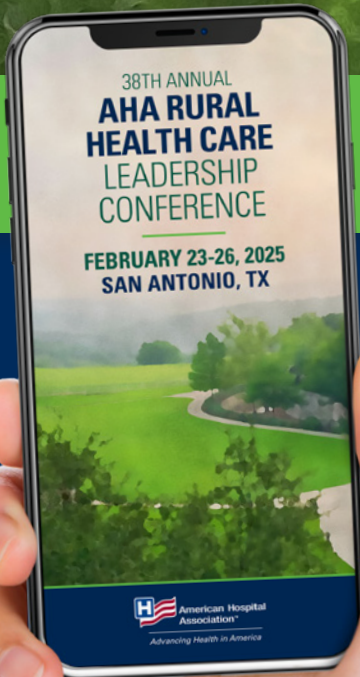


38TH ANNUAL **AHA RURAL HEALTH CARE** | LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 23-26, 2025 | **SAN ANTONIO, TX**

JW MARRIOTT SAN ANTONIO HILL COUNTRY



DOWNLOAD THE CONFERENCE MOBILE APP!

- 1 Connect to your device's App Store or Google Play and search "AHA Meetings & Events" and download.
- 2 Select "2025 Rural Health Care Leadership Conference" under "Upcoming Events."
- 3 Enter your first name, last name and email address. Please use the email address associated with your registration.
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(AS OF JANUARY 14, 2025)



IMPORTANT ATTENDEE INFORMATION

WELCOME TO THE 38TH ANNUAL RURAL HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE.

Please take a few minutes to review this conference guide, which contains the program agenda.

The full agenda can also be found on ruralconference.aha.org/agenda.



CONFERENCE INFORMATION

You can also access the agenda; information on our Faculty, Sponsors, and Exhibitors; as well as session materials via our Conference Mobile App. Session materials can also be found on the [Attendee Hub](#). Go to the session and select Resources to access available handouts.



Scan to access
the Attendee Hub

Questions on Mobile App?
Please stop by the Mobile App Help Desk.



WI-FI ACCESS

Complimentary Wi-Fi is available in the meeting space.

Network: **JW Marriott_Conference**

Password: **AHARLConnect**



WE VALUE YOUR OPINION

As always, we welcome your assessment of the program content and format and greatly appreciate the time you take to provide feedback. The evaluation can be found at:

ruralconference.aha.org/eval



NETWORKING WITH YOUR PEERS

Make sure to visit with our Sponsors in the Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom to learn more about the resources they have to offer. View Sponsor descriptions on the Mobile App to earn points for the Mobile App Game.

Plan to attend the Networking Reception on Monday, February 24, from 5:00 – 6:30 PM. The reception is the perfect way to end the first day of the conference — renew relationships, network with colleagues and visit with Sponsors.



QUESTIONS?

Please stop by the Conference Registration area.



The AHA Rural Health Care Leadership Conference provides Continuing Education from various providers.

American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE)

By attending the 2025 AHA Rural Health Care Leadership Conference offered by the American Hospital Association, participants may earn up to 15.25 ACHE Qualified Education Hours toward initial certification or recertification of the Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives (FACHE) designation.

AHA Certification Center

The Rural Health Care Leadership Conference qualifies for 15.25 AHA Certification Center continuing education credits (CECs) toward CHC, CHFM, CHESP, CMRP and CPHRM recertification.

HFMA CHFP and FHFMA Maintenance

The 2025 AHA Rural Health Care Leadership Conference sessions are eligible as continuing education credits toward the Healthcare Financial Management Association (HFMA) certification maintenance requirements for active CHFP and Fellows when self-reported. The program or session(s) are approved by HFMA for certification maintenance. For more information about HFMA certification maintenance and to report activities as a CHFP or Fellow of HFMA: www.hfma.org/maintain.

SOLVE CHALLENGES AND SHARE SOLUTIONS

Keep an eye out for these icons throughout #AHARuralHealth. We will use them to highlight educational programming and enhance Sponsor connections.

Our **educational programming** focuses on these critical focus areas:



Transforming Care Delivery and Payment



Patient Centricity Through Digital Transformation



Building a More Flexible and Sustainable Workforce



Financial and Operational Excellence



Igniting Innovation



Elevating Health Equity



Improving Behavioral Health



Governance Excellence

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 23

8:00 AM – 6:00 PM REGISTRATION

Ballroom Level

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM HOSTED BUYER FORUM – SESSION 1 | Invitation Only

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom A

12:30 PM – 3:30 PM PRE-CONFERENCE INTENSIVE | Fee \$599 per pair

Begonia/Bottlebrush



Board Chair and CEO Intensive: Strengthening Governance and Leadership Partnerships

Pamela Knecht, *President and Chief Executive Officer, ACCORD LIMITED*

Jamie Orlikoff, *President, Orlikoff & Associates, Inc., National Advisor on Governance and Leadership to the American Hospital Association, and health care governance expert*

Research shows high-performing boards drive organizational success. Effective governance relies on a strong board chair and a collaborative chair-CEO partnership. However, many hospital boards face challenges finding members willing to take on the demanding chair role, and current chairs seek guidance in navigating evolving responsibilities.

This intensive, interactive workshop is designed for board chairs and their CEOs. Led by two governance experts, it will offer practical strategies to enhance chair effectiveness and strengthen the chair-CEO partnership. Breakout sessions will provide real-time governance advice, with content tailored to participant needs based on a pre-session survey.

Note: This AHA members-only session is limited to board chairs and CEOs. Registration is \$599 per pair, and CEOs must register both attendees. Lunch provided.

1:30 PM – 3:30 PM PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS | Complimentary



Critical Response: Cybersecurity Tabletop Exercise for Rural Hospital Leaders

Grand Oaks C-G

John Riggi, *National Advisor for Cybersecurity and Risk, American Hospital Association*

Join John Riggi, national advisor for cybersecurity and risk at the American Hospital Association, for an interactive cybersecurity tabletop exercise designed to enhance decision-making and response for rural hospital leaders.

This exercise places participants in a challenging, real-world scenario to boost their cybersecurity awareness and preparedness. It is structured to engage technical and non-technical leaders to test incident response plans and identify critical gaps.

Participants will be guided through key decision points, drawing on lessons from incidents like the Change Health-care attack. Rural health care leaders will gain practical insights and actionable strategies to strengthen their cybersecurity defenses and protect their organizations and communities from future threats.



3:00 PM – 6:00 PM HOSTED BUYER FORUM – SESSION 2 | Invitation Only

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom A

3:30 PM – 4:00 PM REFRESHMENT BREAK

Ballroom Foyer

4:00 PM – 5:30 PM PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOPS | Complimentary



Co-Designing Innovative Solutions to Ensure Health for All

Grand Oaks ABI

Jackie Hunter, *Vice President, Health Equity Strategies, Institute for Diversity and Health Equity, American Hospital Association*

Julie Kim, *Senior Program Manager, Institute for Diversity and Health Equity, American Hospital Association*

Jessica Moschella, MPH, *Senior Vice President High Value Care, University of Vermont Health Network, Burlington, Vt.*

Beth Wythe, *Member, Board of Directors, South Peninsula Hospital, Homer, Alaska*

Join us for a hands-on workshop on co-designing innovative strategies to ensure equitable health care for all. Participants will collaboratively tackle challenges related to patient care access and workforce diversity in rural hospitals and health systems. Using the AHA's Health Equity Roadmap as a guiding framework, this design thinking session will develop actionable solutions for data collection, culturally responsive care and community collaboration to reduce disparities and improve health outcomes.

The session will also feature an interactive discussion exploring the experiences of hospital leaders striving for equitable outcomes. The discussion will highlight the benefits of engaging with AHA's Health Equity Roadmap, address systemic barriers to health equity and examine the impact of social determinants on health. Attendees can ask questions, share insights and discover practical strategies to promote health equity in their communities.



