

# Rural Matters

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## Congratulations and Thank You Jack Salo!

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Rural Health Network of South Central New York, we want to let you know that Jack Salo, Executive Director, has announced he will be retiring by the end of the second quarter of 2021. The Board of Directors is committed to an effective, timely and smooth transition to a new Executive Director that ensures continuity in the delivery of the many services and programs of the Network. We express our gratitude to Jack for his commitment to continue to support the mission of Rural Health Network by assisting in a transition period.

The Board and the Rural Health Network staff extend our deepest gratitude and appreciation to Jack for sharing his time, talents, and energies for the betterment of the region's



*Lisanne Bobby, Board President*

health. His leadership has been strong and effective through his career. Rural Health Network has expanded significantly in the fifteen years that Jack has been Executive Director. Jack recognizes, as does the Board of Directors, that advocacy and work on behalf of the rural population is best accomplished in partnership with other organizations. He has developed personal relationships and organizational partnerships that facilitate our collective focus on improving health, food security, transportation, and local economies across the Network service area. Jack's work on behalf of rural populations will continue to be felt at Rural Health Network and within the region and New York State into the future.

Lisanne Bobby  
Board President

Recruitment for the Executive Director position began late last week. The posting can be viewed here: <https://rhnscny.org/get-involved/#employment>

## Jack's Thoughts "On Retirement"



*Jack Salo at home at Peaceful by Nature Farm*

Well, the time has come for me to try my hand at whatever comes next and for someone new, with a fresh perspective, their own unique experiences and skills to step into the role of Executive Director of Rural Health Network. I will be stepping down late spring - early summer this year. I will then be available to support the transition for a period of time to allow the new Executive Director to get their bearings.

What will they find when they get here? Well, I can share with confidence that they will find a team of committed and talented staff who over the past five to ten years have built out an impressive array of essential services in support of rural health. They will find a hard-working board of directors that provides governance, leadership and oversight critical to organizational success and accountability. They will also find a depth and wealth of community, government and healthcare

partners with which Rural Health Network works and plans and delivers services every day.

We do have a new and newly renovated facility thanks to the generosity of our donors, including individuals, the foundation community and local businesses. We are also in good shape financially. While these things are important and provide a quality workplace and stability, I believe it is the people and the relationships we have formed together that are the strength of Rural Health Network. It is the people and our relationships that will make it possible for the new Director to continue leading the way to improve the health and well-being of rural people and communities.

Just a few thoughts on retirement. Don't we need a new term or word to describe the things that people my age do once they step down or more appropriately step back from a long career? Many, if not most of us do not stop working. Some take on new full-time work challenges. Others work part-time. Others volunteer or support their family in ways ranging from providing childcare for their grandchildren to caring for aging parents. Many combine two or more of these activities and continue living productive, service-oriented lives many years after so-called "retirement".

In Robert Bly's book *The Sibling Society*, he calls out retirees to stay put, in their communities. He writes of the need for elders to be present and accounted for, and the importance of their contributions to community life and viability. I think about my role models for this continued connection to community, family and service, people like Ron Dougherty, Diane and Jerry Albrecht, and Dave and Mary El Emerson. I think about what their communities would be like without them, and all that would have not happened. I aspire to continue contributing as they have while also enjoying more time to create, learn and rest. This doesn't feel like retirement, but rather an opportunity for change, to re-charge and to use my remaining time well.

Jack Salo  
Executive Director

## Celebrating a Successful Capital Campaign

We are excited to announce that Rural Health Network's Capital Campaign has surpassed our goal to raise funds for the purchase and renovation of 455 Court Street in Binghamton.

Our original campaign goal was \$525,000. Revised estimates for renovation costs resulted in an increased goal of \$552,389.

**With the help of local foundations, business and individual contributors, we have received \$557,182 in gifts and pledges for the campaign.** The building was purchased in February 2020. Renovations to create a learning center, accessible restroom, and additional private office space began last fall and are almost complete. Furniture and technology for the learning center have been ordered and are expected to arrive sometime this spring. A comprehensive list of supporters for the campaign will be shared in the spring.



## A Collaborative Partnership puts Food on one Family's Table

The COVID-19 pandemic has swept communities across the globe and affected nearly every aspect of our lives. Curbing the spread of the coronavirus has led to a myriad of unintended consequences, one of which is food access. Families in quarantine and isolation that are unable to afford the cost of food or grocery delivery services are often left anxiously wondering where their next meal will come from. In response, Getthere has expanded our transportation mobility services to include food delivery to those that need it.

Stephanie Button, a Getthere Mobility and Transportation Advocate (MTA), recently navigated a tricky situation to ensure that a local family was able to put food on the table. Stephanie answered the call from a New York State contact tracer that reached out to Getthere's Call Center after discovering a quarantined family of five was out of food and the children had not eaten. The family had planned to visit the grocery store the very day they were informed that they were exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19 and would need to remain in their home.

The situation was complicated by the fact the family did not speak English, and the contact tracer no longer had access to a translator to communicate with the family. Due to the family's culture, they also had a special dietary need, Halal food.

