

Surveys Direct Use of Hospital Sale Proceeds

By Nick Todaro

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Some residents may have already gotten the call.

This month, a national research firm is polling Lincoln Parish residents about their health habits and lifestyles in an assessment of the parish's overall health. The results of those surveys and a series of focus groups will guide the use of the parish's portion of capital generated in the sale of Lincoln General Hospital.

The state Attorney General's office requires the step, said Shirley Reagan, former Louisiana Tech business dean and chair of the Lincoln Health Foundation board.

"The results of the survey will be used to develop the strategic plan and expend funds when they become available from the sale of Lincoln General Hospital," Reagan said.

When the hospital was sold, the \$36 million in proceeds went to Lincoln Health System, an organization composed of Lincoln Health Foundation, Willis Knighton Hospital and St. Francis Medical Center. Once the nuances of the sale are complete, Reagan said, LHS will dissolve, and the liquidation will give LHF the lion's share of the money — about \$20 million.

That \$20 million will then be invested. Income from those investments will be available for the use in pursuing better health care for all of the residents of the parish, Reagan said.

"We're finally getting to a point where this is going to impact our population," Reagan said. "(The board) is really excited about that."

Professional Research Consultants, located in Omaha, Neb., has the task of performing the community health assessment required by the state. At the end of the month, Professional Research Consultants will spearhead a series of five community focus groups.

The results of their assessments will be included in a community report due out in 2009, aimed at both helping LHF determine where to spend investment revenue and to help community health care professionals in their day-to-day operations.

"This is the community's opportunity to give us the information we need to address the health needs that are most important to our area," Reagan said.

In light of recent volatility in financial markets, Reagan mentioned that LHS has used a "conservative investment policy" with the proceeds from the hospital sale.

"The portfolio is managed in a well-diversified manner," Reagan said. "Thus, the value of the portfolio has been and continues to be very stable."

Talk to LHF: For more information about the community health assessment project, contact Norman Hanes, Lincoln Health Foundation assistant secretary, at 251-5847.