

# The Healthcare Consortium

## For Your Health

### **“Celebrating the Power of Rural this National Rural Health Day”**

Every November, we celebrate National Rural Health Day—a day that honors the strength, resilience, and resourcefulness of rural communities. It’s also a time to recognize the efforts of rural healthcare providers and their community partners who work tirelessly to address the unique health challenges that rural residents face.

Those of us who live in the Twin Counties know that rural life has much to offer. The rural parts of the United States—making up nearly 86% of the nation’s land area—can be wonderful places to live, work, learn, play, and pray. Nearly 61 million Americans, or about one in five, call rural areas home. But while rural living brings beauty, community, and connection, it also comes with real challenges. On average, rural Americans are older, poorer, and sicker than their urban counterparts, and they often die earlier as a result. These differences, known as health disparities, are well-documented and stem from a variety of barriers that make getting and staying healthy more difficult in rural places.

Financial barriers play a major role. Nationally, rural residents earn a median income of \$46,000, compared to \$62,000 in urban areas. About 17% live at or below the poverty line, and 15.8% face food insecurity—both slightly higher than urban rates.

A shortage of healthcare workers is another challenge. Rural areas have fewer primary care physicians, specialists, and mental health providers, making it harder for residents to find consistent, timely care and contributing to higher rates of chronic illness and premature death.

Even when care exists, transportation remains a barrier. Long travel distances and limited public transportation make reaching healthcare more difficult for rural residents—especially those farthest from metropolitan areas.

This is where Rural Health Networks step in. The Healthcare Consortium, serving as the Rural Health Network of Columbia County, creates partnerships among hospitals, public agencies, mental health and addiction service providers, disability organizations, businesses, and faith-based institutions. Together, these “Network Members” collaborate to strengthen healthcare access, share resources, and develop local strategies that improve health outcomes for rural residents so that rural living—good in so many ways--can also be good for our health, too.

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*The Healthcare Consortium is a non-profit organization with a mission of improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of the residents in our rural community. The agency is located at 325 Columbia St. in Hudson. For more information: visit [www.columbiahealthnet.org](http://www.columbiahealthnet.org) or call 518-822-8820.*