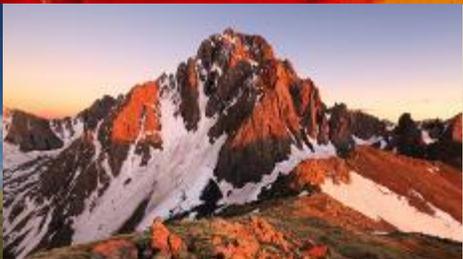




CCHN NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2020



COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER NEWS

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Salud Transforms Health Services to Continue Care for Farmworkers

Salud Family Health Centers have provided mobile health care to migrant farmworkers since 1980. The mobile unit has been a mainstay in the community, bringing care to workers, farms, dairies, and greenhouses across central and northern Colorado.

When COVID-19 hit in mid-March, Migrant Health Director Deb Salazar was faced with the possibility that her community might lose access to care just when they needed it the most. Ms. Salazar spoke with CCHN about how she and her team is handling providing care for some of Colorado’s most vulnerable essential workers.

Unable to travel with the mobile unit, Ms. Salazar and her staff reworked their entire service model. The team stepped up their relationships with local business partners to find ways to keep providing care to migrant patients. “We told them we had to suspend services as they knew it, but we are still here.”

Salud found safe transportation and developed portable setups with partnered worksites to provide testing and patient enrollment onsite. At some sites, up to 350 workers can receive screening and care in one place.

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Salud has also taken a proactive approach to sharing guidance on safe workplace practices. Strengthening community relationships, Ms. Salazar's team helps worksites address the many needs that COVID-19 can bring up. Salud staff set up trailers where medical staff can isolate sick workers, and helped worksites update their sanitation procedures to increase worker safety to COVID-19 standards.

Sunrise Community Health: Exhausted and Exhilarated

Mitzi Moran, CEO at Sunrise Community Health, took a moment to talk with CCHN about her Community Health Center (CHC) experiences over the last seven months. "It is exhilarating to stand steady in the storm and serve patients, to see team members stand taller and stronger."

Over 10 days in the middle of March, Sunrise condensed their 11 operational sites down to five. Ms. Moran credits her staff with leaning in to work quickly to be "a port in the storm every day, especially when it is raging." Staff rerouted floor plans and workflows to screen all patients for respiratory symptoms and set aside two sites for COVID care.

Telehealth, now found in every CHC, landed at Sunrise for the first time in March. Staff have innovated to connect Sunrise's 42,000 patients with care, averaging 85 percent of medical capacity through peaks and valleys. Over half of visits in April were conducted by telehealth. Since then, Sunrise patients have reduced their telehealth use to fewer than a quarter of all visits, as more are ready to be seen in person.

Ms. Moran shares that an unexpected benefit of rapid changes and staff redeployment has been more teamwork between the dental and medical teams. Before COVID-19, Sunrise's dental team was housed in a separate building. When dental clinics temporarily closed and staff adapted their work to support patient care, Sunrise saw "more connectivity and cross-training between departments."

The surprise star of Sunrise's COVID-19 response has been their drive-up pharmacy. Sunrise's Grab and Go pharmacy served 31,000 people between March 16 and Aug. 6. To operate this drive-up pharmacy, patients stay in their cars and text or call staff, who run medications out to patients and ensure proper care.

Thanks to creative problem solving by redeployed dental staff and the pharmacy team, Sunrise continues to find safe ways to guarantee care for their patients in a changing landscape.

STRIDE Opens New Facility for East Denver Metro Area

STRIDE Community Health Center opened its newest location this month, expanding patient access to care on the east side of the Denver metro area and increasing its presence in Aurora. STRIDE serves more than 50,000 individuals in a five-county area.

"We knew that a new location in Aurora would make our integrative care more accessible to the community, based on growing demand," said Laura Larson, vice president of development at STRIDE Community Health Center.

"Aurora's population has changed rapidly, and we felt that its vital community resources should reflect and support that change. We pride ourselves in being located in the communities who need us most, and the East Colfax location is no exception," she continued.

Aurora Community Connection played a major role in the planning and completion of this newest STRIDE location. The organization partnered with STRIDE to assist them in addressing the needs of the Spanish-speaking community along East Colfax, providing guidance and support throughout the process.



