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July 1, 2024

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

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Exciting Things Are Happening at SORH!



Joel Presley

Summer has arrived, and with it lots of exciting things happening with SORH. We are ramping up our Migrant Farmworker Health program to meet the needs of seasonal workers who work diligently with many of our local farmers to harvest their crops.

We also received continued funding to support our Student Loan Repayment Program through the National Health Service Corps. This program offers student loan assistance to certain specialties who agree to serve in a designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA).

The SORH staff wishes you and your family a safe and relaxing summer, and we hope you enjoy the rich content and information we pulled together for you within these pages.

Thanks,

Joel Presley
SORH Executive Director

A Sight for “SORH” Eyes

SORH Team Attends NOSORH Regional Meeting in Charleston, S.C.



Pictured above (L-R) are Hospital Services Program Specialist, Amanda Sutton; Hospital Services Director, Dawn Waldrup; SORH Executive Director, Joel Presley; and Program Specialist for the SORH Program, Cole Edwards. The team represented Georgia at the NOSORH Region B Partnership meeting in Charleston, S.C. in May.

A team from the State Office of Rural Health (SORH) traveled to Charleston, S.C. in May to represent Georgia at the National Organization for State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) Region B meeting. There are eight states that comprise Region B, including Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida, Tennessee, Kentucky, North Carolina, and South Carolina. Staff from each of the SORHs gather annually to discuss healthcare issues, share best practices, and hear updates from the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. During the state sharing portion of the meeting, Dawn Waldrup, director of hospital services, shared details of one of Georgia's Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Grant projects.

NOSORH was established in 1995 to assist SORHs in their efforts to improve access to quality health care for nearly 61 million rural Americans. NOSORH enhances SORH's efforts by supporting the development of state and community rural health leaders; creating and facilitating state, regional, and national partnerships that foster information sharing and spur rural health-related programs/activities. NOSORH also drives the annual National Rural Health Day celebration scheduled this year on Nov.21.

To learn more about NOSORH, click [here](#).

Focus on Rural Health

Beyoncé Parker Joins SORH as Summer Intern



Beyoncé Parker has joined the Georgia State Office of Rural Health (SORH) as an intern for the summer, working alongside Nita Ham and Cole Edwards with the SORH Programs section. Parker is currently a senior at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in Tifton, where she is a Rural Community Development major with a specialized concentration in Community Health.

SORH offers a multi-track internship opportunity designed to accommodate students at the undergraduate, graduate, or post-graduate level. Five intern tracks have been identified with the purpose of allowing students to choose a track that aligns with their individual interests, educational background, and career goals.

During her time in SORH's internship program, Parker has chosen to focus on the "Role of Health Care in Community

Development" track which concentrates on the function of access to healthcare in rural community growth and development.

"I am very excited about the opportunity to partner with the Georgia State Office of Rural Health as this program that I will be working with this summer aligns me with both state government and rural communities," said Parker. "I would like to have an impact and change on the way rural communities are served in regard to health care."

[Read the full story here.](#)

SORH's Cole Edwards Graduates From Georgia 2Gen Academy

Cole Edwards, (pictured left) program operations specialist for the SORH Program, and DCH's Michael Smith were among 26 state and community-based agency "graduates" of the notable Georgia 2Gen Academy at a recent ceremony at Loudermilk Conference Center in downtown Atlanta. The two participated in this nine-month program sponsored by the Georgia Children's Cabinet, for which first lady Marty Kemp is honorary chair, and Commissioner Russel Carlson is a member of the Executive Children's Cabinet.

Selected academy participants come from agencies that serve children and families. It is designed to help leaders implement [Georgia 2Gen principles](#) aimed at supporting children from low-income families with high-quality early learning, while supporting their families in attaining the education, training, and, ultimately, jobs that lead to self-sufficiency.



“It was an honor to be part of this second cohort of the Georgia 2Gen Academy. I was not quite sure what to expect, but I learned so much,” said Edwards, program operations specialist with DCH’s State Office of Rural Health office located in Cordele. “The connections I made with people from other state agencies and nonprofits proved invaluable and highlighted the importance of breaking down silos with fellow agencies in the work we do daily.”

[Read the full story here.](#)

From Hospital Services

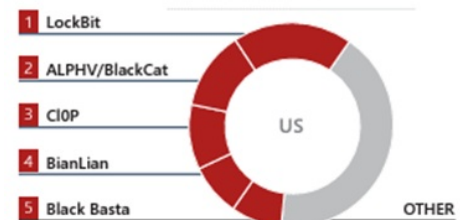
Federal Officials Offer Free Resources for Rural Hospitals to Combat Rising Cyberattacks

