

# WESTERN MT AHEC



*2022*

**ANNUAL  
REPORT**

# WESTERN MONTANA AHEC

The Western MT AHEC, at the University of Montana, in Missoula, was established in 2008. WMT-AHEC is affiliated with the College of Health at the University of Montana-Missoula and is located at the Missoula College Campus. WMT-AHEC is closely affiliated with the 13 health professions programs offered through the University of Montana Health & Medicine (UMHM) programs. WMT-AHEC serves the following Western counties: Flathead, Lake, Lincoln, Mineral, Missoula, Sanders, and Ravalli.

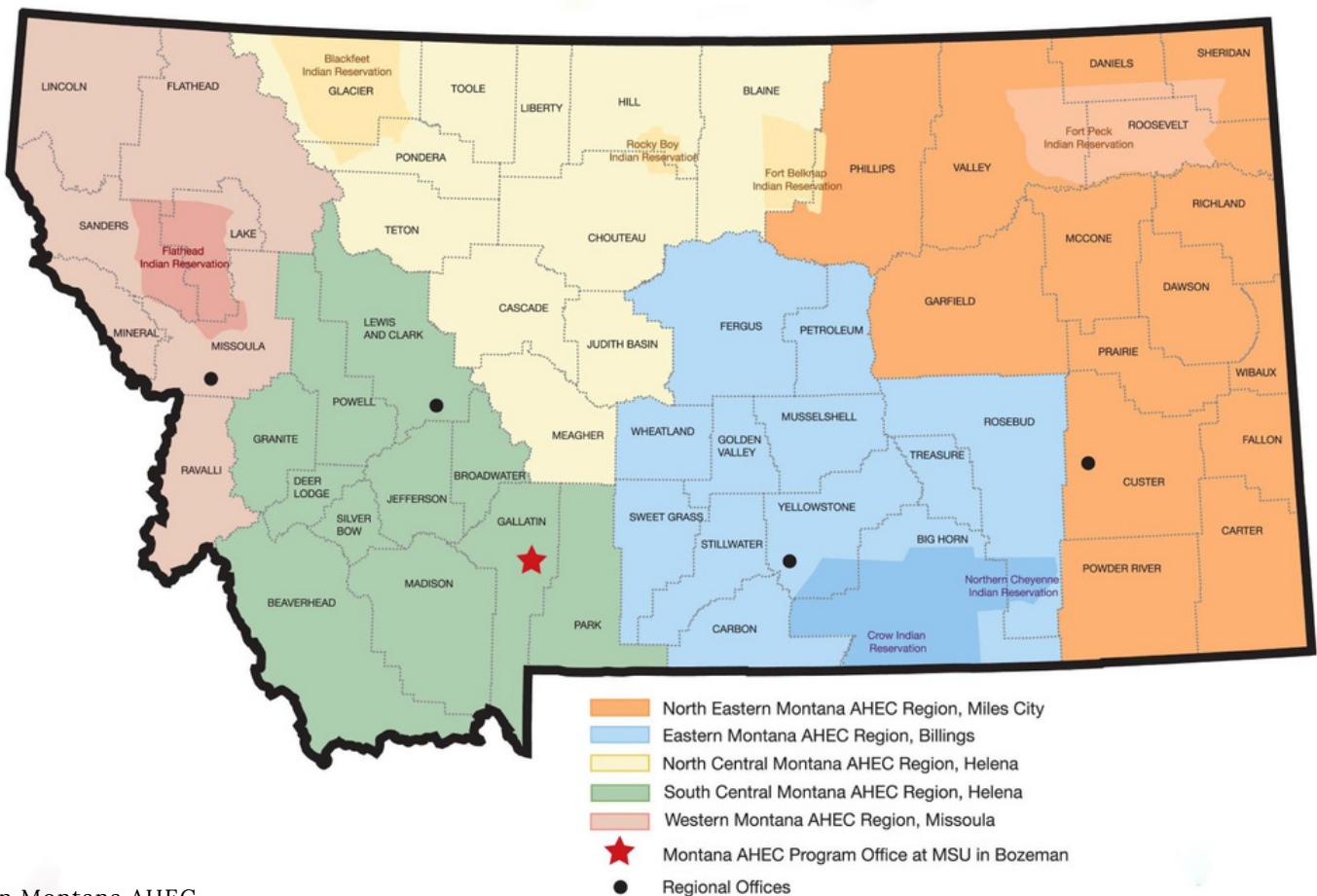
## Mission

The AHEC Mission is to enhance access to quality healthcare, particularly primary and preventative care, by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals via strategic partnership with academic programs, communities, and professional organizations.

