

# 2021 Annual Report



## Western New York Rural Area Health Education Center

Mission: Improve health and health care  
through education.

## About WNY R-AHEC...

R-AHEC is a non-profit organization headquartered in Warsaw, New York. Our mission is “to improve health and healthcare through education.” Counties served include Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Steuben, Wayne, Wyoming, and Yates.

**Health Workforce Development:** Through various grant based and independent initiatives, current healthcare workforce is offered a variety of on-going skills training, career ladder development, and professional skills development. Projects are designed to build and retain a skilled healthcare workforce.

**Student Housing:** The Thiel Hospitality House offers medical and health profession students’ opportunities to connect with rural preceptors during clinical rotations.

**Pipeline Programming for Youth:** Offers health career education and career path development for youth at all school levels. Activities include classroom presentations, field trips, shadowing experiences with local healthcare providers, all aimed at exploring the various careers in healthcare.

**Health Information Technology Support:** The Western New York Rural Broadband Healthcare Network (WNY RBHN) is a consortium of partners in rural, urban, and medically underserved areas of Western New York and surrounding regions, which utilizes the FCC’s Rural Health Program and the Healthcare Connect Fund to enable eligible facilities to provide better access to care through telemedicine.

**Community Health Education:** Through Resources for Education and Awareness of Community Health (REACH), initiatives are implemented to improve community awareness of various health issues.

## Letter from the Executive Director



On behalf of the Board of Directors and staff, I want to thank you for your continued support this past year. This report reflects the programmatic aspects of our efforts throughout 2021.

Our organizational goals and activities focused on advocacy to ensure continued state funding, evaluating existing programs and employing new recruitment strategies, and recruiting and training new program staff.

A local foundation generously awarded funding through its iCap Program which provided a capacity planning consultant to assess the organization’s strengths and weaknesses. The board and staff worked closely with a consultant to identify areas of focus for capacity building that include marketing, strategic planning, staff development, and board governance. We will be developing a three-year capacity building plan. This has been an eye-opening process and we are excited about the dialogue and ideas that have come from these discussions!

This past year was a year of challenges and opportunities. Although there has been a lot of changes, we have weathered the challenges and with a great team of new and current staff, we anticipate great things. In 2022, we are looking forward to another exciting and productive year!

Sincerely,

Melanie Rhodes, Executive Director

# WNY R-AHEC 2021 Financial Report

**Income:**

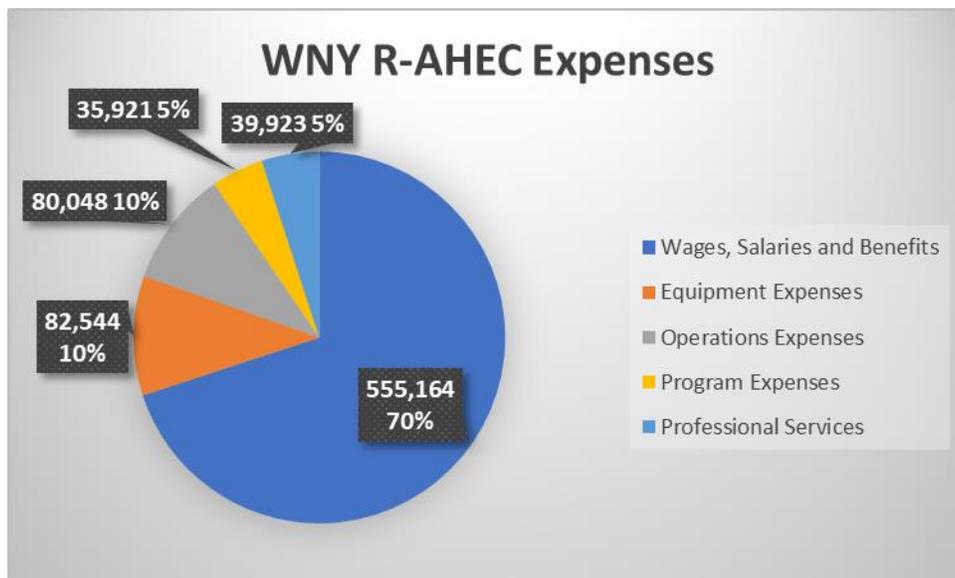
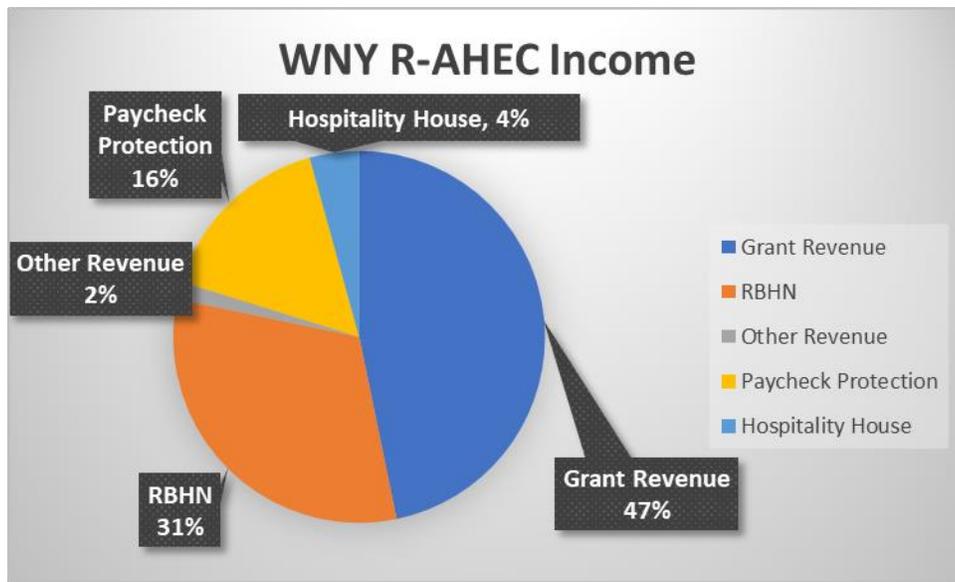
Grant Revenue	\$437, 958
RBHN	\$295,160
Other Revenue	\$ 14,254
Paycheck Protection	\$149,000
Hospitality House	\$ 40,260
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$936,632</b>

