

# Community STARS



National Rural  
Health Day  
*Celebrating the Power of Rural!*





# National Rural Health Day #powerofrural

On this, the 25th anniversary of the Federal State Office of Rural Health Program and National Rural Health Day, the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) is proud to present “Community Stars”, a collection of touching and impactful stories about the people who work with State Offices of Rural Health (SORH) across the nation.

Each of the 50 SORH is an anchor of information and technical assistance for rural communities. Their quiet work ensures collaboration is a cornerstone on which rural communities can build to ensure better health and improved care.

This publication honors and gives a personal voice to rural people, providers, advocates, and communities across the country. It documents just a few shining examples of service and dedication to the people who call rural America home. We thank all those who submitted these stories and to those individuals highlighted on these pages.

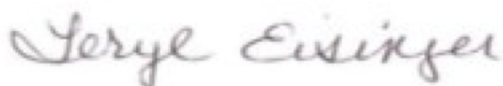
From that first year of National Rural Health Day, SORH, State Rural Health Associations and our partners around the nation have received governor’s proclamations, conducted photo contests, conferred awards, convened conferences, and broadcast webinars to educate the public on the “Power of Rural.” We do this to ensure the health needs of millions of rural Americans are understood and to focus attention on these key facts:

- Rural communities are wonderful places to live and work.
- Rural America’s health professionals, hospitals, and clinics are dedicated to delivering high-quality and innovative care to underserved Americans.
- Collaboration is crucial to address the barriers and disparities that remain.

During this 2016 National Rural Health Day, and for all of 2017, we call on all those who care about rural America to join NOSORH and take the “**Pledge to Partner**” and to keep working for the Power of Rural. Rural health organizations, companies that serve rural health providers, and all those for whom rural health matters are asked to commit to four specific calls to action: Innovate, Collaborate, Educate, and Communicate. Together, we can work to ensure that rural health funding and policies are in place to meet the needs of rural communities. Pledge now at [PowerofRural.org](http://PowerofRural.org) and while you’re at it, take to social media and make #PowerofRural a trending topic.

We hope that you enjoy and become inspired by these stories about the real stars of rural America. On behalf of your partners in the 50 SORH and the staff of the NOSORH, we wish you every success as you work to improve health in rural America.

Happy National Rural Health Day 2016!



Teryl Eisinger, MA Executive Director  
National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health

Thank You Sponsors! Without You, National Rural Health Day Would Not Be Possible!



Thank You To Our Partners for Your Support on National Rural Health Day!



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Take the  
**PLEDGE**

[www.powerofrural.org](http://www.powerofrural.org)



**Innovate**



**Educate**



**Collaborate**



**Communicate**

## What is the Pledge to Partner?

It's a Collective Focus Over a One Year Time Span. It's a Fresh Conversation. It's a Way to Communicate & Address Challenges. It's a Promise to Stay Informed & Get Involved.



# National Rural Health Day [#powerofrural](#)

## COMMUNITY STARS

Mary “Mellie” Bridewell – Lake Village, AR .....	6
Maria Coutant-Skinner – Torrington, CT.....	7
Dr. Morton Glasser – Willimantic, CT .....	8
Jeri Johnson – Loa, UT.....	9
Linda Larson – Montecello, UT .....	10
Roger Masse – Ellsworth, KS.....	11
Dr. Arnold Matlin – Mt. Morris, NY.....	12
Dr. Jara McDonald – Kellogg, ID.....	13
Mercy Hospital Watonga – Watonga, OK .....	14
Dr. R. Curtis Mills – St. Johnsville, NY.....	15
Patrick O’Hara – Cooperstown, NY .....	16
Dr. Mary Ann Rigas – Coudersport, PA .....	17
Saint Elizabeth Medical Center – Wabasha, MN .....	18
Snake River Community Clinic – Lewiston, ID.....	19
United Way of Laurel Highlands – Johnstown, PA.....	20
Susan Wilger – Silver City, NM.....	21
Marty Wilson – Cleveland, UT .....	22
Dr. Marlene Wust-Smith – Port Allegany, PA .....	23

## COMMUNITY STAR – Mary “Mellie” Bridewell

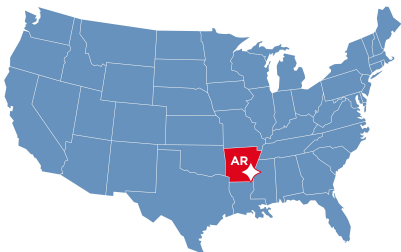


NAME:  
Mary “Mellie” Bridewell

ORGANIZATION:  
Greater Delta Alliance for Health

LOCATION:  
Lake Village, AR

SUBMITTED BY:  
Arkansas Office of Rural Health



In 2007, 10 rural hospitals joined forces to improve community outreach and population health. As the Executive Director of the Greater Delta Alliance for Health, Mellie Bridewell understands the sense of pride and connection that comes from having a stable community hub, like a hospital. “The hospitals were facing reduced staffing and resources, so we needed to collaborate and formalize our network.”

