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### **NRHA announces 2009 Rural Health Award recipients**

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is proud to announce its 2009 Rural Health Award recipients. The ceremony will honor the following organizations and individuals May 7 during the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Rural Health Conference, which will attract 900 rural health professionals and students to the historic Fontainebleau Resort in Miami Beach, Fla.

“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.”

**Grande Ronde Hospital** in La Grande, Ore., is the 2009 Outstanding Rural Health Organization.

“This hospital’s leadership in adopting and developing multiple telemedicine programs has greatly improved access to care for the area,” Morgan said. “The contributions of Grande Ronde will surely serve as a model for other hospitals.”

**Family Medicine of Port Angeles** in Washington will receive the Rural Health Quality Award.

“This organization has embraced the planned care model while pioneering the use of the electronic health records,” said Beth Landon, NRHA president. “Family Medicine of Port Angeles’ clinical efforts give informed patients contact with a prepared, proactive practice team for productive interactions and improved health outcomes.”

**Louisiana Emergency Medical Services Designated Regional Coordinator (EMS DRC) Network** is the Outstanding Rural Health Program.

“These volunteers ensure those with special medical needs are cared for during times of crisis,” Morgan said. “Louisiana EMS DRC successfully coordinated the medical transportation of thousands of elderly, disabled and special needs rural people during hurricanes in 2008.”

**Paul McGinnis** will receive the Louis Gorin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Health. McGinnis is community health, quality and practice development director of the Oregon Rural Practice-Based Research Network.

“Like Louis, Paul has given more than 25 years of creativity, compassion and leadership in improving rural health care,” Landon said. “His work includes developing state and national policy, training students, creating tools to spread knowledge and rolling up his sleeves to work directly with rural communities.”

**Tom Dean, M.D.**, is the 2009 Practitioner of the Year. Dean is a Medicare Payment Advisory Commission commissioner and chief of staff and physician at Horizon Health, Inc. - Jerauld County Clinic in Wessington Springs, S.D., where he was raised.

“Tom has practiced for 30 years as a family medicine specialist,” Morgan said. “He has inspired students to pursue residencies in family medicine, served as a sole emergency room physician, and benefitted rural residents across the nation with his advocacy activities.”

**William Weeks**, Dartmouth Medical School associate professor, is this year’s Outstanding Rural Health Researcher.

“William’s extensive, high-quality research has aided policy formation that has improved rural health care, especially for rural veterans,” Landon said. “He has been recognized nationally and internationally with committee and policy advisory appointments, awards and presentations of his life-changing work.”

**J. Ocie Harris** will receive NRHA’s Distinguished Educator Award.

“Ocie retired last year after a distinguished career in medical education, finishing as the dean of the Florida State University College of Medicine,” Morgan said. “The scope of his accomplishments and the significance of his work in rural health have impacted thousands of lives and will continue to impact the future for generations to come.”

**Michael Arnold**, a University of South Dakota doctor of physical therapy student, will receive the 2009 Student Achievement Award.

“In addition to exemplary academic performance, Michael helped initiate, organize and conduct health screenings for the public and underserved students and provided acute physical therapy services to high school football players on a medically underserved American Indian reservation,” Landon said.

**Christine Hancock**, a University of California medical student, will receive the organization’s Student Leadership Award. She recently completed her master’s thesis on rural physician recruitment determinants.

“Christine coordinated a telemedicine program and completed rural preceptorships in Mexico, Bolivia, Peru and northern California,” Morgan said. “She serves as chair of NRHA’s Rural Medical Educators student caucus and has worked to involve students in rural health.”

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 18,000 diverse individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.