



Illinois' Rural Hospitals Celebrate National Rural Health Day on Nov. 17

By A.J. Wilhelmi, President & CEO, Illinois Health and Hospital Association and Pat Schou, Executive Director, Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network

More than 1.4 million Illinoisans live in rural communities and rely on their local hospital as an important—and often only—source of healthcare. As representatives of Illinois' 86 small and rural hospitals, including 52 critical access hospitals, the Illinois Health and Hospital Association (IHA) and the Illinois Critical Access Hospital Network (ICAHN) are proud to recognize National Rural Health Day, which celebrates rural communities, highlights the unique health challenges and opportunities they face, and brings together hospitals and other stakeholders who work tirelessly to improve the health and wellbeing of their neighbors.

Illinois hospitals not only provide high quality care to their patients, but also serve as large employers, economic engines, and are active community partners.

Hospitals are embedded in the fabric of their communities and are continuously identifying new, unique ways to provide care. Sparta Community Hospital has a mobile healthcare clinic fully equipped with two exam rooms and a wheelchair lift to help improve access to healthcare. FHN Memorial Hospital in Freeport partnered with the Northern Illinois Foodbank to provide nutritional food to at-risk communities, while also offering mobile medical screenings. Lincoln Memorial Hospital collaborated with Lincoln Elementary School District 27 to reduce childhood obesity and promote healthy habits from a young age, and also helped the school add more fresh and local foods into kids' meals, improving overall well-being.

The Rural Home Hospital Project at Blessing Health System in Quincy implemented an innovative program that allows certain patients to receive hospital-level care in their home that includes twice-a-day nurse visits and a daily telehealth check-up with a physician. Patients also wear a patch monitoring vital signs, which their physician can check via computer or phone.

Rural hospitals provide all of us with something critically important: assurance that when we need it most, the care will be there, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Today, we recognize and thank the heroes who work in rural hospitals and their associated clinics and services. We acknowledge their many sacrifices.

Illinois' rural hospitals are struggling to manage increasing costs, workforce shortages and supply chain disruptions. As Congress considers end-of-year legislation, we urge the delegation to prevent looming cuts to hospitals and extend the Medicare-dependent hospital program and enhanced low-volume adjustment. We also ask lawmakers to support targeted financial relief so that rural hospitals can continue to fulfil their mission and the heroes working in our hospitals can continue to do what they do best—roll up their sleeves, work together and take care of their neighbors.

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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-iha.org. Follow IHA on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

About ICAHN

Quite simply, the mission of our organization is – and always has been – to strengthen critical access and small, rural hospitals through collaboration. Better together, ICAHN and its 58 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
- Establishing an institute that specializes in rural health population management

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](#).