“A huge piece of becoming a vital community resource is seeking out and working with the organizations and resources the community already trusts,” said Larson. “By establishing our presence in partnership with a well-known existing organization with extensive knowledge of the community and its needs, we hope to build a solid foundation as both a trustworthy and reliable health care provider located conveniently in the neighborhood, and as a valuable partner for other local community organizations.”

CHCs Receive Three 2020 CASBHC Inspiration Awards

Employees of CHCs were awarded three of the four 2020 Inspiration Awards given by the Colorado Association for School-Based Health Care (CASBHC) in September. The awardees were:

- Cori Depue, project specialist for Denver Health’s School-Based Health Centers
- Sara Albertson, health educator, STRIDE Community Health’s School-Based Health Centers, Lakewood.
- Jon Dudley, health educator, STRIDE Community Health’s School-Based Health Centers, Lakewood
- Jennifer Suchon, clinic director and nurse practitioner, Northside Child Health Center, Montrose

CASBHC presents its Inspiration Awards annually in recognition of outstanding contributions to School-Based Health Centers and the health of young people.



Valley-Wide Pivots to Meet the Challenges of 2020

Valley-Wide Health Systems has had a busy summer! The COVID-19 pandemic slowed the CHC’s patient visit rate and made staff’s days more stressful. Through it all, Valley-Wide pivoted and put their energy into three big projects.

Transportation Program

Transportation sometimes presents a significant barrier to care for patients. This problem is especially challenging to overcome in a rural area such as the San Luis Valley, making up approximately 8,000 square miles of farmland and natural open spaces. If patients do not own a car or are unable to drive, there is only one taxi service and no public transportation.

In 2019, Valley-Wide began the process of creating a full-time transportation service for their communities. Valley-Wide received a \$50,000 Community Facilities Grant for purchasing four 2020 Toyota Corollas. A full-time driver staffs each car. The program, officially dubbed The Valley-Wide Ride, launched on August 10, 2020.

The Valley-Wide Ride gives patients the ability to book a ride 24 hours in advance of their pick-up time and be driven to any "health and well-being" destination. The Ride can take patients to the gym, library, grocery store, laundromat, or even to a health care appointment with a Valley-Wide competitor. The reservation also includes a pick-up from the patient’s destination.

Patient visits to health care appointments take precedence over all other ride types. The service is entirely free for any rider, no matter where they are going. Due to COVID-19 precautions, each car's interior is thoroughly sanitized each time the driver drops off a passenger. The Ride also requires all drivers and passengers to wear a mask while inside the vehicle.

Rides are currently limited to pick-ups and drop-offs within the city limits of Alamosa and Monte Vista, but Valley-Wide staff hopes to expand The Ride to the entire CHC service area very soon.



Center Dental Clinic

Last year, Valley-Wide Health Systems partnered with the Town of Center to apply for a Community Development Block Grant from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA) for a new location to house the Center Dental Clinic. A Community Development Block Grant can be used to fund community development activities and needs full support from a town to be awarded.

On June 21, 2019, DOLA awarded \$600,000 to the Town of Center, with Valley-Wide Health Systems as the sub-recipient, to renovate an existing building at 135 Sixth Street in Center. Construction on the new building began in May 2020.

The 2,960 square-foot building needed extensive renovation to prepare for the addition of six dental operatories (treatment-and-examination areas), laboratories, staff spaces, a cashier/receptionist area, and a lobby. Additionally, windows were added to bring natural light into the interior. Other renovations brought the building into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Following the renovations, the new Center Dental Clinic will house two dentists and a hygienist. The new clinic will open to patients on Nov. 9, 2020. The old Center Dental Clinic, which opened in 1988, will close after services are moved to the new location.

Valley-Wide Buena Vista

In July 2019, Valley-Wide Health Systems bought the Trailhead building in Buena Vista at 707 US Hwy 24 and transformed it into Valley-Wide's newest clinic, Valley-Wide Buena Vista. The clinic offers co-located medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmacy services.



The clinic staff includes Jack Haley, PA-C, who joined Valley-Wide as a medical provider. Mr. Haley has nearly 30 years of health care experience, including primary care, emergency medicine, and occupational medicine. The dental provider is Susan Davis, DDS, who has been practicing at Valley-Wide's Alamosa Dental Clinic. Mr. Haley and Dr. Davis are joined by Bradley Trathen, LPC, who will provide integrated Behavioral Health services.

