



# Rural Health Advocate

*The Semi-Annual Newsletter of the Florida Rural Health Association*



Joe Peters,  
President

## New FRHA Board Members to Take Office

Four new FRHA Board members, elected at the last annual meeting, will take office in January. As our new members come on board, we would like to thank those members that have given their time, energy and wisdom to guiding the association over the past several years. Among these are Wendell Rollason award winner Susan Gay, Kim Barnhill, Kathy Holzer and Marlon Hunter. Each individual served with distinction and their contributions are greatly appreciated.

Our new Board Member include former FRHA President and current FACHC CEO Andy Behrman, former NRHA President and FSU Medical School faculty member Gail Bellamy, Diane Gaddis, CEO of Community Health Centers Alliance, and Bob Pannell, Director of the Office of Rural Health with the Florida Department of Health. Our new members have already made significant contributions to FRHA's strategic planning efforts, and will make a real difference in helping us achieve our ambitious goals and objectives in 2009.

*Below is more detailed information on our new members:*

### Andrew Behrman, MBA FACHC, President and CEO



Andy Behrman has been the President and CEO of FACHC since 2003. Mr. Behrman has over 30 years experience in the health care industry, starting his career in hospital administration, and then serving as Florida's first AHEC center director and a founder of the Florida AHEC network. Mr. Behrman began his work with community health centers at that time by establishing clinical rotations for health professions students and physicians in community health centers throughout Florida. Mr. Behrman has also developed one of the state's most successful rural health networks, still operating after 10 years. Since joining FACHC he has revised the association's strategic plan, increasing our abilities to better meet the needs of all CHCs in Florida.

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Andy Behrman  
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Gail Bellamy  
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Tracy Burger  
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Florida Dept. of Health

Gaye Williams  
Central Florida Health Care, Inc.

#### STAFF

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Executive Director  
850-942-2144



## **Gail R. Bellamy, PhD**

*Director of Community Studies, Associate Director in the West Virginia University Health Science Center Eastern Division WV Institute for Health Policy Research*

Dr. Bellamy joined the Institute for Health Policy Research in January 2002. She holds academic positions as an associate director in the Robert C. Byrd Health Sciences Center Eastern Division and as an associate professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management in the School of Rural Public Health at Texas A&M University. Dr. Bellamy is currently providing project coordination support for the Pediatric Preventive Oral Health Project and is the staff coordinator for the West Virginia Oral Health Policy Task Force. She is also overseeing the evaluation of the Transportation for Health Project funded through the West Virginia Southern Rural Health Access Project/ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Prior to her position with the Institute, Dr. Bellamy was the director of community research and program development for Scott and White Memorial Hospital. She also held academic positions in both the College of Medicine Department of Family Medicine and the School of Rural Public Health Department of Health Policy and Management at the Texas A&M University Health Sciences Center. Prior to joining Scott and White, she was a senior Medicaid Policy Analyst for the Texas Department of Human Services.

Dr. Bellamy has held leadership positions in state and national health associations. Most recently she completed her term as President of the National Rural Health Association and begins a term on the Governing Council of the American Public Health Association in November 2002. She is the Public Health Crossroads Topic Editor for the Journal of Rural Health. Her area(s) of research interest and expertise cover both policy and programmatic factors promoting or inhibiting access to care for rural and underserved populations. Gail has spoken and published extensively on health policy.

Dr. Bellamy received her baccalaureate degree in Psychology from UCLA, her masters in psychology from Pepperdine University, and her Ph.D. from the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health (formerly School of Hygiene and Public Health).



## **Diane Gaddis, CEO**

*Community Health Centers Alliance, Inc.*

Diane has approximately 14 years experience in the community health center (CHC) environment, including both information systems and financial management roles. Initially joining Community Health Centers Alliance, Inc (CHCA) in 2000, she served as Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the growing organization while also fulfilling the duties of Chief Operations and Chief Financial Officer. Prior to her tenure in the community health center sector, she served as a reimbursement consultant for the durable medical equipment industry and as Finance Controller within a payroll management services enterprise with over 2,500 employees. She holds a degree in Business Administration and Management Information Systems from the University of South Florida, graduating magna cum laude. To further benefit the CHC and rural health sector, Diane has provided various education sessions on topics related to the advancement of health information technology in CHCs, acquisition and implementation of electronic health records or practice management systems, as well as disaster recovery planning and security. Such sessions have been at the request of the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Medical Record Institute, the Health Information Management Systems Society – Central/North Florida chapter, the Blue Foundation of Florida, the National Association of Community Health Centers, and the Florida Rural Health Association. For 2008, Diane currently serves on the State of Florida's Health Information Security and Privacy Committee's Legal Working Group.

