



NARHC News

Volume 1, Issue 1 December 2005

Ohio Couple Honored with Outstanding Rural Health Provider Awards

A Statewide Rural Health Conference was held on June 3, 2005 at the Quest Business Center in Ohio. Approximately 125 participants attended the conference, which was titled, "Bringing it Home: Quality, Access and Resources." Ohio's Lieutenant Governor Bruce Johnson and Dr. Forrest Calico, Senior Advisor on Quality for the National Rural Health Association addressed the morning plenary session, followed by two sets of four "Toolbox" sessions in the morning. The Awards Banquet convened for lunch, awarding an outstanding rural health administrator, an outstanding rural health program and two outstanding rural health providers. The awards delivery had a surprise ending for the two providers, a married couple who had unknowingly nominated each other, **Dr. Stephen Ulrich** and **Theresa Ulrich, MSW, LISW**. The acceptance speeches touched the hearts of all who were there. "We want to thank everyone and it is our hope that we will have the funding to continue to serve our populations." They went into an underserved area 24 years ago and Theresa is the only private Mental Health worker in this underserved area. When asked about the acceptance speeches, Theresa stated "The speeches were not pre-written as neither myself or my husband had any warning that this was happening, so we were both surprised! My husband is much better at speech making and he is the one who presented my award to me. He alluded to my donation of time to help new Rural Health centers adjust to their new billing issues, as I regularly serve as a consultant to these projects and the Department of Health on a gratis basis."



Dr. Stephen Ulrich and Theresa Ulrich, MSW, LISW

"It is our hope that we will have funding to continue to serve our populations!"

Terri Ulrich, MSW, LISW
Practice Manager
Perry County Family Practice
1625 Airport Road
P.O. Box 596
New Lexington, Ohio 43764



The Ulrich's pictured with Heather Reed, head of the Office of Rural Health

Administrative Services Contract to Change

The State Public Policy Group (SPPG) has managed the Administrative Services for the association for nearly six years. In August, they made a strategic decision for their company to focus more strongly in the policy and issue management arena and will not be renewing their contract. The NARHC Board of Directors and members appreciate the hard work and long term commitment made by SPPG and wish them the best in their new venture. Special thanks go out to **Jon Rosmann**, Senior Program Manager and **Ben Banowetz**, Program Manager for their dedication and support over the years.

NARHC Board of Directors has selected Health Services Associates, Inc. of Fremont, Michigan to assume the administrative services of the association which will begin on January 1, 2006. Under the direction of **Ron Nelson, PA-C**, HSA is a practice management consulting group developed specifically for the purpose of providing management and consulting services to medical practices in rural areas throughout the United States. Mr. Nelson, President of HSA, will be principle on the contract and will resign from his NARHC Board effective January 1, 2006. Mr. Nelson is the co-founder and first President of the NARHC; and past President of the AAPA. "All of us at HSA are excited about this opportunity and are ready to get to work!" explained Mr. Nelson at the Annual Meeting held in Washington DC when the announcement of the contract change was made.

"We are looking forward to an equally beneficial and long term relationship with HSA as we have had with SPPG." stated Bill Finerfrock.



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From the Executive Director

First, I want to thank you for your support of the Association and the work we do on behalf of Rural Health Clinics and the patients you serve. As you will notice later in this newsletter, effective January 1, 2006, the Association will be receiving administrative services from Health Services Associates. We are very pleased and excited about the new opportunities we can pursue with the HSA staff and leadership and look forward to a long and productive relationship.

This will also mark the end of the Association's relationship with SPPG. While the company has chosen to move in a different strategic direction, we want to thank them for their many years of work with the RHC community and their guidance as we have continued to grow.

As I was writing this article, the United States House of Representatives was debating and voting on the 2006 Fiscal Year Appropriation bill for the Department of Health and Human Services. The final version of the bill would have been devastating for the rural health community as it would have caused the likely closing of the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy and a discontinuation of the Rural Health Clinic teleconference series among other things.

