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IHA, ICAHN to Celebrate National Rural Health Day on Nov. 20

***Illinois' Small and Rural Hospitals Continue to Deliver High-Quality Care,
Expand Access, and Drive Economic Growth Through Innovation***

NAPERVILLE – In recognition of National Rural Health Day on Nov. 20, the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) and Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network (ICAHN) are celebrating Illinois' rural hospital community for their tireless efforts to provide high-quality care to their patients and address healthcare challenges facing rural communities across the state.

IHA and ICAHN also recognize the innovative ways small and rural hospitals are serving their communities, including the development of mobile clinics that expand access to care, advancement of unique education initiatives, and strengthening community outreach efforts.

"Illinois' small and rural hospitals are the heart of their communities, delivering exceptional care as their dedicated workers tirelessly strive to improve the health of the patients they serve," IHA President and CEO A.J. Wilhelmi said. "Through new and innovative approaches, Illinois' small and rural hospitals are expanding access to care, promoting wellness, and helping their communities remain strong and safe. IHA and ICAHN are proud to represent these hospitals and applaud the compassion and hard work of our rural healthcare workers."

"Across Illinois, rural hospitals are doing far more than delivering care - they are innovating, educating, and strengthening the fabric of their communities every single day. Their commitment to meeting patients where they are, overcoming persistent challenges, and building healthier futures is nothing short of extraordinary. Their work demonstrates the power of collaboration and the value of sustained investment in rural health. ICAHN is honored to stand with our rural hospitals, celebrate their achievements, and advance the work that ensures high-quality care remains close to home for every rural resident," said Tracy Warner, Executive Director.

More than 1.6 million Illinoisans live in rural communities and rely on their local hospital as an important—and often only—source of healthcare. Illinois' rural hospitals are continuously identifying new ways to serve their patients, while also being proactive and strategic to recruit and retain a talented, rural workforce.

Kirby Medical Center has partnered with the Cerro Gordo and Bement School Districts to provide education via a [Nutrition and Cooking class](#) with their 7th-grade students. The classes are built upon basic skills learned in Health Class. Students learn about choosing healthy foods and developing basic cooking skills. Wellness is incorporated into each segment and targets an aspect of the wellness wheel. Daily life skills are taught through meal planning and preparation labs within the kitchen setting. Several experts provide in-class and hands-on education sessions including registered nurses, hospital administrators, registered dietitians, and wellness professionals.

[Salem Township Hospital's](#) Registered Dietitian and Nutritionist Caroline Boehne, MS, RDN, LDN, now hosts a monthly Diabetes Support and Nutrition Education Group. The group meetings, which are held at **Salem Township Hospital**, in Salem, are free and open to those newly diagnosed or have been living with diabetes for years. The monthly sessions provide nutrition tips, the opportunity to ask questions and support from others in the community navigating diabetes in their daily lives. "Throughout my education and community experience in dietetics, I have noticed that many people, especially in rural communities, lack access to peers who understand what it's like to live with diabetes every day," Boehne said.

Sarah Bush Lincoln Health Center in Mattoon has a van that offers 3D Mammography. The mobile unit makes stops throughout the Central Illinois area including local health departments providing mammograms. With access being cited as one of the main reasons women do not have regular mammograms, [Sarah Bush Lincoln's](#) (SBL) Mobile Mammography unit was developed with help from BankCheck, a collaborative effort between nine area banks; the Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health; a rural Health Initiatives Partnership Program grant from the Southern Illinois University School of Medicine; and the Susan G. Komen Foundation. For women, who have not been regularly receiving mammograms and health screens, the mobile mammography unit travels to area county health departments, businesses and SBL's extended campus locations to provide access to women living in those communities.

[Wabash General Hospital](#) in Mount Carmel promotes foot health to keep their community members mobile, active and safe through its annual Free Foot Care Clinic. This year's three-day clinic provided 220 individuals with foot washing, toenail trimming and personalized referrals for additional care—key components of foot care all at no cost. The hospital noted that the event offers "compassionate care and essential support to community members in need." Those participating in the clinic also walked away with a new pair of high-quality shoes, including Brooks and On Cloud, as well as a pair of socks provided by the WGH Foundation.

Illinois has 85 small and rural hospitals, which includes 55 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs), and an annual economic impact of more than \$16 billion.

National Rural Health Day is an opportunity to bring attention to and honor the efforts of rural healthcare providers, communities, organizations, State Offices of Rural Health (SORH), and other stakeholders dedicated to addressing the unique healthcare needs of rural America. [Click here](#) to learn more about how Illinois' small and rural hospitals are making a positive impact on their communities. [Read rural health stories from ICAHN members](#) and explore some ways [ICAHN hospitals turn collaboration into action for their communities](#).

About IHA

The Illinois Health and Hospital Association, with offices in Chicago, Naperville, Springfield, and Washington, D.C., advocates for Illinois' more than 200 hospitals and nearly 40 health systems as they serve their patients and communities. IHA members provide a broad range of services—not just within their walls, but across the continuum of healthcare and in their communities. Reflecting the diversity of the state, IHA members consist of nonprofit, investor-owned and public hospitals in the following categories: community, safety net, rural, critical access, specialty, and teaching hospitals, including academic medical centers. For more information, see www.team-ihh.org. Like IHA on [Facebook](#). Follow IHA on [X](#) (formally known as Twitter).

About ICAHN

Quite simply, the mission of ICAHN is – and always has been – to strengthen critical access and small, rural hospitals through collaboration. Better together, ICAHN and its 60 member hospitals make it their overarching goal to preserve access to rural healthcare while improving the vibrancy and viability of the communities served. ICAHN accomplishes this goal by:

- Ensuring appropriate funding and financial resources
- Continuing efforts to be a recognized resource on Critical Access Hospitals and rural healthcare in Illinois
- Promoting efficient use of information technology services for the network and members alike
- Maintaining and further developing specific-type peer networks, activities, and listservs that promote hospital operational efficiencies and connectivity
- Offering ongoing educational opportunities and resources
- Developing and offering projects that are self-sustaining and which add value to the organization and its members
- Developing and offering shared services that offer value to members

ICAHN is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation established in 2003 and is governed by a nine-member board of directors. For more information, see <https://icahn.org>. Follow ICAHN on [Facebook](#).

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