COMMUNITY STARS

2026 NOMINATIONS

Adam G. Jahling

Adam has worked on Oregon's social health and Oregon's environmental crisis for more than three decades, serving from home base, where he started his third and latest endeavor, to help bring equal rights, justice, and environmental/health equity to every American in the region listed, and beyond too. He can be found working hard and diligently on the Oregon OPOS, Oregon Pipeline of Services, with the Tri-Couties, and spends time in rural Clackamas Co. With its many unique challenges, The Warm Springs Reservation is the Idaho project of Oregon and he's helping with the Tribal challenges, and opportunities right now, all over. Our pick because he's the only superman that strives to be like Jesus everyday. A truly blessed individual.

Alexandria Carr

Alex donates her time and energy into providing emergency medical response to the largest ambulance service area in Wasco County. She handles over 80 percent of the medical dispatches personally. She exemplifies the rural healthcare volunteer – putting others first, being there for her community, knowing the people in town and being involved in other town projects. She runs the ambulance service, goes on emergency ambulance calls and coordinates with multiple fire departments and emergency services departments – local, county and statewide. She does the recruitment, organizing and scheduling of all the volunteers. She sets up trainings and cleans, inventories and washes the ambulances. She is the best of the best.

Angela Cumming - BestCare Treatment Services CMHP Director

Over the five years as the director of the community mental health program, Angela started same day mental health and substance use disorder SUD assessments. She ensures that there is SUD programming seven days a week. She opened a sober living and drop-in center to ensure a hub for accessing care, resources and support. She started a grow your own program so employees start at the ground level and grow themselves into leadership positions, creating long term employment opportunities. Angela truly cares about the community and has built an entire system of wraparound, person centered care for her community, including employment supports. She's grown and expanded access to care in Prineville OR and is building across the county.

Bridgette Conn

Bridgette Conn has made an extraordinary impact on rural health in Tillamook County through her service with OUR Tillamook, a coalition addressing substance use disorder through prevention, treatment, recovery and outreach. She helps connect individuals and families with resources, support and hope, while strengthening partnerships that expand access to care. Through initiatives including the Behavioral Health Resource Network, Active Outreach and community-based recovery pathways, Bridgette has helped create lasting solutions for some of the community's most vulnerable residents. Her compassion, persistence and commitment to meeting people where they are with a warm smile improves lives and strengthens the health of the entire community.

COMMUNITY STARS

2026 NOMINATIONS

ConneXions Program

ConneXions, a program of Good Shepherd Health Care System, is a community-based initiative comprised of eight community health workers, a Nurse Manager, and a Nurse Program Director dedicated to improving health outcomes across Umatilla and Morrow Counties. ConneXions CHWs help individuals navigate barriers, access services, and connect to support that improves quality of life. Through outreach, community events, health education classes, and peer support groups, they provide trusted support where people live, work, and thrive. Their knowledge of local resources and shared lived experience allows them to build meaningful relationships and create lasting impact in our rural communities.

Dane Zahner

Dane is an incredible force for good all across Douglas County and beyond. He is dedicated and engaged in community health and wellness on every level, no job is too small, no person is in too high or too low of a place for him to make a meaningful connection and bridge gaps that allow him to deliver services to those in need. Whether it be with us at HIV Alliance, the Douglas County Gay Archives or the countless other ways in which he volunteers his time and energy, Dane is always finding new ways to support his community, defend their needs and interests, and to collaborate with folks from all different walks of life and experiential backgrounds in order to make Douglas County a welcoming, safe and supportive place for all.

Daron Ryan

Daron Ryan is truly an Oregon Community Star. She is a Project Manager, PIO and so much more. She is integral in providing and elevating strong communication around health topics for the entire region, she started a Provider Newsletter. She has trained over 3000 people on opioid overdose response, saving lives. She volunteers with the OWL program treating reproductive health and prevention to young people in the community. She has been the committee coordinator for the Ambulance Service Area Advisory Committee. She coordinates multiple partnerships between entities to improve health care access for the committee. Truly everyone needs a Daron on their team. Our community is richer for all of her contributions.

