

Important Impact: Lincoln Health Foundation Helping Residents in Need

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The Lincoln Health Foundation (LHF) says the proof is in the numbers — the sale of what was formally known as Lincoln General Hospital is making a big impact on Lincoln Parish health initiatives.

LHF held an annual public meeting Thursday at Lincoln Parish Library to update parish residents on current activities by the foundation toward fulfilling its mission of improving health care and outcomes for residents of Lincoln Parish.

The nonprofit Lincoln General Hospital — now known as Northern Louisiana Medical Center — was bought by the for-profit Community Health Systems for \$36 million in March 2007 from Lincoln Health System.

LHF, a nonprofit organization, owned almost 70 percent of the shares for Lincoln Health System.

In addition to interest on investments, some of the LHF projects were funded partially through the annual bequest from the Sturgis estate, which is between \$150 and \$200,000.

The most recent audit LHF shows how much progress the foundation has made in three years. The audit showed total liabilities and net assets of \$25,906,731.

Since 1998, LHF has passed out \$866,531 in funding for 11 projects designed to address local health issues.

“The best thing is that we’ve made a positive impact on the community,” LHF Chair Shirley Reagan said. “Our goal is to help everyone with an emphasis on our children in need here in Lincoln Parish.”

The goal includes implementing school-based health care programs that:

- Increase school nursing staff
- Ensure that school nurse’s stations are stocked with adequate supplies
- Provide hygiene supplies for those students who do not have adequate personal hygiene education or hygiene supplies
- Provide dental, hearing and vision screenings—as well as access to dental and vision care for students who need those services but are unable to access them, and ensure that the health care services provided to students in need are coordinated effectively by a school-based coordinator.

LHF is also working to improve access to Lincoln Parish public health services by improving the operational flow of patients receiving services at the Lincoln Parish Health Unit, and expand the existing immunization program by providing the Gardasil vaccine for the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) to underinsured women between the ages of 19-26.

Since 2008, the LHF has provided \$84,000 in funding to help the Lincoln Parish Health Unit, including a HPV Gardasil vaccination program and the installation of a women, infants and children’s kitchen at the health unit.

LHF Chief Executive Officer Norman Hanes said the foundation is especially excited about a new program it's about to start funding.

"We have a grant for an initiative we're very thrilled about," Hanes said. "It's a medical Mobile Clinic that's being set up by local doctor Leonel Lacayo and his wife."

Lacayo said the clinic will bring medical services to area residents who might not otherwise receive it.

"Ruston and Lincoln Parish reminds me very much of (the book) 'A Tale of Two Cities,'" Lacayo said. "You hear a lot about how many rich people —millionaires— we have in Lincoln Parish. But 1/3 of the parish is at or below the poverty level. Most of those people are uninsured. When Lincoln Health Foundation did a community health assessment that was required by law for them to start up, access to affordable health care was the top priority.

"Transportation was a big factor, because most of these people don't have a way to get to the doctor. Prescription costs were another big factor."

Lacayo said his clinic will allow those people to receive the medical services they need. He expects it to begin rolling early next fall.

"We're proposing a fully-equipped mobile medical clinic to travel around the parish on a regularly-scheduled basis," Lacayo said. "So much about health care is about follow-up treatment, which is next to impossible for someone who doesn't have transportation. We have an emphasis on screening and plans to help people get healthier, but if you don't do follow-ups, you're not going to make a real impact.

"Having a mobile unit travel to certain areas on regular schedule will help us make the kind of impact we're looking for."

To Learn More: To find out more on the specific programs funded by the Lincoln Health Foundation, see the spring edition of the Ruston Daily Leader's Living Well magazine, which will be published in April.

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