



Welcome from the ORHA Co-Presidents

We have come to another exciting milestone in the development of the Ohio Rural Health Association. This year we will be holding elections for positions on the ORHA Board of Directors. For the past several years, our board has been busily preparing and growing the association, and we are eager to bring in new leadership. If you are passionate about rural health in Ohio, we hope you will consider this opportunity to serve alongside us.

[Click here for the ORHA bylaws](#)

The duties and responsibilities of an ORHA Board member include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Maintaining regular attendance at board and committee meetings [Meetings may be in person or via Zoom / telephone]
- Serving as a member of at least one committee of the board or corporation
- Assisting with and participating in the Annual Ohio Rural Health Conference
- Participating in the approval of the annual budget and the allocation of any available grant funding
- Maintaining general support of the Association and its purposes
- Participating in policy, management and election discussion and decisions
- Exercising voting rights
- Assisting in the creation of standing, special and/or ad-hoc committees as needed
- Demonstrating board member responsibilities of care, loyalty, and obedience

[Click here for information and Board Member application materials](#)

The only way we can keep this great momentum going is with your involvement!

Please consider submitting an application and sharing with your colleagues who are also passionate about rural health.

Sincerely,

Member Profiles

Megan Gordin, BS, ORHA Student Board Member

Megan grew up in Madison County, which is considered semi-rural. Living just 30 minutes away from Columbus and having the resources needed to travel there whenever necessary, she never considered the many people who experience physician shortages or limited access to health care across Ohio's rural populations.

After attending Ohio University and getting involved with both the Ohio Rural Health Association and the Heritage College of Osteopathic Medicine's Office of Rural and Underserved Programs, Megan has experienced firsthand the powerful role that organizations like these have in influencing rural health policy and preparing future physicians and leaders to practice in rural underserved areas. Rural health has become important to her throughout her involvement and through taking public health courses at Ohio University.

On May 1, Megan graduated Summa Cum Laude with a Bachelor of Science in Journalism and a Minor in Community & Public Health from Ohio University! She can't wait to continue serving on the ORHA board and sharing the important work that our organization does.

Allen Hocker, MHA, BSN, RN, CNOR, the new Senior Advisor of Operations at OhioHealth Shelby Hospital, has returned to his roots.

Living less than 10 miles from the hospital, Hocker identifies with the rural community and hospital, which marked its centennial on April 20, 2021.

"There are great families and citizens in these communities that have vulnerabilities and disparities when it comes to prevention of disease and accessibility to health care," says Hocker. "I am fortunate to work for OhioHealth, an organization that understands the needs of rural populations and commits to improving health by bringing access points and high-quality care through traditional and telehealth models."

Hocker previously spent 12 of his previous 24 years in healthcare at Shelby Hospital and he will work closely with other hospital leaders to grow the hospital and serve the community.

Prior to returning to Shelby Hospital, Hocker was the Director of Surgical Services, Supply Chain, Wound Care, and Biomedical Engineering for Mount Carmel West and Grove City Hospitals in Columbus. After gaining operational and administrative experience in an urban setting, he sees Shelby Hospital with a fresh set of eyes and is excited to return. "After more than 4 years serving in a metropolitan area, it was an easy decision to return to healthcare in a rural, north central Ohio community," he adds.



Committee Updates

Communications and Education Committee

The Communications and Education committee meets monthly to review ORHA social media outreach efforts, upcoming events to share with ORHA members, create newsletter content, and update the ORHA website. After the Rural Health Conference, the committee will survey members to determine what type of educational and professional development opportunities members want.

The committee was pleased to welcome a new committee member, Allen Hocker (see Member Profile) above. Allen's insights and expertise are a welcome addition to the committee.

If you would like to join the Communications and Education committee, or be featured in an upcoming Member Profile, [click here to e-mail Laura Akgerman](#).

Professional Development Funds available

The ORHA Board is pleased to announce the Ohio Rural Health Association Scholarship Program. The scholarship funds are intended to promote professional development and training of individuals who contribute to the mission and vision of ORHA. ORHA members may apply for up to \$500. Members may apply to funds every two years; preference is given to members who have not previously received funds. These funds are provided in partnership with the State Office of Rural Health at the Ohio Department of Health.

[Click here for the scholarship application.](#)

Must be a current member of ORHA to be considered for the scholarship.

⁴ Not a member? [Click here to join ORHA.](#)

Scholarship application must be submitted prior to June 1 by 5 pm. Approved applicants will be notified by June 8.

One training idea to use these scholarship funds:

Discount Available for Rural Health Coding & Billing Specialist Online Course, [click here for more information](#)

Legislative Committee

The legislative committee continues to meet monthly. Members of the committee continue to engage external stakeholders to ensure that we are aware of upcoming and current issues, as well as to identify opportunities for ORHA to lend our voice to issues pertinent to rural health in Ohio.

