

Rural Matters November 2022

Leadership Message



I'm pleased to announce the 2022 recipients of Rural Health Network's National Rural Health Day Awards. This is our third year presenting the awards to honor individuals and organizations that contribute to the health and well-being of rural people and communities.

RURAL HEALTH CHAMPION-Beth Saroney Paro

RURAL HEALTH LEADER - Lorianne Welch

RURAL HEALTH PARTNER - Broome-Tioga BOCES
Rock On Cafe

RURAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER - Caren Bush

Please see the next article for more information about each recipient.

-Mark Bordeau
Executive Director

National Rural Health Day Awards



RURAL HEALTH CHAMPION - Beth Saroney Paro

This award is presented to an individual or organization that exhibits concern for rural issues and takes steps to address those concerns in the region. Beth Saroney Paro, now retired, worked in a rural primary care clinic and saw first hand the needs of rural people that went beyond their clinical health concerns. Before, during, and after her service on the Rural Health Network Board of Directors, Beth has always kept individuals at the forefront, ensuring that their voice is heard in program planning and decision making. It is not surprising that in

accepting this award, Beth praised the efforts of Rural Health Network.

"I have been associated with the Rural Health Network of South Central New York for many years in many different capacities. This is an organization whose mission is to advance the health and well-being of rural people and communities. They accomplish this by listening to residents and community partners, assessing needs and designing programs to meet these needs. Through the good work of their dedicated board, innovative leadership and creative management and staff, this organization has grown and expanded their many programs. These programs are designed to improve access to healthcare, nutritious foods, access to transportation and to address social isolation. I am very proud of my association with the Rural Health Network. This recognition of my small contribution is both humbling and appreciated. Thank you."

RURAL HEALTH LEADER - Lorianne Welch

The Rural Health Leader Award is presented to an individual who has made significant contributions to rural health and well-being through advocacy, leadership, or volunteer/professional work.

Lorianne Welch is the Executive Director of the United Way of Broome County. We are honoring her for providing leadership that ensures that needs of rural communities in Broome County are included in the many ways United Way of Broome County serves people and for the ways she personally and professionally stepped up to meet needs in Broome County and beyond over the last two years. Lori served as co-chair the Health Equity Task Force for the Southern Tier Regional Vaccination Hub, working with representatives across an eight county region to reach at risk populations that varied by community.



Lori said: *"United Way of Broome County values the strong and longtime partnership with Rural Health Network of South Central NY, who works each day to advocate for the right of rural residents to have access to affordable healthcare. Their work leveraging collective resources across multiple systems helps to address the social determinants of health and form the basis for innovation and efficiency. It is an honor to receive this recognition and we look forward to continued collaborations."*

We also congratulate Lori on her coming retirement next month.

RURAL HEALTH PARTNER - Broome-Tioga BOCES Rock On Café



Pictured L to R: Arlin White, Steve Klock, Annie Hudock, Julie Raway, Bryan McCoy, Patrick Walsh, and Nicole Lori.

This award is presented to an individual or organization who has partnered with Rural Health Network to advance our work in serving rural people and communities. It almost goes without saying that our Farm to School program would not be possible without the partnership of Broome-Tioga BOCES Rock on Café. The focus of the Rock on Café program is to offer healthier versions of foods that children like while being affordable and convenient. Farm to School supports local farm livelihoods, strengthens regional food systems, connects members of the community through food and farming, and provides fresh, local, healthy lunches to students so that they can engage with their environment, learn, and develop healthy lifestyle habits.

When she learned about this award selection, Rebecca Stone, CEO and District Superintendent, Broome-Tioga BOCES said: *This is fabulous news. I am so excited for Annie and her team in food service. Not only are they providing delicious, healthy meals using local foods, they also remove many of the barriers our rural families have when it comes to meal application and payment. Way to go team!!!*

For more information about this partnership, visit the Rock on Cafe [website](#) or our Food and Health Network [website](#).

RURAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER - Caren Bush

This award is presented to a healthcare practitioner who works in rural communities and/or works to address rural health issues.

Caren Bush is a Wellness Coordinator at UHS Primary Care Endicott. She is a tireless advocate for the needs of patients, working to ensure that they have the resources needed to address health concerns.



Caren has been involved with the Produce Prescription Program (PRx) since the 2nd year (2018), and enrolls the most participants of any site each year. Our PRx program allows health care providers in the community to write prescriptions for fresh fruits and vegetables to patients who are at-risk or have been diagnosed with diet-related chronic illness. Patients receive vouchers to spend at local farmers' markets, farms stands, and other retail options – giving additional purchasing power to people who need it most.

