



Crossroads

Special points of interest:

*MRHA Annual meeting
agenda and registration*

*A recap of the annual
AHEC symposium*

*Office of Rural health
Policy celebrates 20
years of service*

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From the MRHA president's pen

Greetings! Fall is fast approaching and so is the MRHA Fall Conference scheduled for November 1, 2007. As you review this issue of the newsletter, you will find the details of the conference, which can also be found on our Web site. We hope you have already planned to attend, but if not, please do so.

This year's focus for the conference is on solutions to the challenges faced by our rural healthcare workforce. This is a timely topic for many reasons. According to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ), one-fourth of our nation's population lives in rural areas. I believe it is safe to say that most of us have a first-hand understanding that rural residents have a higher percentage of poverty rates, a larger percentage of the elderly

and other vulnerable groups who tend to be in poorer health, and more difficulty getting to healthcare services. When you add to this mix a shortage of qualified doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, you pretty much

have a picture of what Mississippi is working to overcome.

Rural healthcare over the last decade has been adversely affected by changes in the healthcare delivery system, resulting in financial hardship for our rural hospitals, unavailable resources, and transportation problems for rural residents. These conditions translate into a continual struggle to recruit and retain a qualified healthcare workforce to care for a population with multiple needs. We can be encouraged in knowing that AHRQ's current research agenda includes key healthcare issues facing rural Americans to include access to care, supply of primary care physicians and other health-care providers, and organization of services for vulnerable rural populations, just to name a few.

It is essential that research and analysis of our unique healthcare workforce issues be carried out. For the fall conference, however, we wanted to go beyond the data to provide an opportunity to focus on positive initiatives aimed at strengthening and improving Mississippi's healthcare workforce. I encourage you to take advantage of the important information that will be provided and join us on November 1 in a serene rural setting to learn more about healthcare workforce initiatives in Mississippi of which we can all be proud.



Martha Catlette, President
Mississippi Rural Health
Association 2007

Register Now!

**Mississippi Rural Health Association
Annual Conference**

**"Vital Signs: Diagnosing and Treating
Mississippi's Rural Health Workforce"**

November 1, 2007

**Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center
Raymond, MS**

Register now to attend this one-day conference on the state of Mississippi's health workforce including current trends, future outlook, community-based initiatives, and programs working to impact rural health professions. For more information, see pages 6-7, visit the MRHA Web site at www.msrrha.org, or call (601) 898-3001.

News from the Mississippi Office of Rural Health

From the MORH director's desk

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Office of Rural Health Policy, celebrated 20 years of service and held its All Programs Meeting in Washington, D.C. in August.

The meeting was well attended. Mississippi had approximately 15 people representing the state and various rural health program initiatives in the state that are funded through the federal Office of Rural Health Policy.

Although the meeting highlighted great strides that have been made in rural health over the years, there is still much to be done. The sessions on changing demographics in rural America, injuries in rural America, and the rural healthcare workforce help in reminding us of the enormous needs that exist and the challenge to remain vigilant and dedicated to initiating and sustaining rural health initiatives.

I'm a numbers person—I love stats, data, analysis, etc.— and there was plenty of (actually fascinating) data provided to us at this meeting. I also thoroughly enjoyed Dr. Elizabeth M. Duke, Administrator, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), as the keynote speaker for the luncheon on the second day of the meeting. Of course Dr. Duke had numbers also, as she discussed some of the accomplishments of both HRSA and the Office of Rural Health Policy over the last 20 years and during her tenure as administrator. She also shared some very personable, interesting, and hilarious stories with the audience. To celebrate the 20th year anniversary of the federal Office of Rural Health Policy, the National Organization of the State Offices of Rural Health, presented the Office with a commemorative quilt (pictured to the right).

Speaking of the challenge and continuing the work of supporting rural health initiatives, the Mississippi Office of Rural Health is pleased to announce we have received almost \$1,000,000 in federal funding for the 2007-2008 year from the Office of Rural Health Policy.

“Although the meeting highlighted great strides that have been made... there is still much to be done... we must remain vigilant and dedicated to initiating and sustaining rural health initiatives.”

We will continue assisting, coordinating, and supporting rural health interests statewide; sponsoring conferences and educational activities; providing technical assistance and information; producing a quarterly newsletter; working with small rural hospitals; and assisting with recruitment and retention of healthcare providers for rural areas.

I will provide a profile of small rural hospitals in the *Crossroads* newsletter. This edition features King's Daughters



Rozelia Harris, MBA
Director, MORH

Hospital in Yazoo City, Mississippi (see page 4).



