# RURAL DEALTH ASSOCIATION OF TENNESSEE

**Rural Health Association of Tennessee Workforce Development Success Stories** *Final Report for GR-21-73441 July 2021 – May 2024* 

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# **RHA's Workforce Development Program Overview**

Founded in December 1994, Rural Health Association of Tennessee (RHA) is on a mission to lead the way for a healthy Tennessee through partnerships, advocacy, education, and resources. In 2021, with the support of some small grants from Delta Regional Authority and Wellpoint (formerly Amerigroup), RHA launched their Rural Workforce Development program in West Tennessee.

RHA's Workforce Development program strengthens collaborations between healthcare facilities (employers), K-12 schools, and community and technical colleges. Over the past 3 years, RHA has taught more than 3000 students about careers in healthcare through the Workforce Ready! program, hosted job fairs, connected employers with high school Career and Technical Education (CTE) instructors, and provided support in the form of tuition assistance and purchasing of supplies to help students looking to obtain a certification in a healthcare occupation.

In July of 2021, Rural Health Association of Tennessee (RHA) received a "Notice of Award" from Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) about a funding opportunity to build strategies and best practices to reduce COVID-19 risk across the state of Tennessee in underserved and rural communities. The contract (GR-21-73441) totaling \$2,468,000 was made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). This funding allowed RHA to expand the Workforce Development Program from West Tennessee to Middle and East.

Through this CDC funding, RHA has assisted more than 400 aspiring healthcare professionals obtain certification in the following professions:

- Community Health Workers
- Doulas and Certified Lactation Consultants
- Peer Recovery Specialists
- Medical Assistants
- EMS Technician
- Certified Nursing Assistants

The following success stories are only a small sampling of the work achieved by RHA's Workforce Development team. We are thankful to the teachers, employers, and participants who shared their enthusiasm and photos with us so that we could put faces along with the work.

Additional thanks to Wellpoint, who in 2022 provided a \$75,000 grant to complement the work we did through this CDC grant. There were so many times we encountered a student, or sometimes an entire class of students, who would not have received their certification if not for the support of WellPoint.

Last, but certainly not least, a big thank you to Beth Keylon and Madison Rymer, RHA's Workforce Development team, for all their hard work over the past several years. You have undoubtedly made a positive difference in the lives of many people across the state of Tennessee.

# **Emergency Medical Services**

# Jefferson County Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Jefferson County EMS expressed the need for Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) training in their community.

RHA was able to cover the costs of textbooks, clinical gear, and a portion of state testing fees to support the class of 18 graduates.

Angie Bowen was an RHA Workforce participant, earning her Advance Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT) certification in April 2023. Aa ceremony that same month,



Instructor John Reeves with the Jefferson County EMS presented Ashley with the Walters State Community College student academic award for Public Safety/Paramedic.



Walters State students, Karen Lee and Ashley Wooliver began working toward their Advanced EMT (Paramedic) Certification with Jefferson County EMS in August 2023.

Both employees of Jefferson County EMS, this certification allows them to deepen their understanding of knowledge learned on the job, which Karen and Ashley have stated that this has been a vital part of their learning process so far.

Angie Bowen, a Director with Jefferson County EMS, has stated that Ashley and Karen are exceptional students, and the organization is proud to have them thrive throughout the Paramedic Training Program and ultimately graduate in December 2023.



#### **Meigs County Emergency Management System**



These students began their journey to come an EMT through Meigs County EMS in January 2024.

On March 24, 2024, these six (6) RHA Workforce Participants took their final exam marking the completion of the Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program. All students passed with a score of ninety-two percent (92%) or greater.

In April 2024, the students took the National Registry Exam which expands their EMT licensure and allows them to provide services anywhere in the state of Tennessee.

#### **Roane State Community College & Jefferson County EMS**



In January 2024, in partnership with Jefferson County EMS, RHA was pleased to partner and sponsor Lacoda Timmerman with her paramedic training program at Roane State Community College, which lasts three semesters. RHA provided funding assistance with tuition, books fees and uniforms. Lacoda just started her second semester and is doing very well.

Lacoda graduated in May 2024.

#### Anderson County Emergency Medical System

August through November 2023, RHA partnered with Anderson County EMS to sponsor eleven (11) students through obtaining Advanced Emergency Medical Technician certifications. All students graduated from the program and plan to continue building their careers in the healthcare profession.



# Healthcare Occupational Training Partnerships

# **Cleveland State Community College**

In May 2024, partners gathered to celebrate the accomplishments of these six (6) students completing the Phlebotomy Program at Cleveland State.