**Expenses:**

Wages, Salaries and Benefits	\$555,164
Equipment Expenses	\$ 82,544
Operations Expenses	\$ 80,048
Program Services	\$ 35,921
Professional Services	\$39,923
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$793,600</b>

Net Income \$143,143

*\*unaudited financials*



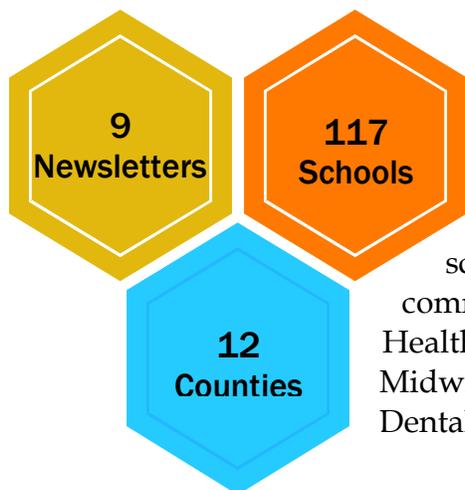
## 2021 Programming Highlights...



### AHEC Scholars and Champions

These two-year academic programs are designed to provide current health professional students from various disciplines with community-based learning opportunities in underserved and medically disadvantaged areas. In 2021, three Scholars and one champion completed the Scholars Program and received NYS AHEC certificates. During the 2021 summer program, from July 12th through July 30<sup>th</sup>, R-AHEC hosted five students from SUNY Geneseo and Rochester Institute of Technology

(RIT). Students in the 3-week program completed experiential activities in the local community with Cleveland Emotional health, Mercy flight, Lighthouse Station Maternity Home, the Warsaw Food Pantry, Chicory Bay Health Coaching and with Spectrum Human Services. Students created a mental health presentation which they shared with the Warsaw Community at the end of the 3-week program.



### Career Newsletters

Due to Covid restrictions, programming staff relied on partnerships with local school counselors and focused on virtual distribution of the student newsletter to 117 schools in the 12 counties to students, colleagues, and the community. Highlighted careers/topics include Public Health Educator, Dental Hygienist, Pharmacist, Nurse Midwife, AHEC Scholar, Chiropractor, Audiologist, EMT, and Dental Assistant.

### SEPA (Science Education Partnership Award)

This five-year program (June 15, 2020 – April 30, 2025) gives high school students and teachers the opportunity to learn how to use metagenomic data tools to conduct research about the organisms in local waterways. During 2021, Dr. Stephen Koury and Michael Chiulli, a LeRoy teacher, have been busy with LeRoy students prepping Oatka Creek bacterial DNA samples for sequencing (Research Lab High School also collected samples from Broderick Park).



## Health Workforce Development

### ATHOS (Advancement Training for Healthcare Occupations)



**Care Coordinator Certificate Program:** The Workforce Challenge Grant ended on January 15, 2022 and R-AHEC staff will continue providing case management and annual reports for the next two years, while looking to expand this program. R-AHEC served 137 participants in seven cohorts and a pilot group between 2020-2021.

