



**Northeast Oregon**  
Area Health Education Center

# ANNUAL REPORT



**GROWING THE FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE SINCE 1991**

Addressing the healthcare workforce shortage in rural and frontier Oregon by developing our own health professionals that reflect the composition and needs of our communities.



# CONTENTS

---

01

ABOUT NEOAHEC

---

---

04

STORY OF IMPACT

---

---

07

PATHWAY PROGRAMS

---

---

09

HEALTH PROFESSIONS  
PROGRAMS

---

---

10

SIMULATION WITH  
NEOAHEC

---

---

11

FUNDERS & PARTNERS

---

---

13

BECOME INVOLVED

---

# FROM THE DIRECTOR

As I reflect on the remarkable journey of 2025, I am filled with gratitude for the unwavering support and inspired by the incredible opportunities NEOAHEC has received.

Organizations like Grande Ronde Hospital have demonstrated their commitment to our MedQuest camp for over three decades, a testament to the collaborative spirit that drives our mission forward.

NEOAHEC was honored this year to be recognized by our U.S. Senators, who shared a moment with us at our Rural MedQuest camp and highlighted NEOAHEC at the beginning of a town hall in La Grande. Their support underscores the importance of our work and propels us into 2026.

I want to extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Roundhouse Foundation, the Oregon Health Authority, the Murdock Charitable Trust, and all our volunteers and in-kind supporters, who have played a pivotal role in expanding our capacity and creating more opportunities in our region.

Through my role on the National AHEC Board of Directors and with the National Rural Health Association Fellows program, I have met many wonderful people in 2025 who are making positive impacts on rural health throughout the country. This source of energy has become an ongoing inspiration for me and NEOAHEC to continue striving toward growth and impact throughout eastern Oregon.

Thank you for believing in NEOAHEC and standing with us as we encourage the future generation of healthcare workers and extend support to current health professionals.

Sincerely,

*Meredith Lair*





## 2025 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



NEOAHEC is governed by a volunteer board of directors made up of fourteen individuals representing multiple sectors in our region.

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Education Center

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Coordinator

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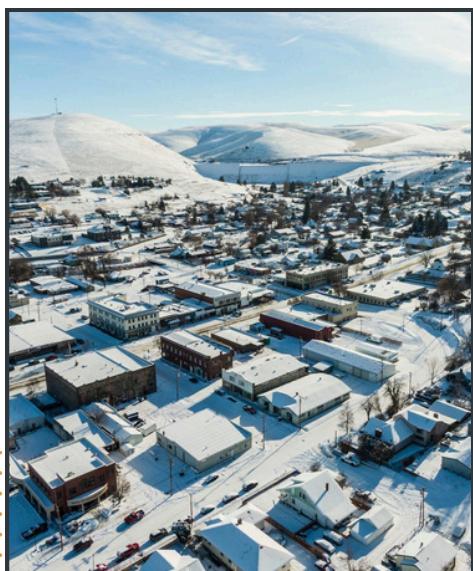
Education Program  
Specialist

### **Carissa Scariano**

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Manager

### **Adam Sieders**

IT/  
Developer



Heppner, Oregon

Proudly Serving: Baker, Gilliam, Hood  
River, Malheur, Morrow, Sherman,  
Umatilla, Union, Wallowa, Wasco,  
& Wheeler counties.

Partnering to serve Grant & Harney counties

# Strategic Goals

## Health Career Pathway Excellence & Impact for Youth

Provide premier health career exploration programs to students interested in health careers.



## Community Engagement & Collaborative Learning for Health Professions Students

Mobilize and lead community-based projects for interprofessional health professions students, focusing on current and emerging health needs.

## Simulated Education & Ongoing Learning for Health Professionals

Enhance healthcare in our rural communities by providing simulation-based training using high-fidelity manikins and advanced technology.



## Innovation & Societal Impact

Be pioneers for the collection of standardized data, providing longitudinal updates from pathway to practice.

## Exemplary & Inclusive Service

Remain distinguished for organizational excellence across its programs.