The Phlebotomy program was organized and developed as a partnership between RHA, Chelsea Falana, Workforce Specialist at Cleveland State, Becky Brady with Polk County Schools, McMinn County Schools and Vickie Sullivan. RHA Grant funds were able to fully fund the program, covering tuition and two sets of scrubs for all students.



Chelsea Falana stated, "without this support, this program would not have been possible." Becky Brady added, "this generosity allowed these high school students to obtain certification and continue their future in healthcare career paths."

In May 2023, RHA staff were at Megis County High School presenting Workforce Readiness Curriculum certificates to the students, Katelyn Kilgore and Amber Letner seniors that participated in the Workforce Readiness program approached staff and requested funding assistance for a phlebotomy course at Cleveland State Community College in the summer. RHA staff began helping these students with enrollment documents and funding assistance for the class. Both successfully completed the program and received their Phlebotomy Certifications on June 20<sup>th</sup>. They will now move on to attend the University of Tennessee in Cookeville in nursing programs.





In December 2023, Chelsea Falana at Cleveland State contacted RHA regarding an individual who was enrolled in the school's Phlebotomy Bootcamp Program, but was going to have to drop because of an issue with the student's financial aid.

With Workforce Development dollars, RHA Kim was able to sponsor student, Kim Bergdoll, so that she could complete the course. Kim excelled throughout the course and earned her certification in February 2024. After graduation Kim went to work for the Plasma Center in Cleveland.

## National Healthcare Corporation (NHC) Sequatchie

Throughout the course of the grant, Rural Health Association of Tennessee (RHA) has supported a variety of workforce participants who were either trained employed at National Health Care Corporation (NHC) Sequatchie and interested in upskilling or were interested in becoming employed by the company.





In February 2023, Brianna Copeland completed her Certified Nursing Assistant program in January through the American Red Cross. Brianna is now employed full-time at NHC Sequatchie. Briann is interested in skilling up and obtaining her EKG certification. She has been researching programs at TCAT Chattanooga.

In March 2023, RHA partnered with Jakia Holland, lead nurse at NHC Sequatchie to assist Joyce Jordy, Abbie Boston, and Rylee Marshall through CNA certification. All three were hired upon completion at NHC as certified nurse assistants.





RHA, NHC Sequatchie, and the Bledsoe County Correctional Facility partnered to assist with Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) tuition for three (3) individuals who need professional development within their current job position at Bledsoe County Correctional Facility.

Participants Terri Dempsey, Latisha Johnson, and Kim Byrd enrolled in the CNA course at NHC Sequatchie in January 2024 and completed the course by the end of February in time for a special graduation ceremony in March.

One of the participants, Terri Dempsey said that they were ecstatic to have achieved the CNA Certification. Having already had relevant experience, the certification allows them to grow in their current role at Bledsoe County Correctional Facility, as well as earning a wage increase. The three participants expressed their gratitude for assistance of the RHA via this grant opportunity.

#### NHC Sequatchie County & Bledsoe County High School



Bledsoe County Highschool Student, Lexi Massingill (left), participated in the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) program at NHC Sequatchie in November 2023. She first finished her online coursework, then completed her clinicals over winter break. RHA assisted her with tuition and provided scrubs for clinicals. Lexi wants to attend TCAT Cookeville for LPN after she graduates.

Meggan Jablonski (right), also a Bledsoe County High School student, completed her CNA certification in November 2023. Through grant funds, RHA provided tuition assistance and scrubs at the conclusion of the program. Meggan plans to utilize this certification to get a head start on her career in healthcare. After graduating from high school in May 2024, Meggan plans to attend TCAT Chattanooga to pursue a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) credential.





NHC Sequatchie Instructor, Jakia Holland says that student, Zoey Black, was an incredible student and will be an amazing CNA.

Zoey Black enrolled into the CNA training program in July 2023 with the goal of using as a stepping stone into the LPN program at TCAT Shelbyville.

#### AHC McKenzie & Baptist Hospital

Kaliah Adams, a Certified Nursing Assistant at American Health Communities (AHC) McKenzie and also a Hospice Aide with Baptist Hospital, has been an RHA Workforce Participant for over a year. RHA supported Kaliah through her pursuit of a career as a Licensed Practical Nurse and hopes to eventually attend a Registered Nursing Program. She has also been working toward Labor Doula Certification through RHA's Maternal Health program. Providing Kaliah with career and educational counseling has helped her break her goals down into smaller, achievable goals, while working toward a bigger vision of a career in healthcare.