At the helm, Mellie oversees the many programs that the Alliance promotes. The Health Education for Local Providers (HELP) program trains health care providers using on-site simulations and other methods. And, thanks to a Delta States grant, hospitals are becoming certified diabetes care and education sites. Next on the list, bringing in more nurses.

Having grown up in the delta, Mellie knows how important it is to keep community hospitals operating, with providers who are part of the community. “Patients want to know who their doctor is,” she says. Her favorite story is about a local doctor who walked into a store with his children, where he was greeted by just about everybody, as he was well-known in the small town. After they left, his daughter said ‘daddy, you’re just like Santa Claus!’ “That’s one of the best reasons to practice here,” says Mellie. “You become a hometown hero.”

## COMMUNITY STAR – Maria Coutant-Skinner

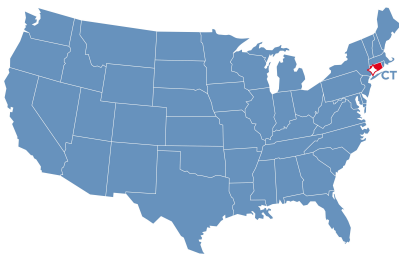


**NAME:**  
Maria Coutant-Skinner

**ORGANIZATION:**  
McCall Center for  
Behavioral Health

**LOCATION:**  
Torrington, CT

**SUBMITTED BY:**  
Connecticut Office of Rural  
Health



The McCall Center for Behavioral Health is in the part of Connecticut that boasts rolling foothills, quaint New England villages, green trees and blue water. The beautiful surroundings aren't overly populated, as there are only 35,000 residents in Torrington. The small city houses all of the social services for Litchfield County, including the soup kitchen, several churches and shopping centers.

As Executive Director of the McCall Center, Maria Coutant-Skinner is happy that this tight-knit community brings a spirit of collaboration to everything they do. She grew up here, and after school and a year abroad, decided to make it her home. "It sounds cliché, but there are remarkable people here," she says. "People who have a passion for people in need, helping them realize their potential."

One of the drawbacks of a rural community is the isolation that some experience, which can amplify societal problems, especially for those battling addiction. Maria had a front row seat to this phenomenon when she was working directly with clients. "You can see when you help with the tangible problems – transportation, economic stress – its good. But when you can solve an intangible – like making a connection, finding out they're not alone – it can be magical," she says.

The McCall Center started a taskforce to address the high rate of overdoses in the county. The model is gaining the attention of larger cities who are dealing with the same issue. Maria's excited to be the one leading the charge, developing the model and sharing their findings. After all she says, "when we can build these connections, the suffering is reduced."

## COMMUNITY STAR – Dr. Morton Glasser

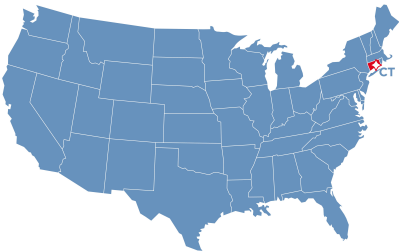


NAME:  
Dr. Morton Glasser

ORGANIZATION:  
Generations Family Health  
Center

LOCATION:  
Willimantic, CT

SUBMITTED BY:  
Generations Family Health  
Center



When you have practiced medicine for over 50 years, it is hard to remember exactly what got you involved in medicine in the first place. Dr. Morton Glasser recalls, “It was probably lots of things. Whatever it was, I am still doing it because I still love it.” The day after he got married, he and his wife went to Oklahoma to work at a 150-bed Indian Health Services Hospital. “It was a great experience for this kid from the Bronx,” Dr. Morton shares. During his two years, he delivered 120 babies, treated active tuberculosis patients, and learned to ride a horse, among many more experiences that helped shape the doctor he would become.

