



## **eNewsletter - April, 2010**

April, 5 2010

### **Looking Ahead to Two Important Meetings**

And later in the fall, the 13th Annual RoundTable Symposium. Thursday, Oct. 28 and Friday, Oct. 29 Place: The Inns & Spa at Mills Falls, Meredith, NH on Lake Winnepesaukee.

Call for Participation!

The Symposium theme this year is the integration of medical care and public health. Planning is now in full swing and there is an opportunity for you, either singly or in cooperation with colleagues, to have a voice in the program. Public health issues such as obesity, nutrition, smoking, and community wellness programs are hot topics. If your organization is taking steps to promote better public health in your community, call or e-mail Marion Pawlek with your idea for a presentation. He will help you refine it and decide where it will best fit in the program.

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### **HRSA Awards Two Planning Grants in New England**

Two health centers in New England recently received Rural Health Network Development Planning Grants from HRSA's Office of Rural Health Policy. The Katahdin Valley Network (KVN), Patten, ME, and the Mascoma Valley Health Initiative (MVHI) in Canaan, NH, each received a one-year award of \$85,000. These were highly competitive awards, as only 30 were given throughout the entire U.S.

Durward L Humphrey, CEO, Katahdin Valley Health Center (which will act as the lead agency) said KVN will focus on the most vulnerable populations in the community: the poor and uninsured, the disabled and homebound, the aging and young children. The project has two primary goals: 1) Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment; and 2) Develop the Network

infrastructure to ensure sustainability over the next five to ten years. KVN will engage a consultant to collect the data for the needs assessment.

The Katahdin Valley Network (KVN) consists of the four major health care providers in north central Maine: two Federally Qualified Health Centers, Health Access Network (HAN) in Lincoln and Katahdin Valley Health Center (KVHC) in Patten; and two Critical Access Hospitals, Millinocket Regional Hospital (MRH) in Millinocket and Penobscot Valley Hospital (PVH) in Lincoln. The entire area (52,000 population) is designated rural.

In Canaan, Susan Houghton, CEO of Mascoma Valley Health Initiative, broke the good news to her board on March 2 about the HRSA award, the first direct federal grant for MVHI. The grant will allow MVHI to perform a rural health network needs assessment called the Upper Valley Healthy Community Project. The project will focus on assessing need for prevention services to reduce alcohol and other drug use, suicide and other behavioral health issues.

### **Mt. Ascutney Hospital In the News**

Mt. Ascutney Hospital and Health Center (MAHHC), VT, and Dartmouth-Hitchcock (D-H), Hanover, NH, have announced a joint agreement that enables D-H to be the actual employer of the new CEO of MAHHC. Hospital officials say this arrangement will ultimately lead to better healthcare for patients in the region.

MAHHC is currently searching for a new CEO to replace Richard Slusky, who will be retiring as CEO at the end of September after 28 years of service to the hospital. Leaders at both organizations say one of the objectives is to improve collaboration between the organizations at a Senior Management level, in order to provide a better-coordinated system of care.

Nancy Loux, President of the MAHHC Board of Trustees is enthusiastic about the arrangement and the opportunities it will provide. "This is a win-win for both organizations and more importantly, for the people in our communities who use the hospitals," she says.

Loux says patients will see positive changes in many areas including the sharing of clinical information, patient transfers between facilities, and an improved relationship in strategic planning for rehabilitation services." For details of the agreement, read the press release.

In other news, the Mt. Ascutney Hospital Community Health Foundation is now in the second year of a 3-year, \$375,000 grant from the Office of Rural Health Policy. The program aims to increase access to mental health, social services, and dental care. Jill Lord, Director of Patient Care Services, said the program seeks to build a sustainable base for these services. A consortium of seven health and social service providers, with the Community Health Foundation as the lead agency, are working together to create an integrated primary medical, mental health, and oral health service system targeting low income, uninsured, underinsured, and underserved residents in Windsor, VT. Over the years, the Community Health Foundation has brought millions of dollars to the greater Windsor area to provide community health programs.

