2026 Annual RHAU Conference

Stronger Together: Uniting for Rural Health Transformation

Dixie Convention Center

St. George, Utah

November 4-5, 2026

RHAU Conference Day 1

Wednesday, November 4, 2026

Time	Topic	Speaker	Location
10:00 a.m.	**Registration Opens**		North Registration Desk
10:30-12:00 p.m.	**ACHE Live In-Person Event** Successfully Leading Change in Healthcare Organizations	Matthew Nemelka David Dirks Hunter Adams Mark Holyoak	Garden Room
12:00-12:10	**Lunch Sponsor Message**	Jeremy Glass Arch Nexus	Garden Room
12:10-1:00 p.m.	**Lunch & RHAU Corporate Sponsors Highlights** *UHIN* *The Utah Marriage Commission* *University of Utah Neuroscience Outreach* *Westland Construction*	Kasey Shakespear & Sponsor Representatives	Garden Room
1:00-1:30 p.m.	**Break -** Information tables and poster sessions		Garden Room & Ballroom
1:30-4:30 p.m.	**RHAU Conference Workshops**		Sunbrook A Sunbrook B Sunbrook C Entrada A
---------- **Networking Event** ---------- *Sponsored by Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine*			
4:30-5:40 p.m.	**RHAU Networking Social**		Garden Room & Ballroom
5:40-5:50 p.m.	**Networking Event Sponsor Message**	Corey Ercanbrack Vasion	Garden Room
5:50-6:00 p.m.	**Title Sponsor Message**	Dr. Anand Lalaji The Radiology Group	Garden Room

6:00-6:30 p.m.	**Welcome & RHAU Annual Update Presentation**	Matt McCullough & Kasey Shakespear	Garden Room
6:30-7:00 p.m.	**Presentation of RHAU Annual Awards, Rural Health Impact Awards & the Deb Lamarche Telehealth Award**	Matt McCullough, Kasey Shakespear, Marc Watterson, Marz Cesarini	Garden Room

RHAU Conference Day 2

Thursday, November 5, 2026

Time	Topic	Speaker	Location
7:30 a.m.	**Registration & Info Tables open**		North Registration Desk
7:30-8:00 a.m.	**Networking Breakfast** *Sponsored by Molina Healthcare*		Garden Room & Ballroom
7:50-8:00 a.m.	**Breakfast Sponsor Message**	Maura Mendenhall Molina Healthcare	Garden Room
---------- ***Keynote Session*** ---------- *Sponsored by STAT*			
8:00-8:20 a.m.	**Conference Welcome**	Matt McCullough & Kasey Shakespear	Garden Room
8:20-8:30 a.m.	**Fueled Growth Partners Message**	Jeff Mitchell	Garden Room
8:30-9:30 a.m.	***Keynote Address:*** PUSH WHAT'S POSSIBLE: The Olympic Formula for Breakthrough Performance in Any Season	Johnny Quinn, CSP	Garden Room
9:30-10:00 a.m.	**Morning Break** - Information tables and poster sessions		Garden Room & Ballroom
10:00-11:00 a.m.	**Breakout Session 1**		Sunbrook A Sunbrook B Sunbrook C Entrada A
11:00-11:05 a.m.	**Snack Sponsor Message**	Bonnie Fecowicz Nightingale Solutions	Garden Room
11:05-11:30 a.m.	**Mid-Conference Break** - Snacks, Information tables and poster sessions		Garden Room & Ballroom

