



Optimal Health for All Iowans



Swatches

Connecting Rural Iowa

August 2016

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President's Message IRHA Outreach and Engagement

The Iowa Rural Health Association dedicated the first half of the year to doing outreach with membership and a variety of partners to better understand the workforce challenges facing rural health in different regions of the state. The sessions provided a great opportunity to hear feedback on the IRHA mission, how the organization can bring together stakeholders to better understand challenges facing rural health, and prospective ways to overcome these challenges.

As we approached mid-year, IRHA began meeting to review the organization's operations, budget and mission. The strategic planning sessions identified opportunities where IRHA can increase its engagement both internally and externally. We plan to maintain IRHA's strong relationship with the National Rural Health Association which has been an important partner in fulfilling IRHA's mission in this area. IRHA will continue pursuing funding to host regional meetings on important issues facing rural health while holding the broader annual conference at the end of the year in the Des Moines area. Finally, IRHA plans to continue our partnership with colleges, universities and others that share a common interest in educating their students and the public about opportunities to better address the needs of rural health.

We appreciate the regular feedback we receive from IRHA members throughout the state. Our goal is to increase engagement by encouraging members to contact IRHA administrator Melissa Primus (mprimus@iaruralhealth.org) if you have an interest in joining a committee or helping to plan future events as IRHA enters 2017. IRHA committees include



Benefits of being an IRHA member:

1. Health advocacy with a rural perspective

2. Access to resources through the IRHA and NRHA websites and email distribution lists

3. Networking opportunities with professionals from diverse disciplines

4. Input opportunities for State and Federal Policy issues

5. Discounted rates for Annual Conference

6. Opportunities for leadership development

The IRHA membership year runs with the calendar year. Renewal notices will be sent via email in early December. Renewal is easy. Please take a few minutes to renew when you receive the notice.

Thank you for your continued support of IRHA!

policy/advocacy, membership/special projects, communication, and education. We look forward to hearing from you.

Thank you again for your commitment to rural health and stay tuned for information on IRHA's upcoming annual conference.

Sincerely,
Eric Tempelis

Seeking Nominations for Karbeling Award

Each Fall, the Iowa Rural Health Association recognizes an outstanding individual in the area of Rural Health by presenting them with the Jerry Karbeling Award. We are now accepting nominations for the 2016 Jerry Karbeling Award. **Nominations are due October 3, 2016.**

Jerry Karbeling was a member of the Iowa Rural Health Association and served on the Board for 5 years. He served as President of the Association in 2002-2003. At the time of his death in 2005, Jerry was the Senior Vice President for Public Affairs and Corporate Development for the Iowa Pharmacy Association, a practicing community pharmacist, and owner of Big Creek Pharmacy in Polk City. He was a healthcare activist, an adjunct professor, and served on the City Council of Polk City.

The Iowa Rural Health Association seeks to recognize Jerry's legacy and to retain the memory of his contributions. The Jerry Karbeling award will be presented to an Iowan on an annual basis. The award will recognize an individual who has demonstrated successful activism for improving rural health and a commitment to community service as exemplified by Jerry.

The individual's contributions should include:

1. Respected leader in the healthcare industry;
2. Community oriented as evidenced by serving on boards/committees, for the purpose of advancing a healthy lifestyle;
3. Activist as identified by participation and enthusiasm in developing public health policy.

The letter of nomination should include documentation to the above three categories, and be accompanied by 3 letters of support speaking to the nominees effectiveness as a health leader, a community minded individual, and previous policy contributions at the local, state, or national level.

The nomination should be submitted to the Iowa Rural Health Association (mprimus@iaruralhealth.org) by October 3. The [award criteria](#) and [nomination form](#) are linked as well as available through the [IRHA website](#).

Iowa Mission of Mercy
Coming to Dubuque, Iowa, for the first time!

Another year has passed, and it's time for the ninth Iowa Mission of Mercy! When we began in 2008, no one knew just how successful the Iowa Mission of Mercy would be. That year, the local chair, Dr. Marty Averill, noted, "would anyone come?" Well, he had nothing to fear. Not only did they come in 2008, but they have been coming ever since to the tune of 10,700 patients!

This year Dr. Heyo Tjarks, a long-time Dubuque dentist, decided to chair the Iowa MOM in Dubuque, Iowa. The ninth Iowa Mission of Mercy will be held September 23 & 24 at the Five Flags Center. We hope to treat over 1,200 patients at the 2016 event.

While much has changed about the Iowa Mission of Mercy since that first year, what has not changed is the need for services like the Iowa Mission of Mercy. Barriers to receiving oral health care still exist. The greatest barriers for individuals not receiving the care they need continue to be lack of dental insurance and insufficient funds to pay for care on their own.