A Practical, Common-Sense Approach to Health Care Workforce Well-being

Grand Oaks C-G

Elisa Arespacochoaga, *Vice President, Clinical Affairs and Workforce, American Hospital Association*

Corey Feist, JD, *Chief Executive Officer and Co-founder, Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation*

Stefanie Simmons, MD, FACEP, *Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Lorna Breen Heroes' Foundation*



Challenging work conditions and job-related stress are key drivers of burnout and poor mental health for health care workers. This workshop will help hospital executives and trustees understand the primary drivers of burnout and explore practical, evidence-based solutions to improve workplace policies and practices. Participants will learn how the work environment influences burnout and affects hospital quality, safety and financial performance. The workshop will focus on reducing burnout through systemic improvements, beyond self-care and resilience, and offer strategies to strengthen well-being and trust between leaders, trustees and front-line teams.

6:00 PM – 7:00 PM AHA ASSOCIATE AND SPONSOR RECEPTION | Invitation Only

Event Lawn 1

7:00 AM – 5:30 PM REGISTRATION

Ballroom Level

7:00 AM – 8:30 AM BREAKFAST IN THE SPONSOR HALL

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom BC

8:30 AM – 10:00 AM PLENARY SESSION: CHARTING THE FUTURE OF RURAL HEALTH CARE

Grand Oaks Ballroom J-S

Conference Welcome

Rick Pollack, *President and Chief Executive Officer, American Hospital Association*

Empowering Rural Health Care: Addressing Challenges and Shaping the Future Landscape

Tina Freese Decker, MHA, MSIF, FACHE, *President and Chief Executive Officer, Corewell Health, Grand Rapids, Mich.; Chair, Board of Trustees, American Hospital Association*

Presentation of the AHA Rural Hospital Leadership Team Award

The award honors the leadership team who has guided their hospital and community through transformational change on the road to health care innovation. The team displayed outstanding leadership and responsiveness to the community's health needs and demonstrated a collaborative community process that has led to measurable outcomes.

Charting the Future of Health Care

R. Scott Dingle, *Retired United States Army Lieutenant General; 45th Surgeon General of the United States Army and former Commanding General, United States Army Medical Command*

As the former Army Surgeon General and Commanding General of U.S. Army Medical Command, R. Scott Dingle has led transformative changes in the Military Health System to prepare for future challenges. In this session, he will draw on his extensive leadership experience to address key challenges in the broader health care system, including workforce shortages, rising costs and access to care. He will also explore how emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and telemedicine can shape the future of health care, highlighting the critical role of collaboration across sectors to improve patient outcomes and revolutionize care delivery.

10:00 AM – 10:15 AM REFRESHMENT BREAK

Ballroom Foyer

10:15 AM – 11:15 AM CONCURRENT SESSIONS



7 Minutes to Innovation: Strengthening the Rural Health Care Workforce

Cibolo Canyon 6-7

MODERATOR: Elisa Arespachochaga, *Vice President, Clinical Affairs and Workforce, American Hospital Association*

PRESENTERS:

Jeff Comer, MD, *Chief Executive Officer, Summit Health System, Show Low, Ariz.*

Derek Greenwald, RN, BSN, *Chief Nursing Officer, Syracuse Area Health, Syracuse, Neb.*

Brian D. Burnside, *Chief Operating Officer, Carlinville Area Hospital, Carlinville, Ill.*

In this fast-paced session, rural hospital leaders will present innovative strategies to tackle workforce challenges — in just seven minutes or less. Each speaker will share transformative approaches that have reshaped their organizations, covering everything from recruitment and retention to workforce development initiatives. Discover how these leaders have overcome rural workforce hurdles and found new ways to empower their teams. The session offers quick, impactful case studies with practical insights to help you strengthen staffing and ensure workforce sustainability in your rural health care setting.



Preserving Obstetric Care in Rural Communities

Grand Oaks CDH

Colleen Durocher, *ROAMS Executive Director, Holy Cross Medical Center, Taos, N.M.*

Tammy Hayes, RN, MS, CENP, LNHA, *Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Northfield Hospital + Clinics, Northfield, Minn.*

Kimberlee McKay, MD, *Medical Officer and Director of Medical Research, Avera Research Institute, Avera Health, Sioux Falls, S.D.*

Eilidh Pederson, MPH, FACHE, *Chief Executive Officer, Western Wisconsin Health, Baldwin, Wis.*

Rural communities across the country are facing challenges in accessing adequate and timely maternal care. Those communities and health care providers are navigating labor and delivery unit closures and growing shortages of OBGYNs, resources and spaces for safe deliveries. Hospitals are using innovative resources and skills to fill the gaps in rural maternal care. Hear how rural hospitals are investing in increasing access to maternal care in rural communities through telehealth, workforce development and education, and training on timely screening, referral and intervention.



Rural Pathways to Value-Based Care: Leveraging Alternative Payment Models and Clinically Integrated Networks

Grand Oaks EFG

Paul Aslin, *CIN Executive Director, Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals*

Reyann Davis, *Director, Value-Based Care, Texas A&M Rural and Community Health Institute*

Melissa Matlock, *CIN Population Health and Quality Analyst, Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals*

Kia Parsi, MD, *Executive Director, Texas A&M Rural and Community Health Institute*

Alternative payment models (APMs) that incentivize quality care and improved outcomes while lowering costs are evolving across Medicare, Medicaid and commercial payers, yet rural hospitals face barriers such as low patient volumes, limited financial resources and data analysis challenges. This session explores APMs tailored for rural health care, highlighting the growth of Clinically Integrated Networks (CINs) like the Texas Organization of Rural & Community Hospitals CIN, which now includes 32 hospitals, including Critical Access Hospitals and rural health clinics. Insights from the Texas Rural and Community Health Institute will focus on overcoming participation barriers, APM adoption best practices and the role of CINs in transitioning rural providers to value-based care models. Attendees will gain practical, actionable strategies to advance value-based care in rural communities, ensuring high-quality care and the sustainability of rural health care systems.



Strengthening Rural Health Through Board and Philanthropic Alignment

Grand Oaks ABI

Mark Gordon, FACHE, *Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, University of Vermont Health Network, Burlington, Vt.*

Cindy Reynolds, CFRE, *Principal Consultant, Accordant*

This session explores how rural hospitals can thrive when hospital, community and foundation boards align toward shared goals. Through real-world examples from a critical access hospital and a larger rural hospital, participants will learn how addressing governance challenges — such as fiduciary duties, trust-building and board member selection — can foster stronger collaboration and community investment in health care.

Attendees will gain practical insights into improving board alignment, navigating governance issues and developing strategies to engage community leaders in supporting the future of rural hospitals. The session also highlights the financial benefits of health care philanthropy and its role in advancing key hospital initiatives.



Transformative Partnerships: Community-Invested Solutions to the Substance Use Disorder Crisis

Cibolo Canyon 8-11

Lesley Ogden, MD, *Chief Executive Officer, Samaritan North Lincoln & Pacific Communities Hospitals, Newport, Ore.*

Anthony J. Frank, MD, FACEP, FAAPL, *Senior Vice President of Medical Affairs and Chief Medical Officer, UNC Health Blue Ridge, Morganton, N.C.*

Hear how two rural health systems have tackled the substance use disorder crisis by developing unique, community-driven solutions. In North Carolina, UNC Health Blue Ridge collaborated with Burke Public Health to create the Overdose Fatality Review Public Health & Safety Team (OFR/PHAST), which analyzes overdose trends to improve care and outcomes. In Oregon, Samaritan Health Services led a collaborative effort to build a residential treatment facility to address the region's urgent need for substance use disorder treatment.

Both organizations worked with local partners, including health districts, nonprofits and government entities, to reduce stigma, increase access to care and engage communities in developing solutions. This session will highlight how these partnerships came together to address critical health challenges, offering strategies that can be applied in other rural communities to combat the substance use disorder crisis. Attendees will leave with practical insights into uniting diverse stakeholders and building sustainable health solutions.

11:15 AM – 11:30 AM REFRESHMENT BREAK

Ballroom Foyer

11:30 AM – 12:30 PM CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Fast Track Onboarding for Maximum Board Engagement

Grand Oaks ABI

Laura Orr, *Chief Executive Officer, Forward Governance Consulting*

Onboarding new hospital board members can be a lengthy process, but today's health care environment demands that members be prepared to contribute effectively in a much shorter timeframe. Boards must be knowledgeable, agile and fully engaged to keep pace with the rapidly changing landscape, and delays in onboarding can impede critical decision-making and strategic initiatives. To address this, organizations need efficient onboarding strategies that accelerate board member readiness and engagement during their first year of service.

