Colorado AHEC Program Office

“Discover Health/Descubre La Salud” Traveling Exhibition Launched

By: Jennifer Hellier

[Denver, CO, November 1, 2016] The University of Colorado’s Area Health Education Center (AHEC) Program Office, in collaboration with the STAR Library Education Network (STAR_Net), and CLACE, have developed a traveling, bi-lingual, health exhibit titled Discover Health/Descubre la Salud. This project is a 5-year $1.25 million grant funded by the Science Education Partnership Award (SEPA) program of the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Discover Health/Descubre la Salud explores the nation’s most serious public health issues (diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular health), especially among underserved and rural populations. It also encourages youth, especially those from at-risk

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communities, to pursue careers in healthcare professions. The exhibit will be on display in ten Colorado county libraries for three months at a time from November 2016 to 2019. The first host library is Anythink Brighton.

Getting people interested in science can be a challenge, but Discover Health/Descubre la Salud strives to make it fun with suitcase-sized, table-top interactives, engaging anatomical models, compelling media pieces, computer-based interactives, and portable graphic panels. One exhibit piece is a giant heart model that is eight times life-size with an open atria and ventricles for viewing internal cardiac structures; while another exhibit is a green screen interactive for patrons to take a “journey though the human body.”

Host libraries will also offer a related series of public events to bring health education programming to children, teens, and adults through strategic partnerships between community members, educators, and health professionals. Discover Health/Descubre la Salud enables libraries to directly impact their underserved communities through active and healthy living programs. The effect generated by Discover Health/Descubre la Salud will extend well beyond the duration of the exhibition to influence and inspire lifelong learning opportunities, as well as proactive lifestyle changes.
Raising Take-Back Day Initiatives as a Student Society  
By: Kendra Lesnick

Motivated by the 2016 Colorado Collegiate Health Professions Development Scholars Program (CO-HPD), Belinda DeMario (fellow CO-HPD scholar) and I returned to the fall semester at the University of Colorado Colorado Springs, to co-found and co-develop the UCCS Mental Health Society (MHS). The student organization is aimed at fostering positive student development and sustaining healthy lifestyle choices, while establishing a sense of student community and inclusion. With close to forty current society members, club activities have focused on both an educational aspect relating to student psychological encumbrances and possible corresponding coping methods, and group activities designed to serve as encouraging, rewarding, and affirmative to health-conscious student lifestyles. The society also collaborated with the UCCS Wellness Center to generate the first campus mental health awareness week which was held in late November, early December. Officially named “Mind Body Week,” this event prioritized educating students on cannabis-brain impacts, stress management, proper nutrition and exercise organization, and suicide prevention.

The club vision also aligns with the notion that to uphold a healthy state of mind, avoidances should be directed toward harmful tendencies, such as behaviors endorsing the abuse of prescription drugs. The seriousness of prescription drug mistreatment and the potential resulting health risks and implications have bolstered the need to educate and encourage communities to participate in the turning back of unused, unneeded, or unwanted prescription medications. This message was strongly emphasized in the CO-HPD program, and actions to assist the fight against the misappropriation of prescribed medications was incorporated into a 2016 CO-HPD regional project.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, young adults ages 18-25 years are the largest abusers of prescription opioid pain relievers, ADHD stimulants, and anti-anxiety Rx drugs. With this age range comprising the majority of college students, MHS, although still young, has identified the need through this regional project to begin educating students on this increasing issue. With club backing, our projected aim is to raise student body awareness on the dangers involved in prescription drug abuse and to incentivize the importance of making positive, healthy decisions, which benefit not only the student, but also his or her community.

We intend to inform students on viable and convenient ways, based on their personal situation, that they and hopefully their outside network, can surrender these drugs, whether that means turning them in internally through UCCS or through other outside community organization and business take-back programs. Our future work will include promoting the annual DEA National Take-Back Initiative Day to the students, which has previously been held at UCCS in the fall, and includes raising awareness of campus and nearby resources designed to assist with prescription take-backs. This DEA initiative targets safe, easy, and responsible means for proper prescription drug disposal, and MHS is eager to spread the message. A special thank you is extended to Dr. Jennifer Hellier, Director of Programs and CO-HPD Director, Michael Flowers, Renee Johnson, and the three 2016 CO-HPD team leaders for the high level of regard they held for the CO-HPD scholars and also for the inspiration each devoted to us. The impression of this program helped make possible the formation
of the UCCS Mental Health Society, and encouraged its aims to establish a progressive movement against prescription drug abuse in the local community.

**Bringing Pre-Health Day to UCCS: A Successful Re-Creation**

**By: Kendra Lesnick**

With the 2016 CU Pre-Health Day serving as a model guideline, six students from the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs collaborated to develop the first on-campus UCCS “Pre-Health Day.”

