



MRHA
Missouri Rural Health Association

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



**STRONGER
TOGETHER FOR
RURAL MISSOURI**



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

2025 has been a year of momentum and impact at MRHA. From advancing key legislation to expanding opportunities for connection through events and The Causeway, MRHA has continued to bring people together, elevate rural voices, and drive solutions where they are needed most.

I remain deeply committed to advancing MRHA's mission: *providing leadership on rural priorities through advocacy, partnerships, and education*. This mission continues to guide our work.

As we look ahead, our focus remains clear: ensuring every rural Missourian has access to the care and resources they need to thrive. We will continue strengthening partnerships, expanding educational opportunities, and advocating for policies that address the unique challenges facing our communities.

Your engagement is what makes this work possible. Whether you participate in a webinar, attend a conference, or connect with peers through The Causeway, you are helping turn ideas into action and impact.

Looking ahead to 2026, MRHA is well positioned to foster collaboration, drive innovation and advance solutions that helps rural Missouri Thrive. Alongside a dedicated board, staff, and community of supporters we are making a meaningful impact and shaping a stronger future for rural Missouri.

KATIE EIKEN
MRHA BOARD PRESIDENT

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE



FROM THE DESK OF MRHA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, HEIDI LUCAS

2025 has been one of the most consequential years in MRHA's history. Across Missouri, rural communities continue to face provider shortages, funding challenges, and barriers to care. In response, MRHA has strengthened its role as a trusted advocate, connector, and voice for rural health.

Our advocacy efforts delivered meaningful results. We celebrated the passage of the audio-only telehealth bill, expanding access for patients without reliable broadband, and supported the women's health omnibus bill, one of the only healthcare bills passed in the 2025 Missouri legislative session. At the federal level, MRHA worked to elevate concerns around historic Medicaid cuts, highlighting the real-world impact on families, providers, hospitals, health centers, and rural health clinics.

The Causeway, our free statewide community of practice, continued to grow and thrive, now serving more than 800 members. It has become a vital hub for learning, collaboration, and problem-solving.

2025 Highlights

- 25+ media interviews
- Launched Advocacy Committee
- 500+ new members to The Causeway
- \$2.8 million invested in Rural Health
- Facilitated 37 Webinars
- Hosted 2 Conferences

MRHA's reach also expanded in 2025, with increased visibility in statewide and national media and participation in key policy discussions. As a result, policymakers, funders, and rural leaders increasingly recognize MRHA as a leading voice for rural health in Missouri. While challenges remain, MRHA enters 2026 stronger, more connected, and more visible than ever. We remain committed to advocating boldly, fostering collaboration, and advancing solutions that ensure every rural Missourian has the opportunity to thrive.

HEIDI N. LUCAS, MPA
MRHA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

ADVOCACY IN ACTION



MRHA is a go-to source for the media, amplifying the voices of rural Missouri. Our Executive Director was quoted more than 25 times this year and regularly connected reporters with trusted local experts.

BUILDING A STRONGER RURAL HEALTH SYSTEM

Missouri Advocacy

Federal Advocacy

Looking Ahead

MRHA remains committed to ensuring that rural communities across Missouri have access to high-quality, sustainable health care. Through strategic advocacy, partnerships, and public engagement, MRHA addressed the unique challenges facing rural hospitals, clinics, health centers, providers, and patients. Our efforts focused on shaping policy, amplifying rural voices, and advancing solutions to strengthen the rural health system.

MRHA provided testimony, before the state legislature, on all priority bills heard in committee. These efforts ensured rural perspectives were represented throughout the legislative process and helped policymakers understand the real-world impact on rural Missourians.

STATEWIDE ADVOCACY

Advancing Rural Health Across Missouri

OUR POLICY AGENDA FOCUSES ON THREE KEY PRIORITIES

Investing in Rural Health Infrastructure

Providing stabilizing relief for rural providers, including Critical Access Hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Clinics, and other rural hospitals. Strong infrastructure is critical to the future of rural communities.

Reducing Rural Healthcare Workforce Shortages

Supporting recruitment, training, and retention of health care professionals to meet the unique needs of rural communities.

Addressing Declining Life Expectancy & Access to Care

Tackling health disparities by ensuring access to care, investing in public health, and prioritizing chronic disease prevention and obstetrical support.



