Dental therapists take care home

Hospital donation helps college train nurses

Border health advocates share experiences

Delivery comes full circle for rural med student
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All smiles 6
Dental therapists take care home

Hospital donation helps college train nurses 11

Border health advocates share experiences 14

Delivery comes full circle for rural med student 16

Rural outreach programs under review 18

Beginnings and passages 20
Words from a rural health rookie and a seasoned pro

Mile markers 24
Get to know New Mexico’s border health director

Short cuts 35
Lights, camera, Austin

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On the cover
Dental health aide therapists have provided oral health care to rural and remote Alaskan communities since 2006.
Connect to innovations and opportunities at these 2011 NRHA events.

Rural Medical Educators Conference
May 3
Austin, Texas

Annual Rural Health Conference
May 3-6
Austin, Texas

Quality and Clinical Conference
July 20-22
Rapid City, S.D.

Rural Health Clinic Conference
Sept. 27-28
Kansas City, Mo.

Critical Access Hospital Conference
Sept. 28-30
Kansas City, Mo.

Rural Multiracial and Multicultural Health Conference
Dec. 7-9
Daytona Beach, Fla.

RuralHealthWeb.org
Big tasks for rural health

1/1/11: what a great date to start my responsibilities as president of the National Rural Health Association.

I look forward to the exciting year ahead. My most recent predecessors, Dennis Berens and Beth Landon, have worked to strengthen rural economies and communities. With the guidance and hard work of CEO Alan Morgan and our staff, NRHA is seen as the national leader for rural health. Our association is stronger than ever.

My goal as president is to work with all of you to successfully implement health reform. I know not everyone thinks the health reform law is a good one. But regardless of your position, I believe more rural Americans should have access to affordable health insurance, a strong rural health workforce and quality health care services. We need to support our rural safety-net programs.

None of these are small tasks. I look forward to working together to achieve these goals and make this year another great one.

Kris Sparks
2011 NRHA president

5 things I picked up in this issue:

1. A South Dakota med student completed a rotation under the doc who delivered him. page 16
2. A donated former hospital building was the catalyst for a college to develop a nursing program. page 11
3. Every winter, Paul Dulin treats friends and neighbors to a Mexican feast of posole. page 24
4. Before 2006, 25,000 Alaskans had no access to oral health care. The dental health aide therapist program changed that. page 6
5. Three of the 10 poorest American counties are on the U.S.-Mexico border. page 14
With many villages accessible only by snowmobile, boat or plane and the majority of dental providers located in large cities, thousands of Alaska Natives have not seen a dentist in decades. As a result, dental decay in Alaska Native communities is widespread – 60 percent of children ages two to five have untreated decay, and 20 percent of adults over 55 are completely toothless.

“We have two-and-a-half times the rate of decay in children in Alaska Native populations than in other areas and races across the country,” says Mary Willard, DDS, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium (ANTHC) Dental Health Aide Therapist Program clinical director. “And it doesn’t just affect kids – we also see dental caries and lost teeth in the adult population.”
Until recently, there was not much isolated Alaskans could do to combat the ravages of tooth decay. Faced with insurmountable transportation costs, lack of insurance and loss of income, many were left with one choice: live with the pain.

### Community solutions

But beginning in 2003, ANTHC began implementing the dental health aide therapist (DHAT) model, which has been utilized for 80 years to provide safe and effective care in more than 54 countries worldwide, including Great Britain, Canada and New Zealand, where the first therapists began practicing in 1921.

Certified dental therapists are mid-level providers working as part of the dental team. They work remotely under the general supervision of a dentist to extend the reach of services to populations in need. They are able to provide the full scope of preventive care, including cleanings, fillings, sealants, simple extractions and referrals.

And according to Willard, since 14 dental therapists began practicing in Alaskan communities in 2006, more than 25,000 residents have direct access to dental care that they didn’t have before.

“One of the things we hear is that it’s nice to get the care at home and not have to travel far away,” Willard says. “Patients talk about how nice it is to be treated by someone who looks familiar or is familiar within the community. Often our therapists are the first native people who have worked on their teeth, and they’re proud and happy about that.”

In fact, one of the main reasons for the longevity and success of the DHAT program is the trainees’ connection to the communities they serve. While many past recruitment efforts have focused on getting providers to rural areas by offering loan forgiveness, the incentives turned out to be ineffective as long-term solutions.

“Often our therapists are the first native people who have worked on their teeth, and they’re proud and happy about that.”

Mary Willard, DDS, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium Dental Health Aide Therapist Program clinical director

“As soon as the loans were repaid, the providers were gone,” says Alice Warner, PhD, program officer at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, a national philanthropic organization dedicated to improving the lives of vulnerable children and families. “This is why rural areas are starved for providers. But when someone comes from the community and is trained and educated to become a therapist, they generally return home and...”

Dentists return home

As executive director of New Mexico Health Resources (NMHR), a nonprofit dedicated to recruiting and retaining health professionals in rural areas, Jerry Harrison knows firsthand the challenges of getting dentists to come to small towns.

“We have one of the oldest dentist populations in the country, and as they retire there’s no one to take their place,” he says. “We have a severe shortage of dentists to begin with, and we’re one of the few states that doesn’t have a dental school.”

To combat this shortage, Harrison and NMHR work with the pre-dental society at the University of New Mexico to prepare students for admission to dental schools as well as for dental hygiene work.

On average, 10 New Mexican students per year graduate from dental programs across the country. Many of these students are eligible for loan repayments due to poverty, as well as through the National Health Service Corps and the Western Interstate on Higher Education, which offers funding for students living in states where health professional training programs aren’t available.

Ten more students graduate each year without state supplemental financing.

And because the students have rural community connections, 95 percent of them return home to practice after graduation.

“It’s very different than moving someone in from urban Albuquerque and having them go to work in a town of 2,500,” Harrison explains.

Going forward, he says the dental health aide therapist model currently utilized in Alaska could have “tremendous potential” in expanding care.

“One of my dreams would be that dental education programs would integrate training programs for mid-level providers the way medical schools have implemented nurse practitioner, physician assistant and clinical nurse specialist training,” he says. “I’d like to see dental schools integrate training for mid-levels along with dentists and hygienists, or community colleges affiliated with dental institutions.”
practice there. They’re invested in the community in ways others are not.”

For the last two years, the Kellogg Foundation has been evaluating the effectiveness of the DHAT program in five communities in Alaska, the only state where dental therapists are legally allowed to practice other than Minnesota as of May 2009. So far, the results of the study have been positive and encouraging.

“The major findings were that the program in Alaska has shown that the therapists are providing safe, competent and appropriate care,” says Kathy Reincke, Kellogg Foundation communications manager. “And the patients are highly satisfied with that care.”

