



September 2013

### **AHECs Part of the Joining Forces Initiative**

The National AHEC Organization has been part of the Joining Forces Initiative chaired by First Lady Michelle Obama and Dr. Jill Biden. Our role nationally was to provide continuing education to health professionals on the behavioral health issues of our veterans/military service members of the wars of the past ten years. The goal was to reach 10,000 providers. New numbers are coming in daily, but as of September 24, the count is over 12,183 providers!

These programs have all varied in length, but the primary agenda for each event has been to educate providers on military culture, mental health issues seen in some of the veterans/military services members of the wars, and available resources.

In 2008, Mid-Missouri AHEC held the first session in Missouri in Jefferson City. As part of the recent national initiative, Northwest Missouri AHEC coordinated four events which reached 482 providers and students from several different target audiences.

Attendees of the events indicated that after attending this conference they will be more aware of patients that are veterans/military service members, will improve listening and communication skills, increased their awareness of resources available to veterans/military service members, will improve their assessment skills of these patients, and learned more about the issues most common to this patients.

As part of the Veterans Administration's Mental Health Summits across the country this year, the Southeastern Missouri AHEC joined approximately 50 other community resource organizations at the John J. Pershing VA Medical Center in Poplar Bluff for a Veterans Mental Health summit. The purpose of this summit was to share about their organizations and about resources they have to offer in southeast Missouri. Northwest Missouri AHEC and West Central Missouri AHEC collaborated with the Kansas City Veterans Administration Medical Center on its summit, bringing community providers and the VA together to share limited resources.

AHECs across the country are continuing to improve behavioral health access and services for veterans by referring local providers to the free Citizen Soldier Support Program (CSSP) online courses. These courses offer online CEU/CME for behavioral health providers, physicians, human resource professionals, and optometrists and ophthalmologists. Contact any AHEC for more information.



*Photo: Event speakers at Missouri Western State University nursing conference.*

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

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