FEDERAL ADVOCACY

Amplifying Rural Voices Nationally

At the federal level, MRHA focused on protecting programs essential to rural health, including Medicaid and SNAP. Proposed cuts to these programs posed significant risks to rural hospitals, FQHCs, rural clinics, and communities. MRHA worked closely with partner organizations, coordinated media outreach, and connected rural leaders to journalists to elevate their voices. By bringing these stories to national attention, MRHA ensured that the unique needs of rural Missouri were part of the federal conversation.



LOOKING AHEAD

Ongoing Advocacy for Rural Health Care



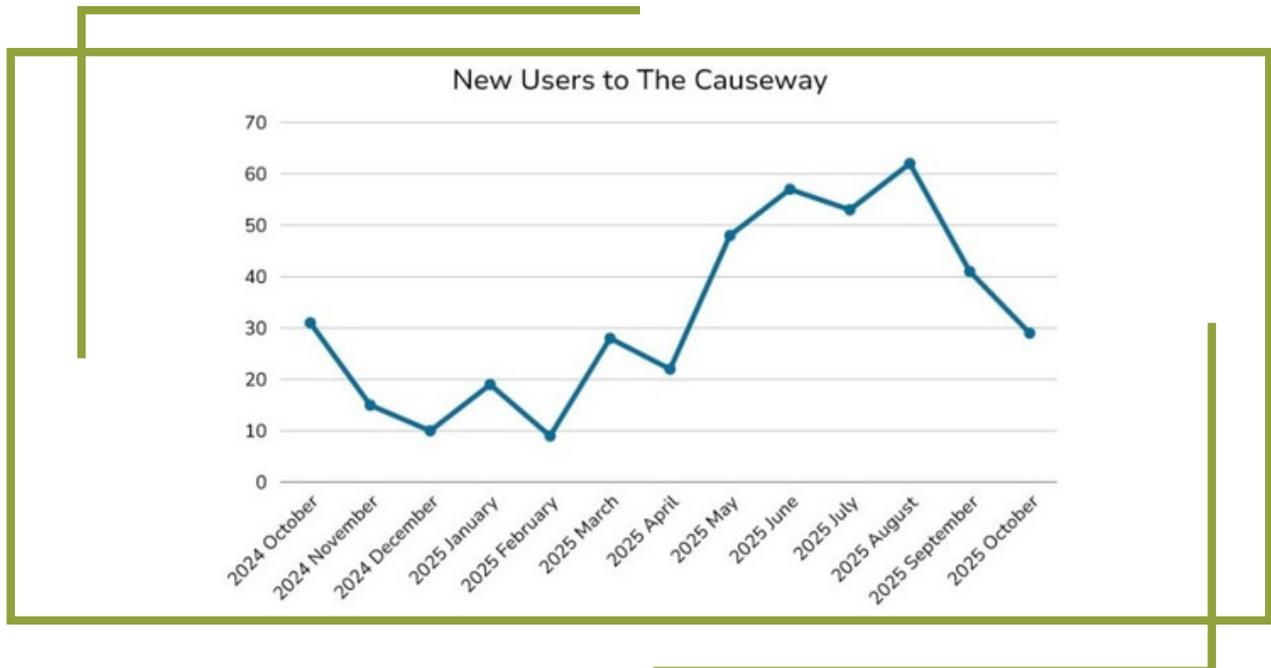
Through state and federal advocacy, MRHA has strengthened rural voices, elevated public awareness, and reinforced its role as a trusted leader in rural health. In 2026, the organization will continue to advance policy priorities, foster collaboration, and develop solutions that ensure every rural Missourian has access to the care and resources needed to thrive.

THE CAUSEWAY



THE CAUSEWAY: BUILDING CONNECTION, STRENGTHENING RURAL HEALTH

Over the past year, The Causeway has grown into a dynamic and trusted hub for Missouri's rural health community. What began as a platform to connect providers and organizations has evolved into an essential tool for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and peer support across the state.



A DEEPENING COMMITMENT

Over the course of this year, The Causeway platform accelerated beyond initial expectations - growing not only in membership and activity, but in depth, confidence, and collaborative problem-solving. What began as a bridge is becoming a backbone, supporting collaboration across geography, discipline, and resource limitations.



KELSEY'S STORY

In early 2025, Kelsey, a clinic staff member in a rural county, posted a question about distributing Narcan at her clinic. She was unsure about the federal regulations surrounding standing orders and wanted to proceed carefully while still supporting harm-reduction efforts.

