Championing the Preceptor Bill

By: Monica Mika

This year Centennial Area Health Education Center (CAHEC) will continue to work tirelessly with Representative Perry Buck, Colorado AHEC Program, Colorado Academy of Family Physicians and the Colorado Rural Health Center on the development of a bill to support our preceptors. The bill’s intent is to use tax credits to encourage and incentivize rural preceptors to continue to train students to practice in rural and frontier counties of Colorado. In the short term, the bill hopes to:

- Increase the number of clinical rotations in rural Colorado.
- Encourage students to live and practice in rural areas.
- Maintain a strong workforce in rural areas now and into the future.

When implemented over the long term the bill will:

- Impact the rural healthcare workforce pipeline by supplying more rural primary care providers to Colorado through an increase in

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sustainable precepting opportunities. The operational purpose of the project, with the intent on accomplishing the long-term goal, is to develop collaborative partnerships among inter-disciplinary primary care educators in Colorado and to strengthen the healthcare workforce serving in the rural and frontier areas of our state.

- Bring all the universities in Colorado together to work for solutions in the healthcare workforce serving in the rural areas of Colorado.

The mission of the Colorado AHEC Program is to improve the quality and accessibility of education for healthcare professionals in Colorado in order to enhance the delivery of health care services throughout the state, with special emphasis on frontier, rural, urban communities and underrepresented groups, and this bill will aid in this effort. To date, the demand for preceptors in the state is not currently being met, and future projections show an even bigger deficit.

**Interesting Factors Influencing Support of Preceptors (Colorado Rural Health Center, 2014)**

**Geographic Need:**

- Seventy-three (73) percent of the state is classified as rural or frontier.
- Amongst Colorado’s 64 counties, 17 are urban, 24 rural, and 23 frontier. Closely correlated, 77 percent of Colorado’s landmass is rural, equating to nearly 80,000 square miles.
- The average rural county spans nearly 1,700 square miles. Las Animas is the largest county covering 4,773 miles, which is almost four times the size of Rhode Island.
- The total population of Colorado is 5.35 million. 13 percent of the population lives in a rural county, totaling 697,748 people. This does not, however, include residents of urban counties living in a remote area.
- 13 counties in Colorado do not have a hospital and two (2) counties are without a hospital, Rural Health Clinic (RHC) or Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC). The state has 29 Critical Access Hospitals (CAHs) and 51 RHCs, although the RHC number frequently changes.
Primary Care Need:

- The median age range in rural communities is 45-64, contrasting with urban communities which are heavily within the 18-44 demographic. The only growing demographic in most rural communities are those over 65.

- Like national trends, the income gap between rural and urban residents is significant in Colorado. The median household income for rural residents is 26.5 percent less than urban Coloradans ($45,307 compared to $61,642). Twenty-four and a half (24.5) percent of rural Colorado children live in poverty in comparison to 15.8 percent of urban children.

- Six (6) counties are without any type of oral health provider, one (1) county does not have a licensed physician, and one (1) county does not have any primary care providers.

- On average, it takes over one (1) year, sometimes up to three (3) years, to recruit a physician, and more than six (6) months to recruit an advanced practice nurse or physician assistant.

- Less than four (4) out of ten (10) rural Colorado physicians will practice in the same location over five (5) years.

- The average urban patient to physician ratio is 1:1,300 while the rural ratio is 1:1,437. The urban ratio for all other primary care providers is 1:1,560 compared to the rural of 1:1,775.

- Rural Colorado is at a greater disadvantage as there is a higher aging population, poorer social determinants of health, higher chronic disease prevalence, and less access to healthcare because of geography and fewer providers in the region.

Other Programs at CAHEC

CAHEC is developing a strategic program plan for this year which will focus on developing programs to support ancillary health related careers. Programs for SHARE (Teen Literacy) and Saturday Sessions are topping our list of expanded educational opportunities. Our last Saturday Session was held on January 16, 2016, and investigated Mortuary Sciences and what it takes to start this career path. In February, we will host a Saturday Session on Occupational Health Careers. As we continue on this strategic journey, we hope to expand our pipeline opportunities for all levels and types of health careers.
SLV N.E.E.D.
(Naloxone – Education – Empowerment – Distribution)

On September 17, 2015, the San Luis Valley Area Health Education Center was awarded a $100,000 HRSA (Health Resources and Services Agency) ROOR (Rural Opioid Overdose Reversal) grant. Getting to the point of submitting for such a grant came as a result of the enormous work of numerous entities in this valley.