## GOAL

A diverse, culturally competent primary care/healthcare workforce representative of Montana communities, that is prepared to deliver high quality care in a transforming system and is distributed throughout the state, particularly in rural and underserved areas and populations.

## Montana AHEC Regions



# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I am proud to welcome you to a review of the past year through our 2022 Annual Report. It has been a busy year as always across the varied programs of WMT-AHEC, and I could not be prouder of our team and the various ways their hard work is making an impact for students, health professionals, and communities across our region. The scope of work of WMT-AHEC is broad to meet our mission of enhancing accessing to quality healthcare by improving the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals, particularly in service to rural and underserved populations, via our partnerships and programs.

As you review our Annual Report, you will find updates regarding the following efforts across a spectrum of healthcare workforce development and community engagement activities in service of our mission:

- Health professions exposure and recruitment through K-12 career awareness programs.
- Support of health professions student training across our region including the AHEC Scholars Program, pre-health shadowing, WWAMI Missoula, Behavioral Health Workforce and Training (BHWET), simulation training, and rural rotation travel stipends.
- Continuing education and support of health professionals in practice, including Friday Medical Conference, the COVID Update series, and our new *All Things Vagus* podcast.
- Identification of regional health equity priorities and facilitation of action steps through our Western Montana Health Equity Taskforce.

We strive to increase the impact of our programs through collaboration with colleagues across the University of Montana and other regional institutions of higher education, as well as with continued vision creativity in developing new programs and initiatives to meet the gaps in healthcare and health professions workforce development in our region. Stay tuned for exciting developments in 2023, including action steps borne from the hard work of our Western Montana Health Equity Taskforce in identifying health equity priorities for our region. In the coming year, we will infuse the wisdom of this thoughtful group of regional leaders across our programming to meet our organizational goal of supporting a diverse, culturally competent health care workforce representative of Montana communities, that is prepared to deliver high quality care in a transforming system. Thank you for all that you do as a partner and friend of WMT-AHEC to support that same goal as we strive together to improve the health of communities across western Montana.

Here's to great things in 2023!

Amy Matheny (she/her), MD, MPH, FAAFP  
WMT-AHEC Director



# THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS AND SPONSORS

- University of Montana Health & Medicine
- Red Willow Learning Center
- Northcentral AHEC, Southcentral AHEC, Eastern AHEC, Northeastern AHEC, and AHEC Program Office
- St Luke Community Healthcare
- Providence St. Patrick Hospital and St. Joseph Medical Center
- Clark Fork Valley Hospital
- Community Medical Center
- Mineral Community Hospital
- Logan Health
- Montana Hospital Association
- Montana Primary Care Association
- Montana Family Medicine-Residency
- Montana Public Health Training Center
- Salish Kootenai College
- Flathead Valley Community College
- Missoula County Public Schools
- Bitterroot Health
- Western Montana Clinic
- Cabinet Peaks Medical Center
- Logan Health-Whitefish
- Partnership Healthcare Center
- Northwest Community Healthcare Center
- Montana Department of Labor & Industry
- Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana
- Headwaters Foundation
- Central Montana Medical Center
- Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
- WWAMI Montana

# WESTERN MONTANA AHEC TEAM



**Ilsa Seib**  
(she/her)

Director of Budgets, WWAMI and Pre-Med  
and Personnel



**Liz Kelsey**  
(she/her)

WWAMI and Pre-Med  
Job Shadowing  
Manager



**Robin Mochi,**  
Continuing  
Education  
Coordinator



**Katie Turner,**  
UM Pre-Med  
Job Shadow  
Coordinator



**Tim Schehl**  
(he/him)

BHWET  
Program  
Manager



**Jillian Hull**  
(she/her)

AHEC Scholars &  
Career Awareness  
Outreach



**Chelsea Bellon**  
(she/her)

Health Equity &  
Community  
Engagement  
Specialist

# STAFFING UPDATES

Staffing changes can be expected, but the WMT AHEC team is growing and uniting their important work around Western Montana! We supported Mary Parrish, Lilly Apedaile, and Irene Schmid as they furthered their career and moved to different roles around the state.

