AHEC Pineywoods, universities, medical providers work to improve rural health care

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NACOGDOCHES, Texas (KTRE) - Flu and COVID-19 only accentuate the importance of having good rural health care.

Yet, the rural population is one of the largest physician-underserved populations in the nation. A collaboration is underway to improve the service.

When illness spreads across small towns and country lands, be glad Shontel Minor, a director of Texas AHEC Pineywoods, has your back.

“AHEC stands for Area Health Education Centers. And our focus is providing health care workforce development to our coverage areas,” explained Minor.

AHEC East extends across 100 counties.

Following a restructuring and obtaining non-profit status, The Pineywoods division is reconnecting with 17 Deep East Texas counties.

Minor tells regional leaders too few Deep East Texas students enter a career in health care. Their support establishes pipeline activities.

“So, we’ll be focusing on our health career promotion opportunities for our school age youth. We’ll also be doing clinical based education and training. We will be doing professional education and support as well as community health and development,” listed Minor.

Sam Houston State University’s newly developed medical school has a pipeline to 31 hospitals and clinics, most located in Deep East Texas. Sam Houston’s Dr. Courtney West.

“We would like our students come in train, go back out and train in those areas and then go back and live and serve.”

By summer’s end, Sam Houston med students will train in health facilities right along with students from other universities, including SFA and Angelina College. West is confident school rivalry will be left at the door.

“You’ll see nurses and physicians and students rotating thru these facilities together. It’s really not a competition. Once they go to medical school they come from all different colleges. It’s a collaboration”, said West.
The educator practices what she preaches. She has deep ties to East Texas. She was born and raised in Madisonville, with grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncles living throughout the Deep East Texas region.

Education centers, medical schools and community leaders provide the pipelines, so the division between health professions and community needs won’t exist.

https://www.utmb.edu/ahec/home

https://www.shsu.edu/academics/osteopathic-medicine/

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