



UNION GENERAL  
HOSPITAL



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Press Release  
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Contact: Lewis Kelley, CEO  
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● **CHATUGE REGIONAL LEVERAGES USDA FUNDS TO IMPROVE IMAGE, ADD CRITICAL SERVICES** ●

**HIAWASSEE, GA** – Chatuge Regional Hospital & Nursing Home is nearing completion of a significant project that modernizes facilities, adds a much needed Geriatric-Psychiatric Unit, and provides new healthcare capabilities to the hospital. Primary funding for the project totaling over \$1.67 million came in the form of a zero-interest loan through the USDA's Rural Economic Development Loan & Grant (REDL&G) program. The loan will be paid back by Chatuge Regional over a 10-year period.

REDLG funds can only be leveraged in rural areas of the US through a partnership between USDA, community-based borrowers (like Chatuge Regional), and rural electric and telephone cooperatives, in this case Blue Ridge Mountain EMC. This fund offers zero-interest dollars for projects that stimulate job creation and economic growth in rural communities and provide for improved services in areas where such investments may otherwise be difficult due to lack of available funds.

Chatuge Regional CEO, Lewis Kelley, stated that, "In recent surveys of our community we were told that our citizens desire a new look for our hospital, as well as additional services like a psychiatric unit for elderly patients, and additional healthcare offerings. Chatuge Regional Hospital & Nursing Home listened to the public and delivered on a promise to improve in these and other areas. USDA and BRMEMC worked closely together with Chatuge Regional Hospital & Nursing Home and our consulting partner, Hometown Health, to craft a funding strategy beneficial to our community that would not, at the same time, cause us to extend beyond our financial means. We want to thank these partners for helping us quickly respond to the needs of our community, and add much needed assets that will be a help to so many for years into the future."

USDA's Rural Development Director for Georgia, Quinton Robinson, commented that, "USDA-Rural Development is proud to partner with Blue Ridge Mountain EMC to deliver much-needed loan funding to Chatuge Regional Hospital & Nursing Home that optimizes health care services in Towns County and the surrounding region, and at the same time positively impacts economic development in this rural community."

A ribbon-cutting and dedication event is being planned that will take place once construction is fully completed. For questions about the project or to find out more about the USDA's REDL&G program, please contact Lewis Kelley or John Mark Gordon at (706) 896-2222.

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Chatuge Regional Hospital & Nursing Home is a wholly owned non-profit subsidiary company of Union General Hospital, Inc., providing Towns County and the surrounding area with full continuum healthcare services including an emergency center, numerous outpatient facilities and advanced specialties. Chatuge Regional has been serving the community for over 54 years and provides nearly 300 jobs and well over \$20 million in annual economic impact to the community.

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