The Oregon Office of Rural Health awarded $117,000 in Community Engagement Grants during FY 2014-15 to five Critical Access Hospital communities across Oregon. Using Health Resources and Services Administration Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant funds, these grants enabled hospitals and their communities to implement sustainable programs in response to challenges identified by community needs assessments ranging from nutrition to mental health.

Two of the grantees completed their programs in August of 2015, while three others will continue activities until the summer of 2016. A summary of these projects follows. For more information on the grants, please contact Maeve Trick at mcclelma@ohsu.edu.

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number H54RH00049, Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant, $117,000, 0% nongovernmental sources. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.
Good Shepherd Medical Center (GSMC) launched a care coordination program, ConneXions, in October 2014. Sponsored in part by the ORH Community Engagement Grant, ConneXions used a team of Community Health Workers (CHWs) to help patients with chronic diseases in Umatilla County navigate healthcare and social services. The team created a new process to assist patients in the emergency department (ED) and used the Emergency Department Information Exchange (EDIE) to reach patients as soon as they needed help.

ConneXions made contact with 2,418 people over the course of the program, including 1,046 seniors. All of the seniors who engaged with the program were able to access services that enabled them to remain in their homes. GSMC reduced 30-day readmissions by 8% during the grant period (only four patients returned), and returns to the ED within 72 hours dropped to zero. The Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization will begin to reimburse for CHW services this fall, and GSMC is finalizing a contract with an area Medicare Advantage program to provide care coordination services for their patients.
Nutrition services and oncology teams at Samaritan Lebanon and Samaritan Pacific Communities worked together through the ORH Community Engagement Grant to pilot a financial and operational model for providing medical nutrition therapy to oncology patients.

While nutrition services for oncology patients are required for accreditation, prior to this project those costs were covered in hospital operations. Patients in the pilot were provided:

- Nutrition counseling, that was billed using an existing CPT code;
- Vouchers for nutritious food;
- Cooking equipment;
- The option of a summer nutrition program at the local Farmers’ Market

This program reached 45 patients during the grant cycle. Nineteen of the 26 patients who received nutrition counseling reported improved knowledge of nutrition, increased consumption of nutrient-dense foods and better access to local food resources. In addition to improved nutritional intake, the two hospitals made substantial progress in making the service sustainable: all private insurers reimbursed for the service.

Pictured: The nutrition toolkit given to each patient.
Pioneer Memorial Hospital is using their ORH Community Engagement grant to pilot a home visit program for patients with diabetes and multiple chronic conditions who visit the hospital emergency department (ED). The goal of the program is to increase patient health and reduce visits to the ED as well as admissions to the hospital. Home health nurses visit patients after they return home and develop a care plan with advice regarding medication management and discharge instructions.

Since the start of the program, return visits to the ED have dropped more than 75%. Data from the most recent quarter of the project show there were only 7 visits to the ED among the 109 patients in the program, with no admissions and no returns to the ED within 30 days.

The program will continue until next summer. Pioneer Memorial Hospital plans to expand the services that home health is able to offer during the next phase of the program, with the goals of reducing the number of hospital admissions by 25% and, reducing the number of ED visits by 10%.
Lake County first identified seniors as a priority population during their Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) process. Residents realized their community offered several services that sometimes did not reach seniors. They applied for an ORH Community Engagement grant to place a “Senior Navigator” - a person to help seniors access services - at the Lake County Senior Citizens Association (LCSCA). The navigator works to connect seniors with over 44 programs that can improve health and enrich quality of life.

LCSCA has reached out to over 300 members of the senior population in Lake County since the navigator position was filled in February. Nearly all seniors who were referred to services are now participating. Participation in senior center meals increased by 40% and approximately 50% of seniors have chosen to participate in a new opportunity for physical activity.

The Senior Navigator Project will continue until the summer of 2016.
ORH awarded a Community Engagement Grant to Providence Seaside Hospital to work with Clatsop County law enforcement agencies to:

- Implement an innovative community policing model for responding to psychiatric emergencies;
- Reduce the number of arrests for non-violent offenses of people with mental illness;
- Reduce the number of emergency department holds;
- Build a lasting relationship among law enforcement, mental health providers and families of people with mental illness;
- Promote use of the new Columbia County respite facility.

Twenty-nine officers from Warrenton, Astoria, Seaside and Gearhart Police Departments, as well as the Clatsop County Sheriff’s office, attended a three-day Crisis Intervention Training, focusing on common psychiatric crises and evidence-based ways to respond. Eighty-four percent of officers reported that they learned a new skill during the training. The hospital will be tracking the impact of training through the summer of 2016, with the first data on outcomes available in November of 2015.