NARHC and other organizations quickly crafted a letter to every Congressional office urging them to vote against the bill and go back to the drawing table. I am pleased to report that the bill was defeated and the following is an excerpt from one of the news articles published immediately after the vote,

"Lawmakers after the vote said it was defeated by a wide-ranging coalition of conservatives who do not vote for social services spending under any circumstances, **moderate Republicans upset about cuts in rural healthcare access**, and Republicans in general who did not receive earmarks under a bill-wide ban negotiated with the Senate."

While no one group alone was responsible for defeating this bad bill, all of us working together were able to marshal the votes to prevail. Now the challenge begins to get the money restored so that the Office of Rural Health and many vital rural programs can continue.

Your continued support for NARHC and the work we do is appreciated. Please let us know how we can be of help.

Bill Finerfrock
Executive Director
NARHC

From the President

Greetings, colleagues and friends of rural health. We at the National Association of Rural Health Clinics hope you enjoy and find informative the new format for our newsletter.

If there has ever been a time to stay informed and active in the health policy arena, it is now! In fact, it will be essential that we stay actively engaged over the next several years. It is obvious to everyone in healthcare that the federal and state budgets will continue to contract regarding healthcare funding issues. Across the nation, state Medicaid offices are dealing with numerous creative ways to hold cost at bay. CMS is no less interested in maintaining control over the ever-spiraling cost of delivering healthcare.

Rural Health Clinics are a very small piece of that big pie. The at risk populations we serve have little voice in Washington and we must collectively, as their healthcare providers and healthcare system, continue to champion the cause of providing appropriate quality cost effective healthcare in the rural areas we serve. Our voices are not heard unless we collectively band together and support a national organization that represents us and these important issues.

The National Association of Rural Health Clinics continues to be the tip of the spear for the Rural Health Clinics Program. Our relationship with Capital Associates and Mr. Bill Finerfrock, our executive director, has yielded numerous policies, additions, changes and innovations at the federal level. We also continue to assist members at the state level as they deal with Medicaid and state policy issues.

All of us at the National Association of Rural Health Clinics appreciate your support and look forward to your continued membership. To those of you, who are members, recruit a member. To those of you who are not members, join us in our efforts.

Finally, I personally wish each of you a safe and happy holiday season. May good health be your enduring blessing.

John Gill

In the Next Issue

Diabetes Training/Education
Billing
Medicare Advantage
Common Questions from Listserve

Recap of Annual Meeting in Washington, DC

The 2005 Annual Meeting proved to be another great success despite Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The number of participants were down this year due to the hurricanes but the energy levels of those in attendance was very high. Comments like "I always learn so much at this conference" and "This meeting has been wonderful because it is small enough to be personal, but very professional in content" marked the success.

Bill Finerfrock started the meeting off by doing an outstanding job coordinating the meetings on the hill and with educating the participants on how to lobby. "I was extremely pleased with having information presented to us on how to lobby in the Senate and House buildings. This was very helpful!" "The session was very informative, as always, and helpful for a better understanding of the variety of issues facing RHCs" wrote a couple of participants.

Days two and three were just as intense educationally as the first day. A panel of speakers went over *RHC 101* which always proves beneficial to, not only to the new RHC personnel, but to those who have been in the business for awhile it serves as a good refresher. "I appreciated the knowledge of the individuals as a group presenting key information" wrote one participant. Also discussed were the *Medicare Advantage Program*, *RHC Update*, *Medicaid Update* and *Understanding Managed Care*. Both of these days also offered concurrent sessions which included topics on the *340B Drug Pricing Program*, *Behavioral Health Services*, panel discussion with the *Fiscal Intermediaries* and *Compensation Programs in Provider-Based Organizations*. Those who participated in the concurrent sessions gained from them and left with a greater understanding and appreciation for the opportunities and diversity in the RHC Program

We encourage you to mark your calendar for our Spring Institute and would like to extend a special thanks to all who attended the Annual Meeting.

Congratulations Anita Baker!
Anita was the Door Prize winner from the Annual Conference.

Meet the New Board Members of 2005

At the October Annual Meeting in October two new members were appointed to the Board of Directors, **Gail Nickerson** and **Ramsey Longbotham**. Help warmly welcome them to your Board of Directors!

