



# CCHN NEWSLETTER FALL 2023

## Community Health Center News

### Legislators and Government Officials Visit Colorado Community Health Centers

Colorado Community Health Centers (CHCs) welcomed legislators and government officials to their facilities over the summer and into the autumn. Mayors, Council members, state and congressional legislators, and agency personnel made dozens of visits. The visits included tours of the facilities, information about the services and value CHCs bring to communities across Colorado, and to express gratitude for support. Among the visits were tours of Axis, Peak Vista, Summit and Sunrise, ribbon cuttings at Tepeyac Community Health Center and Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc., a discussion with staff and partners from the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, and a grand opening of the new Mountain Family Health Centers site. Mountain Family shared [a video of the grand opening](#).

These visits are such important ways for CHC staff to show off their value, and advocate for continued support and funding. Advocacy will always be an essential part of the CHC movement, and sharing your voice is the perfect way to show gratitude for your CHCs. Join us in [advocating for CHCs!](#)



U.S. Rep. Yadira Caraveo (CD7) visits Sunrise Community Health's Monfort Family Clinic in Greeley, joining Sunrise staff in front of Sunrise's mobile clinic, Aug. 28.



U.S. Rep. Brittany Pettersen (CD7), third from left, joins CCH staff and visiting Congressional staff at CCH's Renaissance Veterans Apartments at Fitzsimons, Aurora, Aug. 28.

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Nick Zucconi, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) regional administrator in Denver, and Simon Smith (behind Mr. Zucconi), CEO, Clinica Family Health, distribute food at Clinica's Pop-Up Food Pantry, during National Health Center Week, Aug. 11.

## Colorado Coalition for the Homeless Celebrates National Health Center Week

In honor of National Health Center Week, the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless hosted activities designed to celebrate and appreciate staff. On Tuesday, staff got back to their roots and joined Plant Care 101: plant care is self-care. On Wednesday, treats and meals were shared at Fort Lyon, Stout Street Health Center, and 48th Avenue East Shelter Clinic. At Stout Street Health Center staff enjoyed hundreds of breakfast burritos and sandwiches, took team photos in the photo booth, and did some stress-reducing coloring. The week closed out with a Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction class for a relaxing end to a Friday afternoon.



*Colorado Coalition for the Homeless staff from Safety and Security, Outreach and Engagement Services, and Case Management, with their new plants.*

## Clinica Family Health and Friends Conduct Successful Pop-up Pantry

In celebration of National Health Center Week, Clinica Family Health partnered with Community Food Share (CFS) to provide a pop-up pantry for patients and neighbors at Clinica's Lafayette facility. On Friday, Aug. 11, Lily Griego, the regional director of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Region 8, and Nick Zucconi, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) regional administrator in Denver, participated in the event. In addition, they shared the news that Clinica had received a \$400,000 federal grant to expand early childhood developmental screenings. HHS staff joined Clinica staff and CFS volunteers to fill trunks and back seats with groceries. In two hours, the team handed out 12,107 pounds of canned goods, protein bars, corn on the cob, watermelons, peaches, baby wipes, chicken, milk, yogurt and chocolate. More than 350 families received nutrition assistance.



## In Appreciation of Kerry Cogan

*By Ben Wiederholt, Interim Chief Executive Officer, CHPA*

Kerry Cogan passed away Aug. 14 after an inspiring and courageous battle with an illness. Kerry was the founding CEO of the [Colorado Health Provider Alliance](#) (CHPA) and served until August 2022. Thanks to her leadership and expertise, Kerry led CHPA from a concept to the strong non-profit Accountable Care Organization that we are today. She effectively cultivated and established relationships with our member CHCs, community partners, and payers. She was respected and admired not only in Colorado but nationally, and she supported other states and organizations to form ACOs.

If you would like to express your appreciation for Kerry, please consider making a donation to the [Betty White Wildlife Fund](#). In addition to her passion for making the health care system work better, we know she loved Betty White, and she loved animals and nature.



## Three Fabulous CHC Videos – Short and Oh So Sweet

Watch short YouTube videos from [Northwest Colorado Health](#), [Mountain Family Health Center](#), and [Tepeyac Community Health Center](#). The videos include ribbon cuttings, celebrations, and great reminders of how essential CHCs are to the patients they serve, and how unique they are in the way they offer high-quality, patient-first, integrated care.



## UMC Staff Connects with their Community Through Local Events

Outreach and Enrollment staff at Community Health Centers help members of their communities apply for and stay enrolled in health coverage, introduce them to the care options, and answer questions. After the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency ended in May, individuals who had been locked-in to Medicaid coverage for over three years began to be disenrolled. It has caused lots of stress on families who are confused, frustrated, and afraid of losing coverage. Outreach and enrollment specialists like Kerry Bentler at Uncompahgre Medical Center (UMC) have been doing what they always do – answering questions, solving problems, reassuring patients, and getting their communities access to care.



