

*Mission: To improve access to and quality of healthcare services for rural Oklahomans through collaboration, advocacy, education, recruitment, and training.*

*Vision: Giving Voice and Vision to Rural Health*



# 2021-22 Annual Report

[WWW.RHP-NWAHEC.ORG](http://WWW.RHP-NWAHEC.ORG)

RURAL HEALTH PROJECTS, INC.



# Fiscal Year 2021-22 Summary

Here are the highlights from the year:

- In July of 2021, staff were notified RHP received a \$1 million grant through HRSA's as part of a targeted campaign to "support and empower local trusted voices within communities to help encourage vaccination, protect more people, and save lives." This funding was made available by the American Rescue Plan and is being distributed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through HRSA's (Health Resources and Services Administration) Community-Based Workforce for COVID-19 Vaccine.
- Statewide, AHEC began the final year of the first funding round of the AHEC Scholars program and RHP/NwAHEC have 11 students enrolled in the AHEC Scholars program this year.
- RHP received Excellence-level certification from the Pott's Family Foundation's Family Positive Workplace.
- RHP staff presented to both Leadership Greater Enid and Youth Leadership Greater Enid classes about RHP's mission and programming.
- Staff assisted in planning and participating in other successful community events, including a drive thru clinic for prescriptions, medication disposal bags, and sharps containers for disposing used needles.

- Staff led a group effort to create Saturday in the Park, which included many activities for families as well as food, treats, serology and other health testing, and COVID vaccinations.
- Staff participated in two Enid Dental Days as resources and assisted with arranging serology testing for the Tri-CHIO. The serology testing is a blood test that shows people if they have antibodies (both natural



*Walk this May team, "Bougie Buffalo," pose in front of their mascot. This picture was featured in the Prairie View Elementary yearbook with the caption: "Over 3,179,156 in May."*

from having had COVID and the antibodies from the COVID vaccine).

- Staff facilitated the Oklahoma Rural Health Conference in October 2021 on behalf of the Rural Health Association of Oklahoma in partnership with the Oklahoma Office of Rural Health.
- An event called Walk this May (annual event going forward) was created. Six area businesses sponsored this event.
- Staff developed a Community Health Worker Training Course that focuses on the state recommended Community Health Worker Roles and Skills. Six individuals have completed the training and earned certificates.
- AHEC staff provided Project ECHO (Extension for Community Health Care Outcomes) support.
- AHEC staff hosted two sessions of Talk Saves Lives (a suicide prevention program) and NEAR Science

(Neurobiology, Epigenetics, ACE's Study and Resilience) Community Training for healthcare professionals and community members.

- AHEC funding provided 62 youth with access to VirtualJobShadow.com, a career exploration website.
- AHEC staff also partnered with the OSU AHEC office to host three virtual Mental First Aid training events.
- AHEC staff assisted with Operation Orange, which provided education and health care exploration activities for 33 high school students.



## TSET Healthy Living 2.0 Program

Rural Health Projects completed its fourth year of the TSET (Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust) Healthy Living Program 2.0.

Major milestones, victories and progress for the TSET Healthy Living 2.0 program this year were:

- TSET Staff assessed five school sites for smarter lunchroom criteria and five food retailers for nutritional opportunities.
- Visits were made to food retailers who have agreed to partner to provide suggestions for increasing access to healthy options.
- There has been an increase in school buy-in. Drummond is working on updates to their policy book, which is still in process. Staff have developed a relationship with Chisholm's nutrition director and have been working on updates to their wellness policies.
- An event called Walk this May (annual event going forward) was created from the recommendation of the core team, which was developed in the previous grant years. Planning for a fall event, Walktober, has ended as this event runs through the month of October. Six area businesses have agreed to sponsor this event.
- A report was created and provided to the core team which will assist in making recommendations on needs identified for social support structures.
- A report on shared use opportunities was developed and received an increase in community buy-in for policy from Integris Pavilion and OSU Extension Office, who have space that either is currently being utilized or has potential for physical activity.
- An active transportation task force has been established to generate ideas and opportunities for infrastructure changes within the community, including members from City of Enid, Main Street Enid, Visit Enid, Enid Running Club, The Bike Shop, Enid Hubbub, business owners, members of nonprofit agencies, etc. Goals have been established and walkability and bikeability assessments have been completed on the first target area.
- Discussions have begun with Main Street Enid on a potential parklet for First Friday events, which can highlight businesses for up to a month at a time.
- One TSET staff member is on the Enid Parks & Recreation Board and we submitted an idea for fitness trail signage to be added to our existing walking trails. This idea was well-received and planning has begun.
- Staff assessed tobacco-free city property signage in Enid and a recommendation report was developed and given to city leadership. We worked diligently with City of Enid on updates to tobacco-free city-owned property ordinance, specifically regarding parks/recreational areas, as well as their enabling ordinance (underage purchase, use, and possession of tobacco products), which was adopted in August. Drummond adopted enabling and zoning ordinances, and an increase in community buy-in for reducing youth access to tobacco. Staff met with Town of Lahoma to discuss adopting an enabling ordinance as well as a zoning ordinance which limits proximity of tobacco retailers to school sites and playgrounds.
- Two youth have been recruited for retailer education visits and an idea was submitted (and has been created) for a pre-visit press release to inform the community that visits will be taking place. Fifteen visits were completed, with only three potentially completing the tobacco sale to minors. Staff provided education to those retailers on tobacco laws and kudos to the retailers who properly checked IDs and refused the sale.
- Two staff members attended the National Conference on Tobacco and Health in New Orleans. All staff attended a walkability and placemaking summit in Ponca City.



