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Gundersen Health System's Dr. Scott Rathgaber AHA Grassroots Champion Award

Every year, one individual in each state is honored as a "Grassroots Champion" by the American Hospital Association (AHA) in consultation with state hospital associations. This year, WHA nominated Gundersen Health System CEO Dr. Scott Rathgaber to receive the AHA Grassroots Champion Award for his service and efforts.

Rathgaber regularly participates in WHA grassroots advocacy initiatives, including virtual roundtable advocacy events with lawmakers. Examples include meetings with Congressman Ron Kind, who serves on the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, and U.S. Sen. Tammy Baldwin, who has been a strong supporter of a number of health care priorities like 340B. He also recently traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate on behalf of hospitals with members of Congress and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary Andrea Palm.

Rathgaber also advocated on behalf of his hospital and other regional hospitals in supporting Operation Allies Welcome, in which more than 13,000 Afghan guests were housed at Fort McCoy in Monroe County in August 2021. He joined WHA and other hospital leaders in meeting with Ft. McCoy officials and hosted Homeland Security Chief Medical Officer Dr. Pritesh Gandhi at his La Crosse hospital. Rathgaber also advocated for additional federal medical resources to ensure this new population's health care needs would not overwhelm the western Wisconsin's health care system.

Rathgaber is a champion of the Wisconsin Hospitals PAC & Conduit, personally contributing to the program, explaining the importance of this type of advocacy to others and engaging with candidates through special events.

WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding presented the award to Rathgaber in La Crosse on May 23. "Dr. Rathgaber has done an exemplary job educating elected officials on the public policy issues affecting hospitals across the country and in Wisconsin," said Borgerding. "WHA was pleased to nominate Dr. Rathgaber for this well-deserved award, and we know he will continue to be an advocacy model for others."



WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding presents Scott Rathgaber, M.D., Gundersen Health System CEO, with AHA's 2022 Grassroots Champion award.

"It is a great honor to receive the Grassroots Advocacy Award. This honor is a validation of the impact of our entire team at Gundersen who strive to advance the health of the communities we serve," said Rathgaber. "The Wisconsin Hospital Association is an ideal partner to collaboratively work to inform our legislators and invite them to engage in improving health care in our great state. WHA seeks to understand pertinent issues. Time and again, they have been proactive to address barriers to excellent care far ahead of others in the nation. It is a privilege to work closely with such a mission-oriented organization."