*UMC table at Montrose Regional Health Fair*

As part of her outreach to community members, Ms. Bentler has set up her table at several community events. She answers individualized questions in a more relaxed and casual environment that people may not want to come into the clinic to ask. As she describes it, “There is no pressure, no appointment needed, and no reason for the potential patient to travel to us when we are already involved in an activity they are attending.” She attends local events to let people know that UMC is there to help wherever they can, and so they know that they have choices in their community.

Ms. Bentler has talked with people who may have been considering one of UMC’s services but hadn’t made the leap to make an appointment yet. Others have noted that they were unaware of what UMC offered before talking with an outreach and enrollment specialist.

Ms. Bentler shares more about how the conversations tend to go: “I invite attendees to the table to ask any questions they may have about our services, our providers, financial and insurance barriers, and how we might be able to help them as potential patients. I make sure to discuss some programs that we have that can financially assist people to navigate through some barriers they may be having. If they prefer a telephone call so the discussion doesn’t take place in a public place, I offer my card or they can leave their information with me for later contact as well. Sometimes, people just want to know how to pronounce Uncompahgre!”

## Dr. Wallace Receives National Achievement Award

Dr. Mark E. Wallace, Sunrise Community Health, was honored in August with the Samuel E. Rodgers, MD Achievement Award from the National Association of Community Health Centers. This award is presented annually to celebrate a clinician providing health care and leadership in the Community Health Center movement. It is named for Dr. Samuel U. Rodgers, MD, MPH, who opened the first federally qualified Community Health Center in Missouri, among the first in the nation.

Dr. Wallace has over 30 years of executive leadership experience, all while practicing family medicine and advocating on behalf of public health. He is Chief Clinical Officer for Sunrise, and CEO and Chief Medical Officer for the North Colorado Health Alliance. In his distinguished career, he has served on the Colorado Health Foundation Board of Directors, as a senior medical director at Colorado Access, and as executive director of the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment, to name a few. As leader, he doesn’t seek the spotlight. He is constantly working behind the scenes helping foster support and solutions for a better overall result.

Dr. Wallace has worked tirelessly in all areas of public health, from providing direct care to working in education, state and regional advocacy, policy work, and community engagement.

His knowledge and unflagging commitment to the health and well-being of the community, before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, exemplifies his commitment to widespread equitable health care access and health improvement for all. He played a critical role for Sunrise's COVID-19 response. He helped with on-the-ground care and mitigating spread, and tracking and planning for what was ahead based on community-level, and national, numbers and behaviors.

Dr. Wallace felt honored to receive the award and said, "I overcame many financial and family barriers to achieve my 7-year-old self's dream of being a primary care doctor. Early in my medical education I recognized I was entering an inequitable and complex health care environment in which too few privileged leaders believed access to health care was a fundamental human right and too many poor and marginalized persons bore the disproportionate burden of disease. Fortunately, the visionary founders and builders of the Community Health Center movement, such as Dr. Rodgers, had been hard at work for a couple of decades so my generation had shoulders to stand on, models of care to learn from, and clinics to become part of."

Stephanie Brooks, Policy Director, CCHN, remarked: "Dr. Wallace's public health leadership and vision in northeast Colorado is significant. In addition to his role at Sunrise, I'm also impressed with his leadership of the innovative North Colorado Health Alliance, which helps center patients to receive whole-person care in and outside of a medical clinic and addresses social drivers of health, resulting in better health outcomes."

In 2020, he received the Colorado Public Health Association's Lifetime Achievement award in recognition of his significant contributions and leadership in the field of public health.



*Dr. Mark Wallace.*

## **Ross Brooks Selected CHAMPS Outstanding Champion of the Underserved**

In August, Ross Brooks, immediate past CEO of Mountain Family Health Centers, was selected as the recipient of the 2023 Outstanding Advocate of the Underserved Award by the Board of Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States (CHAMPS). CHAMPS recognizes outstanding staff and board members from HHS Region VIII (Colo., Mont., ND, SD, Utah, Wyo.) CHCs and related organizations for exceptional contributions to the CHC movement through advocacy, leadership, and dedication to the CHC mission.

Mr. Brooks has been an integral part of the Colorado Community Health Center movement for over two decades. He started at CCHN 2002, and in 2012 became the CEO of Mountain Family Health Centers. As a tireless advocate for the uninsured, Ross has used his positions of power and his morally courageous voice to move Coloradans closer to universal coverage. He was diligent in working with and updating his local, state, and federal government officials about the service of Mountain Family and CHCs to communities across Colorado. He has been a leader among CHCs in engaging state legislators from both sides of the aisle and creating strong CHC advocates at the Capitol.