# Heppner's Growing Healthcare Community

**A story about a rural eastern  
Oregon town investing in its own  
children to sustain healthcare  
access close to home.**



**Petra Payne**  
Spanish/Health/Careers Teacher  
Heppner Jr/Sr High School



**Paul Lindsay**  
OHSU School of Nursing Student  
Heppner Jr/Sr High School Class of 2023



**Emily Jack, MD**  
Physician, Pioneer Memorial Hospital  
Heppner Jr/Sr High School Class of 2010

Read the story on page 5



Pioneer Memorial Hospital, part of the Morrow County Health District, is the smallest hospital in Oregon. It's in Heppner, a very small and rural town. Located 45 miles south of Hermiston, the population is under 1,200 and there's just a few small communities surrounding it.

People love living there. They don't mind being so far away from everything else because they have such a strong sense of belonging, which starts young.

Petra Payne teaches at the high school. According to her,

**“Our school is the center of the community.”**

She has watched local businesses work with students on their professional development and local people come to all of the school's events, and Petra works hard to support Heppner students as each one of them takes her Spanish, Health, and Careers classes.

Petra has partnered with NEOAHEC for the last seven years to expand health career exploration opportunities for kids in Heppner.



One of her students, Paul Lindsay, recently moved to La Grande to attend nursing school. He had always thought he would find himself in a career like one of his parents, a feed lot farmer and a crop insurance adjuster, but after attending NEOAHEC's MedQuest summer camp, he picked a different path.

**“My mom wanted to be a nurse, so I feel like I'm kind of carrying on that dream.”**

Since he started nursing school, two of his younger siblings have decided they want to be nurses, too. Paul's sister was also a part of MedQuest on her journey into nursing.



Another one of Petra's students, Emily Jack, came from a family of cattle ranchers, going back 5 generations on one side and 6 on the other. She has been deeply involved with NEOAHEC since attending OHSU, even helping to create a new program that introduced people to rural healthcare.

After completing her residency, she moved back to the area and began practicing family medicine in Pendleton. She spent this time working with health professions students as they rotated through eastern Oregon, taking on 6-8 students a year.

She recently accepted a new position at the hospital in Heppner as both Medical Director for the Clinic and the Hospital and Medical Director for Hospice and Home Health.

She will continue to practice as she is able, and she plans to continue to take on students. Even though it seems like a lot, Emily always wanted to end up back home to raise her family and to make a difference for her community. "Luckily, I just work with a lot of really talented people... We've all trained for different things.

**"I really lean on everybody to work as a team. It's not all on me by any means."**

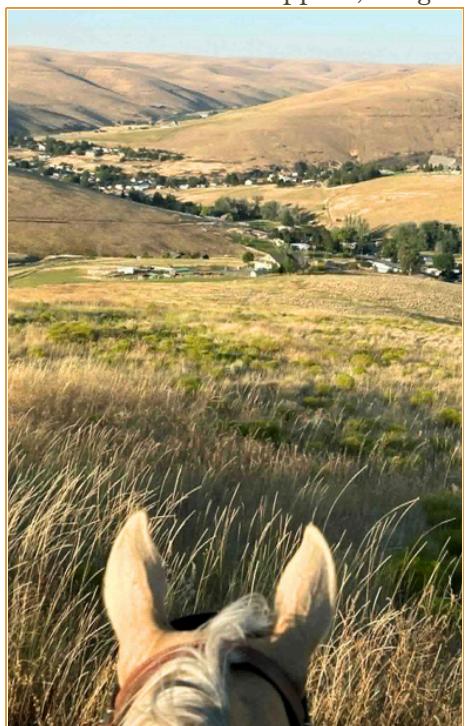
Emily plans to take students into the practice to help them become more confident in rural primary care. She has always invited people to become part of the community, but this time she can focus on showing them what life is like in her own hometown. She plans to invite them to local events, like their town's big St. Patrick's Day celebration, or to even visit her family and see what it's like to brand cattle.

"There was a time when young people weren't moving home because they didn't have jobs," added Petra. But now the investment the community has made in growing their own is proving successful.

**"We are seeing health providers come home."**

It takes a village of people willing to work hard to create a community. Petra, Paul, and Emily are just three of the people who play an important part of Heppner's health career pathway. And they're not alone - more Heppner residents like Emily and Paul are heading into health professions programs and coming home.

