

SUMMER 2017

RURAL HEALTH UPDATE

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

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Message from the Executive Director

It is hard to believe that a year has passed since our first newsletter to update you on the activities of the WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health (ICRH). As was true then, the purpose is to thank you for making possible the many rural activities in which we are involved. There is no doubt that you are the backbone of these endeavors. In the 2015-2016 fiscal year, 715 West Virginia University students from ten disciplines as well as nine residents engaged in community based rotations. These rotations afforded our students an opportunity to witness healthcare outside the walls of a clinical classroom and develop an appreciation of the joys and rewards of providing real world medicine.



I am very excited about a new program we will be starting this September, under the direction of the WV Area Health Education Center Program (AHEC), to establish a group of inter-professional AHEC Scholars composed of students from medicine, dentistry, nursing, pharmacy, public health, social work, physical and occupational therapy that will focus on rural health care. We have significant buy-in from each of the five schools in the Health Sciences Center in establishing curricula for the scholars. Students from the other health professional schools in the state will also have the opportunity to participate in this program. It is our, and AHEC's, hope that this will serve as an aid in the recruitment of health professionals to rural areas.

WVU ICRH continues to support scholarships for professional students in exchange for a commitment to practice in underserved areas of the state. We also are involved in health career programs for rural high school students via WV HSTA (Health Sciences and Technology Academy). In early April, we held our second annual WVU Rural Health Day for undergraduate students with an interest in medicine from colleges and universities throughout West Virginia and adjoining states.

In summary, this has been a productive year for the WVU ICRH made possible by your continued "boots on the ground" involvement. I have tremendous optimism for the upcoming year and truly appreciate your contributions to the health and education of rural West Virginians.

Larry Rhodes, M.D.

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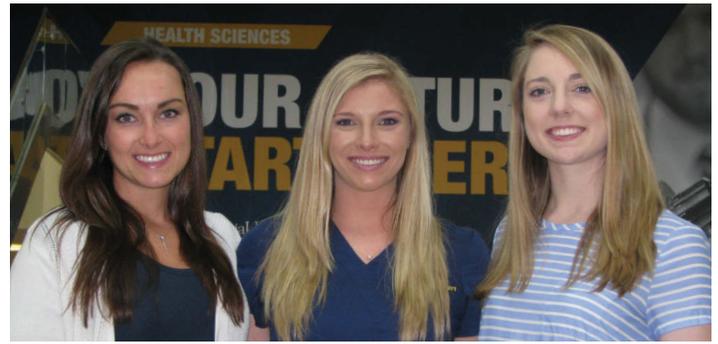
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SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

The WVU Institute of Community and Rural Health awarded three dental scholarships and four medical student scholarships for 2016-2017.

4th Year Dental Student Awardees receive \$50,000 for a two-year commitment in a rural or underserved area of West Virginia. These students have confirmed practicing locations.

- Christa Bryan has selected Grafton.
- Amanda Honeycutt has selected Eleanor in Putnam County.
- Janel Kalar is completing a general practice residency at WVU prior to rural practice.



▲ Dental student awardees

Medical Student Scholarship Awardees receive \$25,000 for a one-year commitment in a rural or underserved area of West Virginia. They will begin their obligation upon completion of residency.

- Donald Brubaker
- Alyson Leo
- Darrin Nichols
- Lauren Norris
- Lauren Rover
- Grace Walkup



PROJECT REACH

Since 2011, the student-run Rural Education Alliance for Community Health (Project R.E.A.C.H.) has provided health education and screenings to 2,487 West Virginians in Berkeley, Fayette, Greenbrier, Hampshire, Jackson, Marion, Mercer, Monongalia and Preston counties. Members of Project R.E.A.C.H. attend different festivals and community activities to provide blood pressure readings, information about nutrition and smoking cessation, and encouraging individuals they talk with to schedule appointments with a local primary care provider and dentist for regular wellness visits.

