

Rockbridge Area Health Center

Caring for our Whole Community

RAHC Board of Directors

Dennis Cropper
Chair

Clyde Hart
Vice Chair

Jane Horton, MD
Secretary

David Dugan
Treasurer

Sheila Colón
Clay Devening, DDS
Pat Jones

Josh McMichael
Thomas Wagner
Susan Whitsitt
Rev. McKinley Williams

2021 IN REVIEW

7,175 patients
received a service

27,802 visits
by patients to RAHC

5,095 people
served had incomes
below the poverty level

2,054 visits by children
for medical, dental, or
behavioral health care

243 veterans
were served

881 patients
received mental health services

Since pandemic onset, 5,800+
COVID-19 vaccinations and 8,000+ tests
have been administered.

View or download the Rockbridge Area
Health Center's 2021 Annual Report at:
rockahc.org

The mission of the Rockbridge Area Health Center is to promote and provide access to comprehensive, high-quality and affordable health care to improve the health and well-being of the greater community.



Cultivating Healthy Lives

Ask any gardener in Rockbridge County what goes into producing a healthy tomato and they'll tell you: a viable seed, adequate moisture, and protection from pests. Also: good soil is a must.

Not long ago, if you had asked someone in the healthcare profession what factors go into producing a healthy person, they'd be likely to point to a small set of factors: strong genes, good habits, and perhaps regular visits to the doctor.

It turns out that people are a lot more like tomatoes than you might expect. Over the last two decades, the health profession has come to recognize that a person's environment, like the soil a tomato seed encounters, has a strong influence on how well they thrive. Whether a neighborhood has sidewalks or your parents' education level or the presence of a language barrier at work might seem like incidental factors. But those realities, along with the stresses of poverty, unstable living conditions, or lack of social outlets can make all the difference to your longevity and well being.

Today, we call these factors the Social Determinants of Health (SDOH). Addressing them has become a focus for health care providers everywhere. Knowing about the impact of SDOH requires us in the health care profession to now widen our vision beyond what happens in the exam room or at the pharmacy window, and to directly address our local community's assets and deficits.

As you read this newsletter, take note of the ways in which the Rockbridge Area Health Center is striving to do just that. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, we are uniquely positioned to advocate for a holistic view of wellness, and to take steps to close the gap in health outcomes. It's built into our mission to provide comprehensive access to care to all parts of the community.

You'll see these efforts play out in activities like our community health needs survey, profiled on page 5. Our medication access program, insurance assistance counseling, and sliding scale payment structure provide support to those whose lives are already impacted by the stress of a fluctuating economy. To alleviate issues around lack of transportation, we are increasingly present out in the community, with a dental facility in Buena Vista and a new medical office at Kendal at Lexington. Don't miss the stories on our in-school dental clinics and pop-up vaccination event at the Maury River Senior Center and in Rockbridge Baths.

We have so much more in the works. Stay tuned in the near future for news about new mobile health units and the launch of school wellness programs that will bolster young people's chances of making healthy choices that will have lifelong benefits. We are committed to everyone's thriving.



Suzanne Sheridan

Suzanne Sheridan
CEO - Rockbridge Area Health Center

FALL
2022

Benchmarking Community Wellness

This summer, RAHC received a \$100,000 grant—as well as the donation of a handsome park bench at Lexington’s Kids Playce—from Aflac Inc., the nation’s largest provider of supplemental insurance.

Aflac’s Community CareGrant awards recognize the efforts of organizations that support health and well-being through affordable access to care.

Earlier this year, Aflac released a study identifying states where medical debt is particularly acute. Studies confirm that the stress of debt exacerbates the stress of illness. When such stress is combined with lack of access to care, problems snowball and quality of life deteriorates. In the Rockbridge area, 38% of residents are classified as low-income, and many people have historically suffered from the lack of access to consistent and affordable care.

All of which makes RAHC’s wide-reaching efforts to address the social and financial factors affecting health grant-worthy. From community wellness education programs to dental clinics and vaccinations in the schools, from insurance access assistance to opening new points of care



Teresa White and Suzanne Sheridan

across the area, RAHC is committed to addressing health care disparities.

Said Teresa White, president of Aflac U.S. as she presented the award, “We know the Rockbridge Area Health Center will use the award to create long-term health and wealth impacts for the residents of the Lexington-Rockbridge area.”

The \$100,000 award will help fund the RAHC school-based culture of wellness program, along with a multidisciplinary women’s health initiative for those with limited resources.

The park bench, meanwhile, will provide rest and relaxation to all.

RAHC Family Planning Services

Ever since the maternity wing at our local hospital closed twelve years ago, pregnant women in the Rockbridge area have been traveling to Roanoke, Augusta, or Charlottesville to deliver their babies. At the same time, local prenatal care and family planning services have become increasingly difficult to come by.