In this session, you'll learn how to build a compelling case for the return on investment of an in-depth, fast-track onboarding program in year one. Participants will evaluate their current approach, identify areas for improvement and explore the essential elements of an accelerated, high-impact onboarding process. By the end, you'll have an actionable plan to enhance your organization's onboarding, shorten the learning curve and increase board member engagement.



Thriving Independently: Strategic Pathways for Rural Hospitals

Grand Oaks CDH

Patrick Ganyo, *Vice President of Rural Services, Bryan Health, Lincoln, Neb.*

Dan Hiser, JD, *Chief Legal Officer, Bryan Health, Lincoln, Neb.*

Hal Katz, *Partner, Husch Blackwell*

Treg Vyzourek, *Chief Executive Officer, Brodstone Healthcare, Superior, Neb.*

Rural hospitals are facing many challenges, including encroachment by larger urban and suburban hospitals, declining reimbursement rates, increased operational costs, provider and labor shortages, and shifts in the care delivery model, all of which are impacting a hospital's ability to maintain its independence. There are options available other than selling to a larger hospital system. This session will explore diverse strategies and models that are proving successful across the country for maintaining independence and local control — including joint ventures, collaborations, diversification of services and innovative care models like “hospitals at home.”



Better Together: Rural Based Clinically Integrated Networks

Cibolo Canyon 6-7

Ben Bucher, *Chief Executive Officer, Towner Country Medical Center, Cando, N.D.; Chair, Board of Directors, Rough Rider High Value Network*

Clint MacKinney, MD, MS, *Chief Medical Officer, Cibolo Health*

Ken Westman, *Chief Executive Officer, Riverwood Healthcare Center, Aitkin, Minn.; Chair, Board of Directors, Headwaters High Value Network*

Nate White, JD, *Chief Executive Officer, Cibolo Health; Chief Strategy Advisor, Rough Rider High Value Network, Headwaters High Value Network*

In a time when independent rural hospitals and clinics are facing increased financial and operational challenges, many rural providers are seeking health care models that preserve their independence while continuing to invest in the delivery of high-quality care in the changing environment. Explore how in North Dakota and Minnesota, rural, independent hospitals and their clinics are joining High Value Networks — clinically integrated networks with shared services — to transform their organizations' future viability and pave a way to reaching the Quadruple Aim and achieving value-based care.



Engaging Tribes and Tribal Perspectives in Health Workforce Training

Grand Oaks EFG

Rick Bunio, MD, *Executive Clinical Director, Cherokee Indian Hospital, Cherokee, N.C.*

Bryan Hodge, *Chair, Department of Community and Public Health, Mountain Area Health Education Center*

Lori Rodefield, *Director of GME Development, Wisconsin Collaborative for Rural Graduate Medical Education*

Matthew Tobey, MD, MPH, *Director, Rural Medicine Program, Massachusetts General Hospital, Boston*

American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations primarily live in rural communities and face disproportionate health disparities and underrepresentation within the health care system. This is compounded by a lack of providers with AI/AN heritage or with sufficient knowledge of AI/AN cultures to provide culturally competent care. Nationally, only 1 percent of medical school students are American Indian or Alaska Native and there are relatively few tribal graduate medical education (GME) programs. Growing medical residency training in partnership with tribal communities is a critical and impactful approach to support an equitable distribution of both primary care and prevention services. Learn how one such partnership has developed a GME program in North Carolina, including experiences in finding program funding.



Advancing Sustainability in Rural Health Care

Cibolo Canyon 8-11

Kara Brooks, *Senior Associate Director of Sustainability, American Hospital Association*

Terri Scannell, *Principal Advisor of Sustainability and ESG, OhioHealth, Columbus, Ohio*

Rachelle Wagner, *System Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy Engagement, CommonSpirit, Los Angeles*

Join this session to learn how rural hospitals can implement sustainable practices to address environmental, social and financial challenges. Hear how to navigate operational and fiscal risks posed by environmental and climate impacts on health care. Discover strategic opportunities, incentives and cost-saving measures for advancing sustainability, whether part of a health system or an independent hospital. Learn from case studies about enhancing emergency operations planning, reducing greenhouse gas emissions in clinical settings and leveraging community health programs to build partnerships and mobilize resources. Participants will leave with actionable strategies to align sustainability practices with operational goals and community health priorities, fostering a resilient future for rural health care.

12:30 PM – 1:45 PM AHAPAC LUNCHEON | Invitation Only

Begonia/Bottlebrush

Bridging Divides: The Role of Rural America in National Politics

Jonathan Martin, *Politics Bureau Chief and Senior Political Columnist, POLITICO*

AHAPAC will host an insightful discussion with one of America’s most respected political journalists as he explores the future of American politics and its impact on rural communities. Politico’s Jonathan Martin will shed light on the pivotal role of rural voters in shaping the country’s political landscape.

By invitation only. Please contact the AHA’s Shari Dexter for more information at sdexter@aha.org.

12:30 PM – 1:45 PM NETWORKING LUNCH IN THE SPONSOR HALL

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom BC

1:45 PM – 3:00 PM PLENARY SESSION: LEADING RURAL HOSPITALS INTO THE FUTURE

Grand Oaks Ballroom J-S

Introductory comments by Joanne M. Conroy, MD, *Chief Executive Officer and President, Dartmouth Health, Lebanon, N.H.; Immediate Past Chair, Board of Trustees, American Hospital Association*

What’s the Big Idea? Leading Rural Hospitals into the Future

Jamie Orlikoff, *President, Orlikoff & Associates, Inc., National Advisor on Governance and Leadership to the American Hospital Association, and health care governance expert*

There seem to be few big ideas in health care post-ACA and post-value-based care. So, there is not much for rural leaders to lean into or away from, no clear ground rules to provide a sense of long-term direction. In the absence of a “big idea paradigm,” we can focus on the moment we are in and the immediate challenges we face, or we can create and lead toward our own “big ideas.” This presentation will reflect on the current climate of rural health care in America, how we got here, and where the future currents, or innovative rural leaders, may take us.

3:00 PM – 3:30 PM REFRESHMENT BREAK IN THE SPONSOR HALL

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom BC

3:30 PM – 4:30 PM CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Caring for Kids in Rural Communities

Grand Oaks ABI

MODERATOR: Julia Resnick, *Director, Strategic Initiatives, American Hospital Association*

PANELISTS:

Cris Daskevich, *Chief Executive Officer, CHRISTUS Children’s Hospital, San Antonio, Texas*

Andrea Paulson, MD, *Medical Director for Greater Minnesota, Gillette Children’s Specialty Healthcare, Saint Paul, Minn.*

Raphe Schwartz, *Senior Vice President and Chief Strategy Officer, Children’s Hospital Colorado, Aurora, Colo.*

While pediatric hospitals are often located in urban areas, they also serve children from rural communities, particularly those with complex medical needs. To better support these children and their families, pediatric hospitals are innovating within their facilities and beyond. This session will highlight how these hospitals are reducing the travel burden for patients, using digital tools and leveraging local rural health care workers to help children thrive, regardless of their location. Attendees will explore challenges in accessing specialty care, innovative strategies to extend pediatric care to rural youth, and opportunities for partnerships between rural health care organizations and pediatric hospitals to improve care for kids.



Extending Virtual Specialty Clinical Services to Improve Lives in Rural Settings

Grand Oaks CDH

James Heilman, MD, FACEP, *Vice President of Strategic Outreach, Oregon Health and Science University*
 Christopher Strear, MD, *Chief Medical Officer, Columbia Memorial Hospital, Astoria, Ore.*

Learn how rural hospitals utilize digital health innovations to expand access to specialty care, reduce travel burdens and improve patient outcomes. By exploring a variety of virtual services, including intensive care units, remote consults and telemedicine solutions, participants will learn how these tools are transforming care delivery in rural settings. The session will highlight real-world collaborations between rural hospitals and larger medical centers, offering insights into the implementation process, operational challenges and outcomes.

Attendees will better understand how to adopt and integrate digital specialty services in their communities. Key takeaways will include practical strategies for overcoming common barriers and lessons learned from established programs to guide future initiatives. Participants will also have the opportunity to explore innovative approaches for improving access to specialized care in rural areas and discuss how these models can be tailored to meet local needs.