In early 2008, Mr. Brooks was chosen for the prestigious Geiger Gibson Emerging Leader award from the National Association of Community Health Centers. In that nomination, over 15 years ago, he was recognized for the same qualities that he continues to be known for today. "I am impressed by Ross's curiosity, listening skills, and willingness to ask questions when he confronts new situations. Ross, despite his youth, has an exceptional feel for the complicated mix of factors that FQHCs must manage at the community level. His intellect, enthusiasm and hard work are a big part of CCHN's success," said at the time by Mike Bloom, then executive director, Northern Colorado Health Alliance, and former CEO of Sunrise Community Health.

## Axis wins NAVEX 2023 Customer Excellence Award

Axis Health System in southwest Colorado has been selected for the nonprofit winner of the 2023 [NAVEX](#) Excellence in Ethics and Compliance Award. Axis is among the organizations selected that represent innovative, impactful, and successful risk and compliance programs. Award winners were selected by a committee of risk and compliance industry experts who evaluated more than 60 nominations across several award categories.

Axis' Ethics and Compliance program is founded on principles from the Federal Sentencing Guidelines' Seven Elements of an Effective Compliance Program. The program's motto, "there are no mistakes, only lessons," emphasizes a growth mindset, promoting continuous improvement and evolution of the program.

"These [award-winning organizations](#) stand out because they demonstrate how a next-level risk and compliance program contributes to organizational resilience and a stronger workplace culture," explained Steve Chapman, Chief Customer Officer at NAVEX. "It is a privilege to recognize the innovation and creativity our customers apply to their programs." Navex provides and maintains integrated risk and compliance management software.



*Key members of Axis' Ethics and Compliance Team (left to right), Amber Manwaring, MBA-HC, CHC, MLS (ASCP) CM, Director of Ethics and Compliance; Shay Denning, JD, Chief Legal Officer; Melisa Dillon, RHIT, CHCA, Manager of HIM and Coding Compliance.*

Axis Health System is a Licensed Behavioral Health Provider, a licensed Substance-Use Disorder Treatment Provider, and a federally qualified Community Health Clinic. Axis provides behavioral, oral, primary, and crisis health care.

## Summit Community Care Clinic Successful in Managing High Blood Pressure for Patients

Patients at Summit Community Care Clinic with hypertension have seen greater success in controlling their blood pressure. This is thanks to a new, collaborative change in treatment processes and support from the community.

As part of the Care Clinic's ongoing Quality Assurance and Improvement program, blood pressure control is one of several metrics monitored and used to determine the efficacy of the Care Clinic's treatments, processes, and programs. As blood pressure tends to run higher for those living at elevation, controlling blood pressure among the Care Clinic's patients, most of whom live in mountain communities, is more challenging.

The steady numbers prompted a new, team-based approach, implemented in July 2022, using the Care Clinic's Model for Improvement. This included:

- Training and re-training of Medical Assistants in proper blood pressure measurement.
- Purchasing electronic blood pressure cuffs for each exam room to facilitate a more efficient check-in process.
- Validating initial high readings, as many patients can initially have elevated pressures due to the stress of arriving in a clinical environment.
- Providing additional training for medical providers on hypertension management best practices and case reviews.

- The addition of the on-site pharmacy in September 2022, which made obtaining medications much easier for many patients.
- Development of patient educational materials at appropriate reading levels in English and Spanish.
- Patient engagement through referrals to the Care Clinic's in-house health coaching and tobacco cessation programs to initiate beneficial lifestyle changes.
- Distribution of blood pressure cuffs to patients for at-home monitoring.
- Follow-up protocols to facilitate compliance.

As a result of these new processes, the Care Clinic saw an increase in the number of patients who are successfully managing their blood pressure. As of August 2023, the blood pressure control measure was 71.8 percent, exceeding the 70 percent target.

"We continuously strive to improve the quality of care to support the improvement of patient safety and health outcomes. I am so proud of the collaboration between and within our medical teams to ensure what we are doing is working – from added communication between staff to really empowering our patients to manage their care, fewer people are having strokes and heart attacks because of these changes," said Dr. Cowie.

The updated and expanded blood pressure control initiatives at the Care Clinic are supported by federal, state, and local partners, including Health Resources & Services Administration, Colorado Department of Health and Environment, and the Rotary Club of Summit County.

## Valley-Wide Health Systems Re-opens Rocky Ford Clinic

After a brief closure for remodeling, Valley-Wide Health Systems re-opened the Rocky Ford Clinic on Aug. 23. The renovation completely updated both the interior and exterior of the building to better reflect modern clinic design, and included a roughly 400-square-foot expansion to the original 6,000-square-foot building.

