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CALHOUN LIBERTY HOSPITAL, CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER ANNOUNCE HOSPITAL TASK FORCE

BLOUNTSTOWN, FL -- Calhoun Liberty Hospital CEO Ruth Attaway and Rev. R.B. Holmes, Chairperson of the Tallahassee Chapter of the National Action Network and pastor of Bethel Missionary Baptist Church, today announced the creation of a task force to work with the Calhoun Liberty Hospital. The task force, which includes medical personnel and community members, will look for best practice recommendations to make to the hospital as well as ways to improve its communication with its community.

“This is a critical moment for Liberty and Calhoun counties because health care is an essential component to a strong community,” said Rev. Holmes. “It is imperative that we, as a community, support Calhoun Liberty Hospital as it works toward better care and communication.”

Members of the task force include:

- Dr. Murray Baker, Emergency Room Director, Jackson County Hospital
- Doris Ballard Ferguson, Retired Associate Dean of Florida A&M University’s Nursing Program
- Dr. John Fogarty, M.D., Dean of Florida State University’s College of Medicine
- Reverend Angus Jackson, Pastor of St. Paul AME Church in Blountstown
- Dr. Esias Lee, M.D., Neighborhood Medical Center
- Mark Plummer, Retired Liberty County Pharmacist
- Kenneth Speights, Chairman of the Calhoun County School Board and Director of Social Services at River Valley Rehabilitation Center
- Dr. Cyneetha Strong, M.D., Practicing Family Physician; President, Williams Gunn Medical Association; Past President, Florida Academy of Family Physicians

“Our hospital welcomes this opportunity to learn from experts,” said Attaway. “There’s never a point where we are beyond improvement, and we appreciate the members of this task force being generous with their time and talents.”

Over the next several months, members of the task force will work with the hospital to help develop best practices for internal procedures, including communication policies with patients.

The task force will also look for ways to improve the hospital's communication with community members so patients and their families can have confidence in the quality of care provided by the hospital. Leadership and professional development will be additional areas of focus.

Attaway today also announced the launch of the hospital's own internal review, following investigations currently ongoing with the Agency for Health Care Administration, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement and the Florida Department of Health.

"When I listened to the audio from the Blountstown Police Department, the first thing that struck me was a lack of compassion. That cut me to my core," said Attaway. "We cannot be in a position where people feel that we do not care about our patients."

Attaway's review will focus primarily on the hospital's standards of care, professional behavior and courtesy and compassion toward patients. As part of the review, Attaway announced that for the immediate future, the people who were directly involved in Ms. Dawson's care have been moved to non-patient care positions or placed on administrative leave.

Calhoun Liberty Hospital is a 25-bed critical access facility which must maintain an annual average length-of-stay of no more than 96 hours for acute inpatient care. This means the hospital focuses on caring for common conditions and outpatient care, transferring more critical patients to larger hospitals once they have been stabilized. Calhoun Liberty Hospital often also functions as a primary care facility for many local residents, due to a shortage of local physicians who are unable to accept new patients.

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