



Fall 2021

IL RURAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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SAVE THE DATE!

**2022 IRHA
33rd Annual
Educational
Conference
August 10-11**



**I-Hotel
Champaign**

**More details
coming soon!**

25 Legislators Participate in Aug 24th Rural OB Shortage Forum

IRHA extended an invite to General Assembly members to participate in the first ever **Rural OB Shortage Forum** on Aug. 24th. The Forum was held via Zoom and the turnout was overwhelming! Legislators from both parties from all parts of the state participated but ironically the majority were from the Chicago and suburban areas. Back in April Dr. Phil Johnson of Litchfield Family Practice reached out to IRHA and ICAHN to see if we could join forces and get a group together to prevent the closure of any more Rural OB Depts. **We started having monthly Zoom meetings and officially formed the Rural OB Shortage Alliance (ROSA).** Additional participants in our meetings include hospitals administrators and representatives from the Illinois Health and Hospital Association, the Illinois Dept of Public Health, SIU School of Medicine, RMED and others. ICAHN Executive Director Pat Schou and IRHA Executive Director Margaret Vaughn put together a PowerPoint for the Forum that was shown to legislators, so **that would gain a better understanding of the background and causes of OB closures in rural settings as well as potential solutions.** A discussion followed in which legislators in were able to provide feedback and seek further insight. *See page 16 for list of legislators on call.*



**Doug Florkowski
CEO of Crawford
Memorial**

Issues we are looking to pursue at the state level include:

1. Allowing OB providers who work for privately owned Rural Health Clinics to qualify for State Student Loan Repayment Program to help with recruitment (hospital owned RHCS automatically qualify since they are considered non-profit)
2. Getting additional state grant funding for small hospitals that provide OB funding and are currently losing revenue to help defray their costs in order stay open.



Dr. Phil Johnson

Speakers included Dr. Phil Johnson of the Litchfield Family Practice Center and Crawford Memorial Hospital CEO Doug Florkowski, so legislators could hear from both the perspective of the challenges faced by docs delivering babies in a rural setting and as well as hospitals' struggles to keep their OB units open.



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The IL Helpline provider portal helps you connect your patients to services and now we can help you become an MOUD prescriber.

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Patient Balances in Times of COVID (Patient Co-Insurance and Deductible During COVID-19)

By Charles James, IRHA President

As the pandemic endures, questions are churning about payer policies for Co-Insurance and Deductible (Coins/Ded) amounts related to COVID. Today, we seek to illuminate the answers some of these questions.

Federal law prevents charging co-insurance and deductible for TESTING, and Vaccination. The laws passed at the beginning of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency prohibited providers from collecting balances for COVID *testing and vaccination*. There were not similar prohibitions on billing for medical treatment of COVID.

HHS recently issued a letter to payers and providers reminding them of their obligations not to charge patients for these services, especially recipients of Provider Relief Funds.

The letter reminds:

“Health care providers about your signed agreements to administer COVID-19 vaccines to patients free-of-charge, and

Group health plans and health insurers that you’re legally required to cover COVID-19 vaccines and diagnostic testing without patient cost sharing.” [See <https://www.cms.gov/covidvax-provider>]

By anecdotal reports, a review of media, and our own experience, Commercial payers HAD been eliminating patient cost-sharing. Commercial payers seem now to have started applying co-insurance and deductible amounts for medical treatment of COVID. Many have announced deadlines for starting to do so or other policy changes relative to recognizing out-of-network balances. As usual, there is wide variation among payers. (Here is a good index).

In trying to estimate the potential costs of COVID to patients, many refer to this study by Peterson Center on Healthcare and KFF (Kaiser Family Foundation), which examines “we examine the potential cost to employer health plans and their enrollees of COVID-19 treatment by looking at typical spending for hospital admissions for pneumonia [claims from 18 million people enrolled in large employer plans in 2018].”

The Peterson-KFF study goes on to state: “Some large health insurance companies have assured the public they will not charge higher cost-sharing for people who inadvertently go out-of-network, but only health care providers (such as hospital and physician groups) would be in a position to halt balance bills.”

Many of the reasons for surprise COVID-related patient bills were: out-of-network providers, high deductible amounts, prescription costs, medical device costs, and other unexpected medical expenses. The study also cited reason to expect HIGHER out-of-pocket costs for COVID due to increasing patient deductible amounts (driven by choices made by employers in selecting health plans), disproportionately higher numbers of patients being required to seek out-of-network care due to COVID. One unfortunate side affect of this is that patients will avoid vaccination due to fears of surprise medical bills.

A distortion of the Golden Rule applies in many cases, as it does here: “They with the gold make the rules.” As it goes with COVID patient bills. It will be up to the largess of large health insurance companies, employer group health plans, hospitals, and physician groups to determine how much burden our patients will share for their COVID treatments.



