



July 20, 2021

Thank you for completing your 2021 Community Star Individual Nominee Questionnaire!

Overview

Here is a copy of your answers for your records. All nominations will be reviewed and evaluated by members of NOSORH's Community Star Selection Committee. One Community Star will be selected per state. If you are selected as your state's Community Star, I will work with you to schedule an interview so that we can develop your outstanding story to share in our annual book of Community Stars released on Thursday, November 18, 2021.

If you have any questions, please reach out to NRHD Community Star Project Coordinator, Brea Corsaro at bcorsaro@powerofrural.org.

Your Information

Darlene Rose Melk, MD, FAAP

Chief Medical Officer

Chiricahua Community Health Centers, Inc.

Douglas, Arizona

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Have Questions? Contact:

powerofrural.org | nosorh.org | bcorsaro@powerofrural.org



Organization or Project Website

<https://cchci.org>

Please describe in as much detail as possible, your role within your organization and the nature of your work in rural health?

I am a pediatrician by training who came to work for Chiricahua Community Health Centers, Inc. in 2010. In 2014, I took on the role of the Director of our mobile program, then in 2015, Director of Community pediatrics. In July of last year (2020), I became the Chief Medical Officer. Due to our location, we struggle with recruiting and retaining highly qualified, mission drive providers. Our goal is to provide the highest quality preventive care so that our patients can stay healthy.

What inspired you to choose your career?

I knew I wanted to be a doctor at a young age, but did not choose pediatrics until I was in medical school. Focusing my energy and time on children was a natural fit for me. I have never once regretted my decision. It is an absolute privilege to do what I do. Working in an underserved part of the world is rewarding and challenging at the same time. The children we serve don't have the same opportunities simply because of where they were born. I love to think of ways to make a positive impact on their health and future.

What is the impact of your work in your community or the rural populations you serve?

Our vision statement is "Health for ALL". Over the past eleven years, our pediatric team went from three providers to twenty. Over the past decade, we implemented universal developmental screening, opened walk in

pediatric immunization clinics, began serving adolescents in their high schools, have pediatric clinic that are integrated with dental hygiene, dietitians and behavioral health. We also opened an "Early Childhood Center of Excellence" focused on prevention and attention to the critical early childhood period. It has been quite the experience! I wish I could live to be 100 years old because I feel like we are only getting started.

Have you accessed, benefited from, or worked directly with your State Office of Rural Health? If yes, please describe.

We have an informal relationship with our SORH.

Are you or your organization a HRSA, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy Grantee? If yes, which grant program? If yes, which one?

No