

@ HEALTH & WELL-BEING ISSUE

A PUBLICATION OF THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

FALL 2002

FOCUS: COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT

Defining health



How do you define health? That was the question facing The Rapides Foundation in the years immediately following its establishment in September of 1994. With a century-old legacy of hospital ownership, the Foundation's overall mission was to improve community health status. But how exactly and using what criteria?

"There was no basis for the Board and staff to weigh the relative importance of a grant in regards to what the benefits to the community would be," said Joe Rosier, President and CEO of The Rapides Foundation. So they approached Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine for help. "The Tulane Assessment came about out of a sense of wanting to be more strategic in our grantmaking."

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The Rapides Foundation

Defining health

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Tulane spent months researching and compiling a vast array of statistical information on the Foundation's 11-parish service area. Healthcare, economic status, employment, youth recreation; a whole spectrum of issues that ultimately impact individual and community health were all scrutinized. Surveys, focus groups and comparative studies using both state and national data were all incorporated in a final five-volume community assessment.

The Foundation's Board of Trustees was presented the Tulane Assessment at a retreat in 1998. "And so in one time and in one place our Board was able to see and understand a little bit better the significant issues facing the community and could now begin to base their decisions on knowledge and factual information," explained Rosier.

A wide range of experts and resource professionals were on hand to explain the findings and how the different areas of study were linked to community health. They also discussed where there were opportunities to intervene. Rosier remembers that retreat as "eye-opening, particularly some of the infant mortality and children in poverty information. And I know the Trustees were totally shocked by the Youth Risk Behavior Survey information that showed extremely high levels of early initiation of smoking and alcohol use by children. They knew kids smoked, but the numbers were almost unbelievable to them."

As a result of the Tulane Community Health Assessment, the Trustees were able to develop the Foundation's current set of grantmaking Initiatives. And the word "health" took on a new meaning. "Our Board adopted a much broader definition of health that really does explore the determinants of health, which ultimately gets into quality of life and social issues," said Rosier. "The Tulane Assessment helped us understand the magnitude of the issues we face and set our

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Joe Rosier, Foundation President and CEO

priorities. It also established a baseline of measures of community health."

