

Springfield Hospital ERHC – 9/15/22

\$1M ERHC	Springfield Hospital
\$1M ERHC	Little Rivers Health Care Clinic
\$637K ERHC	Brattleboro Memorial Hospital
\$88K ERHC	Upper Valley Haven

[Salutation]

Thank you Bob, Anna and Jim – and the entire team of staff and practitioners here at Springfield Hospital. We are excited to be here today to celebrate the Emergency Rural Healthcare Grants, and to celebrate the story of the people who have made our health care system work, particularly in times of high need and stress.

My name is Sarah Waring, and I am the state director for USDA Rural Development for Vermont and New Hampshire. Our mission is to increase economic opportunity and improve the quality of life for all rural communities, and we do that through supporting housing, business development and community facilities and infrastructure. And what community infrastructure is more vital than a health care entity, whether small or large? We at the USDA strongly believe that no person in rural America should be without access to health care services because of their zip code, and I'm sure that belief is shared universally in this room.

I want to start by simply saying what we all know and what we've gathered here today to discuss: our healthcare system has been under incredible stress. We moved from an urgent emergency in the pandemic to an enduring emergency with our healthcare workforce and business model. As society reels from the trauma of the pandemic, your staff has been on the frontline taking the body blows, day in and day out.

We are here to celebrate that dedication and to announce our awards to health care providers in Vermont through the Emergency Rural Health Care grants. But more than anything, we are here today to say 'thank you.' The word 'hero' is thrown around a lot, but you and your staff are more than worthy of the label.

These grants were designed to support rural hospitals and health care providers implement telehealth and nutrition assistance programs, increase staffing to administer COVID-19 vaccines and testing, build or renovate facilities, and purchase medical supplies. They also will help regional partnerships, to solve regional rural health care problems and build a stronger, more sustainable rural health care system in response to the pandemic.

Brattleboro Memorial Hospital will use \$637,600 to modernize equipment and make improvements that meet the increasing demands of telemedicine, including an upgraded phone system, smart beds, lifts, portable beds and stretchers, and cutting-edge diagnostic and treatment equipment.

At Little Rivers Health Care, \$1 million is going to an ambitious renovation and expansion project at its Wells River clinic. LRHC will be putting in additional exam rooms, health offices, care team support spaces, a waiting room, work reception area, bathrooms and fire safety compliance work. The project will accommodate additional clinicians and increase access to primary care in economically disadvantaged areas severely impacted by the pandemic, as evidenced by sharp increases in demand for medicinal, behavioral and mental-health care.

At Upper Valley Haven, \$88,000 is going to purchase kitchen equipment and a new cargo van to support and expand their food programs; upgrading its kitchen from a residential-grade kitchen to a commercial-grade kitchen with increased food preparation and storage capacity, adding a van with reefer unit to pick up and delivery food, and service the Children's program.

And finally, here at Springfield Hospital, \$1 million dollars will help close their pandemic funding gap so they can make necessary improvements like a new air-handling system, and ensure that area residents can continue to access high-quality health care close to home.

We want to say thank you to the incredible leaders who are here today, and let you know that we're happy to support your work now and in the future. We know that healthcare is a pillar of community for rural America, as well as a strong leg in our local economies. We are proud to be a part of the solution with you.

[Handoff]

PROFILES IN COURAGE:

Brattleboro Memorial Hospital

Rebecca "Becky" Burns, RN, is the Director of Community Initiatives at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital. When the Covid-19 pandemic hit in early 2020, Becky stepped away from that role to set up a testing clinic for patients and community members. As the pandemic unfolded she went on to assist with establishing and operating a vaccine clinic as well as guidance and procedures to meet the health needs of BMH employees. These clinics, and the responsibilities they entailed, were first-of-a-kind at BMH—and Becky was a driving force behind making them happen! During a long stretch of worry and uncertainty, Becky made sure these services were rolled out

smoothly and effectively. If we were unsure how to make something happen, we turned to Becky who would always figure it out.

Aida Avdic, MD, is the Medical Director of Hospital Medicine at Brattleboro Memorial Hospital who works on the Progressive Care Unit, our inpatient medical/surgical unit. With the Covid-19 pandemic in full swing, Dr. Avdic showed incredible professionalism and leadership by demonstrating the importance and responsibility of entering patient rooms wearing the appropriate personal protective equipment. She was able to put safety first while also doing the right thing by patients. And her willingness to lead the way by repeatedly stepping into Covid rooms wearing the proper gear helped ease staff worries and allowed everyone to perform their jobs with a sense of confidence.

Springfield Hospital

Lyndsy McIntyre, MSN, RN, VP of Patient Care Services, who jumped into action as our Incident Commander at the start of COVID and continues to fill that role to this day!