



SHORT ROWS

[Click here for the SORH website.](#)

**Happy New Year!
January 1, 2022**

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

Leading the Fight Against Rural Health Disparities

Subscribe at rural.health@dch.ga.gov



From the Executive Director

Creativity and Innovation: Our Hope and Vision for 2022

As we reflect on 2021 and look forward to this new year, there is much optimism for the growth and success of rural healthcare in our communities.

We have experienced many challenges these last two years in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and our healthcare workers have answered the call. 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.

As we move forward into a new year, our focus will continue to be on giving attention to the importance of rural healthcare accessibility and creating new innovative ways of providing the best quality care for our rural communities.

My hope and vision for 2022 is creativity and innovation. We are extremely excited about 2022 and the future progress that will be made in “Leading the Fight Against Rural Health Disparities.” It is our vision and goal to connect with our partners and communities more than ever before in order to garnish synergy within the rural communities we serve. On behalf of the SORH team, I wish you a positive and prosperous Happy New Year!

Stephen Register
SORH Executive Director

A scenic landscape photograph showing a sunset or sunrise over a calm body of water, possibly a lake or river. The sky is filled with warm, orange, and yellow hues, reflected in the water. In the foreground, there are some reeds or grasses. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and scenic.

A Sight for “SORH” Eyes

SORH Staff Networks with Rural Hospitals at Annual HomeTown Health Fall Conference



Representatives from the Georgia State Office of Rural Health (SORH) attended the 22nd Annual HomeTown Health Fall Conference "Rural Hospitals & Rural Communities, Better Together" at Callaway Gardens in October 2021. Pictured above standing left to right, they are: Stephen Register, Executive Director; Dawn Waldrip, Director of Hospital Services; Tina Register, Program Specialist for the Georgia Farmworker Health Program; and Cole Edwards, Program Specialist for the SORH Program.

Along with participating in the conference sessions, the SORH staff was available during networking receptions and breaks to meet with rural hospital representatives and share information about the programs and opportunities offered by the SORH.

If you have questions about any of our SORH programs, email us at [SORH Questions](#).

Focus on Rural Health

A large, semi-transparent teal rectangular box covers the bottom portion of the image. Inside this box, the words "Focus on Rural Health" are written in a white, sans-serif font.

Coffee Regional and Memorial Hospital & Manor Awarded New Remote Critical Care Services Grants

The Georgia Department of Community Health, State Office of Rural Health (SORH), will award two new Remote Critical Care Services Grants to Coffee Regional Medical Center in Douglas and Memorial Hospital and Manor in Bainbridge.

The anticipated award amount for each hospital will be \$450,000 each year of the funding period. These two hospitals will follow Crisp Regional Hospital in Cordele and Washington County Regional Medical Center in Sandersville, both which have been participating in the program for the last three years.

The funding of the Remote Critical Care Services Grant connects rural hospitals in Georgia with Emory Healthcare to operate and maintain an electronic intensive care unit (eICU) program. This innovative approach allows Georgians in rural service areas to receive expert care not limited or disadvantaged by geography.

Local hospital ICU physician and nursing staff utilize the new eICU software to improve the clinical expertise required of patients.

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



Coffee Regional Medical Center in Douglas



Memorial Hospital & Manor in Bainbridge



Rural Emergency Hospital: New Medicare Provider Type Provides Access to Emergency Care in Rural Areas

In December 2020, Congress passed the Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) of 2021 (Public Law 116-260), which, in Section 125, created a new Medicare provider type called the Rural Emergency Hospital (REH).

By creating the REH, Congress has established the first new rural provider type in over 20 years since the Critical Access Hospital (CAH) was created in 1997 under the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (Public Law 105-33). The REH comes as a response to an ongoing period of hospital closures in rural communities and to the concerns of access to emergency services in rural areas.



The National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services (NACRHHS) published their October 2021 Policy Brief on the new REH provider designation. In the brief, the Committee notes the implications the REH program to offer an innovative way for rural communities to integrate care and services sectors.

The REH will be a new rural hospital type that does not provide inpatient care but will provide 24-hour emergency services. In many ways, the REH will operate like a typical emergency department of a rural hospital with one significant exception. It will not have the ability to admit a patient for inpatient services. Instead, REH patients can be treated for a period not to exceed an annual per patient average duration of 24 hours.