He chose to practice in rural Connecticut when returning to the Northeast. When he first came to town, he was one of three doctors in this small town that were willing to accept state welfare patients. Dr. Glasser explains, “The majority of people were locked out of main stream medicine and were routinely getting their care in the emergency room.” Generations Family Health Center, a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC), opened its doors in 1984 directly across from his private practice and the practice and relationship has grown ever since. Dr. Glasser recently closed his private practice to focus full-time on his work with the FQHC.

Dr. Glasser helped change the healthcare landscape for indigent people in this area. “We converted a 2-tier system of those who had access to care and those who did not, to a 1-tier system where everyone has access to quality care. They feel like they have a true medical home and I am thrilled by it all,” shares Glasser.

He is asked about three times a week when he will retire. His response, “I’m having too good a time.”



## COMMUNITY STAR: Jeri Johnson

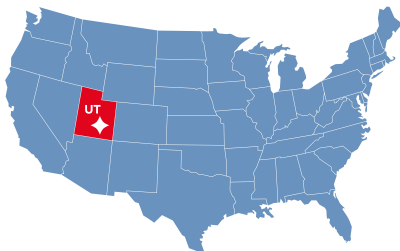


NAME:  
Jeri Johnson

ORGANIZATION:  
Wayne County EMS

LOCATION:  
Loa, UT

SUBMITTED BY:  
Utah Bureau of EMS and  
Preparedness



With an average population of less than one person per square mile, and the closest medical center being at least an hour away, Wayne County presents an unusual challenge to providing EMS services. Even so, Jeri Johnson says she always felt she would come back, “in my heart I knew.” She cites having more time with the people she cares for as one of the rewarding aspects of her job. She says, “you have time to develop your skills, and you get to see how it all plays out.”

Capitol Reef National Park is close by, as well as Bryce Canyon and Arches National Parks, which means lots of elevation changes. And, it’s not only the terrain that’s diverse. Tourism brings many people through Wayne County each year, and often people with limited or no English. Cell coverage can be a challenge in remote areas, which means translation services may be unavailable.

As if providing care under these circumstances wasn’t enough, Jeri also volunteers with the county disaster response team, coordinating testing and drills for other EMS providers. She also serves on the state team and works with the surrounding counties to develop the relationships needed to get services. She says she likes being a part of it, “and knowing we have each other’s back.”

She was born and raised here, and went into the EMS field right out of high school. She has seen the relationship between hospitals and EMS personnel evolve over time, and she hopes to continue to see EMS further integrated into the care system. “We are considered a critical part of the care team,” she reports. “We’ve come a long way.”

## COMMUNITY STAR: Linda Larson



**NAME:**

Linda Larson

**ORGANIZATION:**

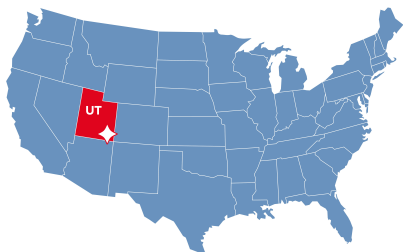
San Juan County EMS

**LOCATION:**

Montecello, UT

**SUBMITTED BY:**

Utah Bureau of EMS and Preparedness



At 8600 square miles, San Juan County is the largest county in Utah. With both mountains and red rock desert, the region is home to about 14,000 people. Linda Larson has lived here her whole life.

She began her career working as a secretary for the local ambulance service and found herself training to become an Advanced Emergency Medical Technician. She has also served as the County EMS Director for the last 16 years. In her leadership position, she also serves as the training officer, EMS coordinator, EMS for children county coordinator and emergency management operation chief.

Linda cites her highly trained EMS family as one of the best things about her job. "I work with amazing people," she says. "They are truly dedicated."

With treacherous winter travel and overheated hikers in the summer, she says the distance to hospitals can be a challenge. The other challenge is funding. "Retention is important," she says. "We need to keep people, which can be hard when the funds aren't there."

She enjoys running and travel with her family when she's not working, which isn't often. "I wouldn't be where I am without the staff that I work with."

## COMMUNITY STAR – Roger Masse



NAME:

Roger Masse

ORGANIZATION:

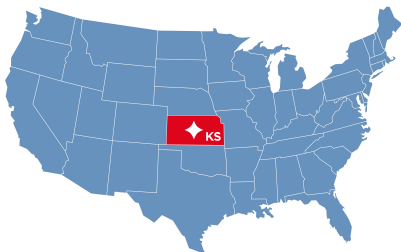
Ellsworth County Medical  
Center

LOCATION:

Ellsworth, KS

SUBMITTED BY:

Central Kansas Mental  
Health Center



Ellsworth County Medical Center has a simple mission – Improving Lives, and CEO Roger Masse recognized the value of teaming with other agencies to accomplish this clear and concise directive.

