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January 1, 2024

SORH Short Rows is the quarterly newsletter from the Georgia State Office of Rural Health (SORH) for all matters rural. It provides an update on the progress made to improve rural health in Georgia's hospitals, primary care practices, FQHCs, stakeholders, vendors, health care advocates, and legislators.

Leading the Fight Against Rural Health Disparities

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SORH Staff Extends Best Wishes For A Healthy, Prosperous, and Happy New Year!

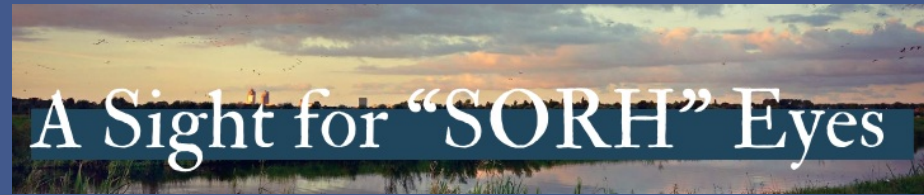
Yet another holiday season has come and gone just as quickly as 2023. As we enter the new year, the small but mighty SORH staff resolves to continue supporting our rural hospitals and communities to the best of our ability. In 2023, the SORH staff of nine managed over 66 grants and 18 contracts distributing \$27,070,000 in federal and state funding to 120 rural counties. All of these initiatives are guided by DCH's mission, "to provide Georgians with access to affordable, quality health care through effective planning, purchasing and oversight".



We could not accomplish these initiatives without the help of our partners and stakeholders who work alongside us to provide support to our rural Georgia hospitals and communities. We extend our thanks to you all and look forward to continuing old relationships and building new ones.

Looking ahead into 2024, we pledge our continued support to the two million rural residents we serve, and we are excited for what the future holds. We wish you all health, prosperity, and best wishes for a happy new year!

The SORH staff



CareConnect Health Expands Fort Valley Clinic- **U.S. Senator Ossoff Provided Assistance, Cut Ceremonial Ribbon**



U.S. Senator John Ossoff (center) is flanked by staff and administrative executives from CareConnect Health during a recent ribbon cutting ceremony celebrating the expansion of CareConnect Convenient Care, Fort Valley. The clinic provides urgent and primary care to the Fort Valley and Byron communities employing three nurse practitioners, four front office receptionists, and three medical assistants. The clinic is open seven days a week from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Prior to the expansion, the clinic provided nearly 1,000 visits per month in just four exam rooms, quickly resulting in the need for more resources and a larger space. CareConnect Health was presented with an opportunity from Senator Ossoff's office to work together for an expansion of the clinic which included the addition of four new exam rooms and two new restrooms. With the expansion, the staff anticipates an increase in their patient base from 1,000 to up to 1,500 patients per month.

Stakeholders attending the ribbon cutting ceremony held December 1, 2023, included CareConnect Health Administration and board members, representatives from the Georgia Primary Care Association, Fort Valley Mayor and citizens of Fort Valley, executives from Houston Healthcare, PeachState Health, Crisp Regional Hospital, Fort Valley State University, Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Peach County Sheriff's Department, and Fort Valley Police Department.

Click [here](#) to learn more about CareConnect Health.

Focus on Rural Health

SORH Hosts Trauma Commission on National Rural Health Day - Commissioner Carlson Highlights Power of Rural Partnerships



DCH Commissioner Russel Carlson (*top picture*) addressed the Georgia Trauma Commission at their annual meeting held at the SORH in Cordele noting the significance of partnerships and the day's activities coinciding with National Rural Health Day.



The Commission members (*bottom picture*) focus specifically on rural needs, issues, and initiatives at their annual November meeting.

The Georgia State Office of Rural Health (SORH) was privileged to host the Georgia Trauma Commission Annual Meeting on November 16, 2023, in Cordele. More than 60 participants, including commission members and staff, committee leaders, trauma system partners, and stakeholders from around the state participated in person and virtually. Department of Community Health (DCH) Commissioner Russel Carlson and DCH Chief Medical Officer Dr. Dean Burke also attended the meeting.

The commission consists of nine members appointed by the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, or Speaker of the House of Representatives. Currently, Dennis W. Ashley, M.D., serves as Chair for the Georgia Trauma Care Network Commission with James R. Dunne, M.D., serving as Vice Chair, and Regina S. Medeiros, DNP, serving as Secretary/Treasurer.

