



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.

Idaho Rural Health Association Update

At our January IRHA Board meeting, Carol Taylor, a consultant funded through the National Rural Health Association, reviewed the newly developed IRHA Board Orientation Manual and reviewed board development strategies. IRHA Board Members developed a strategic plan focused on improving advocacy efforts, building membership, improving visibility, and providing education and networking opportunities. See page 3 for details.

Other topics discussed included the NRHA Policy Institute that four IRHA members will be attending the end of January (see below for details). The IRHA Board will be meeting at the following dates and locations in 2009:

Tuesday, April 21, 2009 11 AM to 4 PM - Twin Falls, Idaho
Thursday, July 2, 2009 11 AM to 4 PM - Grangeville, Idaho
Wednesday, October 28, 2009 11 AM to 4 PM - Pocatello, Idaho

Check out the IRHA website for further details by going to:

<http://www.idahorha.org/>

Board of Directors:

President

Mary Sheridan, RN
Department of Health and Welfare
State Office of Rural Health & Primary Care

President-Elect

David Schmitz, M.D.
Family Medicine Residency of Idaho

Past President

Linda Powell, MS, CPT
Idaho Area Health Ed. Center,
Mountain States Group, Inc.

Treasurer/Secretary

Ryan McAllister, PT
St. Luke's-Idaho Elks of Twin Falls

Board Members

Joe Cladouhos
Syringe General Hospital
Keith Davis, MD
Shoshone Family Medical Center
Felice Lampert, MPH
Benewah Community Hospital
Alan Stevenson
St. Benedict's Family Medical Center
Bill Woodhouse, M.D.
Family Practice Residency Program



IRHA Delegation Attends Rural Health Policy Institute

A diverse group of Idaho Rural Health Association (IRHA) members including Joe Cladouhos, CEO, Syringe General Hospital, Grangeville; Ryan McAllister, Rehabilitation Director, St. Luke's-Idaho Elks of Twin Falls; Stephanie Hansen, Health Program Specialist, State Office of Rural Health and Primary Care, Boise; and Kathie LaFortune, Pediatric Physical Therapist, Moscow, attended the 20th Annual Rural Health Policy Institute on January 25-28, 2009 in Washington, D.C. "Change must come to rural healthcare, too" was the theme of the institute and speakers addressed the need for access, quality and equity in rural healthcare. According to Hansen, "the change in administration preceding our trip bought new enthusiasm and energy to the conference. After attending the Policy Institute, I have renewed belief that legislative changes will occur in the near future that will have a positive effect on the rural health community in Idaho." (continued page 2)

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Idaho Rural Health Association Update



IRHA Provides Support for Rural Community to Fight Meth Use

Picture complements of Tim Trainor St. Maries Gazette Record

In St. Maries, community members had been talking about the growing meth problem in their county. When IRHA approached a St. Maries civic organization about holding a community rural health forum on methamphetamine use, its members jumped at the idea. Last April, IRHA board member and rural director at the Family Medicine Residency of Idaho, David Schmitz, MD, provided an educational forum to members of the Benewah County Community Coalition. The coalition group includes educators, law enforcement officials, healthcare providers, counselors, and business owners. Using materials from Idaho Meth Project, Schmitz presented on the serious health effects associated with meth use. Afterwards, he hosted a discussion among the 21 participants. They discussed ways to "unsell" the drug and strategies to reach youth in their community.

A second presentation to the larger community was made later that week at the local high school to more than 50 teens and their families. Following these successful educational events, St. Maries community coalition members continued to meet and organize additional meth education events in St. Maries and outlying areas over the year.

Partnering with the IRHA helped the St. Maries coalition bring the power of education to their community to fight against meth use.

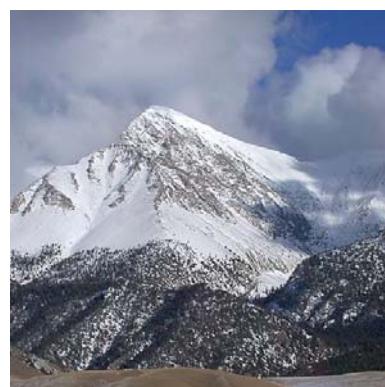
If there is something the IRHA can help support in your community, contact Mary Sheridan, President at: SheridaM@dhw.idaho.gov

If you have a story about efforts in your community that you would like to share with our members, please email the text and any pictures to:
lindapowell@mtnstatesgroup.org

NRHA Policy Institute (continued)

The rural healthcare portions of the Stimulus Bill were a hot topic during the institute; however, healthcare reform will be the focus of the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) in the year to come. NRHA's message to Policy Institute attendees and to Congress is...as healthcare is reformed, rural can't be left behind.

Armed with policy statements provided by NRHA and our own personal stories of providing health care in rural Idaho, the IRHA descended upon Capitol Hill. Four visits to Senate and House offices in the course of five hours left little time for much beyond getting through security and making it to our meetings on time. We asked Senator Risch to join the Senate Rural Health Caucus and also invited Representative Minnick to join the House Rural Health Care Coalition – and both agreed! We met with health care liaisons for Senator Crapo and Representative Simpson who were already familiar with the importance of funding for provider education, increasing health care coverage for rural Idaho residents, and the unique challenges facing critical care hospitals in the areas of access, information technology, and workforce shortages. Though the current focus of both branches of Congress was on the current stimulus package, our voices were heard, and as health reform takes priority in the next few months, rural health care will not be left behind. McAllister stated, "meeting face to face with our legislators is great opportunity to help them understand how the legislation they create affects the delivery of healthcare in Idaho. We shared firsthand the unique challenges of healthcare we face and encouraged them to make the health of rural Idahoans a priority."



IRHA Strategic Initiatives

Build Membership

Goal: Increase membership by 20% by 12/31/09

- TA application to NRHA
- Contact past members to encourage rejoining
- Create membership database
- Renewal notice system to be developed
- Increase organization recruitment
- Web based enrollment
- Presence at various events
- Build value in membership
- Dual membership
- Communicate with members at least monthly
- Track membership growth (goal thermometer)

Advocacy

Goal: The IRHA will be the recognized and effective advocate for rural health

- Hire a legislative observer
- Use Voter Voice as tool
- Delegation to be sent to NRHA Policy Institute – will report back to board and membership
- Disseminate IAFP Legislative Updates – membership to evaluate after session
- Legislator links
- Rural Health day at capitol 2010

Education & Networking

Goal: Provide 3 Rural Forums on odd years and conference on even years

- Rural Forums
- Form conference committee 4/09, include non-board members, establish theme and location

Visibility

Goal: Implement strategies to increase the visibility of the IRHA

- Work toward Voter Voice
- Increase and monitor web utilization
- Present to students
- Presence at various events
- Branded marketing / business cards
- Rural forums
- Continue quarterly newsletter

Join Us Today!

All current members will be receiving a dues notice and prorated invoice to bring all memberships to a calendar year basis starting January 1, 2009. You will have the option of donating your prorated deduction and paying full membership or paying your prorated membership dues. We will also be sending out invitations to past members and other potential members to increase our membership. If you know some who should receive this invitation, simply email Deb Green at greedebb@isu.edu with their contact information. Annual dues have not been increased. To become a member of the Idaho Rural Health Association, simply make checks payable to Idaho Rural Health Association and mail to:

Ryan McAllister, PT
560 Shoupe Ave West
Twin Falls Idaho, 83301
rmcallister@ierh.org

Annual Dues:
Individuals \$25
Organizations \$100 (maximum of 5 members)
Students \$15