"This addition will greatly enhance the experience of our patients visiting the Rocky Ford Clinic," Glenn Rumrill, Valley-Wide's Regional Director of Operations for the Lower Arkansas Valley explained. "Patients will notice enhanced parking, a beautiful and bright waiting room, and seven brand new exam rooms".

While this remodel was made possible through a variety of funding sources, the building itself has a long history of support from the residents of Rocky Ford. In 1962, the Rocky Ford Community Council's Doctor Procurement Committee set out to bring doctors to Rocky Ford. They bought the land from Glen A. Watkins, who built the original one-story building which was opened in September of that year. Watkins turned the building over to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church for operation, but not before dedicating the building to the memory of his wife, Gloria Watkins, who had passed away the previous year. Valley-Wide purchased the Gloria Watkins Memorial Medical Arts Building in 1997.

"The original building served its purpose for a long time, providing very valuable medical services to the community, but it was beginning to show its wear. This expansion was a great way to honor that legacy, while also modernizing the building." Mr. Rumrill said.

The project was supported by funding requested by U.S. Sen. Michael Bennet, and funding from the Colorado Department of Local Affairs (DOLA), the City of Rocky Ford, and the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).



*Jania Arnoldi, CEO, Valley-Wide Health Systems and Shannon Wallace, Rocky Ford City Manager, hold open the door to welcome visitors.*



## Peak Vista Increases Access through Teledentistry

An innovative teledentistry effort at [Peak Vista Community Health Centers](#) has brought in new patients from a host of locations. Many patients get a dental consult from home, and a few while driving in their cars. (The dentists tell them to pull over to continue the visit). The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) recently published an article on this creative endeavor.

Teledentistry saves people time and money by allowing dentists to get started before an in-office visit. This has improved scheduling overall, freeing up time slots for patients in urgent need of an in-person visit, and helping those who cannot get in right away. “If they’ve got an infection in their mouth, I can get them started on antibiotics,” said Dr. Meredith Hudson, Peak Vista’s Regional Dental Director.

Some, including one of the first teledentistry patients, have connected from their workplaces. “She was actually in a stairwell at work. It’s huge if we can save them a visit,” Dr. Hudson said.

Many patients are trying to assess how serious a problem really is, but do not have much scheduling flexibility due to work duties. They hesitate to travel to a clinic because it would require taking time off from work, resulting in a loss of income for many.

Peak Vista started offering teledentistry early this year with support from [HRSA’s Optimizing Virtual Care grant program](#). Despite challenges with information technology systems during the first days, the effort is growing steadily. Some patients will call in using a personal computer, but most use smart phones that have video capability.

The service is so new that patients rarely ask for it; instead, Peak Vista staff may suggest an online visit if someone calls asking for a first appointment. “Most people don’t even know that teledentistry exists,” Hudson said.

Overall, this innovative approach helps to expand access to oral health care and improve delivery while lowering costs. Meanwhile, patients benefit from the increased flexibility.

Peak Vista serves more than 81,000 patients in Colorado’s Pikes Peak and East Central regions.

## CCNE 20th Anniversary Celebration

On Sept. 28, the Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence (CCNE) held their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration. CCHN partners with CCNE on projects including Building Skills for Effective Teams, Health Care Advocate, and Emerging Leaders. During the event, CCNE celebrated the exciting work they have completed over the past two decades, and shared touching stories that demonstrated the value of their nursing mentorship program. Part of the event was raising money for their new nursing support scholarship that provides stipends for nursing students to use for housing, tutoring, and other living expenses. All funds raised during the event went straight to support this new program. To learn more about the exciting programs they are currently working on and will be working on in the future, visit [CCNE’s website](#).



*Ingrid Johnson, president & CEO of CCNE (left); Sarah Macrander, senior health center operations manager at CCHN; and Emily Krizmanich, workforce specialist at CCHN at the CCNE celebration.*

## Axis opens two retail pharmacies for the public in Cortez and Dove Creek

Axis Health System now has two fully operational retail pharmacies in Montezuma and Dolores Counties.

These pharmacies are a part of the first telepharmacy program in the state of Colorado, which Axis Pharmacist Josh Shumway has pioneered to better serve the community. Telepharmacy benefits rural communities by allowing the pharmacist to supervise, verify prescriptions, and counsel patients from either location. Both pharmacies have staff available in person during business hours.

Dr. Shumway and certified pharmacy technicians Brandi Higgins and Tiffany Parisi oversee the pharmacies. Dr. Shumway, who joined the Axis team in June 2022, was able to help design the sites to best meet the community's needs.

Dr. Shumway hopes to keep growing the pharmacies' services and building their reputation as timely, reliable sites. "We can provide the services that this community needs," he said. "Community members have a reliable pharmacy that's going to be open, and that their meds are going to be ready on time."

