



CCHN Newsletter

October 2017

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HEALTH CENTER NEWS

Community Health Centers Celebrate National Health Center Week

The 2017 celebration of National Health Center Week (NHCW) in Colorado was filled with community health fairs, patient and staff appreciation events, back-to-school activities, visits by elected officials, and “giving back.” National Health Center Week is celebrated annually in recognition of the service and contributions of community, migrant, homeless, and school-based Community Health Centers (CHCs). This year’s celebration focused on the theme of celebrating CHCs: the key to healthier communities.

CHCs often “give back” to their communities and host events to bring their communities together during NHCW. In the San Luis Valley, Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. (Valley-Wide) hosted a barbecue at La Puente, a rural homeless shelter in Alamosa. La Puente provides food, shelter, community outreach, and after-school and summer programs for children in two of the poorest counties in Colorado. The Valley-Wide mobile van was parked outside for the day to provide health care services to people living in the shelter. Further north and west, Mountain Family Health Centers (Mountain Family) hosted community lunches at each of their clinics attended by local elected officials, police and fire departments, and public health partners. Similarly, High Plains Community Health Center (High Plains) led a tour of Prowers County Commissioners and Lamar City Council members of their main clinic site. Uncompahgre Medical Center in Norwood celebrated NHCW with a community barbecue, fire truck rides, helicopter care flight rides, and opportunities to meet UMC’s staff.



August is time to prepare to go back to school, for both children and their families, and to learn about health care and healthy living. Health fairs and back-to-school events featuring health screenings, information booths, and back-to-school preparation were held across the state. Metro Community Provider Network (MCPN) hosted a health fair in Wheat Ridge with partner agencies and Rep. Ed Perlmutter. The Colorado Coalition for the Homeless held its annual back-to-school supply drive and give-away to help children living in motels, shelters, or transitional housing. Sunrise Community Health hosted an interactive event in Greeley where health messages and health education were presented. Mountain Family hosted a free screening day with free blood pressure, heart, lungs, and HIV screenings at each of their clinics.

In addition, CHCs reached out beyond clinic grounds to help their communities. Salud Family Health Centers (Salud) partnered with multiple agencies in Fort Collins to provide free produce to patients and community. The Salud farmers market is sponsored by a local organization, Sproutin' Up, that supports community building through gardening and free farmers markets. River Valley Family Health Center handed out peaches grown by local farmers in Olathe along with NHCW literature to folks entering their clinics.

Several Colorado CHCs scheduled events and activities specifically to express appreciation of their staff. Pueblo Community Health Center held their fourth annual staff appreciation breakfast, Salud and Valley-Wide continued their tradition with staff appreciation picnics, and High Plains dedicated a day to staff appreciation.

Peak Vista Community Health Centers (Peak Vista) honored Dr. Richard Moothart with the presentation of CCHN's Volunteer Clinician Award. Dr. Moothart began volunteering at Peak Vista in 2010. He has provided 257 cardiology consults with over 370 encounters in that time. The CCHN Volunteer Clinician Award honors clinicians who have provided patient services in or on behalf of a CHC for at least three years and who have led advocacy activities on behalf of the medically underserved. Awardees are nominated by the CHCs for which they provide patient care.

Donors supported CHCs while also having fun at NHCW events. Former Denver Bronco Ebenezer Ekuban hosted MCPN's annual Celebrity Golf Classic: Healthcare the Fairway golf tournament. Clínica Tepeyac held the ¡Adelante! 5K Run/Walk fundraiser with community expo and kids half-mile fun run.

This year is CCHN's 35th anniversary and in celebration, CEO Annette Kowal sent copies of the recently published history of the early years of the Community Health Center movement, *Out in the Rural: A Mississippi Health Center and Its War on Poverty* by Thomas J. Ward, Jr., to each CHC for staff to share and learn about their history. In addition, CCHN sent every Colorado CHC employee a keychain flashlight in appreciation of their work to light the way to the future of health care.