To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Office of Rural Health Policy, the National Organization of the State Offices of Rural Health presented the Office with this commemorative quilt

A message from the Area Health Education Center assistant director

I would like to thank all vendors and participants for attending the Third Annual Mississippi Area Health Education Center Symposium, "Missing Persons: Serving Mississippi's Rural and Underserved Communities." Special recognition and thanks also go to our co-sponsors: Enterprise Corporation of the Delta, Mississippi Primary Health Care Association, Mississippi Rural Health Association, Humphreys County Memorial Hospital, The University of Southern Mississippi's College of Health, and Mississippi Osteopathic Medical Association.

The symposium's plenary session keynote speakers included: Dr. Luke Lampton, who addressed Mississippi's health professions workforce shortages, focusing particularly on medically underserved and disadvantaged communities; and Susan Moreland, Executive Director of North Louisiana AHEC, who presented North Louisiana AHEC's model of community health programs, recruitment and retention programs, and rural clinical training for health professional students. Both speakers addressed the importance of establishing a community health network and development and facilitation of health and education related services to communities throughout the state.

Dr. Lynne Cossman, Co-Director of Mississippi State University's Social Science Research Center, addressed the need and benefits of the development of a statewide Center of Health Workforce and clearinghouse of healthcare data. Wilbert Jones, Chief Executive Officer of the Greater Meridian Health Clinic, was also among the break-out session presenters and discussed recruiting and retaining healthcare professionals in rural underserved Mississippi. Dr. Diane Beebe, Chair of the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Mississippi Medical



Center introduced rural programs that aid in identifying and recruiting qualified university and college students from rural areas for medical school matriculation. Dr. Donna Roberts, Clinical Professor, the University of Louisville (Kentucky) Department of Family and Geriatric Medicine, introduced residency programs that encourage healthcare institutions to work collaboratively to create a broader residency program throughout rural Mississippi. She also presented information about training programs that provide a comprehensive exposure to the fundamental aspects of healthcare in underserved areas and also retain sufficient flexibility to allow effective development of a student's individual abilities and interests.

Other break-out session presenters included Alicia Barnes, Mississippi Primary Health Care Association's Clinical IS specialist, and Cheryl Hamill, Program Administrator for the AIDS Education and Training Centers at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. Ms. Hamill provided information regarding the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated populations. Ms. Hamill presented

information that addressed identifying measures to assist in connecting to care and overcoming barriers to improve care. Ms. Barnes discussed the UDS report and its significance to community health centers. Ms. Barnes' information included how the clinical quality measures and UDS report may be used in addressing healthcare disparities in the state of Mississippi.

The Mississippi Area Health Education Center strives to enhance access to quality healthcare by 1) developing a statewide AHEC program that will retain a diverse and culturally sensitive health workforce that provides the highest quality of care for all; and 2) developing partnerships with school districts, healthcare providers, private foundations, and communities that share the AHEC goals and missions. Our symposia bring quality speakers to address timely subject matter to the business and healthcare professionals of the surrounding tri-state area.

Again, thank you to those who attended and supported our efforts.



Stephanie Young, Assistant Director, Mississippi Area Health Education Centers

Get Ready for Influenza Season!

Influenza vaccine manufacturers are projecting that as many as 132 million doses of vaccine will be available for this season. Three manufacturers have already begun to ship this season's influenza vaccine, with almost all of the vaccine expected to be shipped and distributed in October and November.

On September 19, the National Foundation for Infectious Diseases will sponsor the 10th Annual Influenza/Pneumococcal News Conference, which will be broadcast via live Web cast and telephone. More information about this event can be found at www.visualwebcaster.com/NFID-NewsConference-2007.

The Centers for Disease Control and Protection has many influenza resources available at www.cdc.gov/flu/ and a gallery of educational materials for the public and healthcare providers at www.cdc.gov/flu/gallery. Please check the CDC's Flu Gallery for new materials throughout the influenza season.

HealthConnect offers wide variety of products and services

HealthConnect is one of the premier programs of the Mississippi State University Extension Service. Adapted from the national Rural HealthWorks program, it offers a wide variety of products and services designed to make the community more aware of the healthcare sector, as well as assist healthcare organizations achieve more efficient and effective operations.

The program's community-related products encompass a wide variety of deliverables. Impact analyses demonstrate the importance of the healthcare sector to the community's economy and consumer phone surveys ascertain residents'



healthcare purchasing preferences. Other products such as surveys of healthcare providers, community healthcare directories, community forums, strategic planning sessions, and community leadership development training provide a solid base from which healthcare organizations can establish a more solid bond with the communities that support

them.