Stephanie contacted at least a dozen food pantries along with the American Civic Association only to discover that they were closed due to snowy weather and dangerous driving conditions. Stephanie turned to the Rural Health Network's Food and Health Network (FaHN) program to see if they could help find a food pantry or knew of another service getting food to people in quarantine and isolation.

Luckily, FaHN knew the food pantry at the [Southern Tier Aids Program](#) (STAP) was open and operating. When Stephanie reached out to STAP and explained

the family's situation, they told her that they had served another Islamic family, were familiar with the dietary requirements, and even had Halal food in stock. The staff at STAP was able to box up a week's worth of food for the family while Stephanie found a transportation provider to pick up the food and drop it off on the family's porch for a no-contact delivery.

Thanks to Stephanie's persistence, Getthere's collaboration with FaHN, the STAP food pantry staff, and a brave cab driver, the family was able to receive food that day and quarantine so as not to potentially spread illness. Stories like this highlight the importance of community partnerships. Community partnerships knit together by caring staff dedicated to providing exceptional service benefits the clients we serve every day.

The Getthere Call Center operates Monday - Friday from 7 AM to 7 PM.



[1-855-373-4040](tel:1-855-373-4040)

## Getthere Job Posting

### Mobility & Transportation Advocate Job Opening

The Getthere Call Center is expanding again! Join our team of exciting transportation leaders to make a difference in your community.

Rural Health Network seeks a full-time Mobility Transportation Advocate to work in Getthere, a one-stop transportation assistance center, providing case management, information and referral services, trip planning, travel training, and transportation education services. The MTA will serve with the Getthere team of transportation professionals to improve access to health care, employment and other essential services to those that face transportation barriers, with a primary focus on the elderly, people with disabilities, and the rural population.

This full-time position is a 40 hour per week position with benefits. Candidate must be empathetic and understanding to the needs of individuals, practice analytical and problem-solving skills, understand the health and human services sector, and desire an integral role in the success of a dynamic and growing collaborative community initiative.

[Apply here.](#)

## Introducing Hannah Rion, Farm to School Coordinator

My name is Hannah Rion and I am the newly hired Farm to School Coordinator for the Food and Health Network program at Rural Health Network of SCNY. I recently graduated from Paul



*Hannah Rion, Farm to School Coordinator*

Smith's College, where I studied Sustainability and Entrepreneurial Business. Having grown up in Delaware County, I am overjoyed to be serving the South Central New York region in this capacity.

My upbringing was heavily focused in agriculture, as I had the pleasure of being raised on a small farm, where I continue to reside today. My appreciation for food and the journey it takes to reach the mouths of many, grew

stronger during my time at Paul Smith's College. My schooling offered me the opportunity to visit farms throughout the Adirondack region and beyond, enabling me with acquired skills and a broader understanding of many of the stresses our food system stakeholders face. I plan on utilizing the knowledge I gained from my experiences at college, in addition to my upbringing, throughout my time in this position.

I am thrilled to be working for an organization that places such importance on health in communities, especially since these are communities that I have grown up in myself. In a time where health is being discussed prominently across the world, I look forward to creatively developing solutions to some of the obstacles local communities are facing. More specifically, I am delighted to continue to expand upon all the work that has been accomplished before me, thanks to the efforts of many. I am eager to begin collaborating with my fellow Food and Health Network staff members, as well as the many other organizations that share similar objectives. I plan on contributing my drive to help others, accompanied by my passion for fresh food and agriculture to better the farm to school initiative throughout the neighboring counties.

## **Rural Health Service Corps New AmeriCorps VISTA Positions Available**

Rural Health Service Corps has two openings for VISTA positions with the Schuyler County Coalition on Underage Drinking and Drugs and The New York State Association for Rural Health. These are year-long positions starting Summer 2021 that involve full-time service (35-40 hours/week). Through capacity building activities such as fundraising, grant writing, research, and volunteer recruitment, AmeriCorps members in the VISTA program serve in an office setting and gain experience and leadership skills. This opportunity prepares members for a life of service in the public, private, or nonprofit sector. For more information about these positions and AmeriCorps VISTA, please visit our [website](#).



**AmeriCorps**

## Announcing a New Evaluation Project

The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) have selected community partnerships across the country to receive over \$2 million as a part of the *Improving Social Determinants of Health: Getting Further Faster* program. Rural Health Network is pleased to announce that we are among the 42 selected communities who have demonstrated impact in advancing health equity by addressing social determinants of health, and will actively participate in a national retrospective evaluation of promising practices. The evaluation will focus on five areas of the social determinants directly linked to chronic disease: the built environment, community-clinical linkages, food insecurity, social connectedness, and tobacco-free policy.

Our coalition, "Supports for Healthy Aging in Rural New York" uses mobility management and transportation services to connect the rural elderly to clinical and social supports, with the long-term goal of promoting healthy aging in Rural Broome County. Partners include Broome County Health Department, Broome County Office for Aging, and advisors from Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study and the National Center for Mobility Management.