Diana Carter

Diana Carter has transformed rural health in Curry County by founding and leading Brookings CORE Response, a community-driven organization that reaches people who are often overlooked by traditional systems. Through compassionate outreach, navigation, and advocacy, she helps individuals facing houselessness, housing insecurity, addiction, and mental health challenges access the resources and support they need. Diana's leadership has created a trusted network of care that bridges gaps between services and the people who need them most. Her unwavering commitment, persistence, and ability to bring partners together have improved lives and strengthened the health and resilience of one of Oregon's most rural communities.

COMMUNITY STARS

2026 NOMINATIONS

Domestic Violence Services

Domestic Violence Services provides emergency shelter and coordinated services with other partners in our community to serve survivors of domestic and sexual violence, stalking and human trafficking, as well as education and outreach. DVS provides a safe environment, physically and emotionally, for survivors to begin the healing process, advocacy for beginning again (for many) and moving forward in the manner the survivor chooses, and in doing so, helping them reclaim their power and autonomy. DVS advocates attend people victimized by sexual predators by walking alongside the survivor; from providing advocacy in the hospital to helping them regain their voice and personal agency as they move through their journey into healing.

Envision EyeCare for All

Envision EyeCare for All (EEC4A) is transforming rural health in Oregon by addressing a critical gap: eye health and vision services are largely absent from the systems designed to serve rural and underserved populations, including federally qualified health centers, community health centers, and school-based health centers. Founded in 2023, EEC4A developed a mobile, community-centered model that brings comprehensive eye care directly to rural communities. Beyond delivering care, EEC4A collects stories, measures impact, and advocates for systemic change so eye health is recognized as an essential part of overall health. Because better vision changes lives, strengthens communities, and improves health.

Erin Collins

Erin has partnered with OSU's CHW Training Program to deliver a continuing education course in palliative care for THWs serving rural and frontier Oregon (52 graduates). Through this partnership, she equips CHWs with foundational palliative care skills to expand access to care in underserved communities. Erin consistently builds meaningful connections with participants, linking them to ongoing resources like Oregon ECHO or End-of-Life Doula Training for continued learning and support. CHWs often share that the course helps them feel less isolated and better prepared to apply these skills in their communities. Erin's dedication to Oregon's rural workforce and her lasting impact on those who serve it are why I am proudly nominating her.

Fabiola Herrera and Jorge Martinez

Jorge Martinez and Fabiola Herrera lead OHA's Oregon Farmworker Health Program (OFHP). They are dedicated to humanizing, dignifying, and elevating farmworkers, actively shifting the broader cultural narrative by centering the authentic perspectives of both workers and growers. Under Fabiola's leadership, OFHP expands this mission, bringing to light the stories of thousands of farmworker women who have faced domestic violence and sexual abuse (DV/SA), intimidation, and been silenced. Together, they hold a vision that is both deeply transformative and grounded in practical action. Their commitment goes far beyond surface-level work; it is about saving lives, restoring dignity, and bringing hope to those who need it most.

COMMUNITY STARS

2026 NOMINATIONS

Geriatric Workforce Enhancement Program

Currently, and for the past year, we have partnered with GWEP to provide diagnosis training to PCPs in rural communities where getting an Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis may prove difficult if not impossible. The Oregon GWEP team is phenomenal in making themselves available, presenting topics to wide range of audiences and providing the tools needed to make the diagnosis families need to go forward. GWEP is making a difference for rural Oregon families.

Hat Creek Consulting

Hat Creek Consulting is a small but mighty team of three: Paul Lindberg, Claire Rawson-Wagner, and Kayla Warner. They provide backbone support for rural health collective impact efforts in Hood River and Clatsop County helping partners address complex health barriers. Through the Collective Health Impact Model, Hat Creek convenes partners, supports project design and writes grants that turn collaborative ideas into fundable projects. This work has secured more than $35 million for rural health efforts across the Gorge and North Coast allowing small organizations to do impactful work, while building infrastructure for shared action. Special recognition is due to Providence Health for financially supporting this work.

Heather Land

It is an honor to nominate Heather Land for the Community Star Award. Heather embodies unimpeachable professionalism, incredible adaptability, and a genuine heart for service. As a leader at Treasure Valley Paramedics, Heather's impact on Malheur County is immeasurable. She ensures our rural communities receive nothing less than top-tier patient care. Meanwhile, she is equally devoted to her staff, creating an exceptional workplace culture where employees thrive. Heather is a rare leader who truly cares, often working behind the scenes without seeking the spotlight. Treasure Valley Paramedics owes its success, character, and high standards entirely to her outstanding guidance.

