

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Frontera Healthcare Network and Texas A&M Expand Partnership to Launch Rural Nursing Internship Program

This summer, a student from rural Texas could earn a fully funded nursing degree and return home to care for the community that raised them, thanks to a new partnership between Frontera Healthcare Network (FHN) and Texas A&M University.

It's not the first time Frontera and Texas A&M have built something together. Working alongside Curtis Donaldson, Executive Director of the Rural Medicine Program at the Texas A&M University College of Medicine, Frontera served as the original pilot site for Texas A&M's Rural Medicine rotation program, which has since expanded across the state. The partnership is already producing results, with one of the program's early students, Dr. Kevin Windecker, now returning to serve the same rural communities where he trained. Frontera hopes the new Rural Nursing Internship Program will create that same kind of lasting impact by introducing students to both the opportunities in rural healthcare and the hospitality of the Texas Hill Country. With newly secured funding, Texas A&M's School of Nursing is formally launching the Rural Nursing Internship Program, (Project ConNECT) and Frontera is honored to serve as the inaugural clinical rotation site. This summer, the first nursing students will begin rotations across Frontera clinics and partner facilities throughout Central Texas.

"This partnership reflects what's possible when academic institutions, community health centers, and local communities work together," said Mikki Hand, Chief Executive Officer of Frontera Healthcare Network. "We're not just hosting students; we're intentionally building a rural workforce pipeline that supports our communities today and into the future."

Dr. Sharon L. Dormire, PhD, RN, of the Texas A&M School of Nursing, said the partnership represents an important step toward strengthening the future of rural healthcare in Texas.

"Rural communities need healthcare professionals who understand the unique strengths and challenges of rural healthcare because they have lived it firsthand," said Dr. Dormire. "This partnership with Frontera Healthcare Network creates meaningful opportunities for students to learn in real-world rural settings while building relationships with the communities they may one day serve. Programs like this are essential to strengthening the future of rural healthcare in Texas."

The Rural Nursing Internship Program removes real barriers. Students from rural backgrounds are eligible for fully funded BSN tuition, eliminating the financial obstacles that keep many from

pursuing a healthcare career. And for Frontera staff, the program opens a pathway to pursue a Master of Science in Nursing, supporting career growth while keeping talented people rooted in the communities they serve.

Students will gain hands-on experience in a variety of rural healthcare settings through Frontera clinics and partnerships with local hospitals and long-term care facilities, providing real-world experience, to help prepare them to care for the communities they may one day call home.

Faculty from the Texas A&M School of Nursing, including Dr. Sharon Dormire and Dr. Jessica Cargill, DrPH will work alongside Frontera's clinical teams and local community leaders, who play an essential role in welcoming students and helping align their training with the real-world healthcare needs of the communities they're learning to serve. Together, Frontera and Texas A&M are proving that rural communities don't have to wait for the healthcare workforce to come to them; they can build it themselves. Through financial support, hands-on training, and clear career pathways, this program is designed to bring healthcare professionals home and keep them there.

About Frontera Healthcare Network

Frontera Healthcare Network is a Federally Qualified Health Center dedicated to providing high-quality, accessible healthcare to rural communities across Central Texas. Through comprehensive medical and behavioral health services, strong community partnerships, and innovative workforce development initiatives, Frontera is committed to improving health outcomes and expanding access to care.