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**April 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***

Subscribe at [rural.health@dch.ga.gov](mailto:rural.health@dch.ga.gov)



## ***DCH is Planting New Roots in Downtown Atlanta As the SORH Remains in Rural Cordele***

Moving day is on the horizon for the Georgia Department of Community Health as it pulls up stakes at the 2 Peachtree location and plants new roots at the Sloppy Floyd Building, East Tower in downtown Atlanta. We are excited to announce that 2 Peachtree's official relocation begins on Monday, April 10th!

We wanted to make sure all our vendors and grantees were aware that we will be sending out official notifications of DCH's change of address soon. Meanwhile, should you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to the SORH.

As for the SORH, we will remain in our 502 South 7th Street location in Cordele, where we will continue to serve rural Georgians.



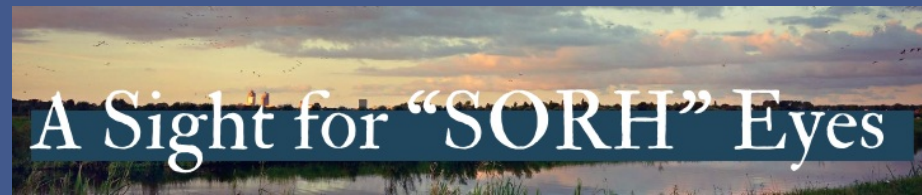
As we approach Spring and Summer, the SORH is still very much dedicated to the fight against rural health disparities and will continue to forge ahead with hope, hard work, and determination. We are excited about the stories we continue to hear from Georgia's healthcare workers and institutions.

We are encouraged daily by their perseverance and commitment to provide access to medical care to the rural Georgians they serve.

All the best,

**Stephen Register**  
SORH Executive Director

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## **Nathan Deal Scholars Share Motivation for Choosing Careers in Rural Health Care at GHA Meeting**



*Mercer University School of Medicine's Nathan Deal Scholars address hospital executives and members of the SORH attending Georgia Hospital Association's Center for Rural Health Meeting in February. Each scholar shared their field of practice, their hometown, and their personal motivation for choosing to serve rural Georgia.*

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The Nathan Deal Scholars from Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM) took time out of their busy schedules to meet hospital executives and representatives from the State Office of Rural Health (SORH) at the Georgia Hospital Association's quarterly Center for Rural Health meeting on February 23 in Macon.

The 12 scholars are recipients of the Nathan Deal Scholarship for the 2022-23 academic year. They were selected based on character, leadership qualities, community involvement and their likelihood of serving in rural, underserved Georgia after their scholarship obligations are met. They will receive 85-100 percent of tuition for up to four academic years.

During the luncheon, Terri Walker, M.P.A. and director of special programs at MUSM, reviewed the scholarship program details and introduced the scholars who shared personal stories and their motivation for choosing a career in rural health care. Along with the rural and critical access hospital C-suite executives, several SORH representatives present also had the opportunity to meet the scholars including: Stephen Register, SORH Executive Director; Nita Ham, Senior Director of the SORH Program and Hospital Services; Beth Walker, Senior Director of the Primary Care Office and Georgia Farmworker Health Program; Dawn Waldrip, Director of Hospital Services; and Amanda Sutton, Program Specialist for Hospital Services.

[Read the full article here.](#)



# Focus on Rural Health

## Dodge County Hospital Completes Renovations With Rural Hospital Stabilization Grant Funding



*(L-R) Miranda Bush, emergency room director, poses alongside Sierra Richardson, licensed practical nurse, and Paige Bohannon, registered nurse, in front of the renovated nursing station at Dodge County Hospital. Dodge also received a new electronic medical record platform.*



*Pictured above is the newly-renovated entrance to the emergency department at Dodge County Hospital. The improvements provide a fresh outlook for patients visiting the Eastman hospital. The renovations were made possible with Rural Hospital Stabilization Program funding.*

Even in the middle of the COVID-19 global pandemic, Dodge County Hospital forged ahead with renovations and projects that have sparked a positive, fresh outlook for both hospital staff and their patients in the small community of Eastman.

Dodge County Hospital was a recipient of funds from the Rural Hospital Stabilization Grant Program (RHSGP), which was launched in 2014 under then-Governor Nathan Deal with the intention of providing financial support to rural hospitals to improve rural access to health care.

The most obvious update to the hospital is the beautiful renovation of the emergency room, which was completed in July 2021 despite several pandemic-related setbacks including worker shortages and supply chain issues.

"It's been so long since we've renovated," said Nancy Kale, Outreach Coordinator. "In some ways, you can say it took 30 years to complete the renovation because this is really the first time that we've ever done an overhaul like this since first opening our doors."

[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).

