

Things are moving fast in the world, in our lives and at Rural Health Network. Some changes are a long time coming, including the call to an end to the violence and abuse of systemic racism. Others feel like a tap on the shoulder to remind us of our place in the natural world - a forced reckoning of individualism necessary to mitigate the real dangers a global pandemic. While events we either can't control, or feel swept along with have dominated the news and our lives, we take some solace in our daily activities, families, communities and friends. Towards that end, I wanted to provide a few updates on what is happening at Rural Health Network as we continue working together to navigate the new environment.

Re-Opening: A work group has been working since late April to plan for the re-opening of our office at 455 Court Street. Since the initial shut-down of non-essential businesses, the Rural Health Network has remained open with a small staff of five or less to maintain business operations, while most employees have been working remotely. Rural Health Network has multiple programs that meet the essential service definition so was not required to shut down on-site operations completely. Our plan for re-populating the Court Street office is to incrementally increase staff numbers beginning in July. Contingent upon the availability of the supplies and services necessary to re-open safely, RHN plans to increase staff numbers at the Court Street Office from 5 to 10 in mid-July; 10 to 15 in mid-August and potentially to our maximum safe number, projected to be 24, after Labor Day.

Capital Campaign: Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and shut-down, the business component of the capital campaign was postponed. Rural Health Network is awaiting decisions on two foundation funding applications and will have more information to share in the next several weeks. Thanks again to all of our supporters who have continued to contribute to and promote the [capital campaign](#). In the last two months, grants from the Mildred Faulkner Truman Foundation and Visions Federal Credit Union along with gifts from individual donors have advanced the campaign to 60% of our goal.

The July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021 Fiscal Year: Rural Health Network will enter the new fiscal year in a strong position financially, which is important considering the uncertainties with New York State and other traditional funding sources due to the economic disruption caused by COVID-19. RHN's diversified funding portfolio also provides some resilience to potential and actual funding cuts.

An important focus of RHN over the past two months has been to consider the rural health needs that will be confronting our region as we move into the less acute phase of the Pandemic. Staff leaders have been engaged in strategy analysis and have continued to apply for funding to both support existing initiatives and in anticipation of needs and opportunities arising from COVID-19. In addition to traditional funding sources, we anticipate the need for new partnerships and funding to continue our mission in the post COVID-19 world.

Systemic Racism: Rural Health Network will continue to work to address the health disparities, social and economic justice issues that disproportionately affect African Americans. Additionally, we will continue to participate in educational activities to educate ourselves about racism. Our Community Health Education Department will consider what our role can and should be in providing education on racism in rural communities. Deep rooted issues at the individual or the societal level are not addressed with one conversation or proclamation. Real change requires ongoing dialog, practice and action. There is much work to do.

Jack Salo
Executive Director