



The Colorado
Health Foundation™

CHF Statewide Listening Tour

Northern + Northeast Tour Executive Summary
October 26 – October 28, 2015

Purpose of Tour: The new Foundation President and CEO, Karen McNeil-Miller, is touring Colorado in order to learn about health needs and concerns within communities across the state. The statewide #HealthiestCO Listening Tour is an opportunity for grantees, community residents and local leaders to come together and share their perspectives on health. Karen is interested in speaking with community members about the major assets as well as concerns and barriers to good health that exist within communities across Colorado. Karen believes that health is everyone's business, not just for individuals that work directly in healthcare, and hopes to engage community members across all sectors.

Who participated? The delegation included nine staff members from The Colorado Health Foundation and three staff members from Community Resource Center. The Northern and Northeast Tours reached approximately 190 persons in the region, including tour session attendees as well as site visit hosts and participants.

Where did we go? The Northern and Northeast Region Listening Tours took place on October 26 – 28. The delegation met with representatives from Boulder, Larimer, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Washington, Weld and Yuma counties. The tour consisted of seven sessions hosted in the communities of Wray, Sterling, Fort Morgan, Greeley, Fort Collins and Longmont, Colorado. Additionally, the delegation participated in site visits of Yuma County Hospital District in Yuma, the New Centennial Mental Health Center in Fort Morgan, Salud Family Health Centers Clinic in Fort Lupton, My Health+Connections Community Outreach and Enrollment Center, Sunrise Family Medicine Clinic, Boys and Girls Club and Rodarte Center in Greeley, Sister Mary Alice Murphy Center for Hope in Fort Collins and St. Vrain Valley School District in Longmont. A full itinerary of the tour is available in Appendix A.

What did we do? The Foundation is hoping to start an on-going conversation with communities across Colorado to effectively address the needs of the state. In open discussions, community leaders described the region's character, existing needs, and efforts currently underway to address a variety of health related challenges.

What did we hear? At each tour we heard concerns of community members and various barriers to achieving overall health and wellness. While each community presented its own unique perspectives, we found overarching themes and challenges that are experienced among community members within the Northern and Northeast regions. A number of participants used the following similar terms to describe the character of the region and its inhabitants: strong-willed, independent, resilient and hard-working. The residents of the region are proud of their strong faith communities, agriculture industry and the wide-open spaces that permit less congestion than in the Front Range. Attendees spoke of several common regional concerns: job availability and recruitment of qualified professionals, limited housing options, lack of access to healthcare services, behavioral health services, food insecurity and limited opportunity for outdoor and recreational activities.

Regional Themes

Job Availability and Recruitment of Qualified Professionals: Communities discussed the challenge of recruiting qualified physicians and healthcare professionals into the region. Overall opportunity for employment is limited in the region, and while healthcare professionals are in high demand, spouses of qualified healthcare professionals struggle to find work in the area. This often deters young families from moving into communities within Northeastern Colorado. Several communities expressed the difficulty of drawing young professionals that grew up in the region back into the community after leaving for school or other jobs. Opportunities for student federal loan reimbursement through a commitment to five to seven years in a rural healthcare setting exists for physicians and healthcare professionals in the region. Residents of Logan and Morgan counties expressed the challenge in keeping those individuals in the rural communities that they have served after their loans have been reimbursed.

Housing: Rent is high in the regions compared to the average annual wage. Many residents are interested in renting homes in the region rather than buying. Residents of Yuma County discussed houses being “flipped”, driving up the cost of rent. People have interest in moving to communities in Morgan County, however, drastic housing shortages exist and new homes that have been built exceed most people’s budgets. The floods of 2012 destroyed many low-income homes in Weld County and growing economic pressures are pushing out low-income families. Additionally, much of the workforce commutes into Boulder County because housing prices are so high. As a result, there is an increase in the amount of people seeking services within the county.

Lack of Access: While many residents in the region are aware of the services available in their communities, many will choose not to access them. Attendees described pride, primarily among senior citizens, as a barrier to accessing medical services and government assistance. Most primary care and specialty services in the region accept Medicaid, meaning that the services are available to those that are willing to seek out help. Many seniors suffer quietly because asking for help is often seen as a weakness. Residents feel that there is importance in who offers help or assistance to those in need, meaning that people are more trusting and willing to access services if a recommendation is coming from a friend or family member. There has traditionally been difficulty in breaking down the philosophy of resisting “government handouts” that exists among residents in Northeastern Colorado. Because many people on the eastern plains classify themselves as frontier and independent, prevention efforts often go unnoticed. Additionally, those living in less rural communities such as Fort Collins and Boulder described an existing stigma of accessing federal assistance. Residents of these counties often lack knowledge of where services are located.