11:30-12:30 p.m.	**Breakout Session 2**		Sunbrook A
			Sunbrook B
			Sunbrook C
			Entrada A
---------- Plenary Session ---------- *Sponsored by the University of Utah's Huntsman Cancer Institute*			
12:30-1:00 p.m.	**Lunch**		Garden Room
1:00-1:15 p.m.	**Lunch Sponsor's Message**	Lena Chamra Filewave	Garden Room
1:15-2:00 p.m.	***Utah RHTP Updates & Year 2 Outlook***	Krisann Humphreys, Christine Espinel, Jackie Patel, Stacey Herpel	Garden Room
2:00-3:00 p.m.	**Utah Legislative Panel**	Marc Watterson Evan Vickers Jen Dailey-Provost Logan Reid Zil Joyce Dixon Romero	Garden Room
3:00-3:05 p.m.	**Snack Sponsor Message**	Annie Simkins Hughes General Contractors	Garden Room
3:05-3:30 p.m.	**Afternoon Break** - Snacks, Information tables, and poster sessions		Garden Room & Ballroom
3:30-4:30 p.m.	**Breakout Session 3**		Sunbrook A
			Sunbrook B
			Sunbrook C
			Entrada A
4:30-5:00 p.m.	**Awards, Prizes, & Adjourning the Conference**		Garden Room

Conference Workshop Details

Conference Workshop Track 1	
Bridging the Gap: Advancing Age-Friendly Health Care for Older Adults in Rural Utah	Sunbrook A
Description: Utah's rural older adults face growing challenges in accessing coordinated, high-quality health care services. Workforce shortages, geographic isolation, transportation barriers, behavioral health needs, caregiver strain, digital inequities, and fragmented systems all contribute to disparities in health outcomes. Veterans and underserved populations in rural communities often experience even greater barriers to care continuity and specialized services. This three-hour interdisciplinary conference explores the current state of rural aging and health care delivery in Utah while highlighting innovative strategies that improve access, coordination, and outcomes for older adults. Participants will examine age-friendly health system principles, veteran-centered care models, telehealth and emerging technologies, behavioral health integration, caregiver support, and community partnerships that strengthen rural systems of care. Using the Age-Friendly Health Systems "4Ms" framework—What Matters, Medication, Mentation, and Mobility—participants will identify practical, scalable next steps Utah can take to improve rural aging services, reduce gaps, strengthen collaboration, and create a more responsive statewide system for older adults and family caregivers.	
Speakers: Robert Ence, MBA, Executive Director, Utah Commission on Aging; Cynthia Beynon, PhD, RN, CNE, Assistant Dean, MS, DNP, and Post-graduate APRN Programs, University of Utah College of Nursing; Rebecca Garner,FNP-BC, University of Utah and Intermountain Health; Wes Godfrey, MD, Medical Director, Acute Care Geriatrics – Southwest Utah Market; Medical Director, CV Hospitalist Group – Utah Valley Hospital, Intermountain Health; Matt Hansen, MPT, DPT, MBA, Executive Director, Home Care and Hospice Association of Utah; Jaleen Johnson, BS, Assistant Program Director, Northwest Regional Telehealth Resource Center; Joel Macey, MS, MPA, President and CEO, Community Nursing Services; Jen Morgan, B.S., Psychology, Certification in Conflict Resolution, Program Manager, University of Utah; Kelly Reeder, BA, CMC, Assistant Director, AAA, Five County AOG/AAA ; Erin Rand, RN, BSN, Trauma Outreach and Injury Prevention Coordinator, Intermountain Health; Rand Rupper, MD, MPH, Professor, University of Utah Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine; Anna Sadler, BS, Program Coordinator & PR Specialist, Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Research Center (ADRC), Utah State University; Carrie Schonlaw, SSW, Five County Association of Governments/Area Agency on Aging, Deputy Director/Area Agency on Aging Director	
Workshop Sponsor: UnityBPO	

Conference Workshop Track 2	
Building the Future of Rural Telehealth: Utah's LIFT Initiative, Telehealth Alliance Priorities, and an AI Scribe Success in Rural Care	Sunbrook B
Description: Utah's rural communities are entering a pivotal moment for telehealth transformation. This session will provide an in-depth look at the	

Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) LIFT Initiative, including Year One milestones and progress and priorities for Year Two. Participants will gain insight into statewide telehealth infrastructure planning, digital readiness efforts, and the early implementation strategies shaping Utah's five-year transformation roadmap. The session will also include an update on the Telehealth Alliance Steering Committee, a multi-sector group guiding statewide telehealth strategy, identifying priority needs, and informing funding recommendations. Attendees will learn how the Alliance is shaping Utah's telehealth ecosystem and how rural partners can engage in upcoming planning and implementation activities. To ground the discussion in real-world innovation, the workshop will highlight a telehealth-enabled AI scribe use case featuring Moab Regional Hospital and AVO, an AI-powered clinical documentation tool (https://www.avomd.com/). This case study will explore how rural providers are leveraging AI to reduce administrative burden, improve documentation accuracy, and increase provider capacity—demonstrating how emerging technologies can support sustainable telehealth expansion in frontier settings.Participants will leave with a clearer understanding of statewide telehealth priorities, opportunities for collaboration, and practical examples of innovation that can be replicated across rural Utah.	
Speakers: Sarah Bauman, MBA, Director of Telehealth Services, Utah Telehealth Network, Andy Paulsen, MBA, MHA, RHTP Manager, Utah Telehealth Network, William Gustin, Chief Medical Officer, Moab Regional Hospital	
Workshop Sponsor: Stealth Wireless	

Conference Workshop Track 3	
The Golden Spike of Rural Healthcare: Connecting Data and Decisions Improves Operational Results – A Utah-based case study	Sunbrook C
Description: Rural hospitals and clinics collect valuable clinical, financial, and operational information, but it often remains scattered across separate systems and reports. Connecting that information is an important first step. Lasting improvement happens when leaders and frontline teams understand the story behind the numbers, trust what they see, and know how to respond. Using the completion of the transcontinental railroad at Promontory Summit as a guiding theme, this interactive workshop will show how connected data can strengthen rural healthcare. Real-world examples from Blue Mountain Hospital, Uintah Basin Healthcare, and rural health clinics will demonstrate how tools already in use are improving reimbursement, reducing denials and write-offs, strengthening provider and clinic performance, and helping teams make better use of operating rooms and other limited resources. The workshop will then look beyond current operations to consider how the same infrastructure can support population health and value-based reimbursement models. The session will conclude by exploring hub-and-spoke relationships between rural providers, Intermountain Health, and other integrated delivery networks—including how data pipelines can extend specialized capabilities into rural communities without eroding local ownership or control.	
Speakers: John Wadsworth, MSBMI, Co-Founder & CEO, REDi Health	
Workshop Sponsor: REDi Health	

Conference Workshop Track 4	
RHC Practice Manager's Workshop	Entrada A
Description: Effective practice management extends beyond day-to-day operations—it requires a proactive approach to compliance, documentation, financial performance, and quality improvement. This session provides a high-level overview of key practice management principles, including regulatory updates, compliance program fundamentals, documentation best practices, revenue cycle considerations, and operational strategies that support a successful and sustainable practice. Attendees will leave with practical insights into identifying compliance risks, strengthening internal processes, and preparing their organizations for an ever-changing healthcare environment.	
Speakers: Tressa Sacrey, BA, Director of Compliance & Education, Health Service Associates	
Workshop Sponsor: Utah RHC Network	

Breakout Session Details

Track A: Graduate Medical Training
Track B: Resources in Rural Health
Track C: Healthcare Leadership
Track D: Mental Health and Wellness

Breakout 1		**10:00-11:00 a.m.**
1A	*Show Me a Med Student That Only Triples My Work..." How to structure clinical teaching so that we can get home in time for dinner.*	Sunbrook A
	Description: This session will explore ethical and practical strategies for integrating medical students more effectively into clinical care teams, particularly in rural settings. Drawing on best practices, current literature, and insights from experienced physician preceptors, the presentation will examine how learners can contribute meaningfully to patient care while allowing physicians to practice at the top of their license. Participants will discuss the benefits and challenges of teaching students and residents, with a focus on efficient, team-based models that enhance learning outcomes while minimizing additional time burden for providers.	
	Speakers: Brandon Hall, MD, FAAFP, Vice Chair of Primary Care & Assistant Professor, Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine, Michael Banasky, BIS, Student Doctor, Rocky Vista University College of Osteopathic Medicine.	
	Session Sponsor: Utah Center for Rural Health	
1B	*Closing the Distance in Rural Utah: How to Build a Volunteer*	Sunbrook B

