

Mark your  
Calendar!



**September 3**

Joint Committee on Rural  
Emergency Care (3:00 p.m.  
EDT)

**September 8**

Performance Measures  
Committee (1:00 p.m. EDT)  
  
Development Committee  
(3:00 p.m. EDT)

**September 9**

Workforce Committee (Noon  
EDT)

**September 15**

Policy Committee (2:00 p.m.  
EDT)

**September 21**

Environmental Scanning  
Webinar (3:00 p.m. EDT)

**September 23**

Leadership Institute Mentors  
(1:00 p.m. EDT)

**September 28**

Educational Exchange  
Committee (2:00 p.m. EDT)

Please visit our [News & Events](#)  
section on the Web to learn  
about these and additional  
upcoming events.

# The Branch

An Update for State Offices of Rural Health and our Partners

August 2009

Website: <http://www.nosorh.org/> Wiki space: <http://nosorh.wikispaces.com/>



## Good Luck and Thank You, Betty!

As we mentioned last month, Betty King is moving on from NOSORH's program specialist position effective August 31 to devote more time to other rural health-specific projects.

Without a doubt, Betty has been one of the driving forces behind NOSORH's educational exchange program during her tenure. She has been a great resource for reaching out to experts in the rural health field for SORHs. She coordinated more than 30 educational Webinars and pre-conference workshops and developed numerous mentoring, leadership and other educational resources for members; she has also helped NOSORH launch various communication and program evaluation initiatives.

"NOSORH represents the potential [we have] to improve the health of people who live in rural communities," Betty says. "I am proud of all the accomplishments to which I contributed for NOSORH and will always value the wonderful people with whom I have had the opportunity to work. But [to quote Michelle Shocked], the secret to a long life is knowing when to go."

Thank you for everything you have done to help NOSORH become the organization it is today, Betty!



## President's Message on Workforce

As you may know, the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) held a meeting August 10-12 in Washington, DC to discuss the challenges that rural and urban underserved communities face in attracting and retaining an adequate number of primary care providers. I'm pleased to report that State Offices of Rural Health were well represented in these conversations.

During the meeting, HRSA asked participants to share their thoughts on how the agency could address primary care workforce issues and shortages most effectively. If you wanted to provide feedback but didn't have the chance to do so, it's not too late – HRSA has set up an e-mail address, [Workforcesummit@hrsa.gov](mailto:Workforcesummit@hrsa.gov), where participants can continue to provide

their perspective on how HRSA should address this issue.

If you have any comments or innovative ideas you would like to share, please do so as soon as possible – the e-mail address will only be active until **September 30, 2009**.

Sincerely,

Lynette Dickson,  
NOSORH President

## Workforce Strategy Session a Success

Nearly 40 participants attended the NOSORH Workforce Strategy Session held in conjunction with the ORHP Region Meeting in Laramie, WY on August 18. PCO, AHEC, higher education and hospital association representatives from 14 states focused

on developing collaborative models for addressing rural health workforce concerns. The top three areas identified for potential collaboration included HIT workforce opportunities; recruitment and retention incentives; and models of care.

Special thanks to Sharla Allen and the Wyoming Office of Rural Health, NOSORH Workforce Committee Chair Kristin Juliar and all of our partners who made this such a meaningful event.

## SORH Comings and Goings

**Michelle Clark**, administrator for the Maryland Office of Primary Care and Rural Health, stepped down from her position effective August 20. Michelle plans to spend more time with her children and pursue other interests.

**Wendy Opsahl**, director of communications for the North Dakota Center for Rural Health, resigned August 7 to accept a similar position with Washington, DC-based Atlas

Research, LLC. Wendy is also in the process of completing her PhD.

Good luck in the next chapters of your lives, Michelle and Wendy!

### NOSORH Award Nominations Being Accepted

It's not too late to nominate a worthy individual or organization for one of NOSORH's six annual awards!

Please complete an [Awards Nomination Form](#) and submit it to [Alison Hughes](#) by September 11 if you would like nominate someone for a 2009 award. [Award Descriptions](#) and a [List of Previous Award Winners](#) are both available in the Awards Committee section of the NOSORH Web site.

## Congratulations to Our First Associate Member

A special welcome – or welcome back, that is – to Denise Denton, who recently became NOSORH’s first associate member!

The NOSORH Board of Directors recently adopted a policy that allows individuals who support NOSORH’s mission become associate members. This includes, but is not limited to, SORH alumni; representatives/employees of primary care associations, primary care offices, area health education centers, state rural health associations and other partner organizations; or individuals representing any other local, state or national organization or corporation that supports NOSORH’s mission.

Associate membership privileges include access to all NOSORH services including e-survey and webinars tools; discounted registration fees for all NOSORH meetings; eligibility to participate in the NOSORH Leadership Institute, Rural Health Grant-Writing Course and other training programs; access to, and listing on, associate member e-mail listserv; access to Webinars and other resources available only to members on the NOSORH Web site; e-mail subscription to *The Branch*; eligibility to receive NOSORH Recognition awards; and eligibility to serve on committees of interest.

