



2024 Annual Report

ON OUR WAY TO WELLNESS



Foreword

Stephen A. Estes,
President and CEO



Taking the long view in physician recruitment

If there is one thing we've learned over the years at Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center, it's that the journey to success is a marathon, not a sprint.

So much of what we have built is a product of long-term planning. Recognizing this, we are always doing the best we can to position ourselves for future success.

Physician recruitment is a great example of that effort. For many years, we have proactively sought out the best and brightest local high school students who show an interest in becoming physicians.

We then build relationships with them as they progress through undergraduate and medical school. If you've been treated here in the summer and noticed a bright young face working as a phlebotomist, in patient transport, or as a medical aide, it might have been one of those students.

The hope is that they'll never lose their connection to their hometown, and that they'll be eager to come home to practice medicine.

Last year was a great example of how that pipeline works, as you'll discover on page 6 and 7 of this report. We were pleased to welcome Dr. Hannah Bullock to Rockcastle Pediatrics and Adolescents as

the practice's newest pediatrician. Dr. Hannah, as she likes to be called, is a 2013 graduate of Rockcastle County High School; and she knows that having a deep understanding of the community helps her to take better care of her patients. She is one of eight homegrown physicians on staff, a remarkable number for a small rural community.

It was also the year that Victoria Dotson entered medical school. You might recognize the name from reading about her running accomplishments in the local news. The Rockcastle native won 13 state championships in high school cross country and track and field, and she went on to set more records at Marshall University.

She notes how she's applying the discipline and perseverance she cultivated as a college athlete to medical school. Her goal? To become a surgeon who will return home to serve her community.

We're so proud to be a part of the development of such talents as Dr. Hannah and Victoria. Ultimately, it is our patients and community who benefit the most, and that's who we keep in mind as we work each day to advance our mission – one recruit, one step, one mile at a time.



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Our Board of Directors

Joseph E. Lambert, Chairman
Bigge W. Towery, Jr., Secretary
Jeffery T. Burdette
Debra Lambert



From left are nurses who were trained in ICU dialysis care: Emiley Hensley, RN; Samantha Gray, RN; Amber Taylor, RN. Not pictured is Tricia Beth Nelson.

‘We know these patients’

Dialysis care added to ICU

In 2024, Rockcastle Regional continued to lean into providing the highest quality and most accessible care possible for Rockcastle County and beyond.

For example, when physicians pointed out a way that care could be improved and made easier for patients to access, leaders made a critical investment in two new dialysis machines for the hospital’s intensive care unit.

Dialysis, a medical treatment that removes waste products and excess fluid from the blood when the kidneys are unable to do so, was first administered to an ICU patient in April and continues to be used for several patients each month.

“This keeps our critically ill inpatients who need dialysis from having to be transferred to another facility,” said Tammy Brock, Rockcastle Regional’s chief nursing officer. It means those patients can continue to get care from a familiar, trusted healthcare team, and families don’t have to face the burden of daily travel to see their loved one.

As a part of the transition to expanded care, the hospital trained four staff nurses in dialysis care and began partnering with a tele-nephrology physician group that serves as dialysis care consultants.

“Dialysis availability in a hometown setting is just another example of our facility providing the most up-to-date care and treatment options,” said Patti Halcomb, intensive care unit coordinator. “Our nurses have received extensive training and are certified in dialysis care. We are so blessed to have this treatment available with the rising numbers of patients with renal (kidney) disease.”

“It’s truly rewarding to be able to offer our patients this service so they don’t have the hardship of travelling out of town to get care,” said Tricia Beth Nelson, RN. “We know these patients and they know us, and that in itself provides a certain peace of mind that’s difficult to replicate away from home.”

EPIC COMMUNITY CONNECT

In 2024, Rockcastle Regional took the first steps toward adopting Epic Community Connect, an electronic health records program that allows hospitals to share patient records across systems.

Set to be fully adopted in 2026, the investment will be a major technological step forward for the hospital, and will result in:

- **Improved care coordination:** Patients and providers can communicate and collaborate more effectively.
- **Reduced duplicate testing and procedures:** Patients can avoid unnecessary tests and procedures.
- **Better quality measurement:** Organizations can measure quality more effectively.