The SLVAHEC has mobilized numerous organizations and individuals in the San Luis Valley in addressing chronic pain management and prescription drug addiction and abuse since November, 2012. The SLVAHEC has worked with healthcare providers and community stakeholders for three years. Many positive developments have resulted from the numerous meetings and workshops in pursuit of healthier communities. For instance, the San Luis Valley healthcare providers from five organizations (SLV Health, Rio Grande Hospital, Conejos County Hospital, Valley Wide Health Systems and SLV Behavioral Health Group) have developed a universal Pain Management Agreement (Consent for Chronic Medication and Pain Management) and Updated Prescription Guidelines. Utilization of these two documents have already begun to develop intended results of better pain medicine management and less recreational doctor shopping for non-intended use. But much work still lay ahead.

The SLVAHEC worked with ION Business Strategies of Denver, Colorado, in writing the HRSA grant. Only fifteen grants were awarded nationally, and the SLVAHEC was one of the fifteen! The intent of SLV N.E.E.D. (SLV Naloxone – Education – Empowerment – Distribution) is to address and reduce the high rates of opioid overdose deaths in the San Luis Valley. The project will purchase naloxone (an opioid antagonist) and train healthcare providers, first responders and the community on the correct administration of this drug. Naloxone has a proven track record of saving numerous lives of individuals who overdosed on opioids. SLV N.E.E.D. will utilize Narcan Nasal as it is user friendly and the least complicated form of administration.

SLV N.E.E.D. has received great support from the local healthcare community, first responders, and human services agencies.

Mr. Shane Benns, CAC II, has been hired as a Health Educator to coordinate this project under the supervision of SLVAHEC Nurse Coordinator, Charlotte Ledonne. Mr. Benns has been busy providing training workshops on the administration of naloxone and recruiting various entities into the project. Numerous law enforcement agencies, some pharmacies, and hospitals are currently participating in the project via signed Memorandums of Understanding with more anticipated in the very near future. It is anticipated that project SLV N.E.E.D. will make a significant impact on the number of San Luis Valley opioid drug overdose deaths.
David Gurule Addresses “Grow Your Own” Students

The San Luis Valley Area Health Education Center held its second “Grow Your Own” Student Health Careers Guild Pre-Collegiate Planning Session on November 16, 2015. As is the practice for this program, alumni of various SLVAHEC sponsored/co-sponsored programs are asked to come back to speak to our students. Positive role models are extremely valuable in imparting to young minds their wisdom and experience. They also help students avoid common mistakes and encourage them to continue seeking their educational goals. For these alumni, it is simply “paying it forward”!

During this Pre-Collegiate Planning Session, “Grow Your Own” students and their parents were provided dinner and a keynote address by David Gurule, San Luis Valley native, graduate of Alamosa High School, Create Health participant and University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus School of Pharmacy student. David shared with the group how he got to where he is today and what it took to get to that point. He also shared with the students how to plan for post-secondary training.

David found himself in front of a quiet audience at first, but that did not affect his ability to get his message across and inspire the young (and older) minds who were actually paying close attention to his every word. Soon enough, he had student participation moving right along.

Like most everyone else, David needed to do some soul searching before deciding upon his chosen career. He now knows that he made the right decision in pursuing his career as a pharmacist. Sharing his story helped the students realize that they have the ability to choose to pursue a career in the healthcare field. The evening was a big success!
It was in the late 1850’s that Florence Nightingale turned her attention to the needs of the time as England was a pitiful mess in regard to the care of the sick. The Victorian society turned a blind eye on the plight of those who were poor and ill. Families with means took care of the ill as best they could with the little knowledge they had. Religious women nursed the sick as an act of charity, but those in public hospitals were subjected to the most dirty and inhumane conditions known to man. Florence wanted to change this by gathering knowledge and educating women about placing patients in the best environment for healing. Most people thought she was crazy. Why would an educated woman of privilege consider undertaking this most unlikely and impossible task? It was precisely her “privilege” that convinced her it could be done. Because of her social standing, she would be listened to and would be able to open doors to insure better treatment of patients. Over one hundred and fifty years later, nurses today are a testament to her success. As Florence faced her challenges, we are facing probably our biggest challenge. Florence recognized that the people of her time were in dire need of quality care no matter their social standing. In 2016, the people are different but the challenge is the same. Nursing has developed into a profession that is in a perfect position to face the challenges in healthcare today. We have the foundation, education and workforce to find the answers to the most troubling healthcare concerns of our time. So we ask, “what would Florence Nightingale do?*

The Nightingale Award Event on March 12, 2016, will be full of answers to this question. At the Double Tree Hotel in Denver, nurses from all over the Denver area will show how they are continuing the legacy of Florence Nightingale. From 167 nominations, twelve nurses will be selected as “Luminaries” to go on to the state event in May. They will be honored for their outstanding achievements in bedside, education and administrative roles and for demonstrating their leadership, advocacy and innovation in improving patient care. Florence Nightingale opened the door to progress and nurses today walk through it proudly for the sake of their 21st century patients.

