

e-Link expands into Faulkner County

Posted: January 30, 2013 - 11:18am
SPECIAL TO THE LOG CABIN

Arkansas e-Link, a statewide broadband network, will begin operations in Faulkner County, connecting health care and educational institutions for telemedicine and distance learning.

A demonstration of the training and equipment capabilities was held today at Conway Regional Medical Center in Conway. With most of the e-Link technology already in place at sites in the county, services will begin once personnel at those locations complete training with the new equipment and systems.

Arkansas e-Link, led by the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), is using high-speed data transmission lines to connect 413 community institutions for videoconferencing between medical professionals, patients and doctors and others along with the real-time exchange of patient data and readings. Nine of the 413 are in Faulkner County. When the rollout is completed, e-Link will have a presence in all 75 Arkansas counties.

The broadband will allow patients to consult in real time with medical specialists in other locations through interactive video so the patients can receive needed health care near their homes. Hometown medical providers will be able to collaborate with distant medical specialists to co-manage patient care so they don't have to refer patients to distant hospitals or clinics. The higher education component of e-Link will facilitate resource sharing, collaboration and research opportunities at two-year and four-year colleges in Arkansas.

“By providing the equipment and bandwidth necessary to make it happen, Arkansas e-Link is connecting patients, physicians and other medical professionals in an expansion of telemedicine the size and scope of which is unprecedented,” said UAMS Chancellor Dan Rahn, M.D. “The project will benefit residents in their daily lives by providing connections to their local hospital, public library, two-year college, emergency services, community health clinic, mental health clinic and other institutions within the network.”

Arkansas e-Link was created from a \$102 million grant awarded in August 2010 to UAMS and partner institutions through the Broadband Technology Opportunities Program Comprehensive Community Infrastructure grant.

With another \$26 million in matching funds from partner institutions statewide, the project is integrating isolated community institutions to expand the capabilities and geographic reach of broadband networks serving Arkansas. Faulkner County is getting \$400,762 of the total for the data transmission lines, interactive video units and medical equipment.

“Conway Regional Health System, by working with its e-Link partner, has more opportunity to reach out further with its services and boost accessibility in our community,” said the health system's CEO James Lambert. “We can augment and diversify our specialty coverage as well as

explore new possibilities. This gives Conway Regional yet another tool that will allow us to maintain our strong commitment to providing high-quality, compassionate health care to our patients.”

In addition to Conway Regional Medical Center, other e-Link partners in Faulkner County include the Arkansas Department of Health’s Faulkner County Health Unit and Faulkner County In-Home Services as well as Conway Regional Health System’s Greenbrier Family Medicine and Mayflower Medical Clinic, CRHS Home Health, Baptist Health Therapy Center in Conway, Human Development Center in Conway and CAI Counseling Associates in Conway. Conway Regional Health System’s Clinton Medical Clinic in Clinton, Van Buren County, also is included in the rollout.

Besides improving patient care at those institutions, e-Link will enable the community partners to reduce the cost of travel by staff for the continuing medical education credits to maintain professional certifications and standards. E-link also will give health care providers another way to offer outreach for effective community health education.

“We are very excited about this collaborative effort,” said Debbie Green, Arkansas e-Link project director. “We believe this is a great opportunity for the state.”