	Transportation Program	
	Description: Rural transportation barriers limit access to healthcare, food, and other essential services, especially in geographically isolated communities. This breakout session will highlight a successful volunteer rideshare program developed in rural Utah through local partnerships and innovative funding strategies. Marry Ramirez will share how the program was built through collaboration with partners in Sanpete and Millard counties and support from Intermountain Health's Community Health Grant Fund to reimburse volunteer drivers. Attendees will learn practical strategies for building partnerships, securing funding, establishing referral processes, and recruiting and retaining volunteer drivers.The session will also cover lessons learned, common challenges, and the program's impact on improving access to medical appointments, food resources, and other essential services, with strategies that can be adapted in other rural communities.	
	Speakers: Marry Ramirez, MHL, Community Health Program Manager, Intermountain Health, Jeff Wallace, MS, Chairman of the Board, Sanpete Family Resource Center, Deyanira Berenice Diaz, CHW, Executive Director & Ride Share Program Manager, Millard Resource Center	
	Session Sponsor: Red Rock Audio Innovations	
1C	*Elevating Revenue Cycle Performance: How Leadership Alignment Drives Cash Collections*	Sunbrook C
	Description: Elevating revenue cycle performance and ultimately improving cash collections requires more than process fixes. It relies on intentional strategy, cross-departmental collaboration, and the active involvement of cross-functional leaders who champion revenue cycle priorities across the organization. This session will explore how engaged leadership at every level can directly influence efficiency, accountability, and financial outcomes. Attendees will learn the foundational components of revenue cycle excellence, how to identify and prioritize the KPIs that matter most, and how cross-functional leaders can align teams around shared goals to drive sustainable improvement.	
	Speakers: Amy Graham, MBA, CRHCP, Principal, Stroudwater	
	Session Sponsor: Community Hospital Corporation	
1D	*Breaking the Cycle: Trauma, Biology, and Rural Care*	Entrada A
	Description: Rural providers often care for patients whose health is shaped by early adversity, limited resources, and multigenerational stress. This session will explore how emerging research in epigenetics explains the impact of trauma, poverty, and chronic stress on gene expression and long-term physical and mental health outcomes, translating complex science into practical clinical applications for rural healthcare professionals. Participants will examine how adverse childhood experiences and toxic stress may appear in common rural clinical settings, including depression, chronic disease, behavioral health concerns, and substance use. The session will emphasize resilience, neuroplasticity, and opportunities for prevention and early intervention, while highlighting practical trauma-informed strategies that can be integrated into time-limited, resource-constrained rural practice settings.	

