In Appreciation: John McFarland, DDS, Leader, Friend, Mentor

Our dear friend and colleague John McFarland, director of dental services for Salud Family Health for 44 years, passed away on June 18, 2024. CCHN joins the McFarland Family and Salud Family Health in our sorrow at his passing. He was a great health care leader, friend, and mentor, and we know we are so very fortunate that he was part of the Community Health Center movement.

“What a CHC giant he was! Without him, there would likely be hardly any oral health care at CHCs. I loved having him on the Public Affairs committee for all those years and he was also on the CCMCN board as a clinician for years, and in both of these places he made sure the clinical voice was heard and always did it with such passion and grace. I will miss him,” said Annette Kowal, president and CEO of CCHN.

Dr. McFarland was director of dental services at Salud from 1972 until his retirement in 2015. He was instrumental in advocating for dental care as an essential part of primary health care at Salud, throughout the state, and the country. He was a leader at every opportunity, ensuring oral health care has a place at the table and is valued as a critical aspect of good patient care.

Dr. McFarland was a tireless advocate for the integrated model of care where oral health was provided in addition to medical and behavioral health services. He cared greatly about his colleagues and staff, supporting them to excel and attain their professional goals, while appreciating their unique personalities, their families and interests. He himself was an accomplished jazz musician and pianist who could have followed that professional path, but chose to dedicate his career to those in need.

Among his many accomplishments, Dr. McFarland was the founder and past president of the National Network for Oral Health Access (NNOHA), the organization of community, migrant, and homeless dental providers. He was also co-founder of the Colorado Dental Health Network and a member of several state and national dental societies and associations.
In 2007, Dr. McFarland received a Lifetime Achievement Award from NNOHA in recognition of his vision and leadership in founding and nurturing the NNOHA, a national organization that supports CHC clinicians and oral health care for underserved populations.

Dr. McFarland served as president of the Coalition for Oral Health and a commissioner for the Colorado Commission of Children’s Dental Health. Dr. McFarland also served on the National Advisory Council on Migrant Health of the Health Resources and Services Administration.

He received numerous awards, including the Stanley J. Brasher Gratitude award from the Colorado Community Health Network and the Stanley J. Brasher Legacy Award from the Community Health Association of Mountains Plains States. His work inspired generations of dental students that had rotations at Salud and now work at CHCs.

“I am incredibly inspired by the vision, love, and commitment John McFarland brought to his career,” wrote Colleen Lampron, program manager at On Par Productions and formerly co-director of the Clinical Quality Division at CCHN, when Dr. McFarland retired. “He touched so many lives across the nation, including his patients, those who worked for him and many he never met. If a health center patient received dental care anywhere, they can thank Dr. McFarland!”

Learn more about John McFarland here. In lieu of flowers, his family requests donations to Salud Family Health or NNOHA.

National Health Center Week in Colorado

So many wonderful people work for CHCs! We hope you will take the time during National Health Center Week, (NHCW) Aug. 4-10, to thank a CHC staff member. NHCW is an annual celebration to spread awareness about the mission, accomplishments, and importance of Community Health Centers across the country. And who doesn’t love an excuse to enjoy free food with their co-workers, neighbors, and patients?

Colorado’s 20 CHCs, with 243 clinic sites, provide a health care home for more than 857,000 Coloradans. That’s one in seven people in the state, including 23% of Health First Colorado (Colorado’s Medicaid program) enrollees and 21% of Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+) enrollees.

CHCs across Colorado are celebrating National Health Center Week through patient and staff appreciation events. Several CHCs are hosting picnics, breakfasts, summer games, and similar events just for their staff – to share gratitude and camaraderie for working in the Community Health Center Movement. Others are hosting events for their patients, including a farmer’s market at Salud Family Health; giveaways at Northwest Colorado Health, Summit Community Care Clinic, and Peak Vista CHCs; a “walk with a Doc” at Denver Health; food distribution at Clinica Family Health; sports physicals at Pueblo CHC, and screenings and resources for neighbors of Valley-Wide Health Systems who are experiencing homelessness.
Here are community-wide CHC-hosted events, free and open to all to attend.

**Northwest Colorado Health’s Craig Dental Clinic, Aug. 5, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Northwest is hosting a Craig Chamber Mixer and ribbon-cutting for their new School-Based Health Mobile Unit, as well as celebrating their agency’s 60th anniversary.

**Uncompahgre Medical Center, 1350 S. Aspen Street, Norwood, Aug. 8, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.**
Uncompahgre Medical Center (UMC) will host a taco bar and party. This is a community event at which UMC partners with several local entities to share information and resources. UMC typically plans to have fire truck rides and ground tours of their Care Flight helicopter, along with food, games, free school supplies for children and health information.

**Sunrise Community Health, Loveland Community Health Center, Aug. 10, 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.**
Sunrise Community Health is bringing together several local agencies and organizations to host a community resource fair in Loveland. Events will include health screenings, a light lunch, fun activities, and prizes and giveaways.