[Read the full article here.](#)



NHSC New Site Application Cycle Opens Spring 2022



National Health Service Corp (NHSC)-approved clinics improve access to primary care for people in communities with limited access to health care. 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 2022, the NHSC will begin accepting applications from new sites. Specific dates will be announced later by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The Georgia Primary Care Office encourages clinics to

consider applying. By becoming a NHSC-approved site, clinics improve access to health care for patients in Georgia. For more information visit <http://nhsc.hrsa.gov/sites/index.html>.

Is my site eligible to apply?

Potential NHSC-approved sites must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Must be located in, and serve a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA);
- Be a primary care outpatient facility (medical, dental, or behavioral);
- Utilize and prominently advertise a qualified discounted or sliding fee schedule for individuals at or below 200% of the federal poverty level;
- Does not deny services based on inability to pay or enrollment in Medicare, Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP);
- Ensures access to ancillary, inpatient, and specialty care; and
- Meets all requirements listed in the NHSC Site Agreement (see link below).

[Read the full article here.](#)

Celebrating National Rural Health Day - **Knicole Lee Named Georgia's Community Star**



Dr. Knicole Lee

Each year the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) and its partners set aside the third Thursday of November to celebrate National Rural Health Day (NRHD). NRHD is an opportunity to "Celebrate the Power of Rural".

In conjunction with NRHD, NOSORH recognizes one individual or organization nominated from each of the 50 State Offices of Rural Health

faces and grassroots initiatives that are working to address the social determinants of health and improve the lives of those who call rural their home.

The Georgia SORH nominated Knicole Lee, DNP, MSEd, MSN, FNP-BC of Baxley as Georgia's Community Star primarily for her work in designing and implementing the Community Outreach Intervention Network Services (COINS) Program.

COINS is an evidence-based model of care that helps to meet behavioral health and primary care needs of rural Georgians in a collaborative approach encompassing primary care, behavioral health, and pharmacy services all under one roof. COINS is a wrap-around holistic model designed to improve compliance of treatment regimens, increase access, and promote improved outcomes and quality of life.

To read the full NOSORH Community Star publication, go to:
<https://en.calameo.com/read/0045723395dc12ef8ac48>.

[Click here to view Knicole's Community Star page.](#)

(SORH) whose outstanding work and service deserve recognition as a Community Star.

NOSORH's annual Community Star recognition program is one of the most popular features of National Rural Health Day. Each person, coalition, and organization nominated to be their state's Community Star represents the



Farmworker Program

Despite Barriers, Decatur County Farmworker Health Clinic Vaccinated Workers in Camps, Churches, and Work Sites



The Decatur Farm Worker Health Clinic located in Southwest Georgia serves agricultural workers living or working in Decatur, Seminole, Mitchell, Grady, and Thomas counties. The clinic provides 3,500 nonduplicated visits per year including acute and preventive care, as well as chronic illness maintenance. Services in the clinic are provided by two family nurse practitioners and a bilingual outreach staff who effectively communicates with agricultural workers in the service area. A network of providers are also available for referrals for specialist care.

The Georgia Farmworker Health Program is proud of the work that their program's clinic sites have accomplished over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. When asked to speak on their proudest moments in the battle to overcome such harsh conditions, Sheila Ramer, FNP and DCFHC Director stated, *"Mid-January just prior to the COVID 19 outbreak in Georgia, we were informed that our clinic of the past 13 years had been sold by the landlord, and we would be required to relocate. Fortunately, the landlord had office space that had previously housed medical offices and were vacant. He willingly made the necessary renovations and updates we needed. The challenge was to relocate the clinic when vendors were not willing or allowed to provide services. With a deadline of sixty days to vacate the clinic, we struggled to accomplish this task."*

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

You Might be Rural If...



...you come across a gaggle of geese enjoying a beach day.

This gaggle of Canada Geese had the beach to themselves at Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain on this beautiful fall day in October. These remarkable birds have become more common in Georgia and can be distinguished by the "honking" sound they make while flying above in their familiar "V" formation.

According to the Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Canada Goose is extremely adaptable and can live in a variety of locations, from open farmland and rural reservoirs to suburban and urban ponds, parks, and developed areas. It makes perfect sense that they would inhabit beautiful Callaway Gardens.



[**State Office of Rural Health**](#)

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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.

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**Georgia Department of Community Health
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