

White River Health System (comprised of White River Medical Center and Stone County Medical Center) continues to expand its ability to provide the best hospital care possible. More residents than ever use the hospitals' services each year and we continue to seek opportunities to even better meet the needs of our populace.

We believe that an opportunity now exists that could possibly have a major beneficial effect on the future of health care services in North Central Arkansas and your support would contribute greatly to our effort.

INTRODUCTION

During the 2001 Arkansas General Assembly, HB2635 "AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE CREATION OF AN AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC) IN NORTH-CENTRAL ARKANSAS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES" was approved. The Bill called for a study, to be completed by August 2002, which would assess the need for and feasibility of establishing an AHEC in North-Central Arkansas.

Since their initial funding in the 1970s, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences' AHEC Program has been very successful. With current locations in El Dorado, Fayetteville, Fort Smith, Helena, Jonesboro, Pine Bluff, and Texarkana (see Exhibit 1), the mission of the AHEC Program is to:

Improve the supply and distribution of health care professionals in Arkansas, with an emphasis on primary care, through community/academic educational partnerships, to increase quality health care for all Arkansans.

Specific Goals of the AHEC Program are to:

- Enhance the quality of health professional education by using the best academic resources available statewide.
- Retain Arkansas graduates of health professions schools within the state.
- Improve the supply and distribution of primary health care providers in Arkansas.
- Increase the number of individuals from underserved populations who enter health careers.
- Supply professional support and continuing education for health care providers.
- Promote cooperation and coordination among communities, health care providers, educational institutions, and health-related organizations.
- Provide quality health care services and educational programs to the public.

WHITE RIVER HEALTH SYSTEMS PLAN

White River Health System believes that White River Medical Center and Stone County Medical Center are uniquely qualified to best serve as the proposed site for North Central Arkansas. Reasons for this belief would include: Batesville/Mountain View is the most

centralized locations in the proposed district (see Exhibit 2), our communities have business diversity and economic strength, we have quality institutions of higher education, the local health professionals are supportive, White River Health System has an excellent history of working cooperatively with UAMS, and WRHS is currently the major provider of hospital services and it is financially able to participate in the development of the AHEC.

In addition to enhancing the hospitals' services and reputation, other potential benefits would include:

- Formation of education and training linkages between health care delivery systems in underserved rural communities and educational resources within the region and with UAMS.
- Creation of collaborative community-based education and training for health professionals, health professions students, and primary care residents.
- Creation of systems for learning and networks for information dissemination in support of health care providers in underserved communities.
- Support of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary training that is responsive to community needs.
- Promotion of health, disease prevention, primary health care services and cost containment through educational interventions.
- Response to population-based needs and priorities for health professions education.

WRHS leadership anticipates that other communities will aggressively seek the opportunity to be designated as the proposed site. Therefore, we have developed a plan that will support our designation, and one important part of our initiative is to obtain evidence of support from important representatives from our service area.

REQUEST FOR EVIDENCE OF SUPPORT

We have attached a Resolution that we are hopeful will be approved on our behalf. If you deem it necessary or desirable, I would gladly come to a future meeting and present this issue more thoroughly.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request and I will wait for your direction.

Sincerely yours,

Gary L. Bebow
Administrator/CEO

AHEC-NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT

White River Health System

February 2002

INTRODUCTION

During the 2001 Arkansas General Assembly, HB2635 "AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE CREATION OF AN AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC) IN NORTH-CENTRAL ARKANSAS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES" was approved. The Bill called for a study, to be completed by August 2002, which would assess the need for and feasibility of establishing an AHEC in North-Central Arkansas.

White River Health System believes that its Batesville and Mountain View facilities are uniquely qualified to best serve as the proposed site. Recognizing the importance of this decision to its medical communities, WRHS management has researched and held meetings in order to understand the site selection process. In addition, WRHS has engaged professional assistance in the development of a plan that would result in its designation as the AHEC site.

On February 11, 2002 UAMS representatives (Vice Chancellor Charles Cranford and Program Director Ann Bynum), met with consultant Mitch Berry, State Representative Chaney Taylor and CEO Gary Bebow to discuss the selection. A handout is attached (see Exhibit 1) which was presented by Dr. Cranford. Following the meeting, Mitch Berry and Gary Bebow prepared the following outline of initiatives that WRHS should undertake.

