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### **NRHA announces 2013 Rural Health Award recipients**

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is proud to announce its 2013 Rural Health Award recipients. The following organizations and individuals will be honored May 9 during NRHA's 36th Annual Rural Health Conference, which will attract more than 900 rural health professionals and students to Louisville, Ky.

"We're especially proud of this year's winners," said Alan Morgan, NRHA CEO. "They have each already made tremendous strides to advance rural health care, and we're confident they will continue to help improve the lives of rural Americans."

The **Arizona Center for Rural Health** will receive the Outstanding Rural Health Organization Award. The center, formed in 2011, strives to improve rural health care through research, teaching and service in the diverse state with 22 tribal nations and unique health care issues along the U.S.-Mexico border.

**Gibson Area Hospital and Health Services** (GAHHS) will receive the 2013 Rural Health Quality Award. GAHHS implemented computerized physician order entry medication bar coding to assist with medication verification and initiated the process to replace infusion pumps with smart pump technology that included safety software helping the Gibson City, Ill., facility become closer to achieving and maintaining best practice guidelines for patient safety.

The **University of Alabama Rural Health Leaders Pipeline** is this year's Outstanding Rural Health Program. For 20 years, the program has successfully attracted rural students into health professions and produced more than 50 physicians for rural Alabama who are leaders in developing healthy communities.

**Charlie Alfero** will receive the Louis Gorin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Health Care. He is executive director of Hildago Medical Services (HMS) Center for Health Innovation in rural New Mexico. The geographically vast, sparsely populated Hildago County had been without primary medical care services for 10 years, but Alfero assisted community leaders to re-start HMS, a nonprofit primary health care organization. Since 1997, HMS has grown from a single clinic to a 12-site community health center providing primary medical, dental and mental health services across Grant and Hidalgo Counties.

**Larry Rhodes, MD**, is NRHA's 2013 Rural Health Practitioner of the Year. Rhodes is a pediatric cardiologist who volunteers at outreach clinics serving rural West Virginia. He is also director of the West Virginia University Institute for Community and Rural Health, which enabled 400 students to complete 2,700 weeks of rural health training in 2012.

**George Pink, PhD**, will receive NRHA's Outstanding Researcher Award. He is Humana distinguished professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the Gillings School of Global Public Health Department of Health Policy and Management and a senior research fellow at the North Carolina Rural Health Research and Policy Analysis Center that has produced research to inform rural health policy for more than 20 years.

**Erin Locke** will receive the Student Leadership Award. She is a fourth-year University of Kansas School of Medicine student and has conducted research on the challenges of provider retention in rural Kansas and presented it in D.C. She recently completed a rotation in Tanzania and plans to be a family physician in rural Kansas. The Kansas Academy of Family Physicians nominated Locke for the NRHA honor.

**Ian Stormont** will receive the Student Achievement Award. He is a fourth-year medical student in the Wisconsin Academy for Rural Medicine at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health. He worked with Scenic Rivers Area Health Education Council and the Gundersen Hospital in La Crosse, Wis., to create, fund and implement a week-long health careers camp for Native American high school students. The first camp was so successful it is now an annual event.

NRHA's Annual Rural Health Conference is the largest gathering of rural health professionals in the nation. John Snow Inc. provides scholarships to the student awardees to participate in the event.

"Every year, rural Americans come together to gain education and raise awareness on behalf of the 62 million Americans who live in rural areas and desperately need access to affordable health care," said Morgan.

NRHA is a nonprofit organization working to improve the health and well-being of rural Americans and providing leadership on rural health issues through advocacy, communications, education and research. NRHA membership is made up of 21,000 diverse individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.

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