

# Access 2010

A Newsletter for the staff, board members, patients and friends of the Association's member health centers.  
From the Virginia Community Healthcare Association

## Virginia Members of Congress Recognized by NACHC

*National Awards Honor Lawmakers for Leadership on Behalf of America's Health Centers*



Rick Shinn, Director of Public Affairs, presenting Senator Webb with the NACHC Superhero award along with Richard Melke, Tina Burns, Rudel Chinnery, and Amanda Palmore.

This year's visit to Capitol Hill gave the Virginia Community Healthcare Association (the Association) and leaders from community health centers (CHCs) across the Commonwealth an opportunity to meet with their members of Congress. During the visit, the Association and CHC leaders presented national awards to select members, recognizing the support these Members of Congress have provided to medically underserved communities across Virginia and the nation.

Senators Jim Webb and Mark Warner, along with Representatives Bobby Scott and Tom Perriello have been recognized by the National Association of Community Health Centers for their outstanding leadership in expanding health care access to millions of uninsured and medically underserved Americans. Recognition is given each year to members of Congress who have worked to successfully help community health centers

around the state bring affordable healthcare for all.

Across the United States, community health centers serve as the health care home for more than 20 million people in more than 7,500 communities. In Virginia, over 240,000 residents receive care at more than 110 health center sites. Demand for services continues to grow, particularly as millions of people have lost their health insurance along with their jobs during the current recession. Studies have shown that community health centers save the health care system \$9.9 billion to \$17.6 billion a year by keeping people healthy and out of hospital emergency rooms. With 60 million people now struggling without access to health care, an aggressive plan to preserve, strengthen and expand health centers is being carried forward.

The national award presentation came as health center professionals, board members, advocates, volunteers and patients from across the country convened for the 35<sup>th</sup> annual NACHC Policy and Issues Forum in Washington, D.C.

Pictured above is Sen. Webb presented with his 2010 NACHC Superhero award. Sen. Warner will be presented with his award at a later date.

## **General Assembly Holds the Line on Safety Net Funding** *Funds critical to thousands in need of medical care and pharmaceuticals*

In the face of lower state revenues and increasing numbers of Virginians struggling during the current economic troubles, the Virginia General Assembly held safety net funding at current levels, despite calls from two governors for reductions.

Proposals from Governor Kaine and Governor McDonnell had called for reductions in safety net funding ranging from 10% to 50%. Drastic reductions would have seriously damaged the ability of many providers to care for the uninsured and the unemployed, at a time when help is most needed.

Although faced with difficult decisions during budget deliberations, Senators and Delegates held to their convictions that, when people are most in need, the state has a duty to help where it can. In the final budget passed by the GA, safety net providers were maintained at the same levels as in the prior fiscal year. As a result, thousands of Virginians will be able to get care.

State funding will be used to fund the Pharmacy Assistance Programs run by community health centers across Virginia, and to help provide medical services to persons at or below 200% of the Federal Poverty Level.

“We’ve seen people who once gave donations to their local community health center come in now with no insurance, having lost their jobs and no longer able to afford to pay for care,” stated Rick Shinn, Director of Public Affairs for the Virginia Community Healthcare Association. “Some centers have reported record numbers of newly uninsured persons seeking care, and frankly, that trend appears to be continuing.”

“On behalf of those who are poor, those whom have lost their jobs and livelihoods, and those Virginians that are uninsured, we are extremely grateful to the members of the General Assembly for keeping their partnership with community health centers and other safety net providers intact.”

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## Role of Community Health Centers Critical for Many Virginians

### *Helping communities and saving lives*



Joe Ann S. no longer has to sacrifice her health because of the expense of health care thanks to her local community health center.

Joe Ann S. says she might not be alive today if it weren't for her community health center (CHC). Diagnosed with diabetes five years ago, shortly after losing her job the former welder found herself unsure of where to turn for help.

Initially, Joe Ann felt as though she was fighting an illness that would overwhelm her life. She had always been fairly healthy and as a professional welder, she was able to provide for herself. Now faced with a chronic illness and no health care coverage, Joe Ann feared she would not be able to manage her diabetes properly.

