



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Lewis County Health System Awarded for Efforts to Improve Rural Stroke Care**

*The American Heart Association's Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke Rural Recognition Bronze award recognizes efforts to address the unique health needs of rural communities*

Lowville, NY — People who live in rural communities live an average of three years fewer than urban counterparts and have a 40% higher likelihood of developing heart disease and face a 30% increased risk for stroke mortality — a gap that has grown over the past two decades.<sup>1,2</sup> Lewis County Health System (LCHS) is committed to changing that.

For efforts to optimize stroke care and eliminate rural health care outcome disparities, Lewis County Health System has received the American Heart Association's [Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke Rural Recognition Bronze award](#).

The American Heart Association, the world's leading nonprofit organization focused on heart and brain health for all, recognizes the importance of health care services provided to people living in rural areas by rural hospitals that play a vital role in initiation of timely evidence-based care. For that reason, all rural hospitals participating in Get With The Guidelines® - Stroke are eligible to receive award recognition based on a unique methodology focused on early acute stroke performance metrics.

"We are proud that our team at Lewis County Health System is being recognized for the important work we do every day to improve the lives of people in Lewis County who are affected by stroke, giving them the best possible chance of recovery and survival," said Marcy Teal, BSN, RN, LCHS Chief Nursing Officer. "As a hospital in a rural community, we deal with characteristics, such as extended interfacility transportation times, and limited staffing resources. We've made it a goal to make sure those hurdles do not affect the standard of care our stroke patients receive."

"Rural communities deserve high quality stroke care. I applaud our team for their commitment to stroke care excellence and this achievement," said Gerald Cayer, MPH, LCHS Chief Executive Officer.

The award recognizes hospitals for their efforts toward acute stroke care excellence demonstrated by composite score compliance to guideline-directed care for intravenous thrombolytic therapy, timely hospital inter-facility transfer, dysphagia screening, symptom timeline and deficit assessment documentation, emergency medical services communication, brain imaging and stroke expert consultation.

"Patients and health care professionals in Lewis County and the North Country face unique health care challenges and opportunities," said Karen E. Joynt Maddox, M.D., MPH, volunteer expert for the American Heart Association, co-author on "Call to Action: Rural Health: A Presidential Advisory From the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association" and co-director of the Center for Health Economics and Policy at the Institute for Public Health at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri. "Lewis County Health System has furthered this important work to improve care for all Americans, regardless of where they live."

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<sup>1</sup> <https://newsroom.heart.org/news/american-heart-association-issues-call-to-action-for-addressing-inequities-in-rural-health>;  
<https://newsroom.heart.org/news/public-health-ameriacorps-to-address-health-inequity-in-rural-communities>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ahajournals.org/doi/10.1161/CIR.000000000000753#R16>



**Lewis County  
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**In photo:** Front row L to R – Lyndsey Allen, RN, Felicia Bacon, PharmD, Sherry Beyer, PT, Megan Stockman, RN, and Rebecca Keefer, RN. Back Row L to R – Robert Pfeiffer, Lucy Austin, PharmD, Tracie Davoy, RN, Marcy Teal, RN, Emily Paulsen, RN, and Randy Mullin.

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### **About Lewis County Health System**

Lewis Health System offers inpatient and outpatient care services and a 24-hour physician-staffed emergency department to meet the health needs of over 30,000 county residents and seasonal visitors. The system includes a 25-bed critical access hospital, 160-bed nursing home, three specialty centers (surgery, orthopedics, and women's health), internal medicine and family practice clinics located in Beaver Falls, Copenhagen, Lowville, and Lyons Falls, a school-based health clinic at South Lewis Central School, hospice, and home health services.

### **About the American Heart Association**

The American Heart Association is a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives. We are dedicated to ensuring equitable health in all communities. Through collaboration with numerous organizations, and powered by millions of volunteers, we fund innovative research, advocate for the public's health and share lifesaving resources. The Dallas-based organization has been a leading source of health information for nearly a century. Connect with us on [heart.org](http://heart.org), Facebook, Twitter or by calling 1-800-AHA-USA1.