

# Rural Louisiana

a quarterly publication of the Center for Rural Development at Louisiana Tech University

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Louisiana Tech University

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## Rural Health Care and Healthy Rural Communities

Strengthening Louisiana's health sector is a crucial part of economic development in rural portions of the state. The health care sector is often a significant driver of a small community's economy. Rural hospitals in particular are often the largest single employers in a community. When doctor's offices, pharmacies, nursing homes, clinics, and home health providers are factored in, health care services can directly contribute as much as 20% to a local, rural economy.

In addition, individuals employed in health care, both in medical professions and affiliated support services (e.g. clerical support, food service, custodial service) use their wages to purchase goods and services; supporting other local business establishments and providing sales tax revenue. Many own property in the community, pay taxes, and support local organizations. Patients and their visitors also utilize local restaurants, retail stores, and gas stations - generating additional economic activity in the community.

A community's health care system is also a significant factor in its ability to recruit new firms and residents. Company surveys reveal that managers often look at access to health care in deciding where to locate facilities. The existence of a strong health care network lowers

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## Health Care Resources for Rural Communities at LA Tech University

Louisiana Tech University offers several outreach programs to improve the health and well being of people in the community, and to provide research opportunities and real-world training experience for students. In addition, faculty and departments which do not have a formal outreach program but may be looking for projects for themselves or for students related to health care are listed below.

### Speech and Hearing Center

The Louisiana Tech University Speech and Hearing Center provides direct diagnostic services and treatment services for individuals of all ages with speech, language, and hearing disorders

*For appointments or additional information contact: Dr. Angie Sherman, Coordinator of Speech and Language Services or Dr. Keith Woglemuth, Coordinator of Audio-logical Services, P.O. Box 3165, Ruston, LA 71272, (318) 257-4766*  
*Website: [www.latech.edu/slp-aud/Speech and Hearing Center.htm](http://www.latech.edu/slp-aud/Speech%20and%20Hearing%20Center.htm)*

### Psychological Services Clinic (PSC)

The Psychological Services Clinic offers individual, couple, family and group therapies. Services include evaluation and counseling for psychological, emotional, and educational problems for adults, adolescents, children and families.

Psychological Services Clinic is a not-for-profit training program for our graduate students in clinical psychology. Our graduate students provide clinical services to the public under the supervision of clinical psychology faculty. PSC charges for all services are on a sliding fee scale.

*For more information call: (318) 257-3410*

*Website: [www.latech.edu/tech/education/psychology/PSC.htm](http://www.latech.edu/tech/education/psychology/PSC.htm)*

### The Center for Biomedical Engineering and Rehabilitation Science (CyBERS)

CyBERS operates a comprehensive program in developing and applying technology in rehabilitation. Services include:

**Driver Assessment** - The center provides a complete evaluation of an individual's potential to operate a motor vehicle. An individualized prescription includes recommendations for vehicle selection, appropriate adaptive aids and devices, and vehicle modifications.

#### Seating and Positioning/Mobility -

The Seating and Positioning Clinic addresses the seating and corrective postural needs of individuals with severe physical disabilities. Clinical staff can prescribe a wheelchair seating system to provide better body alignment, normalize muscle tone, and inhibit abnormal reflexes.

#### Augmentative Communication -

The Augmentative Communication Program provides comprehensive evaluations for persons who are unable to use speech and/or writing to fully meet their communication needs. The interdisciplinary team includes a speech pathologist, occupational therapist, and adaptive equipment specialist. The augmentative communication laboratory is equipped with numerous communication aids that reflect the most recent advances in technology.

**Assistive Devices Information**- Center staff maintain a current collection of catalogues, brochures and print material on special equipment for persons with physical challenges. Cost and purchase information are provided as well as valiative data, when available.

**Independent Living Skills** - Clinical staff at the center evaluates an individual's ability to perform activities of daily living while using adaptive equipment or compensatory techniques. Numerous assistive devices are used during the evaluation including aids for eating, cooking, dressing, bathing and controlling appliances.