Within hours, leaders from across the state—including public health officials, community paramedicine experts, and harm-reduction advocates—responded with clear guidance, links to relevant regulations, and examples from clinics that had successfully implemented Narcan access. What began as a single, cautious question quickly evolved into a meaningful exchange of knowledge, **giving Kelsey not answers, but a network of support.**

AN EXPANDING ECOSYSTEM

Behind the scenes, The Causeway's infrastructure has been expanded to better serve its users. The introduction of private Currents (secure, invitation-only workspaces) allows nonprofits, coalitions, and multi-agency teams to coordinate grants, campaigns, and sensitive initiatives. At the same time, new public-facing spaces, including a Current dedicated to rural veterans, have created opportunities for broader engagement.

With the addition of a full-time community manager in March 2025, The Causeway launched regular programming such as Touch Base Tuesday, Resource Roundups, and community challenges to keep members active and connected.

These developments mark a turning point. From an early-stage initiative, The Causeway has evolved into a trusted, community-driven platform that supports collaboration and shared problem-solving across rural health, positioning The Causeway for continued growth and lasting impact across Missouri and beyond.

NEW USERS

The most visible sign of growth is The Causeways expanding membership. Between October 2024 and October 2025, The Causeway welcomed 424 new users, reflecting the impact of both word-of-mouth and intentional outreach. While new user growth slowed slightly during peak conference seasons and holidays, engagement among existing members remained strong, demonstrating that users are not only joining the platform, but continuing to find value in it.

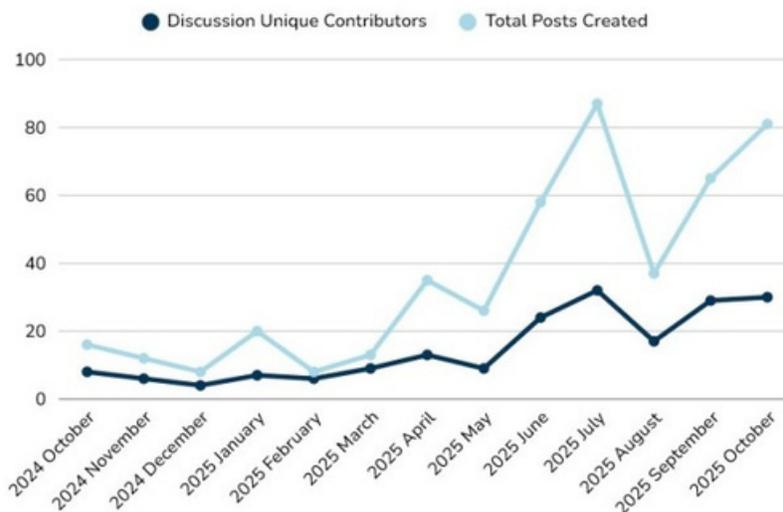
LOGINS

Login trends further demonstrate increasing engagement. Total logins rose from 162 in October 2024 to 376 in October 2025, with unique logins nearly doubling. Peak usage occurred in July 2025, reaching 429 total logins and 165 unique users. This sustained activity indicates The Causeway is becoming embedded in members' workflows—not as a one-time resource, but as a consistent tool for accessing information, maintaining professional networks, and staying connected to statewide initiatives.

DISCUSSIONS

Discussion activity provides even clearer evidence of a maturing community. Monthly posts more than quadrupled over the year, reflecting a shift from staff-driven content to community-led knowledge sharing. Members increasingly used the platform to ask questions, share resources, seek peer input, and highlight challenges related to patient care, transportation, mental health, policy, workforce, and emerging care models. The sharp rise in unique contributors further signals growing confidence and active participation across the network.