[Click here](#) to obtain additional information and download an associate member application form.

## September Environmental Scanning Webinar Planned

Exploring the value and potential use of environmental scanning tools by SORHs will be the focus of NOSORH’s next Educational Exchange Webinar. “Tools for Deciding Where to Spend SORH Time and Resources” will be held at 3:00 p.m. on Monday, September 21; be sure to visit our [News & Events](#) section on the Web for call-in instructions and additional information.

### Contact Information

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[Donna Pfaendtner](#)

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## SORHs and Their Partners Invited to Join Us in Austin!

Please invite your partners and plan to join us for the **NOSORH Annual Meeting and HIT Pre-Conference workshop** slated to take place November 17-19 at the Hilton Garden Inn Downtown in Austin, Texas. In addition to updates on healthcare reform, economic stimulus funding and other policies affecting SORHs, this year’s annual meeting offers numerous breakout sessions designed to develop partnerships, strengthen existing (and create new) programs

and enhance their visibility. Attendees will even have the opportunity to “speak up and sound off for SORHs and Rural America” during a town hall meeting.

Those with a special interest in health information technology-related issues should also plan on attending the **Preparing for Tomorrow Today** pre-conference HIT Summit on November 17. The hands-on, day-long session will enable attendees to identify

model programs that have optimized economic stimulus funding to improve HIT and develop strategies for tapping into those and other HIT-related resources.

Of course, there will also be plenty of time to catch up with old friends and make new ones! Please visit our [News & Events](#) section on the Web for a preliminary agenda and registration information.

## Kris Sparks Announces NRHA Presidential Candidacy

Kris Sparks (Washington), NOSORH’s State Rural Health Association liaison, will seek to become the next president-elect of the National Rural Health Association (NRHA) during the organization’s upcoming elections.

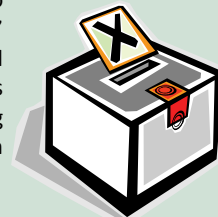
Kris has been working in the rural health arena since 1990 when she joined Rural Health Programs in the Washington Office of Rural Health. She is a past president of NOSORH and of the Washington Rural Health Association, and she has served as a health panel advisor to the Rural

Policy Institute.

In addition to her current position on NOSORH’s board, Kris currently represents the Statewide Health Resources Constituency Group on NRHA’s Health Policy Congress and serves as the Washington Rural Health Representative on NRHA’s State Association Council.

Several NOSORH members currently serve on the NRHA Board of Trustees. Denny Berens (Nebraska) is the current president-elect of the

organization and Sandra Durick (South Dakota) is its treasurer; Kristin Juliar (Montana) and Graham Adams (South Carolina) serve as chairs of the Frontier Constituency Group and State Office Council, respectively. Please be sure to support Kris’ upcoming bid to ensure this outstanding representation continues!



## Dues, Survey Reminder

Thanks to the 35 SORHs that have renewed their membership for the upcoming year! For those that still need to pay their dues, please contact [Teryl Eisinger](#) to make arrangements or discuss any dues-related concerns. We are honored that all 50 State Offices of Rural Health currently

belong to NOSORH and want to make sure that continues to be the case!

It is also extremely important that SORHs remember to complete and submit the member services form that went out with your dues invoice. This is a valuable tool that helps NOSORH

prioritize the services it provides to members, so your feedback is extremely important. To date, only 19 SORHs have completed the survey. If you have not already done so, please [click here](#) to download a copy and submit it to [Donna Pfaendtner](#) as soon as possible.

## OPR Review Assistance Available; More Needed

Does your SORH need help preparing for an upcoming visit from HRSA’s Office of Performance Review (OPR)? Has your office already gone through an OPR review and would be willing to help another SORH prepare for theirs?

If so, then please contact Educational Exchange Co-chair [Gloria Vermie](#) for additional information. You also may want to look at the OPR reviews other SORHs have posted – or post information regarding your own review – on the [NOSORH Wikispace](#).

## Womble Appointed to Joint Committee on Rural Emergency Care

Matt Womble, rural hospital specialist with the North Carolina Office of Rural Health and Resource Development, has been appointed to the Joint Committee on Rural Emergency Care (JCREC) – a collaborative undertaking between NOSORH and the National Association of State EMS Officials that seeks to develop a stronger, more comprehensive approach to improving the quality of emergency care in rural and frontier communities. Womble joins JCREC Co-chair Chris Tilden (Kansas) and members Larry Allen (Kentucky), John Barnas (Michigan), Bob Jex (Utah) and Ron Seedorf (Colorado) as NOSORH representatives on the committee.

## Membership Meeting, SORH Display Planned for ORHP Grantees’ Meeting

NOSORH will hold a membership meeting in conjunction with this year’s ORHP Grantee Partnership Meeting in Washington, DC. The meeting will take place at 6:00 p.m. on Sunday, August 30 in the Constitution Room at the Grand Hyatt Washington.

We will also be exhibiting information about NOSORH and SORHs for the duration of the Partnership Meeting. Please stop by and say hello!