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**Rural Louisiana is a free publication of the Center for Rural Development at Louisiana Tech University. It is primarily distributed electronically. All issues are available on the Center's website [www.latech.edu/tech/rural](http://www.latech.edu/tech/rural). For more information, please contact:**

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# Rural Louisiana

## The Health Care Sector and Rural Economic Development LA Tech Conference, April 2 2004

On April 2nd 2004 approximately 45 people gathered at Louisiana Tech's for a one-day conference focused on the connection between the health care sector and rural economies.

The first presentation was by Dr. Gerald Doeksen, a Professor of Agricultural Economics at Oklahoma State University, is the national director of Rural Health Works and an expert on the impact that rural health care systems have on rural economies.

The purpose of the Rural Health Works program is to expand public awareness of the importance the economic impact of the health care sector and stress its critical role in rural development. Armed with this knowledge, local decision makers can become proactive and involved in planning and supporting their local health system.

After Dr. Doeksen, Jonathan Chapman, Program Specialist, Louisiana State Office of Primary Care and Rural Health, provided information about the implementation of the Rural Health Works program in Louisiana. He is leading an effort of the LA Office of Primary Care and Rural Health to estimate the financial impact a health care sector has on parishes in the State of Louisiana.

With him was Mr. Mark Chustz the Administrator of the West Feliciana Parish Hospital in St. Francisville. Mr. Chustz has used Mr. Chapman's data to convince hospital board members and the community to invest in health care improvements in his parish.

The afternoon session was devoted to programs that are available to improve health care systems in Louisiana's rural communities.

Featured speakers were:

Gayla Prentice, Resource Development Program Coordinator, Louisiana State Office of Primary Care and Rural Health

Dorie Tschudy Critical Access Hospital Coordinator, Louisiana State Office of Primary Care and Rural Health

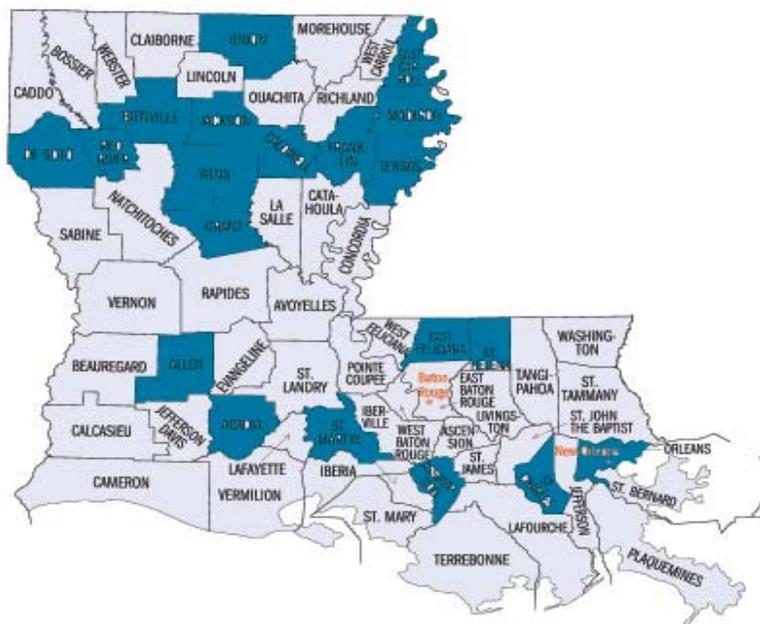
Health

Danny Magee, Community Programs Director, USDA Rural Development.

and

Bill Vogt, Field Representative Telecommunications Programs, USDA Rural Development

## Parishes in Louisiana With the Most Critical Shortage of Doctors



According to the Louisiana Bureau of Primary Care and Rural Health, the green parishes have the most critical shortage of doctors in Louisiana. Although these shortages appear statewide, they are most concentrated in north Louisiana.

# Rural Louisiana

## Rural Health Care and Healthy Rural Communities (continued from the front)

health care costs for firms and their employees and provides value-added services for firms such as occupational health.