This past year, Project R.E.A.C.H. teamed up with the National Center of Excellence in Women's Health and other health professions students across the state to provide 466 health screenings to 250 attendees of the Women on Wellness retreats held in Mannington, Marion County and Rainelle in Greenbrier County and Williamson, Mingo County. Denise Palmer, RN

Ambulatory Clinic Manger, WVU Heart and Vascular Institute provides oversight for health sciences students from various institutions to deliver the health screenings and provide feedback and health consults. In Rainelle, students and preceptors from West Virginia University, the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine and New River Community and Technical College worked together to deliver the health screenings and health consults. "The best part of working with Project R.E.A.C.H. is connecting with West Virginia communities at an earlier stage than is usually possible in our curriculum and collaborating with other students that have similar interests in rural health," said Quintin Brubaker, a Project R.E.A.C.H. student leader.

Members also talked with visitors in Fayette County on Bridge Day and spent a day talking with visitors to the North Preston Food Pantry about healthy eating on a budget. In March, Project R.E.A.C.H. and the Rural Health Interest group spent some time in Williamson, Mingo County, for a day of service. Although the original plan to dig in the community garden with the locals had to be changed last minute because of the 20-degree weather, the group enjoyed a day of painting the community field house and cheering on the Williamson County Youth Basketball League.

Jessica Baker, a Project R.E.A.C.H. participant, inspired by community response, increased her involvement in outreach efforts. "I got involved with Project R.E.A.C.H., when I participated in the Martinsburg Health Fair and the Bruceton Mills Food Pantry. Every activity that I have been involved in has shown me the impact we are able to make by communicating with people about their health conditions and giving advice about healthy lifestyle choices." Baker, most impacted by the children in the communities, sees an eagerness from them to interact. "One of the models that the kids enjoy is a stuffed animal tooth brushing model called Mr. Gross Mouth, showing the effects of tobacco use. We emphasize the importance of dental hygiene and show them proper tooth brushing techniques. They are always so grateful when we are able to give them a toothbrush of their own to take home.

STUDENTS GAIN EXPERIENCE IN RURAL SETTINGS

In the 2015-16 academic year, 77 West Virginia University dental and dental hygiene students completed clinical rotations at 44 different sites, 35 of which were in rural areas as defined by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission or in a dental Health Professions Shortage Area, as defined by the federal government. Students spent more than 250 weeks at these 35 rural sites. Rural rotations took place in 22 different counties in the state with a local dentist serving as their preceptor/field professor. Fourth-year dental students do not embark on their community/rural rotations until they have gained experience at one of the WVU clinics in a number of areas but once at the rural practice site, they perform a number of procedures at the discretion of their preceptor. From July 2015 until the end of

June 2016, dental and dental hygiene students provided over 14,996 procedures for 8,018 patients while they were on their community-based rotations. Most rural dental practices are private, stand-alone practices but some are in outpatient clinics, Federally Qualified Health Centers, or free clinics. One of the rural dental preceptors is Mark Spiker, DDS, at the Susan Dew Hoff Medical Clinic, a free clinic in West Milford. Prior to his volunteer work at the Susan Dew Hoff Clinic, Dr. Spiker was in private practice at the Pennsboro Medical Center.



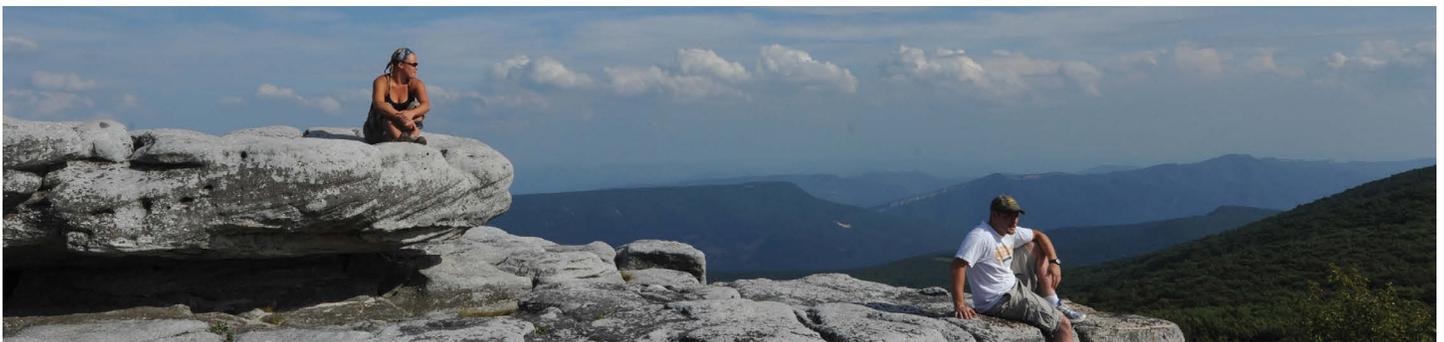
BY THE NUMBERS
(2014-15)

