



**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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**USDA AWARDS \$32.4 MILLION IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT GRANTS FOR
EDUCATION AND MEDICAL SERVICE**

WASHINGTON, Oct. 3, 2003– Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced this week the selection of 84 Distance Learning and Telemedicine (DLT) grants totaling more than \$32 million, providing greater educational opportunities and medical service to rural citizens in 41 states.

“The Bush Administration recognizes the importance of technology in bringing new resources to rural America,” said Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman. “These grants will help expand the availability of state of the art health care and educational resources to rural families.”

In total, 57 distance education grants for \$23.5 million, and 27 telemedicine grants for more than \$ 8.9 million were selected for funding. The education projects will help 556 schools provide students with educational tools to better equip them for the global digital economy. Additionally, rural residents will have access to better, faster and more modern health care through 190 medical service facilities. A complete list of the selected grant recipients can be found at the USDA Rural Development web site at: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

“Information technology is critical to rural Americans. It significantly improves the quality of their health care and their ability to receive access to educational programs that prepare them for a competitive future,” said Agriculture Under Secretary for Rural Development Thomas C. Dorr.

Educational Service Unit (ESU) # 5 in Beatrice, NE received \$153,300 in distance learning grant funds to expand existing school nursing services provided at 21 public schools located in Gage, Jefferson, and Thayer Counties in Southeastern Nebraska.

“The benefits from the ESU #5 distance learning project will be far reaching. The project will greatly impact a number of rural school systems and the many students within with needed medical care, education and awareness,” stated Jim Barr, state director of USDA Rural Development in Nebraska. “Distance learning is a means for rural Nebraska to keep in step with the educational opportunities that stem from our ever increasing technological world.”

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The specific benefits to be gained through the ESU #5 distance learning project will include an increase in school nurse availability to students through two-way interactive video contact, an improved access to health care resources for students, faculty, and staff of the public schools through distance learning training courses, and increased health education classes for students.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at www.rurdev.usda.gov.

For additional information in Nebraska on the Distance Learning and Telemedicine program, contact Andre Boening at 2351 RD 43, Lincoln, Nebr. 68036, phone (402) 543-2129, or visit www.rurdev.usda.gov/ne.

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