If you would like to join the Legislative committee, [click here to e-mail Beth Kluding, Legislative Committee Co-Chair](#)

The ORHA Legislative Committee is tracking a grant opportunity announced May 4, 2021 from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) which announced an increase in the number of vaccines sent to rural communities as well as other initiatives related to underserved communities.

The announcement went on to describe that HRSA will support RHCs to increase the availability of COVID-19 vaccines in rural communities and expand outreach to build vaccine confidence. Working in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), HRSA is inviting Medicare-certified RHCs to join the new Rural Health Clinic COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution (RHCVD) Program to directly receive vaccines from the Biden Administration. HRSA and CDC will continue to enroll interested RHCs to receive COVID-19 vaccines, the allocation for which is separate from jurisdictions' weekly allocations.

In addition, through the Rural Health Clinic Vaccine Confidence (RHCVC) Program, HRSA will make nearly \$100 million available in grants to eligible RHCs nationwide to address health equity gaps by offering support and resources to medically underserved rural communities where COVID-19 vaccine uptake lags in comparison to more populated areas. HRSA will fund all eligible RHCs that apply. The RHCVC Program is the first targeted RHC grant since the passage of the Rural Health Clinic Service Act in 1977.

For more information about HRSA's rural programs, visit the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy website: <https://www.hrsa.gov/rural-health/index.html>

[Click here to learn more about HRSA's allocation to Rural Health Clinics for COVID-19 testing](#)

[Click here to learn more about the Small Rural Hospital Improvement Program \(SHIP\)](#)

[Click here to see the reference source for this update](#)

ORHA supports the reintroduction of the Healthcare Workforce Resilience Act and has May 2021

⁵ sent a letter of support of S.1024 - A bill to enhance our Nation's nurse and physician workforce during the COVID-19 crisis by recapturing unused immigrant visas. [Click here to view this bill](#)

The House companion bill is H.R.2255 - To enhance our Nation's nurse and physician workforce during the COVID-19 crisis by recapturing unused immigrant visas. [Click here to review this bill.](#)

Health care workforce shortages that have plagued rural communities for decades have become exacerbated by the COVID-19 virus pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, 77% of rural counties were designated Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), and while approximately 20% of the nation's population live in rural areas, only 9% of US physicians practice in rural America.

This important bipartisan legislation would allow tens of thousands of nurses and physicians to join the fight against COVID-19 and address the significant health care workforce shortages in rural America by recapturing unused immigrant visas that congress has previously authorized and allocating those visas to international doctors and nurses who have trained in the United States. This could improve access to high quality health care services in rural communities and allow them to combat the COVID-19 pandemic and ultimately save lives.

Membership committee

This committee will be forming this spring. [Click here to e-mail Sharon Casapulla](#) if you would like to help ORHA grow membership, and develop resources for our members.

Ohio Rural Health Conference 2021

August 11-13, 2021

Virtual Conference - Attend from Anywhere!

Daily from 9 AM-1 PM

Registration opens June 1

[Click here for information about the conference, and the registration page](#)

Submit a Proposal

The conference welcomes proposals to present virtually on topics relevant to the subject of rural health in Ohio. Proposal submissions are due by May 31, 2021. [Click here to submit a proposal](#)

Submit a Poster

Share your research about rural health in Ohio! Participate in our conference's peer-reviewed poster session. Poster submissions are due July 1. [Click here for guidelines, and to submit a poster.](#)

Upcoming Events and Trainings

HPERC: Engaging the Community in Rural Education

Thursday May 20, 1 - 2 pm EST

[Click here for the registration page](#)

This presentation will seek to engage our colleagues from the perspectives of a rural medical educator, an AHEC leader, and a rural workforce specialist. Each presenter works with rural communities to develop and sustain quality educational experiences in rural communities. This team has also contributed to the development of a new research tool aimed at better understanding best practices and overcoming barriers to rural health professions education. A description of this project will provide early learning points from which we hope further discussion will ensue.

The Health Professions Education for Rural Communities (HPERC) Community Apgar Project allows communities to identify and weigh factors important in health professions education. Whether a rural community is new to having students or has had long standing success working with health professions schools, the new HPERC questionnaire and process is designed to provide a community with a differential diagnosis of modifiable factors for improving success. It is hoped that the research outcomes of this project will advance rural health professions education more broadly. The HPERC tool is based on a series of Community Apgar research projects intended to provide research outcomes while empowering rural communities to achieve rural workforce goals.

