



# SHORT ROWS



**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

**January 1, 2021**

***The SORH Short Rows*** is the quarterly newsletter from the Georgia State Office of Rural Health for all matters rural. It provides an update on the progress made to improve rural health in Georgia to hospitals, primary care practices, FQHCs, stakeholders, vendors, health care advocates, and legislators.

***Leading the Fight Against Rural Health Disparities***

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I'm sure we can all agree that 2020 was a year unlike any other we've experienced. The SORH team has had to adapt to teleworking and communicating virtually since March. We certainly miss the day-to-day comraderie, the in-person meetings with our stakeholders and partners, and the on-site visits at our rural hospitals.



Stephen Register  
SORH Executive Director



**DCH Mission Statement**

The Department of Community Health will provide Georgians with access to affordable, quality health care through effective planning, purchasing and oversight.

We are dedicated to ***A Healthy Georgia.***

**DCH Vision Statement**

The Department of Community Health is committed to a lean and responsive state government that promotes the health and prosperity of its citizens through the innovative and effective delivery of quality health care programs.

Of course, this pales in comparison to the challenges our healthcare workers have had to endure. While we were teleworking from our homes, somewhat safe from the Coronavirus, healthcare workers were fighting on the front lines caring for the victims of COVID-19, having to update family members daily of their loved one's progress or in many cases, informing them they had passed away, alone, from the dreaded disease. They have exhibited an incredible resilience and for this we offer our utmost gratitude, respect and admiration. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

The pandemic has caused many to lose their livelihood, their business, or worse - a loved one. These trying times weigh heavily on our hearts and we mourn these losses with you. I would be remiss if I didn't mention the detrimental effect politics has had on our country this year. The political issues have added undue stress, anger and division in our country from both sides of the political fence. Hopefully, the unrest will subside soon.

With all the negativity and sickness we experienced in 2020, my hope and vision for 2021 is positivity and healing. Like opening a fresh new calendar with crisp, clean white pages free of the scribbles and coffee stains of the past 12 months, I am claiming a fresh, new start with no stains or scribbles from 2020 - a fresh, new day with a positive outlook, fresh perspective, and hopes for a healthy, peaceful, prosperous year to come. On behalf of the SORH team, I wish you a positive and prosperous Happy New Year!

All the best,  
**Stephen**



**New Video Series Will Spotlight SORH's Impact on Rural Healthcare**

The Georgia State Office of Rural Health (SORH) has recently implemented a plan to expand its communication vision for the office that will shine a spotlight on the diverse work of the Georgia SORH

### **DCH Purpose Statement**

Shaping the future of A Healthy Georgia by improving access and ensuring quality to strengthen the communities we serve.



### **Quick Links**

[State Office of Rural Health](#)

[Georgia Department of Community Health](#) (DCH)

[DCH Grant Opportunities](#)

[HRSA Funding Opportunities](#)

[Rural Health Information Hub](#) (RHI Hub)

[Rural Health Research Gateway](#)

[Health Professional Shortage Area \(HPSA\) Find](#)



through the creation of short, informative videos that will enlighten both the general public as well as the many partners on the SORH's impact on rural healthcare.

To help tell the story of the four program sections that comprise the Georgia SORH office, quarterly videos spotlighting one of the sections will be posted on SORH's website and social media platforms that can be viewed and shared. To complete this mission, directors and program associates within each section of the office will be working alongside Cole Edwards, Program Operations Specialist of SORH Programs, to help in the information dissemination within these videos.



Located in the rural town of Cordele, the Georgia SORH office may, at first glance, seem small, but it is most definitely not insignificant, providing millions of dollars in grants to hospitals and healthcare facilities across the state annually. There has, however, been a longstanding desire that the message of SORH's impact needs to be projected more visibly. Thus, the idea of these informative videos was borne, a vehicle to draw attention to the vast amount of work and activity that comes out of an office with a small but extremely dedicated staff.

The videos will be enlightening, informative and fun! We are excited to see where this next chapter in the legacy of the Georgia SORH office takes us, and we invite you to please check out our first video highlighting the recent National Rural Health Day at <https://youtu.be/wzrmYLEKlvQ>.



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# A Sight for "SORH"

## **Ceremonial Orange Ribbon Was Cut - Mercer Opens Rural Healthcare Clinic in Fort Gaines**



*Mercer Medicine-Clay County officially opened November 12th*

*Several state and local officials participate in ribbon cutting ceremony*

Over one hundred local residents, partners, stakeholders, and leaders gathered to celebrate the opening of the new Mercer-Medicine Clay County Clinic, located in the rural community of Fort Gaines, Georgia. The ribbon cutting ceremony, held on November 12, 2020, was the final step of a long journey that began

with a citizen led initiative in 2016 to find funding and space to for a much-needed clinic.

The Clay County community secured grant funding from One Georgia and the Georgia Department of Community Health to renovate an unused portion of the local hospital, which had closed in the 1980s. Since its closure, half the facility continued to operate as an assisted living facility and the other half was vacant.

