



The Colorado
Health Foundation™

CHF Statewide Listening Tour

Western Slope Executive Summary

September 30 – October 1, 2015

Purpose of Tour: 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. Over the course of eleven regional tours, Karen will speak 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 seven staff members from The Colorado Health Foundation and three staff members from Community Resource Center. The Western Slope Tour reached approximately 135 people across region, including tour session attendees as well as site visit hosts and participants.

Where did we go? The Western Slope Listening Tour took place on September 30 – October 1. The delegation visited Delta, Garfield, Mesa, Montrose and Pitkin counties. The tour consisted of five sessions hosted in the communities of Rifle, Aspen, Delta, Montrose and Grand Junction, Colorado. Additionally, the delegation participated in three site visits at the New Castle Pedestrian Bridge, the River Valley Health Center in Olathe and Mind Springs Health in Grand Junction. A full itinerary is available in Appendix A.

What did we do? The Foundation hopes 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 existing assets and barriers to achieving healthy communities, as well as efforts currently underway to address a variety of health related issues.

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 across the Western Slope region. A number of participants used the same terms to describe the character of the region and its inhabitants: collaborative, supportive, diverse, and resilient, with a love and appreciation of the region's beauty. Attendees spoke of several common regional concerns: lack of access to healthcare services, high costs of health insurance, underserved populations, affordable childcare services, behavioral health, aging populations and job availability.

Regional Themes

Lack of Access: Counties expressed a lack of access to quality care and services within the region. Many community members discussed the need for affordable and integrated care services. Residents of Delta and Garfield counties often must travel outside of their communities to receive the care that they need. There was an expressed lack of primary care physicians in several communities. Several voiced difficulties in attracting physicians to live and work in their communities. Others noted the gap between the number of physicians who accept Medicaid and the expressed need. Primary care physicians are paid much higher wages on the Front Range, making it difficult for rural health centers to recruit qualified physicians and behavioral healthcare workers. Many community members do not know where to turn to access the care they need. Residents expressed a desire for one central location where residents can seek primary care, dental and behavioral health services, calling for further efforts towards integrating care.

High Costs of Insurance: Residents expressed concern over the high costs of healthcare premiums. There has been an increase in the amount of residents that are insured due to the Affordable Care Act. However, because many health insurance plans have extremely high deductibles, a high number of insured individuals are not accessing services.

Underserved Populations: Attendees in every county highlighted the needs of undocumented residents. There is a large population of first generation immigrants that are often living in the shadows. The Hispanic/Latino population is rapidly growing, constituting a growing percentage of children and young families within Western Slope counties. These underserved groups often lack a safety net of family members and may not have the support that other populations have. Due to language barriers, access to culturally appropriate education of preventative and primary care services is often limited. Many undocumented residents rely on emergency care services, driving up healthcare costs. Residents of Pitkin County discussed workforce that must commute in from surrounding counties for seasonal jobs, due to high living costs in Aspen and outlying communities. The labor force in Pitkin County largely consists of low-income and underserved populations who do not receive the benefits of being a resident of Pitkin County.

High Cost of Childcare Services: Access to affordable childcare services was frequently cited as a major barrier to healthy families. Often residents in rural communities hold two or three jobs to support their families, creating a need for childcare services with extended hours. Families often rely on older children taking care of younger siblings. Children in these positions take on many adult responsibilities and are often not given the opportunity to participate in healthy recreational activities outside of school.

Behavioral Health: Many voiced the need for increased access to comprehensive, community-based mental health services. Prevention efforts are needed in order to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health and educate residents on resources and services available. Suicide rates are high in rural communities and prevalent among children and teens. While there have been successful programs developed to address mental health needs in schools, further action

is needed in the community at large. Substance use and abuse at all ages is also a factor in many communities.

Job Availability: Many attendees discussed the challenge of creating a stronger, more diverse economy due to the lack of job opportunities within the region. Many young adults leave the region for higher education and do not necessarily return to their home towns because there are few opportunities and lower pay within small rural communities. Community members expressed the desire to attract young professionals back into the area and create opportunities for growth.

Aging Population: A need for more comprehensive services for aging adults was discussed. Many older residents are on Medicare yet do not have access to the care they need. Healthy older adults that are uninsured often rely on emergency health services. In addition, the large aging population in the region adds to a divided and often contentious political landscape. The older population brings traditional and conservative viewpoints to most counties, creating barriers to change when a more progressive approach is needed.