Both pharmacies are now open to the public Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. To fill or transfer a prescription, patients can ask their health care provider to send it to "Axis Health Pharmacy – Cortez" or "Axis Health Pharmacy – Dove Creek."

The Cortez pharmacy is a part of Axis' recent 8,000-square-foot addition this year, in which it added the drive-through pharmacy as well as dental care to the Empire location and expanded behavioral health and primary care space. Axis' dental health services were previously located in Cortez on Maple.



*Certified pharmacy technician Brandi Higgins (left) and pharmacist Josh Shumway.*

## Colorado Coalition for the Homeless Welcomes Partners for a Tour

In early August Colorado Coalition for the Homeless staff welcomed staff from the Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Primary Care, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and CCHN for a tour of two facilities.

The tour included the Stout Street Health Center as well as the new Stout Street Recuperative Care Center, which welcomes neighbors experiencing homelessness who are too ill or frail to recover from a physical illness or injury on the streets, but do not need hospital-level care.

Most individuals stay at the Recuperative Care Center for at least 10 days and not only get medical treatment, assistance with medication, and three meals a day, but they also have social opportunities such as the creation of the colorful mural highlighted in the picture.



*Staff from Health Resources and Services Administration, Bureau of Primary Health Care, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, and CCHN.*



## Clinica Preceptors Honored with LIC Champion Award

Eight clinicians from Clinica Family Health were selected by a University of Colorado School of Medicine Community Health leadership team as recipients of the 2023 Community Health Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC) Champion Award. Congratulations to Kaitlin Prinsen, Sharon Kirby, Phil Keppeler, Amy Rinner, Steve Sushinsky, Carlie Field, and Upasana Mohapatra.

They volunteer as preceptors in the LIC program at the University, which provides students with the opportunity to gain experience inside Community Health Centers and learn how to work in a team-based care model. Carlie Field took a couple of minutes to discuss her involvement with the program. This is her first year as an LIC preceptor.

“As a former University of Colorado School of Medicine student, I feel a strong desire to give back and work with medical students as so many other providers did for me when I was a student. Specifically I want medical students to work with OB/Gyn preceptors who are excited about medicine, act as positive role models and serve as strong advocate for their patients, especially those who are often unseen and unheard in our U.S. medical system. I hope to encourage students to consider OBGYN as a career specialty because it is such a special field of medicine with incredible variety. I also wanted to have medical students involved in community health and work with the excellent providers and patients we have here at Clinica and see that they don’t just have to pursue academic or private practice jobs after residency.”

Dr. Field explained that she has a student with her for a half-day per week in the CHC, on average two full days per month. The student also joins her in Labor and Delivery and in the OR intermittently throughout the year.

Community Health Centers are known as important partners in growing and teaching the next generation of health care workers in Colorado. Preceptors like those awarded at Clinica are at the heart of this work, and we thank them for their commitment to and excitement for teaching.

## CCHN Student Presentations and Career Fairs

CCHN staff educate students on Community Health Centers and the importance of the mission driving them. Staff from CCHN’s Health Center Operations Division attend roughly eight student presentation and five career fairs each year. Pictured to the right are Mickayla Walters and Emily Krizmanich, who attended the 2023 Colorado Area Health Education Center Health Occupations Promoting Equity (COAHEC HOPE) Institute mini-conference in July 2023.



*Dr. Upasana Mohapatra (second from left) and Dr. Steve Sushinsky (third from left), flanked by CU School of medicine staff, receive the 2023 Community Health Longitudinal Integrated Clerkship (LIC) Champion Award on behalf of seven Clinica physicians who volunteer to precept medical*



*Mickayla Walters (left), and Emily Krizmanich, workforce specialists at CCHN.*

## Axis receives SAMHSA grant to improve access to behavioral health

Axis Health System received [a notice of award from the US Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\) through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#). The award includes a planning, development, and implementation grant to become the first Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) in rural southwest Colorado. CCBHCs were created to transform mental health and substance use treatment across the country and provide sustainable funding for robust community outpatient mental health treatment. Axis received the only award in Colorado this year. The project will be based at Axis' new Durango Integrated Healthcare Campus when it opens in the spring of 2024.



*Axis' new Durango Integrated Healthcare campus*

“Axis Health System’s mental health and addiction treatment services, as well as round-the-clock crisis intervention, don’t just save lives – they strengthen the entire community,” said Senator John Hickenlooper. “This award will create jobs and expand work in underserved communities, all while keeping care affordable.”

CCBHCs must serve anyone who requests care for mental health or substance use conditions, regardless of their ability to pay, place of residence, or age. They are required to provide a range of services, including crisis services. CCBHCs must also ensure access to a comprehensive range of services, providing care coordination when needed and incorporating evidence-based practices and other supports based on a community needs assessment.

