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From: Missouri Area Health Education Centers

### **Shaping Future Healthcare Professionals in Rural Missouri**

High School is a place where we learn and make plans for our future. It is a place where we are introduced to ideas and forced to think about “What we will be when we grow-up”. The experiences we have at this time in our life are often the ones that will shape the person we will become. In rural school districts, the experiences available to shape future careers may be limited. The Area Health Education Centers are on a mission to change that.

The Southwest Missouri AHEC has launched an in-school, workshop- based curriculum to take into rural schools to expose the students to a variety of careers in healthcare. Workshops are designed to pique a student’s interest in healthcare by providing hands-on activities and information about careers and the education needed to attain those careers. AHEC Coordinators are working within the schools on a monthly basis and have provided workshops on vital signs, nutrition, CPR and First Aid, animal dissections, and more. The feedback we have received from the students and staff of the schools has been overwhelming.

*“Thank you so very much for coming out to MCE yesterday and helping us dissect the pigs. Being from a small, rural school means that opportunities like this dissection are HUGE for us! We appreciate all your help yesterday and that you took your time to be here with us! Thank you! Thank you!” – Clancey H.*

*“...Our class is looking forward to you coming again!” – Hunter*

Several of the AHEC Centers across the state of Missouri are using this same in-school model of reaching students, and we are excited about the results. When Southwest MO AHEC started planning this program, we anticipated being in five schools for the first year. We are, however, currently operating in 11 schools for our first year. We have an additional ten schools that are requesting we come in on a regular basis to do programming. We have had schools ask that their students received the full four-hour CPR certification rather than the quick 50-minute overview and practice. Multiple schools have asked about the option for more dissections; this is a definite favorite activity for the students. We would love to expand this program to encompass every rural school in our region that requests programming. Unfortunately, we do not have the staff or resources to provide that level of programming at this time. Additional funding for the Missouri AHEC network would be instrumental in ensuring that programs like this can be expanded, reaching more rural students, and providing a hope for the future careers of these students.

***MAHEC: Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health***



*Students participating in a dissection exercise.*

*MAHEC is a partnership of seven locally-governed organizations and three university-based health professions education programs working statewide to increase the number of Missouri youth entering stable, high-paying jobs as healthcare professionals and the number of professionals caring for underserved populations.*

*The MAHEC partners include:*

- A.T. Still University – Kirksville
- University of Missouri – Columbia
- Saint Louis University
- Northeast Missouri AHEC – Kirksville
- Northwest Missouri AHEC – St. Joseph
- West Central Missouri AHEC – Lexington
- Mid-Missouri AHEC – Rolla
- East Central Missouri AHEC – St. Louis
- Southeastern Missouri AHEC – Poplar Bluff
- Southwest Missouri AHEC – Springfield