Attracting retirees seeking low-cost, warm climates is a strategy pursued by many Southern states. Surveys of retirees have shown that they are much more likely to choose a location that has access to quality health care. Although a temperate climate, golf course, and low cost of living may be a draw, when it comes to selecting a particular location, they will tend to settle where their long-term health needs can be met locally.

Research has shown that rural communities that lose their hospitals generally decline economically. The loss of a rural hospital eliminates a large number of jobs that are difficult to replace. A community without a hospital will have a much more difficult time attracting doctors. Despite its importance, the local health sector is often overlooked by economic developers and local governments when developing economic plans and policies for their community. Most rural parishes in Louisiana suffer from a shortage of physicians and other health professionals. Many small rural hospitals are having difficulty making ends meet due to the large numbers of underinsured patients they serve and their reliance on fixed Federal Medicare and Medicaid reimbursements which, because they often do not have sufficient beds to take advantages of economies of scale, do not cover their costs.

More information about the effect of rural hospital closures on the rural economy is detailed in a report by Dr. Gerald Doeksen of Oklahoma State University [Who Loses? What](#)

[Happens When a Community Loses its Health Care Infrastructure?](#) It is available for free on the Southern Rural Development Center's website: [srdc.msstate.edu/publications/doeksen.pdf](http://srdc.msstate.edu/publications/doeksen.pdf).

Louisiana is working to improve its health care infrastructure in rural areas. Recognizing that access to healthcare is a problem in rural Louisiana, in 2002 the Louisiana State Legislature passed Act 162 which mandated that the State Office of Primary Care and Rural Health develop and implement a strategic plan to increase access and the quality of care in Louisiana's rural and underserved areas. The Office of Primary Care and Rural Health convened a 50 member statewide advisory board to develop the plan.

The advisory committee's plan specifically outlines critical strategies that the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health and its statewide partners will use to improve access to health care services over the next five years. The plan was released in January 2003 and is available on the web at: [www.dhh.state.la.us/offices/?ID=88](http://www.dhh.state.la.us/offices/?ID=88) (choose Strategic Plan - 2002 at the bottom of the page).

Communities should conduct their own planning processes to identify their health care gaps, develop a long term plan for improvement, and act on a plan based on their analysis. A model for a community health planning process that is being used in the State of Oklahoma is available at: <http://rd.okstate.edu/health/chp.html>.

To assist in planning, there is a program called Rural Health Works. This federally funded program provides training to technical assistance providers on how to

conduct health care feasibility studies such as measuring the contribution of health care to a local economy, and determining the need in a community for such things as additional primary care physicians or nursing homes. These assistance providers are then expected to assist local communities assess their health needs. Its website is [www.rd.okstate.edu/health](http://www.rd.okstate.edu/health) and the contact is Cheryl St. Clair, Oklahoma State University (405) 744-6081. e-mail: [cheryl@okstate.edu](mailto:cheryl@okstate.edu).

In Louisiana, staff from the Office of Primary Care and Rural Health have been trained by the Rural Health Works project and, using IMPLAN, an economic modeling system, have begun to estimate the financial impact that the rural health care sector has on all of Louisiana's forty rural parishes.

For more information regarding these studies contact Jonathan Chapman at (225) 342-5754 or [jchapman@dhh.la.gov](mailto:jchapman@dhh.la.gov). Information about the project, and the status of the studies is available on the web at: [www.dhh.state.la.us/offices/?ID=88](http://www.dhh.state.la.us/offices/?ID=88) (choose IMPLAN on the menu).

Rural community leaders who are concerned about the long-run economic viability of their communities need to be proactive in taking advantage of state and federal programs to assist them in strengthening their community's health care infrastructure. This issue of Rural Louisiana lists some resources that are available to help.

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## Health Care Resources for Rural Communities at LA Tech University (continued)

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**Field Services** - Rehabilitation engineers on staff with the Center travel throughout the state visiting disabled clients in their homes, schools, or worksites.

