

FALL 2023

# RURAL HEALTH UPDATE

PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

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## Preceptor Spotlight

# DR. DARRIN NICHOLS

Dr. Darrin Nichols is a rural preceptor for WVU medical student rotations in Wirt County. He has an active Courtesy Appointment with the WVU School of Medicine Department of Family Medicine.

He is the Chief Medical Officer for Coplin Health Systems. Coplin Health Systems is a federally qualified health center (FQHC) and has locations serving patients in Wirt, Wood, and Jackson Counties in West Virginia and Meigs County in Ohio. In this role, he continues to see patients regularly at his Wirt County Family Care clinic in Elizabeth, WV.



### Where did you grow up? Was it rural?

I grew up in a town called Walker, WV, which is a very rural community. While growing up in Walker, I attended elementary, middle and high school at Wirt County Schools in Elizabeth, WV, another very rural community. My graduating class from high school consisted of approximately 70 students. The clinic I currently practice in is located in Elizabeth, WV and is the same clinic that I attended as a patient growing up.

### What and where was your medical school path?

I completed my undergraduate training in Biology at West Virginia University in 2013 and was admitted to West Virginia University School of Medicine upon graduation. I was admitted to the Rural Track program through WVU SoM as a 1st year medical student, which was an extremely impactful experience on my life. This group provided fuel for my passion for Rural and Family Medicine, which has allowed me to get to where I am today. I became a Rural Scholar in my final year of medical school and upon graduation from WVU SoM in 2017, I entered residency in Family Medicine at Charleston Area Medical Center. I completed three years of residency training in Charleston, serving as Chief Resident and graduating from residency in 2020 during the CoVID-19 pandemic. After graduation, I became a family physician for Coplin Health Systems, where I still practice currently.

### Did you always know you wanted to practice medicine in a rural community? Why?

Yes. Ever since I decided that I wanted to become a physician, I knew that I wanted to come back home to practice. Rural communities are very unique and offer a very fulfilling environment in which to practice medicine. I have always felt that my community supported me in many ways to get to where I am today and returning to my hometown allows me to give back to that community. Taking care of the community, not just individuals, gives me a great sense of pride and is my favorite aspect of Rural and Family Medicine.

### What is it like to practice and serve in rural WV?

Practicing medicine in a rural community is very rewarding for several reasons. Getting to know and care for whole families is a deeply fulfilling experience and fosters connection to your patients in ways that practicing in areas that are not rural is not able to do. Integrating healthcare and community involvement and community support is also fairly unique to Rural Medicine and something that I find particularly intriguing about practicing in a rural area.

### Thoughts on the future of rural health in WV:

I think that the future of Rural Health in WV is strong. There is an immense need for primary care in the rural areas of West Virginia, and the medical students experiencing these communities have a unique opportunity to help address that need. The physicians that practice in these rural areas have a wealth of knowledge and experience to offer to the next generation of physicians.

### Advice to current medical students and other health profession students?

My general advice to students can likely be summarized into a short phrase: absorb as much as you can. Take advantage of rural opportunities and rural immersions as much as you can. Step outside of the classroom and the clinics/hospitals and get involved in the communities in which you are learning. Strongly consider practicing in a rural area. There is no better feeling than the gratitude that is received from bringing your expertise and experience to a rural area that needs it.

### Tips on preventing burnout?

Physician burnout and moral injury is of great concern to everyone and has recently garnered increased notice in the United States. It is a multifactorial systemic problem and as such, advice on prevention and improvement is multifaceted and still being studied. It is not an individual fault or lack of resiliency. Personally, I think it has been helpful to start with something small. I would encourage people to set aside some time in the day, no matter how long, to do something that you like to do without interruption – taking a walk, laughing at videos on your phone, chatting with friends or family, reading a chapter in a book – whatever it may be that is enjoyable.

### Hobbies and/or anything else you would like to share!

I am a Mountaineer fan through and through – so I enjoy watching the Mountaineers play football and basketball any chance I get. Family is extremely important to me. I am blessed to live relatively close to most of my extended family and we try to get together as a family as much as we can. I enjoy traveling, including around West Virginia visiting the beautiful sites in our state.

## HIGH HONORS, AWARDS AND RECOGNITION.

- **2016 Rural Scholar in the Department of Family Medicine at West Virginia University School of Medicine**

- **2016 Pisacano Scholar**

Awarded by the Pisacano Leadership Foundation of the American Board of Family Medicine

I was one of 5 students across the nation to be named a scholar that year.

Recognizes medical students committed to Family Medicine with demonstrable leadership skills, identifiable academic achievement, strong communication skills, identifiable character and integrity & community service/civic engagement.