# LifeSpring Community Health

Brenda Resendiz, an employee of LifeSpring Community Health, began her journey to becoming a Certified Clinical Medical Assistant (CCMA) in July 2023, with funding assistance from RHA.

RHA's Workforce Development Coordinator, Madison Rymer, who routinely spoke with Breanda to offer support and encouragement, complemented her on how focused and dedicated she was to completing the program. Brenda's hard work paid off, as she graduated in October 2023.





In June 2023, RHA assisted employee Anna Joujan obtain her phlebotomy certification. Anna stated, "Thinking about the longevity of my training, and the ability to go back and review my learning, solidifying it, it occurred to me that it would be helpful to have print materials, and not only the online training. I guess I'm a bit old-school, here in my mid-40's and having done a good bit of schooling in my past :-). Thank you so much for your help."

RHA funded her practice materials and study guides, as well as the exam fee. Anna studied hard the entire month of June and passed her final exam on July 14, 2023.

## The Breaking the Sickkle Cell Foundation Inc.



In June 2023, through RHA partnered with Dr. Lametra Scott, founder of Breaking The SSickle Cell Cycle Foundation Inc., to scholarship Community Health Worker tuition and exam

The training, developed by Sickle Cell Disease Association of America (SCDAA), provides CHWs with knowledge needed to provide services specifically for sickle cell patients.

Five staff (three, pictured left) successfully passed the exam and received recognition at a community event in Williamson County.

Participant Kelly Zaimah said "I thoroughly enjoyed the CHW classes and the in-depth discussions. Hearing a variety of points of view and perspectives on different subjects is both educational and needed. Because Sickle Cell hits so close to home for me it's easy to feel singled out and unseen."

## **Hero Health**

Gabrielle Brown, Shawna Tidwell, and Samantha Leatherwood (right) became RHA Workforce Participants in August 2023. The two enrolled at Herro Health Training Institute's Medical Assisting Program and graduated in December 2023. Instructor, JaMarcus Corlew, complimented the students on their eagerness to learn and their potential for further advancement in the healthcare profession.





RHA supported Pamala Milton and

Cassie Cowan (left) through an accelerated one-week program at Hero Health Training Institute in Dickson, TN.

Led by instructor JaMarcus Corlew, the participants became certified phlebotomists in July 2023. Pamala Milton is now enrolled in a nursing program through Bethel University, and Cassie Cowan continues her work in the healthcare field as a CNA at AHC in Paris, TN. Cassie will receive additional training on her job to utilize her phlebotomy certification.

#### **Sweetwater Family Medicine**

In April 2023, RHA partnered with the Sweetwater Family Medicine, a Rural Health Clinic in Monroe County, to support five (5) employees renew Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) certification. Dr. Sigrid Johnson was very grateful, confirming the assistance took a financial burden off the clinic and the employees.

In June 2023, RHA supported Dorothy Monroe and Jennifer Strope, nurse practitioners at Sweetwater Family Medicine, in completing suturing training in Atlanta, Georgia. Both put their new skills to use immediately after the training, providing stitches to patients in need.



## **Professional Allied Health**

Throughout the course of the grant, RHA partnered with Professional Allied Health to scholarship students through Phlebotomy, Certified Nursing Assistant, and Certified Medical Assistant training.

The students, from both rural and urban communities, completed inperson instructional training, as well as clinical practice.





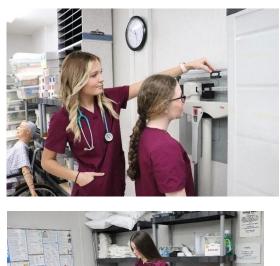


# Walters State Community College

Walters State has been an important education partner throughout the grant, supporting programs with various high schools and County EMS agencies.

Here are a few photos from classes RHA sponsored.







# Workforce Ready & Naloxone Training Partnerships

In Spring of 2021 Rural Health Association of Tennessee (RHA) developed a *Workforce Ready!* a twopart module, developed in partnership with healthcare employers and Career and Technical Education (CTE) instructors. In 2022 the curriculum was updated by Craig Howdeshell, a CTE instructor in engineering with Marion County High School.

*Workforce Ready!* introduces students to careers in healthcare, while also providing the "soft skills" that employers have said are important for young employees to have. The first module teaches learners about smart goals, the basics of personal wellness, and how to create a personal development plan. The second module discusses careers in healthcare, resume writing, and preparing for an interview.

These lessons have been used by CTE instructors across the state, as well as students from community and technical colleges. More recently, RHA has added Naloxone training to raise awareness about addiction and how to administer the drug overdose medication.

