

# LRHA UPDATE

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**LRHA MISSION STATEMENT:**

*To serve as a unified voice for the promotion of rural healthcare through advocacy, education, and leadership.*

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## LRHA AWARDS HEALTH PROFESSIONALS & PROGRAMS



**Dr. Jeff Combetta**  
Rural Practitioner of the Year



**Rep. Fred Mills**  
Rural Legislator of the Year



**Vernon Stevens, Jr.**  
Rural Health  
Professional of the Year



**Growing Up Fit Together**  
Outstanding Rural Health  
Program of the Year

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*A view from the field...*

*Dear Members, Colleagues, and  
Healthcare Leaders,*



I hope you and your family had a wonderful Thanksgiving. We're blessed to have participation and commitment from our members working together as a unified voice for rural health care. I would like to encourage you to join LRHA in Washington, DC on January 24-26, 2011 for the National Rural Health Association's 2011 Policy Institute. This is your opportunity to hear from top Congressional Leaders. You will also have a chance to join LRHA on Capitol Hill as we visit with the Louisiana Congressional Delegation. Click below to register today! <http://www.ruralhealthweb.org/pi>. *THANK YOU* to everyone who attended the 2010 LRHA Annual Rural Health Care Conference in October. The conference was a great success due to your participation and commitment to our education events.

*CONGRATULATIONS* to the following four new Board Members elected to the LRHA Board of Directors:

1. **Milton Bourgeois Jr.** – CEO, Ochsner St. Ann General Hospital.
2. **Mary Ann Cagle** – CEO, Louisiana Rural Health Services Corporation
3. **Karen Mixon** - Administrator, CHRISTUS Coshatta Health Care Center
4. **Angela Sheffie** -Deputy Director of Operations and Workforce, Louisiana Primary Care Association, Inc.

The new Board Members will take their post serving on the Board starting January 1, 2011. We're excited and honored to have a great group of new Board Members and we're looking forward to working with them to serve you.

The 2010 LRHA Annual Fall Conference marked the last conference as a LRHA Board Member for Evalyn Ormond, Sam Fulton and Wayne Arboneaux. They were honored at the awards banquet for their years of service and dedication to LRHA. They each played a crucial role in setting long-term strategic goals, overseeing the financial health of the organization, and representing LRHA throughout rural Louisiana.

Please contact me at 985-369-3813 ext 05 should you have any questions, concerns or comments.

Sincerely,

**Executive Director**

**NOT A MEMBER?**



To join the LRHA, please visit our website and fill out a membership application.

**JOIN NOW!**

Already a member? Refer a friend to join . Tell them to visit the LRHA website.



Growing Up Fit Together (GUFT) would like to thank LRHA for the Outstanding Rural Health Program of the Year Award.

GUFT coordinators continue to work hard in each parish to combat the obesity epidemic and provide health education to school administration, teachers, students, parents, and the community.

## Louisiana Rural Health Association Awards Outstanding Rural Health Professionals and Rural Health Programs

The 2010 Louisiana Rural Health Association (LRHA) Awards Luncheon was held on October 18th at the Lafayette Hilton and Towers. We are honored to announce the 2010 Rural Health Awards Recipients.

◆ **Rural Health Professional of the Year:** *Vernon Stevens, JR., Administrator Riverland Medical Center*

The Rural Health Professional of the Year recognizes a direct healthcare provider (non-physician) for contribution and leadership in healthcare services to rural populations and improving access to rural people.

◆ **Rural Practitioner of the Year:** *Jeff Combetta, M.D. – Franklin Medical Center*

The Rural Health Practitioner of the Year award recognizes a direct service provider (physician) for leadership in bringing health services to rural populations.

◆ **Outstanding Rural Health Program of the Year:** *Growing Up Fit Together*

The Outstanding Rural Health Program of the Year Award recognizes a statewide or regional one time or recurrent program/project that promotes the development of rural health care delivery systems.

◆ **Legislature of the Year:** *Representative Fred Mills*

The Rural Legislator of the Year award recognizes a Louisiana Legislator for outstanding leadership in promoting legislation to benefit access to quality care in rural communities.

**We would also like to salute the following dedicated individuals and successful outstanding program that were nominated:**

**Rural Practitioner of the Year:**

*Lawrence Schneider, M.D. – West Feliciana Parish Hospital*

**Rural Professional of the Year:**

*Paul Mathews – CEO, Hardmer Medical Center*



### **Vernon Stevens, Jr. Awarded Rural Health Professional of the Year**

On October 18, 2010, the Louisiana Rural Health Association (LRHA) awarded Vernon Stevens, Jr. with the Rural Health Professional of the Year Award. Each year, LRHA welcomes nominations for Rural Health Awards from all members of the Association.