# From Hospital Services

*A Flex Initiative:*  
**CAH Leaders and Mid-Level Managers Learn Effective**

# Leadership Strategies in GSU's LEAD Academy Series



Critical access hospital (CAH) leaders and mid-level managers have a unique opportunity to participate in a hospital leadership development initiative to learn best practices on effective leadership strategies. The LEAD Academy is an initiative provided by the Georgia Southern University Center for Public Health Practice and Research and is funded through the State Office of Rural Health (SORH) by the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (Flex) Grant.

Georgia Southern University developed the LEAD academy leadership training series as part of the Flex financial and operational initiatives provided for the current Flex cycle September 1, 2022, through August 31, 2023. The series is comprised of five webinars and an onsite summer interactive seminar offered beginning February 8 through May 16. While two of the webinars have been completed, CAH leaders still have the opportunity to attend the three webinars remaining in the series, including:

- **Deploying Your Talents as Leaders** - Tuesday, April 4, 2023, 10 - 11:30 a.m.
- **Leading Others Using Strengths** - Monday, April 10, 2023, 10 - 11:30 a.m.
- **Happiness Is...Caring for Self While Caring for Others** - Tuesday, May 16, 2023, 1 - 2:30 p.m.

The in-person Leadership Development Symposium scheduled for this summer on the Georgia Southern University campus is also available as well. A link to register for the three remaining webinars in the series can be found here:

[https://georgiasouthern.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_cAzCZLYBosOghym](https://georgiasouthern.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cAzCZLYBosOghym).

[Read the full article here.](#)

For more information about this or other Flex programs, contact Dawn Waldrip, Flex coordinator and Director of Hospital Services at [dawn.waldrip@dch.ga.gov](mailto:dawn.waldrip@dch.ga.gov).



*Meet the PCO Staff -*

## **Working to Improve Primary Care Service Delivery and Workforce Availability for Underserved Populations**

The State Office of Rural Health (SORH) Primary Care Office (PCO) is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The purpose of this funding is to improve primary care service delivery and workforce availability in the state to meet the needs of underserved populations.

The PCO serves as the state's liaison between the federal government and healthcare provider sites applying for a Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA) or Medically Underserved Area/Medically Underserved Population status. Shortage designations enable sites to be eligible for assignments of National Health Services Corps personnel, apply for Rural Health Clinic certification, Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) status, and an FQHC look-alike status. Other programs available to sites located in a HPSA are the Conrad 30 J-1 Visa Waiver program, Nurse Corp Loan Repayment Program, State Loan Repayment Program, and Medicare Bonus Incentives for Primary Care and Mental Health providers located in a geographic HPSA.

The PCO staff managing these programs are featured below:



**Dorothy Bryant  
HPSA Analyst**

Dorothy has been with the State Office of Rural Health for 22 years. She serves as the HPSA analyst with the Primary Care Office. Her job responsibilities include designating whole county, partial county, and facility HPSA's for primary care, mental, and dental health.

Her role is vital to the success of the programs that the Primary Care Office administers. Dorothy also works with submission of progress reports and Non-Competitive Continuation grant submissions to HRSA. In addition, she assists in the administration of the Georgia SORH State Loan Repayment Program.

Contact Dorothy Bryant at [dbryant@dch.ga.gov](mailto:dbryant@dch.ga.gov), phone 229-401-3095.



**Olakesta Outlaw-Houser  
Program Associate**

Olakesta has been with the State Office of Rural Health since 2016. She serves as program associate with the Primary Care Office. She is the state administrator for 3RNET which is a Rural Recruitment & Retention Program.

She also assists with the review and recommendations of Conrad 30 J-1 Visa Waiver applications, manages the semi-annual reports for the program, and performs administrative duties for the SORH office.

Contact Olakesta Outlaw at [olakesta.outlaw@dch.ga.gov](mailto:olakesta.outlaw@dch.ga.gov), phone 229- 401-3090.



**Beth Walker  
Senior Director,  
Primary Care Office**

Beth has been with the State Office of Rural Health since 2016. She oversees the daily operations of the Primary Care Office.

Her responsibilities include administering the Conrad 30 J-1 Visa Waiver program, National Health Service Corps new site and recertification application review, implementing legislative mandated state grant funds, and oversight of the Georgia SORH State Loan Repayment Program.

Contact Beth Walker at [beth.walker@dch.ga.gov](mailto:beth.walker@dch.ga.gov), phone 229-276-2750.

[Read the full article here.](#)



## *Mercer and Rural Health Innovation Center Representatives Attend Board Meeting -* **Future Collaborations to Benefit Georgia Farmworkers**

The Georgia Farmworker Health Program (GFHP) Advisory Board assembled for its recent meeting and welcomed guest speakers from Mercer University expressing interest in future collaborations to benefit the farmworker population in Georgia as well as students seeking careers in various medical fields.



Among the panel of guests were: Kimberly Roth, PhD.; Janine Chalk-Wilayto, PhD., both with Mercer University School of Medicine; Bonzo Reddick M.D., MPH, FAAFP, health director for Coastal Health District, Georgia Department of Public Health; and Chris Scoggins, MPH, director of special projects at the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center.