	Speakers: David Thibault, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, PMHS, Assistant Professor, Nurse Practitioner, Utah Tech University, Norman Thibault, PhD, LMFT	
	Session Sponsor: Intermountain Children's Health	
Breakout 2		**11:30-12:30 p.m.**
2A	*Interested in rural GME? What you need to know, from community need to financing*	Sunbrook A
	Description: This breakout session will provide an overview of the requirements and pathways for establishing rural Graduate Medical Education (GME) programs, including key accreditation components and terminology such as Sponsoring Institution (SI), Designated Institutional Official (DIO), and Program Director (PD). Participants will learn how Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services funds GME programs through Direct Graduate Medical Education (DGME) and Indirect Medical Education (IME) payments, while reviewing common program structures, challenges, and "gotchas" to avoid. The session will also highlight Utah-specific funding opportunities, including state grant funding and potential Rural Health Transformation Program (RHTP) support available to help launch new GME programs in Utah.	
	Speakers: Michael Rhodes, MD, Noorda College of Osteopathic Medicine	
	Session Sponsor: Noorda College of Osteopathic Medicine	
2B	*From Assessment to Action: Improving Healthy Food Access in Rural Utah*	Sunbrook B
	Description: Access to healthy, affordable food is essential for overall health, yet many rural Utah communities face barriers such as long travel distances, limited retail options, transportation challenges, and high food costs, contributing to disparities in health outcomes. This session will highlight Get Healthy Utah's Healthy Food Access Project in rural Utah, a community-informed, nationally funded initiative supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Urban Institute. Using examples from Price and Carbon County, participants will learn how tools such as Healthy Food Walk Audits, surveys, and mapping were used to identify barriers including transportation, affordability, and access to culturally relevant foods, and translate findings into local strategies. Attendees will also be introduced to Get Healthy Utah's guide, "How to Conduct a Healthy Food Access Assessment," and leave with practical tools and a replicable process for improving food access in their own communities.	
	Speakers: Alysia Ducuara, MS, CHES, Executive Director, Get Healthy Utah, Emma Andreasen, MA, Project Coordinator, Get Healthy Utah	
	Session Sponsor: HCA Healthcare	
2C	*Winning the Talent Battle: How to Build a Magnetic Brand*	Sunbrook C
	Description: Rural health centers and hospitals in Utah face unique	

	workforce challenges: geographic isolation, limited candidate pools, budget constraints, and competition from urban systems. In today's healthcare environment, candidates research employers before ever submitting an application. For rural facilities, this means reputation and digital presence directly influence recruitment success. In this practical and interactive session, Chris Sund shares proven strategies rural healthcare organizations can use to strengthen their employer brand, improve retention, and compete for talent without large marketing budgets. Participants will evaluate how their organization appears to potential candidates online, clarify their employer value proposition, and explore leadership behaviors that directly impact retention. Drawing from real-world workforce scaling experience in rural and community healthcare settings, this session provides actionable tools that rural Utah health leaders can immediately implement to strengthen workforce stability and long-term sustainability.	
	Speakers: Christopher Sund, Maxwell Leadership Certified Speaker | Coach | Trainer, President & COO, Uniti Med & GQR Healthcare	
	Session Sponsor: Fueled Growth Partners/Active8 Health	
2D	*Combined Purpose, Greater Impact: Unifying Rural Disability and Mental Health Systems Through Cross-Sector Partnerships*	Entrada A
	Description: Rural communities face higher disability prevalence, elevated suicide rates, workforce shortages, and limited behavioral health infrastructure. For individuals with disabilities, these challenges are compounded by isolation, transportation barriers, stigma, and fragmented systems of care that operate in silos.This session will highlight the Multicultural Disability Network and Training (MULDINET) initiative, which strengthens statewide collaboration and improves access to inclusive community supports for people with disabilities across rural and diverse populations. Over the past three years, MULDINET has grown to approximately 450 members across more than 20 organizations, supporting shared learning and resource alignment.Through case examples, including online learning resources, regional convenings, and collaborative resource development, participants will explore strategies to strengthen cross-sector partnerships, reduce fragmentation, and build more integrated rural disability and behavioral health systems.	
	Speakers: Eduardo Ortiz, Ph.D., J.D., Project Director, Mindy Dokos, MS, Media Specialist & Marketer, Hollie Enniss-Poe, ACMHC, CRC, Project Assistant; Multicultural Disability Network and Training MULDINET, Institute for Disability Research, Policy and Practice IDRPP	
	Session Sponsor: Nightingale Solutions	
Breakout 3		**3:30-4:30 p.m.**
3A	*Community Rootedness: How Building Community Engagement Experiences into Underserved Medical Education can Enrich Rural Clinical Training*	Sunbrook A
	Description: Rural Medical Education at the Spencer Fox Eccles School	

