



## In Gratitude

In the past 18 months, Colorado Community Health Center (CHC) staff, volunteers, and communities have stepped up to care for patients in a time of incredible need, fear, and uncertainty. On behalf of the Colorado Community Health Centers, I wish to express our deep appreciation and admiration for all your work, innovation, kindness, and generosity.

This past March, the CEOs of the Colorado CHCs wanted to make sure their staff knew how much they were appreciated and wanted to share with the larger Colorado community how innovative, flexible, and giving those staff members have been. I invite you to view the video of gratitude we made during our annual celebration of the contributions of César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and all the leaders and advocates involved in the farmworkers' rights movement. Our CHC roots are in this movement and we all are working every day to carry on that legacy.

Community Health Center staff have been amazing in stepping up to meet the needs of Colorado's communities during a very challenging time. Volunteers have shown up to help with testing and vaccination events, supporting medical staff as they helped patients. Communities have shown their support and appreciation for CHC staff and other front-line community responders who are helping all of us through this historic time.

I hope you will view and share [this video message!](#)

With Much Gratitude,

Annette Kowal, CEO  
Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN)

## IN THIS ISSUE

Community Health Center News	2-14
Policy Update	14-15
CHAMPS Update	15
CHPA Update	16
Upcoming Events	16

# Community Health Center News

## **Pueblo Community Health Center's Beam Signing**

Putting the last structural beam in a building under construction is a project milestone. In March, Pueblo Community Health Center (PCHC) celebrated this milestone in their East-Side Expansion project with an official beam signing by PCHC employees. Hundreds of employees will now forever be a part of this once-in-a-generation project.



*Staff at Pueblo Community Health Center signing a beam in the East-Side Expansion project.*

## **National Health Center Week in Colorado**

National Health Center Week, Aug. 8-14, is an annual celebration to raise awareness about the mission and accomplishments of Community Health Centers across the country. Colorado Community Health Centers continue to be thoughtful about the ongoing pandemic as they plan events for this year. Below are a few of the events happening during National Health Center Week in Colorado to celebrate patients, staff, and communities. Contact [your local CHC](#) to see what events are happening near you.

Show your support for Community Health Centers by signing up to be a [grassroots advocate](#).

### **Ribbon Cutting and Back-to-School Fest — STRIDE Community Health Center**

*Tuesday, Aug. 3 from 12:30-4:00 p.m.*

11030 Kitty Dr  
Conifer, Colo.

Join STRIDE to celebrate the ribbon cutting of their new Conifer location. Join for food, beverages, building tours, and a community back-to-school fest. A formal ribbon cutting will occur at 12:30 p.m. and guests are welcome to stop by any time between 12:30-4:00 p.m.

Please [RSVP](#) to Susan Todd by July 27.

## Free Community Appreciation BBQ — Uncompahgre Medical Center

*Wednesday, Aug. 11 from 3:30-6:30 p.m.*

1350 Aspen Street  
Norwood, Colo.

Celebrate National Health Center Week at Uncompahgre Medical Center's (UMC) free community appreciation barbeque. Enjoy firetruck rides, food, drinks, face painting, helicopter tours, and get the chance to meet the staff! This celebration is a great opportunity to learn more about Community Health Centers like Uncompahgre, and to see the services provided to patients and the community.

## Drive-through Lunch — Sunrise Community Health

*Friday, Aug. 13 from 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.*

Sunrise Adelante Clinic  
1010 A Street  
Greely, Colo.

Loveland Community  
Health Center  
302 3<sup>rd</sup> Street SE  
Loveland, Colo.

Monfort Family Clinic  
2930 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue  
Evans, Colo.

Join Sunrise Community Health for lunch to celebrate their wonderful patients and community. Enjoy hot dogs, dessert, and more, at one of three locations!

## Lake County Dental Open House — Summit Community Care Clinic

*Friday, Aug. 13 from 4:00-6:00 p.m.*

223 Harrison Ave  
Leadville, Colo.

Summit Community Care Clinic is hosting an open house at its Lake County Dental location. Recently renovated, Lake County Dental provides a local option for Leadville patients to receive their care. See the facility, meet the providers, and learn all about what the Care Clinic has to offer.

### Other Events - Sunrise Community Health

- Diaper drive, ending Aug. 11
- Door prize drawings at each campus for giveaways and goodies, Aug. 13

### Other Events - Valley-Wide Health Systems

- Hygiene Kit Drive, all week
- Passing out hats to agricultural workers, Aug. 10
- Giving gifts to patients on Patient Appreciation Day, Aug. 11

## **Congratulations to CCHN's 2021 Volunteer Clinician Awardees**

CCHN is proud to announce the 2021 Volunteer Clinician awardees, Alicia Breslin Dunn, RN, and Michael Menachof, MD. These awards are given by CCHN during National Health Center Week. Awardees are clinicians who volunteer at Colorado Community Health Centers, showing their dedication to serving medically underserved communities.