Contact [your local CHC](#) to see what events are happening near you.

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**River Valley Staff Highlight Importance of Community Water Fluoridation**

When providers at River Valley Family Health Centers heard that the town of Hotchkiss was voting on whether to continue fluoridating its drinking water, they knew they wanted to weigh in. Fluoride is a mineral that has been proven to protect teeth from decay. The City Council had previously passed a motion to remove fluoride from the town’s drinking water, and were reconsidering that motion during their April meeting. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) named community water fluoridation as one of the top 10 public health interventions of the 20th century due to the decrease of cavities since the program began in 1945. According to the CDC, drinking fluoridated water reduces cavities by up to 25% in children and adults, resulting in “less mouth pain, fewer fillings or teeth pulled, and fewer missed days of work and school.”

Dentist Marisa Borchardt, pediatrician Andrew Aston, and dental hygienist Tasha Gibson spoke at the Hotchkiss City Council meeting in April about the importance of community water fluoridation and the oral health benefits to people living in the community. The providers, who work at River Valley but were testifying as concerned community members, worried that the community would see an increase in people with cavities without fluoridated water. After the testimony, the City Council voted to rescind their earlier motion and will continue fluoridating Hotchkiss’ water. Dr. Borchardt noted that the City Council members appreciated hearing from the medical and dental community and noted that the outcome was “one of the proudest moments of my dental career.”
Uncompahgre Medical Center Celebrates 85 years with a Spirit Week

In 1939, Norwood Clinic, now called Uncompahgre Medical Center (UMC), opened their doors. UMC staff celebrated this joyous occasion with goofy costumes, big hats, and wide smiles during their spirit week in early June.

CHCs Participate in Psychological Preparedness Training

On June 25, CCHN collaborated with Dr. Natalie Schwatka from the Colorado School of Public Health’s Center for Health, Work, and Environment to facilitate a training and guided discussion for CHCs on psychological preparedness. Psychological preparedness means having knowledge of probable psychological reactions to threats and extreme stress, and identifying and practicing adaptive coping skills. Psychological preparedness emphasizes the management of reactions to threats, which will help individuals and organizations be better able to prepare for and respond to emergencies.

Staff from seven CHCs attended this training and guided discussion. Dr. Schwatka facilitated the training where participants learned about what it means to be psychologically prepared, and several techniques to help reduce their stress responses during difficult situations. After the training, participants discussed how they could include the skills and concepts they learned into their emergency preparedness programs.

This training was a part of CCHN’s continued efforts to support CHCs in promoting safety in the workplace. CCHN hopes to provide future trainings on the importance of including psychological preparedness and mental health in emergency preparedness programs. If you would like to read more about psychological preparedness, visit the Colorado School of Public Health website. For more information or questions on this training, reach out to Katey Schuster at kschuster@cchn.org.

Governor Polis Signs Bills at Summit Community Care Clinic

On May 29, Governor Jared Polis signed two bills into law at Summit Community Care Clinic. He was joined by House and Senate representatives, staff and a board member from Summit, and others who supported the bills.

One of the bills, on which CCHN took a position of support, was SB24-168, Remote Monitoring Services for Medicaid Members. This bill protects and maximizes Medicaid reimbursement for CHCs by requiring the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing (HCPF) to reimburse for telehealth remote patient monitoring (RPM) services, provide grants for purchasing RPM equipment, and cover glucose monitors for Medicaid members.
Important Conversations in Northwest Colorado

In June, Northwest Colorado Health’s leadership team met with Lily Griego, regional director from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, along with Matthew Kireker, regional director from Senator Michael Bennet's office, at their Community Health Center in Craig. The discussion focused on important topics in Northwest Colorado, such as the mental health crisis and strengthening behavioral health, addressing the maternal health crisis, access to health care and affordable health insurance, health equity and more.

Clinica Family Health Will Merge with Mental Health Partners

Clinica Family Health and Mental Health Partners (MHP), two long-time and nationally-recognized partners in providing high quality, affordable health care, have announced their intention to merge into one organization. They will create an integrated health care model capable of better serving those in need—focusing on populations who have historically experienced the greatest barriers in access to care. The new organization, Clinica Family Health & Wellness, will offer physical, behavioral, and oral health care from locations across Boulder, Broomfield, Gilpin, and Adams counties.

By merging a Community Health Center and a Community Mental Health Center, Clinica Family Health & Wellness will be better positioned to provide the most comprehensive care possible for the populations they serve.

"More than anything else, this merger is about our patients and clients," said Simon Smith, president & CEO of Clinica. "When someone is seeking health and healing, they don’t want to navigate a difficult landscape of referrals, hunt for new providers, and explain their medical history over and over from the beginning. They want seamlessly coordinated care from providers they’ve built lifelong relationships with and better access to specialists when they need them."

Clinica and MHP have built a strong partnership for over three decades. With overlapping missions and a strong correlation in populations served, both organizations are committed to breaking down silos in a fragmented health care system and improving health outcomes in the process. With this merger, Clinica and MHP seek to enhance this shared vision of whole-person care.