HealthConnect's second focus is on the management of the healthcare entity. Through feasibility studies and strategic plan development and management assistance (primarily through the Balanced Scorecard system), MSUES faculty work with firm administration to identify not only areas in which the organization can capitalize on its strengths, but also the challenges that may be present.

For more information on these programs, please contact Alan Barefield (662) 325-3207, alanb@srcd.msstate.edu or Garen Evans (662) 325-1796, gevans@ext.msstate.edu.

Profile of a small rural hospital: King's Daughters Hospital, Yazoo City

Staff at King's Daughters Hospital in Yazoo City, proudly refer to themselves as "the heart of our community," and since 1922, the family of caregivers at King's Daughters Hospital has been just that, having seen many changes to the area.

From the once bustling center of central Mississippi's agriculture and farm life in the 1940s, this "gateway city to the Mississippi delta" became industrialized in the decades after World War II. The 1980s and 1990s brought changes with corporate downsizing and a shift toward urbanization.

Through it all, King's Daughters Hospital has adapted to meet the changing needs of the community while remaining true to its mission of providing high quality health care to the residents of the area.

In recent years, Yazoo City has continued to focus on economic development with the opening of two federal correctional facilities and a third facility in the planning stages. Additionally, tourism is a growing industry as the city works to preserve and renovate its beautiful downtown and main street area.

While many of America's rural hospitals face closure, King's Daughters Hospital has remained strong. Today, King's Daughters Hospital serves the community as a critical access hospital with a 25-bed acute and swing bed unit as well as a 10-bed geriatric psychiatric unit



King's Daughters Hospital
823 Grand Avenue
Yazoo City, MS 39194-3233
(662) 746-2261

called Senior Life Solutions.

King's Daughters Hospital also provides a 24-hour emergency department staffed with physicians that see over 1,000 patients each month. The hospital also operates a full-service wellness facility and outpatient physical therapy practice.

Recent additions include a partial hospitalization program for geripsych, a PAC system for radiology, GI endoscopy, a revitalized surgery department, and surgical wound management program.

Daryl Weaver, Chief Executive Officer, joined the staff of King's Daughters Hospital in September 2005 and has worked with an active board of trustees to lead the facility into a new era by focusing on customer service and loyalty, physician recruitment, investment in new technology, and "smart growth."

The hospital enjoys consistently high scores for patient satisfaction, and all employees participate in a culture of

process improvement, which Weaver believes is essential to the organization's ongoing success.

Mr. Weaver holds a bachelor of science degree from Samford University and a master's degree in health services administration from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. He is a nationally recognized speaker on topics including emergency department efficiency and quality improvement.

