

**History of NYSARH at our 20th Anniversary**

New York State Senator Charles D. Cook [Assembly 1973-1978; Senate 1979-1998] was the first chairman of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, which became known nationally for its programs to address the needs of rural residents. As chairman, he authored the legislation which established the New York State Office of Rural Health, which was later named after him, and founded the program of state grants to assist rural health care providers in extending and maintaining services in rural communities. He was credited in helping to maintain a $10,000,000 annual budgetary appropriation to support rural hospitals in diversifying and expanding outpatient services.

The Rural Health Network program was launched in 1997.

The genesis of New York State Association for Rural Health was dialogue among a few Rural Health Network Directors in 2001. The founding board members were all affiliated with Rural Health Networks. They included Barry Brogan, Jim Kennedy, Andrea Haridon, Patricia Koda, Jackie Leaf, Ken Oakley, Reid Perkins, Jim Sylvester, DeeDee Wendland, Elizabeth Wittenberg and Carrie Whitwood.

They invited Al Grant via the National Rural Health Association [NRHA] who provided technical assistance to enable NYSARH to apply for the first NRHA grant. A few members travelled to an NRHA ‘boot-camp’ for training. NYSARH has received this $9,500 annual grant from the federal Office of Rural Health Policy as a NRHA sub-awardee ever since.

Karen Madden at the NYS DOH Charles D. Cook Office for Rural Health was always very supportive of NYSARH.

The first order of business for the fledgling organization was to host a Rural Health conference as a means to recruit more members. It was decided from the beginning that NYSARH would need to include a diversity of members [including hospitals, health centers, behavioral health, primary care, public health, workforce development and academia] in order to be viable and to achieve its goal to be the VOICE for RURAL HEALTH.

The rural Area Health Education Centers engaged with NYSARH early and have remained involved. Peter Beatty, PhD from the Upstate Rural Family Practice Residency Program joined early on. NYSARH also worked with community health planning organizations on health professional shortage designations.

From the beginning, NYSARH held an annual Advocacy Day in Albany. These events were usually organized with the assistance of the Legislative Commission on Rural Resources, the Healthcare Association of New York State [HANYS] and/or the Community Health Care Association of New York State [CHCANYS].

The Rural Health Council, an advisory board to the NYS Department of Health, was formed in 1998 and continued until 2017. Many NYSARH members served on the Rural Health Council, some for many years. These meetings usually attracted a live audience that was also composed of several NYSARH members [this is how people learned about state policies and regulations]. The meetings occurred three or four times a year and provided an opportunity for in-person networking.

For many NYSARH members, the Rural Health Conference is a highlight of their year. Year after year the conference committees pulled together good speakers on timely topics of importance to rural health. Alan Morgan, CEO of the NRHA has attended several times. Keynote speakers have been health policy leaders from the NYS and the federal government as well as academic and community rural policy leaders. Break out sessions have often been presented by NYSARH members to highlight the innovative work of their organizations. The conference has been offered in different locations to facilitate participation by members from all over the state.