“We’re building spaces where your primary care provider can work right alongside your mental health care and oral health care providers,” said Jen Leosz, co-CEO of MHP. "By setting up an environment for strong communication among your team of providers, we can accomplish shared goals for improved health much more effectively. In our history of doing this work together, MHP and Clinica have already seen measurable, positive results reported directly by our patients and clients.”

Tepeyac Reopens Globeville Clinic as Refugee Health Screening Site

Tepeyac Community Health Center officially reopened their Globeville clinic on June 27. Located on Lincoln Street in the heart of the Globeville-Elyria-Swansea neighborhood, Tepeyac will now be able to offer Domestic Medical Exams as part of the Refugee Resettlement Program in the Colorado Refugee Services Program.
After full renovation of the Lincoln Street clinic, Tepeyac can now operate as a dedicated health screening site for refugees, offering essential medical and behavioral health screenings.

"We are incredibly excited about the reopening of our Globeville clinic and the critical role it will play in the refugee resettlement process," said Jessica Weidner, COO of Tepeyac Community Health Center. "This achievement would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our team. This exceptional coordination and partnership with the state refugee office made this reopening a reality."

"Refugees are individuals who have been forced to flee their home country due to persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations. We are here to provide dedicated care to these individuals as they begin rebuilding their lives. We are excited to see this expansion to care for all, with the top five arrival countries of Cuba, Afghanistan, Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Burma," explains Alison Quinn-Beitscher, medical director of Tepeyac.

"While Tepeyac has always welcomed newcomers to Colorado, expanding our services to provide essential care for this designated population further expands our services and reinforces our mission to deliver compassionate, culturally responsive care to all individuals."

**Dr. Joel Tanaka to Receive 2024 Regional Sure Shot Award**

Dr. Joel Tanaka, chief medical officer, Peak Vista Community Health Centers, will receive the Shots Offer Unrivaled Protection (S.O.U.P) Sure Shot Award. [Immunize Colorado’s S.O.U.P!](https://www.immunizecolorado.org/) awards are given to individuals in Colorado who go above and beyond to keep Colorado communities healthy through immunization. The Sure Shot Awardees are nominated by friends or colleagues and are selected based on their leadership, collaboration, and advocacy in the field of immunizations.

Dr. Tanaka is passionate about his family, clinical leadership, health advocacy, health equity, and serving Coloradans to help them overcome barriers to achieving optimal wellness. Dr. Tanaka will be celebrated as an immunization champion and receive his award at the [13th S.O.U.P! event](https://www.immunizecolorado.org/) on Oct. 10, 2024, at the Space Gallery in downtown Denver.

**Integrating Housing and Health Care**

Colorado Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) and the Denver Rescue Mission are working together to further integrate health care and housing.

The 48th Avenue Health Center, which opened inside of the Denver Rescue Mission building in 2022, serves as a satellite location of the Coalition’s Stout Street Health Center. The location eliminates transportation barriers to the downtown CCH campus, destigmatizes seeking care by facilitating easy access, and promotes deep relationships between staff and patients.

This model of embedded, regularly-available health care was first implemented in Denver at scale during the height of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. At that time, the Denver Rescue Mission, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, and the City of Denver Department of Housing Stability, partnered to provide onsite care at the National Western Complex and the Coliseum. Soon after, the organizations came together to conceptualize a more permanent health care solution for those in the shelter environment.
Denver Rescue Mission staff report that because clients have been able to access health care more easily, including receiving prescription deliveries onsite, they have been more successful in submitting and processing applications for housing, as clients are in more regular contact with service providers. In addition, CCH staff find being onsite allows them to improve communications with clients while still being HIPAA-compliant. For example, labs were completed for one onsite client who was not able to be reached via phone. The clinical staff sent a HIPPA-compliant email to the staff onsite at Denver Rescue Mission, who were able to reach this client. As a result, he was seen within one day. With the complex issues faced by clients, these quick interventions due to onsite integrations can be lifesaving.

The 48th Avenue Health Center opened in 2022 with a lobby and three exam rooms, accessible through the Denver Rescue Mission main entrance. Following renovations, the facility now features five exam rooms, a dedicated dental room, an access desk to facilitate the intake of new patients, and a new restroom.

**CCHN Update**

**New Staff – Clara O’Connor**

Clara O’Connor joined CCHN in June as policy analyst, focusing on payment reform. Ms. O’Connor works with CHC staff to implement new and existing payment methodologies to ensure CHCs are reimbursed fairly for the services they provide to Colorado communities. She also supports CCHN's ongoing advocacy efforts. Ms. O’Connor received her Bachelor of Arts in international affairs and anthropology from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She worked within the immigrant rights movement as an organizer and campaign manager, where she began shifting her focus towards health care access for underserved communities. In her free time, Ms. O’Connor enjoys exploring Colorado’s natural beauty, writing music, and clicking through random Wikipedia articles.
About CCHN

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 857,000 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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