Hope Assink

Unique engaging method to reduce chronic disease rates. Mobile WOWtruck (Wellness on Wheels) park with 43 events this year 2026 in all zip codes of the county. Emphasis on physical outdoor movement, clean nutrition, vitality and social engagement.

Illinois Valley Family Coalition

The Illinois Valley Family Coalition exemplifies rural health by addressing the root causes of poor health through trusted, community-driven support. Deeply embedded in the Illinois Valley, they provide food, housing assistance, advocacy, resource navigation, and compassionate care to those who are often the hardest to reach, including people experiencing houselessness, older adults, isolated residents, and families with limited resources. Their ability to build trust, fill service gaps, and respond quickly to emerging community needs makes them indispensable. They don't simply provide services—they strengthen the fabric of the community, creating lasting improvements in health, resilience, and hope.

COMMUNITY STARS

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Ivy Seaburg

Ivy works for a healthcare system (Orchid Health) dedicated to improving healthcare access to patients in rural communities in Lane & Clackamas County. Ivy has participated in dozens of hours of self-study and has sought mentorship to be able to treat patients with Hepatitis C (HCV). Screening for HCV is a primary care role but treatment frequently requires specialty engagement, which is far, and challenging to access (six patients treated). She has also spearheaded the initiation of implementing self-collected specimens for cervical cancer screening. This has increased our rates of screening and detection for patients. Her practice is rooted in health equity and reducing trauma and she is truly deserving of this award.

Jada Rojas

Jada actively practices community health work (CHW) through all parts of her work. She has built a series of like-minded individuals providing opportunity for them to learn and grow and support others. She carries a rural and BIPOC lens through every part of her work, from creating applications, to additional agency documentation so that individuals have in writing the supports that they need. She shines at advocating for the needs of families and grounding her advocacy through real life experiences. Jada also goes above and beyond in her work, advocating for Rural Health Grants and the individuals they serve.

Jared Rogers

If there is a need, Jared is often at the center of the response. As Vice Chair of the Grande Ronde Hospital Board of Trustees, Chair of the Community Benefits Committee, and a member of the American Hospital Association's Committee on Governance, he advocates for rural healthcare locally and nationally. As board member of the Elgin Health District, he led the $2.7 million campaign that transformed healthcare access through the Elgin Health District Clinic. Beyond healthcare, he serves on the Elgin Fire Prevention Board and the Elgin Lions Club, where he helped secure the largest individual donation in club history to purchase a Braille translator for a blind student. Jared is the 'gold-standard' for rural difference making.

Jayden Ruff

Jayden Ruff is the director at South Coast Equity Coalition. She is someone who truly brings people together, listens to needs and connects partners. She cares deeply about the people around her and strives to grow and learn so that she can help to improve health systems. Jayden serves on a variety of board and coalitions, so she sees the ways we can improve at the system level, but she always keeps her focus on the individuals in her community. She advocates for their unique needs and designs events and programs to elevate both the strengths of those she serves and the needs and gaps they experience. One example is that each year she hosts a World AIDS Day event to honor people living with HIV whose needs are often overlooked.

COMMUNITY STARS

2026 NOMINATIONS

Jeff Bethel

He has continued to serve on the Board for many years, striving to have a health center for residents of Benton and Linn Counties.

Jenna Stensrud

I am honored to nominate Jenna Stensrud as Oregon's Community Star. As Executive Director of Oregon Washington Health Network and COPES, Jenna leads with compassion, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to improving our community. She has transformed our agency to better meet clients' needs, creating a safe, welcoming environment that supports wellness and recovery. Jenna developed a foster dog program so clients can enter treatment without worrying about their pets, removing a significant barrier to care. She also hosts an annual National Rural Health Day appreciation event to recognize healthcare workers and community partners. Her vision, leadership, and dedication make her an exceptional Community Star.

Jessica Dyer

Jessica works very hard to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable clients in Umatilla County has access to the appropriate Care and resources. Jessica really goes above and beyond.

