CASCADES EAST FAMILY MEDICINE
Passionate for the rigors of rural medicine

Match Worries and the Push to Expand GME Slots in Oregon
OHSU Focusing on Residency-Ready Graduates
Stay Engaged this Legislative Session
The Healthy People 2010 Initiative, serving as the most widely accepted comprehensive, nationwide health promotion and disease prevention agenda notes, "Access to comprehensive, quality health care services is important for the achievement of health equity and for increasing the quality of a healthy life for everyone."

Health disparities in rural communities
This important consensus document later adds, "Adults in rural areas are 36 percent more likely to report their health status as fair or poor than are adults in urban areas," and "Twenty-five percent of Americans live in rural areas, that is, places with fewer than 2,500 residents. Injury-related death rates are 40 percent higher in rural populations than in urban populations. Heart disease, cancer, and diabetes rates exceed those for urban areas. People living in rural areas are less likely to use preventive screening services, exercise regularly, or wear safety belts." The Healthy People 2010 presents a road map to healthy living, challenging healthcare providers and administrators alike to action.

Supporting the needs of rural Oregon
In 2011, Western University of Health Sciences opened the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific-Northwest (COMP-Northwest) campus. The building was located in Lebanon, Oregon, to meet the needs of the rural population in the state. The medical school was built on the Samaritan Health Campus adjacent to Samaritan Lebanon Community Hospital. This expansion campus continues the commitment of its parent, the College of Osteopathic Medicine of the Pacific, to medical education in the Northwest.

First class graduates in June 2015
Beginning with a cohort of 50 medical students, primarily from the states of Oregon and Washington, the osteopathic school’s presence matured into the four-year medical program known as COMP-Northwest. Approximately 40 percent of its 420-member student body is from Oregon, and the first graduating class reports more than 50 percent are seeking primary care residency training. The campus will graduate its first class of students on June 5, 2015 in Lebanon.

The Rural Health Track
Steadfast in its commitment to serve the rural communities in which it is located, COMP-Northwest has recently opened a specialized educational track—the Rural Health Track. This innovative approach to learning is designed to educate and expose COMP-Northwest medical students to population health in rural and/or underserved communities. The Rural Health Track, which takes place over the span of the second and third medical school years, prepares osteopathic students who plan to work in the rural regions of the Pacific Northwest and in particular, Oregon.

Rural Health Track students are selected through a separate admission process from entry into the regular osteopathic student class. The students are required to fill out an application and participate in focused interviews to evaluate their commitment and motivation to practice in an underserved rural community.

Required rural rotations
The curriculum of the Rural Health Track mirrors the standard medical curriculum taught on the Lebanon campus. However, the students’ interest in rural medicine is nurtured through specialized opportunities. In particular, this cohort participates in additional learning sessions to better prepare them to work in a rural setting. During the clinical training years, these students complete their required rotations in a rural community. While living in these communities, this cohort is encouraged to be actively involved in service, and required to complete a community-based rural health care project.

COMP-Northwest students participating in the Rural Health Track are committed to practicing in rural Oregon upon graduation, and are now able compete for scholarships of up to $35,000 per year, thanks to a partnership with the Oregon Office of Rural Health.

COMP-Northwest is proud to be instrumental in bringing improved access to quality health care services to rural Oregonians in the near future.