RENOWNED VENTILATOR CARE

In addition to acute care and outpatient services, Rockcastle Regional has been providing world-class care to patients who need mechanical assistance to breathe for four decades. At 143 beds, our Respiratory Care Center has grown to be one the largest of its kind in the nation.

With an emphasis on quality of life and the goal of helping patients gain their independence from the ventilator, we treat patients of all ages. In particular, our pediatrics population has grown steadily, and in 2024 we focused on enhancements for those patients, including security upgrades and the addition of colorful murals to brighten their days.



PARTNERING FOR IMPACT

Rockcastle Regional has long been known as a trusted community partner, and in 2024 we continued our collaboration with Rockcastle County Schools by providing in-school student healthcare. In addition, our mobile health unit continued to make rounds, setting up onsite with partner organizations throughout the county to provide primary and preventative care.



MEET THE 2024

New recruits



Hannah Bullock

In 2024, Rockcastle Regional welcomed Dr. Hannah Bullock to Rockcastle Pediatrics and Adolescents (RockPeds) as the practice's newest pediatrician.

Dr. Hannah, as she likes to be called by her patients, earned her medical degree from the University of Kentucky College of Medicine, where she also completed her residency in pediatrics at Kentucky Children's Hospital.

A 2013 graduate of Rockcastle County High School, Dr. Hannah is excited to return to her hometown to practice medicine. She says that having an already established understanding of the community will enable her to take better care of her patients and help her get to know each family for which she is entrusted to provide care.

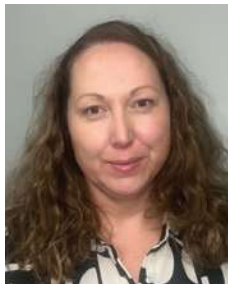
"I prioritize listening to my patients and their caregivers," said Dr. Hannah. "I want to hear their concerns and work together to create a plan that fits for each family. I want to stay connected along the way, checking in to make sure that plan is working."

Dr. Hannah resides in Lexington with her husband, Chad Stephenson. When not working, she enjoys reading, traveling, and spending time with family, including her parents, Tim and Renee Bullock of Rockcastle County.

NEW FACES IN 2024



Hannah Bullock, MD



Tina Kun, LCSW



Leasha Reed, LPCC



Crystal Brown, APRN
(Women's Health)



Zachary Davis, APRN

Victoria Dotson

Victoria Dotson rarely hesitates. When she recognizes a passion, you could say she runs with it.

It happened in the sixth grade at Rockcastle Middle School, when a friend persuaded her to try, well, running, for the school track team.

Victoria took off and never looked back, becoming one of most decorated runners in Kentucky history, winning 13 state championships in cross country and track and field, including the 2017 state cross country title. She won titles in multiple other state competitions and was recruited to run for Marshall University, where she set even more records. Victoria once ran a mile in 5 minutes and 13 seconds. For context, that's an average of 11.5 mph, or a football field every 18 seconds.

But it happened even earlier. Her dad will tell you the story of how she used to watch PBS's Nova, the science documentary series, every Wednesday night at the family's Brindle Ridge home. One night, the show followed a doctor who was doing surgeries in poorer countries. It fascinated Victoria, and that was that. Since then, "there's never been a time in my life that I have wanted to be anything but a doctor," she said.

And it happened when, as a college senior, she scrubbed in to assist with a surgery for the first time. Afterward, she remembers "trying to hold back the smile on my face. I thought it was the greatest thing that I was involved in helping improve someone's life. It was immediate gratification. Since then, any chance I get to scrub in on surgery, I take it."



Scan for more about Victoria's running career at Marshall University



Photo by Will Meadows
Instagram: @51photography

Now, the first-year University of Kentucky medical student volunteers at Surgery on Sunday, a Lexington nonprofit that provides medically necessary outpatient surgeries at no cost to eligible individuals.

Knowing Victoria's decisiveness, Rockcastle Regional Hospital's leadership team loves what they hear when she talks about how, upon completing her medical training, she plans to come back to Rockcastle County to serve her community as a general surgeon.

These days, most of Victoria's time naturally is filled with studying, leaving little time for running, but her appreciation for its impact on her journey is evident.