Mrs. Dunn was nominated by Summit Community Care Clinic for her tireless commitment to their patients. Mrs. Dunn, a registered nurse, was one of the Care Clinic's original volunteers when it opened in 1993 as an all-volunteer, one-day-a-week, walk-in clinic. She worked for years in that capacity. Since then, she has spent countless hours involved in patient education, staff education, and quality assurance reporting. She eventually was hired part-time after the then-CEO, Sarah Vaine, said to her: "You're here all the time. Do you want a job?" Even during her employment, Mrs. Dunn volunteered as a volunteer coordinator for the Care Clinic's annual event, for at least four years.

Most recently, Mrs. Dunn exceeded all expectations by spending an estimated 64 hours at the COVID-19 pods, very often in inclement mountain weather. Mrs. Dunn was one of the few people who was able to draw down the vaccines to get extra doses, stretching the Care Clinic's capacity to vaccinate, when every dose was a precious resource. Mrs. Dunn has given countless hours to support the community, and has tirelessly used her medical expertise to provide quality medical care to people in need.

Dr. Menachof was nominated jointly for the 2021 Volunteer Clinician award by Salud Family Health and Tepeyac Community Health Center. Dr. Menachof is an ear, nose and throat doctor at the Advanced ENT & Allergy Center in Denver. Six years ago, Dr. Menachof generously offered to dedicate his practice solely to Salud patients, completely free of charge, for one day a month. Eventually, Tepeyac was added as well. Knowing that many of these patients prefer to communicate in Spanish, and that none of his staff at the time spoke the language, Dr. Menachof paid for Salud medical assistants to come serve as translators for that one day a month. Dr. Menachof's practice now employs a number of Spanish-speaking staff, and the one-day-a-month program continues to grow.

All the care that Dr. Menachof provides, including surgeries, is completely free of charge. In addition to office-based services, he has managed to use his connections to arrange for greatly reduced hospital fees for uninsured patients needing hospital-based surgery. On the first day of seeing Salud patients, Dr. Menachof took care of 16 patients. Now, his practice routinely sees 100 patients or more per month, and has cared for thousands of patients over the past six years. Dr. Menachof's incredible story was covered [by 9News KUSA](#) in 2020.

Thank you, Mrs. Dunn and Dr. Menachof, for your incredible dedication to caring for Colorado's medically underserved.

## **Jean Sisneros receives NACHC's 2020 Grassroots Advocacy Hall of Fame Award**

One of the 2020 events that Colorado CHC advocates are especially sorry was canceled was the awards ceremony to celebrate Jean Sisneros, STRIDE Community Health Center's Board Chair. Ms. Sisneros was selected by the National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) to receive the 2020 Grassroots Advocacy Hall of Fame Award. The onset of the pandemic canceled the 2020 NACHC Policy and Issues (P&I) Forum, during which she was to be recognized for this award.

We are sending out a big Colorado cheer for Ms. Sisneros and saying thank you for all she does to support Community Health Centers!

[Ms. Sisneros became a patient of STRIDE Community Health Center](#) (then called Metro Community Provider Network) over a decade ago, after attending a 9HealthFair and learning she had uncontrolled diabetes. She was referred to STRIDE to meet with a doctor and learn how to manage the disease. She was a low-income parent and had not previously prioritized her own health care. Ms. Sisneros shared: “[13] years ago I voiced my lack of access to health care for me and my children. I was heard by my Community Health Center. My needs were met, and I then understood the difference between having health care and not having it. That is the specific moment that I realized I could advocate not just for myself, but for others to have access to this invaluable resource, too.”

Over the past 13 years, Ms. Sisneros has demonstrated outstanding advocacy for affordable access to high-quality health care, and for state and federal support of CHCs. She has participated annually in many Colorado Community Health Network and National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) Policy and Issues forums, is a staunch supporter on Facebook and Twitter for CHCs, and has joined in several STRIDE and CCHN advocacy videos. She is incredibly deserving of this high honor.



*Jean Sisneros*

## Thank You for Supporting Colorado Community Health Centers

Thank you to the following organizations for providing grant funding, donations, or grant flexibility to CCHN in support of Colorado’s 20 Community Health Centers during the COVID-19 pandemic:

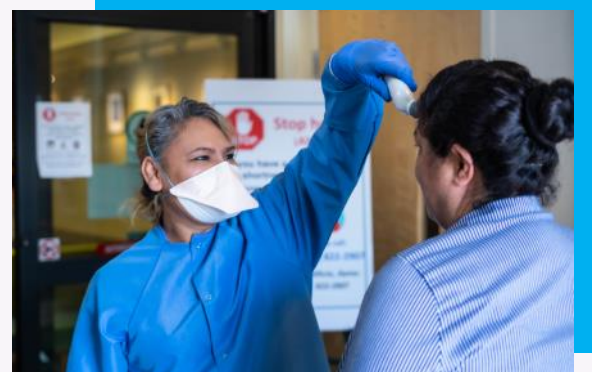
- Amazon
- Caring for Colorado
- Delta Dental
- Kaiser Permanente of Colorado and the Kaiser Permanente National Community Benefit Fund
- The Colorado Health Foundation
- United Health Foundation

Thank you also to the foundation community for the many other grants and supports provided directly to Colorado’s 20 CHCs during their front-line pandemic response.