Achieving Financial Stability and Care Improvement Through Global Budget Models in Rural Health

Grand Oaks EFG

John Bulger, *Chief Medical Officer, Geisinger Health Plan, Danville, Pa.*
 Janice Walters, *Executive Director and Principal Consultant, Rural Health Redesign*



This session offers a comprehensive overview of global budget payment models and their impact on payers, providers and rural communities. Attendees will learn how these models operate and how they can inform decision-making when designing and implementing alternative payment strategies. The session will feature real-world insights from leaders who have successfully adopted these models, highlighting key lessons from the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Innovation demonstration and exploring strategies to ensure long-term sustainability for rural health systems. As alternative payment models continue to drive rural health reform, this session provides essential guidance for advancing similar approaches.



Federal Grassroots Advocacy Through a Collective Voice

Cibolo Canyon 6-7

Joanne M. Conroy, MD, *Chief Executive Officer and President, Dartmouth Health, Lebanon, N.H.; Immediate Past Chair, Board of Trustees, American Hospital Association*
 Sunil "Sunny" Eappen, MD, *President and Chief Executive Officer, University of Vermont Health Network, Burlington, Vt.*
 Andrew T. Mueller, MD, *Chief Executive Officer, MaineHealth, Portland, Maine*

Hear from hospital leaders who have united to advocate for improved access to care delivery in their communities. Through a coordinated grassroots advocacy and communications strategy, they raise awareness among the public, key stakeholders and legislators about the unique challenges rural academic health systems face, including workforce shortages, housing, childcare, payer and regulatory pressures and rising costs. Participants will explore how this collaborative effort has successfully influenced policymakers, learn about ongoing and future advocacy strategies and gain insights on how to engage lawmakers in addressing specific challenges their unique hospitals face. Additionally, participants will learn how to foster regional grassroots partnerships to amplify their collective voice in advancing shared advocacy goals.



Cybersecurity and Compliance on a Rural Health Care Budget

Cibolo Canyon 8-11

Scott Cookman, *Information Technology Manager, Syringa Hospital and Clinics, Grangeville, Idaho*
 Michael Hamilton, *Field Chief Information Security Officer, Lumifi Cyber*
 John Riggi, *National Advisor for Cybersecurity and Risk, American Hospital Association*

Join this session to learn how rural hospitals can strengthen their cybersecurity capabilities using free and low-cost resources tailored to the unique challenges of rural health care organizations. The discussion will highlight practical tools, including open-source solutions, DHS risk assessments, nonprofit monitoring services and products from national laboratories. Attendees will gain insights into leveraging university partnerships, adjusting organizational policies to reduce risk and accessing grant funding to support cybersecurity initiatives.

The session will explore strategies for meeting the Cybersecurity Performance Goals and aligning with the NIST Cybersecurity Framework. A case study from a rural Idaho hospital will provide real-world examples of these solutions in action. Attendees will leave with actionable guidance to reduce risks, achieve compliance, and mitigate the impact of cyber incidents, equipping their organizations to navigate today's complex digital landscape.

SPONSORED BY:  **lumifi**

5:00 PM – 6:30 PM NETWORKING RECEPTION IN THE SPONSOR HALL

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom BC

Join us in the Sponsor Hall to connect, collaborate and engage with your peers over refreshments and hors d'oeuvres. The networking reception provides a unique opportunity to forge new connections and strengthen existing ones. Whether you're looking to share insights, seek advice or explore potential partnerships, the Sponsor Hall is the place to be. Connect with our Sponsors who share your passion for advancing rural health care and exchange ideas that can drive positive change in your community.

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

7:00 AM – 3:00 PM REGISTRATION

Ballroom Level

7:00 AM – 8:00 AM BREAKFAST IN THE SPONSOR HALL

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom BC

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Designing Population Health in a Critical Access Hospital

Grand Oaks ABI

Holly Davis, BSN, RN, *Chief Nursing Officer, Bingham Memorial Hospital, Blackfoot, Idaho*

Bingham Memorial Hospital, a part of Bingham Healthcare, is a state-of-the-art, non-profit critical access hospital located in Blackfoot, Idaho, and helps support a 150-mile service area of in-network clinic locations. To improve patient outcomes in Bingham's rural setting, a population health program focusing on advanced nurse care models emerged in 2018, spearheaded by Holly Davis, Bingham Memorial Hospital's CNO. Since its inception, Bingham's population health team has expanded to five RNs, a data analyst and several care coordinators. Learn how Bingham built a successful rural population health program that helped strengthen its quality care measures and financial sustainability.



Interactive Governance Clinic

Grand Oaks CDH

Jamie Orlikoff, *President, Orlikoff & Associates, Inc., National Advisor on Governance and Leadership to the American Hospital Association, and health care governance expert*

Bring your thorniest governance issues to one of the nation's preeminent health care governance experts in this perennial favorite interactive session. You'll gain practical solutions and proactive ideas for improving governance performance. This session will be very interactive and no issue is off the table, so come prepared to talk, to question and be challenged!



Navigating the Headwinds in Health Equity

Grand Oaks EFG

Keri Conley, *Chief Health Policy Officer, Georgia Hospital Association*

Jackie Hunter, *Vice President, Health Equity Strategies, Institute for Diversity and Health Equity, American Hospital Association*

Marcos Pesquera, *System Vice President Community Health, Chief Diversity Officer, CHRISTUS Health, Irving, Texas*
 Natasha Smith, *Head of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Sanford Health, Sioux Falls, S.D.*

Rural hospitals and health systems face significant challenges in advancing health equity and DEI initiatives, particularly as anti-DEI movements gain traction in many states, leading to the rollback of previous progress. This session will explore the obstacles to promoting equity, such as systemic biases, resource constraints and shifting political dynamics, and highlight the strategies rural hospital and health system leaders use to navigate these headwinds. Attendees will gain insights into innovative approaches, including policy development, community engagement and leveraging data to drive impactful change in their organizations.



Strategies for Transforming the Rural Long-Term Care Ecosystem

Cibolo Canyon 6-7

Jessica Moschella, MPH, *Senior Vice President High Value Care, University of Vermont Health Network, Burlington, Vt.*

Christine Werneke, *President and Chief Operating Officer, University of Vermont Health Network – Home Health & Hospice, Burlington, Vt.*

Rural areas face significant challenges in providing long-term care for aging populations, including shortages of nursing home beds, workforce gaps and limited caregiver support. These issues lead to hospital overcrowding and strain health care resources. This session explores a comprehensive strategy to tackle these challenges, focusing on home-based care innovations, value-based payment models and integrated care systems. Additionally, it will cover aligning post-acute care strategies with payment systems, building population-based post-acute models to complete the care continuum, and applying a framework for identifying and engaging key stakeholders in the process.

9:00 AM – 9:15 AM **REFRESHMENT BREAK**

Ballroom Foyer

9:15 AM – 10:30 AM **PLENARY SESSION:
TRANSFORMING RURAL HEALTH: STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE**

Grand Oaks Ballroom J-S

Introductory comments by Marc L. Boom, MD, *President and Chief Executive Officer, Houston Methodist, Houston; Chair-Elect Designate, Board of Trustees, American Hospital Association*

Transforming Rural Health Care: Strategies for the Future

MODERATOR: M. Michelle Hood, FACHE, *Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, American Hospital Association*

PANELISTS:

Loretta Christensen, MD, *Chief Medical Officer, Indian Health Service*

Chris Hasse, *Chief Administrative Officer, Mayo Clinic Health System, Rochester, Minn.*

Julie K. Yaroch, DO, *President, ProMedica Charles and Virginia Hickman Hospital, Adrian, Mich.*

Hear from leaders in rural health care as they discuss strategies to address the most pressing challenges impacting the health of rural populations and communities. Panelists will share innovative approaches to improving access, addressing workforce challenges and enhancing equitable care delivery through innovative models. Attendees will gain practical solutions they can apply to meet the unique needs of rural communities and drive long-term success in delivering quality health care.