77 WVU Dental and Dental Hygiene Students

spent over **250** weeks

in **35** rural pharmacy practice sites

across **22** West Virginia counties



MARK SPIKER



Mark Spiker, DDS knew he wanted to be a dentist as far back as high school in Ritchie County. He did well in school and his parents were both teachers so a college degree and beyond was a given. Spiker grew up on a 300-acre farm that had been in his family for over 100 years. His grandfather made a living on this farm. He entered the WVU School of Dentistry in 1974; received an Army scholarship in 1975; and graduated in 1978 at age 25. This led to active duty for 2 ½ years in Texas then Alabama. He and his wife,

Marilyn (from Tyler County), met at West Virginia University and always knew that they wanted to come back to West Virginia. What they did not expect, however, was to return to Ritchie County but the dental office in the Pennsboro Medical Clinic lost

their dentist around the time of their return and it seemed like the obvious thing to do. It was a move they never regretted. He began training WVU dental students and had 31 dental students and 18 dental hygiene students come through his practice between 1995 and 2013. Dr. Spiker says that as a rural dentist, you have the opportunity to do a variety of different things if you choose. He has always thought that this kept his practice interesting. In addition to his private practice, he has spent 24 years in the Army Reserve and his practice has included working at a school clinic and at a nursing home. He has also participated in 23 mission trips – mostly in Central and South America. These trips have included work in the villages of the Quichua Indians in Ecuador and on the Amazon in Brazil where he lived on a primitive houseboat and took a smaller boat to the village where they saw patients. All of this while helping to raise four daughters. His practice in Pennsboro was successful and enabled him to retire at age 61 but total retirement did not last long. Last year, he began working one day/week as a dentist for the Susan Dew Hoff Clinic (free clinic) in West Milford where he continues to mentor WVU dental students.

RURAL HEALTH DAY

According to Stanford Medicine, rural communities make up about 20 percent of American's population, but less than 10 percent of physicians practice in these communities. This percentage also includes dentists and the majority of the



emergency medical service first responders. The unique nature of rural health care is not just about the shortage of workforce. The socio economic factors alone present a laundry list of challenges. Tobacco use is higher, many areas do not have access to broadband, there are higher rates of unemployment, many residents are uninsured and more rely heavily on nutritional assistance programs. With the looming threat of diminished federal funding, the need for rural medicine health care providers is more important than ever.

WVU Rural Health Day is the brainchild of April Vestal, Director of the Institute for Community and Rural Health. "The idea behind Rural Health Day was for us to be able to provide a platform to inspire impassion, and provide support in the sometimes daunting path to applying for medical school. We also wanted to bridge the gap between underserved populations and health care providers," said Vestal.

The second annual event, held on April 1, 2017 at the West Virginia University Health Sciences Center, brought nearly 80 pre-health undergraduate students from four-year institutions or community colleges in West Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Ohio. The idea is to introduce future health care professionals to a hands-on rural health experience. The hope is that the experience matriculates into students choosing a rural track curriculum and then a career in rural health.

The morning sessions allowed students to learn how to navigate through the journey of medical school and hear the personal stories of primary care physicians working in rural communities. They talked one-on-one with the physicians and were able to ask in-depth questions about practicing in small towns. Mid-afternoon featured a panel of current rural track medical students. This delivered first-hand experiences of rural track curriculum and upcoming next steps.

