



July 31, 2021

## Thank you for submitting a nomination for Eric Wallace.

### Overview

Thank you for your 2021 Community Star Nomination. Here is a copy of the nomination for your records. If you have any questions, please reach out to NRHD Community Star Project Coordinator, Brea Corsaro at [bcorsaro@powerofrural.org](mailto:bcorsaro@powerofrural.org).

### Your Information

#### **Doug Brewer**

*CEO/Administrator*

Whitfield Regional Hospital

Demopolis, Alabama

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### Community Star Nominee: (Individual)

#### **Eric Wallace**

*Medical Director of Telehealth*

UAB Health System

Birmingham, Alabama

[ericwallace@uab.edu](mailto:ericwallace@uab.edu)

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**Have Questions? Contact:**

[powerofrural.org](http://powerofrural.org) | [nosorh.org](http://nosorh.org) | [bcorsaro@powerofrural.org](mailto:bcorsaro@powerofrural.org)



Which best describes the organization your nominee is associated with?

Health System

Please describe your connection to the individual or organization you are nominating.

As a member of UAB Health System, Whitfield Regional Hospital is directly connected with Dr. Eric Wallace and UAB eMedicine (telehealth service). Dr. Wallace has been extremely instrumental in extending UAB telehealth services to Demopolis, AL since the beginning of 2020. Dr. Wallace and I have had numerous conversations pertaining to implementing UAB eMedicine here in our local community and I thoroughly enjoy engaging with him, albeit virtual. He extends the same, easy going demeanor to our clinical staff during telehealth trainings and patient consults. Dr. Wallace seems to always be available and willing to engage – we have even had a few late-night conversations regarding patient consults, which I detail further later in this nomination.

Please explain the individual's or organization's connection to or interaction with their State Office of Rural Health.

UAB Health System currently runs two grant programs through the Alabama Office of Primary Care and Rural Health. These grants, entitled Small Rural Hospital Improvement Grant Program (SHIP) and the Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (FLEX) Program, are supported by the work of Dr. Wallace and his department. Additionally, the Community Health Access and Rural Transformation (CHART) Model is embraced by Dr. Wallace and UAB eMedicine to promote innovative health care delivery in rural Alabama.



The Community Star Recognition Program is designed to honor those whose contributions are making a difference in rural through collaboration, education, innovation, and communication. What do you believe to be your nominee’s “star” qualities? Provide examples of how your nominee demonstrates these qualities in their work and service.

Dr. Eric Wallace is certainly a Community Star! Dr. Wallace was the driving force at our rural hospital in instituting telemedicine as part of specialty care services. His collaborative commitment is evident throughout the state as UAB eMedicine provides telemedicine services to patients in the rural parts of Alabama who would otherwise not seek specialists’ services due to lack of transportation and inability to obtain paid time off from work. Dr. Wallace is an innovative Community Star, utilizing telemedicine services to the benefit and comfort of our patients and their families. UAB eMedicine has also provided our rural hospital an innovative means to overcome financial hardship that resulted from constantly transferring our patients to other hospitals. We are now providing advanced care locally, which resulted from Whitfield Regional Hospital’s partnership with UAB Health System.

Well before the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Wallace pioneered UAB’s telehealth services as the Medical Director of UAB eMedicine since 2012. Although Dr. Wallace specializes in nephrology, he has gone above and beyond to connect UAB providers across several specialties with patients here at Whitfield Regional Hospital 90 miles away from UAB Hospital. These specialties include nephrology, neurology, infectious disease, and critical care pulmonology with 24/7 on-demand consultation. Over the course of the pandemic, Dr. Wallace and his eMedicine team have provided care for 600+ patients diagnosed with COVID-19 and 120+ ventilated patients. Without the leadership and support from Dr. Wallace, we would not have had the infrastructure and resources in place to admit and provide care for as many patients with COVID-19 as we did. Many of our ICU patients would have been transferred to other hospitals



if we did not have UAB eMedicine consultations readily available to provide critical care pulmonology, nephrology, and neurology. As of mid-2018, Whitfield Regional Hospital is designated as a Regional Stroke Center and Level 3 Trauma Center because Dr. Wallace advocated on our behalf. It is a very exciting time for Whitfield Regional Hospital, especially because we will be Alabama's first external tele-ICU facility thanks to Dr. Wallace and UAB eMedicine. In addition to the specialties listed above, we are now able to institute a Lung Nodule Program as well as intrauterine fibroid consultations. If not for Dr. Wallace's stellar leadership, one can only imagine how many patients would not have access to care.

