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NRHA announces 2023 Rural Health Award recipients

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is proud to announce the association's 2023 Rural Health Award recipients. NRHA's Rural Health Awards are given each year to individuals and organizations in the field of rural health who have dedicated their time and talents to improving the health and well-being of others. The winners will be honored during NRHA's 46th Annual Rural Health Conference May 16-19 in San Diego, Calif.

"We're extremely proud of this year's winners, particularly because of the additional challenges rural health professionals face as we transition to a post-pandemic environment," says NRHA CEO Alan Morgan. "They have each made tremendous strides to advance rural health care, and we're confident they will continue to help improve the lives of rural Americans."

Memorial Hospital Association is this year's Outstanding Rural Health Organization. Located in Carthage, Ill., this hospital has been serving its rural community since 1950. The facility's progressive leadership, engaged board, dedicated employees, and involved community work together to keep residents healthy by providing services such as elder care, addiction treatment, chronic care management, and more.

Serving Oregon and its Migrants by Offering Solutions, a program of Mid-Columbia Medical Center in The Dalles, Ore., has been named this year's Outstanding Rural Health Program. SOMOS partners with local orchard owners, a community migrant health center, a dental clinic, the health department, inpatient and outpatient clinics, and other stakeholders to offer free health screenings and other resources for migrant families.

Bob Moser, MD, has been awarded the Louis Gorin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Health Care. Serving as executive director of the Kansas Center for Rural Health at the University of Kansas Medical Center, Moser provides the highest levels of clinical services as a physician and dedicated leader. In a career spanning multiple decades, Moser has helped increase access to care for patients in frontier areas and revolutionize rural medical education in the state.

Joel J. Johnson, MD, is NRHA's Rural Health Practitioner of the Year. As medical director of First Care Health Center in Park River, N.D., where he is often the lead provider in the clinic, ER, and hospital, Johnson is deeply committed to his patients, fellow clinicians, support staff, and community. He has been caring for many of his patients throughout their lives and his facility regularly receives top marks in patient satisfaction.

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Elizabeth Crouch, PhD, is NRHA's Outstanding Researcher Award winner. As director of the University of South Carolina's Rural and Minority Health Research Center, Crouch is a committed rural health researcher, leader, and advocate who has extensively published and presented her work on rural-urban differences across the lifespan. Through her work with students, she also helps mentor the next generation of rural researchers.

Diana C. Schow, PhD, is NRHA's Outstanding Educator Award winner. As assistant professor at Idaho State University and coordinator of the Graduate Certificate in Rural Health Program, Schow has dedicated her career to rural communities through direct service, administration, teaching, and research for more 20 years. She also helped establish southeast Idaho's first area health education center and is passionate about serving underserved populations.

Zachary Strecker is this year's NRHA/John Snow Inc. Student Leadership Award winner. He is third-year medical student at University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School and a member of the Rural Health Scholars pathway. He has emerged as a leader in his program, guiding projects focused on telehealth services quality and equity for rural populations and volunteering regularly with New England Rural Health Association.

Jennifer Davis, MD, has earned the NRHA/John Snow Inc. Student Achievement Award. During her time as a medical student at East Tennessee State University Quillen College of Medicine, Davis stuck to her rural roots by completing a portion of her Rural Primary Care Track training in her hometown of Rogersville, Tenn. Through her passion for rural health and culture, Davis has emerged as a future rural health champion and leader.

Kevin Bennett, PhD, is NRHA's Volunteer of the Year. A longtime member of NRHA since his student days, Bennett is very involved with the association through the Journal of Rural Health and Rural Health Policy Congress. He is always willing to help out at conferences, presents regularly at NRHA events, and has been integral in helping staff improve the Rural Health Fellows program and research track at NRHA's Annual Rural Health Conference.

Brock Slabach is the recipient of this year's President's Award. Selected for the award by NRHA President Leslie Marsh, Slabach is NRHA's chief operating officer and has served the association in senior leadership roles since 2008. Previously, he was a rural hospital administrator for more than 21 years and specializes in rural health system development and the varied payment programs moving rural providers into value-based purchasing models.

About NRHA

NRHA is a nonprofit organization working to improve the health and well-being of rural Americans and provide leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education, and research. NRHA's membership is made up of diverse individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.