The following represent a few of the schools who engaged in our program and may not reflect if they taught the lessons multiple semesters and/or to multiple classes.

# Lenior City High School

Jennifer McCombs-Cleveland, Lenior City High School, has taught *Workforce Ready! to* more than 120 health science students.



#### **Sequatchie County High School**

Lauren McIntyre, CTE Health Science Instructor with Sequatchie County High School, taught *Workforce Ready!* and Administering Naloxone to 60+ health science students.

RHA Workforce Staff has taught lessons on the importance of continuing education and retaining completion certificates. Visitors from Marathon Health located in Chattanooga spoke to the students about various levels of healthcare occupations from the physician to the medical



assistant as well as social workers assisting with behavioral issues. It explained the level of education required for these occupations and the salary of each position.

#### **Bledsoe County High School**

In May 2023, thirteen (13) students at Bledsoe County High School completed the *Workforce Ready!* RHA staff visited the school and presented their certificates. Durning the presentation, several students expressed interest work-based learning programs during the summer. RHA facilitate introductions between employers and with CTE instructor Ashley Fife.



#### **Meigs County High School**



May 2023, thirty-six (36) students at Meigs County High School completed the *Workforce Ready*! RHA staff coordinated a celebration event and presented employment and training opportunities to the students.

Ashley Hurst, Health Science teacher expressed gratitude for the curriculum saying *"it pairs nicely with the current class materials."* 

#### **Cumberland County High School**

Skye Thomason, Cumberland County High School, taught *Workforce Ready!* to twenty-one (21) high school students enrolled in a healthcare occupational career path. Ms. Thompson stated her goals and expectations for the students were "to better prepare these students for their healthcare careers."

Students receive certificates and were encouraged to begin a portfolio to document participation in training activities.

Health Science teacher Laura Gilpin, also at Cumberland County HS taught the Administering Naloxone training saying "The Naloxone training was great, all eleven (11) students that participated in the training passed. We will have a new set of twenty-three (23) students participating in the Naloxone training and forty-three (43) will be participating in the workplace readiness training in the Spring semester." Ms. Gilpin added she introduced the program to the HOSA students because the curriculum had great examples of real life and situations they would face in their future health care careers.

Ms. Gilpin has also taught *Workforce Ready!* several times. Each time incorporating an opportunity for students to research and present about the wide variety of healthcare professions.











#### Livingston Academy High School

In May 2023, Aeshia Copeland-Reeder, HOSA Advisor at Livingston Academy High School, shared those fifteen (15) students who participated in the *Workforce Ready!* attended an industry onsite visit hosted by Level One Accountability at Volunteer State Gallatin Campus.

Students spoke with physicians, nurses, paramedics, & paramedic students about careers. The class also enjoyed an Observation SIMS lab class hosted by Level One Accountability at Volunteer State Gallatin Campus.



Ms. Reeder said "We've enjoyed the [*Workforce Ready!*] curriculum and appreciate the opportunity to work with you."

## **Milan High School**



In May 2023, thirteen (13) students completed *Workforce Ready!* under the instruction of Mr. Justin Carr, Milan High School's Career Coach. Mr. Carr, stated "I enjoyed the videos, so the students just don't have to listen to me talk."

#### **Fayette Ware High School**

In April 2023, RHA Workforce Coordinator visited Fayette-Ware High School's Certified Nursing Assistant Class to teach the *Workforce Ready*! lessons in person as part of the partnership with TCAT Jackson and Fayette Ware High School



# **Registered Apprenticeship Programs & Partnerships**

In November 2023, five (4) of RHA Sponsored Department of Labor Registered Apprentice's received recognition for completing their Apprenticeships.

Apprentices began working toward 144 hours of "Related Training Instruction" (RTI) and 2000 hours of "On the Job Learning" (OJL) in 2022.

The following is a summary of each Apprentice who was recognized in November 2023 for successfully completing the Apprenticeship requirements.



## **Partners for Healing**

Jessica Rackley began employment as a licensed practical nurse at Partners for Healing in Tullahoma, TN in July 2020. While in this program, Jessica was simultaneously enrolled at Northern Arizonia University to obtain her bachelor's degree in social work (BSW). Her courses in social work and mental health aided her in obtaining the Community Health Worker Registered Apprenticeship Certificate and her BSW in August 2023. Jessica is now employed with the RHA as the R-CORP Director.

Jessica stated, "The knowledge and experience I gained while in the community health worker registered apprenticeship program deepened my understanding about the vital link between healthcare access, care coordination and active evolvement being directly related to the over wellbeing of individuals in the community."



