

**COLORADO
RURAL HEALTH
CENTER**

The State Office of Rural Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Colorado Rural Health Center Honors Kameo L. Smith, D.O. with the Rural
Retention Excellence Award**

Dr. Smith – a family medicine doctor in Cortez, Colorado – is being recognized for her long-standing commitment to providing care since 2007 to residents in southwestern Colorado.

Denver, Colo – This award, presented by Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC), recognizes a provider who demonstrates an enduring commitment to rural practice and outstanding patient care, while highlighting the importance of rural provider retention efforts in Colorado.

Dr. Kameo Smith, chief of staff at Southwest Health System (SHS), was recruited by CRHC's provider recruitment program in 2007. Growing up in Loveland, Dr. Smith attended medical school at the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific in Pomona, California and residency at North Colorado Medical Center in Greeley, Colorado.

Dr. Smith's colleagues describe her as a provider that truly understands her community and treats the entire wellness of each patient.

"Words cannot begin to describe what a phenomenal physician Dr. Smith is," says Michelle Zachary, director of medical staff services. "Families travel from all over the

four corners region to seek her care. She goes above and beyond – in every way possible – from providing excellent quality of care to her patients and families, to the countless hours serving as a medical staff leader.”

As a physician leader who understands the rewards and challenges of a rural health setting, Dr. Smith has been instrumental in the development of a robust recruitment and retention program at SHS over the past several years.

Joined by over 200 healthcare professionals, Dr. Smith will be presented with the Rural Retention Excellence Award during an awards ceremony on October 15 at the Colorado Annual Rural Health Conference in Colorado Springs.

“I am overjoyed to receive this award and be recognized as a leader in rural healthcare,” said Dr. Smith. “I truly enjoy my work and the fact that I practice all parts of medicine.”

When asked about the current barriers to successfully retaining rural health providers, Dr. Smith explained that the lack of resources and employment options for spouses, in addition to changes in traditional practice such as the implementation of electronic medical records require a stronger emphasis on retention programs.

Dr. Smith is largely involved with the recruitment process at SHS, and emphasized their strong relationship with community partners – including the school system and local realtors – as an effort to ensure potential recruits understand the isolation of their community and what resources are available to them and their families.

“Nowadays providers have different expectations when it comes to their work-life balance,” explains Dr. Smith. “Recruitment, and more directly retention, is tied to the whole family.”

According to CRHC's chief executive officer, Michelle Mills, the demand for rural health providers is growing and being driven in part by the enhanced need for primary care providers.

"Our recruitment program recently reported its all-time highest number of open jobs, recruiting for over 82 positions," Mills says. "This award is meant to recognize the achievements in rural provider recruitment and retention, personified by those such as Dr. Kameo Smith and the continued need for focused recruitment and retention efforts."

After more than 10 years, CRHC's provider recruitment program has worked with over 80 communities and has recruited over 150 healthcare providers to live and work in rural and underserved Colorado communities.

To learn more about CRHC or its provider recruitment program, visit www.coruralhealth.org. To learn more about the 2015 Annual Rural Health Conference, visit <http://coruralhealth.org/events/annual-conference>.

About The Colorado Rural Health Center

The Colorado Rural Health Center was established in 1991 as Colorado's State Office of Rural Health. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, CRHC serves dual roles as the State Office of Rural Health with the mission of assisting rural communities in addressing health care issues; and as the State Rural Health Association, advocating for policy change to ensure that rural Coloradans have access to comprehensive, affordable health care services of the highest quality. For more information visit coruralhealth.org, call 303-832-7493, or call toll free 800-851-6782 from rural Colorado.

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