Elected officials in Georgia reached out to Mercer School of Medicine to determine if the school would be interested in establishing a clinic in Clay County. The Clay County Board of Commissioners and Development Authority, using Mercer in an advisory role for the clinic layout, began the renovations in February and completed the project in October 2020. The newly renovated wing of the hospital will provide space for the new clinic as well as office space for the Georgia Department of Public Health.

[Read the full article, here.](#)

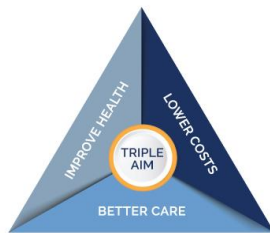


**Window of Opportunity Closes Soon for New  
Rural Healthcare Provider Transition  
Project**

Small Rural Hospitals and Rural Health Clinics (RHCs) interested in preparing for and positioning their organizations toward value-based care, have until January 16th to submit applications for technical assistance within the new Rural Healthcare Provider Transition Project (RHPTP).

With the support of the Health Resources Services Administration's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), the National Rural Health Resource Center manages the RHPTP that provides successful applicants

technical assistance designed to help strengthen their foundation in key elements of value-based care (VBC) including but not limited to efficiency, quality, patient experience, and safety of care. This program targets hospitals and RHCs that are interested in participating in value-based programs and require support in preparing to make the transition.



Value-based programs reward health care providers with incentive payments for the quality of care they provide to people with Medicare. These programs are part of the larger quality strategy to reform how health

care is delivered and paid for.

Value-based programs support the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' (CMS) three-part aim to provide better care for individuals, better health for populations, all at a lower cost.

[Read the full article, here.](#)



**NHSC-Approved Clinics Improve  
Access to  
Primary Care for Underserved  
Communities**

The loan repayment programs offered through NHSC help practices in primary care shortage areas recruit qualified providers who want to work where their skills are needed most.



**How to Become an NHSC Approved Site:**

From approximately April through June (dates will be announced by HRSA), the NHSC will begin accepting applications from new sites. The Georgia Primary Care Office would like your clinic to consider applying. By becoming a NHSC approved site, you are helping to improve care for patients in Georgia.

**For more information visit**

<https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/sites/index.html>.

**Benefits of Becoming an NHSC Approved Site:**

NHSC approved sites have many benefits including:

- Assistance in helping you to attract and retain qualified and dedicated primary care providers. **Providers working in NHSC approved sites are eligible for federal loan repayment programs of up to 50,000 for two years of full-time service.** Read more about this program at <https://nhsc.hrsa.gov/loanrepayment>.
- Opportunities to network with other NHSC approved sites and community organizations.
- Direct access to the Georgia Primary Care Office that provides assistance with increasing access to primary health care services in your community.

For More Information and the **Steps to apply:**

[Read the full article, here.](#)



*GFHP Applies for Funding -*

## Initiative Addresses Hypertension in Minority Populations



The Georgia Farmworker Health Program (GFHP) submitted an application in December to participate in the National Hypertension Control Initiative

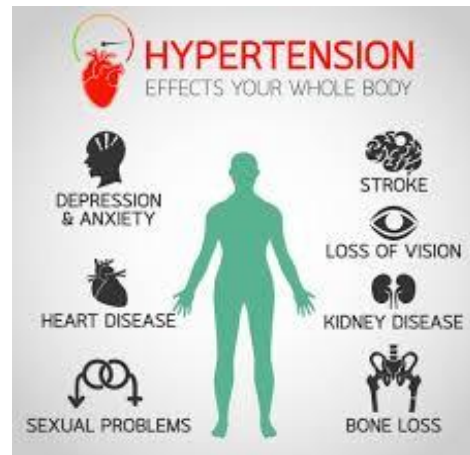
Supplemental Funding for Health Centers (NHCI-HC) Grant to address health disparities among racial and ethnic minority populations in rural areas.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and the Office of Minority Health (OMH) are partnering to provide \$60 million for the National Hypertension Control Initiative: Addressing Disparities Among Racial and Ethnic Minority Populations (HTN Initiative).

Organizations, like the GFHP, that are Health Center Program operational (H80) grant award recipients may request funds to increase diagnosis of hypertension and improve blood pressure control by

building upon their patient-centered and team-based service delivery model, health information technology capacity, and continuous quality improvement infrastructure, while enabling services that support access, patient education, and care coordination.

The GFHP plans to use the one-time supplemental funds to increase provider and staff engagement by





implementing evidence-based practices, including using advanced Self-Measured Blood Pressure (SMBP) technology to increase the number of adult patients with controlled hypertension.

[Read the full article, here.](#)



## ***Quaint small towns hold a special place in your heart!***

*Plains, Georgia is home of our 39th President, Jimmy Carter, who accepted his Nobel Peace Prize on this street in 2002.*

*Located in Southwest Georgia among the pine trees, peanut fields, and magnolias, Plains has a population of 683 and is situated in one of the state's most lucrative farming regions.*

*Our SORH staff member, Amanda Laughter-Sutton, chose Plains as the venue for her beautiful late-November wedding.*

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