## Community Health Center Innovations Through the COVID-19 Pandemic

Colorado Community Health Centers have shown incredible innovation in caring for their patients throughout the pandemic. Examples of that innovation include standing up telehealth and remote health care services, creating safe outdoor care spaces, and improving access to care through persistent technical and call center support.

Telehealth and remote health care services allow patients to safely access care without regularly coming into the clinic.



*MarillacHealth staff welcoming and screening visitors at the clinic entrance.*

This leads to safer access for patients who are especially concerned about COVID-19, for patients who do not have transportation to care or are otherwise homebound, as well as for patients in remote and hard-to-reach areas of Colorado. In addition, more robust telehealth services allow for less staff exposure, and therefore increased safety. Many CHCs have created remote and telehealth care options throughout the pandemic.

For example, Tepeyac Community Health Center has blood pressure monitors, glucometers, lancet test strips, and pulse oximeters to give patients for self-managed support, in coordination with a phone or video visit with their provider. Similarly, Denver Health's Community Health Services uses 4,000 Bluetooth-enabled blood pressure cuffs that connect to patient's online patient portal information. This allows for remote monitoring and medication titrations based on readings.

Colorado Coalition for the Homeless set up backpacks full of telehealth equipment for nurses to use when on-site with patients staying in housing programs. The nurses sit with the patient and help them use the telehealth gear for a remote visit with a provider. Many other CHCs in Colorado pivoted to provide increased telehealth services in some capacity throughout the pandemic, whether phone visits, video visits, or virtual referrals to providers located remotely.

Telehealth has expanded health care access, especially for patients in rural areas and patients who do not have access to broadband services or smartphones. Telehealth will be an important aspect of health care beyond this pandemic. However, many of the current telehealth flexibilities implemented during the pandemic are at risk of expiring soon, unless lawmakers take action both at the state and federal level.



*PCHC staff helping at state testing*

Colorado CHCs also showed quick and meaningful innovation with their call centers and technical support teams. For example, medical assistants (MA) at Inner City Health Center took on some phone triage for patients calling in. The MA talks to the patient, completes a triage sheet, then talks to the provider about course of action. Based on the provider's determination, the MA helps the patient set up a telehealth or contagious disease appointment.



*Sunrise Community Health staff delivering medication at the Grab 'n Go pharmacy.*

In addition to telehealth, many Colorado CHCs maintained access to care by creating outdoor spaces for in-person visits. To name just a few, Uncompahgre Medical Center rented large tents with wraparound walls and installed propane heaters to convert their ambulance bay into a COVID-19 testing site. Summit Community Care Clinic set up an outdoor tent to treat patients who show symptoms of COVID-19. This essential outdoor area started as two tents from people's backyards, put together in 24 hours, and has grown to a more permanent and widely used structure. High Plains Community Health Center set up a screening system via telephone at their front door. Based on the screening, patients may either enter the Community Health Center or providers don personal protective equipment and visit the patient outside by their car. Sunrise Community Health Center created a Grab 'n Go pharmacy, where patients can pull into a parking spot and a staff member brings their prescriptions out to their car.

This discernment helps patients with chronic conditions feel more comfortable coming into the clinic regularly. Similarly, call center staff at Tepeyac Community Health Center encourage patients to participate in virtual visits, but are able to remain flexible to the patient's needs, focusing on safety and capacity. Sunrise Community Health has emphasized outreach to patients, and patient calls to the clinic increased substantially, with 20,000 more calls this year than at this time last year.

Northwest Colorado Health pivoted to online paperwork systems, including an online check-in process for patients to check-in from home or from their car. Northwest also sends COVID-19 screening links to patients ahead of their visits, allowing nurses to triage the patients and either clear them to be seen, or reschedule them for a virtual visit and COVID-19 test.



*Summit Community Care Clinic outdoor vaccine clinic in a tent.*

Pueblo Community Health Center hired new behavioral health staff and pivoted to a remote onboarding system to do so. The electronic health record trainer made color-coded binders and books of screenshots, and completed training with screen sharing. The entire behavioral health team took this opportunity to learn virtual methods for problem-solving via instant messenger. At Sheridan Community Health Center, the behavioral health team helped in the call center, training students on the basics of anxiety and depression. Students then could do a pre-screen for mental health needs and other social service needs, and provide a warm transfer on the phone to the behavioral health team as needed.

The innovations at Community Health Centers during the pandemic continue to provide safe access to care for those who need it most.

## High Plains CHC BSET Leadership Training

High Plains Community Health Center partnered with the Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence (CCNE) and CCHN to complete the Building Skills for Effective Teams Leadership Development Program (BSET LDP). BSET LDP is a highly-rated training program designed specifically for Community Health Centers. It focuses on expanding participants' leadership expertise, interpersonal knowledge, and the emotional intelligence needed to confidently function within Community Health Center care teams and quality improvement efforts.

High Plains decided to join BSET LDP with two cohorts so that professionals across all levels could benefit from this empowering content. Leadership began in fall of 2020, and the open professional cohort joined in spring 2021. With a combination of in-person and virtual meetings, these cohorts completed multi-day trainings focused on building a culture of leadership across the organization.