Charles James
IRHA President

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COVID-19 Updates



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Training



Podcast

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32nd Illinois Rural Health Association Annual Educational Conference a Success

The conference was held August 11-12 at the I-Hotel in Champaign. Attendees were able to choose from over 21 educational sessions, visit over 35 exhibitor booths and enjoy a federal update from our keynote speaker National Rural Health Association COO Brock Slabach. The annual Healthcare Awards were presented during the opening luncheon. Evening activities included a buffet dinner, trivia and karaoke.

Presidential Appreciation Award Presented to outgoing IRHA President Terri Agin Pictured with IRHA Board



2021 IRHA Annual Conference a Success

2021 Conference attendees mingle with exhibitors



Conference attendees relax at our evening social and trivia night at Champaign's Clark Bar





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**-Robert W. Jackson, D.O., FACOI
PSN President and Founder**

Our Mission



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To introduce and maintain the relationship between PSN specialists and the hospitals they serve.



To partner with Academic Medical Centers to provide access to healthcare now and for future generations.



To support the professional needs of PSN specialists and the hospitals providing these services.

Robert Groszewski
Director, Eastern Division

Office (573)881-0934
Fax (913)712-8270

Email robert.groszewski@psnmo.net
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2021 IRHA Annual Conference a Success

Conference attendees relax at our evening social and trivia night at Champaign's Clark Bar



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Congrats to our 2021 Health Care Award Winners

**Award of Merit Winner Ted Rogalski, Administrator
Genesis Medical Center – Aledo**



Pictured left to right National Rural Health Association COO Brock Slabach, Genesis Health Administrator Ted Rogalski, IRHA Executive Director Margaret Vaughn, Genesis Health Practice Site Manager Louise Johnson and IRHA President Terri Agin.

Ted Rogalski received the 2021 IRHA Award of Merit for his extraordinary efforts improving the well-being not only of his employees and patients but of the entire community at the onset and throughout the COVID crisis including the coordination of transportation for COVID testing and shots and even working to ensure schools who were learning remotely were not missing their lunches.



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Chris Christoffersen, *President & CEO*
christoffersen@hsagroup.net

**Administrator of the Year John Giertz
Jerseyville Community Hospital**



Pictured left to right: IRHA Executive Director Margaret Vaughn, Cami Giertz, John Giertz, and IRHA President Terri Agin

John Giertz has dedicated nearly 25 years of service to rural health care administration and has developed an expertise and his work with JHC has improved patient care in Calhoun, Jersey and Greene Counties. He has risen to the occasion and tackled whatever disasters he has had to work through including disastrous flooding and COVID to ensure patient care in the community is not interrupted.



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**Student of the Year
James Sparks**



Pictured left to right: Student of the Year James Sparks with family and IRHA Executive Director Margaret Vaughn

James Sparks is an inspiration to the Illinois Rural Health Association and his story is so moving he got a standing ovation at our Annual Conference. James had struggled with substance abuse and addiction issues most of his adult life and in 2014 after just serving a prison sentence for possession and distribution, when he was encouraged by an academic advisor that he could further his education, get an advanced degree and go on to help others who had similar struggles like himself with addiction and re-entry. He went on to get not only his bachelor's degree but a master's degree in Social Work from SIUC work and at age 54 graduated this past May James is currently a Behavioral Health Specialist with Shawnee Health Services. He was also the recipient of the 2021 IRHA Behavioral Health Scholarships.

A Path to Pursue at Every Stage of a Nursing Career

Nursing is a journey that fulfills many dreams. The routes nurses take to personal fulfillment and professional advancement are varied, but all involve a continuum of learning and the building of professional credentials.

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to talk**



Questions or interested in learning more? Contact

Lisa Carr

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Catching up 2021 IRHA Workforce Development Scholarship Recipients

IRHA is proud to report on the success of some of 2021 our dental and behavioral health scholarship recipients, who are already making a difference serving rural residents.



John Hanlon
Polo, Ogle County
SIU School of Dental Medicine

I am working in Middleton WI, a town just outside of Madison. I see a very diverse population of patients ranging from people driving from small towns in the area to people from the city of Madison. I provide care for all ages as well.

Thank you again for your wonderful scholarship, it has been exceptionally helpful in getting started in a wonderful career.

Clayton Janecke
Scales Mount, JoDaviess County
SIU School of Dental Medicine

Since graduation in June, my wife and I, along with our daughter, have moved to Warren in Northwest Illinois. I have bought and taken over a practice, working as a General Dentist serving our community and the surrounding area. Warren is a small, close-knit, farming community of around 1400 people.

My practice works with patients of all ages and all dental needs. Due to the shortage of dentists and the number of retiring dentists in our region, future plans could include a second location or expansion to better serve our patients.



Catching up 2021 IRHA Workforce Development Scholarship Recipients



**Rachel Taylor, MSW
LSOE, CADC in progress
NASW, NPGA, SIU Trauma
and Hotspot fellowship**

The scholarship financially allowed me to progress my educational studies to incorporate additional certifications offered at SIU.

I will be transitioning jobs on 11/16 as I have accepted a Sex offender and Substance Abuse therapist position with the IL Dept. of Corrections, Big Muddy Correctional Center.