One of the factors contributing to patient satisfaction is the extensive training dental therapists receive, plus their daily communication with their supervising dentist. Before they even begin training, candidates must complete a two-part interview – first with their tribal health organization, then with ANTHC partners at the University of Washington. Once candidates have been selected, they complete two years of intensive, hands-on training, with the first year in Anchorage and the second year at the Yuut Elitnaurviat People’s Learning Center in Bethel.

After this training is finished, candidates complete a six-month precep-

“You’ll hear we don’t have a shortage; we have a distribution problem. But regardless, in too many rural communities there are no dentists or not enough.”

David Jordan, Community Catalyst Dental Access Project director

But with many rural areas facing recruitment and retention issues similar to those in Alaska, their ability to bring dental providers to their communities is limited.

To address this challenge, the Kellogg Foundation has partnered with Community Catalyst, a national nonprofit working to expand health care access, to explore whether the DHAT model is a viable option to
expand care in five states with some of the greatest disparities: Kansas, New Mexico, Ohio, Vermont and Washington. By 2014, the Kellogg Foundation will have invested more than $16 million to increase access to oral health care.

In its partnering role, Community Catalyst is spearheading community-led efforts to establish coalitions to educate lawmakers and the public on the roles of dental therapists.

“We need over 10,000 new providers to meet the needs of our current system,” says David Jordan, Community Catalyst Dental Access Project director. “Dental therapists enter communities that may not have had a provider in over a decade. You’ll hear we don’t have a shortage; we have a distribution problem. But regardless, in too many rural communities there are no dentists or not enough.”

One of the state-level organizations working with Community Catalyst is Health Action New Mexico (HANM), a nonprofit bringing affordable health care to New Mexicans since 1995. In New Mexico, 69 percent of dentists practice in urban areas, but the majority of the two million people living in the nation’s fifth

Care for kids

In low-income populations, oral health care tends to be low on the list of a family’s priorities.

“We see so many families without heat, transportation or phones,” says Robert Howard, dental hygienist and owner of Grinovations, a mobile dental clinic providing care to students across the state of Washington. “it’s a low priority, and maybe rightly so.”

But under the SSB 6020 legislation, which passed in 2001, dental hygienists are legally allowed to practice in schools. This has allowed Howard to overcome financial barriers by taking his clinic on wheels, which is owned and operated by hygienists, directly to kids regardless of their ability to pay.

“When services are provided in schools, the number of children who receive services increases dramatically,” he says.

Howard has been operating Grinovations since 2005, when he purchased the RV-turned-clinic from founder Kerry Warden. On his first day, he realized providing care in impoverished rural communities was vastly different from what he experienced on an average day in a dentist’s office.

“Every once in a while in the dentist’s office we’d have a kid with rampant decay who would be the talk of the break room,” he says. “But that would be every couple of months. In these schools, 60 to 70 percent of these kids would put tears in your eyes. After my first day, I pulled over on the way home and cried. My passion had been sparked.”

In 2009, Grinovations staff took their two RVs, which are fully outfitted with exam rooms, to 85 schools across the state and provided need-based care to nearly 10,000 children. Of these children, approximately 27 percent were uninsured. Stamped on these fee-for-service bills are the words “please pay what you can.” Many patients who still cannot afford to pay show their gratitude in other ways.

“One day a little grandmother knocked on the door of the RV, and she handed me a bag of tamales,” Howard recalls. “Another little kid ran up to me in Wal-Mart and hugged my leg. His parents didn’t speak much English, but they were very humble, thankful folks.”

Grinovations sees many of the same children every year, some of whom they’ve been treating since kindergarten who are now entering high school with perfect teeth. But Howard still sees a significant portion of the referrals he makes each year go unfulfilled.

“We do what we can to get every child hooked up with a family dentist, but in the population we deal with, oftentimes it just doesn’t happen,” he says.

To extend the scope of services available, Howard says adding a dental therapist to their team could “eliminate a tremendous amount of pain and suffering.”

“Of 3,000 referrals last year, 70 to 80 percent could have been addressed by a dental therapist,” he explains. “For low-income folks, these issues usually end up being addressed in the emergency room. Addressing these problems preventatively could save potentially millions of tax dollars.”

Grinovations staff brings care to kids at Washington schools with two mobile dental clinics.
largest state are poor and rural.

According to Pamela Blackwell, HANM project director for oral health access, this has created a crisis-level epidemic of dental disparities and disease. In October, she witnessed the dire need for care firsthand in Albuquerque, N.M., when she volunteered at the Mission of Mercy mobile dental clinic, which has brought oral health care to underserved and uninsured residents in some of the nation’s poorest communities since 1994.

“There were over 2,000 people from all over the state who camped outside for days to get care,” she says. “You would ask them, ‘Are you in pain?’ And so many of them said, ‘Only when I eat,’ which to most of us means all the time. It was really sad and striking, and they were extremely grateful for the opportunity to be there.”

A promising approach

Blackwell is thankful for the many providers who volunteer to make Mission of Mercy clinics happen, but she recognizes that it doesn’t provide a 365-day, close-to-home solution the way dental therapists could.

“We’re working with communities and talking to them about whether dental therapists would work for them,” she says. “We don’t want to force it on anyone, and we want to make sure it has support at the community level. The students who would go into the program would be chosen by the community. They would be homegrown, culturally competent providers.”

Through HANM’s research, Blackwell has discovered that most communities are interested in the DHAT model for both access and career opportunities. And vacant dentists’ offices are ready and waiting – there are 42 unused operatories at New Mexico’s federally qualified health centers and community health centers. School-based clinics have also been considered as future dental homes further utilizing a central location within the community. Later this year, HANM plans to apply for a $4 million federal grant authorized by the Affordable Care Act to train new providers.

“If we can spend the Affordable Care Act demonstration project funding for training therapists rather than building infrastructures, we would prefer it,” Blackwell says. “If possible, we prefer to use resources that are already available.”

But before New Mexico – or any other state – can begin implementing the DHAT model, laws would need to change allowing therapists to provide care. According to Warner, the law change is a slow process because it happens state-by-state, not federally. And if the laws change, there are then training, curriculum and reimbursement issues to tackle.

“Warner says educating citizens and lawmakers on the roles of dental therapists is a vital first step toward changing state laws.”

Alice Warner, W.K. Kellogg Foundation program director

Warner says educating citizens and lawmakers on the roles of dental therapists is a vital first step toward changing state laws.

“Most of the general public doesn’t know about this level of provider,” she says. “If you went to the grocery store and started asking around, most people probably wouldn’t know about dental therapists.”

And that’s why Blackwell says spreading the word about the need for accessible, affordable oral health care in rural and remote communities is so necessary.

“A lot of times we don’t see [the need], so we forget it’s there,” she says. “But we’re already at a crisis. We’d love for New Mexico to give this promising approach a try.”

“When people are denied that care for a lifetime, it affects a significant aspect of every part of human development and well-being.”
One group was planning to spend the summer volunteering with the Missionaries of Charity organization founded by Mother Teresa in Calcutta, India, before the building was named.