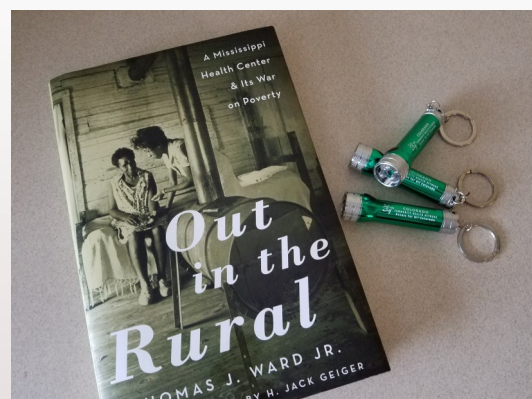
Mark your calendar for next year's National Health Center Week, August 12-18, 2018, and watch CCHN's website for event listings.



Above: Ruby Loya sits outside River Valley's Olathe site handing out local peaches during NHCW



Above: Dr. Michael D. Welch presents Dr. Richard Moothart with the Volunteer Clinician Award



High Plains Expands Pediatric and Dental Clinic

High Plains Community Health Center has broken ground on its most recent expansion project in its dental clinic and pediatric office in Lamar. High Plains CEO Eric Niemeyer and Board Chairperson James Farmer welcomed guests to the Oct. 6 groundbreaking and shared the history of High Plains and the future of the expansion project. The ceremony was attended by members of the community and High Plains' staff.

Both areas will undergo major changes over the next six-to-nine months that will result in more effective clinic spaces. High Plains is utilizing the services of MonCor, LLC, of Lamar, and HGF Architects, Inc. of Pueblo for the construction and architectural work for this project. The work begins this month and will extend the current building out to the west, making it a true rectangle shape. The two buildings will combine to have one entrance with a shared waiting room. The new waiting room will have a double receptionist area, a private breastfeeding area, and two play locations.

The dental clinic's expansion will provide more work and office space for the dental team without affecting patient areas in that building. The pediatric office will see more change, with the expansion creating seven new exam rooms, two exam/procedure rooms, and a behavioral health clinician office. The current exam rooms will be remodeled and turned into a new lab and office spaces for the pediatric staff. During the expansion work, operations will adjust to ensure the safety of patients and the crews working to get this project completed.

For updates on the expansion and other High Plains news, follow them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/HighPlainsCommunityHealthCenter>.



Dr. Gino Figlio, pediatrician; Eric Niemeyer, CEO; Dr. Sonia Grewal, vice president of dental services; and Jim Farmer, chairman of the board of directors, hold the official first shovels for the High Plains groundbreaking Oct. 6, 2017.

Cavity Free at Three and Valley-Wide Reach More Children with Good Oral Health Practices

Valley-Wide engaged a large group of providers, support staff, and administration in the San Luis Valley in a Cavity Free at Three training in July. Cavity Free at Three (CF3) is a Colorado-based program that delivers training to providers and staff to provide preventive oral health services for young children and pregnant women, to decrease early dental disease, and reduce disparities in oral health among people who may be at higher risk. Most commonly, this includes providing fluoride varnish in the medical setting and can be done at the time of a well-child check or another primary care visit. Valley-Wide staff became interested in the training after provider Michael Noonan, who participates in the team-based care grant at Valley-Wide, attended CF3 training in Denver.

Valley-Wide practice manager Grace Sandoval, who also participates in Valley-Wide's team-based care grant, suggested that they outreach to their local Migrant Head Start program and Valley-Wide staff to offer the local children an opportunity to receive free fluoride varnish. CF3 trainings traditionally include an opportunity to practice applying fluoride varnish, using puppets as dummy patients. Through engaging the Migrant Head Start and Valley-Wide staff, participants were able to deliver this application to children instead of the puppets. Parents who accompanied their children received one-on-one education about the benefits of early dental care, using educational materials provided by CF3. The training was a great success, with approximately 25 Migrant Head Start children and 10 children of Valley Wide staff receiving the fluoride varnish.



Above: Valley-Wide staff practice oral health assessment on a puppet

Following the training, all staff who participated will receive a certification that allows them to provide fluoride varnish and education within the clinic setting. This is one of the many examples of the way Community Health Centers integrate care and provide comprehensive primary health care.

