

# Close to Your Home, Close to Your Heart

Heart failure is complex and chronic, but your access to treatment is expanding

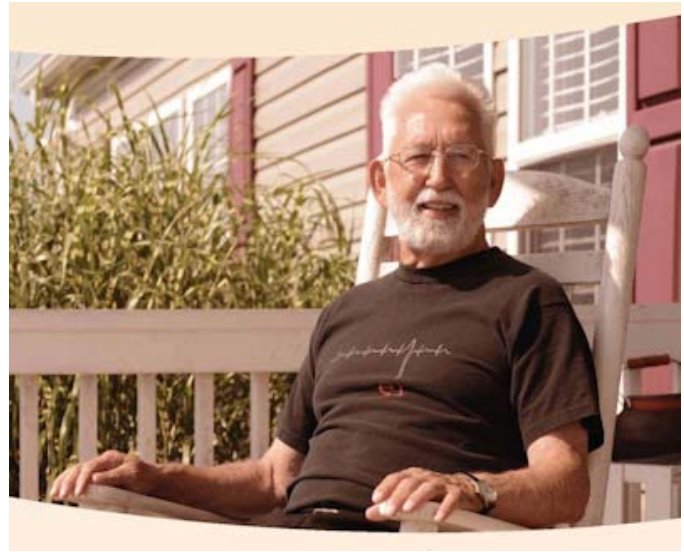
Donald Clark has lived with heart disease for many years, but in 2007 he realized he was not managing his care well. "I started having problems breathing," he recalls. "I couldn't sleep. I couldn't lay down."

Like many rural residents, Donald had been receiving care from his local provider. But as his condition worsened, he started traveling to Nashville to see cardiologists with Saint Thomas Heart in Nashville. Two years and a heart transplant later, Donald is doing exceptionally well and enjoying precious time with his family.

Despite its success in providing quality care to heart failure patients like Donald, Saint Thomas Heart is aware that thousands of residents in rural areas simply do not have access to the care they need. But thanks to a recently awarded, 3-year \$372,594 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the expertise at Saint Thomas Heart will soon be available to thirteen outlying counties through the Tennessee Rural Heart Failure Outreach Consortium project. Ultimately, the project aims to provide patients with full access to heart failure treatment and management at their local hospital, rather than traveling 50-20 miles for care.

Hickman Community Hospital, a member of the STHS family of hospitals and the lead for this project, will work closely with Saint Thomas Heart to assist rural facilities in expanding their capacity to deliver heart failure treatment. "Due to the complexity of the disease, heart failure poses unique challenges to rural healthcare providers," says Jack Keller, CEO of Hickman Community Hospital. "With these grant funds, we'll be able to make a tremendous impact, improving the quality of life for heart failure patients and reducing regional heart disease deaths."

**Saint Thomas Heart is Aware that Thousands of Patients in Rural Areas Face Barriers to Receiving the Care They Need**



## Role of Saint Thomas Heart

Saint Thomas Heart will be serving as one of four consortium members, all of which are hospital facilities providing care to multi-county, rural service areas in Tennessee. Due to its extensive experience with assisting rural facilities to expand capabilities with regard to cardiac care, Saint Thomas Heart will play a critical role in guiding the development and implementation of this project's clinical activities. The Saint Thomas Chest Pain Network, which has helped 10 rural facilities in Tennessee and Southern Kentucky become accredited Chest Pain Centers, will also provide expertise in building the capacity of the rural service areas to deliver heart failure treatment.

Aimed at creating a uniform approach to treat heart failure throughout rural areas in Tennessee, the program will promote the standardization of education and protocol among rural primary care and emergency department physicians, as well as assist in the implementation of outpatient heart failure clinics and ongoing engagement of the target population through educational outreach.

## Counties Served

The program caters to all residents of Tennessee's Benton, Carroll, Coffee, Franklin, Grundy, Henry, Hickman, Lewis, Lincoln, Moore, Perry, Stewart and Weakley counties. All 13 counties are considered medically underserved areas.