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| **Year** | **Highlights** | **Conference** | **President** |
| 2001 | George Pataki is half-way through his time as Governor. George W. Bush is beginning his two terms as President. On September 11th, the U.S. is attacked by airplane hijackers. NYSARH was formed by a group of Rural Health Network Directors.  |  |  |
| 2002 | The NRHA provided guidance. NYSARH incorporated in July and received provisional 501(c) status from the IRS in December. Pat Koda was elected President in June. A few founding Board members attended NRHA training.  |  | Pat Koda |
| 2003 | NYSARH received funding from NRHA.  | Lake Placid | Jackie Leaf |
| 2004 | Healthcare costs were in the news. Health insurance was so expensive the number of uninsured people became a major concern. | Syracuse | Jackie Leaf |
| 2005 | The Institute of Medicine released *Quality through Collaboration: The Future of Rural Health* | Alexandria Bay | Barry Brogan |
| 2006 | The Commission on Rural Resources worked with Cornell University to conduct 11 ‘listening sessions’ culminating in the Future of Rural New York Symposium and Report. | Chautauqua | Barry Brogan |
| 2007 | Eliot Spitzer’s year as Governor. Administrative Services provided by Karen Mastronardi, CNYAHEC | Lake Placid | Jim Kennedy |
| 2008 | David Patterson becomes Governor unexpectedly. The NYS legislature falls into disarray. Administrative Services transitioned from CNY AHEC to Reid Perkins Consulting. NYSARH received permanent 501(c) status. | Corning | Jim Kennedy |
| 2009 | Barack Obama begins two terms as President of the United States. Strong Legislative Committee led by Barry Brogan. Pilot project for Telepsychiatry. Fred Heigel of HANYS organized visits for NYSARH members with legislators in Albany; primary priority was funding from the Office of Rural Health.  | Geneva | Collene Alexander |
| 2010 | The Affordable Care Act became law. The Regional Health Information Exchanges [RHIO, QE] began. NYSARH worked with S.U. to obtain CME for conference sessions to attract more clinicians; this initiative did not significantly change attendees. NYS Commissioner of health Richard Daines and Paul Moore, Office of Rural Health Policy spoke at the conference. National Rural Health Day was created by the NOSORH. | Villa Roma, Callicoon | Andrea Haridon |
| 2011 | Administrative Services transitioned from Reid Perkins to Kathy Carpenter. Andrew Cuomo began his first term as Governor and created the Medicaid Redesign Team.  | High Peaks Resort, Lake Placid | Andrea Haridon |
| 2012 | This was the time when CMS was pushing EMR adoption and ‘meaningful use’. NYS advocacy was ‘very impressive’. | Corning | Tricia Peter-Clark |
| 2013 | NYS created the Population Health Improvement Program to address ‘social determinants of health’. Many NYSARH members developed population health programs.  | Hidden Valley, Ellicottville | Tricia Peter-Clark |
| 2014 | The NYS Nonprofit Revitalization Act went into effect. CMS approved the NYS §1115 Waiver authorizing $8 billion for DSRIP. New York implemented the NY State of Health insurance exchange with great fanfare. Many NYSARH members became navigators. Jason Helgerson, NYS Medicaid Director, spoke at the conference.  | Craftsman Inn, Fayetteville | Don Rowe |
| 2015 | The NYS budget ‘pooled’ several local assistance programs and cut Rural Health Development by 15%. Jim Knickman, CEO of the NYS Health Foundation gave the keynote address. | Ramada, Geneva | Don Rowe |
| 2016 | NYSARH launched a student platform on its website. CMS created a Rural Health Council. Donald Trump won the Presidential election.  | Harbor Lights, Clayton | Sara Wall Bollinger |
| 2017 | The Board held a Strategic Planning Retreat in Rochester in June. The plan for 2018-2020 was approved in December. | Mohonk, New Paltz | Sara Wall Bollinger |
| 2018 | Administrative Services transitioned from Kathy Carpenter to Seven Valleys Health Coalition. NYSARH added a Wednesday ‘pre-conference’ with CEUs for Social Work from SUNY Buffalo. NYSARH published an annual report and launched a quarterly digital newsletter with a distribution list of 1000+. | Greek Peak/ Hope Lodge, Cortland | Richard Merchant |
| 2019 | Administrative Services transitioned from Seven Valleys Health Coalition to Northern AHEC. NYSARH began the Third Thursday Webinar Series. NYSARH unexpectedly received a $1million legislative appropriation to administer pass-through funds. The conference featured a blue-ribbon panel on rural EMS.  | Convention Center, Niagara Falls | Richard Merchant |
| 2020 | The whole world was changed by the coronavirus pandemic. The NYS budget did not include funding for the AHEC system. All state contracts and payments were delayed and reduced.  | Virtual | Helen Evans |

Several board members reported that the there was a ‘very difficult period’ in the late ‘00s. There were some competing priorities and dissention among board members. Andrea Haridon was given credit for getting the organization back on track.

The NRHA Policy Institute provided an annual opportunity for NYSARH to send representatives to Washington, D.C. For several years Ann Abdella, Barry Brogan, Jim Kennedy and Jackie Leaf participated. More recently Helen Evans, Urbanski Liz Farrell, Claire Parde, Richard Merchant and Rob Wingate have made the trek.

Several people interviewed for this summary commented that board service for NYSARH was more work than board service at most other organizations. The board has tried to address this by engaging various people or organizations to provide Administrative Services. The first such organization was CNY AHEC, then Reid Perkins, Kathy Carpenter, Seven Valleys Health Coalition, NAHEC and now Health Workforce NY. All these contractors provided valuable services, but the workload for board members remains high.

As the founders rotated off the board, some other members rose in importance. Some of these were Ann Abdella, Collene Alexander, Tim Bobo, Sara Wall Bollinger, Ashima Butler, Pat Conole, Charlotte Crawford, Pam Hildebrand, Joyce Hyatt, Donna Kahm, Sharon Mathe, Richard Merchant, Claire Parde, Tricia Peter-Clark, Don Rowe and Rob Wingate.

*People who contributed to this Summary*

*Barry Brogan*

*Kathy Carpenter*

*Tricia Clark*

*Steve Jennings*

*Jim Kennedy*

*Patricia Koda*

*Jackie Leaf*

*Karen Madden*

*Sharon Mathe*

*Reid Perkins*

*Don Rowe*

*Carrie Whitwood*

*Sara Wall Bollinger*