

Named Community Rural Health Leader of the Year

During the 2009 Pennsylvania Rural Health Awards Ceremony, held June 3 in State College, Ellen Krajewski of Liberty Township, Tioga County, was named Community Rural Health Leader of the Year.

The Pennsylvania Rural Health Awards are presented each year to select individuals and/or organizations that significantly enhance the health and well-being of rural Pennsylvanians. The awards are sponsored by the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health, which has a statewide awards committee to facilitate the process.

This year, six awards were presented to five individuals, including Krajewski, and one organization by Lisa Davis, director of the Pennsylvania Office of Rural Health, in conjunction with the 17th annual Pennsylvania Rural Health Conference. Pennsylvania Department of Health Deputy Secretary for Health Planning and Assessment Michael Huff, R.N., assisted with this year's ceremony at The Penn State Conference Center Hotel in State College.

Susan Browning of Susquehanna Health, Williamsport nominated Krajewski for the award. The reasons why she was chosen for this award are: "As executive director of the Northcentral Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center (AHEC) for the past 14 years, Ellen Krajewski has demonstrated an unparalleled commitment to rural health through exemplary leadership and innovation.

"She has led the charge to help communities in the AHEC's ten-county region meet their pri-



photo provided
State Deputy Secretary of Health, Planning and Assessment Michael Huff, R.N., (right) presents Ellen Krajewski, MPH, CHES, executive director of the Northcentral Pennsylvania Area Health Education Center, based on Wellsboro, with the Community Rural Health Leader of the Year Award during the 2009 Pennsylvania Rural Health Conference, held at Pennsylvania State University on June 3.

in 1986, and worked for Abington Hospital and Johnson & Johnson Health Management Corporation, before moving to Nauvoo in Liberty Township, Tioga County in 1989. Laurel Health System, a founding and supportive partner

grows in Tioga County, only one of the 10 counties it serves, the Northcentral AHEC has been involved with the safety net dental clinic, Step Outdoors, student training with Laurel Health System, numerous Tioga County Partnership for Community Health projects, health careers programming, Pennsylvania College of Technology's nursing and medical office programs, six health professions programs at Mansfield University, continuing professional education for physicians and other health professionals, and tobacco cessation efforts.

In the Northcentral AHEC's 10-county region, Krajewski has led the organization's support of community medical and dental clinics to increase services to needy populations. She said, "Bringing primary healthcare providers into our rural communities to provide essential care to those most in need is essential to a functioning community and a healthy economy. It is service work and public health work with no easy solutions. The rewarding part of this job is expanding services to those in need, and also working with the committed and hardworking healthcare providers and staff of safety net clinics, small hospitals, and community organizations in our region."

During the June 3 Rural Health Conference, Krajewski also led her first board meeting as she began her first term as president of the Pennsylvania Rural Health Association, which exists to advance the health and wellness of Pennsylvania's rural citizens and communities. Individual and organizational members provide

leadership on rural health issues.

She lives in Nauvoo with her husband, Phillip. They have three children.

Others receiving 2009 Pennsylvania Rural Health Awards on June 3 included: Ed Pitchford, chief executive officer of Charles Cole Memorial Hospital of Coudersport, Potter County, who was named 2009 State Rural Health Leader of the Year for his leadership role with the Pennsylvania Critical Access Hospital (CAH) Consortium; Pennsylvania Senator Patricia Vance (R-31st District) who received the 2009 Legislator of the Year Award for her work with the Pennsylvania Dental Hygienists' Association to improve access to rural health care through her introduction of Senate Bill 455, now Act 51 of 2007; Karen Smith, vice president of patient services at St. Luke's Miners Memorial Hospital (Schuylkill and Carbon counties); who received a Community Rural Health Leader of the Year Award for her efforts in 2008 to establish two Rural Health Clinics that in their first year provided quality primary care to 5,000 patients; Dr. James Gallagher, a "retired" physician who still practices in Mifflinville (Columbia County), who received the 2009 Rural Health Hero of the Year award for volunteering to serve as the Columbia County Volunteers in Medicine clinic's medical director; and "SOS - Saving Our Smiles, the first comprehensive training program of its kind, created by the ACTION Health Dental Task Force in Danville (Montour County), was hon-