



**Mark your
Calendar!**

January

[\(click here\)](#) to obtain call-in numbers & pass codes

- 8-9 Board Planning Meeting** - Tanque Verde Ranch, Tucson, AZ

- 13 @ 1:00 pm (est)**
"Preparing for the NRHA Policy Institute" - webinar (tentative)

- 25 @ 5:30 pm (est)**
NOSORH Annual Policy Meeting in the Pan American room at the Capital Hilton

Quote of the Month:

"My number one goal will be to move the National Rural Health Association to where it is a knowledge center-based organization for the nation, which can also help the rest of the world. I see this as a wonderful opportunity to meet rural health leaders from across the nation and even from other parts of the world, and glean new and creative ideas from them." – **Denny Berens, director of the Nebraska State Office of Rural Health, on being chosen NRHA president-elect**



A Holiday Message from the NOSORH President

As I think about what to write as a year-end summary/holiday message to all of you, I am somewhat perplexed as to what my focus should be. Perhaps I should recap the priorities that I established at the beginning of the year: defining who we are and what we do and determining how to cultivate the resources to help us grow.

Maybe I should highlight what we have accomplished in each of those areas: communications, policy, and development. Or perhaps I should discuss the exciting new NOSORH Leadership Institute and the many possibilities that it brings. But since all of those things can be found at www.nosorh.org, you really don't need to read about them here; so, maybe I should get philosophical and offer my thoughts about the passing of time

and our place in the universe.

Or maybe not...

Rather than do all of that, I think it best to simply thank you all for the opportunity to serve as your President. It has truly been my pleasure to work with, and learn from, the Board, the Executive Committee, our staff and all of you. Please accept my very best wishes for a happy, healthy holiday and a peaceful 2009.

Finally, because I think we all need a little Dr. Seuss now and then, let me offer this anecdote as we make our final holiday preparations and conduct our end-of-year work activities:

"And the Grinch, with his Grinch-feet ice cold in the snow, stood puzzling and puzzling, how could it be so? It came without ribbons; it came without tags. It came without packages, boxes or bags. And he puzzled and puzzled 'til his puzzler was sore. Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before. What if Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store. What if Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more."

Happy Holidays!



NRHA Rural Health Policy Institute

Plan now to attend the 20th Annual NRHA Rural Health Policy Institute, which will be held January 26-28 in Washington, D.C. With a new President, changes in Congress and one of the most challenging economic environments in recent memory, this promises to be one of the most important Institutes in recent years. [Click here](#) for registration information or to download a conference agenda.

As in years past, the **NOSORH Annual Policy Meeting** will again be held in conjunction with the Policy Institute; this year's meeting will take place **Sunday, January 25 at 5:30 p.m. EST** in the Pan American Room at the Capital Hilton. Please contact [Donna Pfaendtner](#) if you need an agenda or have any questions.

Plans are also in the works for a **"Preparing for the NRHA Policy Institute" Webinar at 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 13** (tentative date). Topics to be discussed include an overview of strategies being pursued to reauthorize SORH funding; an update on NOSORH's legislative activities on behalf of SORHs; and tips on how to make the most of your visits to "The Hill." Details on registering for this important Webinar will soon be available in the [News and Events](#) section of the NOSORH Web site.

Promising Practices

This month we conclude our review of the Promising Practices and strategies that characterize strong SORHs by exploring **Characteristic #6 – Being an Effective Communicator/Marketer**. Key abilities of the characteristic include:

- Sharing your Office's story and showcasing its effectiveness/value
- Tracking the application/usage of SORH funds and leveraged funds and translating this into a presentation highlighting your Office's effectiveness

Examples of materials/resources created by SORHs in conjunction with this Promising Practice include:

- Annual Reports (LA, PA)
- Web-based tool which tracks activities and sorts Office actions by location, organizations involved, and activity type (Note: this tool can also be used to record the quantitative impacts of these activities and be used to promote the Office, especially among political constituents.) (ND)
- Informational/promotional brochures and supporting media materials (Various Offices)
- Legislative/constituent briefings (Various Offices)
- Six- and 12-month strategic communications plan (Various Offices)
- Web portals, listservs and other creative and accessible electronic communication vehicles (KS)
- Full-color magazine which expands opportunities to highlight programs and disseminate information (PA)
- Profiles of grants received by the Office or by other organizations with Office support (AZ, GA)

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Our Sincere Thanks ...