Often rural hospitals aren't part of a larger system, so identifying different models of care that help keep costs down and move toward quality outcomes is essential. "We're watching what happens with value-based payments," says Masse. "But we also need to look at the incentives around population health, and the impediments that critical access hospitals have to achieving those goals."

The clinic enjoys very supportive staff and community, yet at times it was still hard to keep going. "Patient centered care being delivered at the clinics really helps to keep costs down," he says. "That's important to support the economic development of the community."

Roger Masse is happy to be living in a rural community where people know each other, and the lifestyle is simple and relaxed. In fact, lifestyle plays a big part in keeping staff rooted in the community, along with a team-based, hands-on approach to providing care. "We want people to stay."

## COMMUNITY STAR – Dr. Arnold Matlin

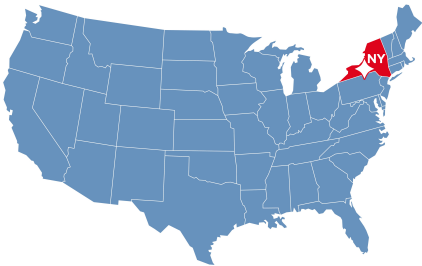


NAME:  
Dr. Arnold Matlin

ORGANIZATION:  
Livingston County Health  
Department

LOCATION:  
Mt. Morris, NY

SUBMITTED BY:  
Livingston County Health  
Department



They say in a small town, everybody knows you. That is certainly true about the residents of Livingston County, NY, and Dr. Arnold Matlin. After practicing pediatric medicine for over 30 years, he began to see his former patients bringing in their own children for care.

Born and raised in Brooklyn, Dr. Matlin hadn't specifically considered practicing in a rural town. But after completing his residency in Rochester, NY, he says, "I just knew I didn't want to be in a city."

He landed his current role as Medical Consultant at Livingston County Health Department in 2004.

As Medical Consultant, Dr. Matlin helps draft and interpret the regulations that keep the health care system in shape, overseeing credentialing and making improvements to the provider notification process.

He suggests to anyone considering a move to a rural area to meet with folks in the community, have coffee with the doctors, and get to know the area. "We have clean air, low crime and great people who appreciate good medical care," he says.

And, people here know Dr. Matlin - so well in fact that a local newspaper ad for a u-pick strawberry farm used a well-known landmark in their directions, saying "turn left at Dr. Matlin's."

## COMMUNITY STAR – Dr. Jara McDonald

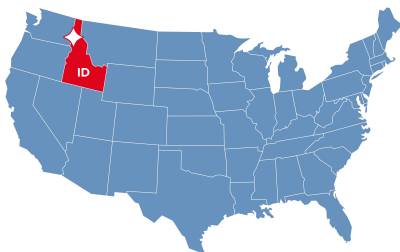


NAME:  
Dr. Jara McDonald

ORGANIZATION:  
Heritage Health

LOCATION:  
Kellogg, ID

SUBMITTED BY:  
Heritage Health



This fast-talking city girl raised by New Yorkers in the bright lights and big city of Las Vegas, NV had a calling to live and work in a rural area. So Jara McDonald chose to participate in the University of Nevada, Reno School of Medicine Rural Residency Program to get the experience she was looking for. She completed her residency in Redding, CA, which Dr. McDonald admits may not seem rural to some, but it is located two and half hours from a large city and gave her a taste of the experience she was longing for. However, Dr. McDonald went into family medicine so she could use the full range of her skills, so she and her husband followed his Pacific Northwest roots to the remote rural town of Kellogg, ID.

Rural Idaho quickly became home for her young family. Dr. McDonald loves working in “this interesting community because of the hard working patients.” The major employer is the silver mine and has been for generations. Many families have lived here for generations as well. This community used to have more services available and patients want to stay here for their services.

“We are working hard to get this community access to the care they need. This is why I got into medicine,” says McDonald. She is proud to mention that Kellogg now has specialists rotating through on a regular basis and that Heritage Health has added woman’s health and behavioral health services. They also just got approval to begin an opioid treatment program, which will be another new program started by Dr. McDonald along with “immunization days” at the local schools, Shared Medical Appointments for her diabetic patients, and expanding the HeritageRx program to Kellogg.