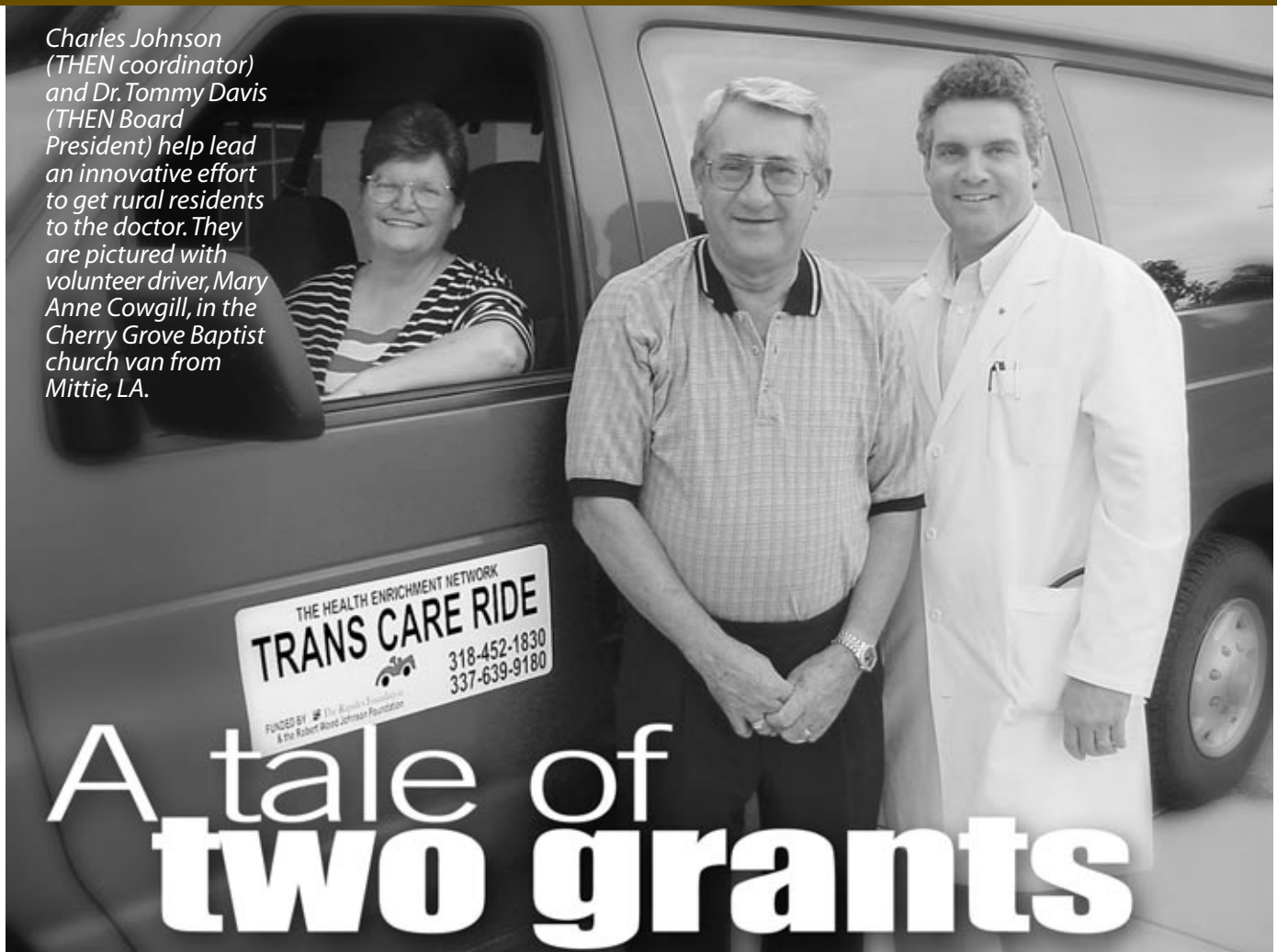
That baseline study has now been reexamined in a second, recently completed community assessment. According to Rosier, "The purpose of this updated assessment is to see where the community is today and detect any trends in our priority areas; are they getting better, are they getting worse, or has some other issue emerged that would be a higher priority?"

This second assessment, conducted by Professional Research Consultants, Inc., (PRC) offers new possibilities for the Foundation and Central Louisiana. "This time we'll have parish-specific data that can be compared to other parishes in the Foundation's 11-parish service area, the state and the nation. We'll also have a Web site available to grant writers or any person or organization working to improve our community health," Rosier proudly stated.

And "health" maintains its broad definition, changing only slightly in this assessment to reflect the federal guidelines known as "Healthy People 2010." The Foundation's "defining moment" is improving the quality of life for Central Louisiana.

Community Health Assessment

Charles Johnson (THEN coordinator) and Dr. Tommy Davis (THEN Board President) help lead an innovative effort to get rural residents to the doctor. They are pictured with volunteer driver, Mary Anne Cowgill, in the Cherry Grove Baptist church van from Mittie, LA.



A tale of two grants

A community health assessment can be a big plus when you're preparing a grant. Just ask Sandy Ray, former Programs Coordinator of The Health Enrichment Network in Allen Parish.

The Tulane data was at the heart of the grant proposal to initiate a rural transportation program in her parish. "Transportation is a barrier everywhere you go and the Tulane data gave us insight into the problem," she said.

Her organization received a national foundation grant, along with matching funds from The Rapides Foundation, and began implementing the program this past February. Now Ray says, "It's one of the major programs of The Health Enrichment Network and is really improving people's lives."