Diane's connection to the rural communities begins with her childhood in Nebraska. Though born in Omaha, she spent many summers and weekends with her grandparents 25 miles north in Blair, Nebraska, a farming community. After joining CHCA and working with the community health centers serving rural Florida, her commitment to being a part of the health care improvement momentum continues to grow.

## Bob Pannell, Director

*Florida Department of Health, Office of Rural Health*

Bob Pannell is the director for Florida's Office of Rural Health where he assists rural hospitals and communities maintain and improve access to high quality health care services. In addition, Mr. Pannell is also the contract manager for Florida's eleven local health planning councils that assist communities in assessing health care needs, obtaining resources to improve health access and services, and evaluating and administering health programs.

Mr. Pannell holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Zoology from the University of Florida, a Master of Science in Planning (MSP) specializing in health planning from Florida State University, and has completed the course work for a Master of Public Health (MPH) from the University of South Florida. Formerly the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility grant program coordinator for the Florida Office of Rural Health for the past seven years, Mr. Pannell has over 33 years experience in health care including: health services and facilities planning; health data management; health program administration; health care consulting; health research; and regulation of quality assurance for hospitals, outpatient services, Health Maintenance Organizations, Medicaid prepaid plans, and works' compensation managed care organizations.



## *Central Florida Health Care celebrates National Health Center Week*

August 10th thru the 16th kicked off **National Health Center Week 2008 (NHCW)** a national campaign dedicated to recognizing the service and contributions of America's Community Health Centers. The special focus for this year's (**NHCW**) is a new health center plan to create more health care homes in the future for the medically underserved and to honor the health care "heroes" at existing health centers today. The health care heroes are health center doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals who have chosen to serve in communities in need, helping to expand the reach of primary care and preventive health services.

*For more*

*information contact*

*Juanita Escobedo*

*863-452-3087 or*

*Stacey Leveridge at*

*863-452-3008.*

*"Our health care heroes at Central Florida Health Care work hard every day, providing people in the community a health care home so they can stay healthy and out of hospitals," said Gaye Williams, Chief Executive Officer. "National Health Center Week is a time that we set aside not only to recognize the work of health centers, but also to spread the message that America needs to invest in an accessible and affordable community health system that can reduce disparities, improve health, and achieve cost savings in health and prevention."*

The annual celebration comes as health centers launch a collective effort to reach the goals of a bold new plan called ACCESS for All America to serve 30 million people by the year 2015. Central Florida Health Care, Inc. is a proud supporter of **National Health Center Week 2008** and the ACCESS for All America plan. Imagine the difference we can make by giving more people access to a health care home so they can stay healthy and out of hospitals. The payoff is lower health care costs, and healthier, more productive communities. We are committed to doing our part in seeing this plan become a reality in our communities.

Also, NHCW set aside a day to focus on a population who is often left outside of the mainstream health care system. The first ever Farmworker Health Day was observed on Thursday, August 14th, 2008. Visitors were able to enjoy refreshments and snacks, as well as, tour Central Florida Health Care's facilities.

Central Florida Health Care, Inc. provides quality, affordable health care services at six locations throughout Highlands, Hardee and Polk Counties.

# Automated External Defibrillators for Rural Counties



Since 2002, when the first grant was awarded to the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, 874 AEDs have been purchased and distributed to rural EMS providers who in turn determined the local distribution needs.

*Ed Wilson, Department of Health, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services*

The Department of Health, Bureau of Emergency Medical Services was awarded a Rural Access to Emergency Devices Grant (RAED) by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration. The purpose of the RAED grant is to purchase automated external defibrillators (AED) and to provide defibrillators and basic life support training in the AED usages.

