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Dorothy Downes joins new statewide rural leader network focusing on ailing health system

Dorothy Downes, Community Health Educator at Island Hospital, will be serving as the representative for LaConner on the Washington Health Foundation Rural Network. The new statewide project is designed to generate greater rural leader participation and community involvement in health systems change. As the representative from LaConner, Downes will join other rural leaders throughout Washington state to make up the 100-member Rural Network.

Since its founding 11 years ago, the Washington Health Foundation has been actively engaged with rural communities through flexible grantmaking and community assistance. Given the increasing challenges facing rural health care, the Foundation has responded by involving more rural leaders to meet health system policy hurdles together.

"LaConner is a healthy community; we have good air, good water, good friendships, fresh produce and the ability to lay back," said Downes. "Still, we are all subject to the eventual result of our genes, to the result of an inactive or health-impacting lifestyle, and to the consequences of natural disaster. To that end, I hope to involve others in the community to serve on a panel thinking through education, planning and intervention opportunities."

The Rural Network is part of a larger statewide strategy. The Washington Health Foundation recently concluded a series of community meetings held in every county and completed a comprehensive Rural Health Poll in May. Through these efforts, the Foundation heard a strong interest in rural communities to solve issues locally and a desire to engage the broader community in order to meet the challenges ahead. To address this need, the Foundation, with help from organizations and individuals across the state, developed the Rural Network.



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