We also have been fortunate to welcome some new team members over the past few months. In April, Chelsea Bellon, joined our team as our Health Equity & Community Engagement Specialist. Chelsea brings lived experience growing up in a rural community, originally from the Colville Confederated Tribes reservation & a member of the Yankton Sioux tribe. She has spent over a decade in academia and six years focused on grants within public health, serving AI/AN communities. Chelsea's commitment is to ensure equity within underserved populations and community voices leading efforts to better health outcomes. Her work with the CDC's COVID-19 grant implement partnerships, community, and access as the core foundations. Chelsea is thrilled to take part in the growth and exposure of WMT AHEC.

This summer, Tim Schehl, joined our team as the BHWET (Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training) Program Manager and Behavioral Health Training Coordinator. UM is Tim's alma mater for his undergraduate (Philosophy) and graduate (MSW), and he has deep roots to the Missoula area. Tim's work with the Youth Homes Inc., his MSW, and a specialized training in clinical therapy with adolescents and the research emphasis on the safe use of psychedelic medicines in the treatment of mental health and addictions disorders brings a diverse skillset to AHEC. His curiosity and concern for social conflicts over expanding N. American energy infrastructures has led Tim to the American Studies program at MSU where he is a PhD candidate in the Department of History and Philosophy. His dissertation examines the role of transnational privatized security assemblages in N. American pipeline conflicts. He welcomes engagement and communication on any of these matters.

As the new year began, we welcomed, Jillian Hull. Jillian will serve as our AHEC Scholars and Career Awareness Program Manager. Jillian is an University of Montana alumna who brings a passion for health equity, particularly equitable access to primary and preventative care for marginalized communities. Her extensive background in research and analysis, as well as her involvement in community-based advocacy will benefit both the students and constituents of WMT AHEC. Jillian looks forward to growing WMT AHEC Scholars program, spreading awareness of health science careers and furthering AHEC's mission to rural communities. Most of all, Jillian is thrilled to make stronger connections across Western MT.



# OUR PROGRAMS

## *BHWET*

Behavioral Health Workforce Education and Training Program is a joint project between the

University of Montana and Montana State University that seeks to place teams of graduate

students in their final years in clinical rotations in rural primary care settings. The emphasis is to connect students with underserved populations who have little access to behavioral health services, while simultaneously training students in integrated behavioral health.

## *MedStart*

A week-long summer camp for high school students hosted at the University of Montana that focuses on healthcare degrees and careers.

## *Friday Medical Conference*

Friday Medical Conference (FMC) is a weekly Continuing Medical Education (CME) opportunity for physicians, healthcare professionals, and several healthcare student programs. This 'Grand Rounds' style lecture series provides a cross-section of recent advances in medicine along with clinical etiology, diagnosis, and management information.



# OUR PROGRAMS (CONT.)

## *COVID-19 Health Equity Grant*

*This component comes from funding from the CDC and distributed through the Montana State Department of Public Health & Human Services. AHEC is focused on providing access, equitable approaches, and relationships across the state, especially in rural communities and within underserved populations. Western MT AHEC, with the facilitation of Chelsea Bellon, leads monthly taskforce meetings where partnerships and organizations can flourish.*

## *REACH*

*A ½ day-long camp for high school students that is hosted at a local hospital or on the University of Montana campus that engages students in hands-on healthcare-related activities.*

## *WWAMI*

*WWAMI is a cooperative program of the University of Washington School of Medicine and the states of Wyoming, Alaska, Montana and Idaho. It is a program which makes medical education accessible to students in the northwestern United States by decentralizing the educational process and by sharing existing facilities and personnel in universities and communities in the WWAMI states.*





# OUR PROGRAMS (CONT.)

## *Rural Clinical Rotations*

Supports health professions students participating in clinical rotations at rural and underserved sites in Montana. Students will receive travel reimbursement for personal car mileage. Clinical rotations must be at a Critical Access Hospital (CAH), a rural health clinic, a tribal health service, or a Community Health Center (CHC) in Montana.

