

# Hospital receives federal funding

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Congressman Rodney Alexander and USDA Rural Development State Director Clyde Holloway visited Bastrop today to present over \$12.5 million in federal funding to Morehouse Parish Hospital Service District 1.

"This funding marks a new beginning for Morehouse General Hospital," said Holloway. "In recent days, we have issued a letter of conditions for a \$7,874,000 direct community facilities loan and a conditional commitment for \$4,643,050 in guaranteed business and industry loan funds. This funding will improve the services offered by the hospital, as well as give the hospital a solid foundation for growth."

The direct loan funds were awarded through the USDA Rural Development's Community Facilities Program, which offers grants, loans, and loan guarantees to develop essential community facilities in rural areas and

towns of up to 20,000 in population. This funding will be used for emergency department and rural health clinic improvements, an MRI/CT build out, second floor air handling unit replacement, exterior and main entry improvements and additions, laundry modifications, and replacement of smaller needed equipment.

The guaranteed business and industry loan funds were awarded through USDA Rural Development's Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program. Lenders work with USDA Rural Development through this program to secure federally-guaranteed loans for projects that will improve the economy in rural areas. The guaranteed funds will be provided to Morehouse Parish Hospital Service District 1 by BizCapital BIDCO II, LLC of New Orleans, Louisiana. These funds will be used to purchase equipment, pay fees, and re-finance debt.

"The hospital service district will have to meet our conditions and requirements to receive the Rural Devel-

opment funding presented today," said Holloway. "But, from what we have seen during the application process, the community's commitment to make this project work will ensure its success."

Morehouse General CEO Cheryl Faulkenberry said the successful loan application was a group effort, and expressed special appreciation for the community support she has seen throughout the process.

"It has been a challenging year," said Faulkenberry. "We knew if we stayed focused, it would happen. The community has stood behind us and stayed strong. We feel like this is a new beginning for the hospital."

Morehouse Parish Police Jury president Terry Matthews pledged the jury's continued support "as we work to improve the quality of life in Morehouse Parish."

Mark Sistrunk, chairman of the jury's hospital committee, described the loan application as a "very serious endeavor" with far-reaching impact.

"I'm 53 years old, and I was born right here in this hospital," said Sistrunk. "We couldn't have had a harder working set of people here. There's no way the people of this parish can say thank you enough. This money coming in will ensure our hospital is a fully functioning part of our community for years to come."

Chamber of Commerce president Jim Conley and Bastrop Mayor Clarence Hawkins each drew parallels between the dedication of Morehouse General staff and that of International Paper mill employees, whose hard work and sacrifices have ensured the continued operation of the Louisiana Mill.

Noting the challenges and close calls for Morehouse Parish in the past year, Hawkins said, "It shows the tenacity of this community that we made it through. It shows we can endure, and we will endure. We can overcome again if we come together, believe in ourselves and persevere."