Jodie Fleck

Jodie had volunteered as an EMT for 22 years. Always finding way to help our community. A few years back when we lost volunteers and didn't have enough to run the ambulance, she sold the ambulance and bought a cargo trailer. Jodie retrofitted it to hold everything that was in the ambulance. Now since she is the only EMT left with Rager Emergency Services, she can respond roadside or whatever to a large event and have everything she needs to keep the patient stable until ground or air transport get there. The patient can be in the trailer out of the weather, and there is no misunderstand about transport like there would be if an ambulance was used. It is a great idea that allows here to continue to do her job w/ the best tools possible.

John Chivers, CEO

I am honored to nominate John Chivers, CEO of Lower Umpqua Hospital District. Over his tenure, John has exemplified leadership, resilience, and a profound commitment to our community, transforming LUHD into a beacon of quality healthcare and workplace culture. Under John's leadership, LUHD has navigated significant challenges and in just four years, he has spearheaded an incredible turnaround, improving the hospital's bottom line from a loss of $3.3 million to a gain of $3.1 million—a remarkable total turnaround of $6.4 million. This financial resurgence has not only stabilized our hospital but has also allowed for reinvestment in our community. John has been a champion for culture and transparency, and I can think of no one more deserving.

COMMUNITY STARS

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Joshua Mullins

I have worked closely with Josh for a number of years through the probation and treatment process. He works diligently to provide trauma informed care to all the individuals he provides services to. He works to think outside of the box and find dynamic solutions to presenting problems. He shows up with integrity, care, compassion, and a striving to make services better. He is great at collaboration and taking a team approach to decision making. His efforts have undoubtedly improved our community.

Kaley Sweet

Kaley is the driving force behind our rural hospital district's impact on community health. She uses innovative marketing to connect residents with critical services and writes grants that fund vital equipment and programs, including a 3D mammography machine. She orchestrates "Putt for Pink," which funded our 3D mammography machine, improving local access to advanced cancer screening. She also has been instrumental in leading a partnership with Thrive Umpqua, uniting leaders and community to address community health needs. Creative and tenacious, She is an asset to making rural healthcare possible. Our district is stronger because of her.

Kati Jokinen

Kati Jokinen is a leader in the rural health push for better healthcare. She is Umatilla County native, a community member with decades of experience living and serving in the region. Kati began her career in a local residential treatment facility more than ten years ago, and now, she is a guiding light in the advancement of substance abuse treatment across the state. She currently serves at the GOBHI SUD coordinator, supporting struggling patients with limited income and even further limited local resources. Furthermore, in a continued effort to evolve and develop better practices, Kati is integrating community non-profits, SUD agencies, hospitals, and primary care clinic efforts to navigate new waters in overcoming this opioid epidemic.

Klamath Health Partnership

Klamath Health Partnership (KHP) is a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) based in Klamath Falls, Oregon, and is the second-largest medical provider in the Klamath Basin and surrounding rural communities. KHP cares for more than 7,500 medical patients and offers integrated services including primary care, behavioral health, dental, pharmacy, and physical therapy. Guided by its mission to provide accessible, culturally sensitive, and high-quality care, KHP is expanding into specialty services such as podiatry, palliative medicine, and allergy/immunology in the coming months.

COMMUNITY STARS

2026 NOMINATIONS

Lake County Public Health Department, Judy Clarke, RN. Director of Public Health

Lake County Public Health Department distinguishes itself by delivering comprehensive, community-centered public health services in one of Oregon's most remote and geographically challenging counties. Serving a population spread across more than 8,000 square miles, the department consistently demonstrates that access to quality public health care should not be limited by distance, population size, or available resources. What makes Lake County Public Health exceptional is its ability to provide a broad spectrum of services facilitating the unique needs of its community. The department offers immunizations, WIC services, family planning, communicable disease prevention, in collaboration with all its community partners.

Lindsey Tyner

Lindsey is the embodiment of dedication, organization, and servant leadership in rural healthcare. She is the backbone of so many critical functions at North Bend Medical Center, and our organization simply would not operate as effectively without her. She oversees our vaccine program with exceptional attention to detail, conducts monthly audits of all our Rural Health Clinic (RHC) offices, audits our books and staff processes, and ensures we remain compliant with ever-changing regulatory requirements. The amount of work she completes behind the scenes is extraordinary, yet she approaches every task with professionalism, humility, and grace. Beyond compliance and operations, Lindsey leads our Food Pantry and nonprofit.