Food Insecurity and Nutrition Education: Both Yuma and Washington counties are food deserts – a geographic area in which access to quality nutritious food is very limited. Residents must drive several miles and often leave the county to access a grocery store, and even then prices of produce are likely to be higher than in the Front Range. Residents will often go to convenience stores in proximity to their homes instead of driving the distance to a grocery store. In many counties in Northeastern Colorado, there is a lack of nutrition and cooking education. Free breakfast programs in public schools are highly beneficial to children in the region, however schools often struggle with the high costs of running the program. Several communities discussed

their efforts to decrease food insecurity and increase nutrition education through food banks, after-school programs, gardening and cooking classes.

Behavioral Health: Substance abuse was described as a major concern in the region. Recovery groups in Sterling have been growing but the drug culture is still strong among teens and young adults. Centennial Mental Health is a large asset to the region, serving a total of ten counties in Northeast Colorado. However, with Centennial Mental Health being one of the few mental health providers in the region, there are limited options for therapists. Stigma persists in the region and many people do not want to be seen walking into Centennial to access the care they need. Residents of Fort Collins highlighted the overwhelmingly high suicide rates among children, teens and adult males. There was an expressed need for integrated behavioral healthcare in schools and increased capacity for long-term care. Residents of Boulder County voiced need for more education about prevention and crisis intervention.

Outdoor and Recreational Activities: There was expressed need among attendees for increased opportunity for outdoor activities for children. Residents on the eastern plains felt youth in their communities are in need of safe and healthy recreational activities to help decrease unhealthy behaviors such as substance abuse. Obesity rates are high among residents of Northeast Colorado, indicating a need for more opportunities for families to exercise outside. Oftentimes cost and transportation are barriers to children engaging in recreational sports. School sports tend to be highly competitive and exclude much of the student population. There is a need for affordable and accessible recreational sports and physical activity programs geared towards children.

Assets: During every session, community members discussed having a caring and invested community as their biggest asset. Residents have a passion to create a strong and healthy environment and are taking steps towards improving their counties. Several communities in the region house local community colleges and universities. These institutions contribute and collaborate with various businesses and organizations in the communities. A strong network of services and providers exist in the area, however getting residents to access those services is a major challenge.

Topics and Projects Unique to Specific Counties

Wray (Yuma County): Attendees from Yuma and Washington Counties highlighted their need for increased recruitment of qualified healthcare professionals. Facilities and clinics offer a variety of services, however they do not have the capacity to serve everyone in need. Nursing homes in Yuma County have enough beds, but do not have enough staffed nurses to fill the facility to capacity.

Sterling (Logan County): Attendees from Logan and Sedgwick Counties spoke of their concern over adequate childcare. Sedgwick County is in danger of losing its daycare center and home centers have had to turn kids away because they simply do not have the capacity. Three daycare centers closed within the past year in Logan County. Additionally residents expressed the need for after-school clubs or programs as well as a recreation center for school-aged children.

Fort Morgan (Morgan County): Morgan Community College has a service area of over 1,100 square miles and provides opportunities for high school students to explore health occupations. Residents also described their community as culturally rich with immigrants from Latin America, East Africa, Germany and Russia.

Greeley (Weld County): Weld County covers a large geographic area, with extreme economic differences between the north and the south ends of the county. The county has many strong community organizations and safety net services available. Collaboration has been apparent through efforts such as Weld Project Connect, in which 67 agencies came together in 2015 to serve low income indigent populations.

Fort Collins (Larimer County): Privilege in the community creates a population that struggles in silence. Residents are often unaware of the services available to them and lack knowledge of the many nonprofits that exist in the community. Suicide rates have drastically increased in Larimer County proving the need for extended crisis intervention services as well as chronic care services.

Longmont (Boulder County): Boulder County has strong and relevant data to track health outcomes. Many programs exist in the county to promote healthy eating and nutrition. The natural and built environments provide many opportunities for physical activity. There is often an assumption that everyone is healthy in Boulder County, however, this is not necessarily the case. Residents feel that those living in poverty are oftentimes ignored or dismissed, but they are still there.