BSET LDP emphasizes prioritizing staff communication, building trust, and allowing all voices to be heard and valued. High Plains cohorts worked through team-based assessments to help understand and strategize on how to address the most vital improvement areas. The cohorts completed their work in this initiative with a capstone project, improving how they collaborate to complete essential federal data reporting to help keep their funding strong.

## Stepping Up to Provide Essential Care for Houseless Coloradans During the Pandemic

In March 2020, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) knew their population was at heightened risk for contracting COVID-19. They relied on their strong teamwork both internally and externally, with several internal departments sharing responsibilities and budgets that were previously divided by department. This helped reduce burnout and helped CCH leadership call on existing partnerships and build brand new ones with everyone from the City of Denver to the National Guard to Federal Emergency Management Agency. Starting with one motel, CCH developed four lodging contracts to provide 700 rooms, health care, and essential social services to houseless Coloradans at the height of the pandemic.

Health Care for the Homeless (HCH) is a grant that offers specified support and funding to help organizations lead the way on several frontiers of care delivery, from helping meet a wide range of social needs to growing partnerships across the country. These grantees, often Community Health Centers, recognize that being houseless for any reason can lead to countless health risks, especially for those with chronic health conditions. The HCH program helps CHCs uphold the standard that all Coloradans deserve quality health care, no matter what. Nearly all CHCs provide care to vulnerable people in their communities, some of whom may be houseless, but some CHCs receive additional funding under Section 330(h) of the Public Health Service Act specifically to serve individuals experiencing homelessness.

Even without an HCH designation, MarillacHealth stepped up as a port in the storm for their most vulnerable communities. Marillac partnered with Homeward Bound of the Grand Valley to help them open Pathways Family Shelter during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. This facility provides housing and health care for houseless women and children. Thanks to long-standing relationships beginning before COVID-19 and strengthened during, Marillac plays a vital role in sustaining networks of community support.

Learn more about the [HCH movement](#) on NACHC's website.

## Sunrise Community Health Wins Outstanding Migrant Health Center Award

Sunrise Community Health was recognized as the 2021 Outstanding Migrant Health Center by the National Association of Community Health Centers. This annual award is presented to one Community Health Center from among the nearly 1,400 Community and Migrant Health Centers operating across the nation.

In 1973, a small group of community members and doctors were concerned about the health of migrant farmworkers, and they opened a clinic in a small, east Greeley storefront. Since this modest start, Sunrise has served tens of thousands of migrant and seasonal farmworkers in northern Colorado, alongside numerous community partners who share a vision for migrant health care.

“We are inspired by the people we serve and the millions of farmworkers across the U.S.,” says Sunrise CEO Mitzi Moran, “Those who toil countless hours in unrelenting conditions such as heat, wind, rain, hail, and even sometimes snow in our part of the world... Those who face fierce odds to provide for their families and children... Those who do the back-breaking agricultural work to provide for all of us.”



*Velen Gomez, Daniel Hernandez, and Mitzi Moran, Sunrise Community Health, accepting the Outstanding Migrant Health Center Award at the 2021 Virtual Conference for Agricultural Worker Health*



Over the years, Sunrise outreach teams have travelled throughout Northeastern Colorado to deliver medical and dental care directly to farms, labor camps, and other agricultural employers. Today, the outreach program also serves other vulnerable groups in the community, including refugees, those living in rural isolation, and those experiencing homelessness.

Two members of the Outreach Team, Daniel Hernandez and Velen Gomez, were present with Mitzi Moran to receive the award at NACHC's 2021 Virtual Conference for Agricultural Worker Health. "We are proud of our Sunrise Cesar Chavez Outreach Program," notes Mitzi Moran "They serve with grace and compassion, honoring and celebrating our patients - with dogged determinedness and little fanfare - and they never hesitate to say, 'What's needed? We can do that.'"

## Current Status of Public Charge and Resources for Learning More

Public charge has been the topic of high concern at Colorado CHCs over the past few years. In 2019, the federal government proposed changes that would have expanded the definition and scope of the public charge test. Out of fear of being considered as a 'public charge', many immigrants and families of immigrants were afraid to enroll in, or chose to disenroll from, health coverage and other essential programs. This is referred to as the "chilling effect" of the 2019 changes.

In March 2021, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, removed the 2019 public charge rule and restored the previous rules.

Public charge is a test that happens when someone applies for a visa to enter the U.S., when an individual in the U.S. applies to become a Lawful Permanent Resident (i.e. Green Card Holder), or when a Lawful Permanent Resident re-enters the U.S. after being abroad for more than six consecutive months. The public charge test looks at how likely someone is to rely on the government as a primary support for maintaining themselves. Public charge specifically considers if a person has used Medicaid for long-term institutional care, or cash assistance for income maintenance.

Public charge is one of many aspects impacting the health and wellbeing of immigrants' lives in Colorado. Center for Health Progress's documentary called *The Essentials*, supported in part by CCHN, tracks the stories of four immigrants from different Colorado communities, including one staff member at Pueblo Community Health Center. The documentary shows challenges in accessing benefits, and how the individuals have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The 22-minute documentary is available for free on [YouTube](#).