That changed thanks to a program at the Rockbridge Area Health Center that provides women’s health care through multiple stages of life. Making such care accessible improves the odds of healthy outcomes. Fewer out-of-town trips also saves time, stress, and travel costs.

In addition to prenatal and postpartum care, check-ups, lab work, screenings, and dietary counseling, RAHC has now become the area’s only source for family planning services for residents who formerly relied on local health departments for such things as contraceptives, breast exams, and pregnancy counseling. Due to funding cuts, the Central Shenandoah Health District stopped offering family planning services this past July.

“Improving access to care has been a passion for me my entire life,” says Kimary Schatten, certified nurse midwife at RAHC. “I’m thrilled to be able to provide women’s health services, as well as offer a local, five-days per week option for prenatal care in one location in the Rockbridge area.”

Schatten’s team includes a registered dietitian nutritionist, women’s health practitioner, and pediatric providers.

As with all RAHC services, care is provided regardless of income or insurance status, and financial assistance is available.



Partnering and Serving Out In The Community

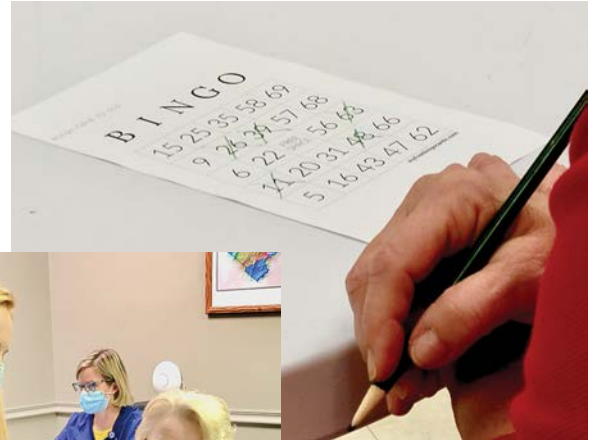
Boosters & Bingo

On Wednesday, October 5, RAHC and the Valley Program for Aging Services (VPAS) joined together for a unique afternoon event called "Boosters and BINGO." Sixty-four people participated at the successful event at the Maury River Senior Center in Buena Vista to play bingo, get a vaccine, or both.

People won prizes, received flu shots or COVID vaccines or bivalent boosters. Bivalent boosters provide protection against both the original strain of COVID and newer ones, such as the omicron variant.

"Providing access out in the community to flu, COVID-19 and booster vaccinations is an important part of RAHC's mission," said Jessica Ferguson, RN, RAHC Immunization Coordinator. "What a great opportunity for us to partner with VPAS to offer vaccination clinics and have some fun at the same time."

Bingo is a fun, low-risk game of chance. Boosters and vaccines may be less fun, of course, but they're also a great, low risk way to beat the odds of contracting a serious disease.



RAHC's Jessica Ferguson providing vaccinations at the Boosters and Bingo event



RAHC's Lori Ashbridge and Faith Ruggerio assisting at the Rockbridge Baths vaccination clinic

Partnering to Provide Flu Shots and Covid-19 Boosters in Rockbridge Baths

In conjunction with the Rockbridge Baths Community Organization, RAHC offered an influenza vaccine and COVID-19 bivalent booster clinic on October 13th at the Rockbridge Baths Volunteer Firehouse. The well-attended clinic provided a total of 68 vaccinations! The location provided a convenient location for those who live in the area surrounding Rockbridge Baths.

Don't gamble with your health. Get a COVID-19 vaccination or booster and a flu shot today.

Your Best Shot at a Healthy Winter

Like pumpkin spice flavoring, chilly evenings, and Sunday football, influenza comes around every year. That's why every year your friendly health care providers urge you to get a flu vaccine.

Here's why you should listen to them:

- **The flu virus changes.** Every year, a new vaccine is made and distributed. You can't rely on last year's immunity to address this year's disease.
- **Flu worsens any health issues you have.** The flu vaccine, on the other hand, provides a layer of protection for people with heart disease, diabetes, respiratory illness and other chronic conditions.
- **Expecting a baby?** Your body is working hard growing a new person, and the last thing it needs is a bout of flu and a potential hospitalization. A flu shot protects you, and has been shown to protect infants for several months after birth.
- **Best-bet protection sure beats the alternative.** While no vaccine can completely eliminate the risk of getting sick, you're much more likely to have a milder bout of flu if you've been vaccinated. It's a worthwhile investment of your time.

Keeping Up With Medicaid Enrollment Changes

With the impending end of the COVID-19 public health emergency, a new crisis may be emerging for those enrolled in Medicaid—loss of coverage.