- **2019 Award for Excellence in Graduate Medical Education from the American Academy of Family Physicians**

I was one of 12 residents selected across the nation to receive this award.

Esteemed distinction that recognizes outstanding Family Medicine residents for leadership, civic involvement, exemplary patient care & aptitude for and interest in Family Medicine

- **2019 Chief Resident for the Department of Family Medicine at Charleston Area Medical Center**

- **2020 Society for Teachers of Family Medicine Resident Teacher Award**

Awarded to a graduating senior resident who best exemplifies the qualities of an excellent teacher and ideal faculty member

- **Heart and Soul Award from Charleston Area Medical Center twice – 2017 & 2020.**

Selected by committee based on nominations from staff, patients, and/or patient families for exceptional service, empathy, and going above and beyond the duty required.

- **Officer Positions in the WV Academy of Family Physicians**

Secretary – 2022-2023

Vice President – 2023-2024

*If you are a medical student interested in a community-based rural rotation, please contact your campus coordinator to find out more. If you are a healthcare provider in a rural area and to become a preceptor for future healthcare providers, please contact Molly Linkous at WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health, [minkous@hsc.wvu.edu](mailto:minkous@hsc.wvu.edu).*

## Grant

# WVU EXPANDS RURAL OPIOID RESPONSE PROGRAMS WITH \$1M GRANT

The West Virginia University Institute for Community and Rural Health will use \$1 million to continue expanding resources across West Virginia through the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program.

A multi-year initiative funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program addresses barriers to prevention, treatment and recovery services for substance use disorder, including opioid use disorder. This is the second time the Institute has received \$1 million in funding for the program.

"The funding renewal will provide a tremendous opportunity to strengthen and expand substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery services in rural communities within the Mid-Ohio Valley," Amy Snodgrass, project director, said. "Through the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program, ten counties will now have access to mobile units, a county drop-in recovery center, peer support services, recovery classes, case management and behavioral health programming through services offered at rural health clinics."

The first funding cycle, lasting from 2019 to 2022, enabled program development in nine rural West Virginia counties — Calhoun, Gilmer, Jackson, Pleasants, Ritchie, Roane, Tyler, Wirt and Wood. Through the new grant, the Institute will be able to continue its outreach and also expand to include Doddridge County.

With a focus on developing connections and community collaboration, the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program is designed to build programs to become sustainable. In its first three years, the program has provided support through various activities such as the recruitment and retention of health care providers, evidence-based prevention education, training and professional development opportunities, expansion of existing community programs, and health screenings and referrals.

Through collaboration with the Mid-Ohio Valley Rural Health Alliance, WVU's experts have been able to partner with agencies including the Mid-Ohio Valley Health Department, Minnie Hamilton Health System, Northern West Virginia Rural Health Education Center and Westbrook Health Services.

"During the last three years, there's been a measurable increase in access to prevention, treatment, and recovery support services in the service area, but also a movement at the community level to support those who need these services," Brianna Sheppard, principal investigator from 2019 to 2022, said. "There's been an increase in access to naloxone and an increase in access to medications for opioid use disorder as evidenced by the increase in the number of prescribers in the region that actively prescribe."

"Health systems in the area have used this as an opportunity to identify additional services and delivery systems needed to address substance use disorder which includes developing contingency management programs in their clinics and a mobile unit that travels

to different counties."

Victoria Sanchez, director of research and evaluation for the WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health, will serve as principal investigator for the upcoming cycle. Leading up to funding approval, her work has been critical to a successful application and the development of a work plan.

"The next three-year grant will build on the strong foundation developed through successes and lessons learned in the previous period," Sanchez said. "The consortium will continue innovative evidence-based practices implemented over the last three years, and with the addition of new community-based and clinical partners, work will expand and develop new services."

To determine new initiatives, listening sessions were held with individuals from across the region, who expressed the need for additional access to services. Plans are underway for the creation of drop-in centers to provide those services, like kitchens for getting a meal, restrooms for showering and technology resources for classes and training opportunities.

The Rural Communities Opioid Response Program has already enabled mobile unit and telehealth services to reach new communities as well as peer support services to connect individuals to treatment and recovery services through county-led Quick Response Teams. In combination with another WVU-awarded grant, the program also helped support expanded behavioral health programming through Minnie Hamilton Health System to include a medication-assisted treatment program. As a result, the health system is now operating at capacity and is in the process of becoming a licensed behavioral health center, allowing for further expansion of treatment services.

To meet education needs across the region and in similar communities across the United States, the Regrounding Our Response curriculum was identified as an educational tool to address stigma and common misunderstandings and raise awareness about public health approaches to the opioid overdose crisis. The training program, originally developed by the Maryland Department of Health, was adapted to include West Virginia-specific data with the assistance of an advisory team and WVU experts. Since its implementation, 50 master presenters have been equipped to lead Regrounding Our Response West Virginia trainings across the state.