Participation in this evaluation project will influence future activities for our Getthere and Northern Broome CARES programs. [Read the full press release](#) which includes a list of all participating community partnerships.

## Community Health Services

On January 29, 2021 Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded \$2.5 billion in COVID-19 relief funds through renewal grants to existing projects to support thousands of homeless assistance programs across the nation.

In the Rural Health Network service area including the City of Binghamton, Town of Union, and Broome, Tioga, Delaware, Chenango, Cortland and Otsego Counties, HUD's Continuum of Care grants will provide critically needed support to programs on the front lines of serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Congratulations to 6 local organizations: Fairview Recovery Services, YWCA of Broome, Volunteers of America, Greater Opportunities for Broome and Chenango, Catholic Charities of Cortland County and the Coalition for Homeless SNY who in total received \$1,780,761 in funding.

We knew there was a housing shortage in most of our service area even before the pandemic. The critical supply and demand need has worsened due to COVID-19. Emergency shelters are at full capacity and subsidized housing complex applications aren't being accepted in many areas. Safe, affordable accessible, quality housing is also a major concern in rural towns and for our aging population, people with disabilities or physical/mental health chronic conditions.

Rural Health Network is fortunate to have a housing subject matter expert, Nicole Rogers, on staff as a Community Health Worker. She addresses this social determinant of health through assisting her Broome County clients with accessing:

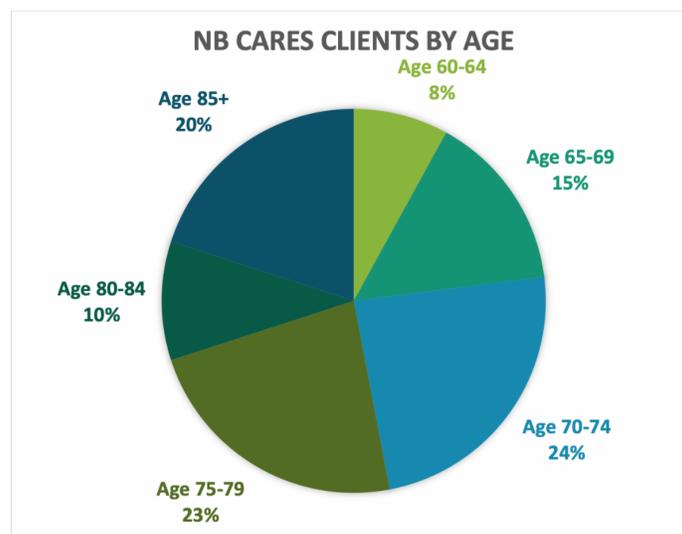
- coordinated entry services for emergency shelter or supportive housing
- housing applications (HUD & Section 8)
- Department of Social Services rental subsidies
- NYS tenants' rights and landlord responsibilities
- Legal Aid support

- energy financial assistance programs
- Healthy Neighborhood Broome Program home safety supplies
- local code enforcement
- household goods and furniture
- durable medical equipment through clinical prescribers and suppliers

We have more advocacy work to do in our rural communities to address housing not only as a basic human right, but also as a resilient rural viability indicator and community development opportunity.

## Northern Broome CARES - First Year Highlights

The Northern Broome CARES Program began providing services in Jan. 2020. We are currently finalizing the yearly report for the NY State Office for Aging and wanted to share some of what happened this year! We served 114 clients in the Northern Broome towns of Lisle and Triangle (which includes the Village of Whitney Point). Of those, 63% were female; 37% were male. Sixty seven percent of them live alone.



The program started the year offering monthly bus trips to Vestal for shopping, group activities such as line dancing and Faith in Action's Chop and Chats. These were well attended and enjoyed by all the participants.

The COVID pandemic hit and in mid-March, the Senior Center where our office is located closed to the public. Our program, like so many others, shifted our focus and planning. Helping clients access day-to-day needs (food, prescriptions, and necessities) and preventing social isolation became new goals. Telephone reassurance calls, sending cards and doing shopping and prescription pick-up and doorstep deliveries were priorities. We worked closely with the Senior Center staff to assist with the take-out meals offered each weekday. In addition, we collaborated with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier to assist in the monthly food distributions in Whitney Point and to make deliveries to seniors in our service area. We were also able to secure food for clients through the monthly CHOW food box distributions.

We were fortunate to receive a grant through Binghamton University's Philanthropy Incubator project. These funds went toward our safety home repairs project. We also received donations from the Itaska Countryside Christian Chapel and private individuals to use toward this goal. We contracted with the First Ward Action Council to provide the labor for the repairs. We are looking at

ways to expand this service, as there is a tremendous need!

We have submitted a request to expand our service area to include the towns of Barker and Nanticoke. This would allow us to serve all of Northern Broome County. We are hoping to receive approval in the very near future.

Our first year looked very different from what we anticipated! However; we have learned much, assisted many, and look forward to continuing the work we have begun.



## News You Can Use

### The Mental Health Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic in New York

Using survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau, a new [NYSHealth report](#) analyzes mental health in New York State during the pandemic.

**Advancing the health and well-being of rural people and communities.**

**Stay Connected**

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



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