The Tulane Assessment also proved valuable

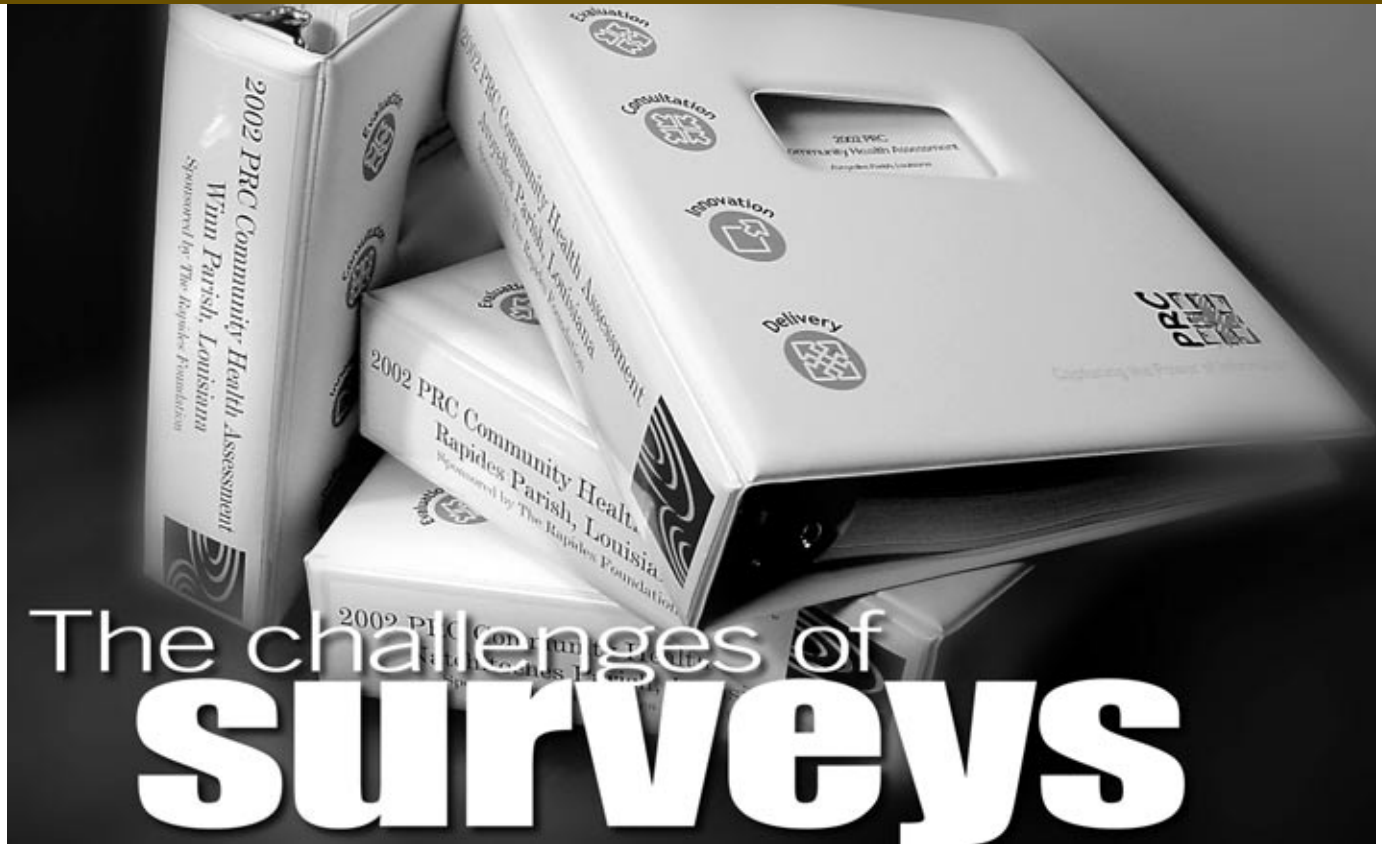
information in securing the grant that created SAGE (Seniors Aging With Grace and Energy), an exercise and wellness program.

According to Daisy Dempsey, director of the Community Senior Citizens Multi-Purpose Resource Center, Inc., sponsor of SAGE, their technical assistant incorporated Tulane data into her proposal. "She said wellness was a good project for us to start out with. Specifically exercise – something for the seniors. So she wrote the grant and we implemented it. It's been a very successful program."

Now The Rapides Foundation has completed its second community assessment. Once again the detailed, updated information is ready and waiting to support and enlighten the next grant writer and organization hoping to offer a positive plan to improve our community.