Central Colorado AHEC is proud to sponsor this prestigious event every year. Our association with nursing is strongly tied to our mission to improve the quality of care for all Coloradans. The challenges we face today are demanding, so it is with great respect for the past that we face the future. “What would Florence Nightingale do?” We are proud to celebrate the nurses of today who have answers!
A New Year Brings New Programs for Central Colorado AHEC

By: Shelley Tucker

We’ve all seen it happen—New Year’s resolutions are made and January gym attendance swells and new diets are launched. Strong commitments are made by people pledging to start something new for their health, but by March the gyms are back to normal and the fast food is back on the meal plan.

AT CCAHEC, we are very excited about our new worksite wellness program rolling out this spring. CCAHEC believes that we can literally change lives and make our organization even better. In today’s ever increasing world of disengagement, evidence shows that “employees are putting well-being on the back burner, skimping on exercise, sleep and eating habits. They have too many demands on their time and are juggling endless to-do lists at work while trying to maintain priorities at home. These unhealthy behaviors leave them stretched thin and struggling to keep up and have big repercussions on their well-being, engagement and performance.” –Virgin Pulse

AT CCAHEC, being a policy holder of Pinnacol Assurance has many perks, one being a worksite wellness initiative supported by an online behavior change platform offered by Virgin Pulse. This helps our employees create daily habits and make sustainable behavior changes across all aspects of life.

Our employees are able to take a health assessment and receive a Max Tracker (like a Fitbit) as an incentive. We can pick the goals that we want to focus on, and the ones that we actually have the capacity to work on at this time, such as heart health, sleep, stress, nutrition, or physical activity. The online platform provides a wealth of information and education to support our goals; additionally we have an onsite Health and Wellness Coach to offer a personal touch with some accountability sprinkled in!

We have many incentives to help support our employees in reaching the goals that they set for themselves as well as group goals. The staff favorite is onsite chair massages for everyone! We look forward to setting AHEC wide challenges once we get a few months under our belts, so keep an eye out for emails with challenges for your agency to be a part of.

In addition to this wellness program, we are furthering our culture change by partnering with Tri-County Health Department, CO Health Links, and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce as a member of the
leadership team to pilot a worksite wellness three year initiative grant project funded by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment. As part of this leadership team, we will be an advocate for health and wellness in the community. We will support, build skills, provide leadership, and act as a crucial part of the planning and promotion of this initiative to support healthier work environments across our community.

Please contact Shelly Tucker for additional information on worksite wellness shelly@centralcoahec.org

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Southwestern Colorado

AHEC

Area Health Education Center

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**Grant Awarded to Fund Teen Health Literacy Learning Project**

**SWCAHEC among Five Awardees Nationwide**

The Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center (SWCAHEC) is among six centers from across the country to receive a grant for participation in a teen health information literacy project. The National AHEC Organization (NAO) announced the year-long learning collaborative to be funded among the six centers nation-wide from the National Library of Medicine (NLM). The project will address a young person’s ability to find, interpret and use reliable sources of health information which can have a direct impact on an individual’s health. To improve health outcomes across one’s life-span, the project will aim to teach literacy skills to diverse populations in order to encourage life-long, healthy personal habits.

SWCAHEC will partner with the Centennial AHEC of Greeley to educate youth in Colorado. The project is designed to test previously developed teen health information literacy models in various contextual situations. SWCAHEC Executive Director, Kathleen McInnis, explained, “The partnership with Centennial AHEC will allow us to implement the literacy models for teens across the state. Locally, here in southwest Colorado, the project will target youth from our populated communities like Durango, Cortez and Pagosa Springs as well as teens from more rural communities and from our local tribes.”

Other awardees from across the country include: Boston AHEC, Brooklyn-Queens-Long Island AHEC, Eastern Connecticut AHEC, and the Montana AHEC. Robert Trachtenberg, CEO of the NAO said the cross-country project is intended to achieve a learning collaborative structure, “We are confident that all our awardees will share best practices and implementation experiences with each other and with future sites. We are doing as much as we can to encourage collective efforts at achieving our common goals.”
SWCAHEC Hires Recent FLC Graduate

The Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center (SWCAHEC) is pleased to announce Danielle Lucero as the organization’s new project coordinator. Lucero will be responsible for the coordination of a new program aimed at improving health information literacy among teens.