PLAN OUTLINE

- I. **PREPARE AND PRESENT TO UAMS A WRITTEN REPORT THAT SUPPORTS WRHS'S LOCATION (Bebow, Berry/June 2002)**
 - A. Provide information that supports the need to establish a North Central AHEC
 - i. Although determining the need for a North Central AHEC is the responsibility of UAMS, we need to provide them with any information that can help them make that determination, as that will be the first hurdle. For example, recent statistics report that north central Arkansas has the highest percentage of uninsured residents in the state. (Berry)
 - B. Description of Batesville/Mountain View (Bebow)
 - i. Once UAMS determines that there is a need for an AHEC in North Central Arkansas, the next step will be to convince them that WRHS has the best site(s). Content of the report will include the following:
 1. Batesville/Mountain View is the most centralized locations in the proposed district.
 2. Business diversity and economic strength are attributes (e.g. agriculture, poultry, and chemical, automotive and electronics

manufacturing. Also, federal, state and county governments are located in Batesville.)

3. The availability of quality institutions of higher education that desire to expand their health education opportunities and want to work with UAMS to do so.
4. The local health professionals are supportive. Many of WRHS physicians are currently on the faculty of UAMS.
5. WRHS is a major healthcare provider and is financially able to participate in the development of the AHEC.
 - a. Provide WRHS market share statistics.
 - b. Describe other WRHS operations and locations.
 - c. Describe composition of medical staffs.
 - d. Provide a list of open, hard-to-fill positions of physicians and allied health professionals.
 - e. Describe examples of previous successful, collaborative efforts between WRHS and UAMS.
 - f. Describe some level of financial commitment from WRHS. For example, WRHS could build facilities and lease them to AHEC.
6. The surrounding communities, local leaders and State Representatives and Senators are supportive of the WRHS location.

C. Evidence of Support for the WRHS location. (Bebow)

- i. Obtain resolutions from Independence, Izard, Sharp and Stone counties and others, if possible.
- ii. Obtain resolutions from Batesville and Mountain View communities.
- iii. Obtain resolutions from institutions of higher learning (e.g. Lyon College, UACCB, Ozarka Technical College, etc.)
- iv. Obtain resolutions from business communities (e.g. Independence County Economic Development Foundation, Batesville and Mountain View Chambers of Commerce).
- v. Obtain resolutions from medical community (e.g. WRHS Board of Directors, WRMC/SCMC Medical Staffs, WRMC/SCMC hospital auxiliaries, Area Agency of Aging, North Arkansas Human Services, nursing homes, pharmacies, ambulances, etc.)
- vi. Obtain letters of endorsement from State Representatives and Senators.

II. WHENEVER THERE IS A PUBLIC MEETING, WRHS REPRESENTATIVES SHOULD ATTEND WITH THE WRITTEN REPORT AND BE PREPARED TO SPEAK ON OUR BEHALF. WHENEVER POSSIBLE, WE SHOULD ASSURE ATTENDANCE OF WRHS SUPPORTERS FROM THE AREA. (Bebow)

III. DURING THE LEGISLATIVE PHASE, WRHS MUST MAKE EFFORTS TO GARNER POLITICAL SUPPORT. (Berry)

- A. Once UAMS is sold on the Batesville/Mountain View location, we must be diligent in ensuring that the House and Senate Interim Committees on Public Health are receptive to UAMS's recommendation. With Senator Critcher membership on the Senate Public Health Committee, we are at an advantage.
- B. After UAMS reports to the Committees, we will work with the original co-sponsors of the study and with UAMS to be sure that the proper authorizing legislation is drafted and passed.
- C. Once the authoring legislation is passed by the legislature, we will work with the budget committees to be sure the project is funded. (This may be our most difficult task.)

CONCLUSION

From the above, WRHS's initiative to become the site of a North Central AHEC will be a major project. While WRHS may do everything right, we still may not get the designation because of another stronger applicant, the uncertainties associated with the political process, or the lack of State funding. However, the long term benefits to the WRHS medical and business communities make it worth the effort.

Purpose of Study

In response to House Bill 2635, approved April 18, 2001, entitled:
"AN ACT TO PROVIDE FOR THE CREATION OF AN AREA
HEALTH EDUCATION CENTER (AHEC) IN NORTH-
CENTRAL ARKANSAS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

House Bill 2635 called for a study to assess the need for and feasibility of establishing an AHEC in North-Central Arkansas.

Mission of the AHEC Program

The mission of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences' AHEC Program is to:

Improve the supply and distribution of health care professionals in Arkansas, with an emphasis on primary care, through community/academic educational partnerships, to increase quality health care for all Arkansans.

Specific goals of the AHEC Program are to:

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- Supply professional support and continuing education for health care providers.
- Promote cooperation and coordination among communities, health care providers, educational institutions, and health-related organizations.
- Provide quality health care services and educational programs to the public.