"We've seen an increase in the number of clinical and community-based partners actively engaged in this work every year. These partnerships are reflected in the activities planned for the next three years that increase the impact of this work through shared knowledge, collaboration and working together on referrals and wraparound services," Sheppard said.

"Together these outcomes indicate a significant decrease in stigma towards those with substance use disorder and, perhaps most importantly, an increase in focusing on the solutions rather than the problems and choosing to work toward solutions as a community."

# WVU ICRH SERVICE PROGRAM

Four medical students and two 4th year dental students were awarded service program funding during FY23 totaling \$200,000.



Sarah Mitchem



Amanda Rahman



Aidan Flanagan

Medical students Aidan Flanagan, Sarah Mitchem MS3, Amanda Rahman MS3 and Victoria Bonafield MS1 will receive \$25,000 each and be required to complete a 12-month service commitment in a rural/underserved area of West Virginia after residency.

Dental students will receive \$50,000 for a two-year commitment in a rural and/or underserved area of West Virginia. Brittany Carver will be practicing in Buckhannon County and Chase Preston will be practicing at a Federally Qualified Health Center, Valley Health Systems in Cabell County.

Not pictured:  
Victoria Bonafield and Brittany Carver.

# WEST VIRGINIA AREA HEALTH EDUCATION CENTERS (WV AHEC) GRANT RENEWED

West Virginia Area Health Education Centers (WV AHEC) will continue to enhance education and training networks within communities, academic institutions and community-based organizations thanks to a five-year, \$1,442,500 per year grant renewal.

The grant, awarded by Health Resources & Services Administration, an agency of the United States Department of Health and Human Services, supports five Centers located throughout the Northern, Eastern, Southern, Southeastern and Central regions of the state.

Working closely with the Institute for Community and Rural Health and implemented through the West Virginia University School of Medicine, WV AHEC seeks to increase diversity among health professionals, broaden the distribution of the health workforce, enhance health care quality and improve health care delivery to rural and medically underserved areas and populations.

“The overarching goals of the West Virginia Area Health Education Centers include diversity, distribution and practice transformation,” Jessica Stidham, Rural Community Health Scholars program manager, said. “Working toward these goals, the grant supports the Rural Community Health Scholars program, community-based experiential training, interprofessional education and pipeline programming that serves West Virginians through the development and maintenance of a health care workforce that is prepared to deliver high quality care in a changing health care delivery system.”

WV AHEC currently serves high school students interested in health professions, college students enrolled in health professions programs and working health professionals in 50 of the state’s 55 counties.

“By growing and nurturing our workforce, West Virginia residents will benefit from an increase in access to care from providers who truly understand their local community,” Stidham said.

The Rural Community Health Scholars program helps prepare individuals to work in rural and underserved communities by

providing supplemental educational opportunities focused on social determinants of health, cultural competency, virtual learning and telehealth, behavioral health integration and practice transformation, interprofessional education, connecting communities and supporting health professionals, and current and emerging health issues.

Health professions students at institutions throughout the state enrolled in a variety of degree programs, including medicine, nursing, dentistry, psychology, pharmacy and public health, benefit from the WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars program’s didactic and community-based experiential training activities. They also have the opportunity to participate in interprofessional training activities through community health initiatives. For high school students interested in health careers, WV AHEC provides pipeline activities such as career shadowing and presentations. Continuing education opportunities are also available for practicing health professionals.

“Participating in this programming provides a foundation for WVU health professions students to not only critically assess the needs of rural populations in West Virginia, but also see how they can work together as an interprofessional team to mitigate the barriers to health care facing our communities and create change for West Virginians,” Stidham said.

“I believe I am a well-rounded physician because of the Rural Community Health Scholars program,” Dimitri Tito, D.O., a WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars program alumnus, said. “I was born in a suburb of Douala, Cameroon, which is where my passion for rural medicine started. I joined the program to equip myself with skills and interprofessional education experiences necessary to practice in rural areas, and this program has prepared me to view populations I serve through a culturally-appropriate lens.”



Give

# GIVE

The WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health offers opportunities for students to positively impact rural and underserved communities through outreach. Become a donor to help us continue to deliver outstanding and unique experiences for our students to ensure that they stay in West Virginia to increase the healthcare workforce that's so needed throughout the state. Your donation could help us improve lives by supporting our mission.

