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### **NRHA announces 2012 Rural Health Award recipients**

The National Rural Health Association (NRHA) is proud to announce its 2012 Rural Health Award recipients. The following organizations and individuals will be honored April 19 during NRHA's 35th Annual Rural Health Conference, which will attract more than 900 rural health professionals and students to Denver.

"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."

**Beartooth Billings Clinic** will receive the Outstanding Rural Health Organization Award. Located in Red Lodge, Mont., and serving Yellowstone Park tourists, the 60-year-old hospital integrated a local primary care clinic – partnering with Billings Clinic, 65 miles away – to construct an \$18 million hospital/clinic through 12 years of careful planning and fundraising that enabled Beartooth to remain independent and community owned while creating a new and innovative medical model.

**Crete Area Medical Center** will receive the 2012 Rural Health Quality Award. Nominated by the Nebraska Hospital Association, staff at the two rural health clinics and critical access hospital have taken a medical home approach and as a result, their diabetic patients are two and half times more likely than the national average to have their long-term blood sugar tested and five times more likely to reach a managed level. In 2011, the medical center also saw a 125 percent increase in cervical cancer screenings, a 69 percent increase in mammography screenings and a 282 percent increase in colorectal cancer screenings.

**Access Health – Blessing Hospital** is this year's Outstanding Rural Health Program. Access Health provides access to health care to uninsured patients in Adams County, Ill., through coordinating a voluntary network of providers and offering care management services. The network not only provides health care on a sliding fee scale, it empowers people to play a key role in improving the quality of their life by providing the knowledge and support for them to become participating members of their health care team.

**Joanne Cochran**, PhD, EdD, will receive the Louis Gorin Award for Outstanding Achievement in Rural Health Care. She co-founded Keystone Rural Health Center in Chambersburg, Pa., in 1986 to provide care to migrant farm workers. Then, three volunteers provided part-time, seasonal care to 500 patients. Under Cochran's leadership, Keystone has grown into a community health center that employs 325 people providing comprehensive medical, dental and behavioral health care to 40,000 patients per year.

**Tyler Hughes**, MD, is NRHA's 2012 Rural Health Practitioner of the Year. A successful surgeon in Dallas, Hughes was faced with the opportunity to advance on an administrative track in the metropolitan area, but instead chose to pursue his dream of practicing in a rural area. When he initially arrived in rural McPherson, Kan., Hughes didn't have a student to mentor so he decided to pay college students to shadow him in hopes that they will be inspired to serve rural residents as well.

**Therese Zink, MD**, will receive the Distinguished Educator of the Year Award. She teaches in the University of Minnesota Medical School's Rural Physician Association program and cares for patients in rural Zumbrota, Minn., where she mentors students and started a collaboration between providers to address the needs of individuals and the community. Zink collected rural health professionals' experiences through essays, poems and short stories in the anthology, "The Country Doctor Revisited: A Twenty-first Century Reader." She secured funding to sponsor book discussion groups with students at 11 medical schools across the country to promote rural health careers.

**Timothy D. McBride, PhD**, will receive NRHA's Outstanding Researcher Award. A professor and associate dean for public health at St. Louis' Washington University Brown School of Social Work, McBride has conducted rural health services research for more than 20 years. But his efforts to promote rural health justice are not limited to data collection. He is an advocate for rural people, providing testimony to Congress, educating legislative staff members and writing op-eds for national media.

**Laci Rector** will receive the Student Leadership Award. This University of Colorado dental student founded Rural Smiles, a service-learning project aimed at incorporating preventative oral health strategies into rural schools throughout eastern Colorado, where Rector was raised and hopes to practice. Rural Smiles offers lesson plans for teachers and interactive presentations by volunteer university students of all disciplines.

**Charles "Chuck" Jantzen** will receive the Student Achievement Award. A native of rural Oklahoma and a third-year student at Oklahoma State University's College of Osteopathic Medicine, Jantzen plans to start a rural family medicine practice. He is a leader in the school's new Students for Osteopathic Rural Medicine club and presents to first- and second-year students about growing rural physician workforce needs, sharing his passion to care for the underserved. He serves as a rural volunteer firefighter and volunteers at rural health fairs.

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 22,000 diverse individuals and organizations, all of whom share the common bond of an interest in rural health.

**[www.RuralHealthWeb.org](http://www.RuralHealthWeb.org)**