In fact, when asked about the connection between the two passions, she didn't hesitate.

"I believe my entire life has been God's way of preparing me for medical school," she said, "and I think my time running in high school and college – the discipline and perseverance and time-management skills I developed – was the number one thing to prepare me for medical school and a career in medicine."

IN THE PIPELINE



Matthew Gonzalez
2025
Vanderbilt University
Medical Center, Division of
Diabetes, Endocrinology,
and Metabolism, Clinical
Fellow PGY 5



Hannah Hillard
2026
Prisma Health
Greenville, SC,
Internal Medicine,
PGY 2



John Cornelius
2028
University of
Kentucky College of
Medicine, fourth year
medical student



Victoria Dotson
2033
University of Kentucky
College of Medicine,
first year medical
student



Evan Singleton
2025
Ascension St.
Vincent, Indiana
Family Residency,
PGY 3



Mahala Saylor
2026
Eastern Kentucky
University, Clinical
Psychology, fourth
year PsyD program



Emily Amyx
2029
University of
Louisville School
of Medicine, Trover
Clinic program, third
year medical student



Madisan Miller
2025
Prisma Health
Greenville, SC,
Internal Medicine,
PGY 3



John L. Saylor
2026
Marshall University,
Division of Pulmonary
Critical Care, Clinical
Fellow PGY 5



Hope Dull Potter
2032
U of L Medical School
University of Louisville
School of Medicine,
second year medical
student

Community Outreach

An unwavering commitment to health

Rockcastle Regional continued its unwavering commitment to community health and wellness in 2024, reaching **9,970** community touches through **135** diverse events.



One of the standout programs of the year was the **Rockcastle Regional Mobile Health Clinic**, where it continued its journey to breaking down barriers to accessing important healthcare and vital health screenings that can prove lifesaving. With 15 different stops throughout the year, the Mobile Health Clinic served 435 individuals through a variety of healthcare services such as diabetes screenings, stroke screenings, and well checks.



The organization, well-known for its commitment to physical fitness, continued its long-running **Countywide Stride Run/Walk Series**, having completed its 12th consecutive year. The beloved series hosts monthly run/walks, encouraging community members of all ages and fitness levels to embrace an active lifestyle. In 2024, the Countywide Stride team launched the “Kids’ Club,” a program geared for kids up to age 12, recognizing them with special awards and rewarding them with prizes as they completed races.

The year also saw the reopening of the **Rockcastle Regional Wellness Center**, which brought back a range of popular fitness classes that community members had eagerly awaited after a prolonged closure due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Among the first classes to have resumed were Spin, Spin + Kettlebell, Zumba, and Gymnastics, each designed to cater to various ages, fitness levels, and interests.

Perhaps the most highly anticipated class to return was **Silver Sneakers™**, a fitness class designed for older adults which focuses on enhancing strength, flexibility, and overall wellness to help participants maintain their independence as they age. The program emphasizes not only the physical benefits, but also the importance of social interaction and mental well-being.

“The return of these classes was not only a step towards physical fitness, but also a chance to rekindle the sense of community that many had sorely missed during the pandemic,” said Jana Bray, Rockcastle Regional community relations director, who also teaches spin classes in the Wellness Center.



“

“Group fitness classes play a crucial role in helping people maintain consistent workout routines. They create an environment where people can connect, support each other, and celebrate progress together, making exercise a more enjoyable and sustainable activity.”

”

Community Outreach



Kayla Abney, Community Health Educator

Beyond fitness and access to care, Rockcastle Regional has long been known for its efforts in educating the community about important health topics and empowering individuals to take ownership of their health. Continuing its commitment to these efforts, the organization welcomed Kayla Abney as the new community health educator. Abney's role is to be the facilitator of a variety of community health and wellness programs, including the tobacco cessation program Freedom From Smoking, as well as the instructor for Silver Sneakers.

“My passion is helping others by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to achieve their personal health and wellness goals.”

“I'm excited to serve my community in an impactful way,” said Abney. “My passion is helping others by equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and motivation to achieve their personal health and wellness goals. Rockcastle Regional is a leader in community outreach, and I feel fortunate to be a part of a team dedicated to improving the lives of those around them.”

