

# RURAL HEALTH NETWORK

*Serving South Central New York*

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

## *Rural Matters October 2024*

### A Message from our Executive Director



Welcome to the October issue of Rural Matters. Fall is in full swing and overall, the weather has been beautiful in our area. School years and semesters at college have begun. Rural Health Network of SCNY has been busy! We are excited to be involved in meetings with the Social Care Network and area agencies learning about preparing for what is to come with the 1115 Waiver. We are hoping in the next few weeks and months we will know more and contribute however we can.

In September, Rural Health Network of SCNY had our annual Staff Retreat. It was a beautiful day at Nathaniel Cole Park where staff could get together, have fun, eat delicious food, and enjoy the great outdoors.

In just a few days, we will be hosting our 2nd Annual Rural Health Network Showcase. We are excited to acknowledge and celebrate Nicole Rouhana (Champion), Shawn L. Yetter (Leader), Catskills Agrarian Alliance (Partner), Dr. Lazarus Gehring (Practitioner), and Tonya Mitschele (Emerging Leader). I am also excited to use this event to meet so many of you that I have not had a chance to meet with yet. Please join us at the event if you can. I look forward to seeing you there! I know schedules can be busy so if you are unable to attend the event but would still like to show your support for our agency, please follow our [Donate Link](#) to show your support!

Demetra Alberti  
Executive Director



## Rural Health Award Recipients

Please join us on October 21st to honor this year's recipients of our Rural Health Awards. Learn more about our previous recipients [here](#).

### 2024 RURAL HEALTH CHAMPION

#### Nicole Rouhana

- Director of Graduate Programs at the Decker College of Nursing and Health Sciences at Binghamton University
- Nationally certified as a family nurse practitioner and certified nurse-midwife



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Rural Health Champion  
Nicole Rouhana, FNP-C, CNM, PhD

### 2024 RURAL HEALTH LEADER

#### Shawn Yetter

- Commissioner of Social Services for Tioga County
- President of the New York Public Welfare Association in 2018
- Rural Health Network (Founding Board Member and former Board President)
- Tioga United Way, Tioga County Rural Ministry, Tioga Opportunities Inc., and United Health Services Board Member



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Rural Health Leader  
Shawn L. Yetter

### 2024 RURAL HEALTH PARTNER

#### Catskills Agrarian Alliance

- A comprehensive food sovereignty project built from the ground up by farmers
- Has helped lay the groundwork for expanding our reach in underserved, rural communities in Chenango, Delaware, and Otsego counties



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Rural Health Partner  
Catskills Agrarian Alliance

### 2024 RURAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

#### Dr. Lazarus B. Gehring

- Educated at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA and received his medical degree from Tel Aviv University in Israel
- He has been practicing medicine in the Southern Tier for 25 years
- Clinical Associate Professor at Upstate Medical University, Family Medicine site director, New York State Rural Health Council member
- Medical Director of the Broome County Health Department




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Rural Health Practitioner  
Dr. Lazarus B. Gehring

**2024 EMERGING RURAL HEALTH LEADER**

**Tonya Mitschele**

- Community Health Worker employed by Gerould's Pharmacy Community Cares Health Solutions
- Played a vital role in the Social Impact Pilot Program, building connections between local organizations and patients to address social determinants of health and improve healthcare access and outcomes



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**Emerging Rural Health Leader  
Tonya Mitschele**

Last call for event tickets - all tickets need to be purchased in advance.

**Rural Health Showcase Tickets**

We are very grateful to our event sponsors for their support of our mission to advance the health and well-being of rural people and communities.

**THANK YOU TO OUR EVENT SPONSORS**

**GOLD**



**SILVER** **DESSERT**



**BRONZE**



**Community Health Education - Upcoming Programming**

October is a Month of Awareness and Education about Mental Health.

**World Mental Health Day:** This day is celebrated on October 10th each year. The theme for 2024 is "Mental Health for all. Greater Investment – Greater Access. Everyone, everywhere."

**Mental Illness Awareness Week:** This week is celebrated during the first full week of October. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) lobbied Congress to create this awareness event in 1990.

**National Depression and Mental Health Screening Month:** This month is a time to learn about mental health issues, depression awareness, and screenings.

**UN World Mental Health Month:** The UN organizes activities throughout the month to address mental health issues. Each week focuses on a different topic.

Mental health conditions can affect anyone, and seeking help is a sign of strength.

Rural Health Network is pleased to offer a variety of options for **Adult Mental Health First Aid** programming this fall, and thanks to Broome County Opioid Settlement funding, we are excited to host Truth Pharm at the end of each course to offer Narcan and Science of Addiction training. Each person who completes the whole training receives not only the 3-year Mental Health First Aid certification, but also a free Narcan kit and valuable information on how to use it.

For more information or to register, contact [Julianne Lee](#).