## *Informational Interviews*

Video conference interviews with medical providers that are geared towards students interested in the medical field (UM pre-med, post-bacc, and high school students). In these interviews, the medical providers talk about their path to a career in medicine, answer student questions about attending medical school, and review a clinical case study with the students.

## *Rural Health Scholars Program*

A pilot collaboration with St. Luke Community Healthcare that involves a 3 week-long, paid job shadowing opportunity along with specialized ACT tutoring and career/college advising for students

# AHEC SCHOLARS BY THE NUMBERS

| College/University                   | #   |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| Carroll College                      | 43  |
| City College at MSU-B                | 1   |
| Hennepin Technical College – MedStar | 7   |
| Missoula College                     | 3   |
| Montana State University             | 224 |
| MSU - Billings                       | 12  |
| University of Montana                | 57  |
| University of Washington WWAMI       | 17  |

**323 Students**

| Program of Study                             | #   |
|--|-----|
| Athletic Training (MS)                       | 21  |
| Biological Science & Global Health (BS)      | 2   |
| Community Health Worker (Cert.)              | 2   |
| Community Paramedicine (Cert.)               | 5   |
| Counseling (MS)                              | 8   |
| Dietetics (MS) + Nutrition Science (BS)      | 15  |
| Exercise Science (BS & MS)                   | 3   |
| Health Administration (MHA)                  | 2   |
| Licensed Practical Nursing (Cert.)           | 1   |
| Medicine (MD)                                | 18  |
| Nursing (BSN)                                | 182 |
| Nursing Leadership (MN)                      | 1   |
| Nursing Practice (DNP)                       | 19  |
| Pharmacy (PharmD)                            | 8   |
| Physical Therapy (DPT)                       | 13  |
| Pre-Professional (Pre-Med, Pre-Dental, etc.) | 4   |
| Psychology (BS + PhD)                        | 5   |
| Public/Community Health (BS + MPH)           | 7   |
| Respiratory Care (AAS)                       | 3   |
| Social Work (MSW)                            | 6   |

# AHEC SCHOLARS

## PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

### YEAR 1

40 Clinical Hours

- Interprofessional, community-based experiential learning
- Clinical rotations

• Volunteer, hands-on experiences

40 Educational Hours

- Elective educational training in the six core topic areas

• For-credit courses or self-paced

### YEAR 2

40 Clinical Hours

- Interprofessional, community-based experiential learning
- Clinical rotations

• Volunteer, hands-on experiences

40 Educational Hours

- Elective educational training in the six core topic areas

• For-credit courses or self-paced

## Certification

A nationally recognized certification that signifies that the students have additional knowledge, skills, and experiences. This will give them an advantage in moving forward in their chosen health profession.

## Benefits

- Learn to work effectively in a team-based setting
- Develop new skills, experiences, and strategies to improve both access and delivery of healthcare
- Have the chance to meet leaders in healthcare and interact with health care professionals creating an invaluable network for your future career
- Make connections with other participants
- Receive a certification, which will set you apart from other students in an increasingly competitive environment
- *Receive recognition at graduation*

