

OMAHA, Neb., October 24, 2008 - United States Congressman Lee Terry and USDA Rural Development Nebraska State Director Scot Blehm presented a ceremonial check today to Alegent Health in Omaha, Neb. for \$383,996. The telemedicine grant will bring expert healthcare services to six critical access hospitals in rural Nebraska and Iowa.

"Health care providers and patients in rural areas face obstacles that those in urban areas do not," said Terry. "The funds will go a long way in providing needed healthcare to many rural Nebraskans. This grant represents the dedication that USDA Rural Development and Alegent Health have to healthcare; and doctors and patients are better off because of it."

The USDA Rural Development Distance Learning and Telemedicine program provided the grant that will enable the Alegent Health eHospital, pharmacists, and critical care nurses to deliver expert services. These services will provide first class emergency and critical

healthcare to thousands of patients and medical professionals at critical access hospitals.

Currently there are limited specialists available at these sites. Critical access hospitals benefiting are Memorial Community Hospital & Health System-Blair, Neb., Plainview Area Health System-Plainview, Neb., Alegant Health Memorial Hospital-Schuyler, Neb., St. Francis Memorial Hospital-West Point, Neb., Alegant Health Mercy Hospital-Corning, IA, and Alegant Health Community Memorial Hospital-Missouri Valley, IA.

"USDA Rural Development is pleased to present Alegant Health with funding today that will greatly enhance the quality of healthcare received in rural Nebraska," stated Blehm.

"USDA Rural Development is committed to delivering the funding needed to help rural communities to succeed and remain strong. We are pleased to report a record year in project funding which means more dollars pumped into Nebraska to keep its' rural

communities viable."

In Fiscal Year 2008, USDA Rural Development delivered more than \$189.8 million to rural Nebraska. Housing funds delivered totaled \$70.6 million, community facilities \$11 million, utilities \$22.4 million, business \$18.9 million, telecommunications \$51.3 million and electric \$15.6 million.

Contact USDA Rural Development (402) 437-5551, toll free 800-670-6553, or (402) 437-5093 (TDY).

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