Another student was volunteering as a nurse’s aide caring for the elderly, and when faced with the task of bathing her patients she began questioning her vocational choice: was she really cut out to be a nurse?

But then she heard stories about the Catholic nun who dedicated her life to caring for the poor, the ill, the injured, the forgotten. When she discovered the new building would be named for her role model, she says she once again became inspired and confident in her decision to become a nurse.

And since the building’s dedication on Aug. 26, which would have been Mother Teresa’s 100th birthday, students have received daily motivation from one of her most famous quotes, inscribed near the entrance: “Give your hands to serve and your heart to love.”

“The students are very excited to be the [nursing school’s] inaugural class,” says Lynne Connelly, PhD, Benedictine College director of nursing. “The name of the building is very inspiring to them.”

Even before the Mother Teresa Center for Nursing and Health Education at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan., opened, many students already felt a connection to its namesake.

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Photo: Students, staff and visiting Missionaries of Charity nuns at Benedictine College in Atchison, Kan., celebrate the unveiling and dedication of the new nursing center. The building was donated by Atchison Hospital.
Room to grow

Enrollment at Benedictine College, a Catholic liberal arts school with 1,488 students, has grown 85 percent over the last 10 years, according to Stephen D. Minnis, college president. Until recently the school lacked the geographical space to accommodate the growing student body.

“We’re landlocked,” Minnis explains. “We have a river on one side and neighborhoods on the other.”

During his six years as president and 12 years on the board of trustees, Minnis says he dreamt of having a bachelor-level nursing program at the college.

“Many students wanted to go into nursing, but they would have to transfer somewhere else,” he says. “We also saw what’s going on in America – there’s already a nursing shortage, and it’s part of our mission to do something about it.”

Fortunately, when Atchison Hospital constructed a new facility south of town in early 2010, hospital leaders decided to donate the old facility, which was built in 1912 directly across from the Benedictine campus. Comprising 10 acres of land and valued at $7.8 million, the donation is the largest single gift in the university’s 152-year history.

“We’re not just in some little corner trying to eke out a program in a couple of classrooms. It’s the perfect size, and we have room to grow.”
Lynne Connelly, PhD, Benedictine College director of nursing

The property will eventually house psychology, sociology/criminology and journalism and mass communication departments, but the donated two-story building, formerly a doctors’ office, was able to immediately address the needs of the new nursing program.

“We have a floor of the building, and we got to design it,” says Connelly. “We were fortunate that we didn’t have to spend much money renovating. We have the space we need, and it’s a dedicated space. We’re not just in some little corner trying to eke out a program in a couple of classrooms. It’s the perfect size, and we have room to grow.”

The building is complete with classroom space and a skills lab with six beds donated by Heartland Hospital in nearby St. Joseph, Mo. In addition to Connelly, the nursing program employs one full-time and three part-time faculty members in pediatrics, general medical surgery and pharmacology. There are currently 18 students enrolled. In the fall registration will increase to 25, at which point they also plan to add instructors in intensive care, mental health and community health.

For Connelly, who served 22 years as a nurse in the U.S. Army and previously taught at the University of Texas Health Science Center and the University of Kansas School of Nursing, working at Benedictine has been “exciting but challenging.”

“It interested me more and more to start from scratch and leave a legacy,” she explains. “In the military you change jobs every three or four years, and I find that...
exciting. It makes you stretch.”

Shared mission

Donating the space has been beneficial for Atchison Hospital as well, as they now have a new state-of-the-art facility with more centralized services to serve the community of 10,432 people. While the major departments at the old hospital were spread out, now the emergency room, medical surgery, obstetrics and radiology departments are approximate to one another on a single floor, and two offices nearby house the town’s specialty physicians.

Also, according to CEO John L. Jacobson, the benefits of having a local nursing program “are nearly self-evident.”

“When your local college is able to attract the best and brightest students, it’s a win-win for both institutions,” he says. “Anytime you have a BSN [bachelor of science in nursing] program adjacent, nearby or even local, it benefits all hospitals in the area.”

“It’s really good for the whole community and the communities around us.”
Charlene Clause, Atchison Hospital chief nursing officer

Last semester Benedictine students received fundamentals training at Atchison Hospital, and during the spring semester they will start clinical, obstetrics and medical surgery rotations. They will also be training at other area hospitals, including St. John Hospital in nearby Leavenworth, Kan.

Because students trained in rural areas are more likely to practice in small towns, many area leaders see Benedictine’s nursing program as an exciting opportunity to address the rural nursing shortage.

“It’s really good for the whole community and the communities around us,” says Charlene Clause, Atchison Hospital chief nursing officer. “Many students are from the region, so the likelihood that they will gravitate back to their hometown community hospitals after getting their BSN is very likely.”

And in the meantime, students continue following in the footsteps of the woman about whom Minnis says, “You’d be hard-pressed to find a better caregiver.”

Lynne Connelly, Benedictine College director of nursing, says she likes the challenge of starting a program from scratch.

“If we can have our students try to emulate Mother Teresa in their care of their future patients, then we’ve created some pretty great nurses,” he says. “She inspires our young people to love their patients and give the best care they can provide, and that’s a great service to the profession.”

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Pediatric Hospitalists, Pediatric Inpatient Services

The Children’s Hospital at Legacy Emanuel is currently recruiting for Pediatric Hospitalists. This program will be managed by The Children’s Hospital Legacy Emanuel and will be physically located at Good Samaritan Regional Hospital, located in Corvallis, Oregon. This is an opportunity to be part of a new Pediatric Hospitalist Program that will have an integrated relationship to The Children’s Hospital.

Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center, the largest hospital in Linn, Benton, and Lincoln counties offers more than 22 medical specialties, including comprehensive cancer care, a full service cardiology and cardiac and vascular surgery program, a sleep lab, neurosurgery and other regional services. It is licensed to operate 188 beds and is one of only three “level 2” trauma centers in the state.

The Children’s Hospital is a 155-bed tertiary care center, including a 50 bed Level III NICU, a 23-bed PICU, a Children’s Emergency Department, and two large inpatient acute care units. The hospital has over 90 pediatric sub-specialty professionals in both medical and surgical areas including 24-hour Pediatric Hospitalist coverage. A new state-of-the-art, free standing Children’s Hospital is currently under construction and will be completed in the fall of 2011.

Corvallis, Oregon is just 90 miles from Portland in the heart of the Willamette Valley.

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Border health advocates share experiences with conference attendees

By Lindsey V. Corey

Teresa Leal loves an audience. For her, it’s not about ego but necessity.

So the Sonora, Mexico, native and activist jumped at the chance to introduce attendees of the National Rural Health Association’s Rural Multiracial and Multicultural Health Conference to the border community of Nogales, Ariz., and a few of its binational programs.

“We’re open to anybody. We need it. We demand it. We’re not going to stop speaking out or working toward solutions,” Leal says. “We don’t want pity from outsiders but understanding that we’re doing our best not to be victims. It was a bountiful experience to have you [NRHA] come and do that.”