*Participants of Walk this May during a group walk. TSET and Walk this May committee members placed signage in multiple parks to encourage walkers.*

Some of the challenges and barriers this year were:

- TSET Staff have experienced challenges with City of Enid regarding their tobacco ordinances. The city attorney reached out to staff about updates to these ordinances and did not have a clear understanding of the laws changed by HB3315 (related to underage purchase, use, and possession of tobacco products.) At this time, there was no urgency made by the city attorney—it was stated that the draft ordinances were not ready for public viewing. However, at a study session ahead of a council meeting the following week, the city attorney presented the draft ordinances to the city commissioners, which staff was only made aware after the fact. At this meeting there was push back from a city commissioner regarding changes to the ordinance covering city parks and recreational areas. Despite MANY efforts from TSET staff and other community members to educate the city attorney, mayor, city manager, and other commissioners a compromise was made which weakened the language in the ordinance, leaving out passive areas of the parks/recreational areas to allow smoking/tobacco use.
- Staffing challenges throughout this fiscal year. Thankfully we didn't have much time in between hires, but it still creates a certain level of challenges as they have to be trained.
- A couple areas of focus were put on hold due to training delays.
- A major challenge for our staff particularly is that we have found potential opportunities for use of funds – signage or implementation use – however, these may not align directly with our chosen strategies (but do align with overall TSET goals) so we are unable to move forward with financial support, even if our partners are very eager to proceed.

### **e-HERO Network**

The e-HERO Network (Ending the HIV Epidemic in Rural Oklahoma) was funded through the Rural Health Outreach and Rural Network Development Program for one year of planning to increase HIV testing, reduce barriers to care, and connect those living with HIV/AIDS to the Ryan White HIV Centers. The e-HERO Network targets Alfalfa, Blaine, Garfield, Grant, and Major counties in Northwest Oklahoma. For this project, RHP partnered with OSU Center for Rural Health, St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, Enid Community Clinic, Garfield County Health Department, and Great Salt Plains Health Center. Dr. Randolph Hubach (formerly with OSU and currently with Purdue University in Indiana, serving as the Director of Sexual Health Research Lab) continues to be an instrumental partner as a subject-matter expert in HIV/sexual health.

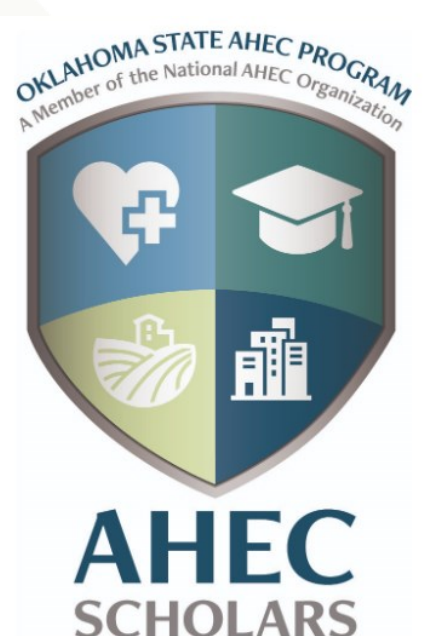
Through this funding, a needs assessment and one-on-one interviews were conducted to gather research about HIV in rural, Northwest Oklahoma. From this information, a plan was developed to increase access to testing, treatment, and care for HIV-related care. The project received a No Cost Extension to continue into 2021-22. Although the grant ended in 2021, the e-HERO Network members meet quarterly and several of the partners have received additional funding to continue this work.