	of Medicine (SFESOM) is grounded in connection to place and community. RUUTE (Rural and Underserved Utah Training Experience) and TRUE (Tribal, Rural and Urban Underserved Education) are integrating to develop an Underserved Medicine Curriculum as the Southern Utah Regional Medical Campus welcomes its first rural-focused student cohort. The RUUTE Community Engagement Experience (CEE) immerses students in rural and underserved communities through either a one-month clinical block or a longitudinal clerkship. Students engage in community health modules, needs assessments, and interviews, culminating in a community-specific health intervention that can be expanded into a TRUE capstone project. Through sustained partnerships with clinicians, public health partners, and communities across Utah, these experiences build skills in community engagement, population health, and health systems improvement while strengthening rural training pathways and relationships with preceptors.	
	Speakers: Sarah Norton, MD, MA, MScGH, Assistant Professor, Co-Director of Tribal Rural Underserved Program, University of Utah Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine; Madelyn Carter, MD, DO, PhD - MPH, CPH, Director of Rural, Underserved and Regional Medical Education, University of Utah Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine; Stephanie Lyden, MD, Associate Professor, University of Utah Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine; Randy Hansen, University of Utah Spencer Fox Eccles School of Medicine	
	Session Sponsor: WeAreDocs	
3B	*What is Happening in Oral Health in Utah?*	Sunbrook B
	Description: This session will share recently gathered information on rural oral health initiatives in Utah, including current projects and emerging needs in underserved communities. Participants will receive an update on best practices for prescribing fluoride supplements and related preventive care guidance. The session will also review the new Utah Oral Health Plan and highlight key priorities for improving oral health statewide. In addition, attendees will learn about available resources, programs, and support services designed to strengthen oral health access in rural Utah communities.	
	Speakers*:* Lorna Koci, Program Director, Your Smile Matters Chair and Past Chair, Utah Oral Health Coalition	
	Session Sponsor: Exact Sciences Corporation	
3C	*The Road to Interoperability*	Sunbrook C
	Description: By 2026, the question is no longer 'Can we share data?' but 'How do we make that data work for us?' For rural providers, interoperability is often viewed as an administrative burden or a technical hurdle. This session breaks down the national interoperability landscape—including the maturing TEFCA framework and the latest CMS Interoperability & Prior Authorization mandates—through a rural lens. We will explore how standardized data (USCDI v7) and modern APIs are finally moving the needle on reducing clinician burnout and automating burdensome tasks like prior authorizations. Attendees will leave with an understanding for shifting their organization from 'passive participants' in data exchange to 'strategic leaders' of a connected care ecosystem.	

	Speakers: Brian Chin, MBA, Chief Executive Officer, UHIN, Inc.	
	Session Sponsor: UHIN	
3D	*Protecting Rural Health Transformation Funding: Practical Strategies for Grant Compliance and Fraud Prevention*	Entrada A
	Description: Rural Health Transformation Program and other Federal Program funding can be a lifeline for rural providers, but with it comes heightened scrutiny and increased exposure to compliance risk, fraud, waste, and abuse. This session shows how organizations can protect these dollars by translating grant requirements into practical, day-to-day controls that withstand audit and regulatory review. This presentation will educate participants on key compliance areas, including allowable costs, cost allocation, and documentation expectations, along with common pitfalls that lead to findings or questioned costs. The session will also examine how fraud risks emerge within grant-funded operations, distinguishing between control breakdowns, unintentional noncompliance, and indicators of misconduct. Using real-world scenarios, participants will learn how to implement right-sized internal controls and monitoring practices that are defensible, sustainable, and tailored to resource-constrained rural environments.	
	Speakers: Evan Masters, Manager| Grants Management Services, Forvis Mazars; Katrin Kramer, CPA, Senior Manager/Engagement Executive, Forvis Mazars	
	Session Sponsor: UnitedHealthcare	