Her message of “I just want to do right by my patients and help them live happier and healthier lives” can be seen through her dedication to this community each and every day.

## COMMUNITY STAR – Mercy Hospital Watonga



**ORGANIZATION:**  
Mercy Hospital Watonga

**LOCATION:**  
Watonga, OK

**SUBMITTED BY:**  
Oklahoma Office of Rural  
Health



When the local hospital in Watonga, Oklahoma, was in danger of closing, the Sisters of Mercy brought the community together to save it. Since then, the hospital and community have taken care of each other in many different ways.

Robert Pearson, who is the Emergency Preparedness/Safety Officer at the hospital, has lived in Watonga all his life. With the small population, he says it can be tough for families. “Our closest town is 35 miles away,” he says.

Each year, the hospital organizes a holiday season basket drive, collecting food, clothes and toys to be delivered to local area families in need. In the summer, there’s a neighborhood block party with food, water games and even a bouncy house.

And, it’s not just tangible goods that are shared. “Kids are looking for role models, and empowerment,” says Robert. Enter Gwen Poteat, the founding director of Lifewize, an empowerment program for students. In the last 5 years, this program has helped thousands of middle school students develop life skills such as decision-making, rational communication and developing relationships, all with volunteers from the hospital. When presented with the idea, Gwen says, “the community literally stepped up and said ‘we want to help.’”

Robert encourages those who would consider a move to a rural area like Watonga. “Everybody watches out for each other,” he says, “you feel safe here.” Gwen adds, “I cannot tell you how awesome it is to have the support from the hospital and the schools. They are committed to serving.”

## COMMUNITY STAR – Dr. R. Curtis Mills

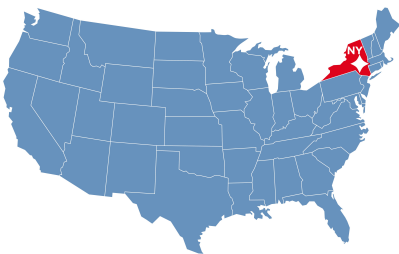


**NAME:**  
Dr. R. Curtis Mills

**ORGANIZATION:**  
Bassett Healthcare

**LOCATION:**  
St. Johnsville, NY

**SUBMITTED BY:**  
Bassett Healthcare



In most places in America, house calls went out with rotary dial phones. But, not in St. Johnsville, NY. This fertile river valley is home to Dr. R. Curtis Mills, and house calls are his specialty.

As an internal medicine doctor with a busy practice, Dr. Mills knew he had a few homebound patients that he would have a difficulty finding time to see. When he did get to see them, he found that being in his patients' homes allowed him to check on more than just their medical condition. "You can take more time to talk with them, assess their environment, see what medications they are taking," he says. He decided to focus his practice on a 50-mile radius of dairy farms along the Mohawk River.

Dr. Mills grew up in a rural area, and he knew he wanted to practice there as well. He chose upstate New York because the people are wonderful, "and the great outdoors are all around us." As a licensed fishing and boating guide, Dr. Mills knows what he's talking about.

So why do so many rural areas struggle with provider shortages? "I think the greatest hindrance is a lack of jobs," he says. "Families are looking for different things, and job availability is a big part of that." Dr. Mills' practice is part of Bassett Health Care Network, which partners with the medical school to bring students into the area, and train them for a future in a rural practice. But, even with this experience, students don't always see themselves fitting in. Dr. Mills insists, "It's got to be in your heart."

## COMMUNITY STAR – Patrick O’Hara

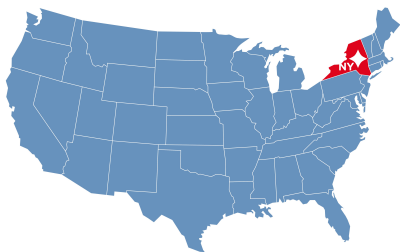


**NAME:**  
Patrick O’Hara

**ORGANIZATION:**  
New York Center for  
Agricultural Medicine

**LOCATION:**  
Cooperstown, NY

**SUBMITTED BY:**  
Bassett Healthcare



Amidst the rolling green hills near Cooperstown, New York, there is a slower pace of life. But for farm families, the work doesn’t stop at 5pm and cows still need to be fed on the weekend. When farmers are in need of care, taking time from the daily work of the farm isn’t always an option. That’s where Pat O’Hara comes in. As a clinical case manager for the NY Center for Agricultural Medicine, Pat helps farmers keep farming.