...to **Barbara Berger** (Connecticut) and **Lynda Bergsma** (Arizona), whose are competing the terms as Mentoring Liaison and Region D Representative, respectively, on the NOSORH Board of Directors this month. We certainly appreciate your willingness to serve NOSORH in this capacity the past few years!

Thank you also to current members of the Board who will be wearing different hats next year: **Karen Madden** (New York) who passes the gavel to incoming President **Lynette Dickson** (North Dakota) but remains on the Board as Past President; **Mark Schoenbaum** (Minnesota) who steps down as a Region C Representative to become President Elect; **Kenny Doppenberg** (South Dakota), who steps aside as a Region E Representative to become Secretary; **Alison Hughes** (Arizona), who after serving as President-Elect, President and Past President becomes a Leadership Ex-Officio; and **Caroline Ford** (Nevada), who also becomes a Leadership Ex-Officio after serving as NOSORH Secretary.

Finally, thanks to several folks who are joining the Board in 2009: **Gloria Vermie** (Iowa) as a Region C Representative and Educational Exchange Liaison; **Gerald Ackerman** (Nevada) as a Region D Representative; and **LouAnn Wilroy** (Colorado) as a Region E Representative. Welcome aboard!

Be sure to check out next month's Branch for a list of 2009 committee chairs and co-chairs.

Volunteers Needed

Anyone interested in representing NOSORH on a Joint Committee on Rural Emergency Care with the National Association of State EMS Officials should contact [Teryl Eisinger](#) **no later than January 9** to express their interest and/or learn more about the committee. Committee members will be appointed by the NOSORH Board during its regular January meeting.

The Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (ORHP) is working with Getzville, New-York-based HMS Associates, to develop a manual which highlights and stimulates partnerships between FQHCs and CAHs. ORHP and HMS are looking for volunteers to serve on a workgroup that would assist in the development of the manual. Please contact Alison Hughes (520-626-6253, ahughes@u.arizona.edu) ASAP if you are interested; NOSORH hopes to appoint someone in time to participate in the workgroup's first conference call on January 6.

Oops!

We know that Sandy Durick is from South Dakota, not South Carolina; we also know that Michelle Clark is from Maryland and not Rhode Island, for Pete's sake! Of course, you would have never realized we knew that after reading last month's Branch – our apologies to Sandy and Michelle for incorrectly listing their home states in our November issue.

A Note from the Educational Exchange Committee

Do you have new staff members that have joined your SORH in the past year? If so, please contact [Betty King](#) so the Educational Exchange Committee can help welcome them to the NOSORH family.

Also, the Educational Exchange Committee is planning a January Webinar that will discuss "data you can use." Be sure to check the [NOSORH Web site](#) for the date and more details!

HIT Committee Discusses Potential Impact of White Space Policy on Rural Health

During the HIT Committee meeting on December 10, Harvey Licht (New Mexico) gave a very informative presentation on national policies that are being developed regarding the use of "white space" – unused broadband space available for new telecommunications channels that is widely considered to be the "last mile" in connectivity. To date, the primary players influencing this policy have been the large telecommunications, hardware and software companies; grassroots organizations are just now focusing on the issue and how the new channels can be used for public services.

The HIT Committee will continue monitoring the development of national white space policies in an effort to keep NOSORH involved as a rural health advocate.

[Click here](#) to download a copy of Harvey's presentation to the HIT Committee.