[go.wvu.edu/ICRH-Campaign](https://go.wvu.edu/ICRH-Campaign) →



The Medical Student Service Award Program

The Dental Student Service Award Program

Project REACH  
(Rural Education Alliance for Community Health)

RUSH  
(Rural Undergraduate Shadowing in Healthcare)

PREP  
(Pipeline Rural Education Program)

CARRS  
(Community and Rural Rotations Support) Program

[go.wvu.edu/ICRH-Students](https://go.wvu.edu/ICRH-Students) →





# WV AHEC RURAL COMMUNITY HEALTH SCHOLARS PROGRAM 2023

The West Virginia Area Health Education Centers (WV AHEC) program supports healthcare professions recruitment and retention in rural West Virginia by providing learning opportunities and experiences that help students understand the challenges of working with rural and medically-underserved populations. Students in the WV AHEC Rural Community Health Scholars (RCH Scholars) program participate in educational and community training that focuses on rural health. In 2022, 28 Scholars, including 15 WVU students, completed the two-year, nationally recognized RCH Scholars program. Additionally, 76 of West Virginia's best and brightest health professions students currently participate in the RCH Scholars program, 35 of whom are enrolled at WVU. These scholars represent fourteen disciplines from eight institutions across the state.

Scholars are afforded the opportunity to develop an astute understanding of how to become leaders in their professions and communities, how best to implement healthcare services in rural and underserved areas, and work as part of an interprofessional team. Scholars also receive training and education from experts in rural healthcare, learn to provide meaningful patient care in the field, and gain hands-on experience to refine their skill set and positively impact the lives of West Virginians. The Scholars program aims to provide interprofessional education through clinical,



## AHEC Scholars

didactic, and community-based experiences to foster a positive change in healthcare delivery and outcomes.

Learn more about the RCH Scholars program at

<https://www.hsc.wvu.edu/west-virginia-area-health-education-center/rural-community-health-scholars/> or contact us at [RCH\\_Scholars@hsc.wvu.edu](mailto:RCH_Scholars@hsc.wvu.edu).

In addition to the WVU Scholars listed below, the following institutions have students participating in the Scholars program: Alderson Broaddus University (1), Concord University (2), Fairmont State University (1), Marshall University (8), Southern West Virginia Community and Technical College (1), University of Charleston (10), West Liberty University (1), and the West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine (17).

### Dentistry, DDS

Wijdan Dabeek  
Madison Hull Smith  
Ahmed Zanabli

### Dental Hygiene

Jodi Drumheller  
Medicine, MD  
Aidan Flanagan  
Eva Macfarland  
Anhthu Trinh  
Luke Stover

### Physical Therapy, DPT

John Brosky  
Physician Assistant  
Payten Brown  
Rebekah Shephard  
Isaac Smith  
Nursing, BSN  
Emily Golden  
Jessica Maynard  
Paige Shafor  
Grace Wilson  
Nursing, NP  
Candice Henson

### Occupational Therapy, OTD

Giorgi Morrone  
Exercise Physiology  
Caleb ShROUT  
Thomas Williams  
Chance Anderson  
Steven Ball  
Nicole Billie  
Ashleigh Clarke  
Carrie Dean  
Phillip Englund  
Briauna Malone  
Joshua Wagoner

### Health Informatics and Information Management

Jasmine Combs  
Alexis Stanley  
Public Health, MPH  
Amna Haque  
Pharmacy, PharmD  
Isaac Pringle

*WV AHEC programs are made possible by federal grant funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration and financial support from the the WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health. This allows WVAHEC to continue meeting the healthcare needs of West Virginians through workforce development, enhanced education, and increased access to care. For more information about the National AHEC Organization, visit [www.nationalahec.org](http://www.nationalahec.org).*



### PREP Participants: (not in order)

*Hannah-Grace Birmingham, Emilie Charles, Bryan Dawson, Mohanad Hayder, Jay Jackson, Charnet Johnson, Marcylla King, Bethany Knight, Erin Langan, Sonia-Frida Ndifon, Joseph Price, Samantha Shingleton, Emily Swope, Emily Whalen*

## PIPELINE RURAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

The second PREP (Pipeline Rural Education Program) cohort successfully finished the program in April 2023. Fourteen undergraduate students with health-related/STEM majors were chosen in 2022 and began the program in Fall 2023. PREP introduces WVU undergraduate students to pathways into the rural healthcare professions. All rising undergraduate juniors and seniors in specific majors were invited to apply. A \$500 participation award was earned at the completion of the program. There were 15 spots available.

PREP students participated in hands-on activities by attending Project REACH events held throughout the year in the most underserved West Virginia communities. These events concentrated on learning how to interact with community leaders to assess the needs of the area and provide non-invasive care. The students provided information on nutrition, dental care, exercise, substance use disorder, and women's health. The students also learned how to administer blood pressure checks, vital signs, and how to calculate BMI. The students also attended rural immersions throughout the state with a focus on various topics which included substance use disorder, health disparities and inequities in rural communities, and cultural competency in rural communities.