Mountain Family Glenwood Springs Clinic Celebrates 17 Years

In honor of the Glenwood Springs clinic's 17th birthday, Glenwood Site Medical Director Jenny Lang was invited to share a patient story in celebration. Ms. Lang said her story is the story of Mountain Family Health Centers.

As I approach my 17 year anniversary at Mountain Family, I have reflected on my patient stories and found it difficult to choose one to present. I thought instead of sharing the stories over the years that have kept me always coming back to work every day at Mountain Family.

There are the at-risk pregnant women who deliver full-term healthy babies, and the new families we guide through parenthood. There was the 15-year-old adolescent who did not know what to do when her friend told her she was suicidal, but knew she could come to Mountain Family for guidance, and was assisted by the front desk and behavior health provider as to the next steps.

There was the alcoholic woman who had just lost her partner to overdose and behavioral health staff were able to get her into detox the same day, then coordinated rehab services after discharge from detox. There was the woman who waited a month for her appointment because she was ready to share her story of childhood incest for the first time and knew she would be with people she could trust to help her navigate her path to healing. One patient, who had an abnormal chest X-ray at another facility, chose to return to her medical home at Mountain Family for the work-up and now we are assisting her through her diagnosis of stage four lung cancer.

There was the 2-year-old whose two front teeth were damaged and decaying, and care coordination staff were able to find funding to treat his dental disease and protect his adult teeth. There was the woman who, after a few phone calls and referrals and by the grace of God, received a telephone call from University Hospital informing her that if she could make it to Denver, they had a free pacemaker she desperately needed. One young woman could not hold a job because she repeatedly had seizures on the job and was fired. Mountain Family Care Coordination organized her receipt of a Vagus Nerve Stimulation device. Now, for the first time, she is able to hold down a job and provide for her family.

There are the many Mountain Valley Development Services developmentally delayed adults we serve who are either running down the halls screaming or swearing at staff but everyone still treats them with love and kindness. There are the individuals we refer to specialists for care who then return to us for our opinion and understanding of what the specialist said. We have families who have good insurance and could choose any medical provider but want to come to Mountain Family because they know this is a special place.

Mountain Family makes miracles happen every day. From the front office staff and billing department to the behavioral health team, from the call center and outreach and enrollment departments to our medical assistants and nurses, from our medical providers and dental team to the executive team and board of directors, everyone plays an incredible role in changing people's lives every day. I have been lucky to serve our many patients and call Mountain Family Health Centers my family.

Building Better Health Conference a Success

Colorado Covering Kids and Families (CKF), a project of CCHN, led the development of the fourth annual Building Better Health Conference. The two-day conference is the only in-person training opportunity for all assisters prior to the open enrollment period (Nov. 1, 2017 – Jan. 12, 2018). It was held Sept. 25-26, 2017, and was attended by 467 health coverage assisters, brokers, case managers, advocates, and county, state, and marketplace staff. Attendees included 57 CHC outreach and enrollment staff from 17 CHCs.

Attendees learned about updates made to the health coverage application, the eligibility and enrollment processes, federal and state health coverage policy changes, and health insurance literacy. In addition to training, attendees gained access to the latest uninsured data, coverage resources, and best practices, and had time to network with other assisters and advocates.

Lt. Gov. Donna Lynne welcomed attendees and thanked them for the work it took to bring Colorado's uninsured rate down to 6.5 percent. A panel of experts from the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF), the Colorado Division of Insurance (DOI), Connect for Health Colorado, and the Colorado Health Institute participated in a conversation moderated by Michael Booth to answer the most prominent questions of the day on health coverage, access, and future policy. The conference keynote, Sister Simone Campbell, inspired attendees with her message to practice the virtue of joy; and the education and consulting firm, Compassion Resiliency, gave attendees tools to build their resiliency toolkit.

Learn more about the Building Better Health conference and see session presentations and resources [here](#).



