



The Outstanding Rural Health Program of the Year Award recognizes a statewide or regional program that promotes the development of rural health care delivery systems; promotes and/or provides increased access to health care services for rural populations or that improves the quality of rural health care through outreach and education. Factors taken into consideration include coordination, networking, innovation, and lasting impact. The LRHA is honored to name Franklin Medical Center’s Orthopedic Surgery Program as the 2022 Outstanding Rural Health Program of the Year award recipient.

A few years ago, Franklin Medical Center realized that there was a lack of access to orthopedic surgery in their region. In Region 8, where the hospital is located, there were few hospitals that provided this service and only one facility, to their knowledge, that provided services to patients with Medicaid or who were otherwise underinsured. This meant that patients faced significant delays and often long travel distances in order to receive care. These patients often required orthopedic surgery to reduce chronic pain, and with the ongoing opioid epidemic, the hospital knew that delaying care for these patients could have serious consequences.

The hospital decided to implement their orthopedic surgery program, beginning with the partnership with Dr. Gene Soeller as a full-time orthopedic surgeon on staff. Driven to expand and innovate, the program purchased a Mako Robotic Surgery System. This made Franklin Medical Center the only rural hospital offering robotic orthopedic procedures in Louisiana.

The Franklin Medical Center Orthopedic Surgery Program became a full-time program in 2020, is now receiving over 100 referrals every month, and has expanded to three satellite clinics.

In referencing the commitment of the hospital and the orthopedic surgery program to the patients of their community, Franklin Medical Center Administrator, Blake Kramer, states “A patient should not lose their access to a higher level of quality care for no other reason than they live in a rural area...Having this kind of access for rural patients who were previously grappling with so many difficulties in receiving any sort of treatment...has made a tremendous difference in their well-being...the difference the program has made cannot be overstated”.

In grateful appreciation and distinguished recognition of their hard work, devotion, and commitment to rural health care, the Louisiana Rural Health Association is honored to recognize Franklin Medical Center’s Orthopedic Surgery Program as the 2022 Outstanding Rural Health Program of the Year Award Recipient.