**Mental Health First Aid, Narcan,  
and Science of Addiction Training**

**Learn how to support your friends, family, and neighbors**

Mental Health First Aid teaches you how to identify, understand and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges among adults. You'll build skills and confidence you need to reach out and provide initial support to those who are struggling.





Narcan and Science of Addiction training includes education on how to recognize the signs and symptoms of opioid overdose and how to respond using Narcan (Naloxone), as well as a deeper understanding of how addiction affects the human body and mind. All who attend the full Narcan and Science of Addiction training will receive a free Narcan kit.

**Upcoming Courses:**

- ❖ **In person at 455 Court St. in Binghamton:**  
Wednesday & Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> - 1:00-5:00pm  
Narcan training Friday 5:00-6:00pm  
*Must attend both sessions to receive certification!*
- ❖ **Virtual, via Zoom:**  
Thursday and Friday December 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> - 9:30am - 1:00pm  
Narcan training Friday 1:00-2:00pm  
*Must attend both sessions to receive certification!*

Registration is Required. Contact Julianne Lee for more information:  
jlee@rhnsny.org  
(607)788-6896

This project is made possible by funding through the Broome County Opioid Settlement Funds.



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## Focus Group on Rural Health Care to be Scheduled in Deposit-Hancock Area

AmeriCorps VISTA member Deacon Hogan is working on a survey project with Guthrie Lourdes. Focus group participants will be asked to share their experiences and ideas for solving rural healthcare challenges. Those interested in attending a group in the **Deposit/Hancock** area can respond to this [interest survey](#).

Contact [Deacon Hogan](#) for more information.



## October is National Farm to School Month

October is National Farm to School Month, and we are thrilled to celebrate two recent grant awards that will support our collaborative farm to school programs reaching 30 school districts across a five county region. Farm to School is a powerful initiative that not only supports student health and learning by providing access to fresh, nutritious food, but also strengthens our rural communities by creating reliable markets for local farms and food businesses.

Rural Health Network was awarded a New York State Farm to School grant to build capacity for the Broome-Tioga Farm to School Program. This program is a longstanding partnership between Broome-Tioga BOCES, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Broome County, Rural Health Network, and 15 participating school districts. The grant will help the team connect with more local farms and food producers within the Southern Tier; provide opportunities for students to learn about local agriculture and the food system while increasing their access to healthy, local foods; expand training opportunities and resources for school food service staff; and explore innovative local processing models to increase the availability of minimally processed local products for school meals. Thank you to State Agriculture Commissioner Richard A. Ball, Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo, Senator Lea Webb, and project partners who recently celebrated this award. See more from the celebration here:

[WSKG](#)  
[Newschannel 34](#)  
[WICZ](#)  
[NYS Agriculture & Markets](#)

Our partners Delaware-Chenango-Madison-Otsego (DCMO) BOCES were also awarded a New York State Farm to School grant. Rural Health Network is excited to work alongside DCMO BOCES and project partners Sidney Central School District and the Catskills Agrarian Alliance, to grow the farm to school program in 15 participating school districts. Through the grant, partners will strengthen connections between the classroom, cafeteria, and community for a comprehensive farm to school initiative; increase local procurement and NY Thursday menus; facilitate farm visits for school nutrition professionals; and expand school garden programs.

We are grateful for New York State's investment in our local farm to school efforts, and programs across the state. To learn more about this work, check out the recently revamped [Farm to School section](#) of the Food and Health Network's website.

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## Welcome a New Public Health AmeriCorps Member

Hello! My name is Kieran, and I'm excited to introduce myself as the new Public Health Farm to School AmeriCorps member, having joined the team this September. Originally from Philadelphia, PA, I've previously worked with children in West Philly, which fueled my passion for promoting healthy eating habits among youth.

I'm dedicated to helping kids explore healthy alternatives and integrating local produce into school lunches. Currently, I'm a junior at SUNY Binghamton

University, where I'm pursuing my Bachelors in Social Work. I plan to graduate in 2026, and will pursue my Masters in 2027.

My goal is to work within the school system as an embedded social worker, focusing on supporting students' success and addressing their needs. In my free time, I enjoy playing basketball and soccer with friends, as well as diving into a good book about sci-fi or psychology. I'm looking forward to contributing to our community and making a positive impact!



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## Enjoying Local Foods All Season Long

It's Winter Squash Season! Challenge yourself to try a variety you haven't had before.

### Winter Squash Guide

- **Acorn:** It has a mild, subtly sweet and nutty flavor. The skin is edible.
- **Butternut:** This is the sweetest variety of winter squash and most versatile.
- **Delicata:** Skin is edible and creamy, mild flavor akin to sweet potatoes.
- **Kabocha:** Sweet with a nice nutty flavor.
- **Spaghetti:** When cooked, the moist flesh develops strands that resemble spaghetti, scrape with a fork and top with marinara!
- **Patty Pat/Patty Pan:** This is very similar to zucchini but a tiny bit sweeter.
- **Pumpkin:** Best for carving and seed roasting.
- **Sugar Pie Pumpkin:** Sweeter than carving pumpkins, with thicker flesh so there's more pumpkin for pie making! yum!

