



April 16, 2014

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NRHA announces 2014 Rural Health Award recipients

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is proud to announce its 2014 Rural Health Award recipients. The following organizations and individuals will be honored April 24 during NRHA's 37th Annual Rural Health Conference, which will attract more than 800 rural health professionals and students to Las Vegas.

"We're especially proud of this year's winners," said Alan Morgan, NRHA CEO. "They have each already made tremendous strides to advance rural health care, and we're confident they will continue to help improve the lives of rural Americans."

The **Alaska Federal Health Care Partnership** and **Mariposa Community Health Center's Platicamos Salud (Health and Wellness) Department** will both be recognized as Outstanding Rural Health Programs.

The **Alaska Federal Health Care Partnership** has revolutionized the delivery of quality care by installing telehealth monitoring units in 1,100 homes of some of the most underserved and remote patients in the country. With more than 70 percent of Alaska not accessible by road, installation teams routinely travel by small aircraft, boat and/or snowmobile, sleep on cots and eat military meals to install monitoring units in the homes of chronically ill patients to improve their health outcomes through self-care and 24/7 monitoring.

On the rural Arizona-Mexico border, **Mariposa Community Health Center's** community health worker initiatives to promote health and wellness have become a model regionally and nationally. The Nogales patient-centered medical home has active partnerships with government agencies, schools, an economic development corporation, public housing, a food bank, behavioral health entities, the regional area health education center and critical access hospital designed to create a synergy of efforts and integration of services to jointly address social determinants of health.

Henry County Health Center will receive NRHA's Outstanding Rural Health Organization Award. As the rural county's only hospital, Henry County Health Center staff is committed to combining small-town hospitality with the latest in medical technology from its new \$15.8 million expansion to a healthy living app for smartphones. Community members donated \$2 million to the facilities project, and more than 500 residents attended the surgery open house.

Samuel C. Johnson III will receive the Louis Gorin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Health Care. Executive director of the Alaska Federal Health Care Partnership since 2004 and a longtime

advocate for rural Alaskans, Johnson advocated for congressional support and funding for the partnership's home telehealth monitoring program, which empowers patients to manage their chronic diseases in remote Alaska. He has also led projects to eliminate environmental hazards and provide safe drinking water.

Hubert Seiler, MD, is NRHA's 2014 Rural Health Practitioner of the Year. Seiler has served residents of Rugby, N.D., and the surrounding area for more than 40 years. He has served as medical director for the Heart of America Medical Center's long-term care center and recently agreed to also lead the hospice program. Seiler has mentored countless students over the years, which has added greatly needed providers to rural North Dakota. Born and raised in small-town North Dakota, Seiler routinely volunteers locally and has done mission work around the world.

Randall Longenecker, MD, will receive NRHA's 2014 Outstanding Educator Award. He helped launch Ohio University Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine's Rural and Urban Scholars Pathways program in 2012. A long-time rural physician, Longenecker has brought together students from all of the state's medical schools for rural health retreats and has taken students to D.C. for NRHA's Rural Health Policy Institute to introduce them to leadership, advocacy and networking opportunities. He also serves as the senior project advisor for the Rural Training Track Technical Assistance Demonstration program, an NRHA-administered grant from the Office of Rural Health Policy that supports existing and developing rural training track medical residencies and conducts rural graduate medical education research. Longenecker was nominated by two of his students.

Tate Hinkle will receive this year's Student Leadership Award. A fourth-year medical student at the University of Alabama School of Medicine, Hinkle looks forward to becoming a family medicine physician in rural Alabama. He created a unique technique using GIS and Census tract information to do a spatial analysis of the state's rural physician workforce and pinpoint where primary care physicians are most needed. The state Medicaid office is using his technique to further delve into rural doctor shortages. Hinkle has volunteered at hospitals and clinics since high school and helped establish a medical student-run community clinic in Birmingham.

NRHA's Annual Rural Health Conference is the largest gathering of rural health professionals in the nation. John Snow Inc. provides a scholarship to the student awardee to participate in the NRHA conference or other educational pursuits.

"Every year, rural Americans come together to gain education and raise awareness on behalf of the 62 million Americans who live in rural areas and desperately need access to affordable health care," said Morgan.

NRHA is a nonprofit organization working to improve the health and well-being of rural Americans and providing leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education and research. NRHA membership is made up of 21,000 diverse individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.

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