The Rural Health Professional of the Year award recognizes an individual for their leadership in health care services to rural populations. Stevens has dedicated his career to serving the rural community of Concordia Parish. He has spent 29 years of his career at Riverland Medical Center and 24 of those years as the Administrator. During the 29 years at Riverland Medical Center, Stevens has been committed to providing health care services to rural residents. He has recruited physicians to Ferriday to ensure access to care, secured grant funding to purchase new equipment or provide additional services, and transitioned the hospital to a completely electronic medical records system.

Stevens currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Rural Hospital Coalition, and the Central Louisiana Area Health Education Center. He was also a founding member of the Board of Directors of the LRHA on which he served two terms as President of the Board. The residents of Concordia Parish are all aware of his dedication and commitment to improve access to care in Concordia Parish. Stevens never-ending efforts to sustain the success of Riverland Medical Center along with his dedication to serving Concordia Parish stands proof that he is a leader within his community and across the state of Louisiana.

### **Jeff Combetta, MD Awarded Rural Practitioner of the Year**

On October 18, 2010, the Louisiana Rural Health Association (LRHA) awarded Jeff Combetta, MD with the Rural Health Practitioner of the Year Award. This prestigious rural health award recognizes a direct service provider for leadership, outstanding patient care, and community involvement.

Dr. Combetta currently serves as the Medical Director, and Hospitalist Director of Franklin Medical Center (FMC) in Winnsboro, La. He has devoted himself to serving his rural community, his patients, and Franklin Medical Center. Despite his short tenure at FMC, he has assisted the hospital with securing the services of a general surgeon and three new hospitalists. Those who nominated Dr. Combetta describe him as an outstanding family physician who demonstrates genuine concern and compassion for his patients on a daily basis. In the words of one of his patients, "I want to thank you for taking good care of me. Mostly for caring. Don't ever change the way you care for your patients."

Dr. Combetta's never-ending efforts to sustain the success of Franklin Medical Center, along with his dedication to providing outstanding patient care, stands proof that he is a leader within his community and across the state of Louisiana.

## **Representative Fred Mills Awarded Rural Legislator of the Year**

Representative Fred Mills was honored by the Louisiana Rural Health Association (LRHA) on October 18, 2010 at the LRHA Annual Rural Health Care Awards Luncheon for the Rural Legislator of the Year. The Rural Legislator of the Year award recognizes a Louisiana Legislator for outstanding leadership in promoting legislation to benefit access to quality care in rural communities.

Representative Mills was elected to serve the citizens of La. District 46 in the fall elections of 2007. During his tenure in the House of Representatives, he has worked tirelessly to support rural Louisiana by serving on the following Committees: Agriculture, Forestry, Aquaculture, Rural Development, Civil Law and Procedure, and the Health and Welfare Committee. As a pharmacist and life-long resident of Breaux Bridge, Representative Mills knows first-hand the challenges facing rural communities.

Representative Mills has been instrumental in supporting the delivery of health care throughout his district. He demonstrates the wisdom, and leadership in addressing the health care needs of rural and underserved communities throughout Louisiana.

## **Growing Up Fit Together Awarded Outstanding Rural Health Program of the Year**

The Growing Up Fit Together Program received the Outstanding Rural Health Program of the Year Award on October 18, 2010 by the Louisiana Rural Health Association. The Outstanding Rural Health Program of the Year Award recognizes a statewide or regional program/project that promotes the development of rural health care delivery systems, increases access or improves the quality of rural health care through educational outreach.

Growing Up Fit Together is an obesity prevention program that serves students in elementary schools located throughout forty-three (43) Delta designated parishes in Louisiana. Almost 1 in 3 Louisiana school-aged children are overweight or obese putting them at risk for a multitude of chronic diseases. Growing Up Fit Together is a unique program designed to combat the obesity epidemic in rural parishes that integrates healthy lifestyle education and movement into Louisiana Grade Level Equivalent and LEAP friendly lessons. Funded by a Health Resources Service Administration Delta Grant, Growing Up Fit Together introduces participating schools to a creative, low-cost, easily replicated lesson-based curriculum designed to increase health and wellness knowledge and encourage exercise to reduce the incidence of childhood obesity.