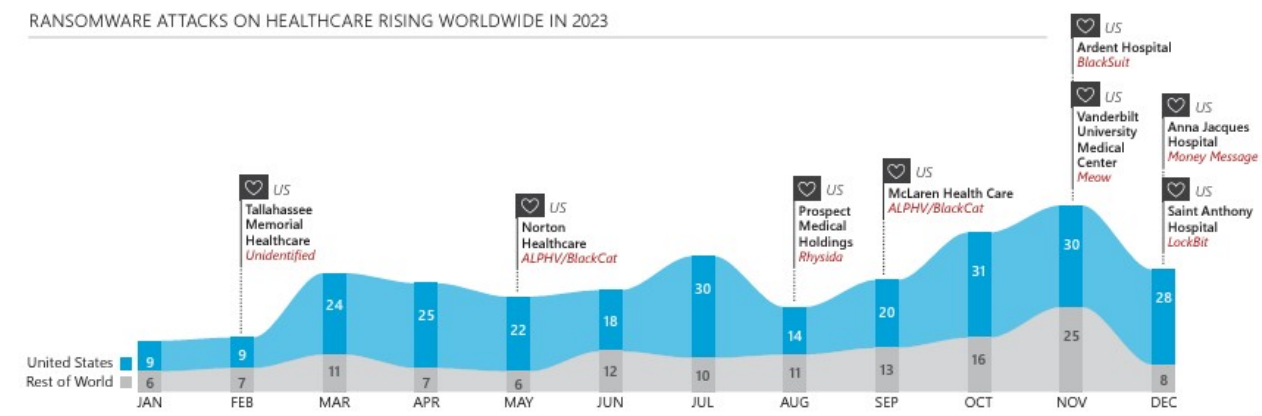
Cyberattacks against the American healthcare system rose 128 percent from 2022 to 2023, according to a June 10, 2024 [briefing](#) from federal officials. There were 258 healthcare organizations that fell victim to cyberattacks in 2023 vs. 113 in 2022. LockBit and ALPHV/BlackCat are the two most popular ransomware bad actors and together were responsible for more than 30 percent of all claimed healthcare attacks worldwide.

These recent cyberattacks targeting the healthcare system demonstrate the vulnerability of our hospitals and their payment systems. In February and March of 2024 alone, the United States experienced one of the most significant healthcare-related cyberattacks to date. During the attack, bad actors reported that one out of every three healthcare claims in the United States were impacted, leading to disruptions in timely payment to healthcare providers, according to the brief.

Federal officials are offering resources to improve the resiliency of the healthcare sector against cyberattacks. These resources include a website launched by the Department of Health and Human Services that outlines [essential goals](#) organizations can implement to better protect them from cyberattacks, improve response when events occur, and minimize residual risk.

HEALTHCARE: 2023 TOP FIVE VARIANTS





Read the full story and find the additional resources [here](#).



Conrad 30 J-1 Visa Waiver Program Assists Rural Communities in Physician Recruitment and Retention

The Conrad 30 J-1 Visa Waiver program assists with challenges in physician recruitment and retention in Georgia's rural areas. J-1 visa waiver physicians are essential to providing health care in rural communities since these regions have more difficulty recruiting and retaining healthcare providers. Therefore, many rural communities fill their physician vacancies by recruiting international medical graduates (IMGs) who have completed their medical training under the J-1 visa exchange visitor program.

IMGs pursuing a medical residency or fellowship training in the United States often use the J-1 Visa non-immigrant exchange visitor visa, which allows IMGs to remain in the U.S. until they complete their graduate medical education. Upon completion, they are required under U.S. immigration law to return to their home country for at least two years before gaining eligibility for an H-1B visa to re-enter and work in the U.S. or for permanent residence.



J-1 physicians have two choices upon completing their graduate medical education. They can either return to their home country for at least two years, or they can obtain a waiver of this obligation. The J-1 visa waiver eliminates the two-year home residency requirement and allows physicians to change into H-1B visa status that will allow them to stay in the U.S.

Read the full story [here](#).



Jamie Branch, Senior Director of Farmworker Health Program



The State Office of Rural Health (SORH) is excited to announce an addition to its leadership team. Jamie Branch joins the Georgia Farmworker Health Program as senior director. She brings with her an extensive background in rural health care, regulatory compliance, and quality improvement. In her new role, Jamie will lead operational activities for several SORH programs.

Prior to joining the SORH team, Jamie spent the past 20 years working in various roles and entities across the healthcare sector, with an emphasis on working directly with healthcare executives and clinicians on population health, healthcare transformation, and quality improvement initiatives. Most recently, Jamie served as a clinical regulatory consultant for United Healthcare, the nation's largest health insurance company.

Jamie received certification as a Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality through the National Association for Healthcare Quality in 2017, and completed her bachelor's degree in population health from South University located in Savannah in 2022.

Emory Farmworker Health Project Offers Student Learning Opportunity While Providing Health Care to Migrant Population



Twice annually, in partnership with the Emory Farmworker Project, the Georgia Farmworker Health Program clinic sites assist in providing a unique opportunity for Georgia's migrant population to receive healthcare services while also affording invaluable learning experiences to clinical students across various disciplines.



Clinical staff and students pictured at left offered both oral and physical screenings to the migrant farmworkers at the Southern Valley Farms warehouse in Norman Park. The summer project was held on June 13.

Photos by Jamie Branch.





...you drive your "carcycle" to the shopping center!

It's a car, it's a motorcycle! No, it's a carcycle?

Rural residents can be very resourceful in making the best of what they have. Case in point, this "carcycle" that was created by merging half of a car and half of a motorcycle. Imagine the skill and ingenuity one must have to be able to bring parts of two different vehicles together and use it for reliable transportation. The custom camouflage paint job makes this one of a kind vehicle perfect for either driving to the woods for a hunting trip, or just hunting for groceries at the local shopping center. This model even has air-conditioning!

Photo by Dawn Waldrip



[State Office of Rural Health](#)

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

[Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center](#)

[DCH Grant Opportunities](#)

[HRSA Funding Opportunities](#)

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

[Rural Health Research Gateway](#)

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

[3RNet - Rural Recruitment and Retention Network](#)

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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