Discussion Contributions in The Causeway



EDUCATION & OUTREACH

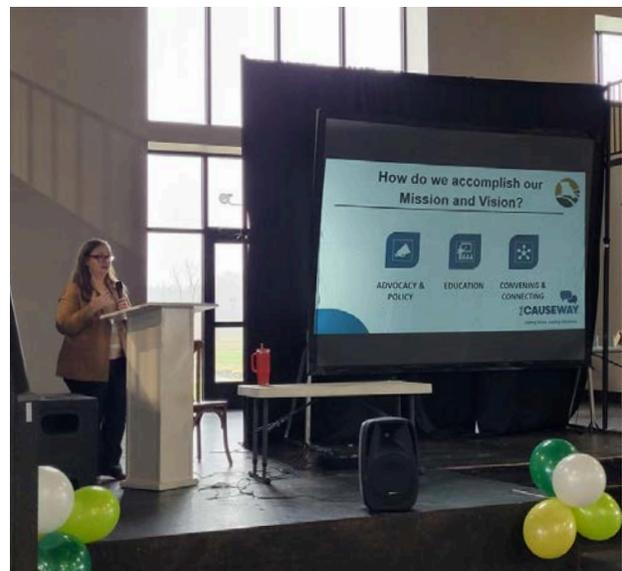


MRHA brings high-quality, accessible, and affordable training to rural health providers, advocates, and communities, addressing the unique challenges they face. Our events connect participants with experts and resources that empower them to improve healthcare delivery, stay informed on policy updates, and advance best practices.

Lunch & Learn Webinars

2025 Missouri Rural Health Annual Conference

Rural Health Workforce Development Conference



LUNCH & LEARN WEBINAR SERIES

The Missouri Rural Health Association’s Lunch and Learn Webinar Series provides free, high-quality professional development to the rural health community statewide. Designed to increase access to resources and information, the series offers weekly live sessions, each recorded and archived for on-demand access.

KEY TAKAWAYS

Consistent Turnout

Consistent growth in registration demonstrates ongoing interest in MRHA’s rural health-specific training.

Accessible Learning

Recorded sessions on MRHA’s LMS allow participants to revisit topics and share content with peers, extending the reach of each webinar.

Representative Audience

Attendees represent a cross-section of Missouri’s rural health infrastructure, from clinical providers to policymakers.

Responsive Programming

The expanding variety of topics reflects MRHA’s ability to identify and respond to emerging needs in rural health.

Trusted Education Provider

Continued attendance growth underscores MRHA’s reputation for relevant, high-quality, and practical learning opportunities.

AT A GLANCE

Year	Webinars Held	Total Attendees	Average Attendees per Webinar
2024	23	900+	39
2025	37	1500+	43

Webinar offerings grew by 30% in 2025, with average participation increasing by 10%. Participation is projected to exceed 1,700 professionals in 2026.

RECENT TOPICS

- Enhancing Dental Access in Rural Missouri
- Innovative Vision Care for Rural Missouri
- Workforce Development
- Partnering with Foundations
- Rural Health Policy and Advocacy Updates
- Addressing Health-Related Social Needs
- School Health
- Patient Safety



PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

“I’ve learned so much I never would have from the Lunch and Learn Webinar series. The series helps keep me up to date on new developments in rural health, even some new developments going on within my own organization!”
 — University of Missouri Researcher

“I appreciate MRHA’s webinars not only because they provide good, relevant content, but also because I frequently find myself connecting further with the presenter(s) and other attendees. Thanks for fostering these connections!”
 — National Non-profit partner

2025 MISSOURI RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

The 2025 Missouri Rural Health Conference, held September 16-17 in Camdenton, welcomed its largest audience to date, up 15% from 2024. Participation remained strong across both days with attendees praising the sessions as high-quality and engaging.

High Engagement

Sessions were well-attended throughout the event, with strong participant retention from opening to closing sessions.

Quality Programming

Attendees consistently rated sessions highly for relevance and quality, noting that content compared favorably to national-level conference.

Diverse Participation

Representation spanned higher education, state agencies, local public health departments, rural hospitals, clinics, FQHCs, AHECs, nonprofits, and community partners.

Strong Exhibitor Value

Exhibitors reported meaningful engagement and networking outcomes, reinforcing the event's value for sponsors and vendors.

Sustained Growth

Attendance trends continue to show a steady increase of 25-30 participants annually, underscoring the conference's expanding reach and reputation.

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

- 2 Days of Sessions
- 215 Attendees
- 36 Exhibitors

INCLUDING:

- Rural Hospitals
- FQHCs
- Rural Health Clinics
- Educators
- State agencies
- Universities
- Local public health departments
- Area Health Education Centers
- Nonprofit organizations
- Community partners



Conference attendance has increased steadily over the past five years, with total growth of more than 80 percent and an average annual increase of about 16%. MRHA is proud to partner with the Missouri Association of Rural Health Clinics (MARHC) to host this annual event and we were pleased to also include our partners at Missouri Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) this year.

2025 RURAL HEALTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE

Held in Columbia, Missouri April 1-2, this conference brought together educators, employers and practitioners to explore strategies for building and sustaining the rural health workforce.

