

# Huron Business Development Corporation honoured for HealthKick

With the launch of the Gateway Rural Health Research Institute, the Huron Business Development Corporation has helped create the only community-based organization of its kind in Canada.

Modeled after a similar centre in Hazard County, Kentucky, the Gateway Rural Health Research Institute has an ambitious mandate to implement community driven research programs on a wide range of rural health issues. Research will be conducted on a variety of concerns including diabetes, obesity, heart attack, and depression.

Construction was completed last year on a new municipally-owned facility to house the institute, and a director of research put in place. Two medical investigators are now focusing on diabetes and mental health.

The research centre is located in the town of Seaford, in the municipality of Huron East in Huron County.

The Huron Business Development Corporation, a Community Futures Development Corporation, has been instrumental in improving health care accessibility in Huron County.

"We see health care as an important economic development tool," said Paul Nichol, economic development manager,

"For communities to attract new residents and new business, good health care must be available," said Nichol.

Recently, the Huron Business Development Corporation's HealthKick Huron Gateway was recognized as a "Project of Excellence" at the Community Futures

National Event 2009 at Blue Mountain near Collingwood. Nearly 800 staff members and directors of Community Futures Development Corporations from across Canada attended the event.

HealthKick Huron and Gateway were chosen to represent Ontario as a positive example of Community Futures work. It was also seen as an excellent project that could be duplicated by other rural economic developers.

"We were so pleased that Huron Business Development Corporation's project was chosen to be nationally recognized. We're proud of the work that they have done, and happy that the Huron BDC is willing to share their success story," said Diana Jedig, executive director of the Ontario Association of Community Futures Development Corporations, which hosted the national event.

The Gateway Rural Health Research Institute grew out of a rural health initiative, HealthKick Huron, which has been on-going in Huron County, thanks to the work of the Huron Business Development Corporation.

Among their many projects, which include physician attraction and retention, is the MedQuest program designed to provide students with realistic experiences in the field of medicine using state-of-the-art advanced simulator training, peer workshops, and the opportunity to watch healthcare professionals in a clinical setting.

The hope is not only to encourage young



**HEALTHKICK AWARDED** - Receiving recognition as a Project of Excellence at the recent Community Futures National Event at Blue Mountain were representatives of the Huron Business Development Corporation: Laura Overholt, Healthkick Huron; Rick Hundey, president of the HBDC board; Donna Taylor, former HBDC board director; Paul Nichol, HBDC economic development manager; Bonnie LaFontaine, current secretary, HBDC board; and Pamela Stanley, past president, HBDC board. (Submitted photo)

people to work in community health care, but to aid in youth retention, another challenge for rural economic developers.

Being awarded the recognition of a Project of Excellence by the Community Futures Network of Canada is another of several distinctions which HealthKick Huron has received. Last year, the Huron Business Development Corporation received the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care's Health Care Innovation Award, as well as the Eco-

nomie Development Council of Ontario's Achievement Award for Best Health Care Recruitment Program.

"I always go in thinking we're going to win. It's about knowing a good thing when you see it and these projects deserve national prominence," Nichol said of the "Project of Excellence" recognition, adding, "the award celebrates the great things the Seaford community is doing and positions it for future economic growth and development."