The Basics of Virtual Care - Free Telehealth Workshop

Friday May 21, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

The Ohio State Office of Rural Health is sponsoring a free Telehealth workshop on May 21. The workshop will cover several basic topics on the evolution of virtual care including broadband, telehealth/virtual care, reimbursement, and financial sustainability. Additional information and registration for the event can be found at the [Upper Midwest Telehealth Resource Center website](#). [Click here for the UMTRC website and workshop registration.](#)

Everyone Can Garden! - A 5-part vegetable gardening webinar series for people with physical and other limitations

Garden Maintenance - Tuesday, June 1st, 6:00-7:30PM

Learn how to manage various garden pests using Integrated Pest Management. This approach utilizes cultural control, biological control, as well as chemical control to minimize pest pressure in the garden. We will also go over a variety of garden tools that have been/can be adapted to be easier and more comfortable to use by people with physical limitations.

[Click here to register.](#)

[Click here for resources and videos of past webinars](#)

Presented by Laura Akgerman (ORHA Secretary), and Jenny Andon, Program Manager, OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteers

Join the Caregiver Support Network for a free webinar on Safe Medication Practices for Better Health

Wednesday June 9 at 2 pm EST - online via Zoom

[Click here to register](#)

- Be your own health advocate – you are the most important part of your healthcare team. Take the time to become an expert!
- Learn safe medication practices – only take medicines as directed by your healthcare professionals, store them securely, and safely dispose of them when no longer needed.
- Know the risks of medication misuse – drug misuse affects us all – find out how you can help

Presented by Ruth E. Emptage, Pharm.D, BCGP

Facilitated by Laura Akgerman, (ORHA Secretary)

Ohio Rural Health Association is not sponsoring these workshops; these events are being shared because they may be of interest to ORHA members.

Rural Health News

The 2020 County Health Rankings are available now

The University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute has been releasing annual county health assessment rankings since 2003. The assessments include more than 30 indicators that impact health. The program has grown from a few counties to a majority of the counties across the country. Since 2010, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Institute have been collaborating on this project.

The project assessments of population health are done with the intent of providing the framework for critical review of policies, systems, and environmental factors that can impact health. There is
May 2021

⁸ also interest in using the assessments to help efforts that address health equity and health disparities, two central themes in this year's report. The report highlights strategies that work, provides step-by-step guidance on how to conduct community assessments, and shares stories based on real-life experiences.

[Click here to link to the County Health Rankings](#)

[Click here to link to the Executive Summary Report on health equity](#)

USDA Invites Partners to Join the Rural Workforce Innovation Network (RWIN)

USDA established the Rural Workforce Innovation Network (RWIN) to create a forum for public and private partners to help increase access to workforce opportunities across rural America. This network represents governmental entities, colleges and universities, nonprofit organizations, and private businesses that are actively working to improve workforce development in their local communities. The kick-off meeting for this effort has already taken place, but more meetings are planned. [Click here to learn more and join the network.](#)

Covid-19 information for rural Ohio

Vaccines distribution in rural Ohio - Spectrum News 1 TV interview

ORHA Treasurer Jaime Parsons, CEO of the Violet Startzman Clinic, Wooster, Ohio was interviewed on Spectrum News1 about Covid-19 vaccines in rural community. [Watch the interview here](#)

Financial resources for businesses and families that have been impacted by Covid-19

The Small Business Relief Grant is designed to assist Ohio businesses that have been harmed by the effects of COVID-19. The \$125 million grant fund will provide relief to Ohio businesses that have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. Funding for the program is from the CARES Act. The business must be a for-profit entity with no more than 25 total or full-time equivalent Ohio employees as of Jan. 1, 2020. The applicant business has a physical location in Ohio and earns at least 90% of annual revenue from activities based in Ohio.

[Click here for information on business relief](#)

[Click here for information on how families can access resources](#)

Join the ORHA Effort

As a member of an essential and growing organization, you have an opportunity to contribute to the vitality of rural health across Ohio!

Now recruiting members for:

- Communication and Education
- Legislative
- Membership

The ORHA Board is excited to start working with you!



[Click here to request information on joining one of our committees](#)

Sponsor the ORHA Newsletter



Align your brand with the Ohio Rural Health Association and communicate your message to healthcare professionals across the State.

\$100/month sponsorship includes placement of logo or flyer in the newsletter and on the website.

For more information, or to sponsor an upcoming newsletter, please contact

Laura Akgerman

at secretary@ohioruralhealth.org.

Share the Good Word Across Ohio!

Got a story to share or an upcoming event? Perhaps an upcoming training, workshop, or educational opportunity? Let us know! We'd love to share your information with the rest of our community. Connect by emailing us at secretary@ohioruralhealth.org

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