For more information contact : *The Center for Biomedical Engineering and Rehabilitation Science, Louisiana Tech University, P.O. Box 3185, Ruston, LA 71272, (318) 257-4562 Email: cybers@coes.latech.edu Website: [www.cybers.latech.edu/](http://www.cybers.latech.edu/)*

### Department of Health and Exercise Science - Senior Exercise Program

Louisiana's Senior Adult Exercise Program allows Louisiana Residents over 60 to take courses at any state

university - tuition free!

The Louisiana Tech Senior Adult Exercise Program is coordinated through the Health and Exercise Sciences Department in the College of Education. The programs helps senior adults maintain the most optimal level of physical, emotional, intellectual, and social independence. It is tailored to work alongside any current medical treatment or rehabilitation program and will prepare the individual for a strong, healthy recovery program that goes beyond the clinical care plan.

For more information contact: *Dr. Gail Clark (318) 257-2107 or [gclark@latech.edu](mailto:gclark@latech.edu)*

**In addition to these centers there are several departments at LA Tech who may have students or faculty inter-**

**ested in working on projects to benefit the health of rural communities. The list below is a starting point:**

**The Department of Health and Exercise Sciences**, Dr. James Heimdal, Chairperson, [jheimdal@latech.edu](mailto:jheimdal@latech.edu) or (318) 257-4432

**Nursing Program**- Pamela Moore, Director and Professor, [pmoore@gans.latech.edu](mailto:pmoore@gans.latech.edu) (318) 257-3101

**Health Information Management**, Angela Kennedy, Department Head and Professor, [kennedy@him.latech.edu](mailto:kennedy@him.latech.edu) or (318) 257-2854

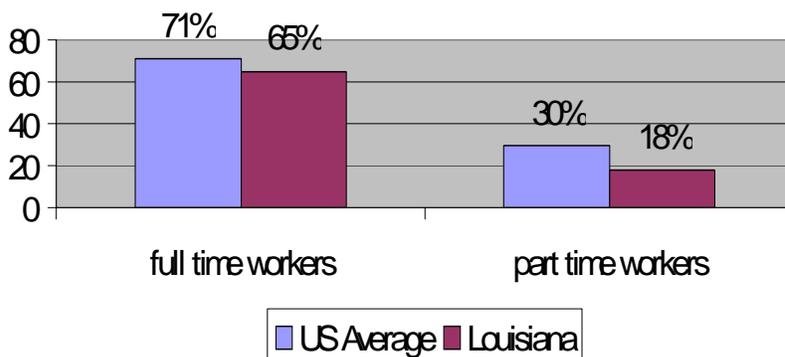
**Medical Technology Program**, Kenneth E. Griswold, Ph.D., CS (ASCP) [egrswold@gans.latech.edu](mailto:egrswold@gans.latech.edu) or (318) 257-4246

**Human Ecology, Nutrition**, Dr. Mary Murimi, [murimi@ans.latech.edu](mailto:murimi@ans.latech.edu) or (318) 257-2607

**Human Ecology, Issues of Aging Populations**, Dr. Jan Colvin, [colvinj@ans.latech.edu](mailto:colvinj@ans.latech.edu) or (318) 257-2713

*If you need further assistance identifying a source of technical assistance or expertise at LA Tech University, please contact Elizabeth Higgins, Director, Center for Rural Development, (318) 257-2919 or [ehiggins@latech.edu](mailto:ehiggins@latech.edu)*

Percent of households with at least one employed worker that have employer-provided insurance



### Employment in Louisiana is no guarantee of health benefits!

Louisiana currently ranks **6th** in the United States for the number of households in which someone is employed full time and **2nd** for the number of households in which someone is employed part-time that do not have employer-provided health insurance.

Source: Kaiser Family Foundation

# Rural Louisiana

## Resources for Local Healthcare

### Federal and State Agencies

#### **The State of Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals - State Office of Rural Health and Primary Care**

This state agency develops innovative solutions for improving access to quality care in rural and inner city communities. It provides grants in five categories: primary care clinic grants, health demonstration grants, emergency services grants for small rural hospitals, state match to federal grants, and physician salary subsidies. Its website also provides data on rural health issues in Louisiana.

