Rhode Island Health Center Association Hosts Annual Meeting:
Awards Presented to
Jeffrey Beard, J.D.
Jerald Fingerut, M.D.
and Beata Nelken, M.D.

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[Warwick, Rhode Island] – The Rhode Island Health Center Association (RIHCA) hosted its annual meeting on Monday, October 21, 2013 at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Warwick, Rhode Island. At the breakfast meeting, RIHCA released its 2012/13 annual report and recognized leaders in community health. Senator Whitehouse made some brief welcoming remarks. Steven Costantino, Secretary of the Rhode Island Executive Office of Health and Human Services addressed the gathering, delivering a keynote speech, “Journey to the Future: On the Road to Quality, Innovation, and Technology.”

Jeffrey Beard, Deputy Regional Administrator at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources & Services Administration’s Boston Regional Office, received the John H. Chafee award for his commitment to strengthening the community health centers. The Association also honored Dr. Jerald Fingerut, who recently retired from serving as the medical director at Blackstone Valley Community Health Care, with the John J. Cunningham M.D. Distinguished Citizen Award for his commitment to expanding access to primary care in Rhode Island. Dr. Beata F. Nelken, Medical Director of Community Health Programs at Thundermist Health Center, was presented with the Clinical Leadership Award in recognition of the leadership she provides to the community health centers and providers.

“We are so pleased to recognize Jeffrey Beard, Dr. Fingerut and Dr. Nelken for their outstanding leadership and service to community health centers and our patients. Their
vision and hard work paves the way for the future of high quality primary care at Rhode Island’s community health centers,” said Jane A. Hayward, president and CEO of the Rhode Island Health Center Association. “With the implementation of health reform and increased access to private health insurance and Medicaid, this is prime time to talk about the future of health care delivery in Rhode Island, and we are glad that Secretary Costantino is able to join us for this conversation this morning.”

Rhode Island’s nine community health centers, with 29 locations throughout the state, are a critical element in the state’s health care landscape. Key 2012 data from the eight federally qualified health centers (FQHCs) released this morning:

- Served 134,905 patients with 564,446 visits;
- 40% of patients had health coverage through Medicaid; 7% were covered by Medicare; 32% were uninsured; and 19% were privately insured;
- Served 45,715 dental patients and 7,510 behavioral health patients, demonstrating the community health centers’ commitment to integrating medical, dental and behavioral health care;
- Provided care to a higher percentage of uninsured patients (32%) than FQHCs in other New England states (CT 23%, ME 15%, MA 20%, NH 30% VT 10%), but still see fewer uninsured patients than the national average for FQHCs (36%).

Founded in 1972, the Rhode Island Health Center Association supports, sustains, and strengthens Rhode Island’s community health centers in their mission to provide high quality, comprehensive health care.

**About the Awards:**

**John H. Chafee Healthcare Leadership Award:** Given to an individual, group or organization whose work embodies the spirit of the late Senator John H. Chafee, demonstrating his commitment to strengthen the health care safety net and provide true justice and equity in health care for all.

**Clinical Leadership Award:** Open to all licensed providers at Rhode Island’s community health centers, this award recognizes an individual who exemplifies continued clinical excellence/professional development, is innovative in practice or policies, demonstrates leadership in areas that benefit the organization and/or the system of care, and gives back to the community.

**John J. Cunningham, MD Citizen Award:** Given to an individual, group or organization whose work promotes the goal of access to primary care for the underserved and uninsured, and who recognizes the importance of the RI community health centers in meeting the health care needs of the underserved.

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About the Award Recipients

Jeffrey Beard J.D. is currently the Deputy Regional Administrator at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources & Services Administration’s Boston Regional Office. Over the course of his twelve year career at HRSA, Mr. Beard has served as project officer and advisor for numerous HRSA initiatives including the Ryan White Care Act, public housing, maternal and child health and the community health center program.

Mr. Beard received his bachelors degree in political science from Boston College in May of 1982 and juris doctorate from Northeastern University School of Law in May 1985. Prior to beginning a career in public health, he ran a community based law office representing indigent clients in civil and criminal matters.

Mr. Beard is originally from Brooklyn, N.Y. and currently resides in Seekonk, Massachusetts.

Dr. Beata F. Nelken completed her residency in pediatrics at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island and has served as a pediatrician at Thundermist in Woonsocket for the last eight years. She now serves as the medical director of community programs which includes current oversight of the Thunderkids Wellness Program, an initiative funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention targeting obesity among middle school children, and the establishment of the Teen Tot Clinic at Thundermist through a CATCH grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics. The Teen Tot program serves as a specialty clinic for parenting teens and their children and has been successful at achieving improved compliance with postpartum exams, screening and treatment for postpartum depression, and compliance with birth control methods among teen moms. Dr. Nelken serves as the director of the school-based health center at Villa Nova High School in Woonsocket. She helped to successfully pass a school board measure to get family planning services available for teens at the high school clinic.

Dr. Nelken currently serves as vice chair of the board of directors at Family Resource Community Action. She is also a board member for Skip Nowell Academy for pregnant and parenting teens, a board member for Northern RI Community Services, and a board member for Woonsocket Prevention Coalition. She also serves on several other community committees in Woonsocket including at Head Start, Riverzedge, Neighborworks, and with the Department of Education Health and Wellness Committee.

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Jerald Fingerut, M.D. retired in June of 2013 after 45 years of clinical practice and health care administration. For the previous 8 ½ years, Dr. Fingerut served as medical director at Blackstone Valley Community Health Care.

After receiving his medical degree at Drexel University School of Medicine in Philadelphia, he completed his residency in internal medicine at Albert Einstein Medical Center and a fellowship in gastroenterology at Temple University Hospital; he spent two years as a lieutenant commander, United States Navy Reserve, at the Naval Regional Medical Center in Virginia. Dr. Fingerut managed a private practice for 23 years before transitioning to hospital administration.

As medical director of Blackstone Valley Community Health Care, a three-site, federally qualified health care practice with over 50,000 patient visits yearly, Dr. Fingerut worked to support the health center’s mission of providing high quality, accessible, affordable and comprehensive health care to the residents of the lower Blackstone Valley. He applied his considerable experience as a physician and hospital administrator to his work on quality improvement, peer review, regulatory affairs, management oversight and physician relations.

Prior to his retirement, Dr. Fingerut sat on the board of directors at Providence Community Health Centers and Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, and served as a member on a number of additional committees across the state. Dr. Fingerut continues his involvement with the underserved patient community as a physician consultant with the Xerox/EOHHS program. He lives in Stonington, Connecticut.

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