Dr. Roth has focused her research on the epidemiology of mental disorders in Latinx and immigrant

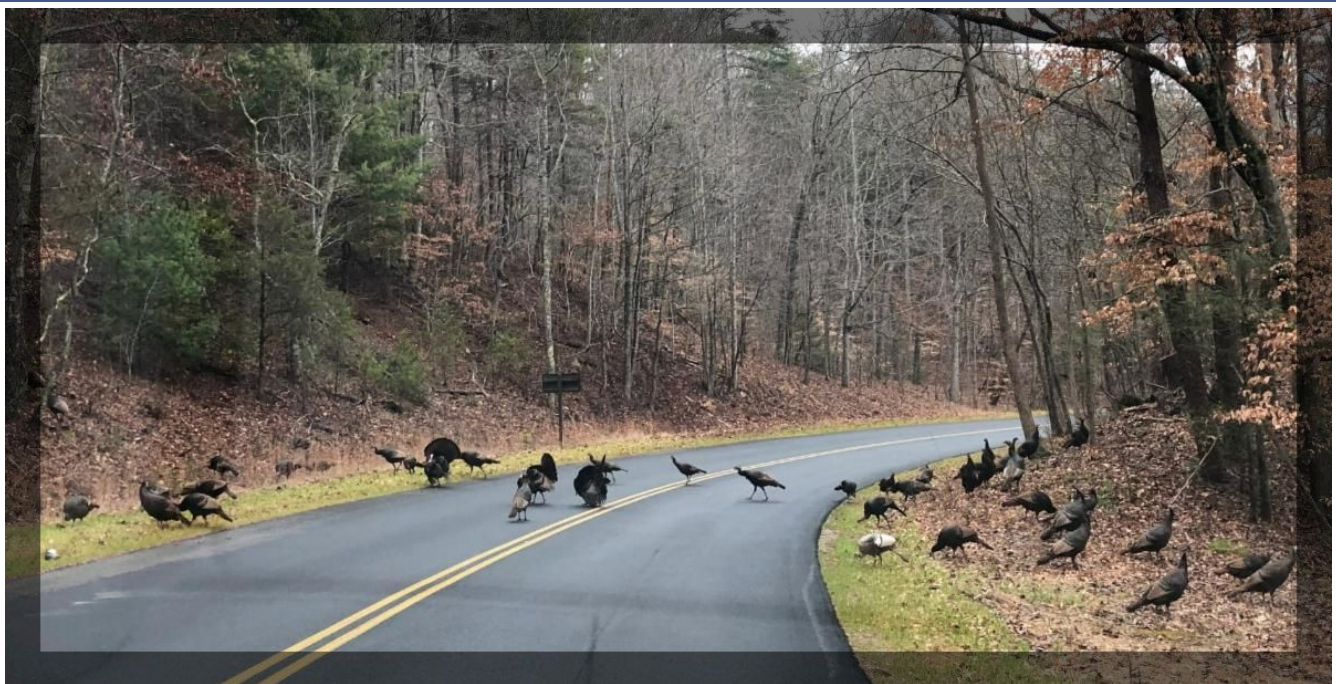


populations, both in the United States and globally. Specifically, her work in this area examines the role of acculturation and other related experiences in shaping Latinx mental health. In addition, she is investigating how neighborhoods can be places of risk and/or resilience for health and well-being.

Recently, Dr. Roth has expanded her focus to include the health of rural populations and the opioid epidemic. Across content areas, she strives to apply advanced statistical techniques to answer complex questions, in particular the integration of psychiatric epidemiology, geospatial information systems (GIS), and latent variable methods to address contextual factors affecting mental health in minority and underserved populations.

[Read the full article here.](#)

To learn more about the Georgia Farmworker Health Program, go to our website [here.](#)



***...you're in the woods listening intently for that first gobble of the Spring season!***

April 1st is the first day of the 2023 Georgia turkey hunting season. Hunting is permitted on private lands beginning Saturday, April 1st and on public lands beginning Saturday, April 8th. The season ends May 15th statewide.

This unusually large flock pictured above crossing a state highway near the Blue Ridge Mountains in north Georgia, consisted of several older males known as Gobblers, younger males known as Jakes, females known as Hens, and juvenile turkeys which are referred to as Poults.

Did you know that wild turkeys have their own language? According to the National Wild Turkey Foundation (NWTf), the sounds of the wild turkey include the Assembly Call, Cluck, Cluck & Purr, Cutt, Excited Yelp, Fly Down or Fly Up Cackle, Kee Kee Run, Plain Yelp, Purr, Putt, Tree Call, and the most familiar, the Gobble. To hear these interesting sounds for yourself, visit the [NWTf website](#).



[State Office of Rural Health](#)

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[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](#)

### 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.*

Subscribe to The SORH Short Rows at  
[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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