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Community Health Assessment



The challenges of surveys

May we ask you some questions?

An important tool in the development of a community health assessment is a resident survey. In many cases these surveys are conducted by telephone. But reaching out to talk to someone can be a daunting task.

"I think the environment for research surveys is a tougher one now, than it was 10 years ago in terms of getting good response rates," contends Dr. Judith Kasper, a professor at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and evaluator for The Rapides Foundation Access Barriers Survey. "Surveyors are facing difficult times because there are so many kinds of marketing survey projects going on. People have answering machines so it's harder to reach them directly, and when you do reach them, people are much more willing to hang up when a survey interviewer asks for a few moments of time."

There's also the problem of who answers the questions. According to Dr. Kasper, "It is important to try to find out whether you've got the best

respondent in terms of knowledge of the topic you're asking about."

But despite these obstacles, Dr. Kasper believes surveys are essential in evaluating behavior and overall health. "It's the kind of information you can't get elsewhere. People's own opinion, and own assessment of their health – these kinds of things are best measured by talking to the individuals affected."

Dr. Joe Inguanzo, President and CEO of Professional Research Consultants, Inc. (PRC), agrees completely, "When you address the issue of a person's health and lifestyle, there's no other way to get that information."

PRC has completed close to 5000 phone surveys for The Rapides Foundation. Those findings form a major component in the overall community health assessment for the Foundation's 11-parish service area. "We interviewed 400 individuals, 18 years and older, within each of 10 parishes, plus 750 more interviews in Rapides Parish," explained Dr. Inguanzo.

Data goes digital

Professional Research Consultants, Inc. (PRC) has been evaluating healthcare trends throughout the United States for over 20 years. Their community health assessments are intensive eight to nine-month research projects that systematically gather information and chart the strengths and weaknesses of an area and its people. It's a tremendous body of work.

"At the end of the process you've got a pretty good picture of a community," explains Dr. Joe Inguanzo, founder of PRC. It's actually a very revealing picture that can be used in many ways.

"For example The Rapides Foundation can use their assessment as a benchmark to compare over time and see if the money they've invested in grants is actually doing any good," said Inguanzo. "It also helps them prioritize their efforts."

Bruce Lockwood, director of the Community Health Division of PRC says, "One of the great benefits of the community health assessments is that it provides information that really is not available in any other way, like parish-specific data."



"The toughest part is to change people's behavior so they're healthier. You have to keep working at it. It's a journey, not a destination."

And now that information can be seen on the Internet. "The Web site is really an exciting development over the last couple of years," says Lockwood. "It gives us a place to electronically share data from the assessment. So someone in say Allen Parish could log on and look at information for their own parish, but also access some of the

information for larger areas and see how they compare to those results."

While Inguanzo acknowledges the many benefits of PRC's community "portrait," he believes The Rapides Foundation is really the one that can most benefit the area. "The easy part is to do what we have done – compile data. The toughest part is to change people's behavior so they're healthier. You have to keep working at it. It's a journey, not a destination."

Community Health Assessment



Survey says more nurses

Surveys have proven invaluable to The Rapides Foundation, not only in the Tulane and PRC community health assessments, but also in their just completed study of the area's nursing situation.

The Foundation commissioned a study in July 2001 to look at the healthcare workforce needs in Cenla. It was clear from that study that the biggest need was in nursing.

Judith K. Leavitt, RN, MEd, FANN, an associate professor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center School of Nursing, recounts her involvement as consultant to The Rapides Foundation. "After that healthcare study, they asked me to help them find out more about what the needs were in the nursing workforce."

To do that, Phase One of the project was launched in April of this year. It consisted of

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Community Health Assessment

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two elements: Direct interviews with nursing executives or nurse leaders of the major healthcare employers and educational institutions, plus a telephone survey of 358 Cenla registered nurses.

"I don't know of any other state that has done a telephone survey. Most of the surveys have been written surveys through the Boards of Nursing," said Leavitt. "What the telephone survey enabled us to get was a lot more in-depth information about the nursing workforce and changes in the working situation."