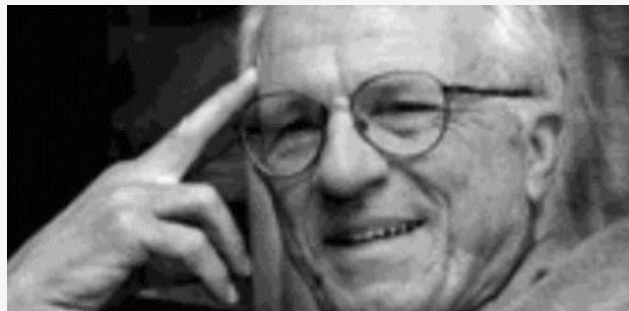
Additional information on public charge is available from CCHN's Covering Kids and Families' [Public Charge resources](#) page.

## The Passing of Steve Handen, one of Peak Vista CHC's Founders

We were saddened to hear about the passing of Steve Handen. Mr. Handen was a champion of affordable health care, immigrant rights, services for those experiencing homelessness, and so much more. He truly was a pillar of his community, and his loss will be felt by many.

Mr. Handen was one of the original founders of Peak Vista Community Health Centers in 1971. It was with his guidance that, to this day, Peak Vista has been able to help so many. In his words, "We're giving people another chance."

Summer 2021



Steve Handen

## **Rural Recruitment and Retention Project Helps Health Care Staffing**

Five Colorado Community Health Centers have been running pilot projects to improve rural recruitment and retention of health care providers at Colorado CHCs. The project, supported by The Colorado Health Foundation and key partner organizations, is showing some successes. The participating CHCs include High Plains Community Health Center, Peak Vista Community Health Centers, Mountain Family Health Centers, Northwest Community Health Center, and Summit Community Care Clinic.

The first year of this project included working with each CHC to create Employee Value Propositions. The Employee Value Propositions included information about the community, leadership opportunities, and values of the CHCs, and were created with support from the Colorado Health Institute (CHI) and the Association of Clinicians for the Underserved (ACU).

In years two and three, CHCs ran full staff trainings, implemented mentorship programs, hired consultants, and created additional marketing materials. In addition to this, CCHN worked with a consultant from the National Rural Recruitment and Retention Network (3RNet) to support the CHCs in developing elements of a comprehensive workforce plan.

Although there were many barriers to this work, including the CHCs responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the CHCs continued their work and saw positive outcomes. For example, Summit Community Care Clinic saw over a 20 percent reduction in turnover in front desk staff, and a decrease in feelings of burnout in their providers, by implementing an onboarding procedure in their medical clinic. Northwest Community Care Clinic created a recruitment and retention plan for their CHC and improved staff satisfaction by sending their staff to leadership development training provided by the Center for Nursing Excellence. Overall, creating training opportunities for all staff, developing comprehensive policies and procedures, and improving the process for applying for positions, helped improve the recruitment and retention outcomes of CHCs in rural areas of Colorado.

CCHN staff would like to acknowledge the support provided from The Colorado Health Foundation and the other grantees from the Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence, and the Eastern Plains Healthcare Consortium during this grant period. In addition, CCHN staff appreciate the hard work and support of project partners at ACU, CHI, and 3RNET.

## **Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc. Counseling and Support Center Grand Opening**

On June 9, Valley-Wide Health Systems held a grand opening ceremony and celebration for the new Counseling and Support Center located at 204 Carson Avenue in Alamosa. The Counseling and Support Center is Valley-Wide's first dedicated clinic for outpatient behavioral health services. Previously, Valley-Wide provided behavioral health care as an integrated service during medical and dental appointments.

Although the clinic officially opened on Oct. 5, 2020, Valley-Wide delayed the grand opening until summer 2021 due to COVID-19 precautions. The ceremony included remarks from Valley-Wide leadership and a ribbon cutting with the Alamosa Chamber of Commerce. Following the ceremony, Valley-Wide gave tours of the new clinic, and attendees got the chance to meet and speak with Counseling and Support Center staff.

The Counseling and Support Center is staffed by two behavioral health providers, Donald Romero, LPC, and Valerie Engle, LPC. Available services include group and individual therapy, support groups, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), and substance use treatment, including Acudetox. Virtual appointments are available in addition to in-person treatment.

In the future, Valley-Wide hopes to add outpatient behavioral health services to other communities in need.

## Relieving Financial Stress for Pueblo Community Health Center Staff

In 2020, PCHC administered an all-staff survey to learn how it could support its staff in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many PCHC employees indicated that financial stress had become prevalent in their lives. In response, PCHC began a partnership with Healthy Cents, a confidential online financial wellness program, to provide financial resources to its employees.

Healthy Cents provides PCHC staff with webinars, podcasts, articles, and worksheets with expert tips for spending, borrowing, saving, planning and more. The focus is centered on helping PCHC's staff create a personal financial well-being journey.

## Reflections on Taking a Drink out of the Vaccine Fire Hose

Sunrise Community Health did their first mass COVID-19 vaccination clinic on Jan. 8, a collaborative effort with UC Health at Island Grove Park in Greeley. At that point, the fire hose of vaccine administration turned on, and only recently did it calm down to a more manageable pace.