### **NwAHEC (Northwest Area Health Education Center)**

AHEC received its second award of a five-year grant from HRSA. The previous centers in Lawton, Tahlequah, Enid, and the OSU Center for Rural Health in Oklahoma City remained the same and we were able to add a center in McAlistier to serve the Southeastern Oklahoma region.

AHEC is structured around three focus areas; Continuing Education/Community-Based Training, Pipeline activities, and the AHEC Scholars Program. With the primary focus on AHEC Scholars program and 10% time each on pipeline and continuing education.

Pipeline is the term used for a student's progress as a continuum leading from high school into postsecondary education and through to the completion of a college degree. We had 62 students from NWOK access virtualjobshadow.com, an online virtual platform engaging job shadowing and career advice videos that take career exploration to a whole new level by connecting academics to the real



world. Also, in the pipeline category for this past summer was Operation Orange which is a free, one day mini medical camp for students in grades 9-12. This year we had 33 high school students from Northwest Oklahoma attend.

Our continuing education events in the past year include support of Project ECHO (Extension for Community Health Care Outcomes). Which is a collaborative model of medical education and care management that empowers clinicians in rural and underserved communities to provide specialty care to more people right where they live. We also hosted two sessions of Talk Saves Lives (a Suicide Prevention Program) and a NEAR Science the Neurobiology, Epigenetics, ACE's Study and Resilience Community Training for health care professional and community members.



**OPERATION ORANGE  
2022**

JUNE 8, 2022

We also developed an online Community Health Worker Training Course that focuses on the state recommended Community Health Worker Roles and Skills. To date we have had six individuals complete the training and earn a certificate.

The AHEC Scholars is a program for health professions students interested in supplementing their education by gaining additional knowledge and experience in rural or underserved urban settings. This program emphasizes an interdisciplinary curriculum that incorporates clinical, didactic, and community-based training. All experiential or clinical training is conducted in rural or underserved urban settings.

The AHEC Scholars program current student enrollment is a well-rounded

group of 14 students. The Class of 2020 has one Masters of Psychology student who will graduate this December. The 2021 class comes from a variety of disciplines including five nursing, three Masters of Psychology, one Masters in Public Health, and one Doctors of Osteopathic Medicine. We are currently recruiting for the 2022 class. To date we have three new students including one nursing student, one public health student and one Physician Assistant student.

Our greatest triumphs and setbacks are in this area. We have finally been able

to recruit Oklahoma State University and Northern Oklahoma College students to join our program, we can not attribute this specifically to any one big win but to a combination of small efforts over the past years building new contacts and relationships with instructors, staff, and administration at the schools. Our challenge and setbacks have come with the new grant cycle guidelines only allowing the following disciplines: Physicians, Physician assistants, nurse practitioners, nurse midwives, dentists, psychologists, pharmacists, optometrists and community health workers. All other professions must have prior approval from HRSA. A majority of our health care profession programs that we have successfully recruited and built relationships with in the past, may no longer qualify even though we know these professions to be vital to health care.

### **Vaccine Hesitancy Program**

Rural Health Projects/AHEC, was awarded a \$1 million dollar grant in July 2021 as part of a targeted campaign to “support and empower local trusted voices within communities to help encourage vaccination, protect more people, and save lives.” This funding was made available by the American Rescue Plan and is being distributed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). Originally written as a 12-month grant from August 1, 2021 to July 31, 2022, we applied and received a No Cost Extension to continue our efforts.



The grant funded a platform, developed by Heudia Health, [getthevax.accessmecare.com](https://getthevax.accessmecare.com). All outreach and advertising efforts are directed to this platform which serves as a virtual social worker providing a variety of resources from vaccination providers to transportation all focused on the social determinants of health. We had a full-scale media campaign with targeted online web ads, streaming etc. targeting our 11-county coverage area and the underserved populations with our local media outlet. A three-month marketing push with a national agency affiliated with USA Today, LOCALiQ garnered over 1.3 million views of our brand through a 3-prong approach of digital display ads, social media and targeted email distribution from July- Sept. 2022.





Infographics are continually updated as CDC data and guidance evolves into English, Spanish, and Marshallese.

Our team has built long-term relationships with various health coalitions throughout our 11-county coverage area. We have had ground floor participation and development with the Oklahoma CHW (Community Health Worker) statewide organization to promote Community Health Workers as an emerging career field. Monthly meetings with the coalition work to develop training, curriculum, organiza-



Saturday in the Park featured the Enid Fire Department and Garfield County Sheriff's Department as well as super heroes for the family to visit.

tion, funding, advocacy and legislative strategies.