Appendices:

Appendix A. Listening Tour Itinerary

Monday, October 26

10:30 – 11:15 AM: Site Visit in Yuma @ Yuma County Hospital District

12:00 – 1:30 PM: Tour Session + Lunch @ Wray Rehabilitation and Activities Center

5:00 – 6:30 PM: Tour Session + Reception @ Northeastern 18 Golf Course - Sterling

Tuesday, October 27

9:00 – 10:00 AM: Tour Session @ Morgan Community College

11:30 AM – 12:15 PM: Site Visit of Salud Family Health Centers Clinic – Fort Lupton

2:00 – 5:00 PM: Site Visit of My Health+Connections Community Outreach and Enrollment Center; driving tour of Sunrise Family Medicine Clinic, Boys & Girls Club, Rodarte Center

5:00 – 6:30 PM: Tour Session + Reception @ Kress Cinema and Lounge - Greeley

Wednesday, October 28

10:00 – 11:00 AM: Tour Session @ Gardens on Spring Creek – Fort Collins

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM: Site Visit at Sister Mary Alice Murphy Center for Hope

4:00 – 5:30 PM: Tour Session + Reception @ 17th Avenue Place Event Center – Longmont

Appendix B. Session Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Organization	Tour Session
Robin	Wiley	Yuma County	Wray
Dean	Wingfield	Yuma County	Wray
Patricia	Brewster-Willeke	Rural Communities Resource Center	Wray
John	Gardner	Yuma District Hospital	Wray
Ginger	Williams	Wray School District RD-2	Wray
Maggie	Freeman	Encore Life Inc.	Wray
Vonie	Weaver	Encore Life Inc.	Wray
Julie	Scruby	USDA Rural Development	Wray
Rhonda	Soehner	Hospice of the Plains	Wray
David	Foy	Washington County	Wray
Terry	Hat	Washington County	Wray
Dallas	Madsen	Wray Rehabilitation and Activity Center	Wray
Robbie	Kraus	Wray Area Foundation	Wray
Matt	Whetzel	Wray Rehabilitation and Activity Center	Wray
Jennie	Sullivan	Wray Community District Hospital	Wray
Bethleen	McCall	Yuma Conservation District	Wray
Gayle	Blecha	Encore Life, Inc	Wray
Silvia	Castillo	Rural Communities Resource Center	Wray
Margo	Ebersole	Rural Communities Resource Center	Wray
Jennifer	Kramer	Wray Community District Hospital	Wray
Karen	Keller	Wray Community District Hospital	Wray
Karen	Ramey-Torres	CSU Northeast Regional Engagement Center	Sterling
Breanna	Tramp	Merino High School	Sterling
Michelle	Pemberton	Northeast Colorado Health Department	Sterling
Spencer	Green	Centennial Mental Health	Sterling
Kathleen	Murray	Centennial Mental Health	Sterling
Brian & Amy	Miller	SCOR	Sterling
Mike	Sullivan	Sedgwick County Economic Development	Sterling
Forrest	Hershberger	South Platte Sentinel	Sterling
Suzanna	Spears	Morgan Community College	Fort Morgan
Merle	Rhoades	East Colorado SBDC	Fort Morgan
Trish	McClain	Northeast Colorado Health Department	Fort Morgan
Spencer	Green	Centennial Mental Health Center	Fort Morgan
Jodi	Walker	Kids at their best	Fort Morgan
Kelly	Rasmussen	MCC Foundation	Fort Morgan
Mary	Gross	Morgan County Family Center	Fort Morgan
Elizabeth	Hickman	Centennial Mental Helath Center	Fort Morgan
Kortnie	Mendoza	Centennial Mental Health Center	Fort Morgan
Cathy	Shull	Progressive 15	Fort Morgan

