



# NEWS RELEASE

## Rural Development

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**Contact:** Holly L. Martien  
Telephone: (318) 473-7917  
[holly.martien@la.usda.gov](mailto:holly.martien@la.usda.gov)

### **MEDICAL PROJECT LINKS RURAL MEDICAL FACILITIES TO ALEXANDRIA LaSalle Parish Hospital District 2 Receives \$262,000 Telemedicine Grant from USDA Rural Development for Critical Life-Saving Technology**

ALEXANDRIA, December 15, 2003 — The citizens of rural LaSalle Parish and surrounding areas will soon be as close to advanced radiology medical services as residents of Alexandria—thanks to teleradiology.

In a ceremony today at Rapides Regional Medical Center, LaSalle Parish Hospital Service District 2 received a \$262,000 USDA Rural Development telemedicine grant to fund distance radiology diagnostic services—known as teleradiology. “This grant will enable physicians in LaSalle Parish to receive a radiologic diagnostic interpretation from a radiologist at Rapides Regional Medical Center without leaving LaSalle Parish. As a result, physicians will be able to give patients the optimum in an accurate and timely diagnosis.” said Mary Moffett, Administrator for Hospital Service District 2 of LaSalle Parish. “This service will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week—and immediate diagnostic services will be available for emergency patients.”

The \$262,000 grant, along with a substantial investment from LaSalle General Hospital, will provide digital teleradiology services to LaSalle Parish Hospital in Jena and LaSalle Clinic in Jonesville from Rapides Regional Medical Center in Alexandria.

In many rural areas, diagnostic choices for X-rays and other medical images have been to either transport the patient or transport the X-ray to a major medical center for interpretation or treatment—sometimes taking days to accomplish. Now, thanks to telemedicine and teleradiology, the medical images can be created digitally and transported over telecommunications lines to be read almost instantly by a radiologist.

Congressman Rodney Alexander presented the \$262,000 USDA Rural Development telemedicine grant to Moffett at Rapides Regional Medical Center. “Teleradiology will enable people in Jena and the surrounding areas to receive life-saving medical services without having to travel to Alexandria,” said Alexander. “Minutes saved in diagnosis will mean lives saved in LaSalle and Catahoula Parishes.”

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“This system will have the capability of transmitting any sort of digital image—from basic X-rays of broken bones to complicated scans and readings. Specialists at Rapides Regional Medical Center will be able to almost instantly view the images and make a diagnosis,” said Michael B. Taylor, State Director for USDA Rural Development in Louisiana. “The medical staff in Jena and Jonesville can make well-informed decisions on the best course of action – local treatment or transporting the patient – as well as provide for follow-up review at the local site.”

Telemedicine and teleradiology medical systems are being installed in rural areas across the country. “In Oklahoma, the first day a similar system was installed, the rural hospital was able to save a stroke victim through early diagnosis and treatment—instead of having to drive 100 miles for diagnosis and treatment—risking greater medical complications and perhaps death,” said Bill Vogt, USDA Rural Utilities Service. “The patient was immediately diagnosed and proper medication administered.”

On hand to celebrate implementation of this new system were Cheryl Wilson, Chief Operations Officer, and Dr. Alfred Mansour, Radiologist, of Rapides Regional Medical Center. “We are excited to be able to serve the residents of LaSalle and Catahoula Parishes through teleradiology,” said Wilson. “Who would have ever imagined we would be able to turn on a computer and help a patient 50 miles away.”

USDA Rural Development’s telemedicine program strives to improve health care delivery in rural America. USDA Rural Development provides a full range of rural development credit services in rural Louisiana. The Louisiana Rural Development State Office is located at 3727 Government Street, Alexandria, Louisiana 71302, and the telephone number is (318) 473-7921. There are four area offices, located throughout the state to serve Louisiana residents. Further information on USDA Rural Development’s loan and grant programs can be obtained by visiting Rural Development’s web site at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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