Marci McMurphy

Marci is a passionate and effective advocate addressing food insecurity across eastern Oregon's underserved frontier communities through the Frontier Veggie Rx program and Greater Oregon Behavioral Health. She launched Veggie Rx with paper vouchers in small stores, engaging communities and identifying practical access points. Committed to improvement, she partnered with Safeway to evolve the program into a low-stigma digital card. Marci builds strong partnerships across retailers, health plans, and state stakeholders to create solutions that are easy to use, track, and show measurable outcomes. Through her leadership, the program expanded from two sites to 1,300 participants across 11 counties, improving access and community health.

Mary Rebar

Mary Rebar has spent over a decade ensuring people with ALS in Oregon's most rural communities receive expert, compassionate support. She travels across remote areas to provide home visits, connect families with local providers who understand ALS, and secure essential medical equipment and communication devices. She guides home modifications, teaches emergency planning, and leads support groups. Mary also supports caregivers, helps them access financial resources, and provides bereavement care. Her dedication ensures rural families never face ALS alone.

COMMUNITY STARS

2026 NOMINATIONS

Mel Anderson

I am proud to nominate Mel Anderson as Oregon's Community Star for her dedication to homeless outreach, landlord engagement, and housing access in Crook and Jefferson Counties. Before Rooted Homes received funding to provide focused outreach, these rural communities were underserved, leaving many people experiencing homelessness disconnected from housing opportunities. Mel has transformed access by building strong partnerships with landlords and service providers, connecting people to housing resources, and ensuring rural residents are no longer overlooked. Her compassion, persistence, and commitment have created lasting change and made a meaningful difference in the lives of Central Oregonians.

Melissa Baurer

Melissa Baurer embodies the spirit of Oregon's Community Star through her leadership, resilience, and lasting impact on rural communities. She led a coordinated response to the 2020 Santiam Canyon wildfires, earning recognition from After the Fire Oregon and FEMA. Melissa successfully guided both immediate response and long-term recovery, culminating in the efficient close of disaster services in Summer 2026. She is a strong advocate for service integration, strengthening connections across health and social systems to improve access and outcomes. Melissa also mentors emerging leaders and supports programs like community health workers, ensuring sustainable, community-centered care for the future.

Michael Couch

Michael Couch created a system to help walk-ins find housing, work, transportation, rent, utilities assistance, and more - most anything needed. Some needs are met by his staff, others via referral. He is set apart by his tenacity, compassion, and his community involvement and partnerships. When seeking funding, he assesses to see if others need funding who have less capacity to apply for/manage funds and includes them when he can. He steps up to lead community-led committees (Delivery Systems Transformation Committee & Lebanon Area Advocacy & Resource Partnership), joins coalitions (Live Longer Lebanon), and initiates/sponsors gatherings (Soup Kitchen Lunch) to bring people together to keep them informed and engaged and always willing to help.

Mid-Columbia Senior Center

The Mid-Columbia Senior Center makes a meaningful contribution to rural health in The Dalles by helping older adults stay active, connected, informed, and supported close to home. Through programs such as wellness activities, SHIBA Medicare counseling, respite support, Meals-on-Wheels connections, and the medical equipment Loan Closet, the Center helps reduce barriers that many rural residents face when accessing care and support. MCSC also supports physical health and mobility through exercise classes such as Strong Person, Tai Chi, Tap Dance, and Line Dance, while offering important support classes for those living with MS, recovering from a stroke, or working through grief. Just as importantly, MCSC strengthens health by reducing isolation.

COMMUNITY STARS

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Nicky Ulrich

I nominate Nicky Ulrich. She is dedicated to serving rural communities and building equity-based frameworks for communities to thrive. Her persistence makes her stand out and is a key driver to improving health outcomes in the communities she serves. At the core of her impact is a fierce commitment to transforming rural health systems, advancing equity and lowering chronic disease risks. She works tirelessly to dismantle systemic barriers, ensuring that communities have resources and support to prioritize vulnerable families and improve health outcomes. Her love for the work is shown through the quality relationships and energy she brings to each situation. Nicky is making a difference through her work and commitment to rural communities.