Kathy	Schlepp	Thompson School District	Fort Collins
Merry	Hummell	Rocky Mountain Youth Clinics	Fort Collins
Jenny	Tauchman	National MS Society CO-WY Chapter	Fort Collins
Ashley	Schwader	Poudre School District	Fort Collins
Peter	Hartman	Colorado State University	Fort Collins
Kathy	Wright	Boys and Girls Clubs of Larimer County	Fort Collins
Chris	Fine	SummitStone Health Partners	Fort Collins
Stacy	Poncelow	Poudre School District	Fort Collins
Stephanie	Ouren	Colorado State University	Fort Collins
Bev	Thurber	Early Childhood Council of Larimer County	Fort Collins
Alan	Curtis	Innosphere	Fort Collins
Kelly	Haworth	UCHealth	Fort Collins
Annie	Brunsell	SummitStone Health Partners	Fort Collins
Jessica	Hinterberg	RMC Health	Fort Collins
Andrea	Walker	Thompson School District	Fort Collins
Andrea	Skubal	Boulder County DHHS	Fort Collins
Jim	Becker	Health District of Northern Larimer County	Fort Collins
Dylan	Radford	Poudre School District	Fort Collins
Kathryn	Vega	Institute for Built Environment - CSU	Fort Collins
Kyle	Dunbar	Colorado State University	Fort Collins
Susan	Krcmarik	The Family Center / La Familia	Fort Collins
Sam	Ernst	Colorado State University	Fort Collins
Sue	Schneider	CSU Extension	Fort Collins
Jen	McLain	alpha center	Fort Collins
Wendie	Robinson	Loveland Youth Gardeners	Fort Collins
Amy	Pezzani	Food Bank for Larimer County	Fort Collins
Cathy	Kipp	Powder School District	Fort Collins
Jane	Hunt	Larimer County Dept of Health and Environment	Fort Collins
Kim	Redd	Successful Transitions	Fort Collins
Sarah	Reynolds	Boulder County	Longmont
Sue	Brittenham	Colorado Health Foundation	Longmont
Kevin	Gilbert	HeartSmartKids	Longmont
Patrick	Kelly	Boulder County Department of Housing and Human Services	Longmont
Robin	Wood-Mason	Boulder County AIDS Project	Longmont
Elaine	Klotz	OUR Center (Outreach United Resource Center, Inc.)	Longmont
Beth	Lonergan	Mental Health Partners	Longmont
Susan	Levy	Boulder Valley Women's Health Center	Longmont
Deborah	Schoeneshoefer	Red Hawk Foundation	Longmont
Rona	Wilensky	PassageWorks Institute	Longmont

Mili	Dawson	Boulder County Housing and Human Services	Longmont
Veronica	Orona	OUR Center	Longmont
Cyrus	Weinberger	Red Hawk Elementary	Longmont
Emily	Miller	Chef Ann Foundation	Longmont
Susan	Wortman	Clinica Family Health	Longmont
Betsy	Holman	DentaQuest	Longmont
Paige	Jennings	St Vrain Valley School District	Longmont
Rebecca	Alderfer		Longmont
Kelly	Pollard	Boulder Valley Womens Health Center	Longmont
Eric	Aakko	Weld County Department of Health & Environment	Greeley
Sarah	Aguilera	Kids Care Clinic	Greeley
Vincenty	Atchity	NCHA	Greeley
Leslie	Beckstrom	Weld County Department of Health & Environment	Greeley
Pam	Bricker	Greeley Downtown Development Authority	Greeley
Lesley	Brooks	NCHA	Greeley
Richard	Budensiek	Banner	Greeley
Holly	Darby	Weld County Area Agency on Aging	Greeley
Deb	Deboutez	City of Greeley	Greeley
Laurie	Exby-Stolley	Centennial Area Health Education Center	Greeley
Melanie	Falvo	United Way of Weld County	Greeley
Kiley	Floren	UCHealth Community Health Improvement	Greeley
Mike	Freeman	NCHA Board	Greeley
Ashlee	Garcia	Kids Care Clinic	Greeley
Kim	Garcia	Centennial Area Health Education Center	Greeley
Libby	Goode-Grasmick	Sunrise Community Health	Greeley
Ellen	Gregg	UNC	Greeley
Judy	Griego	NCHA Board	Greeley
Rachel	Hurshman	School District 6	Greeley
Kim	Jerome	NCHA	Greeley
Lisa	Joyner	NCHA	Greeley
Joanna	Martinson	NCHA	Greeley
Monica	Mika	Centennial Area Health Education Center	Greeley
Gwyneth	Milbrath	Centennial Area Health Education Center	Greeley
Tyler	Payne	NCHA	Greeley
Deirdre	Pearson	NCHA	Greeley
Deirdre	Pilch	School District 6	Greeley
Larry	Pottorff	North Range Behavioral Health	Greeley
Dave	Rastatter	Colorado Access	Greeley
Randy	Ratliff	SummitStone	Greeley
Carlee	Rosen	NCHA	Greeley

Nancy	Schumacher	Centennial Area Health Education Center	Greeley
Karen	Scopel	City of Greeley	Greeley
Lyle	SmithGraybeal	United Way of Weld County	Greeley
Jeannine	Truswell	United Way	Greeley
Mark	Wallace	NCHA	Greeley
Jeremy	West	School District 6	Greeley
Vicki	Wilson	UNC	Greeley