HEALTH CENTER NEWS

From Our CEO Annette Kowal
The 2016 elections are over and it’s time to get to work on 2017 and what we need to do to make sure we, Colorado’s Community Health Centers (CHC), continue fulfilling our shared commitment to increase access to high quality health care for people in need in Colorado.

The election results, as usually happens in American democracy, left people with different feelings, often diametrically different. However we individually feel about who was elected, who wasn’t, and which ballot measures passed or didn’t pass, our neighbors are still our neighbors, our co-workers are still our co-workers, and we still love our families and friends. Community Health Centers are still caring for our patients as we did before the election – that’s what we are here to do.

We will continue to uphold our commitment to high quality, affordable, accessible primary health care. We will continue to fight for the improved coverage and health care access gained for tens of thousands of Coloradans and millions of Americans in recent years.

Time will tell what the impact of the election results will be on our country, and on our family, friends, co-workers, and neighbors. We will continue to uphold our commitment to high-quality, comprehensive primary health care for all, without barriers of income, race, ethnicity, gender identity, age, family structure, religion, or any of the other things that artificially divide us one human from another.

We will continue to advocate for health care access for all and oppose efforts that support a two-tiered health care system and exclude some from receiving the health care they need.
All of us – staff, patients, community supporters – must plan to speak up and speak often. We have numbers and passion – we must assure that these are known.

We are fortunate that the Community Health Center model was built for and continues to renew and improve the way we deliver care, with strong and broad bipartisan support from Washington, D.C., and from the thousands of communities that are home to Community Health Centers.

We will be watching closely to see what Congress does to address dissatisfaction with the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and Medicaid, and to preserve what works well. Community Health Centers have been health care homes to many who are covered by publicly supported insurance coverage such as Medicaid, Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), and Medicare; and to the uninsured, underinsured, and privately insured.

Here at CCHN, our cultural values include collaboration, respect, innovation, abundance, quality, and commitment. We bring these values to our planning, strategy, and decision-making; and we aspire to live and work these values every day. We plan on continuing to do so.

CCHN staff are so very inspired and humbled to be able to serve the Community Health Centers of Colorado, their patients, employees, and communities – our neighbors all. Community Health Centers have a 50-year-history of working with Republican and Democratic U.S. presidents and governors, Congress and state legislatures, to expand access to affordable care, and we plan to continue our work.

I invite every one of you reading this newsletter to join us in moving forward. Please join our advocacy network to receive updates on important legislative action and alerts for when your voice is needed. It surely will be needed and we hope you will join us. Special thanks to Simon Smith, Donald Moore, and Ross Brooks for their thoughts on this column.

First Annual Access For All Colorado Awards
CCHN held the first-ever Access for All (AAC) Colorado Awards on Jan. 12, 2017. The award ceremony celebrated the work of CHCs, including staff and board members, toward the goals and vision of AAC to provide access to high quality care to 1 million Coloradans by 2020. Guests enjoyed dinner, refreshments, and music and dancing courtesy of Salud’s own Rollie Street Scandal.

The first award of the evening was the Rockin’ the House award, which recognizes a CHC that has implemented innovative practices to allow for new processes, improve on known processes, improve efficiency, increase marketability, and/or affect cost savings. The first-ever winner of the Rockin’ the House Award was Mountain Family Health Centers (MFHC) in recognition of their effort to jump into opportunities related to payment reform. MFHC was the first Colorado CHC to take on payment reform through a community-oriented partnership with Rocky Mountain Health Plans, Mind Springs Health, and other community alliances in the Payment Reform Initiative for Medicaid Expansion, or PRIME pilot.

The second award of the evening was the Clinical Distinction Award, which recognizes a clinical team that has significantly improved patient experience, engagement, and outcomes. The first-ever winner of the Clinical Distinction Award was Marillac Clinic, Inc. recognizing their quality improvement efforts to increase the rates of controlled hypertension using techniques to improve patient experience and engagement, innovation, and team work. The initial pilot increased patients’ compliance with hypertension control from 50 percent to 78 percent.
The third award of the evening was the Emerging Leader Award, which recognizes a CHC staff member who has participated in a CCHN-sponsored leadership program and has demonstrated commitment, passion, and innovation. The first-ever winner of the Emerging Leader Award was Dr. Matt Percy, site director at MFHC Rifle Clinic recognizing his leadership capabilities that ensure the Rifle Clinic is highly collaborative and focused on providing high quality, comprehensive health care.