Nigel Jagoo, DO

Dr. Nigel Jagoo embodies the spirit of rural medicine through compassion, education, and service. Since joining CHI St. Anthony Hospital two years ago, he has fostered a collaborative team culture where nurses, therapists, and case managers are valued partners in patient care. He launched a “Lunch & Learn” program to provide evidence-based education for rural healthcare staff and is known for helping patients understand complex conditions in ways that change lives. A former educator. Jagoo excels at patient counseling and health literacy. His commitment to underserved communities includes founding a free clinic as a medical student, rural primary care service, and advocacy work that advances healthcare access for rural patients across OR.

OUR Tillamook

OUR Tillamook is a rural coalition of 16 healthcare, social service, public safety and community organizations working together to address substance use disorder in Tillamook County. Since 2019, the partnership has expanded prevention, treatment and recovery services through innovative, community-based solutions. The coalition helped establish a Behavioral Health Resource Network, developed recovery and deflection pathways that connect people to treatment instead of justice involvement, and launched proactive outreach programs. By uniting diverse partners around a shared mission, OUR Tillamook has become a statewide model for rural collaboration, improving access to care and creating lasting health benefits for the community.

Patrick Dodd

Patrick Dodd Serves as the heart of the community’s behavioral health network, fostering trust, creating meaningful partnerships, and ensuring individuals and families have access to compassionate, coordinated care. Their dedication to outreach, collaboration, and advocacy strengthens not only the lives of those they serve but the resilience of the entire community.

COMMUNITY STARS

2026 NOMINATIONS

Rebecca Chown, DO, FAAO

I nominate Dr. Rebecca Chown for her outstanding leadership and commitment to improving health equity across rural Oregon. An optometric physician and founder of Envision EyeCare for All, she has transformed access to vision care for underserved communities by bringing services directly to schools, rural health clinics, and community partners. Services ensure that children, families, older adults, and agricultural workers receive essential eye exams, glasses, and preventive care regardless of income or location. Through innovation, collaboration, and compassion, she has reduced barriers to care, improved health outcomes, and strengthened communities throughout Oregon.

Rick LaMountain

As a volunteer with the Grant County Senior Citizens Advisory Council, Rick helps improve the lives of older adults through his commitment and compassion. He regularly delivers home-delivered meals to homebound seniors, providing not only nutrition but also valuable social connection and support. Rick is also actively involved with local senior centers and assists with fundraising efforts for the John Day Senior Center and Valley View Assisted Living. His efforts help raise funds for activities and programs that keep seniors engaged and connected to their community. Through his selfless service and dedication, Rick makes a meaningful difference in the lives of Grant County seniors and helps strengthen the rural community he serves. workers, ensuring sustainable, community-centered care for the future.

Rob Brunner

As Angel Flight West's Oregon Wing Leader, Rob Brunner serves as the state's lead volunteer for the non-profit organization, which arranges free, non-emergency air transportation for passengers with serious medical conditions or compelling needs across 12 Western states. Since joining AFW in 2017 and taking the helm as Wing Leader in 2019, Rob has dedicated himself to guiding Oregon's 178 active volunteers. Beyond managing current operations, he travels the state to recruit new pilots, attend rural health events, and support domestic violence prevention workshops on behalf of the organization.

Samantha Duncan of Be Your Best

Samantha is a rural health champion across South Lane and North Douglas County. When not working directly to improve health outcomes through her work with Be Your Best, Rural Organizing Project, Lane Community Organizations Active in Disaster (COAD), she's volunteering with the Live Healthy Lane CHP and CHA work, helping on the farm, and all other sorts of good stuff!

Sara Fuller

Has served Benton Linn County CHC for many years. As an elderly woman she still shows up and takes her job very seriously.

COMMUNITY STARS

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Sarah Littlefield

I nominate Sarah because, as a community health worker, she has done so much great work for the community, more than just the students she works with. She works at the school and is known by the community as a trustworthy, helpful person. She understands the importance of building partner relationships. She also has begun the Alsea Health Fair in which she coordinates to get about 20 community service providers out to Alsea to share their services to the community. Being such a small community, she has made the effort to make this most effective, so schedules this during School Conferences at the only school (k-12) in Alsea. She has also partnered to help facilitate classes for the next generation of CHW's and does it all with a smile!