We have been involved in successful events across our coverage area including job and career fairs, health fairs, coalition community events and 3rd Annual Dental Day. Through a CATCH-UP grant with our TRI-CHIO (Tri-County Health Improvement Organization) we held a large event Saturday, July 30, 2022, "Saturday in the Park" had over 300 attendees, we provided nine vaccines, and 40 antibody tests. We expected a larger turnout but had a rainy Saturday, follow-

Funding	Amount	Percent
Vaccine Hesitancy	567,828.81	52.09%
TSET HLP 2.0	183,331.73	16.82%
AHEC	104164.93	9.56%
Private	80,728.16	7.41%
RHAO	43,837.33	4.02%
EODD	29,679.49	2.72%
eHERO	25,803.55	2.37%
KEDDO	19024.62	1.75%
Tri-CHIO	15,930.50	1.46%
LTCA	14,396.98	1.32%
Walk this May	2,935.68	0.27%
Walktober	1,300	0.12%
CATCH-UP	1,124.75	0.10%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1,090086.5</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

ing our two-month long drought! A follow up event to provide the second vaccines also had nine participants.

After two and half years, pandemic fatigue and politization regarding COVID-19, masks, other mitigation strategies and changing updates and guidance from the CDC have provided significant challenges to our team. We continue to face pushback from the community and not total buy-in from some local partners. Our team has continued to provide new and innovative ways to work through the challenges and provide up-to-date guidance in our outreach and education efforts to all in the 11 counties we serve.



Lisa Bland-Selix (RHP) and Theresa Sharp (Evolution Foundation) are pictured in the Enid News & Eagle during Saturday in the Park.

RHP Funding 2021-22

■ Vaccine Hesitancy ■ TSET HLP 2.0 ■ AHEC ■ Private ■ RHAO ■ EODD ■ eHERO ■ KEDDO ■ Tri-CHIO ■ LTCA ■ Walk this May ■ Walktober ■ CATCH-UP



## Rural Health Projects, Inc./NwAHEC staff and Board of Directors offer our continued thanks to our partners, funders, and donors who help make our services possible:

4RKids  
Alzheimer's Association  
Blaine County Community Health Action Team  
Cherokee Strip Community Foundation  
Central Christian Church-Enid Welcome Table  
City of Medford  
Enid Community Collaborative  
Enid Community Clinic  
Garfield County Health Department  
Garfield County Health Planning Committee  
Garfield County Live Healthy Coalition  
Grant County Community Action Team  
Grant County Health Department  
Great Salt Plains Health Center  
HRSA (Health Resources and Services Administration)  
INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center  
Kingfisher Community Collaborative  
Logan County Partnership  
Long Term Care Authority of Enid—Area Agency on Aging  
Main Street Enid-First Friday events  
McFarland & Associates, Inc.  
NAO (National AHEC Organization)  
National Rural Health Association  
Northwest Osteopathic Medical Foundation  
Northwestern Oklahoma State University  
OHAI (Oklahoma Healthy Aging Initiative)  
Oklahoma Health Care Authority  
Oklahoma Primary Healthcare Extension System  
Oklahoma State University Center for Rural Health  
Oklahoma State University Center for Rural Health,  
Oklahoma Office of Rural Health  
Payne County Live Healthy Coalition  
Rural Health Association of Oklahoma  
St. Mary's Regional Medical Center  
Texas County Coalition  
The Evolution Foundation  
TSET (Tobacco Settlement Endowment Trust)  
Tri-CHIO of Garfield, Grant, and Alfalfa Counties  
University of Oklahoma  
Workforce Oklahoma

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*Back left to right: Laura Ross, PHIO; Kim Whaley, Commanche; Lisa Bland-Selix, RHP; Jill Hazeldine, PHIO; (front left to right) Charlene LittleCook, RHP; Allison Seigars (RHP); and Jaime Moore, OG&E and RHP Board member all enjoy watching the Cornhole Tournament at the Oklahoma Rural Health Conference in October 2021.*



### Staff (as of September 30, 2022)

**Allison Seigars**, Executive Director

**Lisa Bland-Selix**, Program Manager, Vaccine Hesitancy

**Brittany Conner**, Program Coordinator, TSET HLP

**Lucinda Downing**, Office Assistant

**Joelynn Karben**, Community Health Worker, CDMOP

**Kate Ladwig**, Program Coordinator, TSET HLP

**Wendy Langshaw**, Assistant Office Manager

**Charlene LittleCook**, Office Manager

**Tamara Ned**, Community Health Worker, HOME Network/Vaccine Hesitancy

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**Randa Real, RN**, Community Health Worker, Vaccine Hesitancy

**Jesse Wannebo**, Community Health Worker, Vaccine Hesitancy

**Becky Zook**, AHEC Director



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