Pat works with local agencies, clinics and universities to get help for those who are unable to work due to an illness or disability. His clients look to him for help with everything from applying for SSI, to navigating insurance benefits. Working with the Access-VR program, he is able to get funding for vehicle modifications. And, if farming is no longer an option, he helps them find their next calling. “I get to work with really great people, who are motivated to get better,” he says. While it’s difficult for some to get to their health care appointments, Pat is happy that so many more farmers have coverage thanks to the Affordable Care Act.

When asked about living in a rural area, Pat says, “I worked in the city, this is better.” He loves that his worst traffic delay is waiting for his neighbor’s ducks to cross the road.

Pat’s work takes him all over the area, as he meets with clients. “Their work is important, so I go to them.” When he’s not working, Pat enjoys traveling to other parts of the country for rock climbing and skiing.



## COMMUNITY STAR: Dr. Mary Ann Rigas

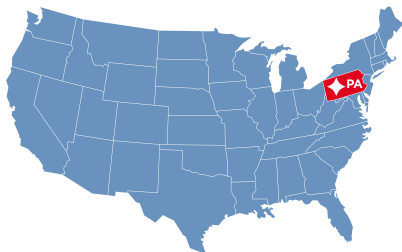


NAME:  
Dr. Mary Ann Rigas

ORGANIZATION:  
Cole Memorial

LOCATION:  
Coudersport, PA

SUBMITTED BY:  
Pennsylvania Office of  
Rural Health



Dr. Mary Ann Rigas knew there was limited access to dental care for low-income and young children in very rural north central Pennsylvania. So, when the local community health needs assessment identified dental care as the top need, this pediatrician did something about it.

Dr. Rigas worked with the local Rural Health Clinics to implement dental risk assessments and a fluoride varnish program, but she didn't stop there. A grant-funded hygienist, co-located in the pediatric office, sees kids as they come through for their regular check-ups. The visits are coordinated so that the care is delivered at the same time. They also have an in-house Licensed Clinical Social Worker.

"I enjoy being able to maximize the medical home concept," says Dr. Rigas about working in a rural area. "It's far from just ear infections and sore throats, you get to use all your skills."

She says that a rural practice is challenging, but in a good way. "I like initiating a project, and bringing practices together for quality improvement."

When she's not creating new projects, Dr. Rigas likes to spend time with her husband and four boys. The family spends a lot of time outdoors, especially cross-country skiing when there is enough snow. "It's such a beautiful area for that," she says.

## COMMUNITY STAR: Saint Elizabeth Medical Center

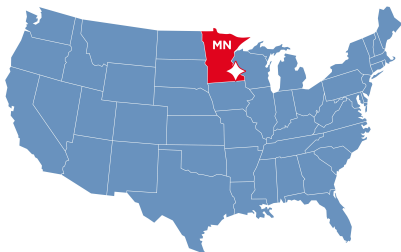


NAME:  
Thomas Crowley

ORGANIZATION:  
Saint Elizabeth Medical  
Center

LOCATION:  
Wabasha, MN

SUBMITTED BY:  
Saint Elizabeth Medical  
Center



Overlooking the Mississippi river and surrounded by acres of bountiful farmland, Saint Elizabeth Medical Center is a critical access hospital, founded in 1898 in Wabasha, Minnesota.

This 2016 Community Star is recognized for its work over the past 15 years to develop strong community partnerships and bringing a full-spectrum approach to health and wellness.

When the hospital's community health needs assessment identified obesity as a key issue, they partnered with public health to get the 5-2-1-0 program implemented. This evidence-based program encourages youth to eat 5 fruits and vegetables, spend less than 2 hours in front of a screen, get an hour of exercise and have zero sugar drinks each day. Another program provides low-income families with access to a farmers market and cooking classes. The hospital also uses volunteers to deliver prescriptions to those who are unable to get out on their own.

One of the most successful partnerships has been the "Field of Dreams" program, in which local farms and businesses donate proceeds from a portion of their acreage to raise money for new hospital equipment. In 6 months they raised over \$400,000 towards the purchase of a tomography machine.

In October 2016, Saint Elizabeth Medical Center was the only hospital in the country to receive the AHA award for "Living the Vision" for improving community health by going beyond traditional hospital care.

Thomas Crowley, president of Saint Elizabeth Medical Center, came here 45 years ago. He sees the benefit of providing care in a rural community on a daily basis. "You're taking care of your friends and neighbors, so it holds you to a higher standard. You bump in to them at the grocery store, at church or at sports events, and you can see the difference you are making in their lives."