PREP students also attended Rural Health Interest Group meetings and attended WVU Rural Health Day in the spring. A poster session and graduation with the presenting of cords was held on April 27. PREP students presented on a subject or concept from the curriculum, that they felt was most impactful. The poster session was a creative way for the students to showcase and explore their deepest interests in rural community healthcare.

The PREP program application will open in early fall 2023. For more information <https://www.hsc.wvu.edu/icrh/students/prep-program/> or [christie.zachary@hsc.wvu.edu](mailto:christie.zachary@hsc.wvu.edu)

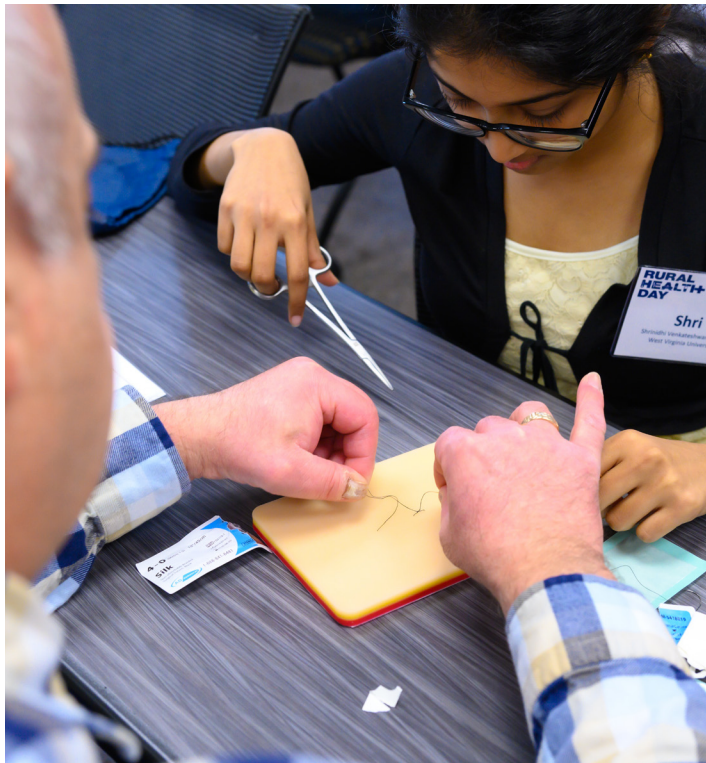
## Event



# 8TH ANNUAL WVU RURAL HEALTH DAY

The eighth annual WVU Rural Health Day held on Saturday, April 1, 2023 at the West Virginia University Health Sciences Center in Morgantown, WV, This was the first year that the event was held in person since 2019 and it was so good to be back! This year brought nearly 50 pre-health undergraduate students from community colleges and four-year institutions from Pennsylvania and West Virginia. Rural Health Day introduces future healthcare professionals to a hands-on rural health experience. The goal is to offer a unique experience that peaks the interest students may have in choosing a rural track curriculum and then a career in rural health practicing in underserved areas in the state. The morning sessions allowed students to learn how to navigate through the journey of medical school, dental school, nursing, and programs in physical therapy and hear the personal stories of primary care physicians, nurse practitioners, and dentists working in rural communities. The student panel discussion featured current rural track medical school students from first-years to fourth-years, dental students, and physical therapy students. The panelists delivered first-hand experiences of the rural track curriculum which includes, rural

immersions, practicing with a rural preceptor, the pressures of choosing a path, advice on studying, and next steps for applying. Practicing clinicians offered advice on balancing a very busy and challenging work lifestyle and the benefits of raising a family in the charm of a small town. The panel discussions have proven to be invaluable. They give curious students a chance to really ask the most intricate, detailed questions, and have actual one-on-one dialogue. The afternoon sessions rotated students through hands-on practices such as suturing and ultrasound, behavioral medicine, and nursing practices. These sessions open the door to the basics of healthcare procedures taught by family medicine physicians, behavioral medicine physicians, and nursing students that serve rural areas. The interactions give the students an advantage if they should choose to pursue graduate programs in health professions. WVU Rural Health Day would not be possible without the many volunteers of staff, clinicians, and students. We sincerely thank everyone for donating time and expertise. WVU Rural Health Day will return in April 2024!