## **Blitz Confirmed as Northern Border Co-Chair**

Confirmed! Several issues ago we ran a photo and story about the nomination by President Obama of Sandy Blitz, Hudson, ME, to be federal co-chair of the newly created Northern Border Regional Commission (NBRC). That has now happened, following enthusiastic endorsements of Mr. Blitz by both Senators Susan Collins and Olympia Snowe at recent Senate confirmation hearings. Rep. Michael Michaud (ME) also praised Blitz warmly for his leadership abilities and past accomplishments.

About the Commission: it is modeled on others of its type such as the Appalachian Regional Commission (in existence since the 1960s), the Delta Regional, and several others. The aim of the NBRC is to alleviate poverty and high unemployment by promoting economic development in the northernmost regions of four states along the Canadian border: New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine. The development effort will be targeted to the counties suffering greatest economic distress. Blitz was selected for the job because of his outstanding record as an experienced administrator and proven ability to foster economic development.

The commission will help create jobs in a 36-county area by investing in infrastructure improvements, high-speed Internet access, health care and renewable energy.

Blitz recently served as regional administrator of the Small Business Administration. He owns a company that helps public and private institutions get government grants and loans. He will meet with the four governors soon and will set up an office for the Commission. Look for more details on our web site as Blitz begins his work. For a map of the 36 counties in the NBRC, click [here](#).

## **Meet John Olson**

John A. Olson, M.Ed., is the new Rural Health and Primary Care Office Chief for the Vermont Department of Health. He isn't new to the Department of Health, though, as he previously coordinated VDH's Comprehensive Cancer Control Program.



In his current role, John will oversee several Federal grants to support the work and sustainability of Vermont's small hospitals, primary care offices and networks of clinics serving rural, low income and uninsured Vermonters. John received his Master of Education degree from the University of Vermont in 2000. You can reach him at 802-951-1259 or by e-mail: [jolson@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:jolson@vdh.state.vt.us).

And we hope to meet him personally at some of the upcoming RoundTable conferences.

## **News from Massachusetts**

The Aging with Dignity Conference: Preventing and Responding to Substance Use Problems Among Older People.

A conference for health and human service professionals.

Tuesday, June 8, 2010, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA For additional information, please contact AdCare Educational Institute, Inc. 508-752-7317

Co-Sponsored by: The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, the Bureau of Substance Abuse Services and the Bureau of Community Health Access and Promotion, Healthy Aging and Disability Unit; the Massachusetts Partnership on Substance Use in Older Adults; A Resource Network on Prevention and Addiction; the Massachusetts Executive Office of Elder Affairs; the Massachusetts Association of Councils on Aging and Senior Center Directors; Mass Home Care & AdCare Educational Institute, Inc.

## **Berkshire AHEC Appointment**

The Berkshire AHEC has hired Bear McHugh as Project Coordinator for the Youth Suicide Prevention Project. He will be supporting and advancing the work plan developed by Berkshire County stakeholders. This project is funded by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's Injury Prevention and Control Program. Before joining the Berkshire AHEC, McHugh worked in addiction and mental health services for 20 years. He received his Masters of Social Work from the State University of New York and is a licensed clinical social worker.

## **Two HRSA Funding Opportunities - Note the Deadlines!**

### **HRSA's 2010 Nursing Scholarship Program.**

Applications are being accepted from April 1 through May 6

The program pays tuition, education-related expenses (including books, clinical supplies and laboratory fees) and a living stipend. In exchange, scholars are committed to work for at least 2 years after graduation at a health facility with a critical shortage of nurses. Preference is given to qualified applicants with the greatest financial need who are enrolled full-time in an undergraduate RN program. Applicants must begin classes for the Fall term on or after July 1, 2010 and no later than September 30, 2010. It is expected that 500 awards will be made for the 2010-2011 school year. Read more about the Nursing Scholarship Program.

