

January 5, 2026

**FOR IMMEDIATE
RELEASE**

Contact: ITHS Communications - iths@uw.edu

ITHS Collaborators Win \$200,000 to Address Health Priorities in Rural Regions

(WASHINGTON/IDAHO) ITHS is proud to announce that Dr. Kelly McGrath and Clearwater Valley/St. Mary's Health System have been selected as the winners of the [NIH Build UP Trust Challenge](#). This \$200,000 prize was awarded by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute in recognition of the outstanding efforts and dedication of the Rural Health Initiative partnership, focusing on community-driven solutions to address vital health priorities in our rural regions.

Dr. McGrath is Chief Medical Officer at Clearwater Valley/St. Mary's Health System and co-Director of the ITHS' Rural Health Initiative. He says the team will use the prize money to grow and sustain programs that address stigma and increase access to mental health services in their community:

"As we celebrate this achievement, we are reminded of the importance of trust and collaboration in advancing health equity in rural areas. This award strengthens our commitment to our community partners and reaffirms our dedication to finding innovative solutions to improve health outcomes in rural communities."

Twenty teams competed in the Build Up Trust challenge for the opportunity to strengthen, implement, and test their innovative solutions. Being named a winner is a testament to Clearwater Valley/St. Mary's Health System's commitment to innovation and improving healthcare outcomes through trust and collaboration with the community.

Additionally, the ITHS Rural Health Initiative provides an exciting opportunity to expand ITHS impact and continue addressing critical health challenges in rural areas. Dr. Allison Cole, director of the WWAMI region Practice and Research Network (WPRN) and co-director of the Rural Health Initiative with Dr. McGrath, says: "The Rural Health Initiative was founded and based on work done by the WPRN, which is a practice-based research network spanning 34 organizations over the five-state WWAMI region focused on community health. The Rural Health Initiative, which started in 2023, is taking this initiative one step further by solely focusing on the well-being of patients in rural communities."