As Mitzi Moran, Sunrise CEO, would say when she was talking in the community or interacting with volunteers at COVID-19 clinics, "Vaccination clinics are a bucket filler. They give us hope for the future and are a beacon of light in this difficult time." Like most Colorado Community Health Centers, Sunrise was at the helm of vaccination efforts in their community. Here are a few of Sunrise's impressive statistics:

- Over 51,000 shots in arms in Weld and Larimer Counties.
- 5,638 of the doses were to people under the age of 18, and 18,261 were to people over the age of 56.
- Sunrise stood up a brand-new volunteer program that had 242 individual volunteers who filled over 600 volunteer slots from March-June (including State Representative Mary Young, Loveland Mayor Jacki Marsh, and retired State Rep. Jim Riesberg).
- 14 different high-school musicians were invited to play acoustic music during the observation period, a fun idea to "give-back" to the schools, and give students a chance to perform.
- 44 percent of vaccinations were given to the Latinx population and 22 percent to non-Latinx. (34 unreported).



*Patients at Sunrise Community Health after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine*

"Then, there are things we can't ever capture in numbers," said Ms. Moran. "The dedication and number of hours our team spent, above and beyond their regular clinic jobs and well-baby check-ups, to do the important work of vaccinating people. Navigating the Governor's phases and turning over rocks in each group to find everyone possible to get a vaccine. Grandmothers who asked to hug us because they could now see their grandchildren after an entire year. Teenagers who were thrilled to get the vaccine because it meant they may not be quarantined or could go to prom. Entire families (three generations) who showed up for events to get a vaccine and enjoy some green chili and music while they were there. The popular "selfies" on social media because they wanted the world to know about the historical moment. Handing out tissues to friends and people we've never met because they were moved to tears when they received the vaccine. There are no other words to describe taking a drink out of a firehose except one: life-changing."

## Progress Continues at the PCHC East-Side Expansion

Progress continues at Pueblo Community Health Center's East-Side Expansion. The three-story-facility will house a patient pharmacy and laboratory, primary medical, behavioral health, and dental services and has capacity to serve 24,000 patients when fully staffed.

One of the goals for the East-Side Expansion project was to increase the amount of natural light, and create a welcoming space that promoted a sense of wellbeing. Project consultants introduced the design concept called "biophilia," which is the innate human tendency to seek connection with nature, and PCHC decided to embed that concept into the project as much as possible. The new clinic will include skylights in the main atrium and large windows to shed natural light in the clinical areas, lounges, and conference rooms. The new clinic is also the first outpatient health care clinic in Colorado listed as zero energy, according to the New Building Institute. This means the building produces at least as much energy as it uses. Completion is still on-track for the end of October 2021.



*Construction at Pueblo Community Health Center's East-Side Expansion project*

## NIMAA – Celebrating Growth and Supporting Community Health Centers

The National Institute for Medical Assistant Advancement (NIMAA) has a rich history with Community Health Centers. In the fall of 2016, NIMAA began as a collaboration between Community Health Center, Inc. (based in Connecticut) and Salud Family Health Centers, here in Colorado. It was based on a shared vision to train medical assistants to work at CHCs. Since then, NIMAA has continued to grow its MA training program and support CHCs by graduating students ready to excel as part of an integrated primary care team. In 2021, NIMAA celebrated two milestones – accreditation and the graduation of its fall 2020 cohort of MA students that started during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the sixth graduating class for NIMAA.

In February 2021, NIMAA received institutional accreditation by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES). This designation recognizes the quality of NIMAA's education, and NIMAA's institutional and programmatic accountability to national standards. NIMAA holds the unique distinction of being the only ABHES-accredited program that combines full distance-learning with a robust in-clinic experience. The ABHES accreditation allows NIMAA graduates to meet eligibility requirements for credentialing examinations that are given by recognized certifying agencies, including the American Association of Medical Assistants and the American Medical Technologists. Graduation from an accredited program provides NIMAA students with a solid foundation for future educational and career advancements. MAs are vital contributors to high-quality health care and are in high demand across the country. With accreditation, NIMAA will continue to expand its educational offerings to underserved communities nationwide.

NIMAA students in Colorado participated in externships in fall of 2020 and spring of 2021 at the following CHCs: Clinica Family Health, Denver Health, Salud Family Health, Summit Community Care Clinic, Tepeyac Community Health Center, and Valley-Wide Health Systems. This externship program allows for graduates to enter their careers as soon as they have passed the National Healthcareer Association exam. Eleven of the 40 MAs who graduated in April 2021 are from Colorado CHCs.

To learn more details about NIMAA, visit [NIMMA.org](http://NIMMA.org).

## Lisa McConnell Receives UNC Preceptor of The Year Award

Lisa McConnell, a family nurse practitioner at Sunrise Community Health, was chosen as the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) School of Nursing's Outstanding Nurse Practitioner Preceptor for the 2020-2021 Academic Year!

Each year nurse practitioner students, peers and/or faculty nominate preceptors who are exemplary nurse practitioners, role models, coaches, learning facilitators, and team players.