The program uses seven grade specific modules at a pilot school in each of the rural parishes served. The modules engage teachers, students and families to promote healthy lifestyle skills. There are three components to the program: (1) Get Moving (2) Get Healthy, and (3) Learning Together.

Program partners include the following: The Health Enrichment Network, Bunkie General Hospital, Louisiana Rural Health Association, Multipractice Clinic, Natchitoches School System, Richland Parish Hospital, and Southeast Louisiana AHEC.

The GUFT Coordinators, along with the program, are making a positive impact on the statewide obesity epidemic. It starts in the school and carries over into the home and community.

## **LSU EXPANDS TRAINING OF PRIMARY CARE DOCTORS TO MEET GROWING DEMAND WITH \$3.12 MILLION GRANT**

Working with the Southeast Louisiana Area Health Education Center, LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans successfully competed for and has been awarded a \$3.12 million grant over five years by the US Department of Health and Human Services to train more primary care doctors and improve access to quality health care for people living in medically under-served and rural communities across Louisiana. With the award, LSUHSC will expand its Rural Family Medicine Residency Program at the LSU Bogalusa Medical Center up to double its current capacity.

“As one of only a handful of programs to have received such an award, we are honored,” says Dr. Richard Friend, LSUHSC Assistant Professor of Family Medicine and Program Director of the LSUHSC Rural Family Medicine Residency in Bogalusa, who is the grant’s principal investigator. “We have been recognized as a training program capable of educating and producing more family physicians and will be able to provide more primary care physicians to areas of the state that desperately need them. The community, the region and the state will all greatly benefit from this award.”

As the nation’s population grows and ages, the need for well trained primary care doctors increases. There is a significant gap between the expected primary care physician supply, demand, and future need. “The need is especially high in Louisiana where 97% of the State is currently classified as a primary care health professional shortage area,” notes Dr. Steve Nelson, Dean of the School of Medicine at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans. “In 2014 when Obama Health Reform takes effect, an estimated 400,000 uninsured patients will become eligible for coverage, ramping up the demand for services.” He adds, “LSU is the primary source of primary care physicians in the State, and this funding will allow us to train even more.”

The physician workforce is also aging. “In Louisiana, 25% of the physicians are over the age of 60,” says Dr. Kim Edward LeBlanc, Professor and Chairman of the LSUHSC Department of Family Medicine, “and many of them are practicing in rural communities, sometimes as the only physician. The need in rural communities will be even more critical when these older physicians retire in the next five to ten years.”

Training for family physicians is a process that begins with medical school and continues through residency. After earning an MD degree in medical school, graduates start full clinical training in a residency program. Family Medicine residency programs, which are accredited by the [Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education \(ACGME\)](#), require three years of training. As with other specialties, Family Medicine residency programs have specific requirements with certain numbers of hours that must be completed for board certification. They are designed to provide integrated experiences in outpatient, community and inpatient environments during three years of concentrated study and hands-on training.



“The LSU Bogalusa Medical Center is pleased to sponsor the LSUHSC Rural Family Medicine Residency Program,” says Kurt Scott, FACHE, Chief Executive Officer of LSU Bogalusa Medical Center. “This residency program is an important part of the health care system in this region. The training of family medicine physicians with expertise in meeting the health needs of those living in rural areas is critical in ensuring that quality healthcare is available to all of the citizens of Louisiana. Expanding the number of program graduates through this grant will make even more physicians available for these important purposes and is consistent with the core mission of LSU to provide quality healthcare to all in need and train future healthcare providers for our State.”

“The \$3,120,000.00 grant award to the LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans represents another significant health workforce 'pipeline' activity between the Southeast Louisiana Area Health Education Center (SELAHEC), Graduate Medical Education at the LSU School of Medicine New Orleans and the excellent Family Medicine Residency Program in Bogalusa” says Brian Jakes, Chief Executive Officer of the Southeast Louisiana Area Health Education Center and Deputy AHEC Program Director of the South Louisiana Regional AHEC. “The grant reviewers at Health Services Resource Administration (HRSA) recognized the importance of the primary care rural physician training taking place in the City of Bogalusa. This residency expansion grant will not only increase the number of Family Medicine physicians trained in Bogalusa, but will also allow for other grant funding opportunities. Further, it will position the LSU Bogalusa Medical Center as the premier training site for the LSUHSC School of Medicine Rural Scholar medical students selecting rural Family Medicine. Southeast Louisiana AHEC is proud to have played a role in securing this grant for the city of Bogalusa that will ultimately benefit the citizens of Louisiana with better health care.”

***LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans educates Louisiana's health care professionals. The state's academic health leader, LSUHSC comprises a School of Medicine, the state's only School of Dentistry, Louisiana's only public School of Public Health, and Schools of Allied Health Professions, Nursing, and Graduate Studies. LSUHSC faculty take care of patients in public and private hospitals and clinics throughout the region. In the vanguard of biosciences research in a number of areas in a worldwide arena, the LSUHSC research enterprise generates jobs and enormous economic impact. LSUHSC faculty have made lifesaving discoveries and continue to work to prevent, advance treatment, or cure disease. To learn more, visit <http://www.lsuhs.edu> and <http://www.twitter.com/LSUHSCHealth>.***

**Louisiana is Invited to participate in North Carolina's Eat Smart, Move More...Maintain, don't gain! Holiday Challenge 2010 Begins Nov. 22**

**Southern States Public Health Programs Working Together!**

**Be a part of creating a healthy Louisiana, join the Holiday Challenge today!**

Many people gain 1 to 5 pounds each holiday season, but scariest of all is the fact that most people who gain weight during the holidays never manage to return to their pre-holiday weight.

This year, don't be afraid of the holidays! The statewide Eat Smart, Move More NC movement is gearing up for the fifth annual free *Maintain, don't gain! Holiday Challenge*. Rather than focusing on trying to lose weight—a difficult task at this time of year—this free, six-week challenge provides participants with tips, tricks and ideas to help them maintain their weight throughout the holiday season.

Free on-line sign-up is open [www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com](http://www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com). Only an email address is needed to join. All participant information is kept confidential.

The challenge will begin on Nov. 22 and run through Dec. 31. **Those who sign up early and complete the pre-survey will receive bonus healthy Thanksgiving recipes and a shopping list.**

Each week, participants will receive free weekly emailed newsletters containing tips to manage holiday stress, ideas for fitting in physical activity during the busy season, and resources for cooking quick and easy meals when time is in short supply.

A calorie counter, food log and activity log are also available for download to help people track their progress. Participants can connect with fellow challenge takers to gain extra support and encouragement on the Holiday Challenge blog.

Those who want to get started before Nov. 22 can also visit [www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com](http://www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com) for other tips and information on eating smart and moving more.

Worksites can promote the challenge by downloading a free step-by-step Holiday Challenge Worksite Guide available at <http://www.myeatsmartmovemore.com/HolidayChallenge/Promote.html>

In 2009, more than 5,200 people from all 100 North Carolina counties and 47 other states took part in the challenge. At the end of the program, 82 percent reported maintaining their weight.

The *Eat Smart, Move More...Maintain, don't gain! Holiday Challenge* is a part of the Eat Smart, Move More NC movement to increase healthy eating and physical activity opportunities wherever North Carolinians live, learn, earn, play and pray. Find out more at [www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com](http://www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com).

**Please feel free to share this information with your friends, family and constituents nationwide.**

The NC Division of Public Health is proud to be an Eat Smart, Move More North Carolina partner organization.  
[www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com](http://www.EatSmartMoveMoreNC.com)  
[www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com](http://www.MyEatSmartMoveMore.com)

**Recent News** [Go to RAC Recent News page](#)

**[In America's Heartland, Worries that Outpatient Policy May Harm Rural Care](#)**

Oct 20, 2010 -- AHA News Now article tells of the concern expressed by rural hospital administrators about the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' policy on "direct" physician supervision of outpatient therapeutic services.

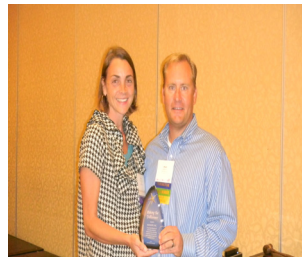
# LRHA Recognizes 2010 Sponsors

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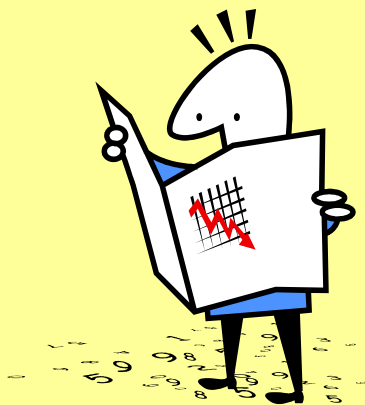


Outgoing Treasurer - Wayne Arboneaux

If you have anything you would like to add to the LRHA Update, please send information

to

**[tamaria.hawkins@growingupfit.org](mailto:tamaria.hawkins@growingupfit.org)**



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