“The CCBHC grant award provides the alignment and infrastructure support for measuring health outcomes that Axis Health System is committed to measuring and improving. Over the last 10 years, we have matured as an integrated system and see this as a momentum boost for the continued evolution of high-quality behavioral health care in La Plata County. We recognize the CCBHC award is an opportunity to create a better health care home while supporting our staff as we work to simultaneously improve access and expand services,” said Shelly Burke, Axis CEO.

As part of its CCBHC project, Axis plans to increase access to high-quality and affordable health care services and supports for all populations, especially adults with a need for higher-intensity substance use disorder treatment, people of all ages who identify as LBGTQI+, Latinx people of all ages, and veterans and their families. The grant will support 10 new jobs over the course of the four-year project.

“Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics are transforming mental health and substance use treatment by providing equitable access to services for all Americans,” said HHS Secretary Xavier Becerra. “After sixty years, the vision of the Community Mental Health Act of 1963, is being realized, and CCBHCs are making that possible.”

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, don’t wait. Call or text 988 or chat [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org).

## Celebrating Elena Thomas-Faulkner and Her Leadership of NIMAA

In August 2023, Elena Thomas-Faulkner stepped down as CEO of the National Institute for Medical Assistant Advancement (NIMAA). She joined NIMAA in 2018 and brought with her years of experience in the CHC Movement from previous roles at Tepeyac Community Health Center, John Snow Institute (JSI), and CCHN. Her work at NIMAA highlighted her many skills, organizational leadership, and passion for working alongside underserved communities. Under her leadership, NIMAA grew to provide medical assistance (MA) education to over 400 graduates and 50 CHCs around the United States.

As Ms. Thomas-Faulkner wrote in a parting LinkedIn post, “It has been an incredible almost 5 years for me at NIMAA. I am humbled to have been part of bringing our program to over 400 graduates and 50 health centers in medically underserved areas across the US, and proud of the incredible team we've built at NIMAA. It is time for me to take a step back and explore what is next in my career. And I'm delighted to be passing the baton to this new leader and the rest of the NIMAA team - NIMAA is in good hands!”

In reflecting on CCHN’s partnership with NIMAA under Ms. Thomas-Faulkner’s leadership, Suzanne Smith, Health Center Operations Division Director at CCHN, shared, “Throughout the years I’ve gotten to work with Elena, it’s always been clear she’s committed to expanding access to health care for people in Colorado and nationwide. Her dedication to ensuring MA students in the NIMAA program receive a high-quality education helps ensure MAs working at CHCs are well prepared to provide care to CHC patients.” CCHN staff wishes Ms. Thomas-Faulkner the best in the next phase of her career and hope to see her in the CHC world again someday. CCHN’s partnership with NIMAA continues under the new CEO, John Butt, who started in August 2023.

## Sunrise Community Health’s 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Block Party

On the evening of Sept. 9, Sunrise Community Health hosted a Block Party at their Monfort Family Clinic in Evans, CO to mark their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The entire community was invited to join the celebration.

The clinic's parking lot was transformed and approximately 2,000 people attended the event. The first 1,000 guests received food vouchers worth \$10 each as a token of gratitude for their unwavering support over the years. Seven food trucks and a Pepsi drink station offered a diverse range of cuisines.

The success of this celebration was made possible by two talented event planners, Charles Countee and Madison Fisher, helped by 50 enthusiastic community volunteers.

While food was a highlight, three inspirational speakers also took the stage to share stories of Sunrise's journey over the past five decades and the organization's remarkable growth and unwavering commitment to the community.

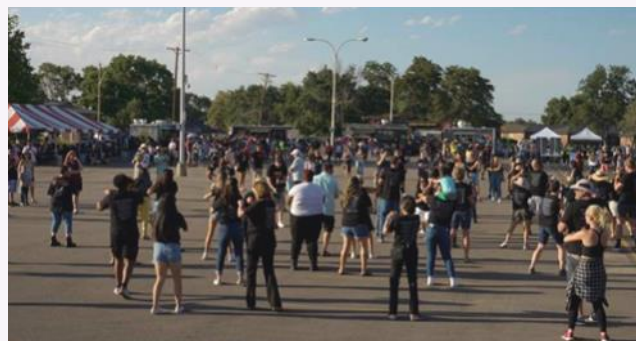
Live music filled the air, featuring musicians who played a variety of tunes, from classics to contemporary hits, keeping the atmosphere lively. For the kids, there was an inflatable slide, and a face painter and balloon artist added to the fun.

A highlight of the evening was a Sunrise flash mob dance to the 1970’s classic, “The Hustle.” Staff and attendees joined in, creating a joyful atmosphere with smiles and laughter.

