

**Rural Health Development Council
Strong Rural Communities Initiative
Steering Committee Minutes
February 26, 2009**

Attendees (in person and by conference call): Connie Abert (Waupaca County), Dr. Sayed Ahmed (Medical College of WI), Randi Arneson (Jackson County), Linda Bishop (Sauk County), Dr. Byron Crouse (UW School of Medicine and Public Health), Joel Davidson (Southwest WI AHEC), Sue Duffy (Sawyer County), John Eich (WI Office of Rural Health), Jessica Kerner (Langlade County), Leslie Patterson (Medical College of WI), Brian Potter (WI Hospital Association), Tim Size (Rural WI Health Cooperative), and Kevin Jacobson (WI Office of Rural Health, recorded these minutes).

Tim Size convened the meeting at 9:00 and introduced Leslie Patterson, who is replacing Eric Gass as the Medical College of WI representative.

Leslie Patterson reported on MCW projects (Langlade, Waupaca and Manitowoc). Due to the economy's impact on the MCW Partnership Fund, they completed a 20% reduction to their budgets for the remainder of their programs. The Fund will award fewer, smaller grants this year. Tim Size said the UW Fund completed their proposal review process but aren't awarding any grants at this time.

The Committee discussed a final in person meeting for project review and closure (the UW projects-Sauk, Hayward and Black River Falls-end February 28). John Eich agreed that it would be a good idea to wrap up the project, but because the UW funding ends in February, maybe MCW could cover the costs? Sayed Ahmed will see if there are funds. Tim will contact everyone to see if there is interest after he hears from Sayed.

Other announcements:

- Kevin Jacobson thanked the Coop and Sandy Scola and staff at Sauk Prairie Memorial Hospital for participating in the Jefferson Wells audit.
- John suggested a presentation to the WI Hospital Association by SRCI program representatives.
- Tim announced the Coop holds several roundtables on hospital/community issues. If any of the SRCI hospitals are interested in participating, let him know.
- John reviewed planning for an insurer/small business roundtable meeting the Rural Health and Economic Development Forum will host. This will be a discussion of worksite wellness programs.

Each community gave an update:

Langlade Jessica Kerner reported that due to the economy, they are emphasizing education and inexpensive reward incentives for program participation. Some businesses are laying people off, so regular programs like challenges are difficult—they don't know if employees will be working

from week to week. “Wellness gets put on the back burner.” Her position won’t be continued by the hospital beyond the grant in June because there’s no guarantee there will be enough businesses interested in wellness programs. They are planning a Healthiest Taste of Langlade County for June.

Black River Falls Randi Arneson said they too are concerned about sustaining their program when businesses are laying off employees, but at this time the hospital will continue its wellness services program. They hosted their 3rd annual Healthy Taste of Jackson County in March. Two vendors backed out due to the economy; seven participated instead of nine from the past two years. There was a discussion of whether employers are seeing any changes in their insurance premiums as a result of wellness programs. Tim said at this scale the impact on insurance isn’t as much an issue as increased productivity.

Sauk Linda Bishop reported that the Hospital completed final HRAs on participants in the Village and Police Department of Sauk City and Universal Tool and Die. Universal’s worksite wellness committee is very active and just implemented a Biggest Loser program. Universal is the only worksite with a committee; they recommend making that a requirement.

Hayward Sue Duffy reported that Hayward Hospital began a successful worksite program—43 participants. Her position has been approved to continue and the Board is considering dedicating separate space for the programs, including More Energy, which now has 61 clients.

Waupaca Connie Abert said that the nurse working with the program who sees self employed underinsured and those with no insurance (farmers, etc.) and conducts HRAs has worked with over 80 people. They recently hosted a worksite wellness meeting for employer and have two new pilot sites as a result.

Manitowoc was not able to make the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00.