# RURAL CLINICAL ROTATIONS

15

*Students  
Supported*

9

*Clinical Rural Sites*

\$3,000

*Dollars in  
Donation*

2

*Different  
Health Professions*

\$4,375

*Dollars  
Disbursed*

16,888 *Miles Travelled*



## WWAMI MISSOULA CLERKSHIPS/ ROTATIONS

9

*Different training sites*

3

*New Teaching  
Faculty*

98

*Clerkships/  
Rotations/Electives*

4

*Visiting students  
from Nagasaki  
University in  
Japan*

62

*Medical students  
participated*

3

*Visiting  
residents from  
the University  
of Washington*

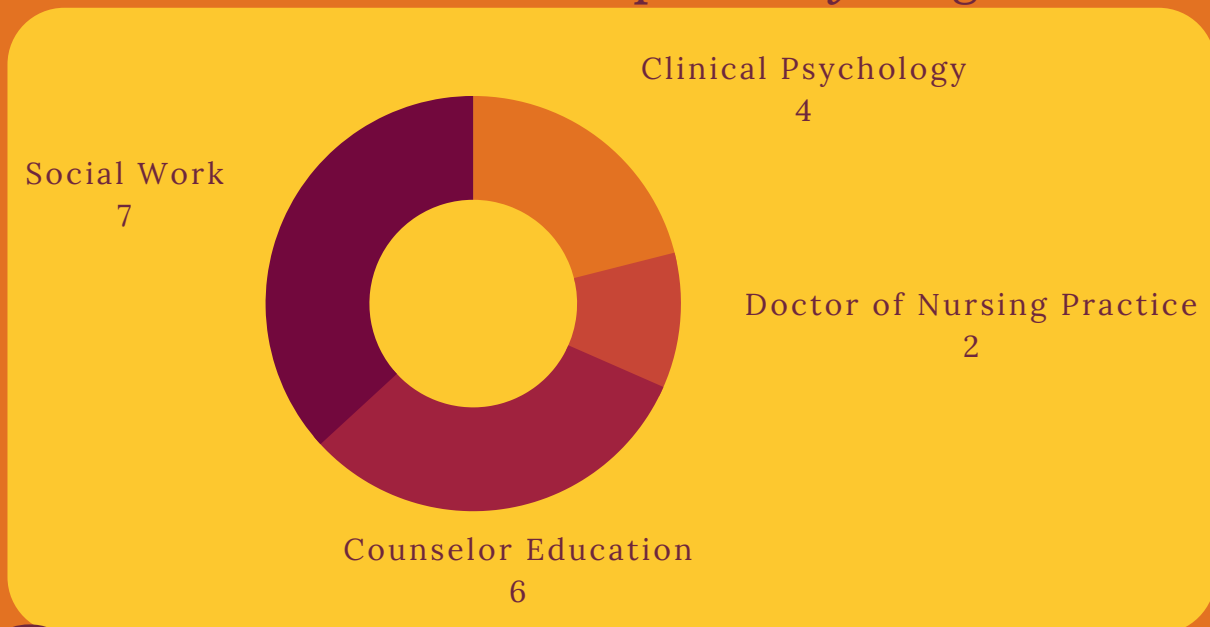
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*Medical students  
from a rural and/or  
underserved background*

# BHWET PROGRAM

The HRSA-funded BHWET Program focuses on increasing the accessibility of quality behavioral health professionals and behavioral health sites across the state, especially in rural and frontier areas where community members only health care touchpoint might be at a primary care setting. The number of appointments and warm hand-offs between professionals, and the number of clients seen from rural areas, HRSA-defined Medically Underserved Communities (MUC), and hours spent in primary care settings are tracked and accounted for so that we can measure program reach and success.

*BHWET Student Participation by Program*



**19**

*Students Participating*

**\$290,112**

*Stipend support provided to students*

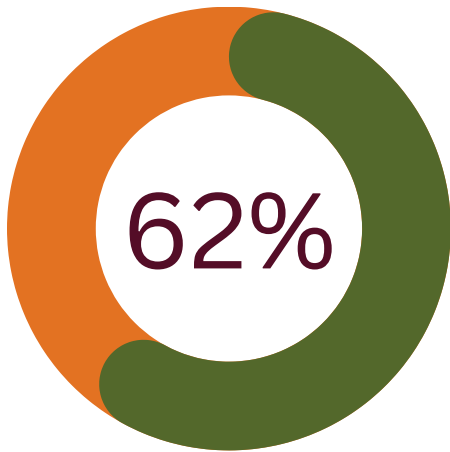
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*Students from a rural and disadvantaged background*

