip



The Oregon Office of Rural Health is excited to announce Astoria and Prineville as the newest Oregon CHIP Communities.

A partnership between ORH and communities with Critical Access Hospitals, The Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP) process is a community-based decision-making model that emphasizes communities making informed decisions that have local solutions.

The goal of this partnership is to develop strategies for improving the health and health systems of the local community. The CHIP process allows the community to learn by reviewing qualitative and quantitative health data and using selected group decision making methods. The Community Health Partnership consists of community members from the local service area and includes the hiring of a local project coordinator to act as the resource person for the community and as a link between the ORH and the Community Health Partnerships.

During the past six years, eight CHIP sites have been conducted. These communities include St. Helens in Columbia County, Baker City, Lebanon, Coquille, Reedsport, Newport and Lincoln City, Florence, and Madras. Some of the projects have involved helping Columbia County form a Health District to generate funds for a hospital; helping Lincoln County identify the need for a Federally Qualified Health Center; assisting Baker City to increase Medicaid and Medicare access and lower ER usage by converting primary care practices to Rural Health Clinics. Other CHIP projects have included health prevention activities such as Build Lebanon Trails, a project centered around increasing walking paths in the community so local members actually have a place to walk and exercise, heart smart lunch menus in local restaurants, and creating local health resource guides that provide all of the local health options available to local residents.

The current CHIP in Madras has selected four focus areas: Affordable Health, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention, Health Promotion, and Quality Health Services. For example, the Quality Health Services committee has decided to work on building a Community Advisory Council that would work with the hospital board on improving how the community and hospital communicate. The goal is to improve customer service to local residents and provide a voice for the community to make certain they feel involved in local health care decisions.

Feedback from CHIP communities has been positive. Many consider the CHIP program to be the catalyst for bringing new local leaders together and the starting point for their communities to begin thinking about making local decisions to solve local issues and improve the overall health of the community.

Upcoming Events of Interest

Rural Health Works Workshop in Portland

March 27, 2007

OHSU Center for Health and Healing

RHW presents “Train the Trainer” workshops to train in

1. Economic impact analysis
2. Community health engagement (planning) process
3. Budget studies for new or expanded health care services.

The training is designed for professionals from agencies that plan to be involved in providing assistance to communities in any of these three areas. Enrollment will be limited to 20 participants and will be “First Come, First Serve.” Registration Questions: 405-744-6489. Program Questions: 405-744-6083 for Cheryl St. Clair.

4th Annual Rural Nurse Conference: “Rural Nursing: Growing Quality”

June 13-15, 2007

Richland, Washington

The Call for Abstracts for the 4th Annual Rural Nurse Conference: “Rural Nursing: Growing Quality”. The submission deadline is January 10, 2007 and the conference is scheduled for June 13-15, 2007 in Richland, Washington.

Washington State University Intercollegiate College of Nursing is looking for nurse leaders, educators and researchers interested in the quality of rural health care, rural nursing practice, education or research to present. Conference presenters will be selected through a blind review process. More information about the call for abstracts and the conference may be found at <http://nursing.wsu.edu/RNI/Conference.html>.

24th Annual Oregon Rural Health Conference

September 13th - 15th, 2007

Salem Conference Center

Please visit our website for registration and other conference information:

<http://www.ohsu.edu/oregonruralhealth/2007conf.html>