Montana Rural Health Association

Outstanding Rural Health Program: Rural Behavioral Health Primary Care Collaborative

Montana Rural Health

A program at the University of Montana that ensures patients in rural areas have access to mental healthcare is receiving national recognition.

The National Rural Health Association presented a 2015 Rural Health Award on April 16th during NRHA's 38th Annual Rural Health Conference to the Rural Behavior Health Primary Care Collaborative, a program of the Western Montana Area Health Education Center at UM

Kaye Norris with a 2015 Rural Health Award for the Rural Health Primary Care Collaborative

"We're especially proud of this year's winners," said Alan Morgan, NRHA CEO. "They have each already made tremendous strides to advance rural healthcare, and we're confident they will continue to help improve the lives of rural Americans."

The Primary Care Collaborative is a partnership between the Western Montana AHEC and critical access hospitals in five isolated Montana communities. The innovative program places pre-licensed, post doctorate psychologists and pre-licensed social workers in Libby, Glasgow, Deer Lodge, Plains and Kalispell to provide mental healthcare services. University faculty members provide supervision until they become licensed.

By locating the specialists at rural health clinics and community health centers, the program reduces the stigma associated with mental health treatment and allows doctors to make referrals to a specialist in the same building. Locating more of patients' healthcare providers in the same facility increases the chance of follow-through and allows specialists to intercept patients in need of behavioral interventions to improve their overall health. Additionally, pairing a psychologist and social worker at the sites prevents professional isolation.

"The idea is to always aim for the highest quality patient care, regardless of geographic location, in an effort to provide equitable care," said project director Sara Laney. "Improving access to behavioral healthcare in rural Montana is the goal of this project. We've had the opportunity to integrate a sustainable model of behavioral healthcare in parts of this state where it previously didn't exist."

One of five regional Area Health Education Centers in Montana, the Western Montana AHEC is a grant-funded, not-for-profit organization committed to making quality healthcare and health science education more accessible to rural Montanans. It is located in UM's College of Health Professions and Biomedical Sciences.

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Hacking Rural Medicine &
Ignite Rural Medicine Event Overview
By: Monica Bourgeau, MS, COO, FMBHP & Event Chair

The nation's first **Rural Medicine Hackathon** and **Ignite Rural Medicine** was held in Missoula, MT, March 20-22, 2015 on the University of Montana campus. The event was led by the Frontier Medicine Better Health Partnership (FMBHP), the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)'s Hacking Medicine program, and Blackstone Launchpad at UM. The term hackathon is a portmanteau of the words "hack" and "marathon," and essentially means a marathon session of problem solving. The hackathon meeting format originated in the technology industry, with companies such as Google and Facebook. These tech companies use hackathons to help solve some of their most difficult problems.

Frontier Medicine Better Health Partnership (FMBHP) is a three-year Innovations Grant program funded by Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services Innovations. The FMBHP works with 25 critical access hospitals across the state of Montana on multiple initiatives that prepare rural communities for healthcare reform.

MIT Hacking Medicine is a student-led program that began applying the hackathon meeting format to medicine in the fall of 2011. They formed the program to share their model and, according to their website, "infect the ecosystem." MIT's Hacking Medicine team mission is to "energize and connect the best minds across MIT and the health ecosystem to teach, learn, and launch the next generation of healthcare solutions to solve healthcare's biggest challenges at home and abroad." To date, the group has facilitated more than 36 medical hackathon events worldwide, including Hacking Rural Medicine.

Blackstone Launchpad at the University of Montana helps students, alumni, faculty, and staff turn their ideas, skill and passions into real world businesses and non-profit organizations. Blackstone Launchpad is a co-curricular, experiential, campus program designed to introduce entrepreneurship as a viable career path and develop entrepreneurial skills and mindsets through individualized coaching, ideation and venture creation support.

156 people registered for the event, with 126 attendees eventually participating, including volunteers, mentors, vendors, speakers, and judges. The event planning team had more than 15 members, including three students from the MIT Hacking Medicine program, Shirlene Liew, Alex Revelos, and Molly Binder.
As hoped, the attendees included a diverse group made up of clinicians, healthcare service providers/administrators, students, business professionals/entrepreneurs, data experts and programmers, educators,

attorneys, engineers, physicians, graphic artists, government/VA personnel, holistic practitioners, and the media.

The weekend event started on Friday night with an Ignite Rural Medicine Event and opening reception. The nationally known Ignite presentation format limits presenters to five minutes total, with slides that auto-advance every 20 seconds. The Ignite event was the sixth one to be held in Missoula, MT, but the first in the nation to be focused on rural medicine.
The weekend Hackathon was based primarily on the MIT Hacking Medicine model, which includes a two-day facilitated process with opportunities for networking, idea pitching, team formation, solution creation, presentation practice, final presentations, and judging.

The Hacking Rural Medicine event used well-established Open Space meeting principles, first developed by Harrison Owen in the early 1980s. The Open Space format allowed attendees to share ideas and get to know each other's interests and expertise, while guiding the direction of the event. This portion of the meeting was facilitated by event volunteer and certified Open Space facilitator, Harold Shinsato. While using these meeting principles, nine teams consolidated around the problems or solutions that were selected by attendees. Once teams were in place, they worked diligently throughout the day to clarify ideas, brainstorm, and develop solutions. Mentors and event facilitators assisted the teams with technical and logistical questions as needed.

Teams reconvened on Sunday morning and began putting their solutions into a formal five minute presentation format. Each team practiced in front of event mentors, who provided feedback on how they could best modify their presentations.

A panel of four judges selected a first and second place winner, and the attendees selected a "crowd favorite." The winning teams were awarded a total of $1,500 in prize money that had been provided by event sponsors. The four judges were valuable representatives of Montana who have focused their careers on rural communities and healthcare. For more information about the teams, other winners, videos, and more articles of the event, please visit http://hackingruralmedicine.org/

Overall attendees found the event to be beneficial and a great collaborative opportunity. Many felt that getting important leaders together was imperative for innovative solutions.

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First place winning team: We Care U Count—We Care U Count created a real-time patient satisfaction survey for rural hospitals, using game technology and geodata software services. They developed a web-based prototype and tested it at the event. The team intends to pursue the development of their survey tool, and that they were approached by a large potential customer/investor at the event.

NRHA Conference Calendar

Improving the Health of 62 Million Rural Americans
www.RuralHealthWeb.org

July 14-15, 2015
SRHA Leadership Conference
Minneapolis, MN

July 15-17, 2015
11th Rural Quality and Clinic Conference
Minneapolis, MN

September 29-30, 2015
14th Rural Health Clinic Conference
Kansas City, MO

September 30-October 2, 2015
14th Critical Access Hospital Conference
Kansas City, MO