

Rural health care professionals honored for serving Greater Minnesota

The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and its partners are recognizing four dedicated health care professionals who have made significant contributions to the health and well-being of their rural communities as part of National Rural Health Day on Thursday, Nov. 16.

“This year’s honorees embody the spirit of servant leadership we see throughout Minnesota’s rural health care workforce,” said Minnesota Commissioner of Health Dr. Brooke Cunningham. “Their incredible accomplishments also serve as a reminder of the critical gaps in care that exist in rural communities and the need to continue working together to fund new ways to train and retain talented health care workers in Greater Minnesota.”

The Minnesota Rural Health Association, the Duluth-based National Rural Health Resource Center, and MDH’s Office of Rural Health and Primary Care are presenting the 2023 Minnesota Rural Health Awards to the following honorees:

- Ann Bussey, rural community advocate from Side Lake, receives the 2023 Minnesota Rural Health Hero Policy Award for her advocacy work in ensuring the needs of older adults on the Iron Range, as well those across Greater Minnesota and rural America, are reflected in policy decisions.
- Shannon Shaw, FNP, medical services coordinator for the Family Advocacy Center of Northern Minnesota, Bemidji, receives the 2023 Minnesota Rural Health Hero Practitioner Award for her work in ensuring access to comprehensive, age-appropriate and culturally sensitive care for victims of child abuse, sexual assault, neglect, trafficking and intimate partner violence in northern Minnesota.
- Riverwood Healthcare Center, Aitkin, receives the 2023 Minnesota Rural Health Team Award for its work in identifying the social determinants of health among their patients and creating community partnerships to address those needs.
- Ted Matthews, director of Minnesota Rural Mental Health, Hutchinson, is the recipient of the 2023 Minnesota Rural Health Lifetime Achievement Award for his work in providing mental health support to farmers across the state.

Additional information about the award winners and their photos can be found on the [Minnesota Rural Health Awards](#) webpage. In addition to the Rural Health Day recognition, the recipients will be honored during the 2024 Minnesota Rural Health Conference at the Duluth Entertainment Convention Center (DECC), June 17-18, 2024.