



The Colorado  
Health Foundation™

## **CHF Statewide Listening Tour**

Southwest and San Luis Valley Tour Executive Summary  
December 7 – December 9, 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 this tour looks to engage community members across all sectors. The Foundation hopes to inspire communities to create and maintain a spirit of collaboration in order to come up with specific projects and focused solutions that will help to better the health of those living within their counties.

**Who participated?** The delegation included thirteen staff members from The Colorado Health Foundation and two staff members from Community Resource Center. The Southwest and San Luis Valley tour reached approximately 150 persons in the region, including tour session attendees as well as site visit hosts and participants.

**Where did we go?** The Southwest and San Luis Valley Region Listening Tour took place on December 7 – 9. The delegation met with representatives from Montezuma, Dolores, La Plata, Archuleta, Conejos, Alamosa and Rio Grande counties. The tour consisted of five sessions hosted in the communities of Cortez, Durango, Pagosa Springs, Alamosa and Del Norte, Colorado. Additionally, the delegation participated in site visits of The Pinon Project Family Resource Center in Cortez, Mancos School to Farm Project in Cortez, Southern Ute Community Action Programs (SUCAP) in Ignacio, South Conejos School District in Antonito, San Luis Valley Behavioral Health in Alamosa and the Monte Vista Sports Complex in Monte Vista. A full itinerary of the tour is available in Appendix A.

**What did we do?** The Foundation hopes to begin 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 needs.

**What did we hear?** At each tour session 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 Southwest and San Luis Valley Regions. Participants used the similar terms to describe the character of the region and its inhabitants: supportive, collaborative and diverse. The residents of the region highlighted their access to many outdoor activities and an appreciation of the region's natural beauty. The top three issue areas that were identified by session attendees were the lack of adequate transportation services, a growing senior population and the need for prevention efforts directed at substance abuse and behavioral health.

## **Regional Themes**

**Transportation:** Both the Southwest and San Luis Valley regions expand over a vast geographic area, requiring a formal and consistent public transportation system in order to connect individuals to the services they need. The lack of access to transportation is often a limiting factor when families or seniors need to seek treatment from a healthcare professional. Those living in outlying communities and without reliable transportation struggle to connect with others in the county and oftentimes deal with isolation. This is especially true in the San Luis Valley, in which residents must travel over 150 miles to access the care they need. This major barrier leads residents to access less preventative care services and more emergency care services, with many of the region's residents not accessing any services at all. The vast geographic area is a challenge for providers as well, making it difficult for them to sustainably and affordably extend services and reach all populations.

**Senior Services:** There is a growing senior population in many of the communities within the Southwest and San Luis Valley regions. Skilled nursing homes and assisted living facilities have reached capacity, forcing seniors to leave their communities for adequate care. Residents in Durango discussed the large gaps that exist in senior care and the need to further develop resources so the elderly can age in place. There was also an expressed need for health and technology literacy among seniors through providing education to help navigate the online healthcare system.

**Substance Abuse and Behavioral Health:** Attendees discussed substance abuse as an intergenerational challenge in their communities. Children are learning destructive behaviors from adults, creating a growing drug culture in the region. Community members in Durango discussed the high volume of emergency room visits that result from alcohol or substance abuse. There is a need for increased behavioral health and preventative services in schools in order to address substance abuse and misuse. Additionally, residents in Alamosa expressed a strong need for the integration of mental health services into primary care. Doing so will help to decrease the persisting stigma of seeking treatment from a mental health provider, particularly among the senior population. There is a high turnover in behavioral health providers in the region, creating a challenge of recruiting and retaining adequate and qualified mental health professionals.

**Assets:** The Southwest and San Luis Valley provide access to a broad spectrum of outdoor recreation activities. Community members do not have to go far to find hiking and biking trails or a place to enjoy nature's beauty. Organizations work well together to provide services across the large region. Clinical and community level services collaborate in order to prevent duplication of services. Several communities discussed a strong spirit of volunteerism and civic engagement, creating a culture of support and involvement. People in the region described community members as having a "can do" mentality in which residents come together to rally around an issue.

## **Topics and Projects Unique to Specific Counties**

**Cortez (Montezuma County):** Attendees discussed Axis Health Care as a major asset in providing integrated medical and mental healthcare. There was an expressed need for increased dental care providers in the county. Many dentists do not take Medicaid, making it difficult for the general population to reach adequate dental services.

**Durango (La Plata County):** Community members in Durango described “a tale of two cities,” referring to the growing disparity within the town’s population. There is a large minority population in the area, creating a need for increased cultural competency among healthcare providers. Attendees were proud of the fact that Durango has over 300 registered nonprofits that meet the needs of the community that government and private sectors do not. The community was described as having a vibrant creative community, with access to a variety of arts and drama festivals.

**Pagosa Springs (Archuleta County):** Pagosa Springs is rich with natural beauty, hot springs and access to outdoor activities. Schools provide electives such as mountain biking and backpacking, utilizing the county’s natural resources. However, attendees highlighted the need for increased youth engagement. The town’s youth center recently closed, leaving middle school and high school aged kids with nowhere to engage in healthy activities outside of school.