About 40 professionals arrived in Tucson before the 16th annual educational conference and watched the desert sunset from a bus headed for the border town of Nogales, population 20,017.

First stop: the Southeast Arizona Area Health Education Center (AHEC), where a staff of seven serve three of the state’s four border counties from a metal building just a short walk from the Mariposa border crossing.

“It was a privilege to have NRHA participants visit our center and get a more personal tour of the community as opposed to just arriving at a conference in a big city,” says executive director Gail Emerick.

She explained that increased mainstream media coverage in light of Arizona’s immigration law (SB1070) has made recruiting health care professionals difficult.

“The media has sensationalized border violence,” she says. “Our border communities on the U.S. side are safer than most of the largest cities in the U.S., but coverage has made people skeptical of coming to serve the area, making it a challenge to find providers. If it was a challenge before, it’s an even bigger challenge today.”

“Our resources have limits, but that doesn’t stop us. It can’t.”

Teresa Leal, border health volunteer

So Emerick looks for those who like a challenge to serve the area’s close-knit Hispanic and Native American populations.

“We’re a great place for health care providers interested in unique cultures,” she says. “Some factors that provide challenges also create a unique service environment. We get dedicated professionals when we do get people to serve here, and that’s a wonderful thing.”

The area also boasts fiercely determined volunteers like Leal, who gathered other health care volunteers from both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border to share their stories and a traditional meal at the Pimeria Alta Historical Society, the former fire station in downtown Nogales where she works two days a week as curator.

NRHA on the border

NRHA’s Border Health Initiative began in 2008. The group includes experts from state offices of rural health, state rural health associations, the U.S. Border Health Commissioners from each state and federal partners including the Office of Rural Health Policy, the Office of Global Health Affairs, the Pan-American Health Organization and other interested stakeholders. Members who developed NRHA’s first official policy brief on border health issues meet face-to-face annually in one of the border states and participate in quarterly calls.

The next Border Health Initiative meeting will be in San Diego in August. There will also be a plenary session highlighting border health issues during NRHA’s 34th Annual Rural Health Conference May 3-6 in Austin, Texas.
Leal founded Comadres (co-mothers), a group of Mexican and American women, in 1986. Today, three generations of women volunteer to educate, support and protect their peers as part of Comadres. The project has provided information on public health topics from tuberculosis and water contamination through one-on-one or informal and sometimes secret gatherings in homes on both sides of the fence. The Comadres network also includes safe houses for child abuse and domestic violence victims.

“We listen to the communities, and the communities listen to us,” Leal says. “We go to them and talk about TB because it’s stigmatized, and we go to squatter communities and try to help with the isolation that a battered woman feels. Our resources have limits, but that doesn’t stop us. It can’t. It’s a very personal and dynamic way of doing things, a way of life, not just a project.”

She also founded Manos de Mujer (women’s hands) to help Mexican and tribal women create and sell traditional products from paper flowers to tamales. The unemployed or underemployed women prepared the meal for the NRHA gathering and took home what was left.

Attendees enjoyed a buffet of corn and flour tortillas, rice, beans, cactus, beef and sweet bread while community members presented on a local ranch offering equine therapy to autistic children, a free clinic for disabled children, a women’s shelter, food safety and peer health education.

“The challenges are big here, but we are a good lab for new ideas, research and programs that could be tried in underserved communities,” she told attendees. “All these voices, even though they don’t have the funding or resources, they keep going to try to address issues that affect them. I’m glad NRHA came here to expand our effort to look at and think about these issues in different ways.”

Local Kiwanis president Pete Wise told attendees that teenagers the organization helped in the past are choosing to volunteer today.

“A little act of kindness you give to a child now can change the world,” he says. “What’s being done here, it’s amazing.”

Donations can be sent to Teresa Leal, 441 North Grand Ave. Suite 7, Nogales, AZ 85621.

**Coming together**

150 professionals and students attended NRHA’s 16th annual Rural Multiracial and Multicultural Health Conference in Tucson, Ariz.

Plan now to participate in the 2011 event Dec. 7-9 in Daytona Beach, Fla.

**By the numbers**

The U.S.-Mexico border extends for 1,952 miles. It includes 44 U.S. counties, the majority of which are rural. Three of the 10 poorest American counties are on the border. Twenty-one of the U.S. counties on the border have been designated as economically distressed areas, including 1,200 colonias in Texas and New Mexico.

**Thank you**

NRHA would like to thank the following people for their donations to the 2010 Annual Giving Campaign and their continued support of rural health.

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**NRHA is proud that 100 percent of staff believe in our mission and donated.**
Hospital delivery comes full circle for rural med student

By Lindsey V. Corey

Twenty-six years after Dave Staub delivered Carl Rasmussen, they met again in the hospital room.

This time it was a four-week rotation.

A second-year med student at the University of South Dakota (USD), Rasmussen went home to Sisseton, S.D., population 2,454, to complete his sophomore rural preceptorship under the direction of Staub, MD, and partners at Coteau de Prairies Hospital and Clinic.

It was his first rotation and chance to see how classroom and lab work translated to patient care.

“I’d been stuck in a classroom, so I was really looking forward to being in a working environment on a daily basis and getting the rhythm and feel of that in my head and to finally start to apply some of the knowledge and to form a more applicable framework to all that book knowledge we’d been tediously working through,” Rasmussen says. “It’s safe to say it exceeded my expectations.”

Day one at Coteau de Prairies, he found himself scrubbing in on a C-section.

“I’d maybe observed a handful of surgeries from a distance, and here I am assisting on my first day,” he recalls. “It was kind of a whirlwind. I remember being surprised when all of a sudden they are removing an infant from the uterus. It’s like I forgot what we were in there for. My head was taking in all the anatomy and focusing on what I had to do, and then holy smokes, there’s a brand new baby.”

Rasmussen also spent time in the emergency room and clinic. The closest large hospital is an hour and a half away in Fargo, N.D.

“I feel like I was exposed to the whole gamut of primary care medicine and the way providers have to work with limited resources, and I think that’s an important building block,” he says. “If you don’t have the foundation, I don’t think you’re going to put together as accurate of a broader picture of how it all fits together.”

Staub, USD clinical associate professor of medicine, has been practicing in Sisseton for 34 years and taught about 30 medical students. He says he values the active learning colleagues at his rural hospital and clinic provide.

“You need to have the student understand that they may not know everything, but nobody in medicine ever does,” he says. “I have all my students see patients,
and I may not be in the room all the time. They need to get over the fear of meeting somebody, and pretty soon they are comfortable with the process and gain confidence in the human, eye-to-eye humanity part of medicine. Learning isn’t watching; it’s doing, and Carl is self-motivated, so it didn’t take long for him to jump in and do exams.”

At first Rasmussen hesitated taking the opportunity to complete his rural rotation in his hometown, but he knew he’d get to work with members of the nearby Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate tribe, and after being away for eight years, he didn’t know many of the Coteau de Prairies patients.