Exploring New Topics

- Workforce strategies for rural health organizations
- Training and apprenticeship programs
- Innovation through technology
- Increasing rural health workforce along the entire pipeline
- Growing the Rural Workforce from Within
- Artificial Intelligence
- The Impact of Residency Location on Future Rural Practice

CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS

2-Day Conference

111 Registered Attendees

13 Poster Presentations

5 General Sessions

12 Breakout Sessions

PARTNERS



MISSOURI PRIMARY CARE ASSOCIATION



School of Medicine
University of Missouri

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Rural Health
Workforce
Development
Conference

FINANCIAL REPORT

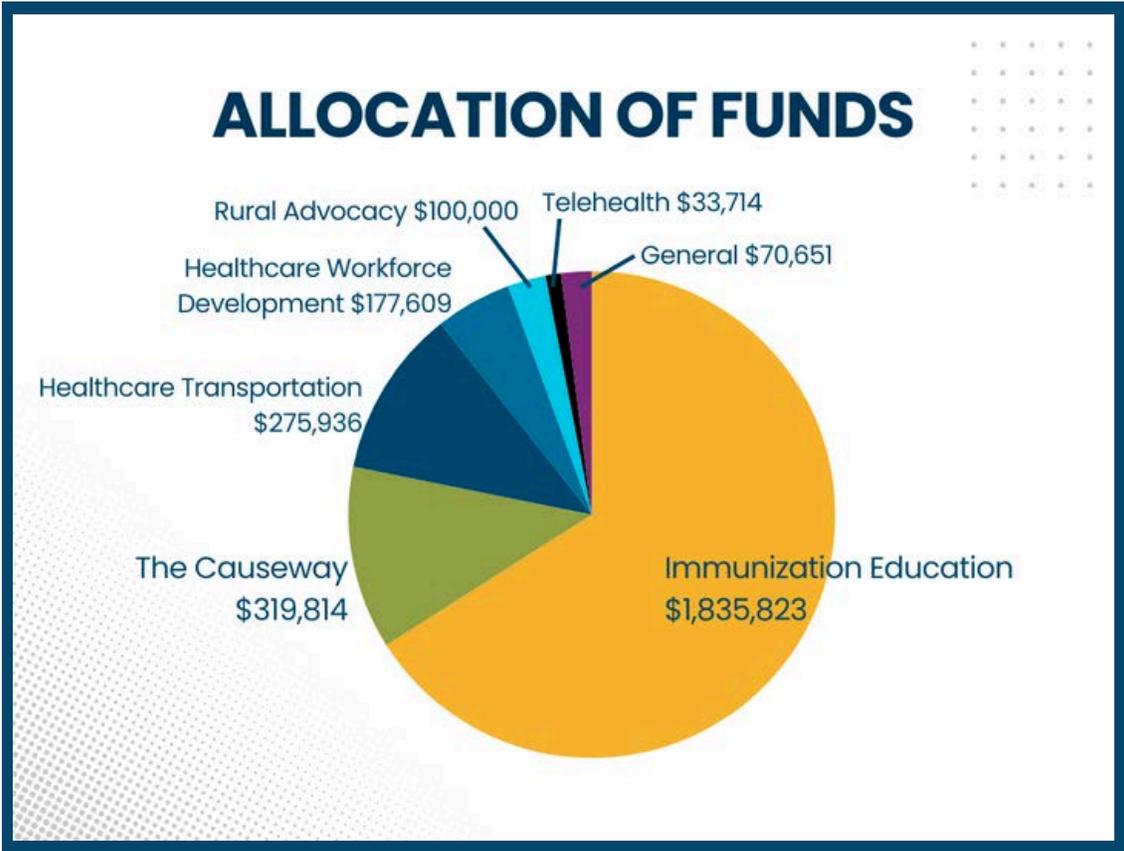
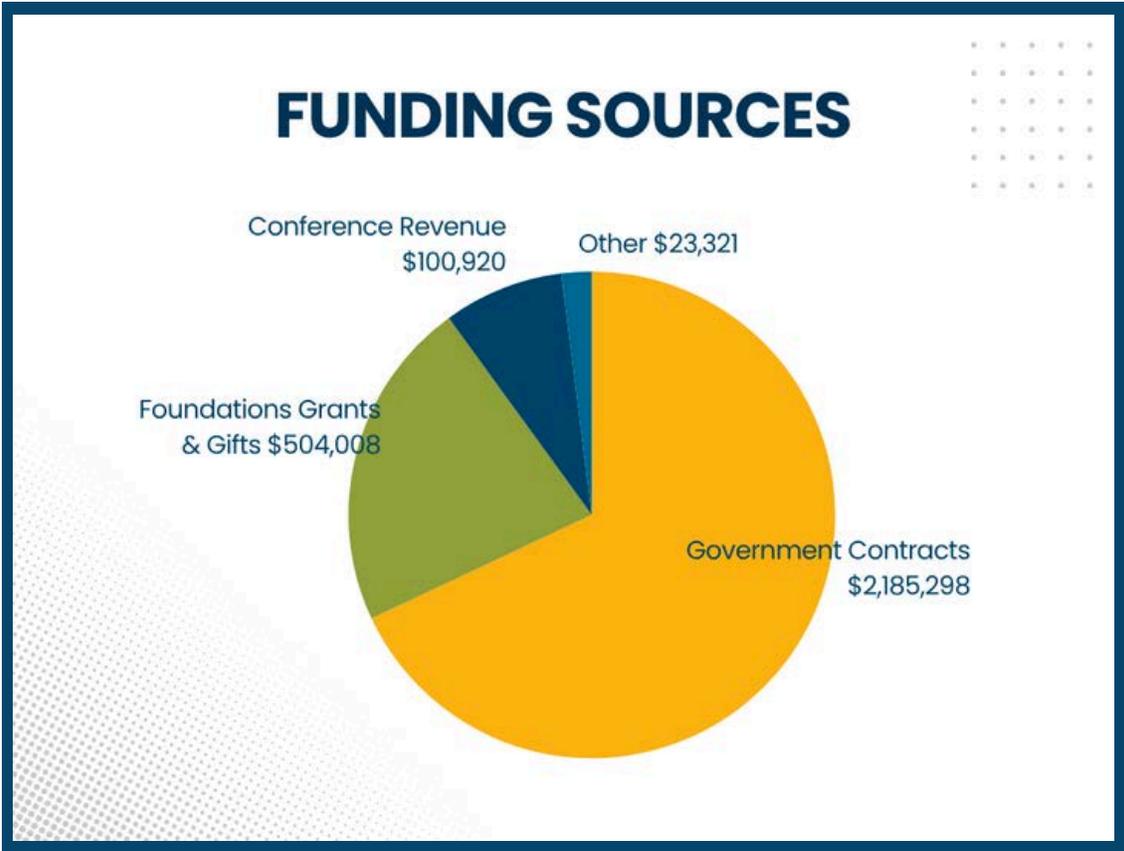


