

Mahoney Announces Diabetes Program Grant for Avon Park

(April 9, 2008)

(Avon Park, FL) - Congressman Tim Mahoney (FL-16) announced today that the Heartland Rural Health Network, Inc. in Avon Park, has been awarded a grant from the United States Department of Health and Human Services' division of Health Resources and Services in the amount of \$169,530.00. This grant money will assist Heartland Rural Health, Inc. institute a Diabetes program for the rural communities of Highlands County designed to assist with all aspects of diabetes care, research and maintenance.

"Heartland Rural Health Network's record of success in serving the needs of Floridians was key in securing funding," said Congressman Tim Mahoney. "At a time of skyrocketing costs of healthcare, it is crucial that the medical needs of rural communities such as Highlands County be recognized and not forgotten."

"The Heartland Rural Health Network is enormously pleased with the support and the financial assistance being provided by the Health Resources & Services Administration, Office of Rural Health Policy by the funding of this grant. This program will enable us to work closely with our local physicians and other health care providers in implementing a program which is designed to increase the health status of our local residents and save lives," said J. Rudy Reinhardt, Executive Director of Heartland Health Network. "The Heartland Rural Health Network would like to thank the legislators at both the state and federal levels for their continued support of programs that benefit our rural communities."

The Heartland Rural Health Network is one of nine rural health networks in the State of Florida. These networks were created by an act of the State legislature in 1993. The primary mission of the Heartland Rural Health Network is to get together with the health care providers in our area to determine the best way to provide quality health care services to our rural residents.

The significant increase in the prevalence of diabetes across the United States, including all of our rural communities has been a source of concern to our health care providers for several years now. Studies have shown that the prevalence of diabetes has increased by 33% over the last decade as a result of an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, the epidemic of obesity, the growth of ethnic groups at risk for the disease and the aging of the population. Diabetes is now the fifth leading cause of death in the United States.

The grant submitted by the Heartland Rural Health Network proposes to address this problem by working with local health care providers by implementing the Diabetes Master Clinician Program that was developed in 2003 by the Florida Academy of Family Physicians. Dr. Edward Shahady is the Medical Director of the Diabetes Master Clinician Program. This program's goal is to facilitate diabetes care excellence in the outpatient setting.

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