As the results of the survey were compiled and analyzed, some surprises began to surface. "It told us that the workforce in Cenla looks different than in the rest of the state." For example, Louisiana is one of the few states where there are more nurses with four-year bachelor degrees than with two-year associate degrees. "In the Cenla region it's just the reverse, which is more typical of what's happening in the rest of the country," Leavitt pointed out.

The findings on minorities in nursing also held surprises. "We found out that the minority representation of nurses is much, much less in the Cenla area than for the state as a whole. So it certainly is not reflective of the population," Leavitt remarked.

With Phase One now completed, its results were then used to plan Phase Two of the project which began in October. "What we're looking at now is trying to create some ways to enhance recruitment into nursing," explained Leavitt. "The first project is going to be an extensive public relations and outreach campaign to recruit people into nursing."

According to Leavitt, the focus of the entire initiative is to plan well into the future. "The solutions are long-term. There are no easy fixes. That's what most groups are focused on."

Leavitt believes this project with The Rapides Foundation can really make a difference. "I don't know of another foundation that is making as much of a commitment to enhancing the nursing workforce as Rapides. It's really exciting, and to me, it's quite unique and an incredible opportunity."

The Rapides Foundation is a philanthropic organization that provides grants to organizations throughout an 11 parish service area that share the Foundation's mission to improve the health and well-being of Central Louisiana.



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

www.rapidesfoundation.org



Health Assessment Update

Community Health Assessment

2002

Highlights



One of the most frequent requests the Foundation receives is for updated health assessment information based upon the 1997 Tulane study. The update is complete and we hope you will find the new version more comprehensive, easier to read and use and accessible on-line.

Assessment Reports Available

Health assessment data for the 11 parishes is printed in a comprehensive 300 page written report along with individual parish by parish summaries. The reports will be available from the Foundation at cost. Please contact Annette Clark, Special Projects Associate, for more details at 318-443-3394 or toll free at 1-800-994-3394. Reports can be downloaded free from our Web site at www.rapidesfoundation.org

2002 Community Health Assessment Highlights

Some of the key findings from the assessment:

1 Highlight




There are important differences in the health status of residents when comparing Cenla parishes against each other, as well as within different population groups within parishes. These differences are more pronounced than in the 1997 study.

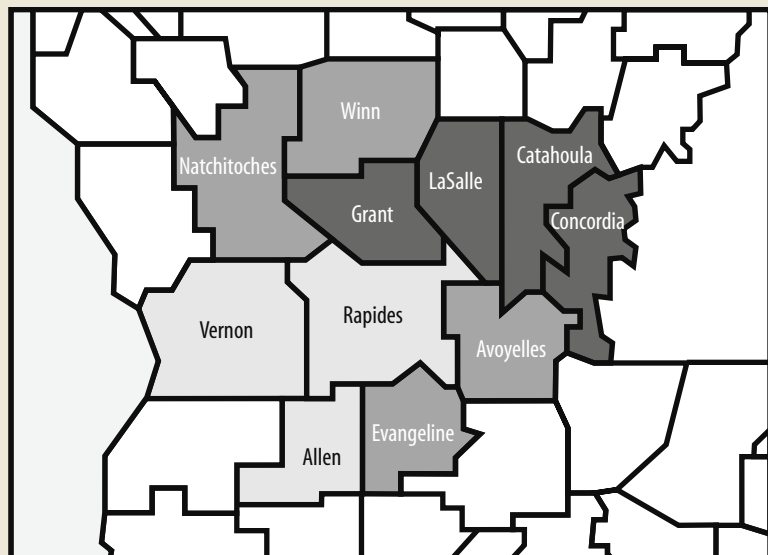


2 Highlight

Significant numbers of Cenla residents report themselves to be in Fair or Poor health – at 1.5 to 2 times the Louisiana and national averages.

