

Texas Rural Health Heroes

The following individuals, in alphabetical order, are being recognized by the host committee for their contributions not only to the health of rural Texans, but also to education and training of the rural workforce.



Tom Banning has served the Texas Academy of Family Physicians for over 20 years. After his tenure as the Director of Legislative and Public Affairs he assumed the role of Chief Executive Officer in 2007. In that capacity, he directs overall strategic and legislative strategy, grass roots, political action, continuing medical education, membership and communications activities for the largest specialty society in Texas, with more than 8,000 members. Tom has helped Texas family physicians realize the power of political involvement and grassroots efforts that have resulted in the passage of key legislation including long sought, comprehensive tort reform, landmark patient protection and managed care laws, and numerous rural health initiatives.

Adrian Billings, MD is a full spectrum family medicine physician with Preventative Care Health Services (PCHS), a federally qualified health center, practicing in rural Alpine, Marfa and Presidio, Texas along the Texas-Mexico border. He is also the director of the Texas Statewide Family Medicine Preceptorship Program. Dr. Billings serves as Co-President of the Presidio-Ojinaga Binational Health Council which brings together US and Mexican healthcare officials together to discuss binational health problems that affect both sides of the United States and Mexico. In 2015, the Texas Academy of Family Physicians honored Dr. Billings with the 2015 Exemplary Teaching Award for his work with precepting medical students. In 2016, Dr. Billings was awarded the Exemplary Teaching Award from the American Academy of Family Physicians. In 2019, the Texas Academy of Family Physicians awarded Dr. Billings the Philanthropist of the year and in 2020 he was awarded the Physician of the Year.



John Bowling, DO, could sense if a student was cut out for rural medicine. The founder of the Texas College of Osteopathic Medicine's nationally recognized Rural Osteopathic Medical Education program evaluated all sorts of factors, such as students' hometown and parental income. But it was often during face-to-face interviews that he trusted his gut on whether students had what it took to practice medicine far from the sprawling medical complexes and countless specialists in the city. That's why Dr. Bowling interviewed every potential student personally. After 18 years of practicing family medicine and obstetrics in rural Ohio, Dr. Bowling joined TCOM's Department of Family Medicine in 1988 with the mission of developing a rural family

medicine track. In 2006, he oversaw creation of the Rural Scholars Program, an innovative four-year curriculum designed to better prepare students for rural practice. During his 28 years at TCOM, Dr. Bowling transformed how the medical school trained students to deliver health care in rural and underserved populations. People in rural communities across Texas live healthier, fuller lives under the care of talented TCOM rural medicine graduates.

Douglas Curran, MD entered medical practice in Athens, Texas after completing residency at John Peter Smith Hospital, Southwestern Medical School in 1979. His family medicine practice has included inpatient adult and pediatric care as well as operative obstetrics. He now serves as the Chief Medical Officer of the East Texas Community Clinic and has also served as President of the Lakeland Medical Associates. He recently led the efforts to open a Federally Qualified Health Center in Henderson County. He has been a clinical teacher throughout his rural medical career, helping to educate medical students, family medicine residents and family medicine obstetrics fellows in what is now the UT Health Athens hospital community.



He served as President of the AAFP in 2006 and President of the Texas Medical Association in 2018. Most recently Dr Curran led the efforts to establish a new family medicine residency which filled its first class in the 2021 MATCH.



Nancy Dickey, MD was born in rural South Dakota and practiced full-service family medicine in Richmond, Texas for 20 years. In that practice, Dr. Dickey mentored students and residents from the University of Texas Medical School in Houston as well as other Texas schools. She was the founding program director of the Texas A&M University Family Medicine Residency in Bryan, Texas. She recognizes that attracting students to practice in small towns means providing links to other physicians, support for maintaining up to date skills, and advocacy for adequate payment to preserve those practices. As her career progressed her influence on medicine increased. She served as the first female President of the AMA, President of the Texas A&M Health

Sciences Center and Vice Chancellor for Health Affairs the Texas A&M University System. Currently, she serves as executive director of the Rural and Community Health Institute working with physicians and hospitals across the state of Texas and the nation.

Dickey's interest in rural health stems from several fronts – from having been born in rural South Dakota to practicing in small town Texas. She provided full-service family medicine including operative obstetrics for nearly 20 years in Richmond, Texas. In that practice, Dr. Dickey mentored students and residents from the University of Texas Medical School in Houston as well as other Texas schools. She recognizes that attracting students to practice in small towns means providing links to other physicians, support for maintaining up to date skills, and advocacy for adequate payment to preserve those practices.