The fourth and final award of the evening was the Shining Star Award, which recognizes CHC board members who have made a substantial and noteworthy contribution to the work of the board of a CHC. The first-ever winners of the Shining Star Award were Carol Lewis, board chair of Denver Health; and Jean Sisneros, vice board chair of Metro Community Provider Network (MCPN). Both winners are engaged and dedicated board members and non-stop advocates for CHCs.

All of the nominees were outstanding examples of the commitment of CHCs and their staff and boards to good health care for everyone in Colorado.
Loans Repayments for Clinical Staff – Final Round

**Safety-Net Clinical Support Staff Receive Kaiser Permanente Educational Loan Repayment Awards in Final Round of Incentive Program**

CCHN was funded by the Kaiser Permanente Community Health Fund to administer an annual loan repayment program for clinical support staff as part of the Preparing the Safety Net for the Future of Health Care initiative. Clinical support staff typically do not qualify for many of the national and state-level loan repayment programs available to clinical providers at safety-net clinics in health professions shortage areas. This loan repayment program helps to close that gap.

Clinical support staff are essential in team-based care, as well as other models for health care reform, and safety-net clinics will continue to benefit immensely from retaining these employees. The fourth and final round of the Kaiser Permanente Educational Loan Repayment for Safety-Net Clinical Support Staff Program has given out individual loan repayments of up to $10,000 to 14 clinical support employees at safety-net primary care clinics across Colorado. Recipients of the loan repayment include nurses, medical assistants, dental hygienists, dental assistants, and lab technicians. Since 2014, CCHN has given out approximately $625,000 in four rounds of loan repayment. Awards are tiered based on awardees’ years of employment with their organizations, and serve to ease the burden of prior educational debt for clinical support staff. In exchange for loan repayment, these staff members will fulfill a one-year service commitment to their current safety-net clinics.

During this past application cycle, CCHN received 91 applications from highly qualified candidates throughout Colorado. Applications were reviewed by a committee of staff members from CCHN and Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC). Fourteen awardees were selected based on their exceptional commitments to serving the underserved and to their clinics. As in prior years, the past application cycle was highly competitive, and all applicants should be commended for their hard work and dedication to their patients and their clinics. Of the 14 applicants awarded loan repayment in 2016-2017:

- twelve are employed at CHCs,
- two are employed at rural health centers (CRHC members),
- seven awardees work in rural areas (50%),
- seven have been employed at their safety-net clinics for more than three years (50%), and
- all (100%) hope to remain at their safety-net organizations beyond their one-year service commitments.

The impact of this program on awardees’ career paths, personal lives, future educational pursuits, and dedication to their clinics is significant. Awardee Angelica Mendoza of Clinica Family Health in Thornton, CO shared: “[Loan repayment] will help me achieve my goal of going back to school to get my BSN and eventually going to NP/PA school…The best reward about working in community health is that smile of appreciation on our patients’ faces and knowing we were able to make a difference for them. I plan on staying in community health throughout my career.”