Strengthening Rural Health: Insights from the CDC

MODERATOR: Susan Doherty, *Vice President of Field Engagement, American Hospital Association*

PANELIST: Amy Kolwaite, PhD, ARNP, MPH, *Captain, US Public Health Service; Chief of Health Systems Strengthening, Resilience and Training Branch, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

Hear about the CDC's new Healthcare Systems Strengthening, Resilience and Training Branch and its mission to address the unique challenges faced by rural health. Learn about the Branch's priorities, innovative strategies, and partnerships to improve health equity, access to care and resilience in rural communities. Attendees will gain valuable insights into how this initiative is poised to transform rural health services and how health care leaders can collaborate to drive meaningful change.

10:30 AM – 10:45 AM **REFRESHMENT BREAK**

Ballroom Foyer

10:45 AM – 11:45 AM **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**



Addressing Gaps in Rural Maternity Care: Learning from a Collaborative Model

Grand Oaks ABI

Natalia Hall, *Associate Vice President for Women's Health and Palliative Care, Northern Light Health, Brewer, Maine*
Dora Anne Mills, MD, MPH, *Chief Health Improvement Officer, MaineHealth, Portland, Maine*

This session provides practical insights from a successful rural maternity care network addressing significant maternity service gaps across underserved areas. Participants will learn how to develop and implement effective frameworks to address rural maternity care challenges using collaborative models that bring together hospitals, state agencies and community leaders. The session will explore strategies for leveraging telehealth and remote services to improve access to perinatal and maternity care, highlighting the importance of building trust and fostering partnerships across diverse organizations. Additionally, participants will understand how these approaches can be adapted to address broader rural health challenges, including workforce development and service delivery. The focus is on equipping attendees with actionable strategies that can be customized for various rural health contexts.



Defending the Front Lines: Protecting Patient Care from Ransomware Attacks

Cibolo Canyon 6-7

Eric D. Fish, MD, FACOG, *President and Chief Executive Officer, Schneck Medical Center, Seymour, Ind.*

John Riggi, *National Advisor for Cybersecurity and Risk, American Hospital Association*

Join the AHA's John Riggi, national advisor for cybersecurity and risk, for a panel discussion with hospital leaders as they discuss how their organizations responded when cybercriminals attacked and breached the defenses of their well-prepared hospitals. You will hear firsthand how the high-impact ransomware attacks against their organizations disrupted care delivery operations, ultimately increasing risk for patients and the communities they serve. This session will illuminate the distinct challenges faced by health care organizations in rural settings, offering a pragmatic examination of strategies to identify, counteract and respond to cyberthreats.



Enhancing Board, CEO and Medical Staff Collaboration

Grand Oaks EFG

Benjamin Anderson, *President and Chief Executive Officer, Hutchinson Regional Health System, Hutchinson, Kan.*

Michael Hagley, MD, *Member, Board of Directors, Hutchinson Regional Health System, Hutchinson, Kan.*

Todd Linden, FACHE, *President, Linden Consulting*

Strong, collaborative relationships between the board, CEO and medical staff are essential for sustainable success in today's complex rural health care environment. This session will highlight the importance of building and nurturing effective connections with providers while maintaining the hospital's administrative structure. Drawing from the extensive experience of a hospital CEO, a physician board member and a governance expert, participants will explore best practices and real-world examples of successful relationship strategies. With practical takeaways and interactive discussions, attendees will leave equipped with actionable plans to enhance governance, align goals and drive organizational performance in rural health care settings.



Navigating the Impact of a Growing Medicare Advantage Program on Rural Hospitals

Grand Oaks CDH

MaryEllen Pratt, *Chief Executive Officer, St. James Parish Hospital, Litcher, La.*

Carl Vaagenes, *Chief Executive Officer, Alomere Health, Alexandria, Minn.*

Aaron Wesolowski, *Vice President of Research Strategy and Policy Communications, American Hospital Association*

The rapid expansion of the Medicare Advantage (MA) program has serious impacts on many rural hospitals. This session will explore the unique pressures that practices employed by some MA plans place on rural hospitals, including below-cost reimbursements, administrative burdens and access to timely, quality care for patients. Attendees will gain insights into the findings of a newly released AHA study, learn about the implications for rural health care delivery, and explore policy recommendations aimed at ensuring fair reimbursement and reducing the administrative strain on these vital institutions.



Navigating the Storm: Critical Lessons Learned in the Wake of Hurricanes Helene and Milton

Cibolo Canyon 8-11

Keri Conley, *General Counsel and Senior Vice President Healthcare Policy, Georgia Hospital Association*

Damien Scott, PT, FACHE, *Chief Executive Officer, Emanuel Medical Center, Swainsboro, Ga.*

This session will provide valuable insights into the lessons learned from Hurricanes Helene and Milton, featuring health care leaders with firsthand experience in responding to these recent environmental emergencies. Through their stories, participants will gain a deeper understanding of how health care leaders at the state and local levels navigated the complexities of these incidents. The session will highlight how these leaders faced significant challenges, developed strategies for resilience and managed critical decision-making during crisis situations. Participants will leave this session better equipped to apply these lessons in their own response efforts, enhancing their ability to lead and support health care systems during environmental emergencies.

11:45 AM – 1:00 PM NETWORKING LUNCH IN THE SPONSOR HALL WITH CONVERSATION STARTER TABLES

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom BC



Join a Conversation Starter table for meaningful discussions with other conference attendees. Each table will feature a designated host to guide conversations on critical rural health topics, such as mental health support in rural settings, leadership strategies for rural hospitals and leveraging technology in resource-limited areas. Grab your lunch, choose a table with a topic that interests you, and join the conversation to exchange ideas, share experiences and gain practical insights from fellow attendees dedicated to rural health care. This is a great opportunity to connect and collaborate with others addressing similar challenges in rural communities.

<p>AHA's Health Equity Roadmap: Intersection of Health Equity, Quality and Patient Safety in Rural Settings</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>	<p>Enhancing Rural Medical Surge Readiness</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>	<p>Boardroom to Bedside: Cultivating the Next Generation of Patient Safety and Quality Leaders</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>
<p>Hiring Veterans to Alleviate Workforce Challenges</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>	<p>IFDHE Resources for Rural Hospitals and Health Systems</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>	<p>Improving Access, Coverage & Affordability</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Association of Nurse Anesthetists</p>
<p>Leading the Fight Against Sepsis</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>	<p>Reviewing Rural Infection Prevention & Control Needs with CDC</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</p>	<p>Self-Assessment Tool for Public Trust and Accountability</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>
<p>Workplace and Workforce Violence Prevention</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>	<p>Enhancing Rural Medical Surge Readiness</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>	<p>Mobilizing Local Partnerships for Sustainability and Resilience</p> <p>HOSTED BY:  American Hospital Association™ Advancing Health in America</p>

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM PLENARY SESSION: WASHINGTON UPDATE

Grand Oaks Ballroom J-S

MODERATOR: Rick Pollack, *President and Chief Executive Officer, American Hospital Association*

PANELISTS:

Travis Robey, *Vice President, Political Affairs, American Hospital Association*

Shannon Wu, PhD, *Director, Payment Policy, American Hospital Association*

Join American Hospital Association leaders for a discussion on the latest from Capitol Hill. Learn what policies Congress is considering and what it means for rural community hospitals.

2:00 PM – 2:30 PM REFRESHMENT BREAK IN THE SPONSOR HALL

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom BC

2:30 PM – 3:30 PM CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Supporting Independent Rural Hospitals Through Networks That Enhance Scale and Strength

Grand Oaks ABI

Ben Bucher, *Chief Executive Officer, Towner County Medical Center, Cando, N.D.*; *Chair, Board of Directors, Rough Rider High Value Network*

Todd Linden, *FACHE, President, Linden Consulting*

MaryEllen Pratt, *Chief Executive Officer, St. James Parish Hospital, Litcher, La.*

Tom Morris, *Associate Administrator, Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, HRSA, HHS*

As consolidation pressures grow, many rural hospitals remain committed to their independence. This session will explore how network models can allow these hospitals to collaborate while maintaining local control. Attendees will learn how networks can enhance quality, reduce costs and improve insurance contracting, offering a viable path forward for independent rural hospitals to stay competitive.

The session will feature insights from two successful rural hospital networks, covering key topics like governance, legal considerations in joint insurance negotiations and participation in value-based care. It will also address the challenges of forming these networks and explore ways to rethink the Federal Rural Health Network Development program to better support independent hospitals. Participants will leave with actionable strategies and a clearer understanding of how networks can help sustain independence while improving operations and financial viability.