# COMMUNITY AND RURAL ROTATION SUPPORT (CARRS) PROGRAM

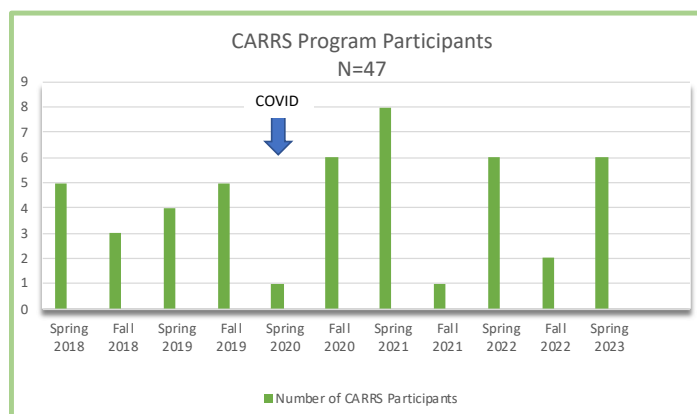
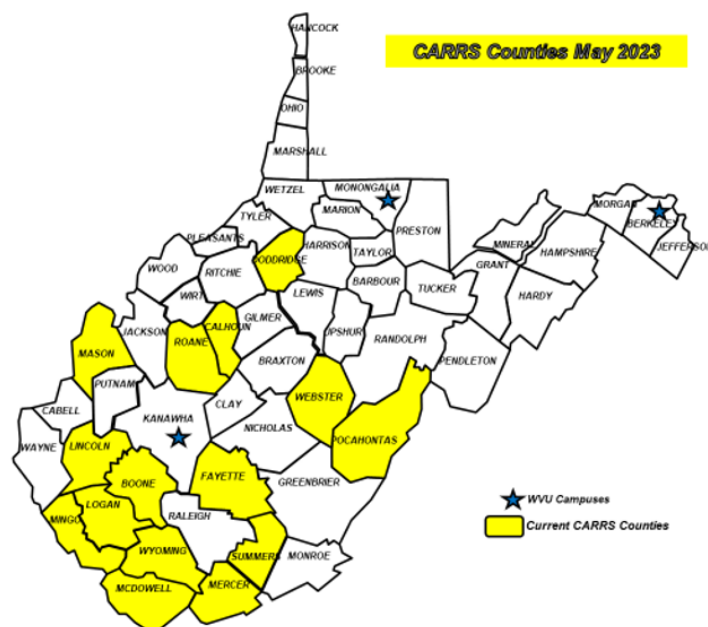
Our Community and Rural Rotation Support (CARRS) Program began in the Spring semester of 2018. We started with students from Medicine and Dentistry and have added Pharmacy and Physician Assistant students over the years. We began with funds for three students a semester and have increased to five students a semester with occasional additional funds from Rural Health Initiative (RHI) supplemental funding. CARRS offers at \$1500 stipend for rotations lasting 4-6 weeks.

From the beginning of CARRS we have focused on counties with the highest need for support, considering a broad variety of risk factors including: county economic status, primary care Health Profession Shortage Area scores, Kids Count county rankings, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area county designations, behavioral health providers by county and rates of poverty, teen pregnancy, drug poisoning mortality and high school graduation. The 15 CARRS counties were selected based on a weighted assessment of these risk factors and include: Boone, Calhoun, Doddridge, Fayette, Lincoln, Logan, Mason, McDowell, Mercer, Mingo, Pocahontas, Roane, Summers, Webster and Wyoming. Our projects in these counties have focused primarily on WV Project ECHO and HSTA. We have started to work with Try This WV and are always looking for new partners.

Students can apply for the program at any time throughout the year (they must already have a rotation scheduled or requested in a CARRS county AND pick a project from those available in that county), applications are reviewed (review committee consists of 2-4 staff) and CARRS awards are made to approximately 5-10 students each academic year. Applications are reviewed at least quarterly but we try to be flexible if there has been a last minute rotation change or other circumstances that warrant an exception. We have had a total of 47 students complete the program over five and a half years.

Building on the popularity and success of the CARRS program, two goals the co-coordinators, Jacquelynn Copenhaver and Molly Linkous, currently have for the program are to:

1. Work more closely with school schedulers to identify and promote preceptors in all CARRS counties; and
2. Continue to expand project options by partnering more actively with programs such as Try This WV and the WVU County Extension Programs.



The Institute for Community and Rural Health is pleased to offer CARRS to our health sciences students. We are honored to work with the students, rural preceptors, school schedulers and faculty to bring CARRS to our rural communities. Thank you to all who have supported this program. We look forward to continuing our work together.

Questions about and ideas for CARRS can be directed to the co-coordinators, Jacquelynn Copenhaver at [jacopenhaver@hsc.wvu.edu](mailto:jacopenhaver@hsc.wvu.edu) and Molly Linkous at [mlinkous@hsc.wvu.edu](mailto:mlinkous@hsc.wvu.edu).

