

## **AU's Powell Institute receives grant to improve region's mental health services**

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ALFRED -- The Lea R. Powell Institute for Children and Families at Alfred University is the recipient of a \$500,000 federal grant. The money, appropriated through the 2004 Omnibus Bill in Congress, will fund a program aimed at expanding mental health services for children and families living in rural areas. Dr. Ellen Faherty, director of the Powell Institute, said the project will increase the availability of services to families living in rural areas of the Southern Tier of New York State and the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania. "This is a traditionally under-served area," Faherty said. "This project will significantly increase access to mental health services." Because of the economic climate and a general shortage of mental health care practitioners, many families in the region lack access to the services they need. The project, which consists of two components, aims to address those obstacles. Federal funding will establish fellowships for graduate students in the Alfred University School Psychology program. The students will receive training in rural school psychology and child and family therapy, and in exchange for tuition remission will commit to practicing psychology in rural areas. The fellowships are for the 2004-05 academic year. Faherty said the number of graduate student fellowships has not yet been determined. Those who do receive fellowships earn valuable experience working with children and families in high need, rural areas. "This really increases our ability to attract high quality students interested in working in rural areas and it gives them a great opportunity for supervised practice," Faherty commented. The twin tiers of western New York and Pennsylvania will benefit as well. The funding will be used to develop The Powell Institute's Access to Children's Counseling and Early Support Services (ACCESS) program. The ACCESS program will provide counseling services at four satellite sites developed with partner rural schools. Each partner school will provide adequate space that will allow for simultaneous counseling of children and parents. The program will be coordinated and supervised through the Powell Institute's Child and Family Services Center. "This will improve our ability to provide mental health services to children and families living in rural areas," Faherty said, noting that many residents in the Twin Tiers are limited in their ability to locate and travel to mental health service providers. The ACCESS program will grow to include additional school-based sites as needs are identified through the Powell Institute's Even Start Family Literacy Partnership with the Cattaraugus/Allegany BOCES, the Division of School Psychology's Leadership Grant program, and the Rural Justice Institute at Alfred University.