**Alamosa (Alamosa County):** Residents in Alamosa discussed the necessity of collaboration in their county and the San Luis Valley as a whole. Because the region covers such an expansive geographic region, organizations and healthcare providers must work together in order to create solutions to the region’s concerns. Attendees highlighted San Luis Valley Behavioral Health and La Puente Home as being major assets in their community in terms of providing mental health and safety net services.

**Del Norte (Rio Grande County):** Attendees in Del Norte stated that the Hospital in Rio Grande serves as a major asset to the county, acting as a community hub and unifying services. Co-located behavioral health services at Valley Wide Health Systems serve as an asset to the community, giving patients the opportunity for on the spot treatment.

## **Appendices:**

### **Appendix A. Listening Tour Itinerary**

#### **Monday, Dec. 7**

10:30 – 11:00 AM: Site Visit @ Pinon Project Family Resource Center

**11:30 – 1:00 PM: Cortez Tour Session @ Cortez Integrated Care (Axis Health)**

4:00 – 4:30 PM: Site Visit @ Mancos School to Farm Project

**5:30 – 6:45 PM: Durango Tour Session @ The Strater Hotel**

#### **Tuesday, Dec. 8**

10:45 – 11:15 AM: Site Visit @ Southern Ute Community Action Programs

**1:30 – 2:30 PM: Pagosa Springs Tour Session @ Ross Aragon Community Center**

4:45 – 5:15: Site Visit @ Conejos Clean Water Action Project / School District

#### **Wednesday, Dec. 9**

9:00 – 9:30 AM: Site Visit @ San Luis Valley Behavioral Health Group

**10:00 – 11:00 AM: Alamosa Tour Session @ Boys and Girls Club of the San Luis Valley**

1:00 – 1:30 PM: Site Visit @ Monte Vista Sports Complex

**2:00 – 3:00 PM: Del Norte Tour Session @ Rio Grande County Annex**

## Appendix B. Session Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Organization	Tour Session
Virginia	Howey	Family Resource Center Association	Cortez
David	Hart	The Pinon Project	Cortez
Gretchen	Groenke	Mancos Foodshare	Cortez
Tracey	Sanchez	Ute Mountain Ute Tribe	Cortez
Angela	Horvath	School Community Youth Collaborative	Cortez
Chuck	McAfee	School Community Youth Collaborative	Cortez
Andrew	Grimm	Axis Health System	Cortez
Duane	Dale	USDA	Cortez
Monica	Palmquist	Southwest TV	Cortez
Casie	LaMunyon	Axis Health System	Cortez
Pam	Wise-Romero	Axis Health System	Cortez
Tobie	Baker	The Journal	Cortez
Bobbi	Lock	Montezuma County Public Health Department	Cortez
Marianne	Mate		Cortez
Laurel	Knutson	The Bridge Emergency Shelter	Cortez
Jessica	Randell	The Pinon Project	Cortez
Pat	Senecal	Celebrating Healthy Communities	Durango
Karen	Midkiff	Centura Health	Durango
Joy	Hess	Centura Health	Durango
Francilia	Ehrig	San Juan Basin Health Department	Durango
Lesley	Marie	San Juan Basin Health Department	Durango
Dr. Richard	Grossman	San Juan Basin Health Department	Durango
Lynn	Westberg	Community Health Action Coalition	Durango
Toni	Abbey	Blueprints of Hope	Durango
Lisa	Schwantes		Durango
Roseann	McDermott	La Plata Family Centers Coalition	Durango
Sloan	Skinner	San Juan Basin Health Department	Durango
Nadine	Ryser		Durango
Wedolyn	Warner		Durango
Kathleen	McInnis	Southwestern Colorado AHEC	Durango
Vaughn	Morris	Boys & Girls Club of La Plata County	Durango
Claire	Ninde	San Juan Basin Health Dept.	Durango
Sandhya	Tillotson	The Garden Project of Southwest Colorado	Durango
Pattie	Adler	Community Health Action Coalition	Durango
Mary	Young	Southern Ute Indian Tribe	Durango
Liane	Jollon	San Juan Basin Health Dept.	Durango
Missy	Rodey	DeNovo Health Advocacy	Durango
Kari	Plante	San Juan Basin Health	Durango
Lisa	Barrett	San Juan Basin Health	Durango
Lauren	Patterson	La Plata Family Centers Coalition	Durango
Ellen	Stein	Axis Health System	Durango
Cari	Powell	La Plata Family Centers Coalition	Durango
Jim	Dyer	Healthy Community Food Systems	Durango
Karen	Rider	SWC AHEC	Durango
Anita	Carpenter	Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwest Colorado	Durango
Lindsay	Box	Boys & Girls Club of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe	Durango

