

GEORGIA Rural Health INNOVATION CENTER

AT MERCER UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

This is the official newsletter of the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center designed to keep stakeholders up-to-date on key information and events.

The Center Collaborates with College of Professional Advancement and Ben Hill County School System to Bring Mental Health Counseling Services to Rural Georgia



Pictured Above, L-R: Joan Anderson, GRHIC, Loren Nix, GPT, Christie Cook, BHES, Brad Wells, GPT, Jahyna Anderson, BHES, Wanda Kimbrell, BHCS

On Wednesday, October 27, 2021, the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, in partnership with the Ben Hill County Board of Education, Mercer University College of Professional Advancement, and Global Partnership for Telehealth, provided the first virtual counseling session for Ben Hill Elementary School students through the Pediatric Mental Health Initiative. This Initiative delivers virtual counseling services to students and their families. The program also provides mental health screening tools and suicide prevention training to educators, community members and students. The collaborative efforts of these organizations designed the Pediatric Mental Health Initiative to address a key issue in Ben Hill County where there are currently no licensed mental health providers.

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Center Projects

Center co-hosts COVID-19 vaccination event with State Representative Mack Jackson and Washington County Department of Public Health



On October 30, 2021, The Center partnered with Representative Mack Jackson, the Washington County Health Department, and Washington County Hospital to provide COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots at Rep. Jackson's church - St. James Christian Fellowship Church. This Family Night, hosted by the church, was open to all community members. The festivities included food, hayrides for the kids, and a drive-in movie. The Center provided assistance coordinating the event and supplied healthcare bags for all attendees with items donated by the Center, the Department of Public Health, and Washington County Hospital. The Center handed out over 50 bags and the Health Department provided 24 COVID-19 vaccinations at the event.

Sow A Seed Grant Recipients Announced

December 1, 2021, the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center announced the Fall 2021 recipients for the inaugural Sow A Seed Grant Program. After extensive deliberation by the Grant Review Committee comprised of members representing the Georgia State Legislature, Mercer University School of Medicine Finance, and the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, awards were made to four organizations: **Reach2Teach, Inc., Heard County Community Partnership, Harmony Medical Foundation, and Ben Hill County Board of Education.**

Each of these organizations presented in their proposals well-developed projects that aim to serve the health needs of Georgia's rural communities by increasing wellness opportunities and health literacy, addressing food insecurity, and preparing generations of rural Georgia citizens with tools to make Georgia a healthier state.



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Hancock County Needs Assessment Team Attends Mobile Vaccination Clinics and Records Public Service Announcement

The Center awarded grant sub-contract with the Georgia Department of Public Health



The COVID-19 pandemic continues to be a detriment in rural communities that often experience pronounced health disparities. Hancock County, which has the highest percentage of African-Americans in Georgia, has faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. Persistent challenges such as access to health and medical services and up-to-date health information have been exacerbated amid the ongoing pandemic. At one point, Hancock County had the highest COVID-19 mortality rates in the United States. Due to the ongoing efforts of the Department of Public Health, The Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, and local healthcare providers, Hancock County now has 48% of its residents fully vaccinated, surpassing several surrounding counties such as Washington County at 43% and Glascock County at only 33%.

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Pictured above, Gloria Cooper, District 1 Commissioner, Hancock County, at the Flu Vaccination Clinic with her healthcare bag.

Warren County Collaboration

August 2021 Nattie Rogers, Senior Field Representative, and Davis Perkins, Rural Health Representative, of the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, met with Emma Sinkfield and her team at Warren County Family Connections, to discuss partnership opportunities for the coming year. The meeting, pictured left, focused on the healthcare needs of Warren County residents and ways to collaborate with other agencies in the area.



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Community Health Reporter Program Virtual Orientation



On Thursday, December 9, 2021 the Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center began its Community Health Reporter Program with a Virtual Orientation & Kick-Off. Dr. Kedrick Williams, Program Coordinator, welcomed 30 Community Health Reporters who will serve as Reporters in rural Georgia beginning this month. This group was formally welcomed and charged by Dr. Jean Sumner, Dean, Mercer University School of Medicine, to exhibit commitment and tenacity in representing the Center as Ambassadors across rural Georgia. The virtual session also utilized interactive educational activities to engage the new Community Health Reporters and equip them with tools of communication and technology to support them as they serve in this role.

Maternal Health Pilot Project



December 6, 2021 - The Maternal Health Pilot Project's Informed Consent and Protocol documents are under review by the Center's research team. Once finalized and approved, these documents will be forwarded to Mercer's Institutional Review Board Review committee for approval.

The goal is to bring maternal health services to rural counties that currently have none. The Center plans to compare clinical findings and the utility of the Clarius portable, handheld ultrasound scanners to traditional office-based ultrasound equipment. The results will guide the Center's next steps as the program expands, using medical backpacks to conduct maternal health home visits.

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Health Fairs & Events

Visit us at these upcoming events for giveaways and wellness activities

Washington County | March 5, 2022

Hancock County | July 2022

Clay County | coming soon

Harris County | coming soon

Peach County | coming soon

Putnam County | coming soon

Are you interested in hosting a health fair in your community?

Please email [Morgan Williams, MPH](#)

NEWS & NOTABLES



Dr. Anne Montgomery, Chris Scoggins and PhD Research Assistants Present at American Public Health Association



Dr. Anne Montgomery, Biostatistician, Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center presents at APHA 2021 Conference.

In October, Dr. Anne Montgomery, Chris Scoggins, MPH and the Center's Rural Health PhD Research Assistants participated in the American Public Health Associations 2021 annual meeting. The meeting, held in Denver, Colorado, brought together over 9,000 public health professionals from across the country to learn from one another and discuss pressing public health issues facing the nation. Rural Health received significant attention at this year's conference with robust discussions of access and equity issues across rural America. The Center was well-represented, with staff and research assistants presenting original research in data-driven decision-making tools, health literacy, and COVID monitoring in schools.

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The Center Donates to Greene and Morgan Counties Diaper Day Events

On November 18, 2021, Rural Health Representatives, Jay Burton, and Davis Perkins, visited Greene County's Department of Public Health to assist the county's "Drive-Through Diaper Day" a local initiative to provide maternal resources to families in need. This event was the second diaper day event following Morgan County on November 9, 2021. Jay and Davis passed out healthcare bags donated by the Center and distributed surveys for the Community Health Needs Assessment which is ongoing in Morgan, Greene, Putnam, and Hancock Counties. These efforts further strengthened ties to both Greene and Morgan

counties, two rural communities on either side of Lake Oconee.

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***Pictured Above Jay Burton (L) and Davis Perkins, (R)
Rural Health Representatives***

Georgia Cancer Summit - Open Registration



The **Georgia Cancer Summit** on January 21, 2022, will bring together public health professionals, health care providers, health policy advocates, researchers, and community organizations involved in community-engaged cancer research, prevention, and control efforts across the state. This free virtual meeting is designed to:

- Broaden your knowledge of evidence-based programs for cancer prevention and control.
- Share information on advocacy and other efforts to reduce cancer disparities in Georgia.
- Provide opportunities to network and develop new partnerships for community-engaged research and dissemination of effective programs.



The Georgia Cancer Summit is offered free of charge by Winship Cancer Institute of Emory University, Georgia Cancer Control Consortium, Georgia CORE and the Georgia Department of Public Health, in partnership with the American Cancer Society, Georgia Health Policy Center, Georgia Rural Health Innovation Center, and Morehouse School of Medicine. Be on the lookout for registration information soon.

Visit our website to learn more.



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