Congratulations to the 2016 -2017 Kaiser Permanente Educational Loan Repayment for Safety-Net Clinical Support Staff Program Award Recipients and their clinics! (See full list on next page)
Dr. Deepak Honaganahalli, Peak Vista Community Health Centers (Peak Vista), was published in the Primary Care Consultant Journal this January for his work in team based care and patient-centered medical home (PCMH). Dr. Honaganahalli spearheaded a team-based care project in an outpatient setting that involved developing a core team to conduct team visits with complex diabetic patients to improve outcomes. He compiled his written observations from the project, which are showcased in the Journal. He presents one year of results along with an assessment of the potential disadvantages of the concept and suggestions for improvement in implementation and long-term success. Dr. Honaganahalli provides insight into fostering a team with integral team members, and defining their roles in providing patient-centered team-based care. This is a great accomplishment for Dr. Honaganahalli and his team in advancing quality care in CHCs. To read the full article, click here.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Awardee Name</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tr>
<td>Abraham Rostran</td>
<td>Summit Community Care Clinic</td>
<td>Frisco, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ana Sterner</td>
<td>Clinica Family Health</td>
<td>Boulder, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Angelica Mendoza</td>
<td>Clinica Family Health</td>
<td>Thornton, CO</td>
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<td>Carrie Garcia</td>
<td>Denver Health’s Community Health Services</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
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<td>Heather Bodine</td>
<td>Colorado Coalition for the Homeless</td>
<td>Denver, CO</td>
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<td>Maria Velazquez</td>
<td>Salud Family Health Centers</td>
<td>Longmont, CO</td>
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<td>Misty Smith</td>
<td>River Valley Family Health Center</td>
<td>Olathe, CO</td>
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<td>Nicole Stephens</td>
<td>Colorado Coalition for the Homeless</td>
<td>Las Animas, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paola Tapia</td>
<td>Pueblo Community Health Center, Inc.</td>
<td>Pueblo, CO</td>
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<td>Paula Scheidegger</td>
<td>Telluride Regional Medical Center</td>
<td>Telluride, CO</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sage Carver</td>
<td>Uncompahgre Medical Center</td>
<td>Norwood, CO</td>
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<td>Stephine Mendez</td>
<td>Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc.</td>
<td>Rocky Ford, CO</td>
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<td>Susan Cochran</td>
<td>Button Family Practice</td>
<td>Cañon City, CO</td>
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<td>Zanda Gatewood</td>
<td>Metro Community Provider Network</td>
<td>Aurora, CO</td>
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New CKF Report Gives Options to Create a More Direct Pathway to Health Coverage

Colorado Covering Kids and Families (CKF), a project of CCHN, published a new report, *Colorado’s Health Insurance Affordability Programs: Goals to Prioritize and Options to Consider to Create a More Direct Pathway to Health Coverage* in September. This report is the first in Colorado to document and examine the eligibility and enrollment process in health insurance affordability programs – Health First Colorado (Colorado’s Medicaid program), Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), and Advanced Premium Tax Credits and Cost Sharing Reductions to purchase a qualified health plan through the state’s health insurance marketplace, Connect for Health Colorado – since the implementation of the ACA.

The report is informed by 11 focus groups held with assisters and their clients, including Community Health Center (CHC) outreach and enrollment staff and CHC patients, in summer 2015; surveys completed by CKF coalition members in 2015 and 2016; conversations with the CKF Advisory Committee and CKF coalition members throughout 2015 and 2016; and research conducted by CKF staff. The report includes a visual representation and explanation of how individuals and families enroll and stay enrolled in health insurance affordability programs, and highlights various legislative, regulatory, and administrative reforms that decision makers should consider to further simplify, streamline, and coordinate the eligibility and enrollment process, and health coverage programs.

Based on the information gathered, CKF recommends nine goals for the state to prioritize:

1. Reduce churn and minimize gaps in health coverage;
2. Monitor and improve eligibility and enrollment systems to provide faster and more accurate eligibility results and enrollment information;
3. Improve online and paper applications to decrease errors, improve client satisfaction, and increase client autonomy;
4. Improve the readability, clarity, accuracy, and timeliness of client correspondence;
5. Improve the quality and accessibility of customer service support;
6. Improve support for community-based assisters and formalize their role;
7. Clarify, communicate, and improve renewal processes;
8. Improve and expand health coverage options; and

Options are discussed throughout the report that would help Colorado realize these nine goals. In addition, CKF created fact sheets based on six of the suggested options that the state could implement in the short term that would have big impact. CKF will use the *Pathways* report and fact sheets as part of future advocacy efforts. Read the full report, executive summary, fact sheets, and past Maze reports on the CKF website.