**When students complete the program, we ask them to complete a reflection/evaluation survey, which contains open-ended as well as closed-ended questions. They give us permission to use their entries as well as their names when we use their quotes. Below are a few of the reflections our CARRS students have shared in their exit surveys.**

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"In addition to my CARRS project, my favorite part of my community experience was receiving mentorship from an attending physician for four weeks and caring for individuals in the community. As a WVU medical student, I get amazing opportunities in Morgantown, but we often change between physicians to work with from day-to-day. It was a privilege getting to build a relationship with Dr. Carroll Christiansen and sit under his consistent mentorship. I quickly caught onto his expectations for history taking, physical examination, overall assessment, and treatment plan. This allowed me to take on [more responsibility than a third year medical student would typically be given in Morgantown]. I also enjoyed the opportunity to care for individuals in Roane County. I often saw a patient, and then in the next few days saw their parents, children, cousins, friends, and other loved ones. This allowed me to establish rapport with patients and feel personal responsibility for their physical and emotional wellbeing as I created plans to help solve their chief complaints. Due to the longer rotation length, I also had the opportunity to see some patients multiple times which allowed me to better grasp continuity of care."

### **Jack Victory, WVU, 3rd Year Medical Student**

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"I was ecstatic to hear that I had been chosen to participate in the CARRS program as I grew up in Logan County and have always wanted the chance to give back to my community in some kind of way. I have always hoped to work in a community pharmacy in an underserved rural area like my hometown, so this rotation and entire experience have been extremely invaluable to me. Speaking to the [HSTA (Health Sciences Technology Academy)]students about their career aspirations and giving advice for their upcoming pursuits in higher education was an extremely fulfilling experience as I hope they now have a better understanding of what exactly pharmacists do and how to better achieve their goals in various career fields; I also hope that I was able to stress the need and importance of health professionals pursuing careers in underserved areas like their hometowns and how much fulfillment they would gain by serving their community members in the near future. I sincerely enjoyed working with Summer [Kuhn, mentor] and I hope that many more students in the future take the opportunity to work with her and other members of the [HSTA] Program - this entire experience will certainly be useful in my future career and I hope that this program continues to encourage more healthcare professional students to consider pursuing careers in rural areas like my hometown."

### **Michaela Howell, PharmD Student**

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"This experience was meaningful to me as it gave me a deeper sense of connection with the community I was serving during my rural rotation. I am glad I had the opportunity to get to know the community and had the chance to make a meaningful impact outside of the dental office. One important point that was driven home for me is the importance of outreach from community members viewed to have significant roles. I was very surprised to see the impact that my mentor dentist had, because people knew who he was and they respected his opinion and service. This is something I hope to continue in my own community throughout the course of my career. Before this project, I was unfamiliar with the Lions club and the services they provide. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn more about the organization and the programs they are involved with. I believe the members also enjoyed having me to join them on their projects as many made comments about how great it was to have me there with them. Many remarked that students typically attend one event; however, I went to five! All members were friendly and welcomed me to join."

### **Olivia Mason, WVU, 4th Year Dentistry Student**

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"I greatly enjoyed my time in rural WV during my CARRS program rotation in Mingo County, WV. I spent 4 weeks providing quality medical care to the patients of Gilbert, WV and surrounding areas. In addition to this, I was also able to complete the community outreach program with HSTA. I loved having the opportunity to teach the high school students about medicine, physician assistants, and answer their questions about college/graduate school. It was really wholesome to act as a resource to these students as I wish I had had when I was in their shoes. I worked alongside Summer Kuhn to take part in the HSTA program with the students and I am thankful for her for facilitating the meetings. I learned during this project that practicing medicine in rural communities is so imperative for the community growth and wellness. I learned that these rural health medical providers truly do make a difference in the quality of life of the patients that they see in these rural clinics. I also learned that the rural health medical providers act as great role models for children in these areas by showing them how they too can have a successful and fulfilling career."

### **Courtney Amend, WVU, PA Student**

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"This CARRS project working with Summer Kuhn from the WV HSTA program was immensely rewarding and was an excellent opportunity for me to learn more from high schoolers in southern West Virginia and reflect on what I could do as a healthcare provider to promote STEM education and healthcare outreach to rural communities in the state."