## **Community Clinic of Shelbyville and Bedford County**



Marlene Rogers began employment at the Community Clinic of Shelbyville and Bedford County in December 2021 as a Spanish Translator. She graduated from Shelbyville Central High School and attended a Medical Assisting program in Manchester. As a Spanish Translator who was recommended by a Board member, it was evident that she had compassion to serve others. To help her advance in her career, Community Clinic of Shelbyville sponsored her through the Medical Assistant Registered Apprenticeship beginning in March 2023.

## Lifespring Community Health

Wendy Wellington began working at Lifespring Community Clinic in Chattanooga, TN in August 2022, enrolling as a Community Health Worker Apprentice soon thereafter.

While in the program, Wendy participated in several training courses to obtain a certificate in Boundary Spanning Leadership for Community Health Workers and Inclusion of Minorities in Community Development. Wendy successfully completed her Community Health Worker Registered Apprenticeship program in September 2023 and was promoted to Coordinator of Community Health.



#### **Rural Health Association of Tennessee**



Madison Rymer began working part-time for the Rural Health Association of TN in July 2022. She excelled quickly and was brought on full time in November 2022 at which time she began the Workforce Development Specialist Registered Apprenticeship program. While working full-time, Madison was also a full-time student and then earning her master's in healthcare administration in March 2023. She successfully completed her Registered Apprenticeship program in October 2023.

Beth Keylon joined RHA in May 2022. Beth has a wealth of knowledge and a background of 15+ years in Workforce Development. She began the Workforce Development Specialist Apprenticeship program in June of 2022. While in the program, Beth attended various conferences and additional training programs to obtain multiple certificates in professional development including Workforce Development with the UT Center for Industrial Services and Mental Health First Aid. Beth completed her registered apprenticeship program in February 2023 to become the 1<sup>st</sup> Registered Workforce Development Specialist apprentice in the state.



# **Program Data & Outcomes**

# Workforce Participants by Occupation

|                                    | Enrolled | Active | Withdrew | Completed |
|------------------------------------|----------|--------|----------|-----------|
| Certified Labor Doula              | 20       | 20     |          | 0         |
| College Students                   | 17       |        | 6        | 11        |
| Community Health Workers           | 28       |        |          | 28        |
| Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) | 25       | 9      |          | 16        |
| High School Student                | 2        |        |          | 2         |
| Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)     | 12       |        |          | 12        |
| Medical Assistant                  | 76       |        | 3        | 73        |
| Nursing Assistant (CNA)            | 504      |        | 58       | 466       |
| Phlebotomy                         | 33       |        | 5        | 28        |
| Registered Behavioral Technician   | 4        |        | 4        | 0         |
|                                    | 721      | 29     | 76       | 616       |

# Workforce Ready & Naloxone Trainings

|             | Workforce Ready<br>Students | Naloxone<br>Trainings | Funding<br>Awarded | Schools |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------|
| Fall 2022   | 550                         |                       | \$8,250.00         | 13      |
| Spring 2023 | 268                         |                       | \$6,210.00         | 11      |
| Fall 2023   | 126                         | 26                    | \$2,080.00         | 4       |
| Spring 2024 | 404                         | 143                   | \$8,530.00         | 6       |
|             | 1348                        | 169                   | \$25,070.00        | 34      |

# **Registered Apprenticeships**

|                             | Enrolled | Active | Withdrew | Completed |
|-----------------------------|----------|--------|----------|-----------|
| Certified Medical Assistant | 2        | 1      |          | 1         |
| Community Health Worker     | 30       | 23     | 5        | 2         |
| Workforce Dev. Specialist   | 5        |        | 2        | 3         |
| Nurse Assistant             | 0        |        |          |           |
| Dental Assistant            | 0        |        |          |           |
|                             | 37       | 24     | 7        | 6         |

# **Supportive Services**

| Item(s)              | Amount Funded | # of Services |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| Book                 | \$ 3,280.17   | 27            |
| Exam Fee             | \$ 3,255.00   | 17            |
| Scrubs               | \$ 25,558.82  | 198           |
| Study Test Materials | \$ 4,670.49   | 22            |
| Supp Service         | \$ 1,206.80   | 3             |
| Travel Assistance    | \$ 21,475.00  | 365           |
| Tuition Only         | \$ 95,501.14  | 100           |
| Tuition & Books      | \$ 3,575.00   | 11            |
| Grand Total          | \$ 158,522.42 | 745           |

For more information about RHA's Workforce Development Program, visit <u>https://www.tnruralhealth.org/workforce</u> or email <u>info@tnruralhealth.org</u>.