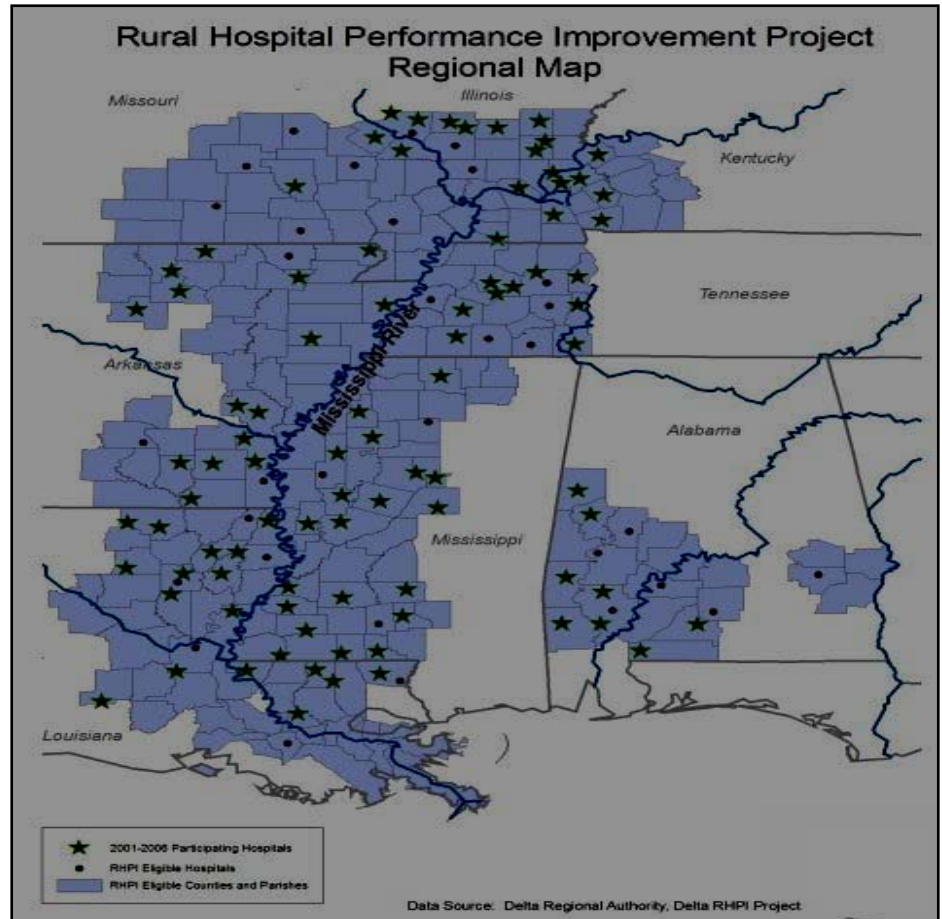


Daryl Weaver, CEO
King's Daughters Hospital
Yazoo City, Mississippi

Federal Delta Rural Hospital Performance Improvement Project meeting

The lead organization for the Delta Rural Hospital Performance Improvement Project recently held a meeting for state partners and project hospitals on August 24, 2007 at the Eagle Ridge Conference Center in Raymond, Mississippi. It was a great opportunity to meet people from other states who work in rural hospitals and it was very interesting to see rural hospital teams planning and developing strategies to ensure quality care for citizens of rural communities.

The Delta Rural Hospital Performance Improvement Project is funded through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Office of Rural Health Policy, and is a part of the federal government's initiatives for rural health. The RHPI project focuses on strengthening rural hospitals as the cornerstone to preserving healthcare access. The project area includes certain small rural hospitals in a 240-county/parish area of eight states in the Delta Region. The region covers portions of Alabama, Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee. The service area is highlighted on the map to the right.



Healthcare employee satisfaction survey reveals interesting results

As part of its HealthConnect program, the Mississippi State University Extension Service (MSUES) partnered with the East Central Mississippi Health Network (EC HealthNet) to conduct a healthcare employee satisfaction survey for the five-county region of Clarke, Kemper, Lauderdale, Neshoba, and Newton Counties. This survey targeted professional employees to determine the factors that influenced job satisfaction in the region.

The survey focused on several areas of the employees' workplace environment including work environment, job satisfaction and advancement, job-related training, compensation and benefits, co-worker environment, workplace environment, and management relations and trust. Six hundred twenty-two employees provided their views on workforce satisfaction.

There were several interesting results from the survey. The majority of respondents felt they knew what was expected in their position and that they contributed to the success of their organization. Furthermore, employees felt they gained a strong sense of satisfaction from doing their jobs well.



Participants also responded favorably to the composition of the compensation/benefit packages. While the level of salaries and wages predictably received less favorable responses than did other components of the package, factors such

as leave, healthcare, and retirement benefits were not only ranked high by respondents, but were also deemed to be important to the employees' overall job satisfaction.

Responses concerning co-worker relationships were also quite positive and not only indicated that employees were comfortable with their co-workers, but that they were also able to get to know their co-workers while they were on the job. Finally, respondents indicated they were proud to work for their organization and that they would recommend employment at their firm for a close friend.

For further information about the survey results or to implement the instrument in your area, please contact Alan Barefield at (662) 325-3207 or by E-mail at alanb@srcd.msstate.edu.



The Mississippi Rural Health Association 12th Annual Conference
“Vital Signs: Diagnosing and Treating Mississippi’s Rural Health Workforce”

November 1, 2007

Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center
 1320 Seven Springs Road
 Raymond, Mississippi

CONFERENCE AGENDA

9:00 – 9:15 a.m.

Welcome and Conference Overview

Mitch Morris, Vice-President, Mississippi Rural Health Association

9:15 - 10:00 a.m.

“Rural Realities, Chaos and the Leadership Quest”

Brock A. Slabach, MPH, Administrator, Field Memorial Community Hospital

The only sign that you can hang over your organization permanently is one that reads “Subject to Change without Notice.” Our delivery systems in the beautiful rural areas of our state continue to face massive upheaval triggered by high consumer expectations, workforce shortages, costly technological advances, and reimbursement quandaries such as Medicare Advantage. This session will explore our quest for the leadership behaviors that we need to not only survive, but thrive in the rural landscapes in which we live and work through the presentation of theory and real life examples to change our communities...and ourselves.