Joe Ann was advised to seek care from her local community health center. After reaching out to them, Joe Ann discovered she could access many needed services through the CHC, such as the Pharmacy Assistance Program. Now, Joe Ann is able to obtain her prescription medications at an affordable cost. She no longer has to sacrifice her health because of the expense of health care.

Without her local Community Health Center, Joe Ann may not have been able to monitor or manage her diabetes properly. Her diabetes would have eventually controlled her without the care and assistance her CHC provided for her.

Joe Ann's community health center story is one of thousands that help define the importance of CHCs to local communities and Virginians across the span of the Commonwealth. Whether working on the Eastern Shore, tending farms in the Piedmont region, or mining in far Southwest Virginia, local residents of medically underserved communities depend on the services provided by CHCs.

All CHCs provide medical services, and many provide dental, behavioral health, and pharmaceutical services as well. With the shortage of physicians and dentists, particularly in rural and inner city area, CHCs are a key element of 112 communities across Virginia.

## Pharmacy Assistance Provides Critical Medications Program Provides Relief to Poor and the Uninsured



In Roanoke, the New Horizon Health Center, provides medical and other services to patients, including a Pharmacy Assistance Program.

The need for pharmacy assistance by thousands of Virginians has increased by approximately 37 percent in just the last few months. For many it is the only opportunity to access medications. One great example is Mrs. T, who visited her local community health center because she had recently lost her job. Her husband receives Social Security disability and is covered by Medicare, but she is just a few years shy of qualifying for Social Security retirement and Medicare.

Despite being entirely without health insurance, Mrs. T has several medical conditions such as diabetes, depression and hypertension which require monitoring and expensive medications. Mr. and Mrs. T also have a son who is a full-time student and living at home leaving the family with an annual household income of just \$27,800.

Since losing her job, Mrs. T has been without her two medications for depression because the expense is beyond what she can afford, at a cost of almost \$800 per month. In addition, her prescription for her diabetes costs almost \$170 per month and even the cost of the inexpensive generic drugs for her hypertension would strain her budget. Since enrolling in her CHC's Pharmacy Assistance Program, Mrs. T has been able to receive all of her medications at a more affordable price. Mrs. T's physician has also been able to change some of her prescriptions to make them less costly.

Like in Mrs. T's case, the CHC's Pharmacy Assistance Program has been known for helping its community members receive their medications at low or no cost. This program is available because of the state funding that is received each year. Resulting in a more proactive approach to health care, there are many benefits to the Pharmacy Assistance Program. Not only are patients positively affected, but the local economy and community are also positively impacted.

Data compiled by the Association shows that community health centers leverage an average of \$100 worth of medicine to every \$1 invested. A case can also be made that CHCs and their Pharmacy Assistance Programs contribute to lowering the cost of healthcare. One example would be that through proper medical and pharmacy management, patients with chronic illnesses such as diabetes and high blood pressure can have fewer emergency room visits and hospitalizations. CHCs and their pharmacy programs, by helping to keep patients out of hospitals and ERs, help lower health care costs as well.

## Emergency Preparedness Taken to the Next Level

### *Eastern Shore Rural Health Recognized for Emergency Preparedness Support*



Nancy Stern, CEO, and Anne Crabbe, COO, accept state award for their outstanding efforts in emergency planning from Jason Loftus, Accomack Director of Public Safety and Emergency Management Coordinator, and Sara Seamen, Accomack Deputy Emergency Management Coordinator.

Eastern Shore Rural Health System Inc. (ESRHS) has been honored as the recipient of the Virginia Emergency Management Association's Corporate Award at the 2010 Virginia Emergency Management Symposium. Nominated by Accomack County Emergency Management, ESRHS won this statewide award because of the assistance they provide to the Shore's three emergency management jurisdictions-- Accomack, Chincoteague and Northampton. They have an active role in each of the jurisdiction's Emergency Operations Centers during activations.

All five of ESRH's centers can become Neighborhood Emergency Help Centers during emergencies, providing mass vaccinations and disease prevention measures for citizens, as well as providing non-emergency medical care during disasters when Riverside Shore Memorial Hospital may be overwhelmed.

Eastern Shore Rural Health is an active member of the Eastern Shore Disaster Preparedness Coalition. Anne Crabbe, the Chief Operating Officer, serves on the Coalition's executive committee. There are currently 46 entities represented on the Coalition.

