



PRESENTS

# COMMUNITY WELLNESS & EDUCATION

INTRODUCING

# CERE

Center for Excellence in Rural Education

**MHA Foundation is excited to introduce** its new nonprofit sister organization, the Center for Excellence in Rural Education (CERE). CERE will officially join the Arizona Area Health Education Center (AzaAHEC) as an Arizona AHEC Regional Center, effective July 1, 2023. This expansion encompasses Gila, Graham, and Greenlee Counties, forming the CERE-AHEC region.

The primary goal of Arizona AHEC is to improve access to high-quality healthcare, mainly primary and preventive care, by enhancing the supply and distribution of healthcare professionals through collaborative partnerships between academic institutions and communities in medically underserved rural areas. Arizona AHEC is dedicated to bridging the gap between healthcare education and the specific needs of underserved communities, striving for equitable access to healthcare services for all residents. By fostering collaborations and implementing educational initiatives, Arizona AHEC aims to address the shortage of healthcare professionals and ensure that communities receive the required healthcare.



**Jennifer Smith**  
CERE Executive Director

Through the efforts of its parent organization, MHA Foundation, the CERE-AHEC objectives have been demonstrated through the steadfast support of health, healthcare, and education in underserved rural Gila County since its establishment as the Mogollon Health Alliance in 1958. AzaAHEC Associate Director Jennifer Zuniga writes, "Arizona AHEC is delighted to announce that Center for Excellence in Rural Education (CERE) will become an Arizona AHEC Regional Center, effective July 1, 2023. The CERE-AHEC region incorporates Gila, Graham, and Greenlee Counties. Please join AzaAHEC in welcoming Jennifer Smith, MBA, MS, C.Ped., who will serve as the CERE-AHEC Director and the entire CERE-AHEC team."

Since 1984, the Arizona Area Health Education Center (AzaAHEC) Program has been actively recruiting, training, and retaining healthcare professionals in underserved rural and urban communities across Arizona. This initiative comprises six AHEC Regional Centers located throughout the state, nine Rural Health Professions Programs (RHPPs) affiliated with Arizona's three public universities, and graduate medical education (GME) programs at Banner University Medical Center South (BUMC-S) and North Country HealthCare.

In the fiscal year 2022, 1,531 health profession trainees from more than 40 universities and residency programs participated in over 450,000 community-based clinical and experiential training hours within the AzaAHEC Program. Through the Regional Centers, nearly 4,500 health professionals benefited from continuing education and professional development events, while approximately 1,000 students in Grades K-12 participated in structured health career pipeline programs.



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
**Arizona AHEC**  
Area Health Education Centers



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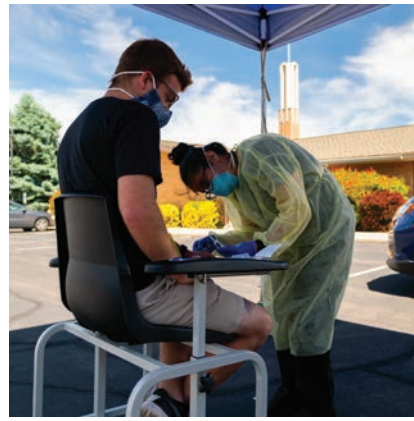
COLLEGE OF MEDICINE PHOENIX



Rural Medical Students of the 2022 Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC) Payson Rotation

The Center for Excellence in Rural Education will partner with AzAHEC in several initiatives. These include the Area Health Education Centers Scholars program, Community-Based Experiential Training opportunities, sponsoring Continuing Education events for existing practitioners, promoting healthcare education programs for students in grades 9-16, and offering health education opportunities to the public.

As a function of the program's coordination with the Federal Health Resources and Services Administration Bureau of Health Workforce, all program areas will feature highly intentional core topics. These focus areas include Interprofessional Education, Behavioral Health Integration, Connecting Communities and Supporting Health Professionals, Social Determinants of Health, Cultural Competency, Practice Transformation, Virtual Learning and Telehealth, and Current and Emerging Health Issues. Kenny Evans, MHA Foundation President, states, "The MHA Foundation Board and staff are thrilled to expand the impact of our mission -- to improve wellness and education in rural Arizona -- through this partnership with AzAHEC, and are excited to introduce CERe to the tri-county region."



# CERe

Center for Excellence in Rural Education



## AREAS OF FOCUS

**Community Based Educational Training**

**AHEC Scholars Program**

**K-16 Pipeline Program**

**Continuing Education for Existing Practitioners**

**Community Health Education Experiences**



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