Martha	Mason	Southwest Center for Independence	Durango
Ken	Marchand	Southwest Conservation Corps	Pagosa Springs
Becky	Hermon		Pagosa Springs
Joseph	Porter		Pagosa Springs
Justin	Cowan	Archuleta School District	Pagosa Springs
Lisa	Keuning	Archuleta School District	Pagosa Springs
Cheryl	Bowdrige	Pagosa Violence Prevention	Pagosa Springs
Don	Volger	Pagosa Springs	Pagosa Springs
David	Hamilton	Archuleta School District	Pagosa Springs
Maryjo	Coulehan	Pagosa Verde	Pagosa Springs
Lisa	Scott		Pagosa Springs
John	Parco		Pagosa Springs
Bill	Hudson	Pagosa Daily Post	Pagosa Springs
Chris	Hinger	Archuleta School District	Pagosa Springs
Clint	Alley	Pagosa Springs Area Chamber of Commerce	Pagosa Springs
Mark	Floyd	RE/MAX Eagle's Nest	Pagosa Springs
Bill	Hudgins	United Way Southwest Colorado	Pagosa Springs
Mark	Douglass	RVing Accessibility dba PEAK ACCESS	Pagosa Springs
Richard	Trumble	AccessAbility Alliance	Pagosa Springs
Renee	Burch	Archuleta County Human Services	Pagosa Springs
Roxanne	DeMarco	First Southwest Bank	Pagosa Springs
Cindy	Schultz	San Juan Basin Health Department	Pagosa Springs
Linda	Reed	Archuleta School District 50 Jt.	Pagosa Springs
Ashley	Souza	Archuleta County Victims Assistance	Pagosa Springs
Laura	Rand	Archuleta School District 50 JT	Pagosa Springs
Erik	Foss	Axis Health System	Pagosa Springs
Greg	Schulte	Town of Pagosa Springs	Pagosa Springs
Brad	Cochennet	Pagosa Springs Medical Center	Pagosa Springs
Darren	Lewis	Town of Pagosa Springs	Pagosa Springs
Traci	Bishop	Ross Aragon Community Center	Pagosa Springs
Sally	High	Geothermal Greenhouse Partnership	Pagosa Springs
Kristi	Smith	CRC	Pagosa Springs
Logan	Chavez	Adams State University	Alamosa
Rosalie	Martinez	Rio Vega Ranch	Alamosa
Ruth	Heide	Alamosa News	Alamosa
Brenda	Felmlie	Alamosa	Alamosa
Judy	Mcneilsmith	Co Choice	Alamosa
Clarissa	Woodworth	SLV Behavioral Health Group	Alamosa
Tracy	Stevens	tracystevens@gmail.com	Alamosa
Jeff	Owsley	SLV SBDC	Alamosa
Julie	Geiser		Alamosa
Karla	Schrifer	Del Norte	Alamosa
Della	Cox-Vieira	Alamosa County Public Health Department	Alamosa
Ashlee	Welsh	Center Consolidated Schools	Alamosa
Honey	Quintana	Sierra Grande School	Alamosa
Suzanne	DeVore	Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc.	Alamosa
Theresa	Rudder		Alamosa
Mayoanne	Martinez	Sanford Public School	Alamosa

Julie	Geiser		Alamosa
Debi	Hoyier	Early Childhood Council of San Luis Valley	Alamosa
Donna	Andrews	Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc.	Alamosa
Adam	Roberts	Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc.	Alamosa
Jeanne "Gigi"	Darricades	Valley-Wide Health Systems, Inc.	Alamosa
Christy	Culp	Department of Local Affairs	Alamosa
Lurette	Frost	Integrated Nutrition Education Program	Alamosa
Freddie	Jaquez	SLV Area Health Education Center	Alamosa
Darren	Edgar	Sierra Grande School District R30	Alamosa
Liza	Marron	San Luis Valley Local Foods Coalition	Alamosa
Christine	Hettinger-Hunt	San Luis Valley Health	Alamosa
Chris	Lopez	Boys and Girls Clubs San Luis Valley	Alamosa
Beverly	Strnad	Alamosa County Public Health Department	Alamosa
Darla	Malouff	Boys & Girls Clubs of the San Luis Valley	Alamosa
Reginaldo	Garcia	UCD - Rocky Mountain Prevention Research Center & CCTSI	Alamosa
Nancy	Schrader		Del Norte
Pam	Bricker	Rio Grande County	Del Norte
Kimberly	Bryant	SLV Public Health Partnership	Del Norte
Adrienne	Atencio	High Valley Community Center	Del Norte
Connie	edgar	Conejos County Public Health and Nursing Services	Del Norte
Debi	Tringham	Valley wide Health Systems	Del Norte
Bonnie	Asplin	Valley Citizen's Foundation for Healthcare, Rio Grande Hospital	Del Norte
Marty	Asplin	Upper Rio Grande Economic Development	Del Norte
Emily	Brown	Rio Grande County Public Health Agency	Del Norte
Nancy	Butler	Personal Interest	Del Norte
Della	Brown	Creede & Mineral County Chamber of Commerce	Del Norte
Ginger	Stringer	Saguache County	Del Norte
Anthony	Guerrero	Valley Publishing	Del Norte
Arlene	Harms	Rio Grande Hospital	Del Norte
DeeAnn	Sierra	Rio Grande Hospital & Clinics	Del Norte
Jaki	Polich	USDA Rural Development	Del Norte
Jim	Poston	Monte Vista Kids Connection/Chamber of Commerce	Del Norte