On a state level, Whitfield Regional Hospital is one of at least 12 hospitals, mostly rural, that Dr. Wallace has directly impacted by implementing UAB eMedicine inpatient consultations. Dr. Wallace has led UAB eMedicine to increase ambulatory telehealth visit volume by 2,000% as of December 2020 resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. Coupled with increased patient satisfaction, Dr. Wallace's team has had a tremendous environmental impact, saving approximately 13.7 million driving miles and 5.7 million kilograms of CO2 emissions. These savings are equivalent to taking 1,231 passenger vehicles off the road for one year. UAB eMedicine covers 18 subspecialties, 64 of 67 Alabama counties, and has made leaps and bounds in increasing access to care in rural settings, particularly for us, the city of Demopolis.

The 2021 Community Star Selection Committee will review and evaluate nominations, making recommendations for which stories to include in this year's book and other NRHD activities based on the following merits. Please review these and select all that apply to your nominee.

Cultivates a vital, innovative rural health landscape and infrastructure. ,  
 Develops leadership capacity to grow rural population health and health equity. , Builds capacity for rural data-driven program planning and decision

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making. , Contributes to rural health innovation, education, collaboration, and communication.

Describe in as much detail as possible, examples of your nominee's work and accomplishments that correspond with your selections to the question above.

Dr. Wallace, an Alabama native, is a culturally competent and compassionate physician leader. After receiving his B.S. in Spanish, he graduated from UAB School of Medicine, served as Chief Medical Resident at UAB, and Chief Nephrology fellow at Vanderbilt University. Dr. Wallace is a well-versed clinical researcher whose dedicated work focuses on the provision of telemedicine to reduce geographic and socioeconomic barriers to specialized care, particularly related to in-home dialysis and Fabry disease treatment (a rare genetic disease). Dr. Wallace leads several innovative service lines at UAB Health System and serves as an Associate Professor at UAB School of Medicine. The following awards, accomplishments, and features provide some insight into Dr. Wallace's phenomenal Community Star-worthy career:

- 2021: NPR article on improving telehealth in rural areas:  
<https://www.wwno.org/public-health/2021-07-12/future-in-limbo-limiting-telehealth-in-the-gulf-south-could-be-troublesome-for-rural-areas>
- 2021: UAB School of Medicine Lecture about the State of Telehealth:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ys5UdcLgCbU>
- 2020: Governor Ivey Announces Broadband Working Group for CARES Act Funding:  
<https://governor.alabama.gov/newsroom/2020/06/governor-ivey-announces-broadband-working-group-for-cares-act-funding/>
- 2020: UAB Doctors Post 1,400 Telehealth Patient Visits in Just One Day, Underscoring Alabama's Broadband Needs:

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<https://alabamane.wscenter.com/2020/05/08/uab-doctors-post-1400-telehealth-patient-visits-in-just-one-day-underscoring-alabamas-broadband-needs/>

- 2020: Pre COVID-19 article on UAB eMedicine impact on Alabama:  
<https://www.uab.edu/reporter/patient-care/advances/item/9019-see-how-health-tech-is-cutting-miles-and-changing-lives-across-alabama>
- 2018: Distinguished Service Award, UAB Medical Alumni Association
- 2017: Dean's Excellence Award for Service
- 2016: Outstanding Teacher, Division of Nephrology
- 2016: Alumni of the Year, Donoho High School
- 2016: Nominee: The Brewer-Heslin Award for Professionalism in Medicine
- 2015: Recognized as one of Birmingham's Best Physician's, B-Metro Magazine
- 2015: Fellow of the American Society of Nephrology
- 2014: C. Glenn Cobbs, Edwin A Rutsky Award for Clinical Excellence
- 2014: Outstanding Teacher Award in the Division of Nephrology
- 2014: Elected to the Southern Society for Clinical Investigation
- 2013: C. Glenn Cobbs, Edwin A Rutsky Award for Clinical Excellence for Top 10 Clinicians in the Department of Medicine
- 2013: Director's Award: Best Home Dialysis Unit in Davita Southland Division
- 2013: Home Dialysis Award for the Fastest Non- Acquired Growth

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I can confirm that the individual or organization is making a difference in rural through collaboration, education, innovation, and communication, and is located, working, or volunteering in a designated rural area.

Yes

I can confirm that I have notified the nominee of their nomination, and the nomination will be accepted.

Yes

How did you learn about the 2021 Community Star Recognition Program?

Email

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