Additionally, three individuals were recognized for their outstanding contributions to Sunrise over the past 50 years. Peter Fine, CEO of Banner Health, was celebrated as a Community Health Champion in recognition of his 19 years of support. Diane Garcia, Sunrise Pharmacy Assistance Technician was also celebrated as a Community Health Champion for her 40 years of service at Sunrise. Dr. Mark Wallace received the Pat Powell Community Service Award for his 30 years of commitment to Sunrise and the people they serve.

### 50<sup>th</sup> By the Numbers:

- ~ 2,000 guests
- 1,000 food vouchers
- 260 employees & partners
- 50 volunteers
- 50 Sunrise suns / artists
- 20 elected officials celebrated (7 in person)
- 7 food trucks w/ PepsiCo drink station
- 3 speakers
- 3 awardees
- 3 live musicians
- 1 kid’s inflatable slide
- 1 face painter
- 1 balloon artist
- 1 flash mob to the Hustle



*Patients, staff, and community members dance to the Hustle at Sunrise’s 50th anniversary celebration event.*



## Summit Community Care Clinic Expands Services

Summit Community Care Clinic has completed three projects to provide additional services within Summit, Lake, and Park Counties. The Care Clinic opened a new medical and behavioral care office in Leadville on Sep. 29, opened a [new School Based Health Center in Breckenridge](#) in September, and will open a new dental practice in Fairplay this week.

The new Leadville office offers a wide range of medical services including primary care, acute illness and injury care, chronic pain management, pediatric and newborn care, referrals, telehealth, family planning, senior care, and cancer screening. The Lake County Care Clinic will offer behavioral health visits one day a week, pending the hiring process for a behavioral health provider.

“Nearly one in three residents in Lake County do not have a primary care physician in the area. Expansion of medical and behavioral health options in the community will make a meaningful positive impact on health outcomes for those residents. People are much more likely to seek out and get the care they need if they don’t have the added burden of commuting into another county to do so,” stated Susan Robertson, the Care Clinic’s Chief Strategy Officer.

By sharing the location with Lake County’s Public Health and Human Services departments, Lake County residents will be able to easily access the Care Clinic’s services as well as the County’s many integral public assistance programs, in one place.

Beginning with the current school year, Summit Community Care Clinic has added medical care services to existing behavioral health and dental services offered on-site at the Upper Blue Elementary School in Breckenridge, to create a newly designated School Based Health Center (SBHC).

The Care Clinic provides preventative dental care and behavioral health visits to all schools within the Summit School District, Lake County School District, and the Park RE-2 School District. To qualify as a Colorado state-funded SBHC, a school must offer medical, dental, and behavioral health services on campus. The addition of medical facilities at Upper Blue expands access to convenient, affordable, and integrated high-quality health care for students, their families, and school staff.

The Care Clinic’s new dental office in Fairplay will provide continuation of dental care options in Park County. This is in response to a request from Dr. Jim Caldwell of Southpark Dental, who is retiring and would otherwise leave a service gap in that area.

“We were so touched by Dr. Caldwell’s request and honored by the amount of support we have received from the Park County community to transition from Dr. Caldwell’s practice to ours,” stated Care Clinic Chief Dental Officer Erin Major.

The Care Clinic received startup funding from Colorado Community Health Alliance (CCHA), the regional organization that administers Colorado Medicaid benefits and coordinates care and services for all members of several Colorado counties, including Park County.

The office will be open one day per week starting Oct. 12, with plans to expand operations based on need. The Park County practice will offer basic dental care, including exams, x-rays, sealants, filling, and cleanings, with the opportunity to refer patients to the Frisco office as needed.

The addition of these three new locations continues to promote the CHC mission of affordable, accessible, health care for all.



*Staff at the new SBHC at Upper Blue Elementary in Breckenridge.*

## A Comfy-Cozy Space Comes to Northwest Colorado Health

Northwest Colorado Health patients can now enjoy a new pediatric comfy-cozy space from Sesame Workshop in the Craig location's lobby. This new space is thanks to a grant from the National Association of Community Health Centers, with the intention of providing comforting and safe spaces within locations that may be overwhelming and uncomfortable for children.

During the pandemic, Northwest staff had to take all of the toys and kids' items out of the lobbies because the frequent cleaning and sanitizing became too burdensome. Northwest staff and patients are so excited to have a place to play and relax in the lobby again.



*Comfy-cozy space at Northwest Colorado Health's Craig location.*

## Tepeyac Community Health Center Opens a Pharmacy

Tepeyac Community Health Center celebrated the opening of a new building in August that includes something top of the list in patients surveys, a new pharmacy. The next nearest pharmacy is a 10-minute drive through heavy traffic or nearly an hour-walk away. As a CHC, Tepeyac is able to offer sliding-scale discounts for medication to patients and individuals with qualifying income. The pharmacy is available to anyone, but to qualify for discounted medication, folks have to be a Tepeyac patient.