## COMMUNITY STAR – Snake River Community Clinic



**NAME:**

Charlotte Ash

**ORGANIZATION:**

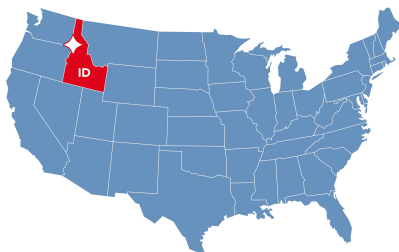
Snake River Community  
Clinic

**LOCATION:**

Lewiston, ID

**SUBMITTED BY:**

Duane Ash



The Snake River winds through some of the most diverse and beautiful landscape in the northwest. The area is widely known as an ideal location for fishing, hunting and other outdoor activities. It is also home to a clinic that for some is their only option for receiving high quality health care.

Charlotte Ash runs the Snake River Community Clinic in Lewiston, ID, and as the Executive Director and only paid staff, her duties range from writing grants to mopping floors. Her cadre of volunteer providers has dwindled over the years but that hasn't slowed the number of patients they see. "Many of my providers come from Washington State," she explains. "But since the Medicaid expansion, they are too busy in their own clinics to come volunteer." The need in Idaho is still great. "The whole region is experiencing a provider shortage," she says. "We have a good connection with the University of Washington medical school, which sends students here for their rural rotation."

Because of the terrain and poor driving conditions in the winter, Charlotte and her team encourage patients to come to the clinic in person when the weather is moderate to establish treatment plans, and maintain contact by phone over the winter. Even with all the challenges, Charlotte says she'd rather be here than anywhere else. "I've lived all over, from West Virginia to Washington, and this is the one place I've found where people don't just talk about (helping each other), they do it," she says.

Charlotte is optimistic about the future, knowing that her community will rise to the challenge. "There are more jobs than people here, and a supportive community that values health literacy and education," she says. "I work with some really cool people. They are kind and giving and will pick you up when you are down."

## COMMUNITY STAR – United Way of Laurel Highlands

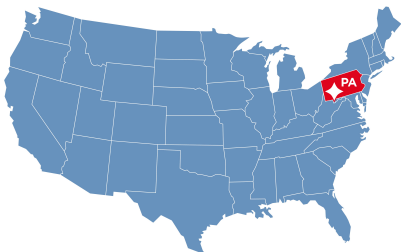


NAME:  
Bill McKinney

ORGANIZATION:  
United Way of the Laurel Highlands

LOCATION:  
Johnstown, PA

SUBMITTED BY:  
Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health



In southwestern Pennsylvania, the steel mills and coal mines which were once the fabric of this community may have faded, but there are still shining examples of grit and determination, hard-working people accomplishing extraordinary things, throughout this area.

Bill McKinney is the President of the United Way of the Laurel Highlands, which is based in Johnstown, PA. The organization’s mission to improve the community through positive social change is well supported. As Bill puts it, “these are very friendly, hard-working people who look out for each other.”

Following a community needs assessment which helped to identify priority areas of focus, the United Way of the Laurel Highlands began to bring interested stakeholders together to plan and implement evidence-based solutions. One of those priorities was access to dental care for adults.

While most low-income children have dental coverage through the CHIP program, adults do not have such coverage, and there was no dental clinic in the area that could work on a sliding scale. As part of the stakeholder group, the Salvation Army suggested looking at a dental clinic they had opened in an area north of Pittsburgh. In 2011, the community got to work determining whether the model would work in Johnstown. Soon the clinic was opened, and began providing care to thousands of people. “It’s a first rate operation,” says Bill, “and we are very proud of it. People come from all over to get care here.”

Next on the agenda? Early childhood development and parental engagement. “We’re partnering on a progressive model to bring a community approach to change,” Bill says. Given the success they’ve had so far, the nation will certainly be watching for the next extraordinary outcome.

## COMMUNITY STAR: Susan Wilger

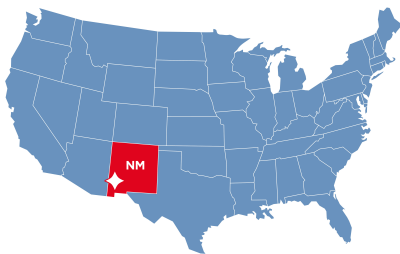


NAME:  
Susan Wilger

ORGANIZATION:  
National Center for  
Frontier Communities and  
the Southwest Center for  
Health Innovation

LOCATION:  
Silver City, NM

SUBMITTED BY:  
Southwest Center for  
Health Innovation



Susan Wilger is an advocate in her community for a strong rural health presence. After growing up in an urban setting, Susan’s first rural experience was when she moved to an area 25 miles outside of Silver City, New Mexico, in 2000. “You learn quickly what ‘frontier’ really means,” she says.

