

# More Health Care Options for Some Ohio Residents with New Cooperative

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A new healthcare cooperative would help maintain cost-effective, viable healthcare in a region of Ohio that is suffering from high unemployment, low wages and an increasing aging population.

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PIKETON, Ohio – Some counties across Appalachia Ohio may see a boost in health care management and an increase in more affordable insurance options in early 2010 as the result of a new healthcare cooperative developed, in part, by a \$200,000 rural economic development grant awarded to Ohio State University.

Tom Snyder, OSU South Centers Ohio Cooperative Development Center program manager, said that the development of the cooperative would help maintain cost-effective, viable healthcare in a region of Ohio that is suffering from high unemployment, low wages and an increasing aging population.

“Providers contracted through the cooperative could offer services at a reduced cost to customers – perhaps as much as 10 percent or 20 percent,” said Snyder. “With the development of this cooperative we are trying to avoid a healthcare crisis by being able to maintain affordable healthcare insurance for communities.”

The Home Health Care Provider Cooperative, formed by the Ohio Area Agencies on Aging & with the assistance of OCDC, is designed to improve home health aide career growth, advancement, training and retention among health care providers. The cooperative will serve eight counties: Morgan, Monroe, Athens, Meigs, Hocking, Perry, Noble and Washington. This new cooperative was awarded the Outstanding AAA/Provider Partnership for 2009.

OCDC was awarded the \$200,000 rural economic development grant by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to assist new and emerging cooperatives, like the Home Health Care Provider Cooperative and small businesses, in rural southern Ohio communities with populations less than 50,000.

Three other cooperatives benefiting from the grant monies include a purchasing cooperative, a farmers’ market cooperative and an initiative to provide broadband Internet services.

The purchasing cooperative involves the collaboration of six groups in Pike County to offer products, benefits and services to its members. The groups involved in the cooperative include: Ohio Forestry Association, Farmers’ Market Management Network, South Central

Manufacturers Network, Benefits Unlimited, Home Health Care Provider Cooperative, and Mother Earth Resources Cooperative.

“The development of the cooperative gives its employees more leverage to acquire the services or products they need, rather than having to deal with that as a single business or entity,” said Snyder.

The purchasing cooperative is expected to launch in early 2010.

The Farmers’ Market Management Network was formed to support new farmers markets across the state. To date, 20 farmers markets are members of the network, but the effort has the potential to attract upwards of 200 farmers markets. Each farmers market, on average, can support as many as of 30 vendors.

The Broadband Collaboration Initiative is designed to improve broadband Internet services in Ashland County.

“The effort is specifically meant to serve rural areas or underserved areas of the county,” said Snyder.

The effort, led by the Ashland County Commissioners and funded by the Ohio Department of Development, is still in the feasibility study and planning stages.

For nearly a decade the Ohio Cooperative Development Center has been supporting rural economic development throughout southern Ohio by assisting businesses in developing cooperatives. The goal is to encourage businesses that serve a common purpose to work together rather than individually, especially in communities where cooperatives would have a significant impact on economic development and where they would be more cost-efficient.

For more information on the Ohio Cooperative Development Center, contact Tom Snyder at (740) 289-2071, ext. 220, or e-mail [synder.11@osu.edu](mailto:snyder.11@osu.edu).

The \$200,000 rural development grant is part of the USDA initiative, “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” – an effort to connect people more closely to farmers and the production, marketing and consumption of the food that is grown. Twenty-one states were awarded \$4.8 million in grants to spur rural economic development.

<http://www.ag.ohio-state.edu/~news/story.php?id=5406>

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