Seed of Faith

Seed of Faith has done so many great things for rural Oregon residents, especially the youth and houseless population Evelyn Harris the executive there, has done many things from distributing computers to help bridge the digital gap, to helping create a community for low-income housing. They have made tremendous strides in keeping the community safe and cared for.

Shannon Berry, MD

Dr. Shannon Berry is a special contributor to rural health in Oregon because she has dedicated herself not only to providing exceptional emergency care, but also to strengthening the future of rural medicine. After completing an Emergency Medicine rotation at CMH as our first resident in 2015, she chose to build her career in Astoria and has become a leader within our hospital and community. As the clinical director for our Emergency Medicine rotation, Dr. Berry mentors future physicians and introduces them to the rewards of rural practice. Her commitment to education has helped attract and retain providers in our community, creating a lasting impact that extends far beyond her own clinical work.

Sonia Mendez

Sonia Mendez is a social worker at Sky Lakes Medical Center in Klamath Falls, OR and has been working at SLMC for 30 years. Sonia goes above and beyond to help people in her community, you can reach her even outside business hours, is very kind, caring and she is the most selfless person I know.

Southern Coos Hospital

This facility has been amazing to work for. The community involvement is significant. From holding a community wide flu vaccine clinic yearly, to volunteering at all the golf tournaments at The Bandon Dunes, providing medical tents or runners as needed. One Tuesday a month someone from the hospital speaks at the Community Meet and Greet. Covering topics from our plan for expansion, school nursing program, budget, new pharmacy, or any other topic that the facility deems important for the community to know and be involved in. But it doesn't stop there, the employees themselves step up and volunteer to help with all of these endeavors. The Executive Team is very involved, and a member of the team rounds weekly with staff and patients.

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St. Charles Healthcare - Madras Hospital

St. Charles Madras is a true pillar of community. The caregivers at the Madras hospital embody the value of providing care for all. Many caregivers are residents themselves, and there is a diverse population of varying beliefs, traditions, and lifestyles. It can be all too easy for small communities to “other” groups and people. But when someone comes to the Madras hospital for care, they are treated with equal compassion, respect, and effort as any individual seeking care there. They have a presence in the community, fostering relationships and sharing resources to those who may be otherwise unaware. The staff go above and beyond with a passion for always learning, improving, and focusing on staying culturally competent to provide care.

Stacy Shaw

Stacy embodies what it means to care about her community. She regularly goes above and beyond while recognizing her own boundaries and limitations, which she actively works to overcome. Stacy leads the local health and human services committee, collaborates across diverse roles such as with first response and law enforcement. Stacy was seen as such a value asset to her team that her role was created for her, a role that encompasses supporting the whole public health department through grant writing, facilitating community connections, and uplifting what it means to be a public health professional. Stacy spends every day going above and beyond to ensure her community is safe and healthy.

Steward Decker

Dr. Decker is a proponent of healthy living and access to health care services. He encourages everyone in our rural area to live a life of health. Offering free monthly lectures at the Klamath Falls Library. The last one was on sleep disorders. Working with the SLMC Mobile Health Clinic to take basic health services to remote places in Klamath County, serving those who cannot get to Klamath Falls in Bly, Keno & Merrill. He is also working with street nursing to bring basic health services to the unhoused in Klamath Falls.Advocating for healthier choices in lifestyle, including modeling by riding his bike to work. Dr. Decker is relentless when it comes to bringing better health services and a healthy lifestyle to Klamath County.

Taylor Alderson

Taylor is a dedicated therapist who is very compassionate with her clients. She works with many clients that have a history of abuse and trauma. Taylor is very dedicated with her clients and fully engaged while they process their painful past. I have known her for five years and as a therapist myself am very impressed by her contribution to the rural community.

Taylor Buntin, LCSW

Taylor Buntin is an exceptional licensed clinical social worker dedicated to improving behavioral health in our rural community. She leads seven therapy groups, including parenting, dialectical behavior therapy (DBT), and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), providing evidence-based support to children, adults, and families. Taylor creates a safe, welcoming environment where participants build coping skills, strengthen relationships, and improve their mental health. Through her compassion, leadership, and commitment to expanding access to quality behavioral health care, she has made a lasting impact on countless individuals and families throughout our rural community.

