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**The Health Care Coalition of Lafayette County Receives \$80,000 in Affordable Care Act Funds
Planning Grant Will Identify Unmet Health Care Needs in Carroll, Lafayette & Saline Counties**

(October 5, 2011) Lexington, MO – The Health Care Coalition (HCC) of Lafayette County has been awarded an \$80,000 Planning Grant by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Affordable Care Act. The award will enable the HCC to undergo a comprehensive planning process to identify, address and ultimately provide unmet health care needs for the underserved and uninsured in Carroll, Lafayette and Saline counties.

"The Health Care Coalition of Lafayette County continues to advocate for and develop health care services and resources for the underserved," said Mel Fetter, CEO of Pathways Community Behavioral Healthcare, Inc. "This Planning Grant is just the next step in assessing needs and developing programs to address those needs."

HCC Executive Director Toniann Richard said that even with Lafayette County's federally qualified health center (FQHC), Samuel U. Rodgers Health Center, the area's unmet needs remain large. Carroll and Saline Counties have no FQHCs, and according to a 2009 Uniform Data System report, approximately 5 percent of the low-income population and 2 percent of the total population in the three-county area are currently being served by an FQHC.

"The planning process is the first step in addressing the health care needs of numerous residents in this three-county region," Richard said. "All three of these areas are designated as health professional shortage areas. Add to that a rural backdrop with intricate health care challenges, and you have a population who suffers disproportionately from preventable chronic diseases."

As a result, the HCC is poised to conduct a thorough needs assessment that identifies gaps in care. Additionally, the health care advocate will:

- Apply for a MUA/MUP (medically underserved area/medically underserved population) designation for Lafayette County;
- Develop a comprehensive approach to bringing additional FQHC services to the area;
- Undergo a multi-county planning process that encourages collaboration and community support;
- Restructure HCC bylaws and its governing board to ensure compliance with Health Center guidelines; and
- Create a comprehensive needs assessment that includes a service delivery model and quality improvement plan designed to meet the areas' unmet health care needs

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“This is exciting news for Lafayette, Carroll and Saline counties,” said Bret Kolman, CEO of Lafayette Regional Health Center. “LRHC is thrilled to be a part of this. When the community comes together, great things happen.”

“Even with the challenges that rural areas often face, we have an incredible opportunity to build the framework for a world class health care system—right here in West Central Missouri,” Richard said. “On the strength of our network partners and technological advances like e-prescriptions, electronic medical records, telemedicine, and health care home models through community collaboration, we have a unique advantage. This Planning Grant allows us the resources to knit together a systematic approach that seamlessly takes health care in Carroll, Lafayette and Saline counties, to new heights.”

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About the HCC

The Health Care Coalition of Lafayette County collaborates with area agencies, businesses and other non-profits to advocate for the health and well being of Lafayette County residents. Among HCC’s current programs are:

- Health information technology initiatives to equip health care providers with the resources needed to offer telemedicine and telehealth services that increase patient access to quality health care;
- Social Innovation for Missouri (SIM) that addresses tobacco cessation and obesity prevention; among other programs; and
- Rural Missouri Health Co-op—with a workplace wellness component—aimed at creating a healthier workforce and reducing insurance premiums.

To learn more, visit HCCNetwork.org, WellnessWorks.HCCNetwork.org, 4everfit.HCCNetwork.org or follow us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

