Oregon Office of Rural Health Announces Rural Community Engagement Grant Awardees

PORTLAND, Ore. – The Oregon Office of Rural Health is pleased to announce $78,000 in grants awarded to four Critical Access Hospital communities across Oregon. Under the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility Grant, the grants address the quality of healthcare outcomes for Medicare patients. These grants will enable hospitals and their communities to implement sustainable programs in response to challenges identified by community needs assessments. By awarding funds to community-driven projects, the Office of Rural Health is pleased to provide assistance for improved care coordination programming in Oregon. Programs are described below.

**Good Shepherd Medical Center-Hermiston**
As the population around Hermiston continues to age, the goal of Good Shepherd’s Healthy Living Communities Project (HLCP) is to enable frail elders to live safely and independently in their own homes. HLCP will employ community health workers to engage seniors in utilizing preventive services and managing their own health problems. HLCP will receive referrals from participating community agencies and work with each senior individually to provide home visits, assessments, educational classes, a referral packet and assistance in enrolling in relevant programs.

**Lake County Hospital District and Lake County Senior Citizens Association-Lakeview**
Lakeview County Health District’s community needs assessment identified many resources for seniors; however, most of these resources are underused. The Lake County Senior Citizens Association will use grant funds to develop an outreach program to connect seniors with existing resources. Established programs include the Home Delivery Program, transportation services, congregate meals, and other outreach programs. With the help of a program navigator, seniors will have the choice of home visits, phone calls or print materials to learn about programs and will receive individualized assistance in accessing and utilizing services.

**Pioneer Medical Center and Morrow County Local Community Advisory Council-Heppner**
Pioneer Memorial Hospital will use funds to improve care transitions and reduce Emergency Department admissions for high risk patients. A home health nurse/care coordinator will identify individuals from Irrigon Medical Clinic and Pioneer Memorial Clinic with high-risk diabetes, coronary artery disease or multiple chronic conditions. Individualized care plans will be developed
for each patient to help coordinate and integrate patient care. The care coordinator will be part of the Morrow County Interdisciplinary Care Team and will collaborate with them on identifying needs and matching patients with appropriate resources.

*Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital, Lebanon*

Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital will use funds to develop and pilot a financial and operational model for Critical Access Hospitals to provide reimbursed medical nutritional services to oncology patients. In addition to assisting with hospital operations, this project will increase oncology patients’ understanding of nutrition through education services. Samaritan will pilot the program with 50 Medicare-eligible patients (and their caregivers) while they are undergoing chemotherapy in Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital and Samaritan Pacific Communities Hospital. Following the pilot, Samaritan will share an evaluation of the program with all CAHs that includes detailed information related to medical nutritional service strategies and insurance billing. This project will be implemented by two clinical dietitians, with support and collaboration by community partners.