Melany Archer, graduate clinical coordinator and program management specialist at UNC, shared a portion of the nomination letter of Ms. McConnell: "During my approximately 450 clinical hours with Lisa, she routinely exemplified the role of a clinical preceptor, and I can only hope to achieve her level of clinical excellence within my future practice as a family nurse practitioner.... Our discussions supported my professional development through the facilitation of critical thinking and the use of evidence-based practices."

Libby Goode-Grasmick, Sunrise operations manager, shared, "Even with a very busy practice, Lisa has a heart and mission for education. She is a great preceptor because she models a high level of skill but equally important, she is compassionate, dedicated, and always a champion for her patients."

## Virtual Tortillas for Tepeyac Competition Fun and Fierce

In early May, 17 celebrities and community leaders faced-off in the Tortillas for Tepeyac annual competition, raising almost \$8,000 in the process! For the past 20 years, Tepeyac Community Health Center has hosted a tortilla-making contest to raise money for Tepeyac's Patient Assistance Fund. This fund helps support patients who have needs beyond the services normally provided by Tepeyac, including specialty care. Although held virtually this year due to the continuing public health emergency, the competition was just as fun and fierce as prior years.



*2021 Tortillas for Tepeyac People's Choice Award Winner, Cori Streetman, Principal at Barefoot Public Relations*

## STRIDE Community Health Center Reaches Level Two in Age Friendly Health System

In mid-June, STRIDE achieved Level Two recognition as an [Age Friendly Health System](#), indicating that the CHC is committed to providing and maintaining excellent care for its older adult patients.

To earn this status, Dr. Barbara Morris, expert geriatrician, and her interdisciplinary team implemented an action plan that included improvements in older adult care management and delivery across three months, tracking and reporting on these actions with specific data points. Looking forward, Dr. Morris hopes to implement the Age Friendly Health System framework at each STRIDE location.

"Becoming an Age Friendly Health System has been a significant goal of ours at STRIDE, but now we need to set our sights even higher," said Ben Wiederholt, CEO of STRIDE. "Dr. Morris and her care management and delivery team have created a wonderful model off which we can now base our organization-wide older adult care strategy. Her team's hard work to help us achieve this level of older adult health care competency will have a huge positive impact on our patients and communities moving forward, ensuring that we continue at full speed on our path towards achieving healthcare equity and access across all the communities we serve."

## Pueblo Community Health Center's Paulina Adjei - Remarkable Women Finalist



Paulina Adjei

Paulina Adjei, Nurse Practitioner at PCHC, was recognized as a finalist as part of [Fox 21 News' "Remarkable Women" series](#). Mrs. Adjei, who immigrated to the United States from South Africa with her husband and three children, was previously an accountant. When she arrived in the United States, she saw that people experiencing homelessness needed help, so she stepped in. At age 43, Mrs. Adjei went back to school, worked as a Licensed Practical Nurse and Registered Nurse, eventually earning her master's degree as a Nurse Practitioner. Now, on her days off, she works at PCHC advocating for people experiencing homelessness.

## Policy Update

### 2021 State Legislative Session Comes to a Close

The Colorado General Assembly adjourned the 2021 legislative session on June 8. Legislators passed a total of 502 bills during this year's legislative session, making 2021 one of the most busy and productive sessions in recent history. CCHN staff, the CCHN lobbyist, and CHC members, worked throughout the session to ensure that legislators knew the valuable role that CHCs play in providing health care to Coloradans.

Guided by CCHN's policy priorities and Public Affairs Committee, CCHN actively supported several items that passed during the legislative session, including:

- [HB21-1275: Medicaid Reimbursement for Services by Pharmacists](#), will allow for clinical pharmacy services at CHCs to be included as allowable costs in the Medicaid cost report. The Medicaid cost report determines encounter rates for CHCs and will allow pharmacists to administer and bill for Long-Acting Injectable drugs for mental health and substance use disorders.
- [SB21-194: Maternal Health Providers](#), extends Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program) and Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+) coverage to 12-months postpartum for eligible individuals.
- [SB21-212: Primary Care Payments Align Federal Funding](#), requires the Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) to seek authorization to maximize federal matching funds for the Primary Care Fund, which would provide additional funding for primary care providers (including CHCs) who care for the uninsured.

CCHN supported many other bills throughout the legislative session, including bills related to health care affordability, Medicaid benefits, family planning, and workforce issues. A few of those bills include:

- [HB21-1232: Standardized Benefit Plan Colorado Option](#), was the legislature's attempt at establishing a public health insurance option for the state. As passed, the bill aims to control health care costs by requiring insurance carriers to offer a standardized benefit plan and reduce health insurance premiums.
- [SB21-009: Reproductive Health Care Program](#), requires Medicaid to cover contraceptive methods and counseling services to individuals without documentation.
- [SB21-025: Family Planning Service for Eligible Individuals](#), requires Medicaid to expand coverage for family planning services to individuals who are living up to 250 percent of the Federal Poverty Level who otherwise would not be eligible for Medicaid.