CKF Takes the Lead on October 2016 Building Better Health Conference

CKF played an important role in providing leadership to the Colorado Health Foundation’s third annual Building Better Health (BBH) conference in October 2016. Along with the Colorado Health Foundation, the Colorado Consumer Health Initiative, the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing, the Colorado Division of Insurance, Connect for Health Colorado, and the PEAK Outreach Initiative, CKF helped the planning committee focus the conference sessions on the needs of CHC outreach and enrollment professionals and other state-wide assisters who help Coloradans enroll and stay enrolled in Health First Colorado, CHP+, and subsidized private coverage through Connect for Health Colorado. CKF staff also coordinated and led several sessions, resulting in what preliminary reports say was the best BBH so far.

BBH is the only in-person training opportunity for assisters on the health coverage application, eligibility, and enrollment processes. In addition to training, attendees gained access to the latest uninsured data and coverage resources, time to network with other assisters and advocates, and an inspiring key note address from Dr. Gloria Wilder MPH, MD.
Coloradans Honored at CHAMPS Primary Care Conference
Three Coloradans were honored at the October Annual Primary Care Conference, hosted by the Community Health Association of Mountain and Plains States (CHAMPS) and Northwest Regional Primary Care Association in Denver in October 2016. The conference focused on the future of health care and included nationally recognized speakers, educational sessions, and the annual award ceremony. Staff from Salud Family Health Centers (Salud), Summit Community Care Clinic (Summit), and MCPN received awards.

Dr. Elias Hernandez, Salud, received the Exceptional Clinical Leadership Award for championing accessible, affordable, quality health care for all. Dr. Hernandez has been practicing at Salud Fort Morgan clinic for 14 years as the center medical director. He is an active and involved participant in the community at all levels, as chief of staff at the hospital, clinician and administrative lead at Salud, founder of his own school, and someone who helps individuals in need.

Dr. Tillman Farley, vice president of medical services at Salud, said, “Dr. Hernandez is someone who cares for people and community at every level. He is passionate about caring for his patients, educating future family physicians, and improving his community. His energy is boundless and his efforts are fruitful. He is a true and significant leader who leads by strong example.”

Delfina Merino, medical assistant at Summit, received the Outstanding Advocate of the Underserved Award for demonstrating dedication to the CHC mission through exceptional leadership and service. Ms. Merino has been with Summit for more than 10 years, and is the teacher and mentor of Summit’s twelve-person medical assistant team. She leads some of Summit’s patient education groups, successfully creating a community for them and providing a deep understanding and support of group members’ life experiences. Additionally, Ms. Merino spends extra time with prenatal patients, bringing a calming and resourceful presence and going above and beyond her role. The management team at Summit wrote in their nomination statement, “Being an advocate is an authentic part of who Delfina is as a person and not a role that she plays. Her passion and belief in the mission of Summit and in the patients as valuable and worthy of quality care, are tremendous assets to Summit and truly makes our clinic a special place to be.”

Dave Myers, president and CEO at MCPN, received the Stanley J. Brasher Legacy Award for dedicating his career to promoting quality health care for all and contributing toward the mission and recognition of CHCs in the mountains/plains states. For the last 33 years, Mr. Myers has dedicated himself to health care access, CHCs, and the patients they serve. He started his CHC career at Salud in the 1980s as a nutritionist and then as director of operations. Later he moved on to help solve the problem of health care access for the uninsured in suburban Denver on the founding team at MCPN. Mr. Myers is on a first-name basis with many municipal, state, and federal legislators. He works tirelessly with the state serving on and chairing many CCHN and local and state committees.

Vice President of Fund Development for MCPN John Reid said, “From payment reform to Medicaid enhanced reimbursement, we can’t begin to quantify in dollars and cents the impact Dave Myers has had on Colorado’s Community Health Centers.”

Because of how he has led his life and career, Mr. Myers illustrates the commitment to service and community embodied in the Stanley J. Brasher Legacy Award and the importance of inspiring others to that commitment.