*For more information contact: Beth Millet, Rural Health Officer; Phone: (225) 342-9513, Fax: (225) 342-5839, E-mail: [bmillet@dhh.state.la.us](mailto:bmillet@dhh.state.la.us); Website: [www.dhh.state.la.us/office/?ID=88](http://www.dhh.state.la.us/office/?ID=88)*

#### **Louisiana Rural Health Access Program (LRHAP)**

The Louisiana Rural Health Access Program partners with other agencies to leverage the resources available to rural communities.

LRHAP is a partnership comprised of: LA Department of Health & Hospitals, Southwest Louisiana Area Health Education Center, Southeast Louisiana Area Health Education Center, North Louisiana Area Health Education Center, Central Louisiana Area Health Education Center, Louisiana Public Health Institute, Louisiana Hospital Association, Louisiana Primary Care Association, Louisiana Rural Health Association, LSU Healthcare Services Division, LA Medical Society, and USDA.

Currently LRHAP has four major functions (1) Rural Community Health Network Development, (2) Provider Recruitment and Retention, (3) Practice Management and (4) the Rural Health Loan Program.

Recognizing that developing local leadership in rural communities is the cornerstone for ensuring access to health care for all rural residents, the Louisiana Rural Health Access Program has established an innovative approach to fostering leadership development and community-health planning activities in the rural communities of Louisiana.

The Community Health Network Development aligns local coalitions of health, business, civic, religious and education leaders and consumers striving to improve access to health

care in their communities. Community Health Network Coordinators work with rural communities to assess area health needs and assets, to identify local barriers that impede access to health services, and provide community-based solutions aimed at reducing these barriers. Once these "strategic plans" are developed The Health Networks serve as community advocates by promoting the community-based plans to parish, regional, and state government. This program is similar to the Rural Health Works program discussed at the LA Tech conference in April 2004.

*For more information contact: Louisiana Rural Health Access Program, Marsha Broussard, MPH Program Director, 1600 Canal Street,*

[Continued on the next page](#)

### Featured Foundation - The Rapides Foundation

**Honoring its 100 year legacy as a provider of quality healthcare services to members of the Central Louisiana community, The Rapides Foundation invests a substantial portion of its grant funds in services and programs seeking to directly create and sustain enhancements in the physical and mental health measures of the community. The majority of these services and programs are (1) new or expanded clinical healthcare services or (2) programs promoting wellness and safe and healthy lifestyles.**

**Through its Healthy People grant program, the Rapides Foundation works to improve access to quality health care, promote healthy behaviors and foster a safe and caring community.**

**The Foundation serves a 9 parish region in Central Louisiana. For more information contact:**

**The Rapides Foundation, 1101 4th Street, Suite 300, Alexandria, Louisiana 71301, (318) 443-3394**

**Website: <http://www.rapidesfoundation.org>**

# Rural Louisiana

## Resources for Local Healthcare

8th Floor, Room 804, New Orleans, LA 70112, Telephone: (504) 599-1396, Email: [MBrous5@lsuhsc.edu](mailto:MBrous5@lsuhsc.edu). The program's website is [www.laruralhealth.org/](http://www.laruralhealth.org/)

### **The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy**

This federal agency promotes better health care service in rural America. The Office informs and advises the Department of Health and Human Services on matters affecting rural hospitals, and health care, it coordinates activities within the department that relate to rural health care, and maintains a national information clearinghouse.

