



2016 WVRHA BOARD MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Welcome one of the new 2016 WVRHA Board Members - Brianna Sheppard Willis

Brianna Sheppard Willis is currently the program coordinator for the West Virginia University Institute for Community and Rural Health, a position she began in April of 2015. Bri was born and raised in the rural coal-mining community of Oakwood in Buchanan County, Virginia and spent summers visiting family in Holden, WV where her father was born.

She completed a BS in Psychology from the University of Virginia's College at Wise in 2006 and a MA in Psychology from East Tennessee State University in 2008. After a two-year position as an associate research assistant for HepatoSys, Inc., a small biomedical research company working to improve liver preservation and transplant, she went back to graduate school at Kansas State University from 2010-2012. In, 2012, she transferred back to ETSU when her major professor at K-State took a job the university to start the new PhD program in Translational Psychology. Bri completed her doctorate in 2014 with specific training in identifying and addressing rural health disparities in Appalachia. She then completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Pain Research at the University of Pittsburgh prior to starting her work at WVU to aid her career research goals of understanding the relationships between motivation, substance abuse and pain conditions and using this information to improve the well-being and quality of life for rural residents.

Currently, Bri is a member of the WVRHA policy committee, the WV DHHR Division of Rural Health and Recruitment Rural Health Advisory Council, the West Virginia Clinical and Translational Science Institute, National Rural Health Association, American Pain Society, and International Association for the Study of Pain. She is also the faculty advisor for WVU's Rural Health Interest Group (RHIG) and Project REACH student groups, serves on the WVU Pre-Health Constituency Board and the 2015 and 2016 West Virginia Rural Health Conference Planning Committees.

Bri currently resides with her husband and shelter pup, Ricki Tiki Tavi that she adopted 7 years ago, in Marion County. She plans stay heavily involved in rural health, raise a family and grow old in the state.