In our most recent attempt to collect data (via email) with a post survey which was emailed to 119 individuals that are being case managed, we had a return rate of 32% (January 2022). 37% of the individuals reported securing a new job or promotion (in-demand job in the health care industry) since completing the program (14/38).

- 100% of individuals completing the program reported being satisfied to extremely satisfied with the program (84% reported being very satisfied or extremely satisfied).
- 95% of individuals reported being very likely or likely to refer a friend/co-worker to participate in this program.

Individuals also reported that completion of this program allowed them to do the following:

- Complete required professional development
- Earn a credit (wanted, needed, required)
- Other items reported were; job security, skills needed to hopefully receive a job promotion soon, job knowledge, self-education, resources, certification for resume, explore resources, looks good on a resume, increase training towards a career change, learn valuable information to help with day to day interactions with patients, consider a new career path, more knowledge

### OPEP (Opioid Prevention Education Project)



Despite COVID challenges, R-AHEC was able to reach 281 high school and college students through 15 “tabling” events or informative sessions focusing on opioid misuse and abuse, stigma, prevention, and treatment. These sessions were designed to increase awareness about the opioid epidemic and to educate participants on current prevention efforts as well as available treatment services in their community. In addition, we were able to reach 218 healthcare professionals and community members through a webinar series.

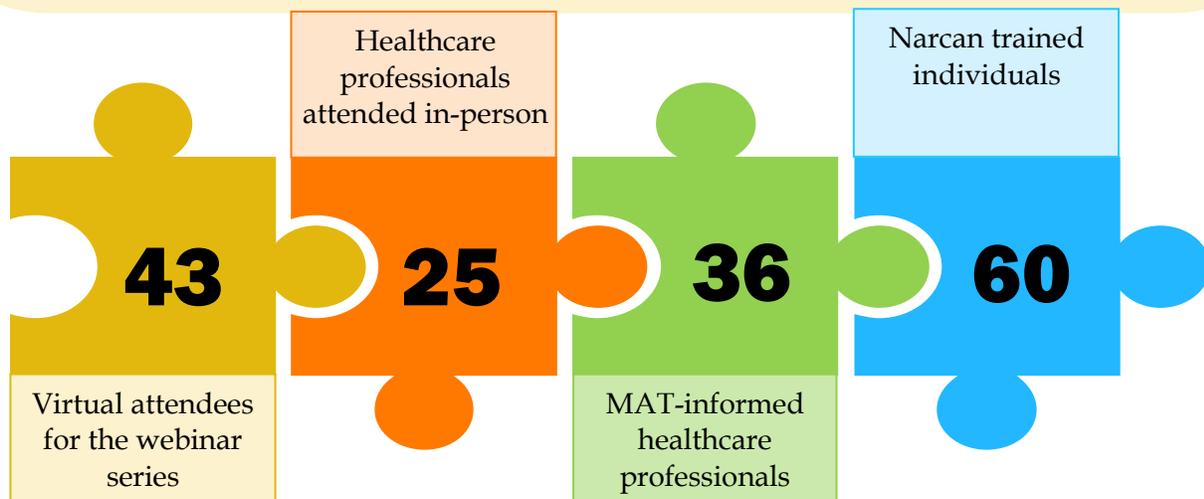
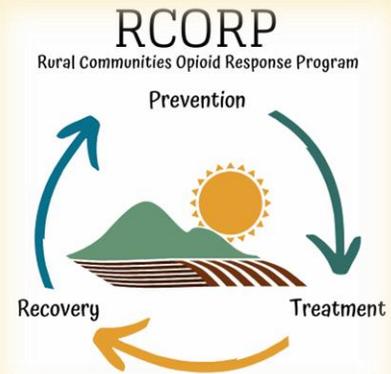
**281**  
high school/  
college  
students

**218**  
professionals  
and  
community  
members

## RCORP (Rural Communities Opioid Response Program)

This program aims to strengthen and expand SUD/ODU prevention, treatment, and recovery service delivery within Wyoming County. R-AHEC partnered with NYS AHEC and Spectrum Human Services to meet the objectives of this initiative. Activities in 2021 included Naloxone trainings as well as trainings relating to SUD/ODU prevention, treatment, recovery, destigmatizing addiction, local related resources, and information regarding Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT).