Without the assistance of the Coalition, resource-strapped local emergency management would not be able to effectively protect its citizens during disasters. ESRHS is also providing staff assistance in preparing a Spanish language version of a Coalition-produced emergency preparedness guide containing localized information. These guides will be distributed by ESRHS and other Coalition entities to Rural Health centers, migrant camps and churches this spring.

Should Accomack's EOC elect to open a point of distribution site after a disaster, Rural Health is able to open a temporary NEHC on site, providing first aid and other medical assistance to citizens coming by for food and water distribution. ESRHS was on the planning committee for Accomack and Chincoteague's EOC/POD functional exercise in May 2009 and played an active role in both exercises at both sites. ESRHS actively supports, promotes and participates in the National Incident Management System compliancy of not only their local organization, but other Coalition members as well.

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## Improving Medical Outcomes for Children and Adolescents

### *State - Association Partnership to Focus on Serious Health Problems*



Margaret Hayman, Project Coordinator, is excited about involving the CHCs in the project with VDH to serve Children and Adolescents

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Division of Child and Adolescent Health has partnered with the Virginia Community Healthcare Association (The Association) on a new project. This project is a collaborative effort to enhance medical screenings and ongoing care of children with serious medical conditions that cause delays in physical, cognitive, or behavioral health.

Using the medical home concept, this quality improvement project seeks to create positive outcomes for the patients in the program and set standards to create change throughout the state. In addition, we plan to apply to the American Academy of Pediatrics for certification of the project.

The Association's Margaret Hayman, project coordinator, is recruiting six community health centers (CHCs) to participate in this endeavor. Peninsula Institute for Community Health (PICH), Piedmont Access to Health Services (PATHS), New Horizons Healthcare, Eastern Shore Rural Health Systems, Inc (ESRHS), Southwest Virginia Community Health Systems (SWVCHS), and Alexandria Neighborhood Health Services (ANSHI) have agreed to participate in this important effort to place attention on children's health issues. In addition to the participating CHCs, the project's physician champion, Dr. Colleen Kraft, will assist with the selection of private pediatric or family practices to take part in the statewide project.

A parent champion, experienced in working with children's health issues, has also been identified to be a part of the project team. This member will work to keep families engaged throughout the program. The four-member project team, which includes the program manager, project coordinator, physician champion, and the parent champion, will attend quality improvement training, scheduled in June, to enhance the team's understanding of how to set goals, how to measure progress, and how to report results.

Community health centers continue to show strength and leadership in improving the overall health of all Virginians. In addition to providing primary care, community health centers continue to provide innovative solutions to all health challenges.

## An Addition to Tri-Area Community Health Center Floyd County Community Health Center Opens its Doors to the Public



Pictured above is the reception area and hallway to the exam rooms in Tri-Area's newly opened Floyd Health Center

After several years of hard work, Tri-Area Community Health Center opened a new center in Floyd County in March. This addition to the Ferrum and Laurel Fork sites will increase accessibility to health care in Southwest Virginia.

Floyd was one of 200 counties nationwide to be designated as High Poverty Counties in need of additional health care service under President Bush's Health Center Initiatives in 2007. From this designation, in September 2007, a New Access Points in High Poverty Counties grant was awarded to Tri-Area Community Health Center for the development of a community health center in Floyd County.

After extensive planning, in the spring of 2009 construction of Floyd Community Health Center finally took off. While the center went through its development and building process, Tri-Area Community Health leased a dormitory building at the Jacksonville Center for the Arts as Floyd Community Health Center's temporary location until the site opened its doors in February.

Floyd Community Health Center will now be equipped with eight regular examination rooms, one examination room for minor surgeries and emergencies, several provider offices, a conference room, and a full service lab where some of the work will be done in-house, while other work is sent to Lab Corps.

Tri-Area wanted this center to be more than just a medical center; it needed to have that welcoming and comforting feeling. "I think (the building) has a warm feel and is homey, and that is what we were aiming for," said Michelle Turman, Executive Assistant.

The staff looks forward to celebrating the dedication and hard work put into the opening of Floyd Community Health Center later this spring with a grand opening.



The new Floyd Health Center provides a lot of space to accommodate community members with a variety of medical needs and serve as the medical home.