% Self-Reported Fair/Poor Health

-  17.4 - 20.4
-  20.4 - 23.2
-  23.2+



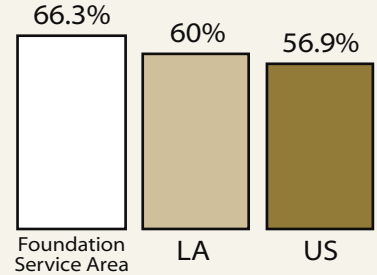
2002 Community Health Assessment Highlights

3 Highlight

Overweight and obesity continue to be conditions on the rise – negatively impacting our elevated rates of diabetes and cardiovascular disease, among others.

Overweight Prevalence

- 28.5% of adults in the Foundation’s 11-parish service area are obese (Status is based on Body Mass Index, a ratio of reported heights and weights; obesity is having a BMI of 30 or higher)
- In all, 66.3% of service area adults are overweight
- 30.2% of adults report no leisure-time physical activity



4 Highlight

Almost one-quarter of the region’s adults cannot consistently take their prescribed medication because of low-incomes and rising costs.



5 Highlight



Area adults identify tobacco, drinking and driving, alcohol and drug use and teen pregnancy as major problems impacting Cenla’s adolescents.



THE RAPIDES FOUNDATION

GRANT UPDATE :

The Rapides Foundation Grants
from July - September 2002



Initiative/Response Grants

• *Arts and Humanities*

Alexandria Museum of Art

Support of intensive K-12 educational programs linking schools in 11 parishes with Heart of Spain exhibit

\$500,000 2 years

• *HealthCare Access*

Administrators of Tulane Educational Fund

Development of cancer control plan for Cenla

50,000 1 year

• *Healthy Futures I*

Allen Parish School Board

Establishment of school-based health center at Oakdale High School

600,000 3 years

Food Bank of Central Louisiana

Establishment of Kids Café after-school programs at three Cenla sites

165,000 2 years

• *Healthy Seniors*

Alzheimers program set aside

Funds assigned for establishment of programs for Alzheimers patient and caregiver treatment and support programs

200,000 2 years

• *Workforce Development*

Nursing Workforce Organization

Establishment of independent employer-led nonprofit dedicated towards promoting nursing as a career, enhancing the quality of the nursing workforce and recruiting middle and high school students into nursing educational programs

800,000 2 years

Mini-Grants and Technical Assistance Grants (one year or less)

Alexandria Metropolitan Foundation

Funds for further exploration of intermodal transportation opportunities in Cenla

10,000

Eunice Alfred Ministries

Organizational development and pilot program funds for Rapides Parish-based start-up group dedicated to working with children of incarcerated parents

7,500

Family Playhouse

Funds to assess and standardize current math and science curriculum used by this Rapides Parish-based youth arts organization

10,000

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GRANT UPDATE: (continued from page 11)

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|---|----------|
| Food Bank of Central Louisiana | \$10,000 |
| Programmatic development for Kids Café after-school programs | |
| 4 Rivers Youth & Adult Community Association | 10,000 |
| Organizational development funds for this Jonesville-based community group involved in after school tutoring and LEAP test preparation | |
| Joy Dara Ministries | 10,000 |
| Organizational development and programmatic development of youth risk-reduction programs | |
| Rapides Parish Fire Protection District #8 (Cotile VFD) | 5,000 |
| Matching funds for purchase of medically oriented equipment and training materials to be used in collaboration with adjoining departments | |
| Special Olympics | 10,000 |
| Identification and assessment of prospective program participants in Cenla | |

Announcement of Community Based and Rural Health Grant Program

The state Department of Health and Hospitals' Office of Primary Care and Rural Health announces the availability of grant funds for Louisiana's rural parishes and health professional shortage areas (HPSAs) through the Community Based and Rural Health Grant Program. This funding is being made available for capital improvement projects and/or developmental projects for primary and preventive health care service expansion projects. Grant awards will not exceed \$50,000. Eligible applicants include public or nonprofit healthcare provider organizations located in rural and/or federally designated HPSAs.

For more information contact Rural Health Officer Beth Millet at (225)342-1889 or bmillet@dhh.state.la.us.



is published by The Rapides Foundation

The Rapides Foundation continues a legacy of community healthcare initiated in 1903.

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