In 2007, the Georgia legislature established the Georgia Trauma Care Network Commission through Senate Bill 60. The bill charges the Georgia Trauma Commission to establish, maintain, and administer a trauma center network to coordinate the best use of existing facilities. Also, the commission provides guidance to direct patients to the best available facility for treatment of traumatic injuries and participates in the accountability mechanism for the entire Georgia trauma system, primarily overseeing the flow of funds for system improvement.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Practice site eligibility requires the site be located in a federally designated Health Professional Shortage Area (HPSA), utilizes and prominently advertises a qualified discounted/sliding fee schedule for individuals at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, does



not deny services based on inability to pay or enrollment in Medicare, Medicaid, and Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP), ensures access to ancillary, inpatient and specialty care, and meets all the requirements listed in the NHSC Site Agreement. Eligibility requirements can be found [here](#).

Now is the time to take action to prepare for the upcoming application cycle. To verify your site's eligibility and to determine your HPSA designation, contact Beth Walker or Dorothy Bryant at SORH. Sites must confirm that clinics meet all eligibility requirements. To review the 2023 NHSC Site Reference Guide, click [here](#).

Applicants are strongly encouraged to submit application paperwork to the Primary Care Office (PCO) before uploading any documents into the Bureau of Health Workforce (BHW) portal. Mrs. Walker and Ms. Bryant are available to review site application documents and provide feedback to ensure compliance with the NHSC guidelines.

[Read the full story here.](#)



Farmworker Health Program Selects Phoebe Sumter Ellaville Clinic as Georgia's 2023 NOSORH Community Star

Each year, in conjunction with National Rural Health Day (NRHD), the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) invites the 50 State Offices of Rural Health (SORH) and other rural health stakeholders to identify individuals or organizations whose outstanding work and service deserve honoring through the Community Star Recognition Program. The program shines a light on



those who work every day to make a difference in rural health. Since 2015, more than 300 Community Stars across the country have been honored on National Rural Health Day, which is celebrated annually on the third Thursday of November.

At SORH, we are proud to share that Phoebe Sumter Ellaville Clinic (PSEC) has been selected as Georgia's 2023 Community Star. PSEC is a hospital-based rural health clinic located in Ellaville, Schley County that is also a service site for the Georgia Farmworker Health Program (GFHP). PSEC provides healthcare services in the clinic and in the field for rural farmworkers in five surrounding counties including Schley, Sumter, Crisp, Macon, and Taylor. PSEC has been an integral part of these communities for more than 20 years.

[Read the full article here.](#)

You Might be Rural If...



...you encounter a herd of curious mules!

If you live in a rural area, most likely one of your favorite past times is riding dirt roads. At times, you can find interesting sites like this herd of curious mules who seem to be very interested in the passersby.

Mules are an offspring of a male donkey and a female horse and typically possess a mix of horse and donkey characteristics creating a tougher, more resilient working animal. They have long been popular as pack animals as they are more patient, hardier, and longer-lived than horses, and are perceived as less obstinate and more intelligent than donkeys.

Don't let the old saying, "stubborn as a mule" fool you. Mules are thought to be more docile than their donkey fathers but a mule's intelligence also means that they are more cautious and aware of danger, making them safer to ride when crossing dangerous terrain. Perhaps "curious" would also be more befitting this particular herd.

To learn 13 more interesting facts about mules, click [here](#).

Photo by Dawn Waldrip



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[Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center](#)

[DCH Grant Opportunities](#)

[HRSA Funding Opportunities](#)

[Rural Health Information Hub \(RHI Hub\)](#)

[Rural Health Research Gateway](#)

[Health Professional Shortage Area \(HPSA\) Find](#)

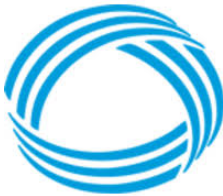
[3RNet - Rural Recruitment and Retention Network](#)

DCH Mission Statement

The Department of Community Health will provide Georgians with access to affordable, quality health care through effective planning, purchasing and oversight.

We are dedicated to
A Healthy Georgia.

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rural.health@dch.ga.gov*



**Georgia Department of Community Health
State Office of Rural Health**

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