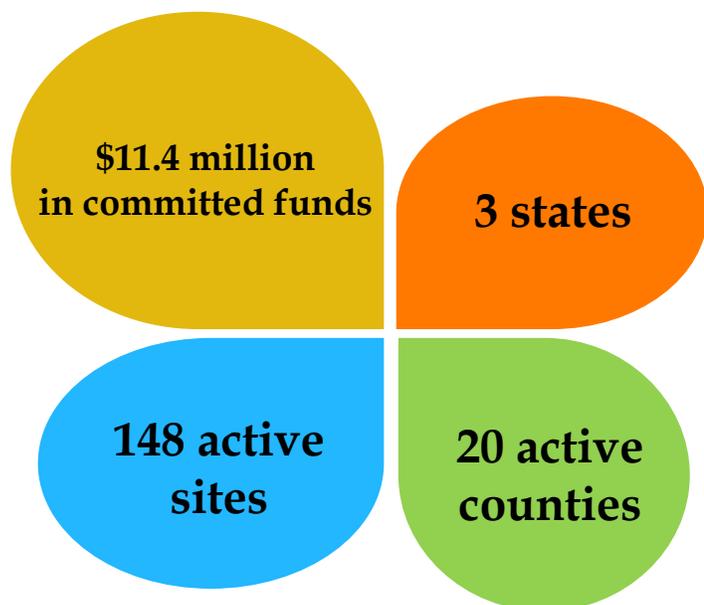
R-AHEC staff in conjunction with Spectrum Human Services developed *Choosing Hope 2*, a four-session webinar series which ran on Tuesdays in March. Topics included medicated assisted treatment, Covid-19 impacts on opioid addiction, stigma as an enemy to recovery and self-care and mental health connections to addiction and recovery. If you missed attending the series in person, check out our website for the recordings at [www.r-ahec.org](http://www.r-ahec.org).



## Health Information Technology Support



R-AHEC, as the consortium lead and administrator of the Western NY Rural Broadband Healthcare Network (WNY RBHN), has worked on behalf of network members since 2009 to obtain subsidies through the FCC’s Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) and to identify and develop other network member benefits such as online education opportunities. This program subsidizes broadband services, equipment, and installation for eligible facilities. Through access to high speed broadband, members are able to utilize clinical mentoring, collaboration, education, and training over secure, high speed networks with scalable bandwidth to support communication, telemedicine, and distance-learning applications. The Healthcare Connect Fund (HCF) offers up to a 65% subsidy and allows administrative offices and data centers to participate.



WNY RBHN continues to expand our network of 148 active sites across Upstate New York, Northern Pennsylvania, and Eastern Massachusetts to strengthen healthcare facilities and organizations by reducing their telecommunications costs. The network currently provides funding for 219 circuits spread throughout the 148 active sites. The program requires that the network must maintain a rurality percentage of 50% or greater. Currently the WNY RBHN rural percentage is at a healthy 60.00%. From FY2015 through FY2021 we have secured \$11.4 million in funding commitments.

In December 2020 WNY R-AHEC in partnership with Horizon Health Services submitted a project application for the Connected Care Pilot Program (CCPP). In October of 2021 the pilot project was selected for the Connected Care Pilot Program. The project will provide up to \$373,320 in Connected Care support to provide remote treatment and video consults to primarily low-income patients who require mental health and opioid-dependency services.

## Student Housing and Preceptor Development

R-AHEC served a total of 53 individuals for a total of 1,115 nights. We worked collaboratively with colleges and academic institutions to identify preceptor sites for their health professions students in rural communities throughout Western New York. R-AHEC's efforts included providing housing for

health professional students at the William F. Thiel Hospitality House. We were able to provide housing for 12 medical students serving in clinical rotations in our twelve-county catchment area. R-AHEC worked collaboratively with WCCHS, Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine (LECOM), University of Buffalo and Genesee Community College to provide supportive housing to students completing rotations in Family Medicine, Emergency Medicine, Physical Therapy, and Occupational Therapy. We are very grateful that the William F. Thiel Trust, a fund held by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo, was able to make this project possible.



In addition to housing health professions students, 14 community members were able to take advantage of the accommodations and 15 frontline medical professionals serving at Wyoming County Community Health System (WCCHS) were able to stay during the battle against COVID and 12 veterinary students doing internships in the area.

## Current Staff 2022

**Melanie Rhodes** – Executive Director

**Sara Longhini** – Director of Programs

**Larry Hoyt** – Staff Accountant

**Christine Chappel** – Administrative Coordinator

**Erin Brauen** – Program Coordinator

**Peter Appleton** – Program Coordinator

**Andrew Mills** – Program Assistant



## 2021 Board of Directors

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*WNY R-AHEC is an equal opportunity employer and provider*