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Georgia Department of Community Health Issues Grant to Richland's Southwest Georgia Health Care, Inc.

ATLANTA – Dr. Rhonda Medows, commissioner of the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH), announced today a \$107,000 grant to Richland's Southwest Georgia Health Care, Inc., to organize a comprehensive plan to combat Stewart and Quitman Counties' problems with diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer. The DCH State Office of Rural Health administers the funding for this program.

"Southwest Georgia Health Care is tackling three major health issues in two of the state's most underserved counties," said Dr. Medows. "Their plan outlines aggressive steps to provide this population with health care stability."

According to the 1998-2002 Georgia Department of Human Resources Age Adjusted Mortality statistics, 9.2 percent of Stewart County's population and 10.3 percent of Quitman County's are diabetics, which is significantly higher than the state average of 6.8 percent.

These same reports show the incidence of heart disease in Stewart County is 436.8 per 100,000 lives and 545.2 in Quitman County, higher than Georgia's 406.4. The incidence of cancer is 186.0 per 100,000 lives in Stewart County and 187.8 in Quitman County in comparison 102.5 in Georgia.

Southwest Georgia Health Care plans a proactive approach focused on keeping a person as healthy as possible by providing chronic disease management. This will include screenings to identify people with diabetes or who are at risk and enrolling them into continuation of care programs. They will offer education to help prevent Type II diabetes.

To tackle Cardiovascular Disease, Southwest Georgia Health Care proposes four levels:

- 1) Prevention through detection and treatment of risk factors
- 2) Lowering risk factors through dietary and pharmacological therapy
- 3) Early identification and treatment of heart attack patients to raise their quality of life
- 4) Control of risk factor to reduce recurrence

To help area citizens facing cancer, Southwest Georgia Health Care will expand their cancer services by providing their Cancer Collaborative Registry to this area. Cancer registries, as with other chronic disease registries, report to a national level patients' progress and their outcomes. Through this process, the patients are connected to possible clinical trials to improve their progress.

Other providers that are currently in the partnership with Southwest Georgia Health Care, Inc., include both the Stewart and Quitman Counties' Family Connection and the Georgetown-Quitman County government.

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About Georgia Department of Community Health

The Department of Community Health champions:

- 1) access to affordable, quality health care in our communities,
- 2) responsible health planning & use of healthcare resources and,
- 3) healthy behaviors & improved health outcomes.

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