In addition to being able to “enjoy Mom’s home cooking,” Rasmussen says he appreciated Staub’s approach to training. “That mentoring style is a refreshing way to learn medicine,” he says. “You can tell when a doctor enjoys it and when they feel burdened by it, so you definitely value someone like Dr. Staub, who devotes so much time and energy to get you involved in learning.”

Rasmussen sought out Staub, his then primary care physician, during his undergraduate education for advice on pursuing a medical career. “I asked him if he could still recognize the reasons he went into medicine,” Rasmussen remembers. “He assured me that he definitely could on a daily basis.”

Rasmussen says he could see himself practicing in a small town after his residency. “I’m trying to remain open-minded so I experience the full scope of each rotation, but at the same time, I definitely feel most strongly drawn to primary care and feel like family medicine would be a good fit for me,” Rasmussen says. “I like that you’re working with patients of any age and seeing them at the frontlines of care. I also like that it’s needed, especially right now.”

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Grant impact

Rural outreach programs under review

By Angela Lutz

In migrant communities along the U.S.-Mexico border, the first key in reaching out to residents to provide health care and education is earning their trust.

Migrant Health Promotion has been bringing health education and outreach to migrant farm workers in southern Hidalgo County, Texas, for nearly 30 years. One of the first lessons CEO Gayle Lawn-Day learned while working toward this mission is the important role of promotoras de salud, or community health promoters.

“It’s all about trust,” Lawn-Day explains. “They need someone who has a similar cultural and language background and accessibility within the community. That’s the real core of being a promotora.”

Coming from the neighborhoods they serve, promotoras aren’t required to have a medical background, but they do receive monthly training and certification from their home state. Then they are able to provide leadership, peer education and resources to support community empowerment and remove the cultural barrier to care.

Removing this barrier is especially important in many of the high-poverty colonias, or unincorporated neighborhoods, Migrant Health Promotion serves, where most residents are uninsured and either don’t have access to health care or don’t follow up on diagnoses due to financial barriers. Transportation is also an issue, as many colonias lack roads and basic services such as water, grocery stores and trash pickup.

“Also, due to recent immigration debates there’s a lot of fear generated, and the angst surrounding the issue has created a lot of problems,” Lawn-Day adds. “People are afraid to access care.”

In border towns where residents have grown more wary of outsiders, promotoras from within the communities who can provide culturally competent care are becoming increasingly valuable.

“[Migrant populations] are not wild about strangers,” Lawn-Day says. “But they trust us. We don’t have a problem finding leaders, either, because they want to serve their communities and be healthy but need the tools to do so.”

In order to provide the necessary tools and resources and educate migrant populations on mental health, chronic illness, and diet and exercise, Migrant Health Promotion has created the Futuros Saludables, or healthy futures, project by utilizing grant funding from the Office of Rural Health Policy’s (ORHP) 330A Outreach Authority, which was created as part of the Public Health Services Act of 1991. Futuros Saludables received a three-year grant: $150,000 for the first year, $125,000 for the second and $100,000 for the third.

According to Nisha Patel, ORHP community-based division director, each year ORHP funds approximately 300 grantees out of 330A dedicated to identifying and addressing health disparities in rural communities. Since 1996, the program has distributed approximately $475 million.

“There’s been a growing recognition that we can’t continue to fund programs without determining if they work and how we can make them work better.”

Michael Meit, National Opinion Research Center Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis co-director

“The most successful grant programs have community buy-in from key stakeholders and leaders,” Patel explains. “They are collaborating with community organizations to solicit resources, having a clear vision and understanding community needs, and developing a plan around that need to address it.”

In order to determine the grantees’ impact and sustainability, ORHP arranged a four-year contract with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis and the University of Minnesota Rural Health Research Center to evaluate 330A programs and
identify common themes among successful grantees.

“This is an innovative initiative,” says Michael Meit, Walsh Center co-director. “There’s been a growing recognition that we can’t continue to fund programs without determining if they work and how we can make them work better.”

Currently in the second year of the evaluation process, Meit says the results and data gathered have been promising.

“We’ve been interviewing grantees, and a lot of these programs are sustained after the grant funding ends,” he says. “The grant funding truly is seed-funding to get these networks up and running. Of the 72 programs we’ve contacted, 80 percent are still up and running. It’s a remarkable example of the programs’ impact, and it speaks to the value of partnering and developing networks.”

“The ultimate goal of this evaluation is to develop a gateway of information... rural communities don’t have to reinvent the wheel.”
- Nisha Patel, ORHP community-based division director

In addition to determining the programs’ sustainability, evaluators are also working to develop resources for rural communities around the country hoping to start similar programs.

“We are identifying common themes among grantees and showing their impact,” Patel says. “The ultimate goal of this evaluation is to develop a gateway of information including evidence-based models and best practices so other rural communities don’t have to reinvent the wheel.”

For example, once the evaluations are complete, communities wanting to expand health care knowledge and services in a culturally competent manner will be able to access successful models such as Migrant Health Promotion’s Futuros Saludables program on the Rural Assistance Center web site.

According to Lawn-Day, since they began their efforts more colonia residents are accessing health care services, and they have developed strategies to deal with stress and depression, including diet and exercise initiatives. This increase in utilization has largely been achieved through the efforts of promotoras, which is why Lawn-Day says she believes the program will have longevity.

Also contributing to the program’s sustainability is the number of organizations with which Migrant Health Promotion has partnered, which has allowed them to open offices serving isolated, underserved and minority populations in five states.

“We have established community leaders, and the community resources will remain in place,” she says. “Even after the grant is done, these people will still be there and will have learned what they need to know to provide services.”

Overview of Office of Rural Health Policy 330A grants
- Created as part of the Public Health Service Act of 1991
- More than $475 million has been awarded since 1996.
- Nearly 300 grantees each year seek to expand rural health care access, coordinate resources and improve rural health care service quality.
- Five grant programs operate under the authority of section 330A:
  - Rural Health Care Services Outreach
  - Network Development Planning Rural Health Network Development Small Health Care Provider Quality Improvement
  - Delta States Rural Development Network

nrha rural roads 19
Texas’ largest medical center looks out for small towns

By Brian Petter

Though I grew up in Houston, I was always intrigued by the landscape changes as we left southeast Texas on family vacations as a child. I enjoyed the peace that came with the open spaces and nature. But I don’t think I really recognized the draw to the rural parts of the state until I left for college and got to visit.

After undergrad, I headed back to Houston to begin working in the world’s largest medical center, and I really enjoyed my time there. But graduate school took me back to College Station, and I was fortunate to study at the School of Rural Public Health. I spent my practicum commuting between two critical access hospitals in Brazos Valley. My graduate school focus on state disparities and experience in small town hospitals solidified my desire to serve in rural communities.