High-Reliability Principles in Behavioral Health: Lessons for Leaders and Trustees

Grand Oaks CDH

Kelly Barton, MPH, FACHE, *President, Behavioral Health, MaineHealth, Portland, Maine*

Karen Simone, PharmD, DABAT, FAACT, *Director, Northern New England Poison Center; Board Chair, Behavioral Health, MaineHealth, Portland, Maine*



As more and more people seek support at our nation's hospitals and health systems for behavioral health concerns, the need for safe, high-quality behavioral health care services has never been greater. We may not always think of behavioral health units, outpatient clinics or hospitals as the epicenter for patient harm events, but providers and administrators in these care settings are regularly faced with unique challenges in maintaining patient and care team safety that are not as common in other parts of the hospital.

This session will explore how high-reliability organization principles can transform behavioral health care. Whether your hospital is part of a larger system, an independent community hospital or a critical access hospital, you'll gain practical strategies to enhance safety and quality in your services and actionable steps to engage leadership and trustees in advancing high-reliability practices.



How to Impact Public Policy: Becoming an Effective Advocate for Hospitals and Health Systems

Grand Oaks EFG

Chad Austin, *President and Chief Executive Officer, Kansas Hospital Association*

Aimee Kuhlman, *Vice President, Advocacy and Grassroots, American Hospital Association*

Kristin Schwartz, *Senior Associate Director, Federal Relations, American Hospital Association*

Adam Willmann, *Chief Executive Officer, Goodall Witcher Hospital, Clifton, Texas*

The American Hospital Association influences the public policy environment for patients, communities and the health care field — and vocal advocates are important in moving these policy issues forward. Elected officials look to constituents in their district or state as they shape policy or make key decisions. This session will prepare advocates for impactful interactions with lawmakers. Attendees will gain knowledge and tools to make a difference by telling a compelling story, using facts and emotion to educate others and forging local connections with elected officials.



Navigating Rural Health Cybersecurity

Cibolo Canyon 6-7

Laura Kreofsky, *Director of Rural Health, Microsoft Philanthropies*, **Microsoft**

John Riggi, *National Advisor for Cybersecurity and Risk*, **American Hospital Association**

With health care ransomware attacks rising over 130% in one year and an average of 2,000 attacks annually, cyber awareness, defense and resilience are more critical than ever. Effective preparation and response demand leadership and action across all levels of an organization, from the board to senior executives.

This session highlights key threat vectors and vulnerabilities identified in cybersecurity assessments of nearly 300 rural hospitals. Participants will gain insights from the Health Sector Coordinating Council's Joint Cybersecurity Working Group and the 405(d) and Underserved Provider task groups. The session also explores a "Day in the Life" of a rural hospital CIO, showcasing operational and strategic challenges. Attendees will gain practical strategies, proven best practices and guidance on strengthening cyber resilience through collaboration, partnerships and available funding opportunities.

SPONSORED BY:  **Microsoft**

3:45 PM – 4:45 PM **OPTIONAL SESSION** | Advance Registration is Required



Infection Prevention Escape Room: Challenge Your Skills to Reduce the Spread

Begonia/Bottlebrush

FACILITATORS:

Marie Cleary-Fishman, *Vice President, Clinical Quality*, **American Hospital Association**

Kristin Preihs, *Senior Director of Clinical Quality & Funded Partnerships*, **American Hospital Association**

Step into the infection prevention-themed escape room, where fun meets education in an immersive, hands-on challenge to sharpen your infection prevention skills. You'll work as a team to solve engaging puzzles while exploring key strategies to reduce exposure and improve patient safety. Guided by the AHA's Patient Safety Initiative, you'll uncover the vital role each health care worker plays in maintaining safety, practice effective teamwork and communication, and enhance staff engagement through evidence-based strategies. Leave with new tools, insights and a renewed passion for infection prevention.

Registration is limited to ensure a small, workshop environment that fosters collaboration and hands-on learning.

LEISURE TIME – ON YOUR OWN

The JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country Resort and Spa offers various activities and amenities for a delightful afternoon and evening. Whether your idea of a perfect afternoon involves unwinding by the pool, enjoying a round of golf, treating yourself to a spa day, savoring delectable cuisine or exploring the San Antonio Riverwalk, the resort offers many choices for enjoying your free time.

4:00 PM – 8:30 PM **OPTIONAL ACTIVITY** | Advance Registration is Required

San Antonio Riverwalk Excursion | \$30

Stroll, shop and dine along the winding path of the San Antonio River Walk for a uniquely Texas experience. Experience vintage and historical sites and learn their history while discovering new attractions, authentic boutiques and exceptional restaurants. A shuttle bus will provide transportation to and from the JW Marriott.

SCHEDULE:

- 4:00 PM: Shuttle departs from the JW Marriott
- 4:30 PM: Arrive at the San Antonio Riverwalk
- 8:00 PM: Shuttle departs from the San Antonio Riverwalk
- 8:30 PM: Arrive back at the JW Marriott

7:00 AM – 10:00 AM **REGISTRATION**

Ballroom Level

7:00 AM – 8:00 AM **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**

Nelson Wolff Exhibit Ballroom BC

8:00 AM – 9:00 AM **CONCURRENT SESSIONS**



Expanding Rural Workforce Through GME Partnerships

Grand Oaks ABI

Keri Bergeson, MD, *Director of Rural Programs, University of Minnesota Department of Family Medicine and Community Health*

Lori Rodefeld, *Director of GME Development, Wisconsin Collaborative for Rural Graduate Medical Education*

Jason Steele, *Public Health Analyst, HRSA's Federal Office of Rural Health Policy*

Richard Wehseler, MD, *Program Director, Willmar Rural Residency Program, CentraCare Health, Willmar, Minn.; Board Member, CentraCare Health, New London, Minn.*

This panel discussion will explore the development of rural graduate medical education (GME) programs, with panelists offering insights on establishing residency programs in rural areas, covering successful models, challenges and strategies for overcoming barriers. They will also highlight the benefits GME training brings to rural hospitals and health systems, along with funding opportunities and resources for those looking to develop GME programs.

Participants will learn about rural residency programs, including Rural Track Programs (RTPs), and the value these initiatives offer to rural health care. Join the session to discover key funding opportunities and resources that support GME development. Attendees will leave with actionable insights and tools to explore GME options for their rural hospitals and health systems.



Together We Can: Addressing Health Inequities in Neighborhoods

Grand Oaks CDH

Mary Mannix, FACHE, *President and Chief Executive Officer, Augusta Health, Fishersville, Va.*

Clint Merritt, MD, *Chief Physician Executive, Chief Medical Officer and Senior Vice President, Augusta Health, Fishersville, Va.*

Krystal Moyers, CHES, *Administrative Director, Community Outreach and Partnerships, Augusta Health, Fishersville, Va.*

Located in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, Augusta Health has a vision to “be a national model for a community-based health system.” To respond to acute deficits in access to health care in its community, Augusta launched a “Neighborhood Clinic” program to establish rotating regular primary care clinics in areas where they’re most needed, with the goal of improving access to primary care, reducing unnecessary emergency room utilization and improving health outcomes. Learn about the program’s success and its subsequent expansion into 17 different sites, including community centers, churches, a firehouse, a mayor’s office and homeless shelters.



From Conflict to Collaboration: A Governance Transformation Story

Grand Oaks EFG

Karma Bass, MPH, FACHE, *Chief Executive Officer, Managing Principal, Via Healthcare Consulting*

Jill Buhler, *Chair, Jefferson Healthcare Board of Commissioners, Jefferson Healthcare, Port Townsend, Wash.*

Mike Glenn, MHA, *Chief Executive Officer, Jefferson Healthcare, Port Townsend, Wash.*

Hear how a critical access hospital, once struggling with internal conflicts, ineffective governance and underperformance, transformed into a high-performing organization known for its quality care, financial stability and expanded services. This remarkable improvement was driven by the collaboration between the board chair and CEO, who turned a divided board into a cohesive leadership team, overcoming the challenges of operating in a close-knit community.

