

Security Health Plan, Marshfield Clinic Health System: Support organization improving access to technology for rural Wisconsinites

Posted on Tuesday, Apr 19, 2022

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MARSHFIELD – According to a 2020 report by Forward Analytics, 25% of Wisconsin’s rural population lack access to high-speed internet. That’s more than 430,000 people. Additionally, many rural Wisconsinites struggle with the connection they have.

Not only does this disparity limit connectivity to school and work, it also has an impact for rural residents who may not live near a health care facility. With increased broadband internet service, health care access can be expanded to rural communities through telehealth.

That’s why Security Health Plan and Marshfield Clinic Health System are investing in Wisconsin Rural Partners (WRP), a nonprofit group that is working to solve these issues for rural communities throughout the state.

Telehealth services became more common at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic – in fact the Department of Health and Human Services report a 63-fold increase in Medicare telehealth during the pandemic. Telehealth allows health care services to be delivered remotely, and patients can receive convenient care by providers in other locations. Telehealth is commonly used for office visits, remote monitoring, evaluation and education.

“Expanding telehealth into our rural communities connects patients with exceptional providers when and where they need it. Not only do members save time

traveling and being away from work, telehealth is less costly than traditional in-person care, which helps keep health care costs down,” said Interim Director of Health Plan Quality and registered nurse Lynne Paller. “Increasing telehealth access will benefit the many rural communities Security Health Plan and Marshfield Clinic Health System serve.”

WRP works to make Wisconsin a better place by assessing the needs of local communities and working to make real change with politicians at the local, state and federal level. Through a diverse group of residents, organizations and community leaders, WRP bridges political differences to advance initiatives important to rural communities throughout the state. One area the group remains focused on is the broadband shortage for rural Wisconsin residents.

“Our rural communities have many issues in common,” said Wisconsin Rural Partners President Sandy Decker. “Our goal is to network together to find solutions and future successes.”

One way WRP achieves collaboration and change is through their 2022 Rural Summit, held April 26-27 in Marshfield. Areas of focus in this year’s summit include health care collaborations to meet community needs, collaboration for shared public services in rural communities, developing and strengthening community leaders and rural broadband.

For more information on WRP, visit www.wiruralpartners.org.