In a story that was [published in the Denverite](#), Pharmacy Manager Arkadiy Shnayderman noted: "It's the wow factor. Patients come to the register and they have anxiety and they're scared about the fact that they may not be able to afford their medication or they have to take steps in order to get their medication. Then you show them the prices and it's \$5, \$10 and they say wow," Shnayderman said.

The new facility includes expanded space for medical, dental, and behavioral health services, and is decorated with artwork from the hands of community leaders and artists.

## CCHN Staff Update

### Erin Varnum

Erin Varnum is the Covering Kids and Families (CKF) Specialist at Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN). She joined CCHN, the lead agency for CKF, in September 2023. Her primary responsibility is coordinating and implementing CKF projects to support the network of health coverage enrollment assisters across the state. Ms. Varnum earned a bachelor of arts degree in anthropology of global health from the University of Vermont. Before CKF, Ms. Varnum worked as a health advocate at a Rhode Island-based nonprofit helping individuals navigate issues with insurers and health care providers. In her free time, she enjoys live music, crafting, and hiking.

### Kate McElwain

Kate McElwain is a Policy Manager at CCHN. Ms. McElwain joined CCHN in September 2023. Her primary responsibility is to implement CCHN's state and federal policy and advocacy strategies. Ms. McElwain earned a bachelor of arts degree in English literature from University of Colorado in Boulder and a Master of Social Work from Metropolitan State University in Denver, Colo. She has experience in case management, community organizing, and policy research and development. Prior to CCHN, Ms. McElwain worked as a legislative aide at the Colorado General Assembly and for various nonprofits and campaigns in the Denver area. In her free time, Ms. McElwain enjoys biking, hiking, cooking, and spending time with friends and family.

# **CHAMPS Staff Update**

## **Haleigh Donahue**

Haleigh Donahue is the Programs Coordinator, Membership and Communications for the Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States (CHAMPS). Ms. Donahue joined the CHAMPS team in September 2023. In her role, she is responsible for coordinating CHAMPS' recognition programs, the maintenance of CHAMPS' database of Region VIII Community Health Center Program contacts, and the management and distribution of the organization's communication outlets, ensuring that relevant information is imparted to the region's CHCs, Primary Care Associations, and other partner organizations. Ms. Donahue received a bachelor of science in journalism from the University of Florida and is a proud Florida Gator. She brings prior experience working in nonprofit settings, including working with an AmeriCorps State program. Outside of work, Ms. Donahue enjoys thrifting, sewing, playing tennis, and exploring local state parks.

## **Kayla Evans**

Kayla Evans is the Program Coordinator, Health Center Workforce at CHAMPS. She joined the CHAMPS team in August 2023. In her role, Ms. Evans is responsible for the coordination and implementation of CHAMPS' programs in support of CHC staff recruitment and retention and health professions education and training. Ms. Evans has a bachelor of arts degree in political science and brings many years of experience working in the non-profit sector, including time as an AmeriCorps VISTA and a program manager for Colorado Healthcare Corps. In her time outside of work, Ms. Evans enjoys hiking and backpacking with her dog Jax, rock climbing, kayaking, and spending time with friends and family.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **NWRPCA/CHAMPS Annual Primary Care Conference**

*Oct. 21-24: Seattle, Washington*

The 2023 [Northwest Regional Primary Care Association](#) (NWRPCA)/CHAMPS Annual Primary Care Conference will be held in Seattle, Wash., from Oct. 21-24, 2023. The multi-day in-person conference hosts networking events, educational sessions, prominent keynote speakers, and exhibiting/sponsorship opportunities. The educational tracks include Board Governance, Clinical, Financial, Healthy Communities, Human Resources & Workforce, Leadership, Operations, and Policy. Please visit the CHAMPS [Annual Primary Care Conference](#) webpage to learn more, and for information regarding [registration](#), [hotel](#) accommodations, the [agenda](#), and [reimbursement opportunities](#).

### **NACHC Policy & Issues Forum (P&I) 2024 hybrid event**

*Committee meetings: Feb. 10-11, Conference: Feb. 12-15: Marriott Marquis, Washington, DC and online* [Conference details here](#). Registration opens in November. NACHC conference hotel block opens in November. [Go here to monitor when it opens and to see alternative hotel options](#).

### **CCHN Policy & Issues Forum (P&I) 2024**

*March 13-14: Denver, Colorado*

The tentative schedule is to hold a training, legislator luncheon, and policy panel on March 13, followed by legislator visits on March 14 at the State Capitol. The venue for the events on March 13 is still being determined, but it will be close to the Capitol. A hotel block will also be available.





## Spring 2023 Newsletter Contributors

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### About CCHN

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*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 832,000 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*

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

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