Caren said: *"The Produce Prescription Program is a great way for patients to enjoy healthy, fresh food. They are able to choose produce they have always loved or something new without having to take away from their food budget. The Produce Prescription Program encourages good nutrition and promotes healthy eating lifestyles. I am proud to be a part of this program."*

In addition to referring patients to the PRx program, Caren frequently refers patients who have transportation barriers to our Getthere Call Center. In early 2021 Caren and one of our Mobility & Transportation Advocates worked with Wings of Hope to get a patient to treatment at the Cleveland Clinic. Her efforts were vital to coordinating that trip.



The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) sets aside the third Thursday of every November to celebrate National Rural Health Day (NRHD).

NRHD is an opportunity to “Celebrate the Power of Rural” by honoring the selfless, community-minded and determined spirit that prevails in rural America. There are several webinars scheduled today and through the weekend that may be of interest to you. Please visit the [Power of Rural website](#) for details.



Recently, the [Healthy School Meals for All New York Kids](#) campaign launched. The Rural Health Network is proud to be part of this coalition calling on Governor Hochul to fund healthy school meals for all New York students in next year’s state budget.

In June, federal waivers ensuring every student in the nation had access to free school meals expired. As a result, more than 726,000 New York students lost access to free school meals.

The Healthy School Meals for All coalition is **calling on Governor Hochul to make New York a leader in ending childhood hunger in schools by funding universal free school meals in the FY2024 State budget.**

Existing programs such as the community eligibility provision (CEP), which provides free school lunches in districts with high rates of poverty, leave many behind, including rural families struggling to make ends meet. In many rural districts, poverty is prevalent but too spread out to qualify for CEP. Additionally, stigma keeps many students in need from participating in school lunch.

Funding healthy school meals for all would change the game. [Studies](#) have shown a direct link between healthy meals and improved academic performance, boosted attendance, and better classroom behavior. With state funding, nearly [2,000 additional schools](#) would be able to provide universal free school meals for all students.

New York has always been a leader – now is the time for us to live up to our state motto and push ever upward by providing Healthy School Meals for All.

[Click here to join the coalition advocating for healthy school meals for all.](#)

WE SUPPORT

Free school meals for all New York students!

All our kids deserve the healthy meals they need to succeed.



Left to Right: Julie Pitts, Rural Health Service Corps Director; Haley Desilet, RHSC Assistant Director and Mitchell Brooks, RHSC Program Coordinator

The Rural Health Service Corps team had a great time at the New York State AmeriCorps Program Director Annual Meeting earlier this month! Program directors from across the state met in Saratoga Springs to discuss innovative ways to support AmeriCorps members throughout their service term and beyond.

Learn more about our AmeriCorps program and open positions across upstate New York, please [visit our website](#).

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Northern Broome C A R E S

The Northern Broome CARES team spent a morning picking apples at Apple Hills in Binghamton to benefit the Whitney Point community. Rural Health Network Intern Tova, Community Health Worker Karli and Program Coordinator Megan picked 200 pounds of apples to be shared among Northern Broome CARES clients as well as the Ecumenical Food Pantry of Whitney Point. The apples picked will help at least 75 families in our service area.

Peg Orzel, who runs the food pantry, said "I was thrilled when I saw Megan's car filled with bags of apples! Many individuals will be able to enjoy the fresh apples this season. We are already receiving such positive comments as people come to the Ecumenical Food Pantry. Megan, Karli and Tova are a real plus to our Whitney Point Community. Their positive attitudes, enthusiasm and quick responses to needs is very much appreciated. We are so happy that Northern Broome CARES serves our Community!"



Learn more about [Northern Broome CARES](#)

News and Resources

Broome County Health Department Survey

Broome County residents, the Broome County Health Department needs your help! Please complete the following 5 minute survey to give your input on flu and COVID-19 vaccination. All questions are anonymous and optional. [Take the Survey](#)

American Diabetes Month

Through our Produce Prescription Program, we're working to prevent impacts of high rates of food insecurity and diet-related disease by utilizing our region's agricultural resources. Here are some things that current PRx participants have said about the program:

I found different ways other than medicine to control my blood sugar like fruits and vegetables. It offered me a lot more awareness on different types of vegetables.

I've been eating my vegetable, I've been losing weight and my blood sugars are fantastic!

[Learn more](#) about the Produce Prescription program.

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