For the state budget, the legislature agreed on \$34.1 billion for state fiscal year 2021-22, which will restore many of the cuts made by the state last year during the COVID-19 pandemic, while also saving a historic amount of funding for future economic downturns. Another significant factor impacting the state budget was the receipt of \$3.8 billion in federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for Colorado. Of this \$3.8 billion, legislators spent about \$2 billion, saving the remaining \$1.8 billion to be allocated in the next legislative session. CCHN will work to continue advances in health care during next year's legislative session.

## Covering Kids and Families 2021 Mid-Year Update

Covering Kids and Families (CKF), a project of CCHN, works to improve how Coloradans enroll in health coverage through Health First Colorado (Colorado's Medicaid Program), Child Health Plan *Plus* (CHP+), and private insurance through Connect for Health Colorado. CKF supports a network of about 430 community-based enrollment assisters across Colorado, including at CHCs, community-based organizations, and more; and by advocating on behalf of assisters and low-income Coloradans for improved policies and systems so that all Coloradans can have health coverage, often the first step to health care.

In the first half of 2021, CKF advocated for a variety of policies and system changes that enabled Coloradans to retain health coverage more easily. Some of CKF's activities that impact CHC patients included encouraging HCPF to release guidance on remote enrollment assistance during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, advocating for improvements that will help Coloradans access Emergency Medicaid, and partnering with the state to modernize and improve the accessibility of the PEAK application. CKF continues to meet with HCPF leadership every other month and HCPF eligibility leadership every month to highlight and resolve barriers that members and assisters face in health coverage eligibility and enrollment.

CKF will continue to work with HCPF to ensure that when the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ends, eligible members remain enrolled in coverage and people who are no longer eligible for Health First Colorado or CHP+ are able to easily enroll in new health coverage. CKF will also continue to advocate that federal and state rules are implemented with minimal barriers to enrollment, and will follow, analyze, and report on Health First Colorado and CHP+ enrollment changes and trends. More information about CKF is available at [ckf.cchn.org](http://ckf.cchn.org). Sign up to [join CKF's contact](#) list and receive monthly newsletters and invitations to meetings.

## CHAMPS Update

### Staff Update — Jess Gitlitz

Jess Gitlitz joined the Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States (CHAMPS) in July 2021 as the new Programs Coordinator, Population Health. She runs the coordination and implementation of CHAMPS' Health Equity programs, and provides support for additional website, clinical quality improvement, advocacy, and other CHAMPS activities. Ms. Gitlitz received her Bachelor of Science in community health from the University of Illinois and is currently pursuing her Master of Science in management. Prior to joining CHAMPS, Ms. Gitlitz focused on volunteering, interning, and working at several different health-focused organizations throughout her undergraduate career. In her leisure time, Ms. Gitlitz enjoys all things outdoors including working out, running, hiking, and camping. She also enjoys cooking, baking, and spending time with family and friends.

## CHPA Update

### **Staff Update — Valentina Gallegos**

Valentina Gallegos has joined CHPA as its Clinical Navigation Specialist. She received her bachelor's degree in communications from the University of Colorado Denver in 2010, and has worked in health care ever since. In her most recent role at Colorado Care Partners, she was the Risk Adjustment and Quality Specialist for the United MA contract; focused on improving their Star quality rating and more accurate risk-adjustment coding. Mrs. Gallegos is slated to attain her Certified Professional Coder certification April 2021 and then start her certified risk coding certification. She has a strong passion for risk adjustment and loves the “ah-ha” moments that educating practices brings forth!

When not at work, Mrs. Gallegos spends her spare time creating memories with her husband and four children. They love horseback riding, taking in the country air, and hiking up the Rocky Mountains.

### **Staff Update — Natasha Snyder**

Natasha Snyder joined the Community Health Provider Alliance (CHPA) as Healthcare Economics Data and Reporting Analyst and is a remote team member. Her plans are focused on optimization of current reporting tools and growth towards a data-centered future. The goal is to collect and analyze trends as they occur, to find the places where patient care and savings overlap in real time, allowing the best possible outcomes for patients and program.

Ms. Snyder hails from Bristol, Tennessee, and attended East Tennessee State University for her bachelor's and master's degrees. After further training in informatics and data analytics she received her certifications in T-SQL and Advanced SQL, in addition to courses in HTML and Writing for the Web. Ms. Snyder loves travel, dogs, and music, and strives to combine them as often as possible.

## Upcoming Events

### **NACHC Community Health Institute 2021**

The National Association of Community Health Centers (NACHC) 2021 Community Health Institute (CHI) and Expo will take place August 22-24. The event is hybrid, with the option to attend in-person in Orlando, Florida, or virtually. The early bird registration deadline is July 30.

[Learn more and register on the NACHC website.](#)

### **2021 NWRPCA/CHAMPS Annual (Fall) Primary Care Conference**

The 2021 Northwest Regional Primary Care Association (NWRPCA)/ CHAMPS Annual (Fall) Primary Care Conference will take place Oct. 24-26 in Seattle, Wash. This multi-day, multi-track conference will offer a variety of keynote plenaries, educational sessions, networking opportunities, exhibitors, and more designed to meet the needs of Community Health Center staff. Conference registration will open in early August.



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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 847,000 of their community members – more than one in seven people in Colorado - from 63 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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