In Florida, based on the latest available data, 34.6% of all EMS responses in the 33 rural counties were to elderly citizens. The total population of the 33 rural counties, as of 2000, was 2,068,008 or 12.23% of the state population.

This project is the third year continuation grant focused on improving access to emergency cardiovascular care in rural communities. The grant provided \$93,374 for the purchase and distribution of AEDs to rural counties. All rural county emergency medical services providers were contacted in order to identify the number of AEDs required and proper placement of the AEDs. Eleven county EMS and one city EMS provider received from four to 10 AEDs each from the 78 purchased by the Bureau of EMS with the grant funds. The counties that received the AEDs were Baker, Glades, Hendry, Gilchrist, Jefferson, Liberty, Walton, Sumter, Calhoun and Putnam. The Villages in Sumter County was the city receiving AEDs. All these recipients will assure, prior to distributing the AEDs to other agencies, such as law enforcement, fire and other public safety agencies, schools, or public buildings, that individuals in each location receive the proper training.

The remaining portion of the grant funds will be used to provide CPR and AED training to first responders, the general public, and other organizations. The Bureau of EMS will be contracting with the Florida Association of Rural Emergency Medical Services Providers (FAREMS) to conduct this training.

Since 2002, when the first grant was awarded to the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services, 874 AEDs have been purchased and distributed to rural EMS providers who in turn determined the local distribution needs. In 2002, 274 of these AEDs were recalled and had to be removed from service. They were replaced using state EMS grant funds. An additional 759 AEDs were purchased with state grant funds and local funds. To date, funds from this grant and state grant funds,

and local sources have allowed for the purchase and distribution of 1,707 AEDs to the 33 rural counties in Florida. A rural county is defined in Chapter 401, *Florida Statutes* as having less than 100 citizens per square mile and a population of less than 100,000. To learn more about this rural grant program contact your COUNTY EMS PROVIDER.



# healthfinder.gov

—a consumer health Web site that's easy to understand and navigate, especially for people who have limited health literacy

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has released a more user-friendly version of healthfinder.gov. The site offers quick and easy information and tools to help people stay healthy and prevent disease. This new web site is particularly valuable for those of us working in the health promotion arena.

Coordinated by the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (ODPHP) and its National Health Information Center, the redesign of healthfinder.gov was informed by health literacy and usability principles and tested with more than 650 users. We're excited about the result—a consumer health Web site that's easy to understand and navigate, especially for people who have limited health literacy.

Be sure to visit healthfinder.gov's [Quick Guide to Healthy Living](#), a new resource that uses everyday language and examples to:

- ✓ Tell users how to take action to improve their health using a “small-steps” approach
- ✓ Give users positive reasons to change their behavior
- ✓ Provide tools and encouragement, such as personal health calculators, menu planners and recipes, tips for caregivers, and printable lists of questions to take to the doctor

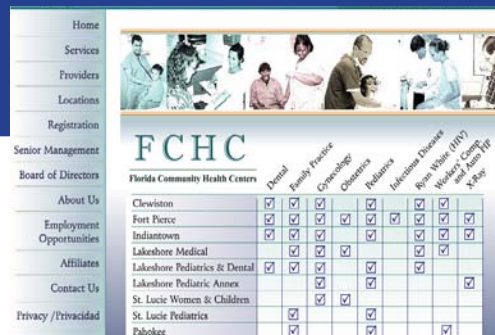
You also may try out the new “[myhealthfinder](#)” tool, which provides personalized health recommendations based on sex, age, and pregnancy status. This feature offers evidence-based recommendations from the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force, an independent panel of experts in prevention and primary care sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality.

Visit the new [healthfinder.gov](#) today and help us spread the word about this exciting new resource.



## Florida Community Health Centers (FCHC) expands Health Navigator Program

**West Palm Beach, FL** – Residents living in Hendry, Martin and St. Lucie Counties now have more support accessing health-related services thanks to grants from Allegany Franciscan Ministries and The Blue Foundation. Florida Community Health Centers (FCHC) recently received funding from these two philanthropic organizations to expand its Health Navigator Program.



