**CELEBRATING THE POWER OF RURAL ON NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH DAY**

**By Steve Ahnen, President, New Hampshire Hospital Association**

On this National Rural Health Day, we celebrate our hospitals and caregivers who live and work in our rural communities to ensure that the power and promise behind the Blue and White H reaches every corner of our state. National Rural Health Day is an opportunity to bring attention to and honor the incredible efforts of rural health care providers, communities, organizations, and other stakeholders who are dedicated to addressing the unique health care needs of rural America.

New Hampshire consistently ranks as one of the best states in America to live, work and raise a family. There are no doubt many reasons for that distinction, but clearly one of them is our small, rural communities, their beautiful landscapes and recreational opportunities, and the welcoming people who live, work and call those small towns and cities home.

Keeping those communities healthy and vibrant requires a strong, collaborative health care system that is able to serve its residents, keep them healthy and care for them when they are ill. New Hampshire is blessed with some of the most caring, committed health care leaders and institutions anywhere in America. From the North Country to the Lakes Region, or the Monadnock Region to the Upper Valley, New Hampshire’s rural health care providers stand ready to serve you when you need them most. They are investing in people, programs and services that aim to keep you healthy and care for you when you are sick.

The Power of Rural can be seen in the collaborative partnerships built in and among hospitals, providers and others in the community to ensure that rural residents are able to get the care they need, when and where they need it. Sometimes resources can be stretched thin in rural communities, but it is through the partnerships and collaborations that they build with others that they are able to maintain and enhance services to serve their patients. And they partner with their colleagues in larger communities to ensure that their patients—their family, friends and neighbors—are able to access care and services that may not be available in their communities.

New Hampshire’s rural hospitals, health care providers and others stand ready to serve their patients and communities today, tomorrow and always.