From the **14th Annual Ladies Night Out** event, which raises awareness for and educates on breast cancer, to the fun and inclusive Ability Walk, the organization remains a pillar of community support for health education, physical fitness opportunities, and access to healthcare across the region.

Rockcastle Regional was again a community leader in organizing the American Cancer Society's local Relay for Life event, which raised \$25,894.44.





Above: Rebekah Ferguson, RD, LD, educating the community at the Kids' Health & Safety Fair

Right: Drs. David Bullock, William Bakhos, and Justin Williams discussed colon cancer at Dinner with the Doc held at Rockcastle County Middle School.

Below, Kevin Rowe presented critical men's health information at the annual Healthy Joe Expo.



Milestones & Awards



Pictured at the KHA Award ceremony are, from left, Melissa Fain, PharmD, Rockcastle Regional's inpatient pharmacy director, Deb Campbell with the Kentucky Hospital Association, and Rockcastle Regional's Brianna Saylor, PharmD.



Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center was recognized as a **2024 Best Nursing Home** for both Long-Term Care and Short-Term Rehabilitation by **U.S. News and World Report**.

Only 19 percent of the U.S. skilled-nursing facilities received the “Best Nursing Home” designation in 2024 nationwide. Rockcastle Regional earned its place on the list by achieving the highest possible rating, “High Performing,” for its long-term care services and its short-term rehabilitation program.

Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Center was also recognized as one of the **Best Nursing Homes** by Newsweek for the second year-in-a-row.

The rankings list the nation’s leading nursing homes in the 25 states with the highest number of facilities. The evaluation is based on the performance data score, reputation score, accreditation score, and resident satisfaction score.

In September, Rockcastle Regional’s inpatient pharmacy earned the **2024 Kentucky Association for Healthcare Quality Pharmacy Award** for its antibiotic stewardship initiatives, the primary goal of which is to successfully de-escalate broad spectrum antibiotics based on daily culture review by a pharmacist.

Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center again won the Kentucky Hospital Association’s (KHA) prestigious **Quality Award**, marking the 14th time the hospital has received the honor.

The award recognizes Rockcastle Regional’s innovative partnership with Rockcastle County Schools to address behavioral health issues among K-12 students. This collaboration has been pivotal in promoting mental health awareness, early intervention, and providing essential support services to students.

Key components of the initiative include on-site counseling services, teacher training, parental involvement, and early intervention programs.



Rockcastle Regional was awarded KHA's Quality Award in 2024 for the 14th time. Pictured from left are Mikhael Shaffer, Makenzie George, LCSW, Casey Franklin with the Kentucky Hospital Association, and Rockcastle Regional Development Director John Lambert.

“We are honored to be recognized by the Kentucky Hospital Association for our work with Rockcastle County Schools,” said Stephen A. Estes, president and CEO of Rockcastle Regional. “This award is a reflection of our dedicated team’s commitment to improving the health and well-being of our community, especially our young people. By addressing the behavioral health needs early on, we are helping to pave the way for a brighter future for our students.”

Rockcastle Regional was named one of “America’s Best Hospitals” and “America’s Best Hospitals for Outpatient Experience” by the **Women’s Choice Award** for the sixth year.

In August, the Kentucky Hospital Association honored Kentucky Representative and Rockcastle Countain **Josh Bray** as **KHA Legislative Champion** for 2024 during a meeting at Rockcastle Regional Hospital.

Representative Bray received the award for his leadership in the House and his recognition of the importance of high-quality health care. His work ensured passage of keys bills important in protecting patients and their access to the high-quality care Kentucky’s hospitals provide.

“Josh has been umbilically connected to health care through Rockcastle Regional for most of his life,” said Estes. “He is not only an advocate for healthcare, but specifically rural healthcare and the patients who seek healthcare in rural areas throughout the state.”

Management Team Leadership Changes

Jason Niceley, MT, AMT, was named the hospital’s director of radiology in addition to his role as laboratory director.





“I love working here because of the patients, the people I work with, and the atmosphere. It’s unique and truly special.”

-STACEY FIECHTER, RT

INSPIRED? COMPASSIONATE?

Want to make a difference?