As a federally qualified community health center, FCHC provides primary medical and dental care to residents in the communities surrounding Lake Okeechobee and the Treasure Coast area.

These awards enable FCHC to hire bilingual health navigators to assist uninsured Hendry, Martin and St. Lucie County residents in applying for Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps, social security and child support enforcement programs.

“Many people in our community can’t speak or read English,” said Ed Brown, President and Chief Executive Officer of Florida Community Health Centers, Inc. “Because of this, they are overwhelmed with the often complicated process of applying for healthcare benefits and coverage.”

According to Brown, one-on-one interviews conducted in the patient’s primary language will provide valuable assistance in accessing primary and preventive health services.

Since the inception of FCHC’s Health Navigator program in mid 2007, over 2,000 residents have been approved for either Medicaid or KidCare coverage.

For more information, contact Molly Ferguson at (561) 844-9443 x 310 or visit [www.fchcinc.org](#).

# Making HIT A Priority in Challenging Times

By Diane Gaddis, CEO & President Community Health Centers Alliance, Inc.

*"I really like the  
script writing  
feature and  
refills, it makes  
things so much  
easier!"*

*Dr. Monica  
Mortensen*

In today's climate of financial uncertainty, community health centers are providing high-quality care to more and more uninsured, on diminishing revenue streams. In January 2008, the Journal of Rural Health published results of a study that indicate 52% of rural families falling below 200% of poverty include multiple uninsured individuals – despite efforts across the U.S. to enroll assistance-eligible people of all ages in available federal and state programs. Florida populations face some unique hardships:

- ✓ In the Washington DC-based Commonwealth Fund's June 2007 study of healthcare by state, Florida ranked 43rd overall for the level of care available and quality of care provided.
- ✓ Also in the above cited study, Florida ranked 50th for access to health insurance, with 26.9% of all adults under age 65 uninsured.
- ✓ In 2007, Florida ranked 47 of 50 states for the number of children living in poverty (678,000, per the Annie E. Casey Foundation's KIDS COUNT data center).
- ✓ The number of Medicaid-eligible residents increased 8% from September 2007 to September 2008 (Florida Agency for Health Care Administration).

On top of these challenges, anecdotal stories about the increasing challenge in the recruitment of primary care physicians abound in the CHC world, from positions remaining unfilled for more than a year, to multiple offers rejected after candidates' partners refuse to make the transition to the area, to fewer and fewer doctors agreeing to work a full-time or on-call schedule. Primary care workloads are expected to increase 29% by 2025, but the number of physicians providing primary care for adults will decrease by 2%. Fewer medical students are choosing the specialty, and even fewer are choosing rural communities for their practices. All health care organizations must find ways to be not only competitive in salary offerings but also supportive of the work styles and lifestyles the new generation of providers requires. However, in an August 2007 physician survey of almost 800 physicians with rural health experience, 54% said they like urban or suburban life more – compounding the challenge even more for rural communities.

To combat these trends and preferences, CHCs and rural health providers must make investments today that will continue to see a return far into the future. A May 2008 study of 925 medical students found that 62% of them ranked availability of health information technology (HIT) very important in their choice of practice. Many health center organizations aligned through Community Health Centers Alliance (CHCA), who serve more than 50% of Florida's rural areas, have embraced the challenge of providing robust HIT to not only improve patient safety and increase operating efficiency, but also to make them competitive with both private practices and health centers operating in urban areas.

Leveraging the members' financial support and commitment across more than 70 health center sites, CHCA has negotiated favorable contracts with software vendors, created an engaged and talented technical team, and garnered grant support to help members tackle the tremendous burden of up-front investment for systems such as Electronic Health Records (EHR). In fact, CHCA has been awarded four federal grants



over the past three years, including EHR implementation grants and two special initiative projects: Electronic Oral Health Records (OEHR), and a planning grant for Health Information Exchange (HIE).

The collaboration between CHCA and its members allows each organization to focus on what each partner does best: CHCA providing the technical, project management, and vendor relations expertise necessary, and members keeping their attention on patient care and clinical outcomes. To date, more than 80 providers have implemented EHR for basic patient visit documentation.

