



September 2018

From: Missouri Area Health Education Centers

### **Happy 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Missouri AHEC (MAHEC)**

October 1, 2018 begins the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year for the Missouri Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) Network. Initiated in 1988 by one medical school and one regional office serving northeast Missouri, the network had, by 2001, expanded to include 7 regional offices and 3 of Missouri's 6 medical schools. Through good times and lean, the network has grown and provided service to Missourians across the state with the goal of improving access to healthcare in underserved rural and urban areas.

To increase quality and distribution of health care professionals across Missouri, the AHEC partners offer career exploration/preparation programming to educate younger students (grades 9-12) about health careers. Over 50% of participants are from disadvantaged backgrounds, over 40 % from rural backgrounds, and many from underrepresented minorities. These are the individuals who are most likely to establish practices in areas of need.

To encourage more advanced students to explore/consider/choose practice sites that better serve underserved rural and urban populations, AHEC offices partner with over 500 exemplary practices and hospitals across the state. With coordination/support services from AHEC, over 2,500 health professions students annually experience clinical learning away from their home campuses. Seventy percent (70%) of sites are in medically underserved communities (MUCs), 40% are in rural areas, and 30% are in primary care settings. Many former AHEC-ers now "give back" to their professions and their state by sharing their stories with aspiring students and/or serving as preceptors teaching current students. Disciplines involved in community rotations have included: medicine, nursing, physician assistant, speech therapy, allied and public health, dentistry, and behavioral health.

We are not resting on our laurels! Today's health care systems and patients are increasingly complex and dependent on health care teams. This year, MAHEC is rolling out a new statewide initiative -- the Missouri AHEC Scholars program. Using on-line and experiential learning activities focused on the broader causes of poor health, this two-year intensive curriculum for selected health professions students aims to enrich the preparation of those close to graduation for service in areas of need. Both the Scholars program and regionally based initiatives that AHEC would like to develop would place students in regional teams/interprofessional groups for robust education, service and research experiences to promote student learning, understanding of underserved rural and urban populations, and response to community needs. In celebrating 30 successful years of service to Missouri, MAHEC partners look forward to an even more successful future.



*Northwest Missouri AHEC Scholars, Cohort 1 enjoy a multicultural meal as part of their regional orientation.*

*MAHEC is a partnership of seven locally-governed organizations and three university-based health professions education programs working statewide to increase the numbers of Missouri youth entering stable, high-paying jobs as healthcare professionals and the numbers of professionals caring for underserved populations.*

*The MAHEC partners include:*

- A.T. Still University –
  - Kirksville
- University of Missouri –
  - Columbia
- Saint Louis University
- Northeast Missouri AHEC -Kirksville
- Northwest Missouri AHEC
  - St. Joseph
- West Central Missouri
  - AHEC – Lexington
- Mid-Missouri AHEC – Rolla
- East Central Missouri AHEC– St. Louis
- Southeastern Missouri AHEC – Poplar Bluff
- Southwest Missouri AHEC
- – Springfield

***MAHEC: Connecting students to careers, professionals to communities, and communities to better health***