2025 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Looking to the future.

Our financial efficiency and commitment to accountability have established MRHA as a trusted partner for government agencies and private foundations seeking cost effective ways to improve rural health outcomes. While grants and contracts comprise the majority of our funding, income from our annual conference and support from community members allow us to extend our reach. In 2025, we invested \$2.8 million in programs to support the rural healthcare workforce, educate the public, expand access to care, and advocate for rural Missourians.

As we look to the future, we remain keenly aware of the funding challenges facing the healthcare and nonprofit sectors. Through diligent financial stewardship and strategic planning, we are navigating these challenges and building a solid foundation for long-term financial stability and program growth. By doing so, we are positioning ourselves to meet the evolving needs of rural Missouri while leading the charge for sustainable healthcare systems.



OUR SUPPORTERS

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Special thanks to Aetna for making our learning management system possible.

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MRHA STAFF

Executive Director

Heidi Lucas
Heidi comes to MRHA with expertise in healthcare advocacy & policy, the social determinants of health, & coalition & community building.

Director of Operations

Sharlet Kroll
Sharlet joined MRHA following a career in state government, with experience in managing statewide programs, budgets, and grants.

Director of Healthcare Technology & Research

Derek Landes
Derek has over 10 years of experience in nonprofits, specializing in rural healthcare for the last five years.

Director of External Affairs

Rachel Hassani
Rachel draws on a background in state government, policy, and advocacy to deliver MRHA's outreach and training initiatives.

Community & Digital Advocacy Manager

Libby Trammel
Libby comes to MRHA from a career in advocacy and community education around interpersonal violence issues.

Research Assistant

Kaitlyn Onanian
Kaitlyn graduated Emory University with a background in political science and public policy.

Administrative Assistant

Laura Neese
Laura comes to MRHA from the business world, with 20 years of experience as a small business owner under her belt.