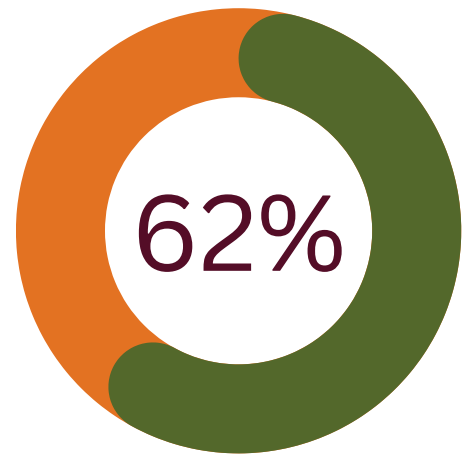
# CAREER AWARENESS PROGRAMS



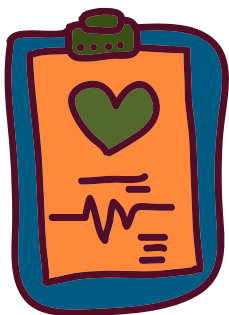
*326 In-Person/Virtual Program Participants*



from a rural background



from a disadvantaged background



*78 Hours of Structured Activities*

# PRE-HEALTH JOB SHADOWING

18 In-Person  
Student  
Shadowing  
Experiences

4 Successful  
"Robot"  
shadows @ St.  
Luke's in  
Ronan, MT

35  
Informational  
Interviews  
(all accessible through a  
private YouTube channel)

143 Pre-Health  
students  
registered in  
SONIA seeking  
shadowing  
experiences

 PRE-HEALTH

# TELEPRESENCE ROBOT

Monthly robot shadows at St. Luke Community Healthcare Hospital in Ronan, MT. Up to 5 students can receive a virtual job shadow experience at a time.

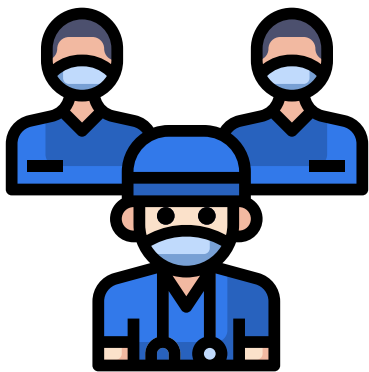
## WANT TO HOST A ROBOT?

Contact Katie Turner:  
[katie.turner@mso.umt.edu](mailto:katie.turner@mso.umt.edu)



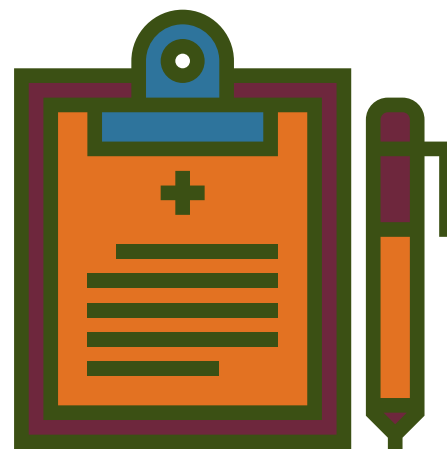
**Thank you Dr. Vigil, Dr. Lackman, and Sarah Taeff for your contribution to our students.**

# CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS



*1,630 Participants*

*July 2021-  
June 2022*



## Friday Medical Conference

1347 live attendance

1798 recorded attendance.

## COVID Update Series

283 live attendance.

1665 recorded attendance.