COMMUNITY STARS

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The Peaceful Presence Project

The Peaceful Presence Project is redefining public health and palliative care by bringing the internationally recognized Compassionate Communities model to Central Oregon. Through initiatives including ONSIS, Connection Cafés, rural end-of-life education, grant-funded ELNEC training, and the Coastal Death Care Series, they are strengthening community capacity and resilience, improving end-of-life literacy, and reducing isolation across rural Oregon. What distinguishes the Peaceful Presence Project is its ability to build enduring partnerships. Rather than delivering programs to communities, they build programs with communities. They cultivate local leadership, strengthen existing networks, and create practical, replicable models.

Theresa Kirby

Theresa Kirby, RN, MBA, CPHQ, is the Quality Program Manager at Grande Ronde Hospital. She has demonstrated outstanding dedication to improving healthcare quality and patient safety in rural communities. Theresa strengthened the hospital's Quality Assurance and Performance Improvement (QAPI) Program, implemented a data-driven approach to quality improvement, and fostered a culture of shared accountability for quality and safety. She also hosted an Oregon Critical Access Hospital Quality Network visit at her hospital and actively shares her expertise with peers statewide. Her collaborative approach has inspired lasting improvements and strengthened rural healthcare partnerships. Theresa's commitment exemplifies the "Power of Rural."

Thrive Umpqua

Thrive Umpqua has become a champion of wellness promotion and community building in Douglas County. Roseburg residents are warmly welcomed to attend events, education, workshops, and community gatherings promoting health, wellness, connection, and safety. Notably, their annual well-being challenge championing longevity principles promotes holistic health interventions that lead to living longer, healthier lives. Initiatives such as these have individual and community-wide impact by modeling and engaging participants in healthy habits and providing resources in underserved areas. Thrive Umpqua makes the healthy choice, the easy choice. We appreciate all they do in the spirit of service!

Tia Murrill

Our office manager is the heart of our clinic and a true champion for rural healthcare. She dedicated countless hours to assembling the extensive documentation that helped both the Union and Elgin clinics achieve 5-Tier PCPCH recognition—a testament to her commitment to quality care and excellence. Her work didn't stop there. She has continued to partner with Red Cross Drug to bring a pharmacy locker to our Union clinic, expanding access to medications and making pharmacy services more convenient for our rural community. Her personal motto says it all: "Do hard things, with good people, and give back to your community." She lives those words every day. A shining example of why living and working in rural communities is such a blessing.

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2026 NOMINATIONS

Tim Lynch

I nominate Dr. Tim Lynch as this year's Community Star for Oregon. While serving as Public Health Director for Coos Health & Wellness, he has become a trusted voice for rural Oregon through his appointment to Oregon's Alcohol and Drug Policy Commission, ensuring rural communities have a seat at the table in shaping statewide policy. He also established an Academic Health Department partnership with the OHSU-PSU School of Public Health, creating opportunities to educate and mentor future public health professionals. His ability to connect people, build partnerships, and advocate for rural communities has strengthened public health not only in Coos County but throughout Oregon.

Trent Dunlop

Trent is the supervisor for West Valley Hospital's Rehabilitation Services. Not only does Trent do an outstanding job of supporting his staff and patients, but he is always willing to step in to provide physical therapy and looking for ways to enhance the patient experience. He advocates for effective change and teaches others how to utilize new techniques and equipment. He speaks up when needed, even if his opinion is different, and encourages others to share their thoughts and opinions on matters that are pertinent to patient and community care. Trent is the perfect example of empathy, compassion, and drive that it takes to make a difference in a rural community like Dallas, Oregon and we are all better having him in our lives!

Western Lane Crisis Response

Western Lane Crisis Response goes beyond traditional crisis care by removing barriers to behavioral health services through 24/7 crisis response, innovative voluntary transportation, youth mobile crisis services, and strong community partnerships. By collaborating with healthcare, first responders, schools, and local organizations, WLCR ensures people receive compassionate, timely care where they are, strengthening the health and well-being of rural Oregon communities. Our team fills critical service gaps, reduces unnecessary emergency department visits and law enforcement involvement when appropriate, and connects individuals to lasting resources that improve outcomes while creating a stronger, more resilient rural behavioral health system.