Our mission is to serve as the informed voice for mental health in rural America, and to provide mental health information and resources. We are working to confront mental health challenges in rural communities and the stigma that surrounds mental illness.

A Message from Rural Minds Founder and Chairman Jeff Winton

It’s been a busy and exciting start to spring here at Rural Minds! We’ve had the opportunity to collaborate with our partners at several events to talk about the mental health crisis in rural America and provide actionable mental health information and resources. Some of these events are highlighted below.

We also recently got the wonderful news that Rural Minds was chosen as the nonprofit that will benefit from the KC Summer Kick-off Horse Show in Kansas City, MO, June 1–3. We extend our most sincere appreciation to the event organizers for this opportunity to increase awareness about the work that we are doing through Rural Minds to confront the mental health challenges faced by people living in rural communities.

Looking ahead to May – Mental Health Awareness Month – Rural Minds will be hosting our next Rural Mental Health Connections webinar that will focus on mental health caregiver challenges in rural America. We’ll hear from Travis Carlson – an independent filmmaker from rural New York whose award-winning film, Mother’s Day, was based on his lived experience with his mother’s struggle with mental illness. In addition, Brittnee Henry will share her experience in caring for her father – a lifelong Iowa farmer who suffers from dementia. Registration is free.

As always, we greatly appreciate your continued support as we work together to end the suffering, silence, and stigma around mental illness in rural America.
Announcing the next webinar in our Rural Minds Mental Health Connections Webinar Series:
“Rural Mental Health Caregiver Challenges”

Rural Minds and the National Grange are pleased to present another Rural Mental Health Connections Webinar – the first FREE webinar in the 2023 series.

Wednesday, May 10, 2023
4:00 pm PT | 5:00 pm MT | 6:00 pm CT | 7:00 pm ET

Many people in rural communities struggle with mental illness, and their loved ones who provide care face challenges that are often overlooked. This webinar will feature:

- Two rural caregivers sharing their stories of lived experience providing care for their loved ones
- A conversation about stigma and the personal and professional sacrifices necessary in order to provide care
- Sharing of relevant free resources for the mental wellness of rural caregivers.

Webinar presenters include:

- Travis Carlson – An independent filmmaker from rural New York who wrote and directed the award-winning feature film *Mother’s Day*, which is based on Travis' lived experience with his mother’s struggle with mental illness. Empathizing with the role of a rural mental health caregiver and destigmatizing mental illness were two objectives for his film.
- Brittnee Henry – A mental health advocate and communications professional who has returned home to her rural community in Iowa to be the caregiver for her father – a lifelong Iowa farmer who lives with dementia.

This webinar will be presented live via Zoom with the option to hear live audio as listen-only. Webinar video will be archived and available post-event on www.RuralMinds.org.

Click here for more information and free webinar registration
By Ellen Butterfield

What happens behind closed doors can be scary, especially when you’re a child. Many years of my youth were spent in spiraling cycles of depression and anxiety that affected both my physical and mental health. My parents divorced at age five, which lead to my siblings and me splitting households for most of my childhood. During this same timeframe, my grandparents passed away unexpectedly. With insurance limitations and minimal access to mental health resources such as therapy, I turned to spending more time at my family’s dairy farm to keep my mind off things.

Read more

Rural Minds on the Road – Raising Awareness of Rural Mental Health Challenges

Here are some highlights of the events Rural Minds has participated in the last few weeks to help raise awareness of rural mental health challenges and to provide actionable information and resources for confronting the mental health crisis in rural America.

On March 1, Rural Minds Executive Director Chuck Strand led a virtual presentation on confronting mental health challenges at the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources monthly meeting. And on March 12 he was a guest presenter at the Connecticut State Grange meeting to speak about partnership initiatives from Rural Minds and the National Grange to confront mental health challenges in rural America and the stigma that surrounds mental illness.

On March 13, Rural Minds Founder and Chairman Jeff Winton partnered with NY FarmNet Personal Consultant Teresa McMahon for a presentation at the Ross Grange Town Hall Meeting in Falconer, NY. As a native of Chautauqua County, NY, this was an especially meaningful event for Jeff. During their presentation, Jeff and Teresa talked about the mental health crisis in rural America and provided mental health information and resources. The meeting was open to the public and well attended with standing room only.

