



# The Future of Rural America Includes Healthcare Access

□ March 31, 2017

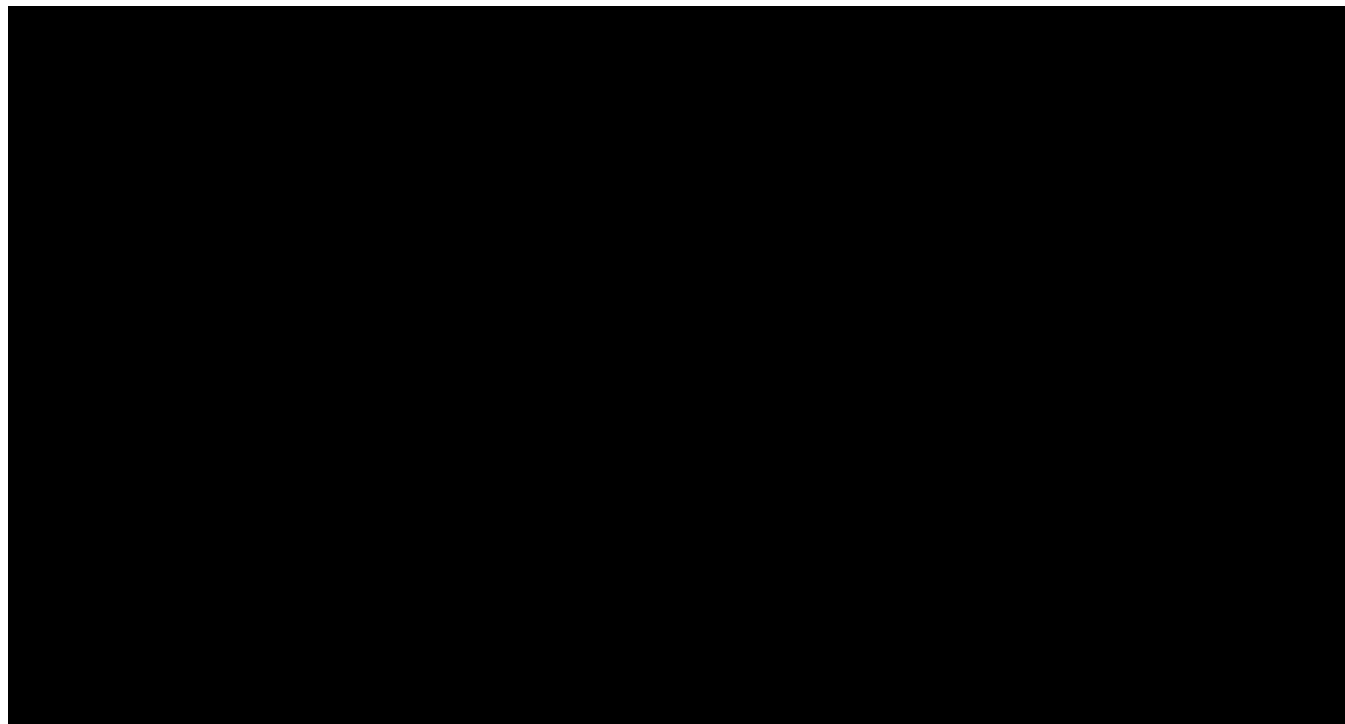
At the conclusion of our Legislative and Policy conference here in Washington DC this week, our **Foundation for Rural Service** (FRS) did an awesome job of putting together a **Telehealth Summit** that not only included the presentation of an original white paper by NTCA’s own Rick Schadelbauer titled “**Anticipating Economic Returns of Rural Telehealth**“ but also had a robust roundtable discussion that included the FCC’s Connect2Health FCC task force members, the Health Resources and Services Administration, NTIA, the Hope Clinic in Tennessee, the National Rural Hospital Association among others.

I can get pretty passionate about the varied and critical broadband applications that make a difference for the quality of life in rural America, but I have to say that I have really found the focus on rural telemedicine and telehealth to be the one where NTCA can really help move the needle. We have the unique opportunity and ability to bring together a wide group of stakeholders to the table to discuss what the regulatory, legal, business and cultural barriers are to taking telemedicine to the next step...and we did just that this week. I was also really pleased that we had nearly 80 folks sitting in on the summit, including NTCA members who added their own stories and experiences into the mix and had some great questions for the roundtable on how to get involved in more efforts with their local health providers in

home monitoring equipment, reimbursement issues (which are huge – and further makes me proud of our **GHP** trustees for taking an early effort to offer telemedicine reimbursements. More to follow there for sure!) communication between community broadband providers and their local healthcare providers, and more creative thinking on how to access specialists remotely into rural care are all on the table.

I encourage folks to check out Rick’s white paper that is also a product of our **Smart Rural Community** initiative. This follows the lead set by folks such as Nex-Tech in Kansas who has service to 11 hospitals and 14 health care clinics in their 9300 square miles and have all but one of their hospitals rolling out telemedicine services. Premier Communications in Iowa has worked closely with the Sioux Center Health and Avera Hospital to establish a connection that allows Sioux Center Health to send diagnostic images to radiologists in Sioux Falls, South Dakota and use live-feeds for emergency care. ComSouth in Georgia has partnered with the county school system to deploy telehealth equipment in school nurses’ offices that are connected to physicians in a regional health clinic, giving their low-income students likely some of the only health care they receive.....and the list goes on.

Access to health care, close to home, ensures that rural Americans can “age in place” and makes rural America a more attractive place to raise a family.



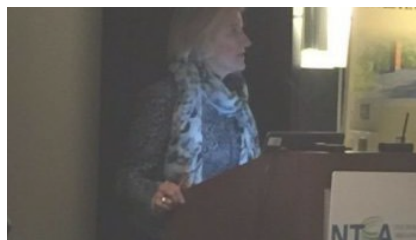
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## MEET SHIRLEY

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**Shirley Bloomfield** is chief executive officer of NTCA–The Rural Broadband Association. With 30 years of experience representing the country’s smallest independent telecom operators, Bloomfield is an expert on the role of federal communications policies in sustaining the vitality of rural and remote communities and the benefits rural broadband networks bring to the national economy.



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