*For more information contact: Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration, 5600 Fishers Lane, 9A-55, Rockville, MD 20857, Phone: (301) 443-0835, Fax: (301) 443-2803, Website: [ruralhealth.hrsa.gov/](http://ruralhealth.hrsa.gov/)*

### **Sources of Data**

**The University of Maryland Library** has developed a website on Health and Medical Statistics. This guide with annotated links provides sources for health and medical statistics that may be found on the Internet. Sources and strategies for finding print sources of health statistics may be found at the end of the guide. If you are new to health data this is a good starting place. The website is: [www.lib.umd.edu/MCK/GUIDES/health\\_statistics.html](http://www.lib.umd.edu/MCK/GUIDES/health_statistics.html)

**The Center for Disease Control's National Center for Health Statistics' Web site** is a rich source of data about America's health. Its website is: [www.cdc.gov/nchs/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/default.htm)

If the CDC's website is overwhelming, a great, easy to access site that provides state-level data on a large number of health indicators is the **Kaiser Family Foundation's website, [statehealthfacts.org](http://statehealthfacts.org)**. It is available on-line at: [www.statehealthfacts.kff.org](http://www.statehealthfacts.kff.org)

### **Resource Clearinghouses**

**The Rural Assistance Center (RAC)** is a rural health and human services information clearinghouse whose purpose is to help rural communities and other rural stakeholders access the full range of available programs, funding, and research that can enable them to provide quality health and human services to rural residents. RAC is an excellent resource. In addition to their website, they publish a free newsletter "Rural Health News."

*For more information contact: RAC, PO Box 9037; Grand Forks, ND 58202, Phone: 1-800-270-1898, Fax: 1-800-270-1913, E-mail: [info@raconline.org](mailto:info@raconline.org), website: [www.raconline.org](http://www.raconline.org).*

### **Infrastructure Grants and Loans for Health Care**

USDA Rural Development Program has two programs that can be of great assistance to rural health care facilities

**The Telecommunications Grants and Loans Programs** can provide clinics and hospitals with high speed internet access and technology to make it possible for isolated rural medical centers to access expertise and resources that are available elsewhere.

**The Community Facilities Grants and Loans Programs** can fund

construction and renovation of rural hospitals and clinics.

*For more information about these USDA programs contact: Danny Magee, Community Programs Director, USDA Rural Development, (318) 473-7940. You can also look at USDA's website: [www.rurdev.usda.gov](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov)*

**Governor's Office of Rural Development** offers community infrastructure grants that can be used to build or renovate rural healthcare facilities. Their website has links to other programs that can be of assistance.

*Contact: Ty Bromell, Director, (225) 342-1618. Its website is: [www.rurallouisiana.com](http://www.rurallouisiana.com)*

**Rural Health Loan Program** Louisiana Rural Health Loan Program, administered through Southeast Louisiana AHEC is designed to assist healthcare projects in rural communities by: providing funds to assist with efforts to improve healthcare infrastructure, providing technical assistance and resources to assist loan applicants in preparing business plans, pro forma financial statements and facilitate referrals, providing compensating deposits to help reduce interest rates on conventional loans, providing linkages with financial institution, city governments, health care providers and community based organizations.

*For further information, contact Richard Blouin or Jack Plummer. at (985) 345-1119. More information can also be found on the Louisiana Rural Health Access Program website: [www.laruralhealth.org](http://www.laruralhealth.org)*

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## The Center for Rural Development News:

### Website Project

The Center for Rural Development is working on a project to develop websites for 10 communities and 8 non-profits in Lincoln, Union, Jackson, Bienville and Claiborne Parishes. Templates that other communities can use as a starting point for developing their sites will be available on the Center's website ([www.latech.edu/tech/rural](http://www.latech.edu/tech/rural)) starting in January 2005. For more information contact the Center at (318) 257-2919 or by e-mail at [ehiggins@latech.edu](mailto:ehiggins@latech.edu)

### Annual Conference

The Center is beginning to plan its annual spring conference. This year the focus will be on nonprofit development. If you have suggestions for specific topics, trainings, or speakers at this conference, please contact Liz Higgins at the phone number above.



Mt. Lebanon Baptist Church, Mt. Lebanon, LA

**Center is seeking towns/schools/  
community organizations  
interested in documenting local  
history!!!**

We are thinking of developing a project to work with children in rural towns to scan in photographs and document the stories of elderly and longtime residents.

If this would be of interest to you, please contact Liz Higgins at (318) 257-2919.