Left: CKF staff Stephanie Brooks, Cam Goldstein, and Liz Tansey at the Building Better Health Conference

Two River Valley Women of Distinction Honored

Two members of River Valley Family Health Center staff were among 25 honored with Women of Distinction Awards on Aug. 26, 2017. They are Debby Harrison-Zarkis, COO of River Valley Family Health Center (RVFHC), and Jennie Mueller, RVFHC Chief Medical Officer (CMO). The honorees were selected from a field of 90 nominees, and RVFHC was the only company with two winners. The Montrose Daily Press sponsored the awards and the winners were selected by the Montrose community.

Ms. Zarkis developed her passion for service when she worked with teenagers on the Navajo reservation in Arizona as a teenager and young adult. After running a large, licensed daycare for seven years so she could be home with her sons, she became a case manager with Community Options. She moved on to social work at Adult Services at Montrose County Health and Human Services. She became director of PACE (Program for All Inclusive Care for the Elderly). She became the first CEO of RVFHC when it began five years ago, and now serves as COO. Under her leadership, RVFHC expanded to Montrose and will be opening another clinic site soon in Delta.

Ms. Mueller joined RVFHC in 2013 and oversees all medical providers, behavioral health providers, and other staff. A sixth-generation Coloradan, she has more than 18 years of health care experience, mostly on the Western Slope. She is a physician assistant, registered dietitian, and certified diabetes educator. She holds a master's degree in science from A.T. Still University. She is a National Health Service Loan Repayment Recipient and Health Resources & Services Administration (HRSA) Leadership Award recipient.



Above: Jennie Mueller and Debby Harrison-Zarkis pose with their awards.

MCPN's Crucial Catch Day Works on Early Detection of Breast Cancer



Metro Community Provider Network (MCPN) held its annual A Crucial Catch Day. Through a partnership with the American Cancer Society and the National Football League, MCPN provided mammograms to 30 women in-need. Patients also enjoyed barbecue and photo opportunities with Broncos Cheerleaders.

Left: MCPN CEO Ben Wiederholt joins Broncos cheerleaders in welcoming A Crucial Catch Day.

Center for Health Progress Honors Ross Brooks

At their annual HEALTHtalks luncheon in September, the Center for Health Progress (formerly Colorado Coalition for the Medically Underserved) honored Ross Brooks, Mountain Family's chief executive officer, with their Community Champion Award for Community Leadership and Advocacy. Each year, the Center honors four community members for "their outstanding contributions to improve health care systems and provide care for Coloradans, especially those who have faced unjust health outcomes."

The Center honored Mr. Brooks because he is driven by the simple principle that access to affordable health care is a human right, not a privilege. He is a tireless community champion for health equity and access to high quality, patient centered integrated medical, behavioral and dental health care for all.

To learn more about Center for Health Progress and their work, click [here](#).

POLICY UPDATE

Federal Funding Delays Impacting CHCs Now

Although congressional support for the Community Health Center program and the Children's Health Insurance Program is strong and bipartisan, Congress failed to come to agreement on extension of these and other critical health programs before federal funding expired on Sept. 30, 2017. CHCs continue to urge Colorado's members of Congress, all of whom are supportive of the CHC program, to do all they can to assure federal support for these programs.