NEWS BRIEFS

Pueblo CHC Hosts Vigil on World AIDS Day
Pueblo Community Health Center held a candlelight vigil in remembrance of those who have passed away from AIDS on Dec. 1, 2016, World AIDS Day. Pueblo’s own AIDS Memorial Quilt was displayed, along with a meet-and-greet and program for the community.
Peak Vista Breakfast of Champions
Peak Vista Community Health Centers held their 12th Annual Breakfast of Champions fundraiser on Nov. 9, 2016, at the Broadmoor Hotel in Colorado Springs. This year’s keynote speaker was Olympic soccer legend Mia Hamm. Almost 700 people were in attendance helping raise $250,000 for Peak Vista. Among those acknowledged at the Breakfast of Champions was the late Sue Forester who, with Dr. Tom Bates, created the fundraising event 12 years ago.

MCPN Crucial Catch Day
MCPN held A Crucial Catch Day on Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2016, at Jeffco Family Health Services Center, in partnership with the American Cancer Society and the National Football League (NFL). More than 200 individuals took part in the event to support cancer screening and prevention, including Denver Broncos Alumni Bucky Dilts and Ebenezer Ekuban. Screening mammograms were provided free of charge to 40 women - a record for a one-day screening event! Additionally, four women were provided with oral health screenings by MCPN’s dental team and additional referrals were made for low-cost oral health care in the community. More than 20 partner agencies joined the effort and provided community resources to individuals and families that attended the event.

PCMH Recognition Spreads in Colorado: MFHC Edwards Receives Recognition
The National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) granted PCMH Recognition to the MFHC Edwards clinic. Congratulations to the Edwards team for their hard work and dedication. MFHC looks forward to seeing the Edwards Team continue to keep the PCMH model and Team-Based Care initiative supported by the Colorado Health Foundation alive, as well as continue to learn and grow.

MFHC Avon School-Based Health Center Awarded $30K
Mountain Family Health Centers’ Avon School-Based Health Center (SBHC) was awarded $30,000 by the Town of Avon. In its letter to MFHC, Avon representatives wrote, "The work of Mountain Family Health Centers is important to the Avon community and, on behalf of Avon's residents, the Avon Town Council would like to express its appreciation for your passion and commitment to the program by awarding Town funds." The Avon SBHC is a comprehensive CHC clinic, located at Avon Elementary School.
The SBHC provides physical, behavioral and dental health care to children where they are, at school, to ensure they are healthy and able to learn and thrive. Services are delivered regardless of ability to pay. Town of Avon funds will be used to provide care for medically underserved, low-income students, who are ineligible for public or private health insurance. These patients have access to MFHC’s sliding fee scale for services; however even this can be cost-prohibitive for many and these students often require specialty care, medical supplies, or prescriptions they cannot afford. This funding from the Town of Avon is particularly important during this first year of MFHC’s operating the SBHC, as it will take time to build up patient revenues from those who do have public or private insurance. In this first year, MFHC plans to increase the number of patients served at the SBHC by 165 percent to 1851, with an estimated total number of visits of 2563.

POLICY UPDATE

2017 State Legislative Session Begins
The Colorado 71st General Assembly began on January 11, 2017, and will continue until May 10, 2017. CCHN and Health Center advocates are closely watching the state’s health care budget and legislative items that impact CHCs and the patients they serve. This includes Medicaid and the Accountable Care Collaborative (ACC), Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), Connect for Health Colorado (Colorado’s Health Insurance Marketplace), access to primary care, and Colorado’s health care workforce, while also monitoring federal efforts to repeal and replace the ACA.

To learn more about the health care issues at the Capitol this session, read this informative guide from the Colorado Health Institute: “Huge Questions for Health”.

As the session progresses, CCHN staff will keep CHC advocates informed of important issues that arise at the Capitol through CCHN’s online grassroots advocacy network. Click here to sign up to receive these important updates.

Colorado Medicaid’s Accountable Care Collaborative
The Accountable Care Collaborative (ACC), Colorado’s regionally-based Medicaid delivery system, is approaching a critical milestone: the re-procurement of contracts for the regional entities responsible for care coordination and regional infrastructure. These new contracts, expected to begin in July 2018, have been termed “ACC phase two.” This presents an opportunity to make changes to the program to integrate physical and behavioral health, strengthen coordination of services, advance team-based care and health neighborhoods, promote member engagement, pay providers for the increased value they deliver, and ensure greater accountability and transparency. CHCs have been and will continue to be committed partners to the ACC.