Gail Nickerson has worked in the field of rural health care for the last twenty years, as a health systems consultant and an outpatient clinic administrator. She also has considerable experience working with a variety of nonprofit organizations. Gail is a Past Chair of the Humboldt County, California Mental Health Board. She was a Peer Leader and later a Faculty Advisor in the Public Health Institute's Women's Health Leadership Program, and is also an alumni of the inaugural class of Cascadia Leadership Institute in Humboldt County, California. Gail currently works as the Director of Clinic Operations for Adventist Health in Roseville, CA, providing oversight for eighteen provider-based Rural Health Clinics in five California counties.

Ramsey Longbotham is currently the Executive Director for the Health First of Texas, PA, which is a messenger model independent physician association (IPA) in Victoria, Texas consisting of 127 physician members contracted with 22 managed care plans. He has held this position since November 1998. Ramsey is also the Executive Director of the Texas Association of Rural Health Clinics (TARHC) a position he has held since November of 1998. The association has been in existence since its creation in Cuero, Texas, in 1993, and in 1994 combined its members with a Texas hospital RHC association that expanded the membership. The association's website is www.tarhc.org.



Upcoming 2006 RHC Events

Spring Institute will be held at the *Crowne Plaza Riverwalk* in San Antonio, TX on **March 9 and 10, 2006**.

The **Summer Institute** will be held in either Reno or Las Vegas, NV. We are looking into June dates and hotel locations.

The **Annual Meeting** will be held at the *Hyatt Regency* in Washington, DC on **November 15 - 18, 2006**.

National Association of Rural Health Clinics

Bill Finerfrock
202-543-0348
info@narch.org

NARHC News is published quarterly.

The purpose of this publication is to keep **YOU** informed of the issues affecting your practice and patients. It also serves as the official word of the association and offers clarification.

Have an idea for an article?

We would like to hear from **YOU!**

Please send your article ideas via email to Nancy at npratt@hsagroup.net. All articles will be reviewed and upon acceptance, placed in the next quarters newsletter depending upon available space.

The National Association of Rural Health Clinics (NARHC) is the only national organization dedicated exclusively to improving the delivery of quality, cost-effective health care in rural under served areas through the Rural Health Clinics (RHC) Program. Through the association, NARCH members become actively engaged in the legislative and regulatory process. Please view the Web Site as an information resource for and about the Rural Health Clinics program. We have tried to provide you with valuable up-to-date information on issues affecting rural health clinics and the communities they serve. In addition, there are useful links to other sites that we have found valuable.

Web Site: www.narhc.org

Check it out today!

2005 Board of Directors

Wm. John Gill, President

Wauchula, FL 33873

Phone: 863-773-6606

Email: jgill@strato.net

Ron Nelson, Treasurer

Fremont, MI 49412

Phone: 231-924-0244

Email: nelson@hsagroup.net

Jim Estes, Secretary

Bartlesville, OK 74003

Phone: 800-399-0874

Email:

hlthcarehorizons@mindspring.com

Kerry Casperson, Board Member

Blackfoot, ID 83221

Phone: 208-785-2600

Email: kerryc@bfmed.com

Brenda Church, Board Member

Terre Haute, IN 47807

Phone: 812-238-4923

Email: fpbgc@uhhg.org

Ramsey Longbotham, Board Member

Cuero, TX 77954

Phone: 361-576-2940

Email: ramsey@tarhc.org

Gail Nickerson, Board Member

Roseville, CA 95661

Phone: 916-774-7308

Email: nickergw@ah.org

Ernie Parisi, Board Member

Quitman, TX 75783

Phone: 903-763-4505

Staff

Bill Finerfrock

Executive Director

National Association of Rural Health Clinics

426 C Street, NE

Washington, DC 20002

Phone: 202-543-0348

Fax: 202-543-2565

Email: bf@capitolassociates.com

State Public Policy Group

Administrative Services

Jon Rosmann, Sr Program Manager

Ben Banowitz, Program Manager

200 10th Street, 5th Floor

Des Moines, IA 50309

Phone: 515-243-2000

Fax: 515-243-5941

meetings@narhc.org

membership@narhc.org

www.narhc.org