Rockcastle Regional Hospital and Respiratory Care Center is looking for dedicated professionals to help us maintain and continue our tradition of delivering exceptional care. We are the largest freestanding ventilator unit in the nation, and we need top talent to join our team. It’s a tough job, but be advised that there are days that are almost unbearably rewarding.

We are seeking:

- Licensed Practical Nurses
- Registered Nurses
- Respiratory Therapists
- State-Registered Nursing Assistants

Some of our benefits:

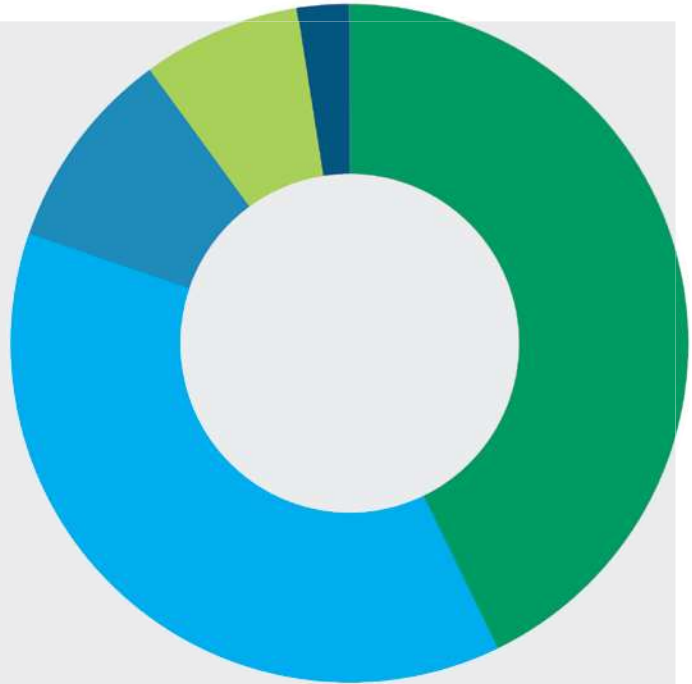
- Employee wellness program (get paid to exercise)
- On-site daycare
- Matching 401K
- Competitive salary
- Scholarships/tuition reimbursement programs
- Attractive health & dental benefits

Apply online at rockcastleregional.com/careers

2024 Financials

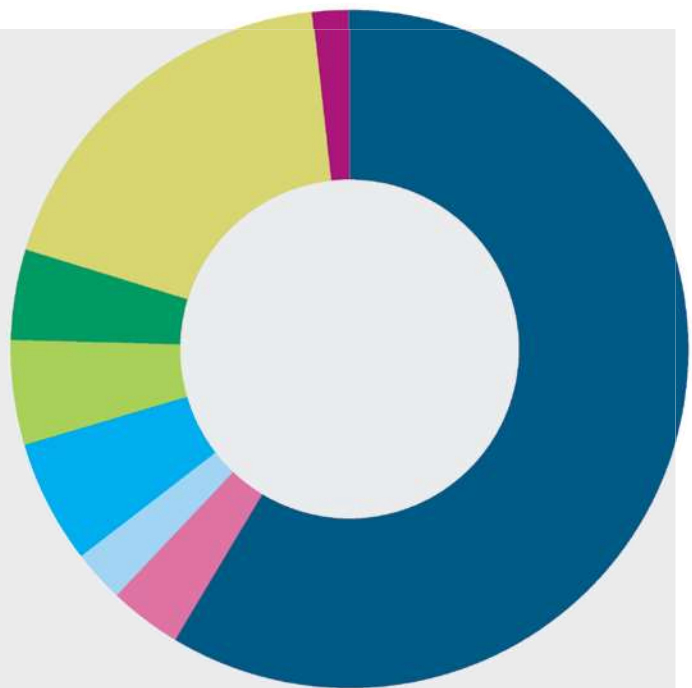
Revenue

Skilled Nursing Facility	42.78%
Outpatient	37.47%
Inpatient	9.72%
Rural Health Clinic	7.55%
Other	2.49%



Expenses

Salaries & benefits	58.59%
FICA	3.46%
Provider tax	2.5%
Purchased services	5.87%
Depreciation	4.99%
Uncompensated care	4.34%
Supplies	18.49%
Other	1.76%





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