## **New Funding for Rural Workforce Development**

HRSA's Office of Rural Health Policy has announced a new funding opportunity focused around Rural Workforce Development. Deadline to submit applications is April 30, 2010. This one-time funding opportunity will support the development of rural health networks that focus on activities relating to the recruitment and retention of emerging health professionals (students and residents). The program seeks to support a range of different approaches to community-based

training and can include a focus either singularly or collectively on professions such as medicine, nursing, pharmacy and other allied health professions. ORHP plans to award approximately 20 new awards for this program of about \$200,000 each. Awards will be made on September 1, 2010.

"Workforce and rural recruitment and retention are a critical component of the 2010 President's Rural Initiative. As part of the Initiative, the Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP) created the Rural Health Workforce Development Program. The Workforce Development Program supports HRSA's goals of improving access and quality of health care, improving health outcomes, and improving public health and health care systems."

For further information on this new program, you may download the application form. Once on the website, click on Find Grant Opportunities, Basic Search and type in the funding opportunity number (HRSA-10-193).

The Program Coordinator is:

Christina Villalobos

[cvillalobos@hrsa.gov](mailto:cvillalobos@hrsa.gov)

(301) 443-3590

### **Oral Health Coalition Applauds New Hampshire House of Representatives**

The New Hampshire Oral Health Coalition is jubilant over the recent passage by the NH House of Representatives of a bill that would allow primary care providers to provide dental disease prevention measures for children ages 0-3 enrolled in Medicaid. HB 1537 passed on March 24 and will be scheduled for a public hearing in the NH Senate sometime in April. The Coalition says that 35 states, including all the New England states with the exception of New Hampshire, offer Medicaid reimbursement to primary-care medical providers who perform oral health screenings and/or preventive services such as fluoride varnish applications on high to moderate risk young children.

In the opinion of the Coalition, reimbursing primary care providers for performing dental screenings and applying fluoride varnish on moderate to high risk children is becoming "best practices" for saving states money by instituting primary prevention strategies. This legislation has received broad bi-partisan support in the NH House of Representatives. Learn more about the Coalition.

## **VVT Rural Development Conference**

Board Member Jonathan Sprague calls our attention to this conference:

The 2010 Northeast Rural Summit: Generating Rural Innovation and Regional Partnership ~ April 12 and 13, 2010 at the Burlington Hilton Hotel

National and regional USDA leaders, state agency leaders, non-profit and business leaders from throughout the northeastern United States will meet for two days of strategic planning around four crucial directions for the rural northeast:

- Food Systems: Local Foods Development and Regional Foods Systems
- Energy: Advancing Efficiency, Generation and Fuel Development
- Broadband: Global Opportunities & Rural Lifestyles
- Rural Economic Development: Investment in Innovation

Speaking on Rural Economic Development will be Dr. Gerald Doeksen, Director, National Center for Rural Health Works, who has been a speaker at RoundTable conferences.

See the website to register, or for more information.

## **Press Clippings**

"Don't Take Critical Access Hospitals for Granted" appears in HealthLeadersMedia. Click to read.

"Obama Chooses Health Policy Scholar as the Director for Medicare and Medicaid"

Both the NY Times and the Boston Globe ran stories on Dr. Donald Berwick's rumored appointment as head of CMS. Described as an iconoclastic leader, Dr. Berwick heads the Institute for Healthcare Improvement. However, the appointment hasn't been announced yet and it may face opposition in confirmation hearings. Here's a link to the Times article.

## **RoundTable Issues Policy Statement**

For more than a year, the RoundTable Policy Committee, chaired by Eric Turer, has monitored closely the progress of healthcare reform legislation. The Committee sent a statement to the Obama Transition Team before the inauguration, urging lawmakers to keep in mind the unique nature of New England's rural communities. Policy briefs were issued to our Congressional delegations and their staff after the 2008 election and during 2009. In March of this year, the Committee issued a press release which went to hundreds of media outlets in New England. The press release and the more detailed policy statement on which it is based are both posted on our web site.

Please send your news to Dot Bergin – [dobergin@gmail.com](mailto:dobergin@gmail.com) or 781-275-7071.

Thanks,

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The RoundTable's online newsletter is published approximately once a month. Current issues are available in HTML format, with links to additional information. Previous issues are available in printer-friendly Adobe Acrobat format.