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**July 1, 2023**

**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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## **Register Bids Farewell to the SORH**



As this will be my final message, I want each and every person I have worked with over the last 3 years with the Georgia State Office of Rural Health (SORH) to know what an honor and privilege it has been to know and work with you in our shared mission to "Lead the fight against rural health disparities".

While I look forward to accepting a new leadership role outside of state government with great anticipation, I know there is so much I will miss. Of those I will miss the most, is the very talented SORH staff who all do an exceptional job, and absolutely love and have a passion for the rural residents of Georgia. Going forward, they will continue to serve you and rural Georgia with the same enthusiasm, skill, knowledge, and commitment you have experienced from them throughout the

years.

It has been an absolute pleasure to serve you, the SORH, the State of Georgia and all those who wisely choose to make rural Georgia their home. Please continue to support our SORH's efforts in improving the lives they touch through creativity, collaboration, and perseverance. Take care and thanks for all you do!

## A Sight for “SORH” Eyes

### Southwest Georgia Regional Commission Hosts Rural Partners Network Kick-Off Meeting



*Southwest Georgia Regional Commission hosted a Rural Partners Kick-Off Meeting in Camilla on May 31, 2023. Representatives from various federal, state, and philanthropic partners offered updates during a panel discussion.*

The Southwest Georgia Regional Commission (SWGRC), in partnership with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), recently hosted a Rural Partners Network (RPN) kick-off meeting for the fourteen counties located in region 10 of the state.

The event was held at the Camilla Depot Event Center in downtown Camilla. The depot is a former train station built in 1911 that was transformed and now serves as Camilla’s meeting facility and Chamber of Commerce office.

The overarching purpose of the day-long meeting was to introduce region 10 partners to the RPN community liaisons as well as to receive information from the RPN agencies regarding funding opportunities to meet community needs.

Suzanne Angell, executive director of SWGRC, and Barbara Reddick, deputy director of SWGRC, led the meeting, alongside Jyles Zellner, Community Liaison for USDA.

[Read the full article here.](#)

## Focus on Rural Health



# SORH's Edwards Attends 46th Annual NRHA Conference: Agenda Focus is Healthcare Equity and Transformation



*John Gale, Senior Research Associate of the Maine Rural Health Research Center, discusses Georgia's Rural Hospital Stabilization Program.*



*The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) hosted its 46h Annual Rural Health Conference in San Diego, CA, on May 16-19, 2023.*

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) hosted its 46th annual Rural Health Conference in San Diego, California, on May 16-19, 2023. The four-day conference centered on equity and transformation of healthcare systems and models in rural areas across the country. NRHA is a national nonprofit membership organization that provides leadership on rural health issues to thousands of members across the United States.

Alongside NRHA, an estimated 1,500 rural health leaders and advocates from across the country gathered in warm, beautiful San Diego with the like-minded goal of raising the standard for rural health.

On behalf of the Georgia State Office of Rural Health (SORH), the conference was attended by Cole Edwards, program operations specialist for SORH Programs, and Tina Register, program operations specialist for the Georgia Farmworker Health Program.

The conference featured over 80 innovative, real-world sessions that helped define the standard of rural health care by highlighting the diverse and constantly evolving community and culture of rural America.

[Read the full article here.](#)

For more information about the RHS Grant Program, contact Nita Ham at [nham@dch.ga.gov](mailto:nham@dch.ga.gov).



## Miller County Hospital is First Georgia CAH to Earn Pathway to Excellence Designation



# Hospital Authority of MILLER COUNTY



Miller County Hospital in Colquitt has recently achieved designation as the first critical access hospital (CAH) in Georgia to earn the Pathway to Excellence Program designation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Ashley Ward, BSN, RN, the risk management and quality manager at Miller County Hospital, recently shared the news of Miller's designation with peers during a Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Program quality professional's Monthly Mingle.

The Monthly Mingle is a peer networking Zoom call hosted by the Georgia Hospital Association's Shondia Evans, who is a program manager for the Flex Program on behalf of the State Office of Rural Health.

Ashley informed CAHs attending the call that Miller is one of only six hospitals in Georgia that have achieved Pathway to Excellence designation. To achieve this designation, organizations must demonstrate a culture of sustained excellence and meet the six Pathway standards essential to an ideal nursing practice environment. Applicants undergo a review process to fully document the integration of the required standards into the organization's practices, policies, and culture. The Pathway to Excellence survey exemplifies the theme of empowering and engaging staff.

[Read the full article here.](#)

## **Veteran Suicide- SORH and Veterans Administration Community Engagement Program Coordinators Collaborate to Offer Rural Resources**

According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the veteran suicide rate in Georgia is significantly higher than the national general population suicide rate. In 2020, there were 183 Georgia veterans that committed suicide.