In many ways the ACC is seeking to expand and scale up the success of the person-centered, comprehensive primary care model that CHCs have practiced for years. As pioneers of the ACC model, CHCs have contributed to improved health outcomes while reducing costs – over 37 percent1 of ACC enrollees linked to a provider are CHC patients, and CHCs account for only three percent of the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) budget.

The ACC focus on access to primary care, care coordination, and regional collaboration has resulted in better outcomes including fewer ER visits, more well-child visits, and increased postpartum care. The current ACC has established the infrastructure needed to support and transform further the way care is delivered in ACC phase two.
A key opportunity for transformation is the integration of the funding of Medicaid behavioral and physical health to make primary, preventive, and behavioral health services more efficient and patient-centric. Data supports that behavioral and physical health are intricately connected:

- 68 percent of adults with a mental illness have one or more chronic conditions\(^2\), and
- 20 percent of visits with a primary care physician have a mental health component, such as screening, diagnosis or treatment.\(^3\)

CCHN staff and members have participated in the Request For Proposal development process and look forward to the next steps. The draft RFP is available [here](http://www.ccdn.org).

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1. HCPF October, 2016 Caseload Report
3. National Ambulatory Care Survey, “QuickStats: Percentage of Mental Health– Related Primary Care Office Visits, by Age Group.”,

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**CCHN NEWS**

http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm6347a6.htm

**CCHN Staff Run Colorado Coalition for the Homeless Home for the Holidays 5K**

CCHN staff and families ran the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless 5K on Nov. 5, 2016. More than 500 participants helped raise over $30,000 for homeless families and individuals.

CCHN staff from left to right: Stephanie Brooks and her son Ian, Marija Weeden, and Sarah Macrander pose after running Colorado Coalition for the Homeless’s Home for the Holidays 5K.
CHAMPS Welcomes New Staff Members
Rachel Steinberg is CHAMPS’s programs and communications coordinator, joining CHAMPS in January 2017. She is responsible for coordinating and implementing CHAMPS’s communications, trainings, and various workforce, operations, and clinical programs. Ms. Steinberg received a Bachelor of Arts degree in anthropology and English with an emphasis in museum studies and Native American cultures from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Prior to joining CHAMPS, she worked in many different fields, including as an educator at Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello, a baker at Spruce Confections, and an AmeriCorps VISTA in the Indian Health Service clinics on the Wind River Indian Reservation.

Valerie Steinmetz is CHAMPS’s programs/outreach and enrollment coordinator, joining CHAMPS in November 2016. She is responsible for working collaboratively with Region VIII State Primary Care Associations (SPCAs) to provide trainings and support Region VIII CHCs. Ms. Steinberg received a Bachelor of Arts degree in health promotion and a minor in marketing from the University of Northern Iowa in Cedar Falls. Prior to joining CHAMPS, she worked for non-profits in the Denver metropolitan area providing health care services and education to minority populations. Recently, Valerie wrapped up her time as a community health agent with the Peace Corps in Zambia, where she worked with rural and vulnerable populations.

Upcoming Events

March 11, 2017, Denver, Colo.
MCPN 13th Annual Green Tie Gala
MCPN’s 13th annual Green Tie Gala is coming up this March. This year’s event will be a phenomenal tribute to Mr. David S. Myers as his retirement approaches in late June of 2017. This may be your last opportunity to experience Dave in his kilt! Please join MCPN in celebrating all their accomplishments. For more information, please click here.
About CCHN

The Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) is the unified voice for Colorado’s 20 Community Health Centers (CHCs) and their patients. CHCs provide a health care home to almost 700,000 of their community members - one in eight people in Colorado - from 61 of the state’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.

If you would like to be added to the newsletter e-mail distribution list, or if you have comments about this newsletter, please contact Maureen Maxwell, CCHN senior manager for federal policy and communications, at maureen@cchn.org or (303) 861-5165, ext. 259.