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## NRHA announces 2016 Rural Health Award recipients

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is proud to announce its 2016 Rural Health Award recipients.

“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 following organizations and individuals will be honored May 13 during NRHA’s 39th Annual Rural Health Conference, which will bring 800 rural health professionals and students to Minneapolis.

**Disparities Elimination Summer Research Experience (DESRE)**, a program of the Georgia Southern University Rural Health Research Institute and the Mercer University Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities, is this year’s Outstanding Rural Health Program. DESRE brings together undergraduate and graduate students from across the country to participate in an intensive, six-week residential research training experience to learn how to engage in impactful rural health disparities research. Students learn about and work with community-based groups including rural federally qualified health centers, migrant education programs, area health education centers, public health, Head Start, and others to help conduct and analyze rural-specific research. DESRE is funded by the National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities.

**The Richard G. Lugar Center for Rural Health** has been named NRHA’s Outstanding Rural Health Organization for advancing rural health through the recruitment and training of rural providers. Established in 1992, the center has facilitated the training of 84 family physicians who currently care for rural Americans throughout the country. This focus extends beyond graduate medical education, as illustrated by the exponential growth in rural-focused health professions students who train on the Union Hospital campus: from 60 to more than 600 in the past decade. The center has designed and implemented numerous outcome-based projects aimed at advancing access to, and quality of, health care in rural areas, including the Wabash Valley Rural Telehealth Network, which brings together independent rural providers and facilitates 6,000 live consults annually.

Physician assistant **Dustin Hager** is NRHA’s 2016 Rural Health Practitioner of the Year. Nominated by a past winner of the award, Hager has been a member of his community health care team for many years, originally as an EMT and paramedic. Hager provides compassionate and competent care along with technological guidance and EHR support at Heart of America Medical Center in Rugby, N.D. He also cares for inmates at a nearby correctional facility and will soon be mentoring a PA student.

**Lynn Barr** will receive the Louis Gorin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Health Care for her continued efforts on behalf of rural health systems. The first to propose a rural accountable care organization (ACO) model to CMS, Barr successfully piloted this model in 2014 and helped to establish six more the next year. Barr went on to expand the opportunity to other rural health systems and now supports more than 170 systems in 22 ACOs. With CMS’ Transforming Clinical Practices Initiative funding, Barr has provided assistance to help prepare 525 other rural

health systems for health reform. The programs she has developed could reach nearly a quarter of all rural health systems in the country.

**Jacob Warren**, PhD, will receive NRHA's 2016 Outstanding Researcher Award for dedicating his career to improving health in rural areas through rigorous and high quality research. As director and endowed chair of the Center for Rural Health and Health Disparities at Mercer University School of Medicine, Warren has received more than \$6 million in federal funding for research projects spanning the rural health spectrum. Warren has published two books on rural public and mental health. His research spans communities, geographies, universities and health conditions to directly advance the field of rural health disparities research and develop the next generation of rural health researchers.

**Hallie Foster** will receive this year's Student Leadership Award. She is a third-year medical student at the University of Toledo College of Medicine and Life Sciences, who has served as the rural medical education liaison for NRHA's Student Constituency Group board since 2015. Foster completed a clinical preceptorship at East Tennessee State University working with underserved Appalachian populations. In her volunteer role with NRHA, she led the way in developing a student-alumni network where she reached out to graduates to expand mentorship.

**Matt Workman** will receive the 2016 Student Achievement Award for promoting student involvement in rural clinical and educational experiences as student outreach coordinator for NRHA's Student Constituency Group. Workman is an exemplar in the Rural Primary Care Track program at East Tennessee State University's Quillen College of Medicine and has elected to complete his medical school experiences with rural faculty and in rural communities whenever possible.

**Alana Knudson**, PhD, was chosen to receive NRHA's President's Award by 2016 NRHA president Lisa Kilawee for her immense research and project findings that have informed state, tribal and federal health policy. Knudson has continually served as a resource for NRHA and other initiatives in rural health policy work that helps improve access to health services for rural Americans. Knudson has served on numerous NRHA committees and is a current member of the association's Rural Health Congress. She is a program area director at NORC at the University of Chicago and co-director of the Walsh Center for Rural Health Analysis.

**Janice Probst**, PhD, was named NRHA's Volunteer of the Year by NRHA staff for going above and beyond to help NRHA meet its mission. A longstanding member, Probst has served on NRHA's *Journal of Rural Health* board for more than six years. She has also been an integral part of the NRHA's Rural Community Health Worker Training Program as she leads the evaluation efforts to help NRHA develop and implement a sound model for improving health outcomes. Probst is director of the South Carolina Rural Health Research Center and professor at the University of South Carolina.

NRHA's Annual Rural Health Conference is the largest gathering of rural health professionals in the nation.

"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.

John Snow Inc. provides scholarships to the student awardees to participate in the NRHA conference or other educational pursuits. The highest ranked critical access hospitals in the country, as determined by iVantage Health Analytics, will also be recognized during the conference.

NRHA is a nonprofit organization working to improve the health and wellbeing 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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