On March 20, Jeff Winton was invited by Medford Grange #188 and the Maryland State Grange to
speak about the collaboration between Rural Minds and the National Grange on confronting the mental health crisis in rural America, including the organizations’ Growing Hope Together campaign.

The meeting was open to the public and attended by Maryland State Grange President Allen Stiles, Medford Grange President Cliff Newsome, staff and representatives from the National Grange, including President Betsy Huber, Communications Director Philip Vonada, Membership and Leadership Development Director Amanda Brozana Rios, Sales, Benefits and Programs Director Loretta Washington, National Junior Grange and Youth Development Director Samantha Wilkins, National Junior Grange Ambassador Nettie Hartley, and National Grange Outstanding Young Patrons Autumn Whitaker and Gail Switzer.

After his presentation, Jeff spoke with members of the National Grange Youth and Junior leadership team about ways to destigmatize mental health in rural America. This helped prepare the team members to discuss this important issue with their state senators when they met with them on Capitol Hill the next day.

On March 21, Vice President of Communications Julie Lux represented Rural Minds in Fort Worth, TX, at AgRally 2023 – a live, nationally-broadcast television show on RFD-TV and the Cowboy Channel that celebrated National Ag Day. During the second hour of the show, Julie was featured along with Farm Fit Momma Amanda Nigg in a segment that provided tips on mental and physical wellness. You can watch the video of AgRally 2023 [here](#) and Julie’s segment from 59:23 to 1:16:17.

On March 30, Jeff Winton shared his personal story and the work being done to honor the mission of Rural Minds at the NY FarmNet training session in Geneva, NY. NY FarmNet was founded by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University in 1986 as a free consulting service to farmers and agribusiness professionals.

On March 31, at the Clifton Springs, NY, Grange Town Hall Meeting, Jeff partnered with NY FarmNet Family Consultant Sarah McCumiskey, LMHC, to help increase awareness about the mental health crisis in rural America. During the meeting, which was open to the public, Jeff and Sarah also provided attendees with mental health information and resources.
A qualified charitable distribution (QCD) is one of the many ways available to support the work we do at Rural Minds in confronting the mental health crisis in rural America. To make a QCD, you must be 70½ years or older at the time of the gift and it must be made directly from your individual retirement account (IRA) to Rural Minds.

Benefits of Making a QCD from Your IRA
When you make a QCD to Rural Minds, the donated funds won’t be included in your gross income for federal income tax purposes and may help keep you in a lower tax bracket. In addition, the donation will count towards your required minimum distribution for the year from your IRA.

Click here to learn more about QCDs and other ways you can help us help others.

IN THE NEWS:
Rural Minds and Mental Health in Rural America

The following are some of the ways Rural Minds has been reaching out through the media to help increase awareness about mental health challenges in rural America and the stigma surrounding mental illness:

WZFG The Flag – “What’s on Your Mind?” Radio Show
Jeff Winton participated in a Talk Radio Town Hall on mental health in the agriculture community on WZFG The Flag’s “What’s on Your Mind?” radio show, which is broadcast on stations in North Dakota, South Dakota, western Minnesota, eastern Montana, and the southern central Canadian provinces.

WXXI News – Radio Interview on “Connections with Evan Dawson”
On the National Public Radio (NPR) member station WXXI News radio show “Connections with Evan Dawson,” Jeff Winton participated in a discussion about the barriers to mental healthcare in rural areas and what can be done to address the challenges.

Chautauqua Today Radio Interview
Prior to a presentation on the mental health crisis in rural America at the Ross Grange Town Hall meeting in Falconer, NY, Jeff Winton was interviewed by radio journalist Dennis Webster on the Jamestown, NY, radio station WDOE for Chautauqua Today.
An article by Jeff Winton about confronting mental health challenges in rural areas is now featured in the Rural Mental Wellness Toolkit of Stigma-Free Society, a Canadian mental health charity.

**NCBA Cattlemen to Cattlemen Interview**

In an interview with NCBA Cattlemen to Cattlemen’s Russel Nemetz, Jeff Winton discussed barriers that are unique to rural residents when it comes to seeking mental health services and how Rural Minds is helping to improve mental health resources in rural areas.

**Canvas8 Report – “How Are Rural Americans Addressing Their Mental Health?”**

Jeff Winton was interviewed by Ben Resnik with the cultural research firm Canvas8 and his comments were included in a February 2023 report that addressed the mental health crisis in rural communities and how brands and businesses can help alleviate the situation.