In 2020, the Federal Public Health Emergency Act implemented a variety of protections against coverage loss. Now, with the end of the formal emergency on the horizon, all states, including Virginia, will be reviewing the eligibility of members.

Anyone enrolled in Medicaid in Virginia should take steps now to prepare. The Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) needs up-to-date mailing addresses and phone numbers for Medicaid members to ensure they receive important paperwork.

Medicaid members can check on and update information several ways:

- Online at commonhelp.virginia.gov
- Call Cover Virginia at (855) 242-8282
- Call their local Department of Social Services
- Call RAHC at (540) 464-8700 - select option 3



Medicaid members are advised to take action quickly to:

- Update contact information
- Respond swiftly to renewal notices and send information to confirm eligibility
- Use current coverage to catch up on preventative or delayed care

RAHC asks the community to spread the word to anyone who might be enrolled in Medicaid to ensure everyone remains covered.

Marks of Excellence

At RAHC, the work we do connecting people with the care they need is rewarding all by itself.

But formal recognition matters, too, of course. That's why you'll see us proudly displaying three new badges of excellence on our newsletters and website, connoting three awards given to us by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Each emblem represents a **Community Health Quality Recognition Award**.

Access Enhancer: Recognizes RAHC for increasing the total number of patients served and increasing the number of patients who receive at least one comprehensive service by at least 5%.



Health Disparities Reducer: Given for improvements in select clinical quality measures during consecutive reporting years for at least one racial/ethnic group or meets established benchmarks for all racial/ethnic groups served within the most recent reporting year.

Advancing HIT for Quality: Awarded for optimizing Health Information Technologies that advance telehealth, patient engagement, interoperability, and collection of health data to increase access to care and advance quality of care.



In addition, RAHC received the **Health Center Quality Leader Award** for the fifth consecutive year and the **Patient-Centered Medical Home accreditation** for the sixth year.



Presented to the highest performing community health centers nationwide, these awards recognize health centers that achieve the best overall clinical quality measure performance.

Expanding Our Reach

More care in more places—that's the vision that has motivated the Rockbridge Area Health Center over the last three years.

Case in point: On September 1st, RAHC announced the opening of a new medical office at Kendal at Lexington. Kendal, a continuing care retirement village, is known for its excellent amenities and vibrant approach to aging. It also prides itself on its connections to the community outside its gates.

Despite being housed in an over 55 years of age facility, the new RAHC medical office at Kendal is staffed by medical providers equipped to provide care to anyone, whether they be children or adults, people with insurance or those without. New patients are always welcomed.



The grand opening of the RAHC medical office at Kendal in Lexington featured a ribbon cutting, tours, and a meet and greet with the medical staff that is supporting the Kendal location.

(from left) Raeanna Simcoe, MD, Roger Clevinger, MD - both RAHC physicians at Kendal; Dennis Cropper, RAHC Board Chair; Suzanne Sheridan, RAHC CEO; Michael Henry, MD, RAHC physician and medical director; Jan Bigelow, Kendal CEO; Bob Huch and David Ellington - both Kendal Board members.

An additional medical office is scheduled to open at the end of this year. Located next door to RAHC's dental office in Buena Vista, the new location will offer a third option for patients to receive medical care in the area.

Dental Clinic Returns to Schools



After a two-year hiatus caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, RAHC resumed its in-school dental programs this spring and has continued them this fall.

“Our entire dental team is excited to be back in the schools to provide this critical service to students of all ages,” said Dr. Stuart Fargiano, DMD, Director of RAHC Dental Services. “Without RAHC’s dental services in the schools, many students have had no access to care for two years.”

RAHC’s in-school dental program was launched in 2013 to ensure all students in area schools have access to regular dental care twice each year. Services include exams, cleanings, sealants, fluoride treatments, and x-rays. If additional care is needed, such as fillings, a student’s family is notified and can schedule follow-up services at RAHC or with their family dentist.

“The need is huge,” added Dr. Fargiano. “By taking the mobile equipment into the schools, it not only improves access to dental care, but also addresses the transportation problems and financial hardships that many families face.”

If You Don’t Ask, You Don’t Know

This spring, Rockbridge Area Health Center gathered important information from the community to help it see what it might be missing.

Unlike previous community health needs assessments that were restricted to Rockbridge County, Lexington, and Buena Vista, the online survey was also distributed to Alleghany, Augusta, Botetourt, and the cities of Covington, Staunton, and Waynesboro.

“To get a thorough understanding of the community’s needs it was important that the survey was made available to residents in areas that in the past have not been represented,” said Mary Looney, RAHC COO. “In an effort to reach as many people as possible the survey was advertised on numerous social media and external news media outlets and paper copies were distributed to libraries and other designated community areas.”