After more than 10 years in College Station, I was fortunate to get the opportunity to serve 26 county service areas just outside San Antonio. It has been incredible to work for the largest health care provider in South Texas and to look out for the interests of patients from surrounding areas. Methodist Healthcare System of San Antonio considers it a privilege to serve the region and is forward-thinking enough to ensure we are able to assist facilities that cannot serve their populations in subspecialty areas of medicine.

We not only serve the rural areas of the south hill country, but we are also fortunate to assist with challenges along the Texas-Mexico border. In my role, I am able to partner with administrative teams of large border hospitals or critical access hospitals in towns of less than 3,000. Most months, I log well over 1,000 miles visiting communities and hospitals, and what I find most amazing is the communities may look different, but similar issues remain, and the lack of access to care is common across our huge state.

One of the most rewarding things I have been a part of was the heart alert program we created with other communities, in which we can auto-launch a helicopter to a patient with a poor EKG reading in hopes of getting the patient help in less than two hours.

Care like this is not available in our region without the collaboration of both our large system and rural hospitals in conjunction with our medical staffs and their concern for the underserved in rural Texas.

Brian Petter is vice president of rural services at Methodist Healthcare System in San Antonio, Texas. He joined NRHA in 2010 and is a 2011 Rural Health Fellow.
I look back on more than 20 years of rural health policy analysis and research and think, “Wow, what a special treat.” I have been blessed to help strengthen the hand of rural health advocates in national and state policy development and to have worked with dedicated colleagues on behalf of people who enjoy the rural lifestyle and opportunities it provides. What a dreamland for a political scientist whose aspiration is to help people reach their full potential, especially those who need a policy intervention to overcome disadvantages not of their own making.

Ironically, I started my academic career in urban politics, influenced by working for Henry Meier, the longest-serving big-city mayor of his generation, in Milwaukee, Wis. My interest was in helping the economically disadvantaged populations of the nation’s inner cities.

After moving to Nebraska and marrying into a ranching family, I gained a deep appreciation for the attraction of rural life and the challenges in providing health care services in remote locations. (An asthma attack on a ranch in the middle of winter influenced my thinking.)

I’ve participated in the policy process by providing the best research available to answer specific policy questions as a researcher, a research interpreter or a policy advocate. The “turf” of rural health is truly nonpartisan, an arena wherein analysis makes a difference. I’ve experienced the excitement of helping advance policy discussions during debates about the 1993 reform proposals, the 1997 and subsequent balanced budget bills, the Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 and the Accountable Care Act of 2010.

Creative solutions are required to address the constant challenge of sustaining high-quality local health care services despite the disadvantages of sparsely populated, often low-income rural places. We are entering an era of dramatic change in the way we organize, finance and deliver health care services.

What a time of opportunity for those of us who believe we can do better and secure a better future for people living, working and playing in rural places.

Keith Mueller, PhD, is professor and chair at the University of Nebraska Medical Center Department of Health Services Research and Administration. He has been a member of NRHA since 1996 and was NRHA’s 2010 Volunteer of the Year.
NRHA partners were chosen for their commitment to improving rural health care.

“Our Corporate Partners are a valuable source of knowledge that our members can use to add to our knowledge center.”
– Dennis Berens, 2010 NRHA president

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“Rural health care will improve through a strong partnership between our members and our Corporate Partners.”
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“Corporate Partners understand that one size does not fit all, and one product does not fit all sizes. Their products are designed and customized to meet the needs of NRHA members.”
– Beth Landon, 2009 NRHA president

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NRHA Corporate Partners

Our Corporate Partners are building relationships with National Rural Health Association members. They have a proven track record in quality and reliability of products and services meeting the needs of rural health care providers.

To ensure successful relationships, the NRHA Services Corporation Advisory Panel reviews and recommends candidates for the Corporate Partners program and ensures all of our Corporate Partners understand the unique challenges facing rural hospitals, clinics and health care providers.

GOLD PARTNERS

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SILVER PARTNERS
1. What inspired you to choose a rural career?
What really drew me into working professionally in rural areas was my service as a Peace Corps volunteer in Honduras from 1977 to ’79. I worked with landless hillside farmers promoting soil and water conservation strategies, tree planting and forest protection, and improved nutrition among the poorest segments of the Honduran population, with Honduras being the poorest of the Central American countries at the time.

2. What is one of the greatest challenges to providing health care to border populations?
In New Mexico, approximately 20 percent of the U.S. border region population is exclusively Spanish-speaking or has minimal proficiency in English. We still have not figured out the best way to transmit health literacy through mass media. Only a small percentage of health care professionals in New Mexico are bilingual, and a similarly low percentage of professionals have the cultural competence to communicate with clients of Mexican heritage.

3. Where have you made the greatest progress in expanding care to border populations?
In the last four years, the Office of Border Health has been able to establish a collegial working relationship with Chihuahua State Health Services in both the Juarez and Nuevo Casas Grandes health jurisdictions and have shared bi-national strategic plans to develop programming.
Beginning in 2007, the New Mexico Department of Health and Chihuahua State Health Services partnered with the Texas Department of State Health Services to develop the Border Influenza Surveillance Network, with 17 sentinel surveillance sites that report influenza-like illness on a weekly basis. This network was in place during the H1N1 outbreak and facilitated a timely and effective response in dealing with the emerging pandemic.

4. What’s your favorite dish to prepare when it’s cold outside?
Every December, just before the new year, I prepare about 20 liters of the seasonal Mexican dish posole, based on my recipe of browned pork loin, onions, garlic, green peppers, red chili puree, Mexican oregano and cumin, and three gallons of posole (giant white hominy). Then we invite about 20 people over to feast.

5. What should everyone know about border health?
The U.S.-Mexico border region is unique. While recent violence and the economic downturn have reversed trends in increasing migration and constant trans-border movement (800,000 to 1 million people each day), the border region has long been and still is the locus of the highest concentration of Hispanics in the States. As migration has swollen the numbers and distribution of immigrants nationwide, present and future lessons learned in the border region are now becoming applicable in immigrant enclave communities throughout the country.

Paul Dulin has been a member of NRHA since 2010. He serves on NRHA’s Border Health Initiative.
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Members on the move

Introducing NRHA’s new leadership

NRHA is a member-driven organization, so our volunteer leadership is critical to the success of the association. We are proud to announce the following individuals were elected by their peers to serve in leadership roles in 2011.

President-elect
Lance Keilers

Treasurer
Sandra Durick

Constituency group chairs

Clinical
Ray Christensen,
Minnesota Rural Health Association

Community-operated Practices
Scot Graff, Community Healthcare Association of the Dakotas

Diverse Underserved Populations
Alice Kirk,
Texas A&M University

Frontier
Charlie Alfero, Hidalgo Medical Services

Rural Health Clinics
Gail Nickerson,
Adventist Health

Congress constituency group representatives

Hospital and Community Health Systems
John Everett
Tom Henton
David Pearson
Tim Putnam
Ryan White
John Worden

Rural Health Clinics
Richard Garza
Deborah Holzmark

Research and Education
Kevin Bennett
Kathleen Spencer

Statewide Health Resources
Jerry Coopey
Brad Gibbens
Janice Wilkins

Student
Michael Small

NRHA announces new class of Rural Health Fellows

After the completion of a competitive review process, 12 fellows were selected to participate in NRHA’s year-long, intensive program aimed at developing leaders who can articulate a clear and compelling vision for rural America.

