



## Arkansas Methodist Medical Center

*It's all about you.*

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Tuesday, October 27, 2009**

### **AMMC STAFFERS LOBBY IN WASHINGTON FOR HEALTHCARE** *Represented Arkansas for the American Heart Association*

**PARAGOULD, AR** -- Arkansas Methodist Medical Center's Chief Nursing Officer Debra Vassar and Director of Education Debbie Bremmer recently traveled to Washington, D.C. to lobby for healthcare on behalf of the American Heart Association (AHA). The two were joined by Valerie Hendrix, a student at the Clinton School of Public Service at the University of Arkansas in Little Rock. The three were the only representatives from the state of Arkansas to be invited by the AHA to lobby in the nation's capital.

According to the AHA, residents of Arkansas lead the nation, ranking third, for instances of heart disease and stroke.

AMMC staffers asked Arkansas legislators to vote "yes" on meaningful, affordable healthcare reform this year. The AHA and its American Stroke Association division believes the bills currently being considered in Congress represent significant steps toward healthcare reform making healthcare more widely available, more affordable and adequate, promoting prevention and wellness.

Specifically the AMMC staffers asked legislators to:

- End exclusions and waiting periods for persons with pre-existing conditions.
- Make healthcare coverage more affordable by prohibiting premium variations based on health status and gender and by limiting variation based on age.
- Abolish annual and lifetime caps on essential medical care.

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- Impose reasonable limits on out-of-pocket costs at levels that protect the chronically ill from bankruptcy.
- Ensure that essential healthcare services are covered including hospital care, ambulatory care, prescription drugs, preventive care, emergency care and rehabilitation.
- Eliminate financial barriers to preventive services.
- Make certain that plan networks include an adequate number and types of providers.
- Provide consumers with complete and understandable information about health plan coverage, costs and quality.

During their two days in Washington, AMMC staffers met with U.S. Representatives Marion Berry and Mike Ross as well as senior legislative aides to U.S. Senators Blanche Lincoln and Mark Pryor.

“Everyone was very receptive to meeting with and listening to our ideas and suggestions,” Vassar says. “Everyone’s mind was focused on healthcare. It was very exciting for us and an honor to represent Arkansas on behalf of the American Heart Association.”

Brehmer has been actively involved with the American Heart Association for several years. AMMC’s community training center offers CPR and other training courses certified by the AHA. In addition, she serves on the state’s emergency cardiac care commission and is a member of the AHA’s Year of the Cure network which follows state and national legislation.

“It was very interesting and exciting to be there and have the legislators sit down and listen to us,” Brehmer says. “I would do it again.”

The American Heart Association is a national voluntary health agency dedicated to building healthier lives free of cardiovascular disease and stroke.

A recognized leader, Arkansas Methodist Medical Center in Paragould provides progressive, compassionate healthcare to residents throughout Northeast Arkansas and Southeast Missouri. Additional information about AMMC is available at: [www.arkansasmethodist.org](http://www.arkansasmethodist.org).