The Valley-Wide Buena Vista clinic has two exam rooms and one treatment room on the medical side, plus two dental operatories and one dental treatment room. Additionally, the clinic is equipped with two consultation rooms for behavioral health services. This clinic will expand access to affordable, high-quality health care in the region, and the Valley-Wide team is thrilled to be joining this community.

Colorado CHC Dental Health Leader Remembered with Gratitude

Dr. Jim Kuhar, the vice president of dental affairs for Peak Vista Community Health Centers for many years, passed away on July 18, 2020. He was exceptional in caring for the patients of Peak Vista in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

Dr. Kuhar was a dynamic clinician and director of an operation providing dental care to over 15,000 patients in the Pikes Peak region annually. In addition, he coordinated specialty and unmet patient treatment needs through a unique referral program. Peak Vista has agreements with other dentists in Colorado Springs who offer Peak Vista's sliding fee scale so Peak Vista patients can get additional work done at fees they can afford.

Dr. Kuhar participated in the Colorado Oral Health Network's Data for Quality project, the Children's Oral Health Outcomes Partnership, Oral Health Awareness Colorado, and the learning sessions for HRSA's Oral Health Collaborative pilot. He was an active member of the Colorado Springs Dental Society, the Colorado Dental Association and the American Dental Association. He was a clinical assistant professor in the Department of Applied Dentistry at the University of Colorado School of Dentistry, faculty appointee in the Department of Dental Ecology at the University of North Carolina School of Dentistry, off-site instructor for the Pueblo Community College School of Dental Hygiene, and off-site instructor for the Pikes Peak Community College Dental Assistant Program. He was instrumental in establishing the Air Force and Army residency partnership for Peak Vista to allow residents to volunteer in Peak Vista facilities. He served as off-site faculty member for the Air Force Academy Advanced Education in General Dentistry Program.

Dr. Kuhar was a dentist, leader, golfer, comic, visionary, mentor, and friend. He is remembered with gratitude by the Colorado CHC family.

NIMAA Students Successful Despite COVID-19 Disruptions

The National Institute for Medical Assistant Advancement (NIMAA) is proud to work with clinic partners who, despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, have remained dedicated to the NIMAA students at their clinics and the community they serve. Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. (VWHS), NIMAA's partner in the San Luis and Arkansas Valleys, worked with NIMAA to help enrolled students complete the program amid the pandemic, and to recruit new students for the fall 2020-21 program.

By the time COVID-19 hit the United States, NIMAA's fall 2019 students were well into their program and nearing graduation. The pandemic halted the student clinical experience across the country, including in the San Luis Valley at VWHS. Luckily, because NIMAA students participate in clinical hours throughout the eight-month program, students had completed most of their hours before the pandemic hit. The biggest challenge became taking the National Healthcareer Association exam to become a credentialed medical assistant. To tackle this problem, VWHS and NIMAA coordinated with students to take the exam through remote proctoring instead of in-person. VWHS hired all of the NIMAA graduates they had hosted as students, stating they "feel that all of [the] students were well prepared for their current position."



Dr. James Kuhar, right, showing off his toothbrush teaching aid that came with his oral health clinical quality award at CCHN's Clinical Quality Awards ceremony, 2007. He was joined by Dr. John McFarland, Salud Family Health Centers.

Recruitment for the fall 2020 program posed a larger challenge for NIMAA and its health partners. Not only was NIMAA recruiting students in a new community, the Arkansas River Valley rather than the San Luis Valley, but traditional in-person outreach was limited. Many VWHS employees had already heard about the success of the program in other parts of the state but were hesitant to apply because they had not interacted with NIMAA before and were unfamiliar with the unique model. VWHS program coordinators and staff worked with NIMAA's recruitment team to share information through social media, local newspapers, and radio. VWHS staff coordinated with NIMAA to hold one-on-one informational sessions that followed social distancing and mask guidelines at their clinics with those who had indicated interest. These sessions allowed NIMAA to share program information, marketing collateral, and build relationships with community members. NIMAA not only filled the five externship spots at VWHS, but had three applicants on the waitlist. Developing a relationship built around a mutual understanding of the community VWHS serves allowed NIMAA to successfully recruit and fill available positions at their CHC.

