

Spring 2015

# Idaho Rural Health Association

Quarterly Newsletter

The Mission of the Idaho Rural Health Association is to provide leadership on issues related to rural health in Idaho through advocacy, communication, and education.



## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS:

- Quarterly newsletter focused on IRHA's interests
- Networking opportunities
- One-time introductory subscription to NRHA's magazine Rural Roads
- NRHA's Action Alerts
- NRHA's Media Alerts
- Discounted fees to attend IRHA conferences and other events
- Rural Health Forums
- NRHA membership discount

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## Idaho Rural Health Association Update

### National Rural Health Association Policy Institute Hill Meetings, 2015



I was excited to attend the Rural Health Policy Institute meeting in Washington DC in early February. Many of the presentations were especially sobering in forecasts of the challenges facing rural health care providers and potentially impacting our ability to continue to provide great care close to home. But my heart and spirits began to lift as we heard from a variety of speakers in Congress on both sides of the aisle describing their commitment to rural medicine and their advocacy to support legislative action to forestall potentially damaging policies. The most important part of the conference occurred when I met Shannon and David Schmitz and together we made our way to Capitol Hill. We met with each member of the Idaho Delegation and were well-received. Our interactions were brief but I believe fruitful in expressing our strong desire to have our Senators and Congressmen become actively involved in defending rural medicine and recognizing the economic value to their respective constituencies. We encouraged them to join either the Senate Rural health Caucus or the House Rural Health Care Coalition.

We invited each member and their staff to attend a reception at the National Arboretum hosted by the National Rural health Association. It was excellent event and well attended. Finally, it was my pleasure to meet two incredibly passionate leaders and rural health advocates in David and Shannon! I am looking forward to the next time we "storm the hill" and return with stories of our successes!

*Patrick J. Branco*

President,  
St. Mary's Hospital, Cottonwood  
Clearwater Valley Hospital, Orofino

Our Vision is to be the recognized advocate for rural health

### Planting Hope for the Future

Ted Epperly, MD  
President, IRHA

Since the last Friday in April (24th) is Arbor Day, I thought I would use this as the theme of my President's column in our newsletter. Arbor Day is an annual observance that celebrates the role of trees in our lives. I love trees! The tree has appeared throughout history and literature as the symbol of life. I cannot help but draw a strong parallel between planting trees and what we all do in healthcare in helping grow those we serve to be healthier people, and helping our employees and each other grow to be capable, competent, and caring human beings who are trying to make our communities and State a great place to work and live. By planting trees and investing in people we are planting hope and creating a better future!

So this April as we enjoy a lovely spring in Idaho let's all be aware and amazed at the beauty of trees in our lives. Let's also be aware of the impact we all have on helping to grow those around us - our children, our spouses and significant others, our pets, our patients, our organizations, our communities, and each other.

At the end of each day we have planted hope. At the end of each day we are planting the future!

### Rural Issue # 071

When people ask where  
you're from and then respond  
with, "where's that?"

### 2015 IRHA Legislative Breakfast

The Idaho Rural Health Association was pleased to once again host its annual Legislative Breakfast. With legislators from across the state in attendance, our members and IRHA leadership were able to address issues important to rural health in Idaho including:

- Continuing to expand funding for health related education at Idaho's education institutions and programs that will place a growing health care workforce in rural Idaho.
- Supporting the Idaho Healthcare Coalition and its \$40 Million SHIP Grant to transform health care throughout the entire State of Idaho.
- Supporting Medicaid Expansion as a mechanism to allow those below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level to have access to timely health care.
- Supporting Telemedicine in Idaho as proposed by the Idaho Telemedicine Council to ensure the highest quality of care as close to home as possible.

As you may know from reading our IRHA Legislative Updates, while some of these issues are resolved and have been successful, others are not. As a valued member of IRHA, we welcome your participation and involvement as we work to connect the importance of these issues with our state legislators. The interactions we pursue with our legislators make a significant difference. This breakfast gathering is just one of many avenues IRHA is working to improve the health of rural Idaho and advocate for positive change.

I am pleased to also note that several of our legislative colleagues also chose to become members of the IRHA. This allows those legislators to stay informed through the IRHA newsletter and other timely material on health care issues in rural and frontier Idaho.

Please let us know how you would like to become more involved with IRHA and see you at next year's event!

David Schmitz, MD FAAFP  
Past-President and Ex-Officio Board Member, IRHA

### LET US KNOW!

Why is rural health important to you?  
What is your passion in rural health?

We will include your response in our  
next newsletter.

Send to Shannon at  
[idahorha@gmail.com](mailto:idahorha@gmail.com)

### Join Us Today!

By joining IRHA, you become a member of a growing statewide network of professionals who are working to improve the health and quality of life for rural Idahoans. Members have come to rely on IRHA to be the voice for rural communities through advocacy, information exchange and collaboration.

IRHA has moved to a new web-based member management system. Now you can join conveniently online. Go to [www.idahorha.org](http://www.idahorha.org) to register or renew your membership.

#### Annual Dues:

Individual \$25  
Organization \$100 (up to 5 members)  
Student \$15

### Idaho State Loan Repayment Program (SLRP)

The Bureau of Rural Health & Primary Care invites you to explore this new opportunity for clinician and physician loan repayment. SLRP is a federal grant created to improve healthcare access in Health Professional Shortage Areas. **SLRP has recently been expanded to include full and part-time clinicians.** Award amounts range from \$5,000-\$25,000 per year, depending on discipline, and matching employer contributions.



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE  
DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH



#### Eligible facilities must:

- Be a nonprofit or public entity located in a Health Professional Shortage Area
- Provide a sliding fee scale for low income and uninsured patients and accept Medicare and Medicaid
- Provide \$1:\$1 matching loan repayment funds

Questions?  
Email: [ruralhealth@dhw.idaho.gov](mailto:ruralhealth@dhw.idaho.gov)  
Call: (208) 334-0669

Funding Available  
Apply Now!

Visit  
[www.ruralhealth.dhw.idaho.gov](http://www.ruralhealth.dhw.idaho.gov)  
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