The VA is leading efforts to understand suicide risk factors, develop evidence-based prevention programs, and prevent Veteran suicide through a public health approach. As part of its work, the VA analyzes data at the national and state levels to guide the design and implementation of the most





effective strategies to prevent veteran suicide. One of these strategies includes Community Engagement Program Coordinators (CEPC).

Nita Ham, senior manager of SORH Programs, and Dawn Waldrip, director of hospital services, recently met with three of the VA CEPCs for the South Georgia/North Florida region to identify how the two organizations could partner to address veteran suicide prevention in rural south Georgia.

Heather Stephens, Nicole Dempsey, and Shea Vela are Licensed Community Social Workers serving as CEPCs for 11 counties in Georgia and two counties in Florida. They each work with communities to identify care needs and opportunities for support and facilitate coalition efforts for suicide prevention among veterans in rural areas.

Stephens said the role of the CEPC is based in the community with the goal of reaching veterans who do not utilize the VA and assist them with their care wherever they choose. The counties they serve are Atkinson, Berrien, Brooks, Clinch, Colquitt, Cook, Echols, Lanier, Lowndes, Thomas, and Ware in Georgia, and Madison and Hamilton counties in Florida.

[Read the full article here.](#)

[Access the CEPC Flyer here.](#)

[Access the COMPACT Act FAQs here.](#)



## 3RNET – A Valuable Recruitment Tool Connecting Communities and Health Professional Job Seekers

The Georgia Primary Care Office is the state administrator for the National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network (3RNET). 3RNET works to improve rural and underserved communities' access to quality health care through the recruitment of physicians and other healthcare professionals.



### Why register to post jobs on 3RNET?

Your employer account on 3RNET gives you access to 3RNET educational resources and a platform to directly recruit health care professionals. Registering to jobs for your facility is free and easy. If your organization has openings for healthcare positions, complete the employer registration form found at <https://www.3rnet.org/For-Employers/Employer-Registration-Form> and forward it to Olakesta Outlaw-Houser, 3RNET network coordinator with the Primary Care Office at [olakesta.outlaw@dch.ga.gov](mailto:olakesta.outlaw@dch.ga.gov). Once your registration has been approved, your site will gain access to mission-minded health professionals looking for jobs in rural and underserved communities.

### How 3RNET Connects Communities and Health Professional Job Seekers

Employer → Network Coordinator → Job Seeker



The role of the network coordinator is to provide outreach to rural and underserved employers to promote job opportunities, connect mission-minded health professionals with rural and underserved employers, and provide state-specific job search resources. Facility types served by 3RNET in Georgia are community health centers, critical access hospitals, and rural health clinics.

[Read the full article here.](#)



## GFHP's Register Attends 46th Annual NRHA Conference in San Diego, CA

Tina Register, program operations specialist for the Georgia Farmworker Health Program, attended the 46th annual National Rural Health Association (NRHA) Conference held in May in San Diego, California. Joining Tina for the conference was Cole Edwards, program operations specialist for the State Office of Rural Health (SORH) program.

Among the many sessions presented at the conference, according to Tina, the session that stood out the most for its powerful message was the session presented by Dr. Benjamin Gilmer, a family medicine physician in Fletcher, North Carolina. Dr. Gilmer shared a synopsis of his medical murder mystery book, "*The Other Dr. Gilmer*".

The premise of Dr. Gilmer's session and book are to promote storytelling as a tool for advocacy. His story focused on his experience of advocating for his former colleague who allegedly murdered his father. Dr. Gilmer believed his colleague's murderous act was attributed to a mental illness he was suffering. Dr. Gilmer reported that 40% of incarcerated people have some form of mental illness and that ten times more mentally ill people are being punished in prisons rather than being treated in mental hospitals.



[Read the full article here.](#)







## ***...you're nuts about the "World's Largest Peanut"!***

The new "World's Largest Peanut" has been restored alongside Interstate 75 in Ashburn and returns as a symbol of the county's local enterprise.

The original peanut, erected in 1975, was destroyed in 2018 by Hurricane Michael. Citizens of Ashburn and Turner County have been working to raise funds to restore the beloved landmark since.

Funding raised by the Young Farmers, local citizens, the Chamber of Commerce, and a donation from the Georgia Department of Agriculture covered construction costs of the new peanut erected in mid-June. The peanut is a popular tourist attraction visible from Interstate 75, one half mile south of the exit 82, southbound.



[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](#) \*New

### 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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[rural.health@dch.ga.gov](mailto:rural.health@dch.ga.gov)*



**Georgia Department of Community Health  
State Office of Rural Health**

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Georgia Dept. Of Community Health | 2 Peachtree Street, 40th Floor, Atlanta, GA 30303

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