Wallace Awarded Lifetime Achievement Award

Dr. Mark Wallace, chief clinical officer for Sunrise Community Health, was recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Public Health Award in August. The award was given by the Colorado Public Health Association. Dr. Wallace is also former executive director and medical officer of Weld County Public Health and Environment. Dr. Wallace is a long-time health care provider and CHC advocate. CCHN staff salute Dr. Wallace and sends out the famous CCHN "woohoo!" in celebration of this achievement!

POLICY UPDATE

As we enter the fall and winter months, and continue to face uncertainty within the policy landscape, CCHN is tracking the issues important to Colorado CHCs.

First and foremost, Congress must act to extend federal funding for CHCs by Dec. 11, 2020, the expiration date of the continuing resolution that is keeping the entire federal government running until after the elections. The National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) leads CHC advocacy work in Washington, D.C., while CCHN supports Colorado's CHCs and grassroots advocates in reaching out to the state's Congressional delegation. CCHN is also closely following the deliberations over a possible additional federal COVID-aid package that would benefit CHCs struck hard by lost revenues associated with the coronavirus. Along with NACHC, CCHN is engaged in ongoing activity to protect CHCs' ability to provide affordable medications to patients through the 340B program.

All Colorado members of Congress have demonstrated their support for CHCs several times this year with votes, letters, and public statements; and the Colorado CHC family is grateful. CHCs continue to update members of Congress on the challenges and successes of working through this unprecedented year.

At the state level, CCHN took positions on several of the statewide ballot measures that voters will weigh-in on during the upcoming Nov. 3 election. Looking ahead to next year, and the upcoming 2021 state legislative session, the state budget has been heavily impacted by reduced economic activity as a result of the coronavirus. The state legislature faces the unenviable task of budgeting for state programs with a gap of approximately \$1.5 billion.

CHCs continue to serve a growing number of uninsured patients, along with patients covered by public insurance like Medicaid. CHCs provide affordable primary care services to help Coloradans avoid pricey hospital emergency departments unless those services are truly needed. CHCs help keep state health care costs down, and CCHN will work with CHCs throughout the state legislative session to protect funding that helps CHCs care for Coloradans, including the Primary Care Fund, Colorado Indigent Care Fund, Child Health Plan *Plus*, and of course, Medicaid.

CCHN also continues the work of preserving CHCs' ability to provide telehealth services to patients and to be reimbursed for that work as much as possible. In the 2020 state legislative session, CCHN joined with partners to pass a bill, SB20-212, which protects CHC telehealth reimbursement in Medicaid. Unfortunately, state funds to continue this program may be at risk as a result of the Colorado budget problems. CCHN is working closely with CHCs and partners at the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing to come up with workable solutions for all. One bright spot is that CCHN's Senior Manager of Policy & Advocacy, Alice Steiner, presented on Colorado's achievements with telehealth via state legislation at NACHC's Community Health Institute in late August.

To join CCHN and CHCs in our advocacy work, please sign up to be a Health Center Advocate here <https://advocacy.cchn.org/>.

CCHN STAFF UPDATE

Adam Carey

Adam Carey is the Accounting Clerk at the Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN). Mr. Carey joined CCHN in June 2020. His responsibilities include processing bills and invoices, preparing payroll for CCHN staff, and offering support to the accountant and chief financial officer. Mr. Carey earned his Bachelor of Science in accounting from Minnesota State University, Mankato, in 2017. Mr. Carey worked at Aramark in Minneapolis as an accounting assistant before moving to Colorado. In his free time, Mr. Carey enjoys running, hiking, cooking, and further developing his understanding of Japanese language and culture.

Grace Trautman

Grace Trautman is the Communications Coordinator at the Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN). Ms. Trautman joined CCHN in September 2020. Her primary responsibility is to craft, coordinate, and send communications for CCHN and the Covering Kids and Families (CKF) project. Ms. Trautman earned a bachelor's degree in marketing from the University of Denver. She has experience developing and implementing marketing strategies for various nonprofits in Denver and the Pacific Northwest. Most recently, she worked in program development at a local senior living community. In her free time, Ms. Trautman enjoys playing Ultimate Frisbee, making art, and exploring the mountains.



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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 for more than 852,000 of their community members – more than one in seven people in Colorado - from 62 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 <https://cchn.org/>.



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