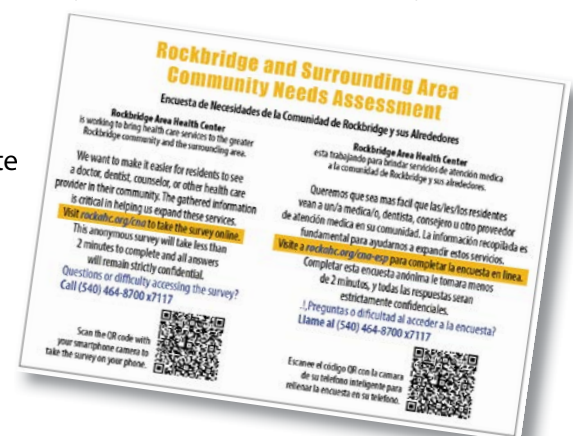
This ‘Surrounding Areas’ survey was circulated in both English and Spanish and was designed as a listening tool, a way to hear directly from people about their healthcare experiences over the last few years. The survey gathered information about household make-up, insurance status, visits to doctors and hospitals, and the kinds of

categories of care family members have needed, such as medical, dental, or mental health services.

In addition to asking about services they used, the survey also asked crucial questions about the kinds of healthcare services that were not used—and why. Is lack of reliable transportation an issue in the household? Does insurance only partially cover needed treatments—or not at all? Does the household have adequate childcare? Is there food insecurity, or problems paying for utilities, rent, medications or phone service?

“Data from the surveys will help to identify areas where access to healthcare services is problematic,” added Looney. “Taking services out to those communities would be supporting RAHC’s mission of providing access to care.”

864 residents responded to the five-minute survey.



Please consider donating today. You can make a difference.

Donate Online at rockahc.org/newsletter or complete the form below and mail to:

Rockbridge Area Health Center
25 Northridge Lane
Lexington, VA 24450

Name(s): _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

My contribution of \$ _____ is enclosed. *(Please make check payable to RAHC)*

Please charge my gift of \$ _____ to my credit card: *(circle one)* Visa Mastercard

Card # _____ Expiration date: ____/____ CCV _____

Signature _____

My donation is for *(Please check one)*

RAHC's Annual Fund **Unrestricted. Allocated to where most needed.**

Donation in memory of

Name

Name and address for acknowledgement

Donation in honor of

Name

Name and address for acknowledgement

More ways to give • Charitable IRA Distributions:

Sec. 408(d)(8) permits "qualifying charitable distributions" from traditional IRA or Roth IRA accounts to be excluded from gross income.

For assistance, please call Janet Beebe at (540) 461-3500 or contact her at jbeebe@rockahc.org or Craig Vinecombe at cvinecombe@rockahc.org. RAHC is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) health and human service organization. All gifts are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Rockbridge Area Health Center is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization and a FTCA deemed facility. This Health Center is a Health Center grantee under 42 U.S.C. 254b, and a deemed Public Health Service employee under 42 U.S.C. 233(g)-(n).

Save The Date!

Sat., April 1, 2023

We're not fooling!

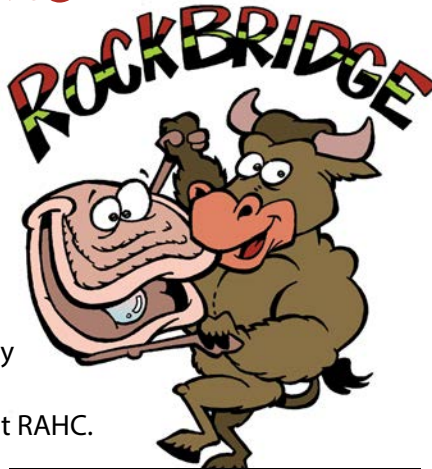
Next year's Bull & Oyster Festival is shaping up to be the best one yet!

What's better than meeting up with friends and neighbors for a feast, music, games and gorgeous views!

This annual event has become a community favorite. The Bull & Oyster Festival brings much-needed support to the work we do at RAHC.

A benefit for the
Rockbridge Area
Health Center

Want to become a sponsor?
Contact Craig @ cvinecombe@rockahc.org



**BULL & OYSTER
FEST 2023**

at the *Virginia
Horse Center*
Lexington, VA

amazonsmile

When you shop on Amazon, purchase through AmazonSmile at smile.amazon.com and choose **Rockbridge Area Health Center** as your charitable organization. Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to RAHC! Same products, same prices, same service.



Link your Kroger Shopper's Card to their Community Rewards Program and Kroger will donate a percentage of your purchase to the Health Center at no added cost to you. Enroll in the Kroger Community Rewards Program at KrogerCommunityRewards.com

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
and Fees Paid
Permit No. 135

Rockbridge Area
Health Center
25 NORTHBRIDGE LANE
LEXINGTON, VA 24450