"I was worried that my productivity would decrease with EHR, but after a few days I was back to 22 patients a day," said Dr. Monica Mortensen of the Thomas E. Langley Medical Center in Sumterville. "I really like the script writing feature and refills, it makes things so much easier!"

Fortunately, CHCA anticipates that additional federal support may soon be in the spotlight to help health centers still struggling to implement HIT. President-Elect Barack Obama, in a statement to the National Rural Health Association, targeted moving "the U.S. health care system to broad adoption of standards-based electronic health information systems, including electronic health records" within the next five years, closing the gap between those who have benefitted thus far from HIT (predominantly private payors) and those who provide the care and their patients. Likely, this will come in the form of funding opportunities that will be rolled out to organizations that are already aligned with others in their regions or state who stand ready to tackle the complexities that HIT projects bring.

CHCs and rural healthcare providers that share a vision of improved healthcare and that recognize the next steps required in patient care evolution must continue to seek strategies and partnerships for HIT adoption in these challenging times. High-quality systems that bring evidenced-based medicine right to the point of clinical decision will both improve efficiency and patient safety, leading to greater access to primary and preventive care, decisively improving health outcomes in the populations we serve. They may also provide a needed edge in the highly competitive search for healthcare providers to meet growing demands into the future.



CHCA, a 501(c)(3), member-supported organization, was founded in 1999 under a federal Health and Human Services program designed to create collaboration models. The Alliance works to ensure access to health care for medically underserved populations through the enhancement of health center operations, including health information technology. Members across Florida provide critical primary and preventive medical care to more than 52% of the State's rural areas, serving more than 300,000 individuals in calendar year 2007. Angela Strain, CHCA's Director of Organizational Advancement, contributed to this article. She provides grant writing assistance to CHCA and its member organizations. For more information, please visit our website: [www.chcalliance.org](http://www.chcalliance.org)

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chcalliance.org](http://www.chcalliance.org)*

# The Keys to Aging Healthy

Helping the many Florida Keys older adults stay healthy and independent is the goal of the “Keys to Healthy Aging” program recently launched by Keys AHEC (Florida Keys Area Health Education Center).

The program’s first year is funded with a \$120,000 award to the Marathon-based Keys AHEC by the Health Foundation of South Florida (HFSF). This award is part of grants totaling \$7.5 million over five years by the foundation to community partners in Broward, Miami-Dade, and Monroe counties. Since 1993, the HFSF awarded more than \$78 million in grants and direct program support for various initiatives and programs including healthy aging and healthy lifestyles, preventive measures and primary care.

The Keys AHEC grant was the third largest of any award given in the three-county area. “This shows confidence by the HFSF in Keys AHEC’s ability to directly and efficiently help our older adults stay healthy,” noted Michael Cunningham, CEO, Keys AHEC. “Our successful track record in other health-related endeavors like our Keys to Quit Smoking program was a significant factor in winning this major grant.”

Keys AHEC anticipates even larger grants from HFSF in the second through fifth year of the foundation’s five-year health initiative for older adults in South Florida.

According to Cunningham, prevention is a key component of Keys AHEC’s strategy for helping older adults to remain healthy and independent. The organization is initiating evidence-based prevention programs in chronic disease self-management, fall prevention, and physical activity starting soon at locations across the Keys.

“National studies have shown that older adults who participate in these types of programs have better general health than those who don’t,” said Cunningham. “These programs are successful because they build older adults’ confidence in their ability to manage their health and maintain active and fulfilling lives.”

Some of the specific areas addressed by the Keys to Healthy Aging program include: exercise for maintaining and improving strength, flexibility, and endurance; appropriate use of medications; communicating effectively with family, friends, and health professionals; and nutrition for older adults.

“These types of programs can help prevent or delay disability, even in patients with heart disease, hypertension or arthritis,” said Cunningham. The programs will be held in community settings like senior centers, churches, libraries, and hospitals. Specific times and locations will be announced in newspaper ads, and through private organizations and government agencies that deal with older adults.