This session will explore the leadership skills, tools and strategies — such as board retreats and self-assessments — that made this turnaround possible. Participants will learn how to apply these approaches to strengthen governance, improve decision-making and drive organizational success in their settings.



Rural Palliative Care: Making a Big Difference in Small Communities

Cibolo Canyon 8-11

Adrienne Goldberg, PhD, MSW, LICSW, **Washington Rural Palliative Care Initiative**

Mandy Latchaw, *Washington State Office of Rural Health Program Manager*, **Washington State Department of Health**



Amber Moody, RN, CHPN, *Nurse Coordinator*, **Washington Rural Palliative Care Initiative**

Gregg VandeKieft, MD, FAAFP, FAAHPM, *Hospice Medical Director*, **Providence St. Peter Hospital, Olympia, Wash.; Medical Director, Washington Rural Palliative Care Initiative**

Rural communities often struggle to offer palliative care due to limited expertise, staff shortages and financial challenges. This session presents a statewide initiative that helps rural stakeholders collaborate to deliver high-quality care to underserved populations. By prioritizing community engagement, clinical training, telehealth consultations and sustainable funding, the initiative has successfully brought palliative care to multiple rural settings, reducing the need for patient transfers to urban centers.

Attendees will explore the Learning and Action Network (LAN) model, which promotes peer mentoring and resource sharing, while also examining why palliative care in rural areas is a matter of quality and equity. This session provides actionable strategies for rural providers, advocates and health care workers to develop sustainable, evidence-based palliative care programs in their communities.



Strategies for Rural Hospital Financial Stability and Sustainability

Cibolo Canyon 6-7

Kristen Dillon, MD, FAAFP, *Chief Medical Officer*, **Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, HRSA, HHS**

Tyler Malone, PhD, *Research Investigator*, **North Carolina Rural Health Research Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**



Keith Mueller, *Director*, **RUPRI Center for Rural Health Policy Analysis, College of Public Health, University of Iowa**

George H. Pink, PhD, *Deputy Director*, **North Carolina Rural Health Research Program, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

This session will explore the financial and operational challenges facing rural hospitals, including the latest research on hospital closures, conversions and value-based payment models. Experts will share insights on national trends and resources available to support hospital sustainability. Attendees will gain a deeper understanding of how their institutions compare nationally in terms of financial stability and value-based payment adoption. The session will also equip participants with the knowledge to effectively communicate with governance boards about trends affecting their hospitals and prepare for future opportunities and challenges.

9:00 AM – 9:15 AM REFRESHMENT BREAK

Ballroom Foyer

9:15 AM – 10:15 AM CONCURRENT SESSIONS



Delivering Age-Friendly Care in Rural Health Settings

Grand Oaks ABI

Raahat Ansari, *Senior Program Manager*, **American Hospital Association**

Rose M. Turner, RN, BSN, ACM, *Director*, **Integrated Care Management, Sharp Grossmont Hospital, La Mesa, Calif.**

Margaret Woepffel, MSN, RN CPHQ FACHE, *Chief Nursing and Informatics Officer*, **Nebraska Hospital Association**

Join this session to hear how rural communities implement Age-Friendly Health Systems by focusing on the 4Ms: What Matters, Medication, Mentation and Mobility. You will learn how rural health providers address unique challenges to improve care for older adults, reduce harm and align services with patient and caregiver needs. The session will highlight strategies for identifying patients with unmet post-acute needs, developing key performance indicators for success and building partnerships with local organizations to create sustainable, community-based care models. Gain practical insights to enhance older adult care in rural settings and drive meaningful improvements.



Navigating Rural Health Care Governance as a New Board Member

Grand Oaks CDH

J.J. Bujeaud, *Board Member*, **North Country Healthcare, Whitefield, N.H.**

This session is tailored for new board members with limited health care experience, providing practical guidance on navigating governance in rural health settings. You'll hear firsthand from a current board member on a similar path, sharing strategies for success.

Participants will learn to understand health care terminology and confidently contribute to board discussions. The session also provides tools for effective communication during meetings, fostering discussions that benefit the entire organization. Additionally, you'll gain access to resources for ongoing self-education, enhancing your role and overall board effectiveness. By the end, you'll have a clearer understanding of your responsibilities, strategies for overcoming obstacles and the confidence to make a meaningful impact on your board and organization.



The Changing 340B Program Landscape for Rural Providers: Updates from Washington and the Field

Grand Oaks EFG

Aimee Kuhlman, *Vice President, Advocacy and Grassroots, American Hospital Association*
 Chad Golder, *Senior Vice President, General Counsel and Secretary, American Hospital Association*

Join this session to hear the latest legislative, legal and regulatory updates affecting the 340B program and developments to watch for in 2025. Discover how to identify the primary threats facing rural 340B hospitals and explore strategies for navigating the program's complex regulatory landscape while maximizing benefits for hospitals and patients. Gain insights into effective communication techniques for conveying the value of the 340B program to lawmakers and examine the potential effects of upcoming changes on rural providers.



AI and Rural Health Care: The Next Frontier

Cibolo Canyon 8-11

MODERATOR: Suzanna Hoppszallern, *Senior Editor, Data and Research, American Hospital Association*

PANELISTS:

Jose Alba, *FACHE, President, CentraCare Long Prairie, Long Prairie, Minn.*
 Amar Kendale, *Co-Founder and President, Homeward*

This session explores how artificial intelligence (AI) is shaping the future of rural health care. Panelists will discuss practical applications of AI to address workforce shortages, improve access to care and enhance clinical outcomes in rural communities. Attendees will gain insights into the opportunities and challenges of implementing AI solutions, ensuring ethical considerations and leveraging AI to bridge health equity gaps.

SPONSORED BY:



Decoding Dashboards: Harnessing Data and Rounding for Informed Decision-Making

Cibolo Canyon 6-7

MODERATOR: Kristin Preihs, *Senior Director of Clinical Quality & Funded Partnerships, American Hospital Association*

PANELISTS:

Deborah Johnston, *Board President, Bartlett Regional Hospital, Juneau, Alaska*
 Gail A. Moorehead, *Chief Quality and Compliance Officer, Barlett Regional Hospital, Juneau, Alaska*



In today's data-driven environment, hospital boards face the challenge of navigating complex dashboards and data to make informed decisions that improve patient care and operational efficiency. This session will equip board members with the knowledge and tools to decode dashboards, interpret key performance metrics and apply this data during hospital rounds. By mastering these tools, boards can drive quality improvements and strategic initiatives within their organizations. Participants will gain insights into best practices for data utilization, understand the essentials of interpreting and applying hospital dashboards and learn how to integrate data analysis into regular hospital rounding practices. The session will also explore methods for enhancing board-level decision-making and oversight, offering practical tips for improving care quality and operational efficiency through informed governance strategies.

10:15 AM – 10:30 AM REFRESHMENT BREAK

Ballroom Foyer

10:30 AM – 11:30 AM PLENARY SESSION: TRANSFORMING ADVERSITY INTO LEADERSHIP

Grand Oaks Ballroom J-S

Featuring introductory comments by Susan Doherty, *Vice President of Field Engagement, American Hospital Association*

Transforming Adversity into Leadership

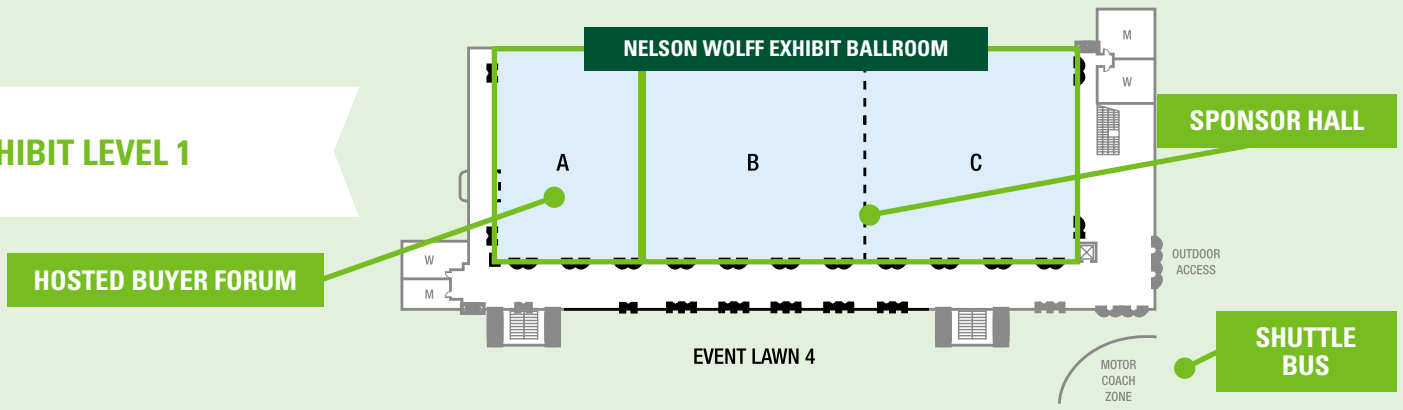
Liz Murray, subject of the Emmy-nominated Lifetime TV movie *Homeless to Harvard: The Liz Murray Story* and author of *Breaking Night: A Memoir of Forgiveness, Survival, and My Journey from Homeless to Harvard*

