

Announcement of Federal Funding for the Health Wagon

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October 8, 2010

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Lebanon, Virginia

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I am pleased to return to Lebanon this morning to announce a major allocation of federal funding that will improve health care services available to individuals in Russell, Buchanan, Dickenson and Wise Counties and the City of Norton.

At my urging, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, through its Health Resources and Services Administration, is providing a federal grant of \$1,438,984 to the Health Wagon to help improve the health care services it provides to low and moderate income individuals across the region.

The Health Wagon began serving patients in 1980, when Sister Bernie Kenny began delivering health care services out of her VW Beetle. In the past thirty years, the Health Wagon has become a medical home for more than 3,000 individuals, providing health care services

regardless of a patient's ability to pay.

The Health Wagon has become a model among nurse managed health centers, providing an entry way to access primary care services for individuals who might not otherwise receive health care services. The Health Wagon is a particular asset in our region because its mobile health care services are able to reach residents in remote and mountainous communities, many of whom would otherwise face a long drive to a clinic.

The services provided by the Health Wagon are supported by private donations, corporate sponsorships, and grants from private organizations.

The federal funds announced today represent a significant investment in the Health Wagon. With the benefit of the \$1,438,984, the Health Wagon will be able to supplement the salaries of two of its Nurse Practitioners as well as one of its nurses. The nurse will serve as a health educator, providing information to communities about healthy lifestyles by visiting schools, community centers, senior citizens groups and other organizations in the Counties served by the Health Wagon.

In addition, with the federal funds, the Health Wagon will be able to hire a social worker to assist patients with making medical appointments, obtaining and managing medications and other needs.

Finally, the federal funds will also be used to purchase an electronic medical records system that will enable the Health Wagon's records to be digitized. This will enable the Health Wagon to provide much more efficient care to patients and to easily communicate with area hospitals and clinics about a patient's condition. The federal funds will enable the Health Wagon to hire a staff member to handle the implementation of the new records system for the next three years.

To implement the federal grant funds, the Health Wagon will work in partnership with the University of Virginia Schools of Nursing in both Charlottesville and Wise, the University of Virginia School of Medicine's Department of Public Health Sciences, the University of Virginia Health Systems, the Southwest Virginia Health Authority, and the Health Appalachian Institute.

This allocation of federal funds will not only enable more efficient and improved services available to the Health Wagon's patients, but it will also provide new clinical training opportunities for nursing students with the Health Wagon and provide them training in primary care.

Ensuring that Southwest Virginia residents have access to affordable, high quality health care services is one of my highest priorities. Today's announcement of federal funding takes a significant step in advancing this goal.

I would like to take the opportunity of these remarks to thank a number of individuals who have worked diligently on behalf of the Health Wagon.

I want to thank Dr. Teresa Gardner, Executive Director of the Health Wagon, and the Health Wagon's excellent staff for their tireless efforts to provide health care services to individuals throughout the region.

I also want to thank Dr. Elizabeth McGarvey, associate professor at the University of Virginia School of Medicine Department of Public Health Services. Elizabeth also serves the Health Appalachia Institute. Her efforts were critical to writing the application for the grant we are announcing today.

I also want to thank Amy Taylor with Mountain States Health Alliance for her dedication to the Health Wagon. Mountain States Health Alliance has provided excellent assistance to the Health Wagon and has displayed an unwavering commitment to providing health care services to our region.

I also want to recognize Lou Markwith, Executive Director of the Virginia Association of Free Clinics, who is with us today.

Finally, I want to thank my Director of Community Development, Derek Lyall, for his

persistent and persuasive efforts on behalf of the Health Wagon.

The federal funds announced today will help provide high quality health care services to those most in need in our region. Today's announcement represents a significant federal investment in the excellent work of the Health Wagon, and I want to congratulate all here on this outstanding achievement.