Heppner, Oregon



## Investigators of Science

A career in healthcare begins with being fascinated by science at an early age.

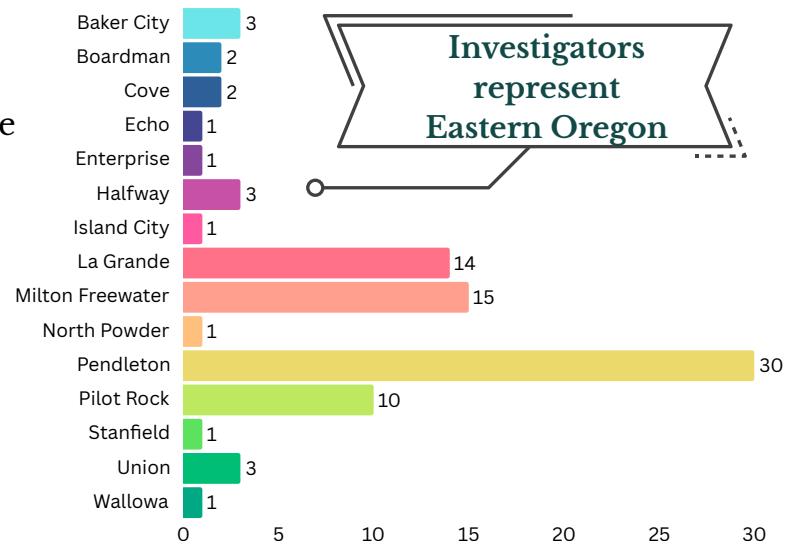
Investigators of Science was created over 20 years ago to do just that. This partnership between Eastern Oregon University and NEOAHEC introduces STEM subjects to middle school students and show them what it's like to be in college.

### This Year's Students Shared:

"I enjoyed the biology segment because I got the chance to further learn about the field I would like to set my career in." - 8<sup>th</sup> grader from Pilot Rock

"I liked math the best because I got the chance to decode a couple of ciphers and love codes and math." - 7<sup>th</sup> grader from Baker City

"I liked going on the crime scene because it challenged my brain. - 6<sup>th</sup> grader from Cove



## MQ Health Career Exploration Field Trips

MQ day camps are a collaboration between a local high school and NEOAHEC. Typically, the events include hands-on learning using our high-fidelity simulators, a tour of the OHSU School of Nursing in La Grande, and presentations from local providers and health professions students.

In 2025, MQ's were coordinated with high schools in Wallowa and Heppner for 17 students.

"There are many paths in healthcare and there are many ways to get where you want." - Student at MQ Day Camp: Heppner



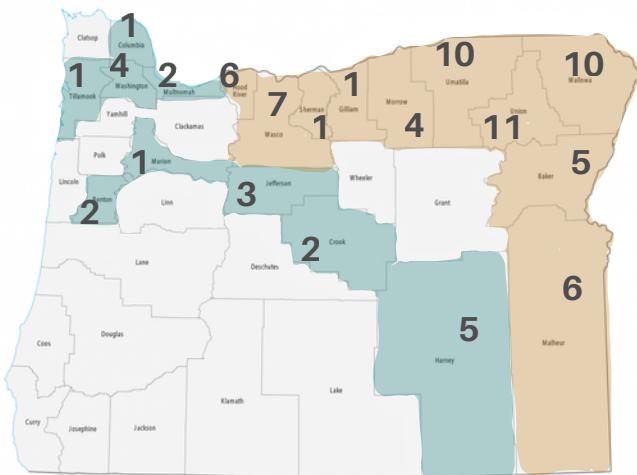
# MedQuest Camps

A foot in the door to healthcare. In 2025, NEOAHEC's MedQuest camps introduced 96 high school students to a variety of health professions, provided them with real-life healthcare skills, and connected them with local peers & mentors.



## Campers by Oregon County

by number of students



"There is no small person in healthcare. They all play a vital part in a team."

- Frontier Camper from Hines



"I loved my 4th job shadow in Cardio pulmonary and getting to learn about the heart and lungs, testing my breathing, and intubating a baby manikin."