Lucero is a recent graduate of Fort Lewis College. She earned a Bachelor’s degree in Public Health and studied abroad in Costa Rica. While attending FLC, Lucero contributed to health education on campus through involvement in the Wellness Peer Advisory Council, Club del Centro and the “Decolonize your Diet” movement. Lucero is a member of the Isleta Pueblo tribe located just south of Albuquerque, NM. Lucero is passionate about creating a culturally competent workforce and someday hopes to bridge Indigenous healing methods with Western medical practices.

CoECC Bi-Annual Dialogue a Success

Meeting Includes Care Coordination Update

More than 20 members from the health community met earlier this week to discuss the latest news on care coordination in southwest Colorado. Partners with the Center of Excellence in Care Coordination (CoECC) discussed recent progress and accomplishments surrounding collaborative care, inter-agency continuity, information exchange and resource networking.

Representatives from Mercy Regional Medical Center, San Juan Basin Health Department, Southwest Workforce Center, Rocky Mountain Health Plans, La Plata County Senior Services, Southwest Center for Independence, and a few other organizations took part in the “bi-annual dialogue.” The health reps talked about how each agency may treat an individual patient – which agency administers a diagnosis, which is treating, and which is prescribing.

CoECC Director Nora Flucke, said the collective effort has demonstrated significant advancement by working with the local health care community. “For the past year and a half, more than 40 partner organizations have come together to build a health infrastructure for improved patient services and greater health system efficiency.”

The results from the collaboration show improved access to timely and appropriate care for patients as well as cost savings across southwest Colorado.
Delta Dental Foundation of Colorado Campaign

By: Doreen Gonzales, Executive Director

Southeastern Colorado AHEC implemented the Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation “Cavities Get Around” 2015 campaign to improve Colorado children’s oral health by eradicating childhood tooth decay. It was exciting to complete and exceed our goals for the 2015 campaign in December. Southeastern AHEC advanced the goal through a number of public will building initiatives.

Public Will Building is a specific approach that results in long-term shifts in behavior, attitude, policy, practice and norms. Through “meaningful contacts”, Southeastern focused on building public will for children’s oral health through educating Pueblo County families with children six years of age and under and community leaders. The primary message is for families and communities to recognize and act upon the importance of children’s baby teeth. Southeastern exceeded the campaign project initiative goal of reaching 400 families regarding the Cavities Get Around campaign and reached a total number of 564 families in 2015.

The majority of the participants were from underserved populations that included Latino, African American, Native American and Caucasian families. Many family member participants were from multi-generational families where it is not uncommon to see grandparents as the primary guardian or caregiver.

In 2016, Southeastern will continue the Delta Dental of Foundation “Cavities Get Around”, Public Will Building Campaign to educate additional families with young children on children’s oral health in Pueblo County and begin the campaign in Huerfano County. Southeastern is really excited to expand the messages of Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation beyond the urban thresholds.

In addition, the 2016 campaign will engage community groups and leaders to embrace a “movement” to include policy changes which will encourage children’s consumption of tap water, care of baby teeth, and consume less sugary drinks. For instance, the Colorado State Board of Human Services, recently implemented a new set of rules for child care centers that will go a long way in improving the health and well-being of children. One of the new rules stated that licensed childcare centers can no longer serve drinks with added sugar unless provided by parents. The reason is that sugary drinks contribute to tooth decay, obesity and diabetes.
What is ECHO Colorado?

By: Dina Baird

Have you heard about ECHO Colorado yet? ECHO Colorado is a statewide professional education initiative aimed at connecting health workforces to topic experts to increase access to specialty care and expert knowledge. Using video-conferencing technology to provide virtual training experiences that blends brief didactic presentations and case-based learning, ECHO Colorado builds multi-disciplinary learning communities across the rural and underserved areas of Colorado.

ECHO Colorado utilizes the ECHO model, a knowledge sharing strategy originally developed at the University of New Mexico which engages learners using bi-directional video in content presentation, case sharing, and peer discussion. ECHO Colorado works with public health and healthcare organizations to identify needs for education across Colorado. Topic experts across the state then design series curricula and commit to engaging in a dynamic learning experience. There are several ECHO series, or learning communities, running in March, with a focus on Hepatitis C, tobacco cessation, pediatric epilepsy, patient navigation, and the pediatric developmental spectrum. Upcoming topics include: obesity prevention & nutrition, child abuse prevention, and population health. Participation is free, the only cost to learners is their commitment to participate in the sessions!

To get involved and learn more, visit the website at http://www.ECHOColorado.org. If you would like to be an expert for a topic, have a topic suggestion, or would like to participate as a learner, please contact the ECHO Colorado staff through email at ECHOCOLORADO@ucdenver.edu.
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