# Friday Medical Conference

*Friday Medical Conference (FMC) is a weekly Continuing Medical Education (CME) opportunity for physicians, healthcare professionals, and several healthcare student programs.*

## Topics in 2022 Included:

- Pathogenic Borrelia
- Update on Viral Infections
- Vaping-Induced Lung Injury
- Detecting Eating Disorders in Healthcare Settings
- Daily Resiliency Skills
- Pharmacy and Climate Change
- Climate Dread
- Psychedelic Assisted Therapies
- Gut Microbiome



## Involvement:

Average live attendance: 40

Average recorded views: 50+

# NEW PODCAST



*New continuing education opportunity with our partner Red Willow Learning Center. Monthly conversation-style podcast with mind/body thought leaders/educators. Each episode explores emerging modalities used to connect to our parasympathetic nervous system.*



# CDC COVID-19 HEALTH EQUITY GRANT UPDATE

Advancing health equity through strategies and interventions that address historic and systemic barriers

## WESTERN REGION TASKFORCE

- 31+ members across 7 different counties and 1 reservation make up the Western Region Taskforce.
- Top 3 Priority Areas are:
  - LGBTQ+ Education in Healthcare
  - American Indian Leadership in Health Equity
  - Behavioral Health/Substance Use Disorder
- Monthly, 60-min meeting & Quarterly, 60-min meeting
  - Over 50% attendance rates



## COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Supporting critical access hospitals with CHNAs by enhancing community engagement & survey outreach.

## COMMUNITY FIRST

Creating and encouraging partnerships across sectors to better serve patients and communities.



## COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS

## COMMUNITY INTEGRATED HEALTH WORKERS

Increase funding, training, and workforce for CHW/CIHW in W Montana. Provide equity feedback and support for regional supervisor.

# LOOKING AHEAD TO 2022-2023

Healthcare providers, facilities, and training programs are in a season of reflection since the height of COVID-19.

WMT AHEC is approaching our programs with intersectional approaches to create a unique experience for students and communities. WMT AHEC is focused on furthering the expansion of relationships in high schools, communities, and tribal colleges.

- Health Equity & Community Engagement Focus:
  - WMT AHEC will support cross-collaboration of projects focused on the three priority areas: 1. LGBTQIA+ Education in Healthcare, American Indian Leadership in Healthcare, and Behavioral Health & Substance Abuse.
  - Foster relationships among the seven counties in WMT by assisting with Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNA) for critical access hospitals.
- WWAMI:
  - Work with healthcare providers and facilities in Western Montana to continue providing clerkship opportunities during the pandemic. Also, expand elective offerings and integrate new faculty into the program.
  - Engage students in our new hospitalist elective.
- Pre-Med Job Shadow Program:
  - Continue to integrate students back into clinics and hospitals.
  - Working to expand the "robot" telepresence within Missoula and across the state.
  - Utilize our software program SONIA to assist with job shadow scheduling and paperwork.
- AHEC Scholars:
  - Beginning February, AHEC Scholars will provide a Health Equity series highlighting community organizations and speakers that focus on closing gaps of inequity around Montana.
- Career Awareness:
  - Expand REACH camps to off-site facilities throughout the Western region focusing on the recruitment of American Indian and BIPOC students into health professions.
- BHWET:
  - Work to increase the number of 'simulation-style' trainings for future BHWET cohorts. One training is in the works for the current cohort.



# *Advisory Board Members*

**Thank you for your service and support.**

- **Maria Clemons**, Executive Director, Northwest Community Health Center
- **Jennifer Courtney**, Principal, Big Sky High School
- **Jay Erickson, MD**, Associate Dean, WWAMI
- **Devin Huntley**, Director of Hospital Operations, Providence St. Joseph Medical Center
- **Greg Hanson, MD**, President and CEO, Clark Fork Valley Hospital
- **Reed Humphrey**, Dean, College of Health Professions, UM
- **Debra Krantz**, Regional Manager, Montana Department of Labor and Industry
- **Jen Robohm**, Clinical Associate Professor of Medicine in Behavioral Science, Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana
- **Brenda Solorzano**, CEO, Headwaters Foundation
- **Karyn Trainor**, Providence St. Patrick Hospital
- **Marcie Willmore**, Director of Adult Acute Care Services, Community Medical Center
- **Tom Gallagher**, Dean, Missoula College
- **Cindy Stergar**, CEO Montana Primary Care Association
- **Alan Pule**, St. Ignatius Schools
- **Kristin Hilton**, Director of Nursing, Salish Kootenai College



*Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities,  
and communities to better health.*