The two organizations she works for, the National Center for Frontier Communities and the Southwest Center for Health Innovation, have a mission to lead collaborative advocacy for underserved communities. The goal is to develop and promote programs to address issues that can then be disseminated to other areas.

One of the inequities that can plague a frontier community is a workforce shortage. As a way to encourage local kids to consider careers in health care, the Forward New Mexico program is a “grow your own” model. Starting in middle school, kids are given exposure to the field of medicine in order to cultivate interest.

And it’s not just kids who need the exposure. Susan’s advocacy supports giving providers who are considering a move to the area the opportunity to experience the frontier culture, not just in the clinic but in the community as well.

In the future, she sees maintaining connectivity through telehealth and community health workers as key to supporting local providers and filling the gaps. “Frontier communities are strong collaborators,” she says. “They really strive to stretch limited resources. It’s all about promoting those connections.”

## COMMUNITY STAR: Marty Wilson



NAME:

Marty Wilson

ORGANIZATION:

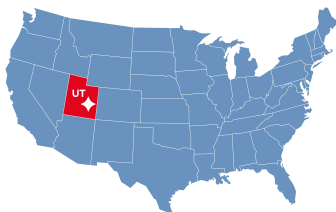
Carbon County Ambulance

LOCATION:

Cleveland, UT

SUBMITTED BY:

Utah Bureau of EMS and Preparedness



Marty Wilson has lived and worked in Emery and Carbon Counties her whole life. “It’s nice and quiet here, and you know everybody,” she says. Her job is anything but nice and quiet though. As a paramedic, Marty sees many familiar faces during their darkest times.

Although not a specialty per se, her passion is working with kids. She volunteers with the Emergency Medical Services for Children program, which educates EMS personnel about working with kids who are traumatized or need medical treatment. She also performs pediatric focused community events at least 3 times year including pediatric prevention advocacy. Marty also originated and organized the Eastern Utah Emergency Care Symposium which just finished its 4th year of bringing education to the rural healthcare providers in Utah.

Marty likes working in a rural area because people don’t get lost in the shuffle. And, while it takes longer to get to a hospital, she says “it’s only 30 minutes from here to the desert, or the mountains. And, we’re only an hour or so from Moab and the (two nearby) National Parks.”

As for the future, she’s concerned that lack of affordability will keep people who are interested in entering EMS from going to school. “We need people who are willing to help.”

## COMMUNITY STAR – Dr. Marlene Wust-Smith

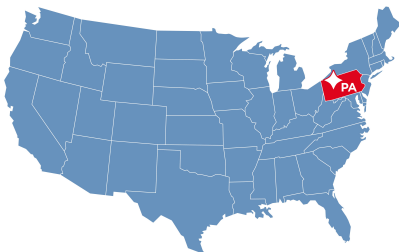


NAME:  
Dr. Marlene Wust-Smith

ORGANIZATION:  
Cole Memorial

LOCATION:  
Port Allegany, PA

SUBMITTED BY:  
Pennsylvania Office of  
Rural Health



After 10 years practicing in New York City and the Hamptons, Dr. Marlene Wust-Smith found her calling in Port Allegany, Pennsylvania. Working at a rural health clinic, Dr. Wust-Smith sees many patients who are struggling with family cycles of violence and addiction. Some of the patients she saw as children are now young parents themselves. “You can see they want to change,” she says. “It’s impressive to me how strong they are.”

After the successful implementation of a patient-centered care model, Dr. Wust-Smith wanted to expand on the idea of coordinated care for her young moms. She started the Village Visits program, which brings new moms and their babies into the clinic as a group. The moms and kids get to interact with each other, with age-appropriate toys and with educators, and get a well-child visit at the same time. “They really engage,” says Dr. Wust-Smith. “They are hungry to learn, and do the right thing.”

In her spare time, Dr. Wust-Smith attends community events, fundraisers (shopping for a cause) and her daughter’s sporting events. She would absolutely encourage people to go into a rural practice, citing the need for more physician peers in areas with limited access to higher levels of care.



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