10:15 – 11:15 a.m.

“Strategies to Meet Current and Future Healthcare Workforce Demands”

Wanda M. Jones, PhD candidate, MS, RN, Executive Director, Mississippi Office of Nursing Workforce

Ms. Jones will present Mississippi nursing and allied healthcare workforce data, including vacancies, turnover, and projected increases in demand. Nursing and nursing faculty supply data will also be shared. Strategies to increase the healthcare workforce pipeline, enhance student success, and facilitate transition to worklife will be discussed. An innovative program to begin Licensed Practical Nursing education in high school will be outlined. In addition, Ms. Jones will highlight creative ways to increase faculty and student capacity as developed via the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation/Northwest Health Foundation *Partners in Nursing* grant.

11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

“Allied Health Workforce – A Lifeline for Rural Healthcare”

Mary Ann Sones, BS, MAT, Retired Dean, Nursing/Allied Health Center, Hinds Community College

The community college allied health education programs are vital to maintaining a viable healthcare workforce. This presentation will include discussion of the allied health educational programs offered in the state including information on the diversity of programs and graduation rates, the role of Mississippi community colleges in answering the shortage of healthcare personnel, and the partnership initiatives for addressing healthcare issues in rural Mississippi.

12:30 – 2:00 p.m.

Lunch and MRHA Membership Meeting

“Healthcare Workforce: The Public Health Response”

F.E. Thompson, Jr., MD, MPH, Interim State Health Officer, Mississippi State Department of Health

Dr. Thompson will discuss what Mississippi is doing to address the workforce shortage statewide and the action the Department of Health is taking specifically to address workforce issues in public health.

2:00 – 2:30 p.m.

“The Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program: Building a Pipeline for the Future”

Diane Beebe, MD, Chairman, Department of Family Medicine, University of Mississippi Medical Center

This spring, the Mississippi State Legislature enacted legislation allowing for the establishment of the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship Program. The purpose of the program is to identify and recruit qualified university and college students from rural and underserved areas of the state for eventual enrollment in medical or osteopathic school, followed by specialization in family medicine or another generalist specialty and ultimately practice in rural and underserved areas of the state. Dr. Beebe will discuss the legislation and current status of the program.

2:30 – 3:30 p.m.

“The Workforce Investment Act and the Healthcare Industry: Partnership for a Healthy Workforce”

Tina Hines, MS, Department Chief, Mississippi Department of Employment Security

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) is a federally funded employment and training program administered by the Mississippi Department of Employment Security. WIA offers a wide array of services to prepare individuals for employment, including skills assessments, job referrals, and training from accredited training providers. WIA is a demand driven system focused on training and employment in fast growing occupations, such as those in the healthcare industry. In response to the needs of Mississippi’s labor market, and in collaboration with WIA partners, a number of state level WIA initiatives have been implemented to train individuals for careers in the healthcare industry. This presentation will highlight those initiatives and provide an overview of WIA services available to job seekers and employers through the State’s network of WIN Job Centers.

3:30 – 3:45 p.m.

Closing Comments and Evaluation



**The Mississippi Rural Health Association Annual Conference
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**Central Mississippi Research and Extension Center
1320 Seven Springs Road
Raymond, Mississippi
November 1, 2007**

REGISTRATION FORM

Name:	Organization:
Title:	Address:
City/State:	Zip Code:
County:	Telephone:
Fax:	E-mail:
Special accommodations needed:	Are you interested in serving on MRHA committees?

(Please duplicate this form if needed.)

Checks should be made payable to the Mississippi Rural Health Association and received by October 27, 2007 to receive the early-bird discount rate of \$75. After October 27th, the conference fee is \$85. A special student fee of \$20 is available for full-time students.

Mail checks and registration to:

Mississippi Rural Health Association
Attention: Jan Entrekin
31 Woodgreen Place
Madison, MS 39110

Payment of the conference registration fee entitles the registrant to a one-year no-cost membership in the Mississippi Rural Health Association.

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION can be found at the MRHA Web site,
<http://www.msrha.org>**

**If you have questions, please call Jan Entrekin at the
Mississippi Rural Health Association, (601) 898-3001**

MISSISSIPPI RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

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*A voice for health
in rural Mississippi*

We're on the Web!
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REGISTER NOW!

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12th Annual Conference of the
Mississippi Rural Health Association
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You won't want to miss this opportunity to hear new information about the state of Mississippi's health workforce including current trends, future outlook, community-based initiatives, and programs working to impact rural health professions.

More details are inside this issue. Register today!