### **Ahmed Haque, WVU, 3rd Year Medical Student**

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## RUSH

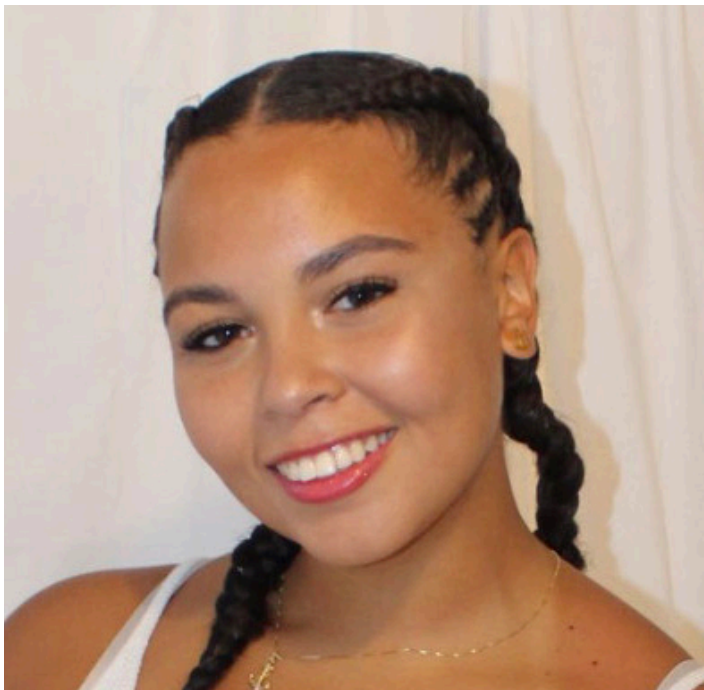
# RURAL UNDERGRADUATE SHADOWING IN HEALTHCARE PROGRAM

The Rural Undergraduate Shadowing in Healthcare Program provides participants with a unique experience that offers insight into what it is like to practice a health profession in rural West Virginia. The RUSH program is very competitive and only awards seven spots per year. Participants must be a current WVU student in good academic standing planning to pursue a healthcare career with the possible long-term goal of practicing in a rural or underserved area of West Virginia in Family Medicine, Dentistry, Physical Therapy, and Nursing. Selected students shadow a rural preceptor for a total of 20 hours during specific dates agreed upon by the participating practitioner and the student and work with the WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health and the WVU Pre-Health Professional Development Office to identify other rural-related programs relevant to their chosen health profession discipline. This could include research and outreach activities. RUSH students also meet one or more times with the Pre-Health Professional Development Office to put together their professional school application, which includes guidance on class choice, writing a personal statement, mock interviews and obtaining a committee letter. After receiving over 200 RUSH applications, seven students were accepted. While staying in rural housing in the communities where they were shadowing, students completed their 20 hours from March to June 2023.

For more information contact Christie J. Zachary, Program Manager of Student Outreach and Marketing, WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health [christie.zachary@hsc.wvu.edu](mailto:christie.zachary@hsc.wvu.edu).



**MacKenzie Barr**  
*Dr. Stephen Armitage - preceptor*



**Kiara Barron**  
*Dr. Ariel Mooney - preceptor*



**Maggie Bickford**  
*Dr. Laura Nulph - preceptor*

NOT PICTURED:

Chaysee Putnam – Dr. Joanna Bailey – preceptor

Patrick Sheehan – Dr. Angela Cherry – preceptor



**Reagan Bennett**

*Dr. Joanna Bailey - preceptor*



**Rylie O'Neal**

*Anitra Ellis, NP - preceptor*

# BEING HOME

Being Home is a pilot project for students in Buckhannon and Elkins Rural Health Initiative housing during their community-based clinical experiences. Being Home aims to develop relationships among students and local community members as well as provide opportunities to foster a sense of place in the region.

During the project's first nine months, we invited fifty-one health professions students, and eighteen of them joined eleven different community members for dinners or outdoors excursions in Buckhannon and Elkins. We hypothesize that engagement in community activities outside of students' clinical experiences can develop a feeling of home and positively influence intentions to practice healthcare in rural West Virginia.



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# TOMORROW IS MINE SUMMER CAMP

The Tomorrow is Mine Summer camp is a camp for children from counties in southern West Virginia. This year's camp was the fourth session and was held June 18 - 24. Through the vision and passion of Larry Rhodes, MD, Executive Director of the WVU Institute for Community and Rural Health, the first goal of the camp is to provide a week of inspiration through speakers and counselors from many backgrounds including art, education, public service, medicine, and law. Just as importantly, a lot of fun traditional camp

activities and field trips were held during the week. The camp's home base is on the WVU Tech Campus in Beckley, WV where children and counselors stay in dorms and experience a college campus environment. The camp, funded through donations, is offered free of charge to children ages 10-12 who might not otherwise have a chance to attend a summer camp. The second goal is to maintain a balance of fun and education while receiving messages of hope and inspiration. Local "winners" from all walks of life take part as counselors and speakers to

share their stories and their skills during the daytime activities. Some traditional camp activities are things that many campers will experience for the first time. The camp hosted children from Summers, Raleigh and Wyoming counties. The camp aims to open the eyes and hearts of children to hope and pathways to success by exposing them to a college campus and a variety of people, many from their own communities, who have made their dreams come true.