



## NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 21, 2008

### **Community Health Champions Named** ***Recognition for Exceptional Contributions Toward Health of Coloradans***

DENVER— Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN), the association of Colorado Community Health Centers (CHCs), announced its Community Health Champions last night at its annual gathering at the state capitol.

The Community Health Champion award recognizes legislators, reporters, and volunteer clinicians for their work to improve the health of Coloradans. The 2008 awardees are:

The Honorable John Morse  
Senate District 11, El Paso County

The Honorable Jim Riesberg  
House District 50, Greeley

David Guhl, O.D.  
Volunteer Clinician for Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc., southern Colorado

Colorado Matters, Colorado Public Radio  
Statewide

**Legislators:** The Community Health Champion award for legislators is given to lawmakers who have gone above and beyond to support legislation and positions that directly support Community Health Centers and increase access to primary health care for the underserved.

Sen. Morse, in his second year at the capital, is a rising star. He is one of only two elected Democrats from El Paso County and has the ability to work with both sides of the aisle. He has an understanding of health care issues and the vital nature of the safety net due to his experience as an emergency medical technician, former police chief, former certified public accountant (CPA) working primarily on audits for health care organizations, and former executive director of Silver Key Senior Services in Colorado Springs. He has visited Peak Vista Community Health Centers to see how they serve the Pikes Peak region. Morse organized local health care leaders in El Paso County to help him develop constituent-based values he uses as he reviews health care legislation.

Rep. Riesberg is a strong supporter of CHCs and for increased access to primary care for the medically underserved. Riesberg co-sponsored prescription drug assistance legislation, is a member of the Health and Human Services Committee, and served on the Health Care Task Force. He has reached out to Sunrise Community Health for current information and has been a consistent vote on issues important to CHC patients. In addition, he attended all of the 208 Commission Health Care Reform events in Greeley.

**Volunteer Clinicians:** Each year, CCHN recognizes a volunteer clinician who is dedicated to serving the needs of the medically underserved. This unpaid clinician is someone who provides direct patient services in a CHC or to CHC patients in his/her office, leads advocacy activities on behalf of the medically underserved, and has provided volunteer service for a minimum of three years.

In 1998, Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. and Dr. Guhl pioneered an annual Farmworker Eye Clinic in response to a gap in service for farm workers. They had no access to eye care, diabetic eye exams, or screenings for occupational hazards such as exposure to chemicals and safety issues. After reading about Valley-Wide's Farmworker Program, Guhl, an optometrist from Colorado Springs, contacted Valley-Wide to offer his services. He has faithfully donated his expertise, hard work, and time ever since.

Each August Guhl travels to rural southern Colorado at his own expense and donates his services to assist Valley-Wide with this free eye clinic program. He begins work at 8:00 a.m. and works until almost 10:00 p.m. providing exams and refurbished glasses to all in need. He brings medical equipment to screen for glaucoma and other conditions. He brings his compassion to each event, each patient, and has developed a great rapport with the farm worker population. Screenings are conducted at Cesar E. Chavez Family Medical Center, which serves as the hub of Valley-Wide's Migrant Farmworker services, providing eye care to well over 2,400 patients through examinations and eyeglasses through the years. As each event winds down and he heads for the door to leave, he turns to the staff and says, "See ya' next year."

Although Guhl has traveled outside the United States for many years to provide vision services in third world countries, he leads by example within the local community. As a result, other local professionals donate follow-up services and glasses to help meet the needs of farm workers in the Valley.

**Media:** CCHN honors Community Health Champions among the media. Part of community health is communicating. Information is essential to good health practices and the media plays a critical role in informing the public about health care. Each year CCHN honors a newspaper, radio or TV station for reporting or otherwise significantly supporting Community Health Centers and the patients they care for. This award honors the recipient for high-profile coverage of issues facing the underserved, coverage of emerging issues in health care for the underserved, and for portraying the human faces of health care issues.

In 2006 and 2007, Colorado Public Radio's program *Colorado Matters* aired an in-depth series on the plight of the uninsured in Colorado. *Colorado Matters* offered high-profile coverage assessing why many Coloradans do not have health insurance and the health care challenges they face. The *Colorado Matters* team examined all sides of the topic, interviewing Coloradans living without health insurance, people who care for the uninsured, and employers who struggle to provide health insurance to their staffs. *Colorado Matters* is being recognized for its thoughtful and thorough reporting about health care and the uninsured in Colorado.

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*For additional information or digital photos from the awards ceremony, please contact Maureen Maxwell at (303) 861-5165, Ext. 259, cell (303)913-9078, or [maureen@cchn.org](mailto:maureen@cchn.org).*

*The Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) is the collective voice for Colorado's 14 Community Health Centers (CHCs) and their patients. CHCs provide a health care home to one in 12 Coloradans from 54 of Colorado's 64 counties. Without CHCs, hundreds of thousands of Colorado's low-income families and individuals would have no regular source of health care. CCHN's mission is to increase access to high quality health care for people in need in Colorado. For more information about CCHN, please visit [www.cchn.org](http://www.cchn.org).*

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