Assets: During each session, community members cited a collaborative and supportive community as their biggest asset. Residents of smaller communities felt community members deeply care for each other and have a passion to create a strong and healthy environment. Residents in Delta County specifically stated that living in the area is not about the money, it is about the quality of life. Communities within the region have access to unique terrain and beautiful landscapes. These positive attributes often outweigh the geographical challenges that Western Slope communities face.

Topics and Projects Unique to Specific Counties

Rifle (Garfield County): Access to quality oral health services was identified as a high need issue. The Smiles Project focuses on providing onsite oral care in schools to low income students, which is seen as a viable solution for a lack of access for low income patients. This is the only clinic of its kind in the county that accepts Medicaid.

Aspen (Pitkin County): Half of the labor force lives in Pitkin County, one fourth in Eagle County and one fourth in Garfield County. Because cost of living is so high in Pitkin County, many workers commute more than an hour each way from surrounding areas. Labor is often seasonal, creating a large transient population within the county.

Delta (Delta County): Internet access is a major challenge in Delta. There is an expressed need for broadband internet in order to create jobs in the community. High speed internet is also needed to support up-to-date healthcare technology and access to medical records. Lack of reliable internet is a major barrier to progress within the community and limits the ability to attract major businesses into the county.

Montrose (Montrose County): There is room to grow in educating the community about services available, in addition to the lack of access to appropriate services among low income and Hispanic

or Latino populations. LiveWell Montrose/Olathe, has had a growing impact in the community through nutrition education, physical activity promotion and cooking classes.

Grand Junction (Mesa County): Mesa County was previously characterized by having a high level of community collaboration and flexibility. With new federal and state restrictions, communities are struggling to find ways to be unique yet efficient in solving rising health concerns.

Appendices:

Appendix A. Tour Itinerary

Wednesday, September 30

1:30 – 2:30 PM: Tour Session @ Mountain Family Health Center – Rifle Clinic

3:00 – 3:20 PM: Tour of New Castle Pedestrian Bridge

3:20 – 5:00 PM: Driving Tour of the Roaring Fork Valley

- **Guide:** Yvonne Long, Director of Garfield County Public Health
- **Guide:** Ross Brooks, Chief Executive Officer of Mountain Family Health Centers

5:00 – 6:30 PM: Tour Session + Reception @ Aspen Jewish Community Center

Thursday, October 1

10:00 – 11:00 AM: Tour Session @ Delta Schools KidzClinic

11:20 – 11:45 AM: Site Visit/Walking Tour @ River Valley Health Center

12:00 – 1:00 PM: Lunch with The Colorado Trust Health Convening Group

1:45 – 2:45 PM: Tour Session @ Bridges Golf & Country Club in Montrose

4:00 – 4:45 PM: Tour of Mind Springs Health

5:00 – 6:15 PM: Tour Session + Reception @ Western Colorado Botanical Gardens

Appendix B. Session Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Company	Tour Stop
Ross	Brooks	Mountain Family Health Centers	Rifle
Ben L.	Bynum, M.D.	Vital Healthcare Capital (V-Cap)	Rifle
Danyelle	Carlson	Mountain Family Health Centers	Rifle
Barbra	Corcoran	CASA of the Ninth	Rifle
Art	Fernandez	Mountain Family Health Centers	Rifle
Jon	Fox-Rubin	Valley Settlement Project	Rifle
Annette	Franta	Mountain Family Health Centers	Rifle
Elaine	Grossman	Valley Settlement Project	Rifle
Jess	Hankins	Garfield County Public Health	Rifle
Carolyn	Hardin	Crystal Springs Solutions	Rifle
Sue	Horn	Family Visitor Programs	Rifle
Tom	Jankovsky	Garfield County	Rifle
Yvonne	Long	Garfield County Public Health	Rifle
Andrea	Maddalone	Rifle Area Chamber of Commerce	Rifle
Stuart	McArthur	Town of Parachute	Rifle
Ron	Milhorn	Colorado West Broadcasting KMTS	Rifle
Veronica	Morales	Mountain Family Health Centers	Rifle
Lanea	Orgill	Mountain Family Health Center	Rifle
Scott	Owens	Mountain Family Health Center	Rifle
Suzie	Reel	National MS Society	Rifle
Gloria	Richardson	CU Denver	Rifle
George	Rossmann	Congressman Scott Tipton	Rifle
Elizabeth	Shepherd	Partners of Delta, Montrose & Ouray Counties	Rifle
Jolene	Singer	Mountain Family Health Centers	Rifle
Jackie	Skramstad	Mind Springs Health	Rifle
Rob	Stein	Roaring Fork School District	Rifle
Annie	Whetzel	Early Learning Ventures	Rifle
Dana	Wood	Garfield County Public Health	Rifle
Jill	Ziemann	Colorado Mountain College	Rifle
Debbie	Braun	Aspen Chamber Resort Association	Aspen