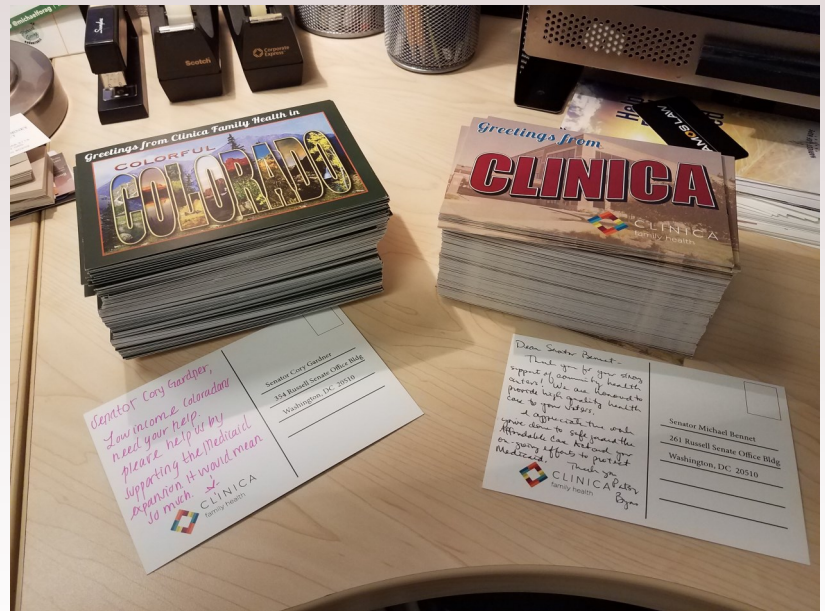
Approximately 70 percent of the federal funding for the CHC program comes from the Health Center Fund, and 30 percent from annual appropriations. While the short-term continuing resolution (CR) currently funding the federal government includes appropriations through Dec. 8, 2017, the Health Center Fund is not covered by the CR. Neither are CHIP; the National Health Service Corps, which provides scholarships and school loan repayment for health care providers in exchange for working in areas that don't have enough providers; or Teaching Health Centers, which help train health care providers in community primary health care. Together, the end of funding for these programs is called the "funding cliff."

CHCs are currently using federal funds awarded in Federal Fiscal Year 2017 and may draw on those funds through the time designated in their grant periods. CHC grant renewals start becoming due in January (not all renew at the same time) and without Congressional action, funding for renewals will not be available. CHCs are community-based nonprofits or public agencies with a mission to provide health care to low-income, working families. Along with federal grants, CHCs receive funding from patient revenue, including from patients on the CHC sliding fee scale; donation and fundraising campaigns; and federal, state, local, and foundation grants for specific programs.

However, CHCs are bracing for service cuts if Congress does not successfully conclude negotiations that are ongoing about how to pay for extensions of these programs. The National Association of Community Health Centers polled CHC CEOs across the nation last month about the impact of the funding cliff. Twenty-six percent of CHCs reported that the potential for the funding cliff was already making it harder to recruit and retain staff. An infographic illustrating the results of the survey is posted [here](#), and an FAQ is posted [here](#).

Colorado has some CHIP funding in reserve, and therefore Colorado's Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+) program has funding for a few months. Assistants should continue to enroll eligible children and pregnant women in the program. The Department of Health Care Policy and Financing estimates that Colorado's not-yet-spent federal allotment will last until late January 2018. HCPF posted an FAQ to their Future of CHP+ page and emphasizes that consumers do not lose their CHP+ coverage right away, they should continue to utilize their benefits, and eligible people can continue to enroll. The website is updated regularly: [Future of CHP+](#)

CHC patients, employees, and community supporters have been contacting their members of Congress, asking that they support CHCs. A bill called the CHIME Act, standing for the Community Health Investment, Modernization and Excellence Act, would extend the Health Center Fund and has been cosponsored by Sens. Gardner and Bennet and Reps. DeGette, Polis, Buck, Lamborn, Coffman, and Perlmutter. The Senate CHIME Act would also extend the NHSC, while a separate bill in the House of Representatives would do the same. Additional bills seek to extend CHIP. The legislative pathway for these bills is not clear, and Congress is wrestling with many priorities, so predictions on the form health care legislation will take by the time it reaches the full House and Senate for votes, and the timeline for such action is unpredictable. To support your local CHC, please [go here](#) to sign up for updates and calls to action.



Medicaid Payment Reform and CHCs: An Update

Community Health Centers (CHCs) in Colorado have been leaders in primary care innovation and transformation both in the state and nationally. Primary care needs to address more than basic health needs and incorporate the impact of non-health related factors on a patient's well-being. One way CHCs seek to address this is by adding new members into care teams to help patients address non-health related issues to improve their health and achieve their individual goals.

CHCs in Colorado have also been at the forefront of acknowledging the need for changing the way that primary care is paid for in order to account for these innovations. Study after study shows that the CHC model reduces overall costs and CHC providers know it improves patient health. The transformation of the health care system and payment needs to be led by primary care, and CHCs are proud to be at the forefront of this work with partners at the state Medicaid agency, the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF).