“With the successes achieved by the previous classes, we look forward to continuing the tradition of building rural health care leaders through this valuable program,” NRHA CEO Alan Morgan says.

The 2011 Rural Health Fellows are:

Sally Buck, associate director, National Rural Health Resource Center, Duluth, Minn.

Elizabeth Burrows, CEO, Vermillion-Parke Community Health Center, Clinton, Ind.

Danielle Hamann, public policy associate, Avera Health, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Deborah Herzberg, CEO, Davis County Hospital, Bloomfield, Iowa

Bren Lowe, CEO, Pioneer Medical Center, Big Timber, Mont.

Brian Petter, vice president for rural services, Methodist Healthcare System, San Antonio, Texas

Mary Ellen Pratt, CEO, St. James Parish Hospital, Lutcher, La.

Tim Putnam, CEO, Margaret Mary Community Hospital, Batesville, Ind.

Michelle Reisinger, nurse practitioner, Community Healthcare Systems, Onaga, Kan.

Nicole Rouhana, clinical assistant professor, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, N.Y.

David Schmitz, associate director, Family Medicine Residency of Idaho Inc., Boise, Idaho

Ryung Suh, president and CEO, Atlas Research, Washington, D.C.
News briefs

ONC listens to NRHA member concerns

Key members of the Department of Health and Human Services Office of the National Coordinator (ONC) for Health Information Technology (HIT) joined NRHA's Rural HIT Task Force's second annual meeting in the fall in Arlington, Va.

“They were specifically interested in hearing from our members serving on the frontlines of rural health,” says NRHA CEO Alan Morgan. “It was a wonderful opportunity for rural HIT stakeholders to speak with ONC senior leadership about what they need to be successful.”

NRHA also presented the results of its nationwide critical access hospital survey on meaningful use readiness, which demonstrated to ONC staff that only about 30 percent of rural hospitals would presently qualify for meaningful use incentives.

ONC is the principal federal entity charged with coordination of nationwide efforts to implement and use advanced HIT and the electronic exchange of health information.

“It was important for them to hear innovative rural telemedicine success stories as well as our concerns and the daily challenges rural health providers face,” Morgan says. “They spent quite awhile discussing the issues and really valued our members’ perspectives. We’re grateful for ONC’s time and efforts and look forward to continuing this partnership.”

Other highlights of the meeting included the participation of Office of Rural Health Policy-sponsored telehealth resource centers. Representatives from resource centers located in Georgia, California, Idaho and Arkansas provided updates about their achievements and obstacles.

NRHA's Rural HIT Task Force meets once a year and participates in quarterly conference calls. The task force is supported by a grant from the Helmsley Charitable Trust.

Policy meeting focuses on HIT for rural hospitals

NRHA hosted a two-day emerging health policy issue meeting in October with the support of the Helmsley Charitable Trust. Attendees focused on the integration of health information technology (HIT) as a means of support for America's rural critical access hospitals (CAH).

Representatives hailed from the Office of Rural Health Policy, the Office of the National Coordinator for HIT, Avera Health Systems and other telehealth resource centers and stakeholders.

“The infusion of HIT innovations is of critical importance as hospital administrators and practitioners strive to further improve the quality and availability of services in rural health care facilities,” NRHA CEO Alan Morgan says.

Given the integral role CAHs play in rural communities, the meeting’s discussion centered upon ways to ensure the highest level of patient safety and quality care are available in these facilities through the utilization of HIT.

Throughout the Arlington, Va., meeting, participants provided NRHA with direction as the association continues to advocate on the behalf of CAH sustainability.

accelerating advocacy

Contact Congress to save rural health programs

In what amounted to the largest political shift in the U.S. House of Representatives since 1948, Republicans gained 63 seats and control of the House agenda. Democrats maintained control of the Senate but did lose their 60-vote, filibuster-breaking super majority. So with Congress no longer under a single party's control, both sides will have to play nice.

In their new role, House Republicans will focus heavily on reducing the federal deficit, an overall noble cause, but this means certain programs receiving federal funding could be fighting to survive. Fortunately, a number of current federally funded rural health programs enjoy bipartisan support, but without hearing from people in their home states, your congressional representatives will not know how truly important these programs are.

It is important that you contact your members of Congress often and urge them to support rural health programs. Visit the appropriations section of the NRHA web site, RuralHealthweb.org, for more information on current federally funded programs that may be at risk.

To find contact information for your members of Congress, go to house.gov/ and enter your zip code.
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Welcome to the National Rural Health Association’s 2011 Buyers’ Guide.

We hope you’ll keep this listing of trusted suppliers and vendors handy throughout the year, as the organizations included are dedicated to making the noble work of rural health professionals like you easier and better.

Corporate Partners, who support NRHA throughout the year, are indicated with the partner seal depicting their level of support. Some offer NRHA member discounts, so please consider their products and services as you make purchasing decisions throughout 2011.

For more information on NRHA’s Corporate Partner program, visit NRHAsc.com or contact Larry Bedell at bedell@NRHAsc.com or 913-269-1199.
Because we care
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Diagnostic testing solutions
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alere.com

The American Board of Physician Specialties (ABPS) is a multi-specialty physician board certification organization. Our physicians place patients first, focusing on the needs of local communities.
abpsus.org

Health care group purchasing
Strategically partnering with health care providers to reduce costs and improve quality. Amerinet offers a comprehensive and competitive portfolio of product and service contracts.
amerinets-gpo.net

Aris Teleradiology delivers high quality radiology services to underserved communities, while creating an environment for radiologists to experience professional excellence.
aristeleradiology.com

Health information technology
Cerner is a global leader in health information technology. Our industry-leading technology allows rural health organizations to improve quality of care while increasing revenue capture.
cerner.com

Employee benefit programs
Colonial Life and Accident is a highly rated national company that specializes in voluntary employee benefit programs designed to enhance every company’s employee benefit portfolio.
coloniallife.com

Accreditation simplified
Exemplary provider accreditation simplified for critical access hospitals and rural health clinics modeled after the Compliance Team’s industry-leading, CMS-approved DMEPOS accreditation program.
exemplaryprovider.com

Information system/EMR
CPSI provides a complete and fully integrated health care information system/EMR that includes software, hardware, conversion/implementation services and continuing support.
cpsinet.com
Audit, tax, reimbursement  
Eide Bailly is proud to be a Gold Level Corporate Partner with NRHA. We provide audit, tax, reimbursement and consulting to more than 200 CAHs. eidebailly.com