The afternoon sessions rotated students through hands-on practices such as suturing and ultrasound, demonstrations of acupuncture and simulations of baby deliveries.

WVU Rural Health Day would not be possible without the many volunteers of staff, physicians, students and rural physicians. We sincerely thank everyone for donating their time and expertise.

CLASS OF 2017

Established in 2012, the WVU School of Medicine Rural Track was proud and excited to graduate eight students from the class of 2017 at the May investiture ceremony. We are pleased to announce that all eight students have matched with primary care residencies throughout the country. Four students matched with residencies at West Virginia University. All eight graduates have plans to practice in a rural or underserved area.

The class of 2017 set the bar high for future students through their involvement in various organizations and academic standards. Among the eight graduates is a Pisacano Scholarship recipient (a prestigious award given annually to only five medical students across the country), three WVU Rural Scholars, a National Health Service Corp Scholar, and two US Army Second Lieutenants.

Richard Stefancic, class of 2017 graduate, believes that his participation in the program has catapulted him forward into his career. "I have been awarded the opportunity to better connect with the rural and underserved population, which will give priceless advantages to my future medical practice," said Stefancic.

Other graduates, such as Darrin Nichols, saw the Rural Track Program as an opportunity to gain more hands-on experience to help him on his way to becoming a rural physician. Nichols said, "I had the opportunity to form lasting friendships with fellow Rural Track classmates." Nichols stressed that the network of physicians he has encountered over the four years in the program has given him insight into patients in a rural setting.

The class of 2017 graduated with a combined \$225,000 in scholarship funds awarded by the WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health. Two recipients of the scholarship have signed a four-year commitment to practice in West Virginia upon completion of residency. One recipient has signed a one-year commitment.



WVU School Medicine Rural Track Class of 2017 includes:

- ✓ Jessica Eiser, MD
- ✓ Joseph Hansroth, MD
- ✓ Alyson Leo, MD
- ✓ Sarah Lively, MD
- ✓ Tanner Moore, MD
- ✓ Westley Mullins, MD
- ✓ Darrin Nichols, MD
- ✓ Richard Stefancic, MD

To learn more about the WVU SOM Rural Track, go to medicine.wvu.edu/rural/

THANK YOU, JODIE!

We would like to extend our sincerest thank you and best wishes for retirement to Jodie Jackson who has served the state for 25 years through her work in rural health in West Virginia. Jodie's interest in rural health began during college when she spent time in Alaska and learned about the role of public health nurses in providing most of the care to Alaska natives in remote areas of the state. After graduating from the University of Tennessee, College of Nursing, she immediately went to work as a home health nurse. As a nurse for the Buncombe County Health Department Division of Maternal and Child Care in Asheville, North Carolina, she would sometimes hike old logging roads or set up at local churches and community centers to conduct well-child visits or visited high-risk mothers and babies at their homes. Jodie and her husband, Strat, moved to Morgantown in 1990 when Strat received a job offer from West Virginia University. She was eight months pregnant and working on a master's degree in public health at Johns Hopkins University. She finished that degree by leaving Morgantown at 4:00 AM every Monday, driving to Baltimore in time for an 8:00 AM class and returning home on Wednesday night for an entire semester when her daughter was only a year old.

She began work in the WVU Office of Rural Health in 1992. "My role involved working with multiple disciplines and multiple health care facilities and universities in the state which gave me the opportunity to get to know some great people all over West Virginia," said Jackson. She has served as the Director of Research and Evaluation and been involved in several statewide projects including the West Virginia Area Health Education Center Program and significant contributions to a federal rural managed care grant in 1995.



▲ Jodie Jackson

"I feel most fortunate that we landed in West Virginia and that my daughter was born and raised here. For one, I see a lot more of my husband. He had to drive long distances from our previous homes in Chapel Hill, NC and Washington, D.C. to kayak the rivers of West Virginia," said Jackson.

We are the fortunate ones, Jodie, thank you.

CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITY: **25TH ANNUAL WEST VIRGINIA RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE**



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For more information, contact Debrin Jenkins at
304-890-7017 or debrinwvrha@gmail.com

RURAL HEALTH INTEREST GROUP

The Rural Health Interest Group (RHIG), a student organized group that has been meeting monthly at West Virginia University during each academic year since 2011, saw a significant increase in membership this past academic year with 450 attending one of the seven monthly meetings held between September and April 2017. The RHIG welcomed four speakers from Boone County this year to discuss approaches to addressing the opioid epidemic at a community level.



▲ Judge William S. Thompson

In January, Judge William S. Thompson of the Twenty-Fifth Judicial Circuit and Keith Randolph, Prosecuting Attorney for Boone County discussed the Drug Court Program, the program's positive impact on participants, and the need for more health professionals' involvement in team-based rehabilitation planning. "It was a wonderful opportunity to speak to such a well-attended meeting of the Rural Health Interest Group. As substance abuse and its devastating impact ravages southern West Virginia, it is good to know that so many of our future health care providers and leaders took interest in our story, said Randolph. I have said it before; the state's substance abuse problem will not be solved by the criminal justice system alone. Solving it will take the collaboration of doctors, nurses, mental health professionals, pharmacists, teachers, preachers and every other concerned citizen who is willing to take on the challenge. That is why Judge Thompson and I reached out to West Virginia University. Our state's future depends on the best and the brightest to help us with this challenge." Attendees included health profession students and residents from dentistry, exercise physiology, medicine, medical laboratory science, nursing, nurse practitioner, occupational therapy, pathology, pharmacy, physical therapy, public health as well as student studying law, education, psychology and counseling. The meeting streamed live to the WVU-Charleston Campus.

In April, Jill Epling and Aaron Adkins presented their work on raising awareness about prescription drug abuse in Boone County. Jill and Aaron are high school students participating in the WV Health Sciences and Technology Academy (WVHSTA). Their research project included a pre-intervention assessment of community-members knowledge about the proper way to dispose of unused medications, an educational brochure and a post-test that showed a significant increase in awareness about both prescription drug abuse and proper disposal. The RHIG is looking forward to another upcoming year of inter-professional discussions around rural health.

HOT EXPO

The Health Occupations Today (HOT) Expo, hosted by the Northern West Virginia Rural Health Education Center, offers colleges, universities, health agencies, and health care facilities a venue to highlight programs and services, and provide information and health awareness activities to a large group of interested high school students. Students can interact with a variety of health sciences professionals eager to share information and knowledge intended to increase awareness of health care careers. Attendees can experience a hands-on activity that connects their students to educators and organizations providing training and career opportunities in West Virginia.

The 6th annual HOT Expo is tentatively scheduled for **November 3, 2017**. If you are a high school teacher, counselor, an agency or organization representative, or represent a college or university, and you are interested in participating, please contact Lew Holloway at 304-462-6466 or lewholloway@nwwrhec.org.

Alumni Spotlight

AMY ISBLE, D.D.S.

Amy Isble, DDS, a 2012 graduate of the WVU School of Dentistry and a dental scholarship recipient in 2012 has served her two-year commitment to practice in an area of need and then some! Dr. Isble has been with the Kanawha County Dental Council for five years. The Council provides dental services to five schools in Kanawha County. Clinics are held in St. Albans Elementary, Bridgeview Elementary, Mary C. Snow (formerly Westside Elementary), Elk Center Elementary and Carver Technical and Career Center. "I enjoy working with children. I gain satisfaction from seeing children receive needed services that they may not have otherwise received," said Isble. "The scholarship I received allowed me to practice in West Virginia and provide needed services to rural and underserved populations."

The Kanawha County Dental Council provides services through Medicaid and CHIP as well as services to children and some adults with no insurance coverage. They are able to do this through grant and foundation funding. Dr. Isble participated in the "Give Kids a Smile" program in February where children receive free dental cleanings and exams. This program is part of a national effort to provide dental services to children. In 2017, the program has provided services to nearly 295,000 children nationwide.





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