*For more information about this program, call (305) 743-7111 extension 201 or go to [www.fkahec.org](http://www.fkahec.org).*

## Smoke Out Celebration in DeSoto County

*by Jessica Balos, MA, CTTTS*

On Thursday, November 20, 2008, DeSoto County will celebrate the American Cancer Society’s Great American Smoke Out in style. The Great American Smokeout was inaugurated in 1976 to inspire and encourage smokers to quit for one day. Now, 44.2 percent of the 45.3 million Americans who smoke have attempted to quit for at least one day in the past year, and the Great American Smokeout remains a great opportunity to encourage people to commit to making a long-term plan to quit for good. The main event in DeSoto County is the Tobacco Health Fair, jointly sponsored by Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center (GSAHEC), the DeSoto County Health Department, and DeSoto Memorial Hospital. Health fair stations will educate the community on the dangers of tobacco and the benefits of quitting, with special emphasis on youth prevention, cessation pharmacotherapy, oral health and tobacco use in pregnancy. Respiratory Therapists from DeSoto Memorial Hospital will be on hand to provide free blood

oxygen and carbon monoxide screenings. In addition, cessation specialists will also be available to help smokers learn how to quit, and to inform the community of local, free cessation services provided by GSAHEC’s QuitTeam in partnership with DeSoto County Health Department, DeSoto Memorial Hospital and Manatee County Rural Health Services.

Other community activities include a turkey dinner raffle for health fair participants, and cold turkey sandwiches featured on the menu of many popular Arcadia sandwich shops. For more information, please contact Jessica Balos of GSAHEC at 941-552-1280.





# *National Association of Community Health Centers*

## **Names 2008 Lifetime Achievement**

### **Award in Migrant Health**

It gives us great pleasure to announce that Edwin Brown, President and Chief Executive Officer of Florida Community Health Centers, has been selected as the recipient of the 2008 Lifetime Achievement Award in Migrant Health from the National Association of Community Health Centers. This prestigious award is presented annually to an outstanding individual or organization which has demonstrated long term commitment and excellence in migrant health.

A native Floridian and retired military officer with over 40 years experience in the health care field - the last 24 at Florida Community Health Centers (FCHC), Ed brings a style of leadership and management that has continually proven successful.

Ed's perseverance and leadership has been instrumental in making health care changes for Florida and the local communities we serve.

Under Ed's guidance, FCHC's operational budget has grown from a \$3.5 million in 1984 to \$20 million in 2008 and FCHC's service locations has grown from 4 to 9.

Ed and his wife Sheila have been married for 47 years and they have 4 children and 9 grandchildren.

Previous awards include the 2001 Wendell Rollason Award and the 2003 Jessie Trice Award from the Florida Association of Community Health Centers.

Ed has held/holds the following leadership positions; current Chair of the Community Health Center Alliance, Board Member and Past-Chair of the Florida Association of Community Health Centers, Board Member and Past-Chair of the Lake Okeechobee Rural Health Network and current Vice-Chair of the Everglades Area Health Education Center.

Quotation from Ed upon notification of this Award "I was very surprised and humbled by the honor of receiving this Lifetime Achievement Award for doing something I love and that I care about so much. Many along the way have assisted me - too many to name - but there's one who cannot go unnamed, Wendell Rollason. Wendell was a nationally recognized advocate for farmworkers and he was my teacher and mentor during my early years working for farmworkers rights in Florida. Without his guidance and encouragement, I could not have achieved this honor."

It may be interesting to note that Ed was nominated for this award by his staff without his knowledge and only learned of this when informed by his staff so travel arrangements could be made to attend the National Farmworker Health Conference.



# Florida Rural Health Association

Dear Current and Future Members,

FRHA is an organization that has value and deserves your support. We have made great progress over the past year, and we will continue to do so with your support. FRHA is working hard to be a strong, clear voice for rural health throughout Florida. Our issues are important because they affect millions of Floridians every day. Policy makers in the State Capitol and in Washington, D.C. are listening to these concerns and acting accordingly. Be a part of this exciting effort by joining FHRA today.

**Yes! I want to join the FRHA, so please sign me up for \$50**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/ST/ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (best number to contact you): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please send completed form and payment to the Florida Rural Health Association, 2340 Hansen Lane, Tallahassee, FL 32301.