

USU Extension HEART Initiative Wins Award for Rural Education Efforts

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Utah State University Extension's Health Extension: Advocacy, Research, & Teaching (HEART) Initiative recently received the Rural Education Partner of the Year Award from the Rural Health Association of Utah (RHAU) at their conference this month.

The award recognizes the educational opportunities USU Extension provides in rural areas of Utah and the work USU Extension HEART has put into combatting substance use disorder and the opioid epidemic.

USU Extension Health & Wellness faculty member Ashley Yaughner led the team that provided many of the rural education opportunities. HEART faculty are located in nine counties – Carbon, Emery, Tooele, Box Elder, Cache, Utah, Salt Lake, Davis, and Weber, and serve the state of Utah. Recent HEART Initiative efforts in rural Utah have included community opioid education dinners, media awareness campaigns, suicide prevention trainings, behavioral health workforce training, and naloxone overdose-reversal medication and training delivery, including access for persons who are incarcerated.

"The work of Ashley Yaughner and her team has helped solidify and provide educational opportunities to those residing in these rural parts of our state," said Kasey Shakespear from the RHAU, who presented the award. "Their presence in the community and their exceptional reputation for inclusion, outreach, and quality education create a unique resource. We are appreciative of their incredible efforts."

Partnering with collaborators such as health departments, research experts, community coalitions, and other key stakeholders to coordinate on-the-ground efforts is a key component of the HEART initiative.

"We are incredibly honored to receive this award and recognition for our rural substance use prevention, treatment, and recovery support efforts," Yaughner said. "This crisis impacts us all and has been devastating to our rural communities. We also know that none of this would be possible without the excellent local and statewide collaborators we have had the opportunity to work with. Thank you for partnering with us to bring meaningful impacts to the people who need them the most."

To learn more about USU Extension and HEART Initiative programs, visit <https://extension.usu.edu/heart/>.

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