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# NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture • Rural Development

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## ST. ALEXIUS RECEIVES GRANT FOR RURAL HEALTH CARE

**BISMARCK**, January 24, 2011 – USDA Rural Development State Director Jasper Schneider announced that St. Alexius Medical Center (SAMC) was awarded a \$302,000 grant to expand access to health care services in rural areas through USDA’s Distance Learning and Telemedicine Program.

“Through technology, we are able to provide resources and expertise to rural areas that previously were not available,” said Schneider. “This grant will help improve critical health care services to rural residents by expanding to new locations and upgrading equipment and software.”

The project will expand a rural EKG (electrocardiogram) and ECG (echocardiogram) service network that connects rural hospitals and clinics in North Dakota to cardiac specialists in Bismarck. More than 24,000 residents at 25 locations in rural communities will benefit from SAMC’s services by greatly reducing or eliminating extensive travel. In addition, the project will provide access to cardiac physicians for a broad range of heart care in collaboration with rural patients' healthcare providers.

“The grant allows the Medical Center to provide state of the art EKG and ECG monitoring equipment as well as other diagnostic telecommunications equipment to patients needing care in rural communities,” said Gary Miller, St. Alexius’ Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. “USDA continues to be a very valuable support organization for rural care access and delivery.”

St. Alexius provides rural access to heart specialists for interpretation and diagnosis of electrocardiograms and echocardiograms through maintaining an on-call cardiologist. SAMC will use the grant funding to upgrade obsolete equipment and upgrade software. The new software will allow immediate transmission of tests that require specialized analysis, allowing rural patients to be diagnosed and treated in their own communities. Rural residents not only save valuable and costly travel time through these services, but also have access to cardiology services from an award-winning Heart and Vascular team that would not otherwise be available within their communities.

Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA Rural Development’s web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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