- Rural Camper from Silverton

IN 2025 THERE WERE:

**301** Job Shadows arranged as part of MedQuest

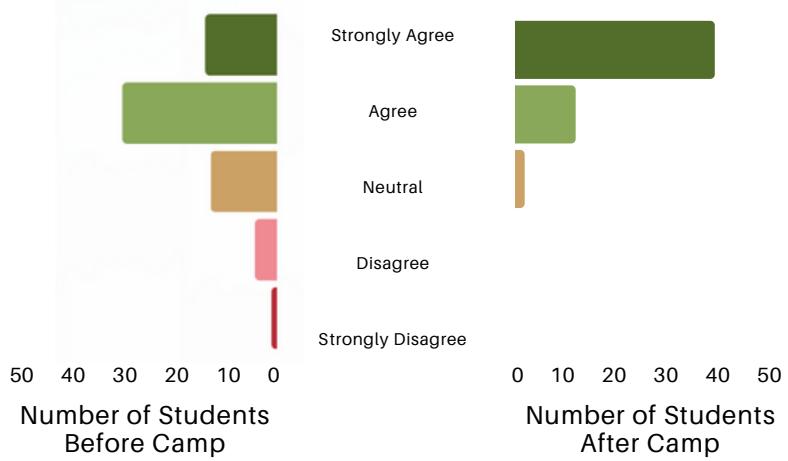
Health Careers explored as part of MedQuest

**63**

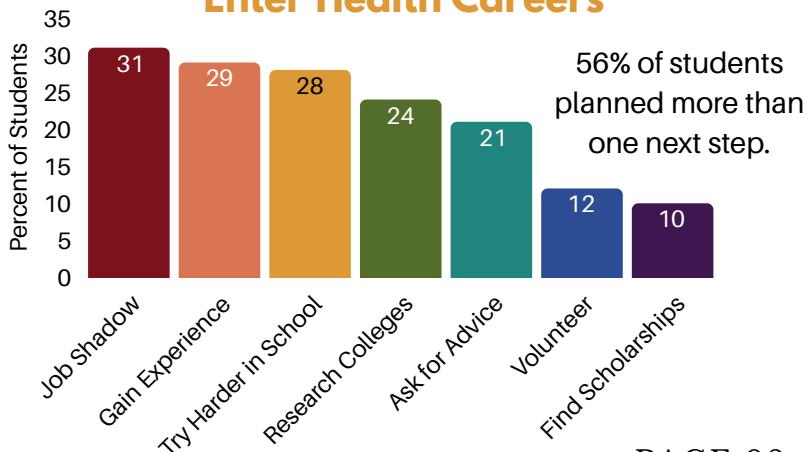
"The best part of my day was learning CPR. I think it's a really useful life-saving skill, and it boosted my confidence"  
- The Gorge Camper from Hood River



I have skills that I can use in the future in a health career.



## Students' Continued Efforts to Enter Health Careers





## Putting Health Professions Students in the Heart of the Community



Assisting OHSU in putting health professions students in rural and frontier places throughout eastern Oregon for their clinical rotations has been critical to NEOAHEC's mission for 34 years. Experiential training is an essential part of workforce development for rural Oregon. In 2025, housing was provided for these interprofessional students in the region:



## Nurse Readiness Program

NEOAHEC is partnering with the OHSU School of Nursing La Grande campus, the Oregon AHEC Scholars



program, and the Roundhouse Foundation to address the



Simulation

nursing workforce shortage by increasing confidence and skills, reducing barriers, and addressing resilience. **23** nursing students participated in 2025.

**Mental Health**

**First Aid**



**Clinical Travel Support**



## *A Year's Overview*

# SIMULATION WITH NEOAHEC

NEOAHEC supported rural clinic and hospitals, rotating health professions learners, and undergraduate nursing students, and pathway students by offering structured practice in low-volume, high-risk scenarios that are often difficult to encounter in rural clinical settings.

Using our community simulation toolkit, NEOAHEC provides the simulation equipment with the personnel to run it with pre-brief and debrief templates to support consistent facilitation, reflection, and learning across sites.

