

2008 JSI/NRHA Student Achievement Award

Josh Bell

Josh Bell has a remarkable passion for rural health. His extraordinary motivation has earned him outstanding levels of academic achievement and has brought a variety of initiatives to his community.

Josh's interest in rural health began early, when he participated in the 2000 Rural Health Scholars Programs as an 11th grader in Rainsville, Alabama. He also participated in the Northeast Alabama Community College dual enrollment program, becoming a member of the Phi Theta Kappa and Mu Alpha Theta honor societies before graduating from high school.

Josh went on to study at the University of Alabama, where he continued his pattern of academic excellence. He was a member of a number of prestigious societies and served as Community Service Chairman and President of the Rural Health Student Association. Josh studied philosophy and economics and was the first student to receive special honors for completing an honors thesis in philosophy. He graduated with honors from the University of Alabama in 2004 with a major in philosophy and a minor in economics.

Josh is currently in his third year in the University of Alabama Rural Medical Scholars program, where he has been involved in a number of projects to improve the health care system in rural Alabama and beyond.

When a rural Alabama community lost the services of a world-class general surgeon, it struggled to find replacements. Josh developed a plan to help the community effectively recruit new surgeons to ensure that appropriate medical treatment remained available to the community.

Josh, who plans to enter private practice of family medicine following his medical training, is involved in a project to develop a clinical business management curriculum for future rural physicians. He also helped produce the 2007 edition of the Alabama Health Occupations Manual, which is distributed to school age children to help increase their knowledge of and interest in health career opportunities. Josh also researched and wrote an article about the primary care shortage in rural areas for a local business publication that was selected for inclusion in the New Year "forecast" edition in 2006.

Josh's remarkable dedication to rural primary care led Dr. John Wheat, director and founder of the University of Alabama Rural Scholars Programs to say "we are glad to have attracted Josh into the educational track for a rural health care career; he can be justifiably proud of his outstanding academic, extracurricular and work performances. His cheerful, confident personality and hard work make him a pleasure to observe in all his endeavors and foretell a very bright future."