To Prepare: (1) Wash the skin and cut lengthwise, removing seeds with a spoon  
(2) Lay in baking pan skin side up with a quarter cup of water  
(3) Bake 400 degrees for 45 min- 1 hour - pierce for doneness

Editor's Note: Try one of my favorite recipes: [Spaghetti Squash Burrito Bowls](#)



## Public Health AmeriCorps and VISTA Members Give Back to Local Community

Being an AmeriCorps member not only offers opportunities for personal and professional growth- it also gives members the chance to become an active participant in making their local community a better place. One way members do this is through service projects. In September, the Rural Health Service Corps partnered with the United Way

Day of Caring to mark AmeriCorps' September 11th National Day of Service and Remembrance.

Public Health AmeriCorps and VISTA members from various host sites gathered at the VINES Dick Andrus Community Orchard to lend a hand. They spent the morning pulling weeds, weed whacking, mulching and harvesting fruit from the many fruit trees in the orchard. This gave members an opportunity to spend time together while learning about the history of the orchard and its beautiful trees. All while serving the community through their maintenance of a community garden.

If you feel passionate about giving back to local communities, AmeriCorps offers you unique ways to do this. We have several part and full-time positions open on a rolling basis. Positions are available in Broome, Cattaraugus, Chemung, Cortland, Tioga and Schuyler counties. Whether you choose to serve in a hands-on position as a Public Health AmeriCorps member or a behind-the-scenes VISTA member, you will have the chance to get things done for your community.

For more information about this and other AmeriCorps positions available with Rural Health Service Corps, please [visit our website](#) to learn more about the benefits that come with serving. You can also reach out to [Haley Desilet](#) or [Alexis Sankofa](#) with any questions you may have.





In January of 2024, Northern Broome CARES expanded their services to offer light housekeeping help to their clients. Unsure of how much this new service was needed, Northern Broome CARES staff set out with a goal of doing 7.5 hours of these services per quarter. Since starting this service, staff have surpassed this quarterly goal by double, if not triple. Clients have utilized the new service to have staff do laundry, help take out the trash, and clean out basements. Recently, MSW Intern Emma Schockner assisted a client by removing a vanload of cardboard from their basement and driving the cardboard to the local recycling center. The new housekeeping services have reduced the stress of the clients utilizing it. One client stated it was nice to clean out her basement, a project she's been putting off for years. Another stated "I wouldn't be able to do my laundry without you," as her health prevents her from going into her basement, where her washing machine is.

Northern Broome CARES serves residents 60+ who live in Whitney Point or the towns of Barker, Lisle, Nanticoke, and Triangle. To learn more about services designed to help residents live well and age well at home, contact Megan Arenas-Cardoso at 607-352-4681.



THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 2024



We're excited to celebrate the #PowerOfRural on National Rural Health Day, Nov 21! Join us in recognizing the spirit of rural America and the efforts of healthcare providers and stakeholders addressing unique healthcare challenges.

Rural Health Network is celebrating a month early with our Rural Health Showcase and recognition of individuals and organizations that contribute to rural health and well-being. Look for our event recap and other news in next month's *Rural Matters*. For more information about the National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health, visit the [Power of Rural website](#).

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## News, Articles of Interest, and Resources

### Comfort Keepers expands to Broome County

Comfort Keepers of Ithaca provides in-home, non-medical care, dedicated to helping seniors and adults maintain independence in the comfort of their own homes. They specialize in providing personalized support for daily activities. They are based in locations throughout the Southern Tier and Finger Lakes area and have recently expanded to Endicott and surrounding communities in Broome County. View their [new client promotion](#).

### Celebrating Diversity

The New York State Office for the Aging recently shared a [wonderful article](#) highlighting Global Diversity Awareness Month which is celebrated in October.

We also found a guide aimed at employers that includes ideas and examples for how to create an authentic celebration of diversity at your organization published by [the diversity movement](#).

### NYHealth Data Brief - Bouncing Back: New Yorkers' Mental Health Progress and Remaining Challenges

More than four years after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, rates of anxiety and/or depression among New Yorkers are showing improvement across all population groups. Still, nearly one in five New Yorkers report experiencing anxiety and/or depression. The findings come from a New York Health Foundation (NYHealth) analysis of U.S. Census Bureau survey data on self-reported symptoms of anxiety and/or depression from the beginning of the pandemic through July 2024. [View the data brief](#).

### Online Course on Rural Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

[Rural Minds](#) has partnered with Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine and NY FarmNet to offer a free online course "Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in Rural America." [Learn More and Enroll](#).

### October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month

We're sharing this [Care Compass Network video](#) produced last October featuring Dr. Nicole Rouhana and Dr. Wayne Teris discussing breast cancer awareness.

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## [2023 Impact Report](#)

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