## IN 2025 THERE WERE:

366

## Simulation training scenarios offered

## Participants in NEOAHEC Simulation

6



## Autism & Sensory Sensitivity Simulation

- Focuses on communication, environmental awareness, and patient-centered care when working with neurodivergent patients.

## Look, Listen, Feel – Clinical Assessment

- Hands-on introduction to physical assessment skills to connect assessment findings to clinical reasoning.

## Mock Code / Acute Deterioration

- Team-based response to a rapidly deteriorating patient, including pediatric mock code scenarios such as RSV-related respiratory failure and near-drowning.

## Moulage Basics – Healthcare Simulation

- Provides instruction in foundational moulage techniques and their application to simulation design.

## Pediatric Trauma

- High-acuity pediatric scenario centered on assessment, communication, role-clarity, teamwork.

## Pediatric Respiratory Distress Readiness

- Assessment and management of child in respiratory distress, followed by sepsis and identifying early warning signs.

# GROWING OUR OWN, TOGETHER!



In Eastern Oregon, community is a shared responsibility. The health of our small towns depends on mission driven organizations working together through partnerships and collaboration to expand services, raise awareness, and create lasting impact.

## We Celebrate and Thank Our Funders for Believing in the Mission of NEOAHEC



Funding high-fidelity obstetric & neonatal simulators



Supporting the  
NEOAHEC  
Pathway to Practice  
Data System



Campus for Rural Health  
& State AHEC Support



Developing  
behavioral health  
curriculum &  
career pathways



Providing  
scholarships for  
MedQuest &  
certifications



Sponsor of STEM through  
Investigators of Science



Federal Health  
Workforce Program



Reducing barriers  
for rural nursing  
students  
&  
Expanding the  
capacity of  
NEOAHEC's  
MedQuest Camps

# COLLECTIVE VISION, COLLABORATION & COMMITMENT TO RURAL OREGON

With Thanks to our Partners Who Expand Our Capacity to Serve Eastern Oregon

AHEC of Southwest Oregon  
American Association of University Women - Pendleton Branch  
Apple Eyecare  
Burns Dental  
Cascades East AHEC  
Central Middle School  
Clemens Ranch  
Columbia Gorge Community College  
Crane Union School District & High School  
Crystal Crane Hot Springs  
Eastern Oregon University  
Eli Mayes Dental  
Emergency Nurses Association  
Grande Ronde Hospital  
Greater Oregon STEM Hub  
Harney County Public Health Department  
Harney District Hospital  
Harris Family Dental  
Heppner Junior/Senior High School  
High Desert Partnership  
Hines Middle School  
Island City Fire Department  
Kehr Chiropractic  
Koza Family Dental  
La Grande Family Dental  
La Grande Family Eye Care  
La Grande Family Practice  
La Grande Fire Department

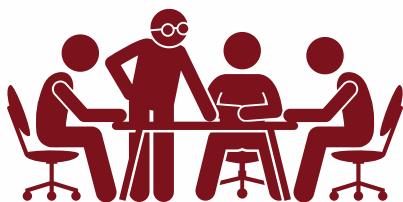
La Grande School District  
Lisa Roath Catering  
Mid-Columbia Center for Living  
Morrow County Health District  
Mountain Sage Medical  
Mountain Valley Therapy  
OHSU School of Nursing La Grande Campus  
One Community Health Hood River & The Dalles  
OHWI AHEC  
Oregon AHEC Program Office  
Oregon Emergency Nurses Association  
Oregon Pacific AHEC  
Oregon Treasury  
OSU Open Campus Juntos Program  
Richland Chapter of the American Chemical Society  
Riverside Greens  
Single Speed Printing  
St. Alphonsus Medical Center Ontario  
St. Anthony Hospital  
St. Lukes Eastern Oregon Medical Associates  
Treasure Valley Community College  
Wallowa High School  
Wallowa Memorial Hospital  
Winding Waters Clinic  
Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center



# BECOME PART OF THE NEOAHEC COMMUNITY



**Program  
Participation**



**Event Staffing**



**Update Account  
Information**



**Story of Impact**



**Precepting &  
Mentoring**



**Board of Directors**



**Scholarship or  
Donation**



**Spread the Word**



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Area Health Education Center



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