Over the last 18 months, CCHN and HCPF have been actively working on several efforts to reform the way that CHCs are paid in Colorado in order to achieve the following objectives: focus the care system on outcomes; reward practices for improving health outcomes; and provide flexibility to more fully utilize care team members and expand the ability of care teams to address social determinants of health.

Over the next 18 months this work will continue and key pieces will be implemented. January 2018 is the beginning of a baseline reporting year for tying a portion of CHC and other primary care provider payments to outcomes. CHCs have been collecting and publicly reporting on quality measures through the U.S. Bureau of Primary Health Care and using that data to inform quality improvement efforts within their practices for more than 20 years. Now, this focus on data-driven quality improvement will expand into primary care through Medicaid in Colorado. While the initial year will bring new challenges in terms of reporting and ensuring that data is accurate, this enables the possibility of larger long-term efforts to pay providers for quality and the value they bring to the system.

Additionally, CCHN and HCPF are continuing to develop a pilot project with a small cohort of CHCs that will transition primary care payments for those clinics in a way that provides the flexibility to not “medicalize” every visit. Currently, the system incentivizes a single visit type – one-on-one, in-person visits with providers – and that model is insufficient in helping patients achieve long-term, sustainable changes in their daily life. Not every patient needs a traditional medical visit, and their needs and achievement of goals might be better served by having access to telemedicine services, dietitians, community support through group visits, or health coaches.

Staff at CCHN and Colorado CHCs are grateful for the foresight of HCPF staff for recognizing the role that primary care and CHCs play in transforming the health care system in Colorado. HCPF staff are committed to stakeholder engagement, and to ensuring that problems are fixed in as timely a fashion as possible. HCPF’s commitment to this work and ensuring that Medicaid funds are spent on high quality and impactful care has been a consistent bright spot.

CHAMPS UPDATE

DynaMed Plus Preferred Pricing Program Fall Enrollment

CHAMPS is offering Region VIII CHC providers a Preferred Pricing Program (PPP) for DynaMed Plus. This evidence-based, peer-reviewed clinical decision support tool is designed to help providers offer quality patient care by answering clinical questions quickly and easily via personal computers or mobile devices. In addition, DynaMed Plus can be integrated into CHC EHRs at no additional charge. The Fall Enrollment Period begins Oct. 2, 2017, and will last until Nov. 30, 2017. Each subscription provides access to DynaMed Plus through July 31, 2018. Cost per subscription is \$200 per provider for CHAMPS member organizations and \$250 per provider for non-member CHCs in Region VIII. To learn more, visit the CHAMPS [DynaMed Plus webpage](#) or contact CHAMPS Clinical Quality Improvement Director Jen Anderson at Jen@CHAMPSonline.org.

CHAMPS 2016 RVIII UDS Summary and Fact Sheet Now Available

Each year CHAMPS produces a report summarizing multiple years of Uniform Data System (UDS) information for CHC Program Grantees in Region VIII. The [2016 Region VIII BPHC Uniform Data System \(UDS\) Summary](#) and related two-page [2016 Region VIII Health Center Fact Sheet](#) are now available. Please click on the links above to download these free electronic documents. To access data summaries from previous years, visit the Region VIII BPHC UDS Summaries section of the [CHAMPS Publications](#) webpage. If you have questions, please contact CHAMPS Workforce Development and Member Services Director Andrea Martin at Andrea@CHAMPSonline.org.

CHAMPS’ Julie Hulstein Receives 2017 NACHC Leadership Award

In August, the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) honored CHAMPS executive director Julie Hulstein as a co-recipient of the 2017 Norton Wilson State/Regional Leadership Award. This accolade is presented annually in recognition of excellent leadership in the health care association arena. Ms. Hulstein has spent more than two decades at CHAMPS, where she has been unwavering in her dedication to the CHC mission, working in collaboration with the five state Primary Care Associations and more than 60 CHCs to promote health equity and social justice throughout Region VIII.

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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 740,000 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.

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