



## Rural Telehealth

### *A sample of telehealth initiatives undertaken by NTCA members*

#### **ComSouth Telecommunications**

*Hawkinsville, Ga.; area served: 273 square miles; population: 11,542*

Taylor Regional Healthcare System (TRHS) relies on fiber-to-the-premise service provided by ComSouth to support electronic medical record transmission and medical image transmission between TRHS facilities and medical partners throughout the world. School nurses have been equipped with computerized carts that allow physicians to see patients via computer from their offices. This promotes high quality medical care with shorter wait times and fewer missed classroom hours for students.

#### **Copper Valley Telecom**

*Valdez, Alaska; area served: 9,408 square miles; population: 7,074*

Large hospitals with specialized care and treatment are 300 miles away in Anchorage; the village of Tatitlek in Prince William Sound is only accessible by boat or airplane. A small health clinic is connected to the Alaska Native Health Center in Anchorage. In many cases, doctor can diagnose, prescribe treatments, and conduct follow-up appointments without the patient needing to travel to Anchorage.

#### **Consolidated Telecommunications**

*Brainerd, Minn.; area served: 2,925 square miles; population: 48,843*

Lakewood Health Systems relies on multiple high-speed Internet circuits, including last-mile connections at satellite clinics. These direct connections provide an alternative to separate site-to-site VPN connections that would slow end-user connections. In collaboration with the Brainerd Lakes Area Economic Development Corporation and other entities, CTC was instrumental in securing funding for a specialized CT scanner, an essential piece of medical equipment for the new Heart & Vascular Center.

#### **Gardonville Cooperative Telephone Association**

*Brandon, Minn.; area served: 249 square miles*

Partnered with Knute Nelson Home Care and Hospice to install wireless Mi-Fi systems that enable vital-sign monitoring and social connectivity for underserved patients.

#### **Panhandle Telephone Cooperative Inc.**

*Guymon, Okla.; Area Served: 6,328 square miles; Population: Approx. 28,100*

The local hospital nearly closed, but the ability to transmit information and medical imagery over PTCI's large-bandwidth connection allowed a management company to purchase the hospital. The company uses the broadband connection to manage all undertakings remotely.



### **Peoples Rural Telephone Cooperative**

*McKee, Ky.; area served: 543 square miles; population: 18,460*

Site of NTCA's pilot [Virtual Living Room/VALOR<sup>SM</sup>](#) which provides free access for veterans to Veterans Administration telehealth and other on-line resources.

Cumberland River Comprehensive Care implemented telemedicine services to add additional capability to their local office.

The White House Clinic is a private, not-for-profit corporation that provides healthcare services throughout a multi-county region. The clinic converted to EMRs in 2005 and with high-speed broadband has been able to expand its service offerings to several satellite offices throughout the region.

### **Solarus**

*Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.; area served: 365 square miles; population: 17,887*

A local orthopedic surgeon relies on a residential 100 Mbps broadband connection to read x-rays and complete work from home.

### **Triangle Communications**

*Havre, Mont.; area Served: 23,000 square miles, including two Indian reservations; population: 38,000*

Service area includes eight critical access hospitals, clinics and long-term care facilities, two Indian health clinics and five satellite clinics. All are challenged by their remote locations, limited workforce, access to specialists and financial constraints. Broadband has enabled collaborative initiatives such as the Eastern Montana Telemedicine Network (EMTN) and Realizing Education & Community Health (REACH). Both have extensive connectivity providing telemental health services, specialized medical consultations and clinical applications such as home health monitoring, burn and wound management, dietician, orthopedic, genetic and geriatric assessment services and more to patients and facilities in remote locations.

### **Vernon Telephone Cooperative**

*Westby, Wis.; area Served: 3.8 square miles; population: 4,362*

Vernon Memorial Healthcare (VMH) is one of the largest employers in Vernon County with more than 500 employees at the hospital in Viroqua, four outreach clinics and two pharmacies in outlying communities, and the Bland Bekkedal Center for Hospice Care. The "View My Health" patient web portal facilitates patient information, scheduling and prescription filling. The radiology department can transfer CT or CAT images to any clinic in the network in less than ten minutes using a 3D Picture Archiving and Communication System (PACS). Vernon Telephone Cooperative was instrumental in connecting wireless and IPTV services throughout the building. As an outreach clinic of VMH, a private metro Ethernet is used to maintain a direct connection to the Electronic Medical Records (EMR) housed at VMH.