

HHF Outlines Plan to Improve Health in Phillips County

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Dr. P. Vasudevan, executive director for the Helena Health Foundation, presented the HHF's ambitious plans to improve the health of Phillips County residents at a recent Rotary Club meeting.

In the first phase, the HHF is financing the Delta AHEC wellness center. This 29,000 square foot, \$4.2 million facility will accommodate health classrooms, a diabetes clinic, and a medical library as well as an indoor track and pool. The Delta AHEC also will feature a Teen Wellness Center. The Delta AHEC groundbreaking is expected in December.

The Delta AHEC facility will feature a pond and an outdoor track, with a major portion of the costs of the project already committed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

"I am very excited about our Helena Health Foundation's ability to offer the people of our community a wealth of special medical and health services that might otherwise not be available to them," said Vic Juengel, Chairman of the Health Foundation.

Citing the purpose of the HHF, Dr. Vasudevan said, "The mission of the Helena Health Foundation is to support an improve the public well-being and quality of life in Phillips County, especially in health care matters, by recommending prudent and creative grants to address community needs in a wide-range of charitable activities in health care and providing leadership in identifying and addressing community health problems and opportunities."

In Phase 2 plans, the Helena Health Foundation plans to build a Senior Day Care Center and, if not provided elsewhere in the community, a primary care clinic. Phase 2 also will provide quarters to accommodate visiting medical students and physicians. In Phase 3, the Helena Health Foundation plans to construct assisted living quarters for senior citizens.

The Helena Health Foundation hopes to introduce a countywide transportation system that will connect the Helena Regional Medical Center and the Delta AHEC facility to population centers in the community.

While Phase 2 and 3 will be offered after the Delta AHEC wellness center is completed, the Helena Health Foundation has already initiated other programs in the community. Through the proceeds of an endowment, the Helena Health foundation offers over \$50,000 per year to fund programs at the Delta AHEC for smoking cessation, Kids for Health, childhood and adult obesity, diabetes and workplace health. Since July, these programs have provided services and treatment to over 1,300 residents of Phillips County.

"The Helena Health Foundation will be working closely with the Helena Regional Medical Center, Delta AHEC, Phillips Community College, physicians of the Phillips County Medical Association, pharmacists, and other members of the health community to assist them in providing the services they currently provide or seek to provide in the future," stated Juengel. "From time to time the HHF may initiate programs of its own to make available a better health climate with facilities and services for all our citizens with particular emphasis on our indigent population."

The Helena Health Foundation is piloting a \$10,000 prescription assistance program for emergency drug assistance. If the pilot is successful, more funding will be added to allow low-income Phillips County residents to continue accessing prescription medications on an emergency basis.

The Helena Health Foundation's funding comes from the long-term lease with Community Health Services operating what it now the Helena Regional Medical Center. The HHF received \$10 million from the long-term lease and it then created an endowment. The revenue from the endowment funds is then used to finance health-related activities in Phillips County.

The Helena Health Foundation's funds for the first two years were used to pay off a \$1 million Medicare-Medicaid liability. Now that the liability has been erased, the HHF is launching its activities to promote health care in Phillips County.