Potential Benefits of a North Central AHEC

- Form education and training linkages between health care delivery systems in underserved rural communities and educational resources within the region and with UAMS.
- Create collaborative community-based education and training for health professionals, health professions students, and primary care residents.
- Create systems for learning and networks for information dissemination in support of health care providers in underserved communities.
- Support multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary training that is responsive to community needs.
- Promote improved health, disease prevention, primary health care services and cost containment through educational interventions.
- Respond to population-based needs and priorities for health professions education.

Specific Plans

Study the recent analysis and development of the Delta AHEC to determine the findings and approaches that would be directly applicable in making a decision for a North-Central AHEC.

Compile current and complete health workforce data on health care providers in the target area.

Conduct a secondary survey of all hospitals and major health clinics in the target area to determine their perceived workforce needs and actual job openings.

Explore the existing health education and training programs in area post-secondary schools to assess available resources and gaps and to develop collaborative approaches to addressing identified needs..

Explore the potential impact on existing regional epidemiology and health problems of introducing various public and consumer health education programs to North-Central Arkansas.

Study the area demographics and transportation issues and barriers to determine how interactive compressed video technology might improve residents' access to health-related programs and resources.

Area Health Education Centers

AHEC North Central
Feasibility Study

AHEC NW
FAYETTEVILLE

AHEC NE
JONESBORO

AHEC FS
FORT SMITH

Baxter

Fulton

Izard

Sharp

Stone

Independence

Van Buren

Cleburne

White

Faulkner

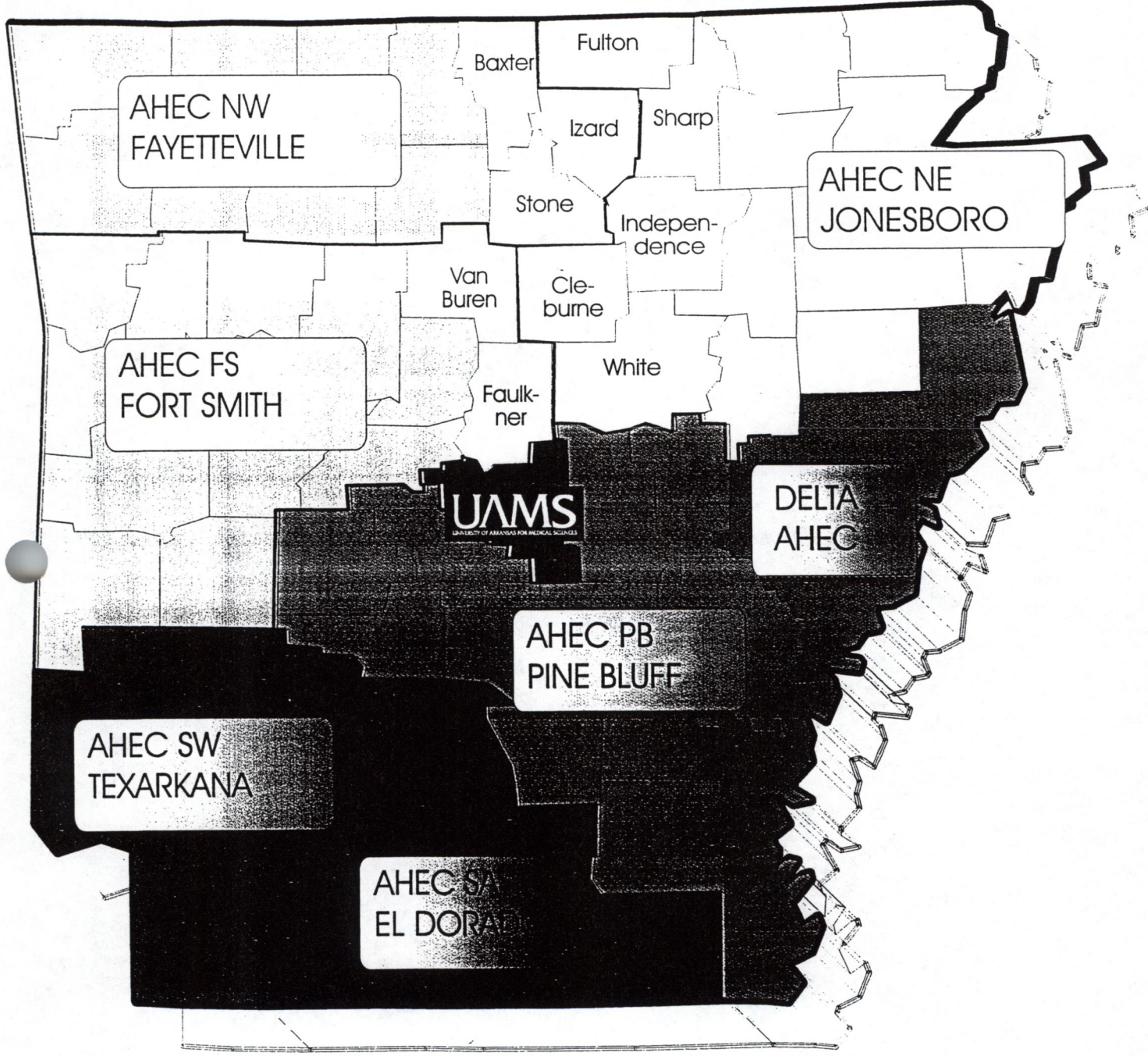
UAMS
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES

DELTA
AHEC

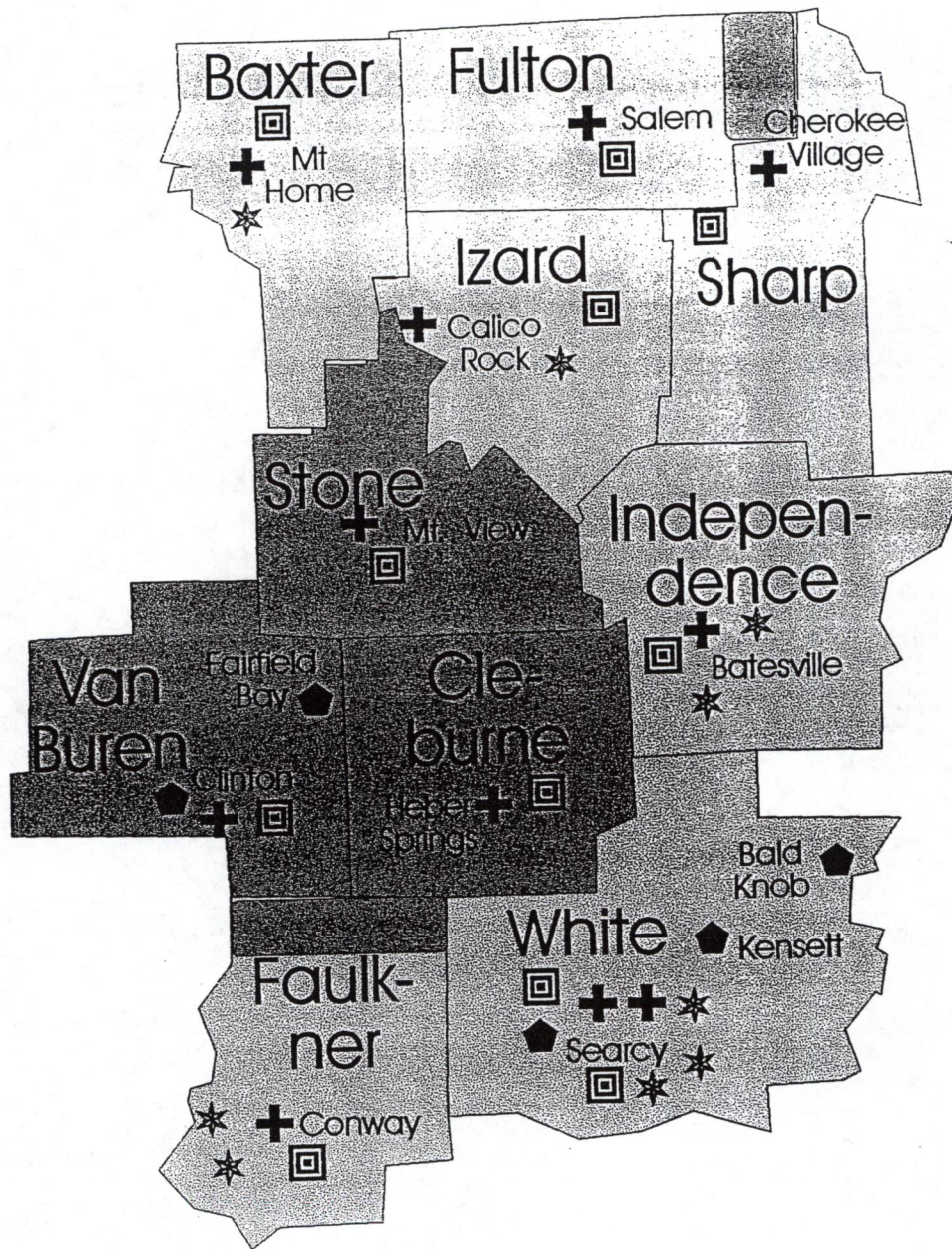
AHEC PB
PINE BLUFF

AHEC SW
TEXARKANA

AHEC SA
EL DORADO



AHEC North Central Feasibility Study Health & Higher Education Institutions



CHC

Hospital > 50 beds

Post Secondary Institutions

Arkansas
Department of
Health Unit

Hospital < 50 beds

HPSA