

Area Mental Health Center  
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### **Area Mental Health Center Receives National Funding For An Integrated Health Care Program to Serve Hamilton and Greeley Counties**

**August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011-** Area Mental Health Center (AMHC) is pleased to announce grant awards of nearly \$700,000 to address the mental health needs of Greeley and Hamilton County residents through integrated medical care. The project will offer comprehensive behavioral health care, focused on prevention and early intervention, two days each week at Greeley County Health Services. Identical services will be offered in Hamilton County at a location yet to be determined.

AMHC Executive Director Ric Dalke shared, “The project will have three key elements: first, behavioral health therapists who travel to Tribune and Syracuse to deliver services, build relationships, and provide training; second, Local Advisory Councils in both counties who work with our therapists to assure that behavioral health services, training and resident-friendly information are available and delivered in a sensitive manner by people residents know and trust; and third, Telemedicine to increase accessibility to both basic and specialty services.”

The project will better equip county health care providers with the knowledge and ability to identify behavioral health needs and link residents to appropriate services to increase prevention. It will focus on early intervention and provide residents with improved access to and usage of behavioral health services when necessary.

This project involves numerous community partners and funders. Local funders include: United Methodist Health Ministry Fund and the Greeley-Wallace Healthcare Foundation with additional grant dollars from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a national foundation based in New Jersey. The agencies AMHC plans to work closely with include: Local Advisory Councils, the Greeley and Hamilton County health care systems, Greeley and Hamilton County public schools, Greeley and Hamilton County local governments and the University of Kansas. This list is expected to grow as the project becomes established over the next four years of grant funding.

“What I like about the project is that the services are accessible to all and user-friendly,” says AMHC “circuit rider” therapist Jordanna Burkett-Crist who serves Greeley County. “My role is to assist in fostering change, as encouraged by the Local Advisory Council and the community. Everyone who takes advantage of these services can be confident that they will get help for their concerns without feeling singled out or labeled.”

“Out of 181 applications for the 2011 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Local Funding Partnerships matching grants, this project was one of only 10 selected. We are excited to work with United Methodist Health Ministry Fund, the Greeley-Wallace Healthcare Foundation and other local funders to support the Area Mental Health Center’s work. We believe this effort has the potential to demonstrate what could become a ‘best approach’ for taking mental health care into rural and frontier areas, as well as a way to overcome the sense of stigma that sometimes

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becomes a barrier to getting care,” reported Deputy Director of Local Funding Partnerships Curtis Holloman.

Benefits to Greeley and Hamilton County residents include: an AMHC therapist available two days a week for scheduled client appointments in that respective community, the ability to meet with the therapist without an appointment as a part of a regular office visit to the doctor, consultation and training for county providers, and informational classes for community residents on topics related to good behavioral health. The Local Advisory Council for each county will tailor behavioral health education and delivery to provide effective strategies and solutions for everyday living. Hopefully residents will also take advantage of greater access to services through telemedicine, increasing opportunities for care that may not be locally available.

The United Methodist Health Ministry Fund is a Hutchinson-based Kansas philanthropy. Its president Kim Moore said the Health Fund’s grant was awarded to address two important health issues—access to health care in rural areas and early identification and intervention for mental health, particularly for young children. “The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s selection of this project in a very competitive national grant process is evidence of the need to find new solutions for health care delivery in our rural communities,” Moore commented. “We are proud that this project was selected and we are pleased to work with the organizations involved. We’re hopeful that this project will demonstrate viable approaches not only for Kansas communities, but for small communities throughout the nation.”

Locally, the Greeley-Wallace Healthcare Foundation has pledged their support for the Local Advisory Councils.

When asked about this project, Greeley County Local Advisory Council Chair Angie Woelk stated, “This is a tremendous opportunity for our county residents, and we are very fortunate to be chosen as the first location. Mental illness has a great impact and affects our community and its members in many different ways. These grants will open up the door to more services, more education, and help to reduce the stigma that is sometimes attached to those who suffer from a mental health disorder. I can’t wait to get started and begin making a difference today!”

**Area Mental Health Center** partners with 13 Southwest Kansas counties to provide comprehensive behavioral health services. It is one of the first agencies in Kansas to be state certified to provide behavioral health services, officially opening in Garden City on January 23, 1961. AMHC assesses and treats people with depression and other mood disorders, anxiety disorders, chemical dependency, life change issues, and many other emotional and personal concerns. We work to ensure the mental health services we offer are comprehensive, culturally competent and accessible. Services are provided to our residents regardless of race, age, sex, religion, color, national origin, disability, political affiliation or ability to pay.

For more information on this project or to learn about services we will provide, please contact Area Mental Health Center at (620) 872-2879.

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**The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF)** is the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans and works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. This project is funded under the Foundation's Local Funding Partnerships Annual Program, which is a matching grants program designed to establish partnerships between RWJF and local grantmakers in support of innovative, community-based projects that meet people where health starts: where they live, learn, work and play. For more information, please visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

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