Liz Murray's extraordinary story of resilience, perseverance and personal transformation takes audiences on a journey from homelessness to Harvard. Raised by drug-addicted parents and homeless by age 15, Liz defied the odds by graduating high school while living on the streets and later earning a full scholarship to Harvard University. Her inspiring experience offers leaders powerful lessons in turning adversity into opportunity, navigating unexpected change and leading with purpose in challenging times. Through her story, Liz will show how shifting one's mindset, embracing flexibility and fostering a strong sense of community can empower teams to overcome obstacles and thrive in even the most difficult circumstances.

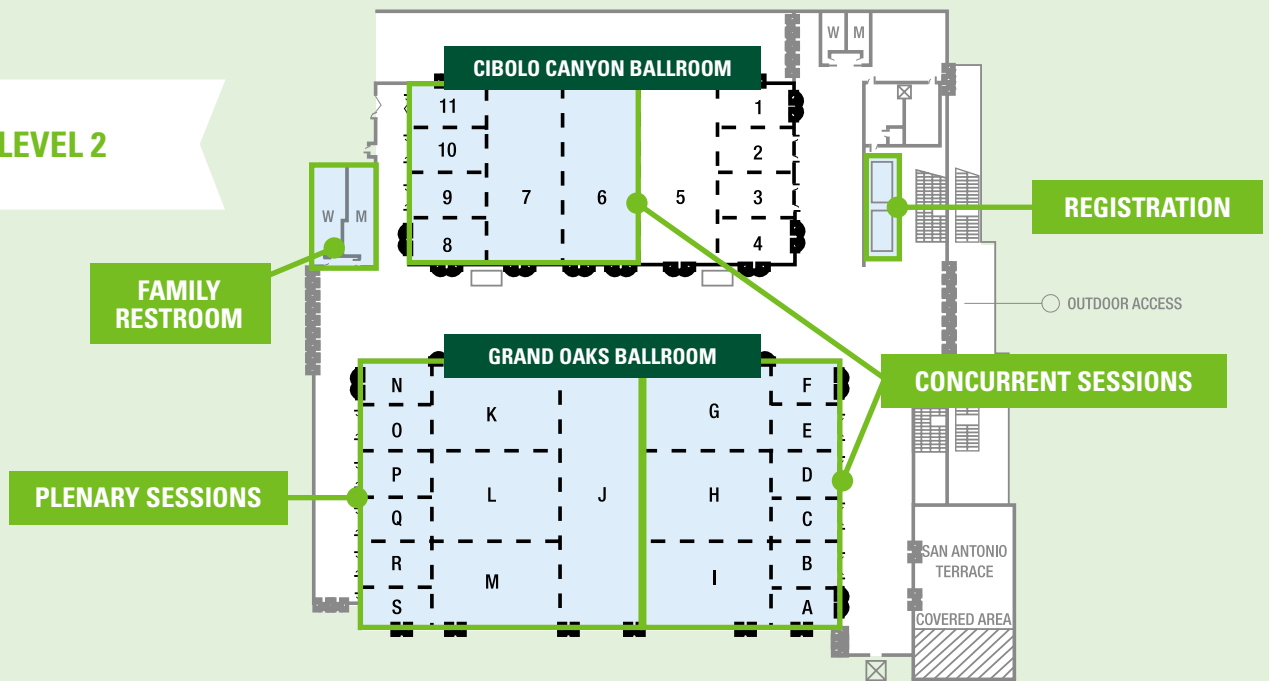
In this session, Liz will connect her life experiences to the unique challenges health care leaders face, emphasizing the importance of resilience and perseverance in leadership. Attendees will walk away with practical insights on transforming problems into opportunities, building flexible strategies in the face of change and cultivating a supportive community within their teams.

HOTEL MAP

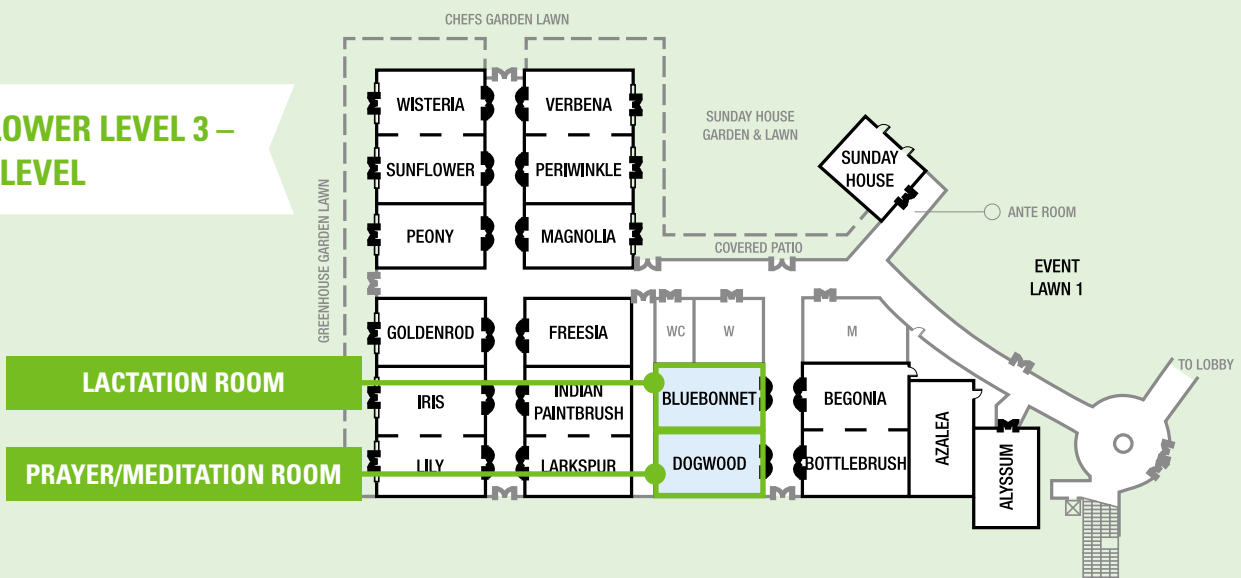
EXHIBIT LEVEL 1



BALLROOM LEVEL 2



WILDFLOWER LEVEL 3 – LOBBY LEVEL





MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Make plans to join your fellow
hospital and health system leaders.

AHA ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

MAY 4-6, 2025
WASHINGTON, D.C.

Connect with policy makers, legislators and thought leaders on pressing issues facing hospitals and health systems and the patients they serve.

annualmeeting.aha.org

ACCELERATING HEALTH EQUITY CONFERENCE

MAY 19-22, 2025
ATLANTA, GA

Dive into strategic hospital-community partnerships, health care innovation and diversity, equity and inclusion efforts presented by leading hospitals and health systems.

equityconference.aha.org

AHA LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

JULY 20-22, 2025
NASHVILLE, TN

Gain high-level, transformational strategies and innovative approaches for delivering greater value and health equity through operational excellence, creative partnerships and redefined delivery models.

leadershipsummit.aha.org

RURAL HEALTH CARE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 8-11, 2026
SAN ANTONIO, TX

Join top practitioners and thinkers to share strategies and resources for accelerating the shift to a more integrated and sustainable rural health system.

ruralconference.aha.org