Steve	Child	Pitkin County	Aspen
Candace	Cross	Aspen Community Foundation	Aspen
Matthew	Hamilton	Aspen Skiing Company	Aspen
Mitzi	Ledingham	Pitkin County Health and Human Services	Aspen
Susanne	Morrison	Aspen Community Foundation	Aspen
Kristin	Nelson	Stepping Stones of the Roaring Fork Valley	Aspen
Tony	Passariello	Mind Springs Health	Aspen
Mike	Pritchard	Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association	Aspen
Lisa	Robbiano	Roaring Fork School Health Centers	Aspen
Jordana	Sabella	Pitkin County Public Health Agency	Aspen
Alicia	Schuller	Aspen Valley Hospital Foundation	Aspen
Liz	Stark	Community Health Services, Inc.	Aspen
Eric	Zeringue	Aspen Valley Hospital	Aspen
Rachel	Anthony	A kidZ Clinic	Delta
Kurt	Clay	Assistant Superintendent	Delta
Mariah	Emond	A kidZ Clinic	Delta
Angela	Fedler	Delta Family Center	Delta
Caryn	Gibson	Delta County Schools	Delta
Brenda	Holland	Families Plus	Delta
Thoms	Huerkamp	ProSpace Interiors, Inc.	Delta
Renee	Joyce	The Center for Mental Health/ A kidZ Clinic	Delta
Bonnie Horn	Koehler	Delta County Health Department	Delta
Nichole	Kurtz	A kidZ Clinic	Delta
Alice Marie	Slaven-Emond	Delta Health and Wellness Center	Delta
Toby	Stephenson	Town of Crawford	Delta
Pat	Sunderland	Delta County Independent	Delta
Pam	Vigil-Wong	A kidZ Clinic	Delta
Beverly	Wilmore	Flight of the Eagle Project	Delta
Tammy	Cuneo-Prado	Live Well Montrose, Olathe	Montrose
Patricia	Edstrom	Northside Child Health Center	Montrose
Robyn	Funk	WRETAC	Montrose
Melanie	Hall	Community Dental Clinic	Montrose

Nancy	Hoganson	HopeWest	Montrose
Kaye	Hotsenpiller	Hilltop	Montrose
Ellen	Pedersen	Gunnison County Multicultural Resource Services	Montrose
Kristin	Pulatie	Montrose County HHS	Montrose
Joni	Reynolds	Gunnison County HHS	Montrose
Lori	Sharp	Montrose Recreation Foundation	Montrose
Jennifer	Suchon	Northside child Health Center	Montrose
Justin	Aubert	Quality Health Network	Grand Junction
Bernie	Buescher	The Keystone Policy Center	Grand Junction
Vanessa	Carter	Mesa County Valley School District 51	Grand Junction
Kristy	Emerson	Mesa County Health Department	Grand Junction
Lisa	Fenton Free	Rocky Mountain Health Plans Foundation	Grand Junction
Janet	Hollingsworth	Hilltop Community Resources	Grand Junction
Sharon	Jacksi	STRiVE	Grand Junction
Kimberly	Langston	Ground Floor Media	Grand Junction
Joan	Levy	STRiVE	Grand Junction
Nicolle	McCown	Club 20	Grand Junction
Maranee	Parry	Hilltop Community Resources	Grand Junction
Sharon	Raggio	Mind Springs Health	Grand Junction
Kristy	Reuss	Colorado Mesa University	Grand Junction
Angelina	Salazar	Family Health West	Grand Junction
Kristy	Schmidt	Marillac Clinic, Inc.	Grand Junction
Alex	Schmidt	St. Mary's Family Medicine Residency	Grand Junction
Anita	Sheetz	Mesa County Health Department	Grand Junction
Michaelle	Smith	Hilltop Community Resources	Grand Junction
Doug	Sorter	STRiVE	Grand Junction
Mike	Stahl	Hilltop	Grand Junction
Dick	Thompson	Quality Health Network	Grand Junction
Juanita	Trujillo	MCHD	Grand Junction
Anne	Wenzel	Western Colorado Community Foundation	Grand Junction
Yeulin	Willett	State of Colorado	Grand Junction
Kelly	Erb	Colorado Rural Health Center	Multiple