I wouldn't have been able to achieve my dream career without the financial assistance of the IL Rural Association Scholarship!

**Kylie Russel
Ogden, Champaign County
Masters in Counseling and Higher Education
Eastern IL University**

I am excited to announce that I have accepted a position as one of the school counselors at Arthur Lovington Atwood Hammond (ALAH) High School! ALAH is a small rural high school serving a low-income population of 43%. In this role, I focus primarily on serving students' social emotional needs.

I am eager to begin my mission of breaking the stigma surrounding mental health in rural communities. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time at ALAH so far this year, while I am looking forward to what the future holds!



Catching up 2021 IRHA Workforce Development Scholarship Recipients

MaKenzie Clawson
Seaton, Mercer County
SIU School of Dental Medicine

I accepted an associate position at Myotech Dental Integrative health center in Moline, IL. I really enjoy this office because the owner doctor is a great mentor so that I can push myself to take on more challenging cases than I would in a solo office.

I'm starting to take CE courses so that I can expand my clinical knowledge and continue to provide the best possible care for my patients.



List of Legislators who Participated in Rural OB Shortage Forum *(continued from page 1)*

STATE REPRESENTATIVES

Avelar, Dagmara (D-Bolingbrook)
Butler, Tim (R-Springfield)
Batinick, Mark (R-Plainfield)
Bourne, Avery (R-Litchfield)
Hammond, Norine (R-Macomb)
Hernandez, Barb (D-Aurora)
Hirschauer, Maura (D-West Chicago)
Gong-Gershowitz, Jennifer
Lilly, Camille (D-Oak Park)
Luft, Mark (R-Peoria)
Marron, Mike (R-Danville)
Murphy, Mike (R-Springfield)
Mussman, Michelle (D-Schaumburg)
Ness, Suzanne (D-Carpentersville)
Stuart, Katie (D-Edwardsville)
Swanson, Dan (R-Woodhall)
Ugaste, Dan (R-St. Charles)
Weber, Tom (Staff)
West, Maurice (D-Rockford)
Willis, Kathleen (D-Addison)
Yedock, Lance (D-LaSalle)

STATE SENATORS

Connor, John (D-Lockport)
Ellman, Laura (D-Naperville)
Johnson, Adriane (D-Buffalo Grove)
Wilcox, Craig (staff) (R-McHenry)

CONGRESSIONAL

Congresswoman Lauren Underwood Staff -
Michelle Thimios



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Illinois HIV Care Connect will be continually posting on social media to communicate the benefits of Illinois HIV Care Connect to people living with HIV in Illinois.

Illinois HIV Care Connect is a statewide network providing medical case management, health care and support services to persons living with HIV. Eight regional offices coordinate the services provided through the program, which is funded by the Illinois Department of Public Health and federal grants and supported by the Illinois Public Health Association.

Visitors to the website can find valuable information about Illinois HIV Care Connect, as well as information about the Illinois ADAP Medication Assistance Program (ADAP-MAP) and Premium Assistance Program (PAP).

Illinois
HIV
Care Connect

hivcareconnect.com



IRHA Rural Physician Lifetime of Service Award

This year, IRHA established the Rural Physician Lifetime of Service Award. This distinction is designed as a “Lifetime Achievement Award” for physicians who are close to retirement and have devoted their entire careers to rural practice (minimum of 25 years) and have gone above and beyond the call of duty to improve the quality of life for their communities.

Shorkey Tawfik, MD award presentation held Sept 24th at FNH in Freeport



Pictured: Seated, Dr. Tawfik and his wife, standing State Rep. Andrew Chesney (R-Freeport), IRHA Executive Director Margaret Vaughn, FNH CEO Mark Gridley and State Sen Brian Stewart (R-Freeport).

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Collaborating to ADVANCE evidence-based healthcare

IRHA Rural Physician Lifetime of Service Award

**Dennis Palmer, DO Award presentation
held Sept. 28th at Oakview County Club in Aledo**



Pictured left to right: State Rep. Dan Swanson (R-Woodhull), IRHA President-Elect Diane Potts, Genesis Health Administrator Ted Rogalski, Mrs. Palmer, Dr. Dennis Palmer, IRHA Executive Director Margaret Vaughn and Tom Palmer



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IRHA Rural Physician Lifetime of Service Award

**Dr Randall Voigts, DO award presentation
held Oct 28th in Jerseyville**



Pictured 1st Row Dr. Voigts, IRHA Executive Director Margaret Vaughn, VP of Physician Services John Giertz and behind them JCH colleagues.



RETRO COMMISSIONING

Get cash incentives to optimize your systems' energy performance.

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PROJECT TYPES



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Incentives through this option can cover up to 100% of the survey cost for tune-up projects that have a simple payback period of up to one year. Measures that may qualify for RCx Lite incentives include:

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Implementation Incentive: \$0.02/kWh or \$0.10/therm saved



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Implementation Incentive: \$0.02/kWh saved

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[^] Estimated savings based on average cost per kWh/therm and depends on age and condition of current equipment.