Software and services from  
Healthland, including our fully integrated electronic medical record solution, empower small community hospitals to deliver the best possible health care. healthland.com

Hospital information systems  
Founded in 1984, Healthcare Management Systems is a Nashville-based company that develops, sells and supports integrated clinical and financial hospital information systems and complementary services. hmstn.com

Optimize hospital revenue  
HealthTech Solutions Group is a revenue cycle and health care technology company which provides innovative tools and services focused on improving hospital revenue cycle operations. healthtechsolgroup.com

Capital equipment financing  
Providing capital equipment financing to providers nationwide with knowledgeable, responsive and flexible solutions. Please contact us regarding your next equipment acquisition. kingsbridgeholdings.com

Increase efficiencies.  
NextGen is a leading provider of integrated EHR and PM systems, connectivity solutions and billing services. Our solutions help improve care quality and increase operational efficiencies. nextgen.com

Health care marketing with a pulse.  
Prairie Dog-TCG is a full-service advertising and marketing agency offering a full range of strategic and creative services for hospitals and markets of any size. pdog.com

Quality care for every community.  
Quick Study Radiology meets the radiological needs of community hospitals, radiology and oncology practices and independent imaging centers across the United States. Our goal is to help these health care facilities improve the quality of their patient care. qs-r.com

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Siemens Healthcare, bringing innovative medical technologies, health care information systems, management consulting and support services to help customers achieve tangible, sustainable clinical and financial outcomes.
usa.siemens.com

As the leading mobile ophthalmic services provider, Sightpath Medical provides facilities with state-of-the-art technology for cataract and refractive surgery and YAG and SLT procedures.
sightpathmedical.com

Physician recruiting TimeLine specializes in physician recruiting. As a member of NRHA your facility receives significant savings, extensive recruitment services and an unprecedented guarantee on your investment.
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Swank HealthCare is a leading distributor of online health care education for hospitals, clinics and medical treatment facilities worldwide. swankhealth.com

vRad is a national radiology practice working in partnership to optimize radiology's pivotal role in the delivery of patient care, enabled by vRad’s next-generation technology. virtualrad.com

Professional services firm McGladrey is a professional services firm that provides accounting, tax and business consulting services to nearly 3,000 health care organizations throughout the country. mcgladrey.com
Managed surgical solutions
AmCare Group designs and delivers managed surgical solutions for rural hospitals specializing in orthopedic surgery, general surgery and anesthesia. amcaregroup.com

Diamond is a national leader in the development and management of high quality behavioral health services, offering a range of contract management, facilities development and consulting services. diamondhealth.com

Telehealth solutions offering a complete spectrum of telehealth solutions including teleradiology, electronic medical records, data storage, PACS, video conferencing and associated infrastructure needs. excaliburmed.com

Group purchasing service for the acute care market with discounted pricing on supplies, equipment and services. fccoop.org

Working together for the survival of Georgia’s rural hospitals. HomeTown Health is working to help its member hospitals find ways to address the challenges of today’s complex health care environment. hometownhealthonline.com

We take care of what keeps you awake at night. Professionals in health care facilities, interior design and architecture, Health Facility Partners provide you a cohesive approach to an efficient and profitable medical facility. HealthFP.net

Do it with Impact, a strategic communications firm with nearly two decades of proven strategic planning, business development, communications, marketing, advertising, media, public and community relations experience specific to health care. doitwithimpact.com

Net.Orange simplifies health care. Our clinical operating system provides an integrated EHR/PM solution, helping meet meaningful use. Our integrated solutions help improve patient outcomes and enhance operational efficiencies. ndorange.com

Invested in your vision. Over two decades of experience providing an integrated set of consulting and IT services to hospitals of all sizes, with demonstrated proof of our ability to help health care organizations meet their objectives. phoenixhealth.com
Solveras payment solutions is a sales and marketing organization providing complete electronic payment solutions to over 15,000 small businesses, medical practices, wholesalers, distributors and software providers throughout the country. solveras.com

Refurbished medical equipment Soma Technology is a leader in the refurbished medical equipment industry capable of outfitting entire health care facilities with quality products at the most affordable prices. somatechnology.com

Wellness Environments builds new and renovated clinical spaces for rural health care facilities. wellnessenvironments.net

Avreo complete radiology workflow solutions Avreo’s web-based solutions encompass robust RIS, PACS, and report production features within a single application/database system. Our innovative approach provides true remote diagnostic reading and transcription so health care professionals can work from any location.

800.844.9926 avreo.com

BKD National Health Care Group BKD National Health Care Group provides audit, tax, Medicare, operations and other consulting services to thousands of rural health care providers, including hospitals, long-term care and senior living facilities, FQHCs, RHCs, HHAs, physicians and more.

800.581.4290 bkd.com

Enabling meaningful use at CAHS Only PatientKeeper offers critical access hospitals clinical and financial applications to streamline physicians' workflow, built with the physician user in mind. And PatientKeeper integrates seamlessly with existing HIS’s - no “rip and replace” required.

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Tri-Tec Monitors Catering to the needs of critical access and rural hospitals for over 30 years. We offer reasonable rental and service plans on a complete line of cardiac monitors. Special financing for critical access hospitals.

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Lights, camera, Austin

Check out this list of some of the hits filmed in star-studded Austin, Texas:

- Courage Under Fire
- Dazed and Confused
- Fast Food Nation
- Hope Floats
- Lonesome Dove
- Miss Congeniality
- Office Space
- The Rookie
- Spy Kids
- Varsity Blues
- What’s Eating Gilbert Grape

And plan now to join rural health in the spotlight during the Rural Medical Educators Conference May 3 and the 34th Annual Rural Health Conference May 3-6. Visit RuralHealthWeb.org/annual.

Off the beaten path

Headless chicken’s legacy

In 1945, a rooster from Fruita, Colo., population 12,274, became legend after a botched beheading.

The axe missed his brainstem, leaving the bird very much alive - albeit headless. Christened Mike the Headless Chicken, the tenacious bird survived for 18 months, traveling the country gathering fame with his manager, who fed him with an eyedropper.

Today a statue of Mike can be found in downtown Fruita, and each year during the third weekend of May residents and visitors are invited to a festival in Mike’s honor. Get ready to party your head off May 20-21.

Visit miketheheadlesschicken.org.

shifting gears

Don’t wait ’til spring for green

- Avoid de-icers made from sodium chloride, which contains cyanide. Instead opt for sand or calcium chloride, which do less damage to concrete, cars and plants.
- Save wood-burning fireplace ashes. They can be mixed in a compost heap to provide nutrients to your garden.
- Set the thermostat at 68 degrees, and turn it down even lower while you’re gone for the day. Lowering the heat by 10 degrees for eight hours a day can reduce your heating bill up to 15 percent.

Tell us what puts your town on the map.
E-mail editor@NRHArural.org.
National Rural Health Association

34TH ANNUAL RURAL HEALTH AND RURAL MEDICAL EDUCATORS CONFERENCES
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