According to a Harris poll conducted in 2013, 48% of lower income adults haven't been to the dentist in more than a year. Further, 20% of adults earning less than \$30k haven't visited a dentist in over 5 years. Thirty six percent (36%) of lower income adults have lived with an untreated cavity for some time causing pain. Emergency rooms are finding more individuals seeking treatment for oral health care. According to the same Harris poll, 18% of lower-income people sought treatment for dental pain in an ER; however, only 6% of those who went were able to have their dental problem solved.

According to the Surgeon General's Report on Oral Health in America, oral diseases affect health and well-being throughout one's life. Research links periodontal disease to a greater risk of heart attack and stroke. Research conducted by New York University in 2010 revealed long-term evidence that linked gum inflammation and Alzheimer's disease, finding that gum disease could increase the risk of cognitive dysfunction. Both children and adults can experience difficulty eating and speaking due to dental

disease and many suffer from diminished self-esteem from visible tooth loss. Oral health care is one of the most-often-reported unmet health care needs in the United States.

The Iowa Mission of Mercy will continue to do its part to assist the citizens of Iowa at the Five Flags Center in Dubuque, Iowa. For more information and to volunteer, please go to www.iowamom.org.

IRHA Member Story *submitted by Katie McBurney*

I appreciate small town life and the sense of community that it provides to residents. I was raised in small town Iowa and I knew after graduating from school as a dental hygienist that I wanted to settle down and raise a family in a close-knit, rural setting, just like my community of Monroe, Iowa. For the last 11 years I have worked as a dental hygienist in the Pella/Knoxville community, with the 8 most recent years focused on public health as part of the I-Smile™ program. Working with I-Smile™ opened my eyes to the real struggles many families face when trying to access dental care in rural settings. It can be difficult for families and local public health workers to find dental providers, transportation, and community resources to assure access to dental care. Unfortunately, many families must be referred to an urban setting, an hour or more away, in order to get the care they need.

After joining the IRHA board in January 2015, I was elated to find a passionate group of individuals who understood and cared about the different challenges that rural patients and health care providers encounter when trying to achieve optimal health. I found many opportunities within IRHA to grow personally and professionally. Here are just a few of the many reasons why I cherish the experience of being an IRHA member.

- **Legislative updates**....these appear in the quarterly newsletter and are my quick "go to" for policy information that may affect the programs and populations I work with.
- **Networking opportunities**....convenient and far-reaching, IRHA has representatives from a multitude of organizations with varied backgrounds and experience. We are joined by our similar passions for improving access and outcomes for rural Iowans.
- **Educational opportunities**.... provided throughout the year on various topics, these webinars and forums include

time for discussion and feedback from peers on issues that impact rural health.

I strongly encourage you to consider joining IRHA today or getting more involved if you are already a member. Working together we can make a difference in the delivery of health care for rural Iowans.

Introducing Megan Hartwig - State Office of Rural Health Coordinator

Please join IRHA in welcoming Megan Hartwig, SORH Coordinator. IRHA works closely with the Iowa Department of Public Health and the State Office of Rural Health (SORH). We look forward to working with and getting to know Megan.

Megan Hartwig returned to the Iowa Department of Public Health as the SORH Coordinator. Megan has her Masters in Health Care Administration and has worked in various health and disability service organizations in both an advocacy and administrative role. Megan has experience working with Federal grants as she was formally the Brain Injury Program Manager for Iowa prior to working at her most recent position with the Iowa Association of Community Providers. Megan has a passion disability and mental health services as well as violence and injury prevention. She looks forward to helping to make connections with hospitals, clinics and community providers to increase capacity and good health outcomes for rural Iowans and their communities.

Back to School: Are Your Patients Ready?

School bells are ringing across the state! The end of summer is here, filling practitioner schedules with physicals and screenings, making sure that students have a healthy start for the upcoming school year. Unfortunately, dental appointments are often overlooked or difficult to access for many Iowans, including school-age children. For kids, this can lead to decreased time in the classroom for learning throughout the year ahead. According to the Surgeon General's Report in 2000, more than 51 million school hours are lost each year due to dental-related illness; a number Iowa has been trying reduce.

In 2007, legislation was passed requiring children entering Kindergarten and 9th grade in Iowa to have a dental screening upon enrollment. The goal is the improved oral health of children, early detection of dental problems, and promotion of the importance of oral health for school readiness and learning.

How can medical providers get involved?

- Encourage patients to visit the dentist regularly
- Provide a dental screening as part of a routine physical
- Complete a school screening certificate for children who will be in Kindergarten
- Refer children with dental care needs to the local I-Smile™ Coordinator

For more information on Iowa's dental screening legislation, printable dental screening certificates, who is eligible to complete a screening certificate, or dental screening audit reports please visit: <https://idph.iowa.gov/ohds/oral-health-center/school-screenings>

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