

For Immediate Release, November 27, 2007

For more information contact:

Andy Davidson, president and CEO
Oregon Association of Hospitals & Health Systems
503.636.2204

Kim Hoffman, Chair
Telehealth Alliance of Oregon
503.970.6125

**Oregon Health Network Pilot Project Receives Funds from Historic FCC Program to
Build Telehealth Network Throughout the State**

Oregon receives more than \$20 million to interconnect health care facilities

Portland, OR – Communities from all corners of the state received a significant financial commitment from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). The Commission has allocated up to \$20,182,625 over a three-year period to establish the Oregon Health Network (OHN), which will link more than 300 health care facilities in urban, rural and frontier communities through broadband connections. Oregon's allocation is one of the larger awards from the FCC's \$417 million Rural Health Care Pilot Program, which is dedicated to the construction of statewide or regional broadband telehealth networks throughout the country. The funding allocation is the largest in the FCC's history.

When completed, OHN will connect Oregon hospitals, clinics, county public health offices, physicians, mental health, dental and optical clinics, and health education institutions, including community colleges, with a level of interactive service and access once only imagined in rural and underserved communities. The OHN is designed to be inter-operable with Oregon Public Safety and Emergency Management networks and Oregon government and education networks. Spearheaded by the Telehealth Alliance of Oregon, the OHN proposal resulted from collaboration among more than 150 individuals and organizations throughout the state. The application to the FCC was submitted by the Oregon Association of Hospitals Research and Education Foundation.

“Through the participation and support of Oregon hospitals and clinics, health care providers, educators, and state and federal elected leaders, the Oregon Health Network will advance access to health care services across every corner of the state,” said Kimberly Hoffman, chair of the Telehealth Alliance of Oregon. “OHN has the potential to touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of Oregonians by bringing improved access to clinical health care services and health education opportunities, particularly in the state's health care workforce shortage areas and medically underserved populations.” Patients, health care providers, health plans, communities and education programs all benefit from the OHN. Patients receive access to state of the art health care in otherwise underserved areas, such as rural communities. Telemedicine improves

collaboration among providers by sharing secure and confidential access to electronic medical records.

OHN will also provide the foundation for improved emergency preparedness applications for hospitals, clinics, private practitioners, public health, emergency medical services and tribal partners who currently cannot communicate across jurisdictions during day-to-day operations and large-scale incidents.

Critical project attention came from the 2007 Legislature when it unanimously passed Senate Joint Resolution 20 to promote and facilitate telecommunication network development. SJR 20 was introduced by Senators Laurie Monnes Anderson and David Nelson. Also, Oregon Governor Ted Kulongoski provided a letter of support and Oregon's entire Congressional Delegation sent letters and kept in close contact with the FCC during the application review process.

What does this mean to a rural Oregon community? In Silverton, in the eastern part of Marion County, it means access to fiber optic cable that will replace the current T1 copper telephone lines not adequate to carry an increasing amount of electronic data. "Since converting to digital imaging, our need for greater bandwidth continues to grow. Everyday around 3:00 PM, the digital pipeline slows to a crawl. This delays sending and receiving diagnostic reports and images to referring physicians who need them," said Gary Pulsipher, CEO of Silverton Hospital.

Andy Davidson, president and CEO of Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems said, "Oregon's hospitals will continue to provide the leadership to ensure that this ground breaking project is successful."

The FCC order, adopted November 19, 2007, will become effective on publication in the *Federal Register*. Additional information can be found on the Telehealth Alliance of Oregon web site, www.ortelehealth.org.

About the Telehealth Alliance of Oregon

The TAO has adopted five objectives that guide the organization's initial services and action plan. They are to:

- Improve access to high quality health care and other allied services through Telehealth and Telemedicine.
- Promote collaborations that advance Telehealth and Telemedicine as a means for improving the delivery of affordable high quality health care.
- Provide and promote education to facilitate the understanding of the possibilities and uses of Telehealth and Telemedicine.
- Provide and support technical assistance to initiatives that advance programs of Telehealth and Telemedicine in Oregon. Promote research that supports appropriate decision-making in the delivery of health care using technology and telecommunications.

Key Contacts – Oregon Health Network

Telehealth Alliance of Oregon

Kim Hoffman, chair
OHSU Information Technology Group
503.970.6125

OAH Research & Education Foundation

Andy Davidson, President and CEO
Oregon Association of Hospitals and Health Systems
503.636.2204

Higher Education

Jon Dolan
Oregon State University
541.737.5402

Community Colleges

Art Hill, VP of Economic Development
Blue Mountain Community College
541.278.5863

Public Safety

Ann Steeves
HRSA Region 2, Public Safety Coordinator
Samaritan Health Services
541.768.6323

Rural Hospitals

Don Russo, Foundation Director
Silverton Hospital
503.873.1790

Telecommunications Vendors

Michael Weidman, CEO
LS Network
503.294.5300

Ed Parker

President, Parker Telecommunications
541.764.3058

Health Plans

Janice Forrester, PhD, Director of Health Information Exchange
Regence Blue Cross Blue Shield
503.830.5273

Oregon Medical Association

Scott Gallant, Executive Director
503.226.1555

Electronic Health Records

Dr. Jody Pettit, Health Information Technology Coordinator
Oregon Office of Health Policy & Research
503.706.2208