Having the majority of the 200 student RSVPs attend, the Pre-Health Day” lunch held last November 19th in UCCS Berger Hall was considered quite the success. The informative event was geared toward attending students from the university interested in or having considered pursuing a career in healthcare. We wanted to bring the information to our fellow students, especially to those who were unable to travel to Denver to attend the 2016 CU Pre-Health Day last September. These students - three from the UCCS Mental Health Society (Amal Alhadad, Belinda DeMario, and Kendra Lesnick), two from UCCS Student Government Association (Kimia Ahmadian and Clairelise Post), and the 6th being an associate fellow student (Asma Samara) - used their club sponsoring and organization affiliation collectively to coordinate the event, raising nearly $3,200 to provide the speakers, students, and volunteers with lunch, snacks, and beverages.

This event served as both educational and networking-friendly for the student attendees by introducing speakers and admission spokespersons representing an array of health care fields and health professional schools. The event hosted Dr. Jennifer Hellier (representing the CU School of Medicine Anschutz Medical Campus), Dr. Kenneth Durgans (from the CU School of Dental Medicine), Cammie Kennedy and Carson Haney (from the CU Skaggs School of Pharmacy), Amy Sturrock (representative for the CU College of Nursing), Michael Flowers (representing the Colorado Collegiate Health Professions Development program), and lastly, Dr. Medhat Ahmed (representing the Undergraduate Pre-Health Program). The guest speakers provided valuable information on steps that the students could take to become more competitive applicants and on how to better prepare for the various healthcare and medical field occupations. The speeches were followed by a 45-minute open-question panel and lastly, by a social networking mixer in which the students expressed great sense of engagement and enthusiasm for. This Pre-Health Day was so effective and helpful for the students that the UCCS Pre-Health club plans to adopt and reproduce the event in the forthcoming years. Thank you to all of the guest speakers who made the 2016 UCCS Pre-Health Day possible!
It started with a simple idea as all great events do. Tracey Laessig, a 3rd year Pharmacy student and member of SNPhA (Student National Pharmaceutical Association), a student organization that focuses on helping underserved communities, came to Connie Valdez, PharmD, MSEd, BCPS, Associate Professor in the Skaggs School of Pharmacy to discuss the reality that farmers and ranchers often do not have access to healthcare in the rural areas in which they live. Tracey wanted to do something to target this population and thought about the National Western Stock Show. After doing some research, Tracey found Colorado AHEC and connected with Jack Westfall, MD, MPH, who independently was also thinking of creating a program to reach this same population. After a chance encounter between Connie and Jack, the idea was further discussed. With Connie’s experience with health fairs, Tracey’s strong interest in providing care for this population, and Jack’s connections, the idea began to take shape. The three players met further and designed the specifics for the first Colorado AHEC Free Health Screenings booth that debuted at the National Western Stock Show in January, 2008.

The first booth, located under the stands of the Stadium Arena, consisted of two stations and three full-time volunteers; Jack and Connie as faculty and Tracey, student volunteer. Throughout the course of the stock show’s two week run, numerous pharmacy students volunteered their time to support the initiative, but Tracey was there every day! Since faculty preceptors were required to be on site, Connie and Jack split this responsibility and also spent a large amount of time at the NWSS.

The screening for adults consisted of obtaining blood glucose, blood pressure, a pulmonary function test for smokers or participants with a history of smoking, and a cholesterol screen for a $20 fee. Approximately 300 adults were screened at the first Colorado AHEC Free Health Screenings Booth.
In its ninth year at the NWSS, and in its 480 square foot prime space on the 2nd floor of the Exhibition Hall, the Colorado AHEC Free Health Screenings Booth is still going strong.

Approximately 250 faculty, staff, and student volunteers from all health profession schools on the Anschutz Medical Campus staffed the health screenings booth this past January, contributing their time and effort to provide free health screenings to the target population of hard-working individuals from rural communities (staying true to Tracey’s original vision). Men and women from rural communities are a population that is often difficult to reach because of both the nature of their professions (e.g., ranchers and farmers) and their self-employment status often leading to scarce insurance coverage.

This year, Colorado AHEC partnered with Colorado State University (CSU) School of Veterinary Medicine, providing students from this school a unique experience to collaborate with health profession students and faculty from the CU Anschutz Medical Campus.

Almost 1150 adults were screened this year for height, weight, blood pressure, glucose levels, balance, vision, and oral health. 278 children were screened using the HeartSmart Kids program. This interactive program teaches kids how to make good healthy lifestyle choices for their future in order to stay healthy.

Thank you Tracey Laessig for your vision and hard work, thank you Connie Valdez and Jack Westfall for supporting Tracey’s initiative, and thank you to all of the volunteers that make this program such a success! Colorado AHEC looks forward to providing free health screenings at the National Western Stock Show to men and women from rural communities for many more years to come.

Colorado AHEC Free Health Screenings Booth at the NWSS 2017

Matt Hess joined the Colorado AHEC Program Office on February 27, 2017, as the new Grant Development and Marketing Coordinator.

Matt grew up in Boulder, Colorado. He attended Baylor University in Waco, Texas where he received a Bachelor of Science in Education and History. After graduating, he remained in Waco and taught at a school for troubled youth. As a teacher, he saw the difference that working with animals and gardens made on his students. He began volunteering at World Hunger Relief, Inc. (WHRI) partially with the intention of developing more skills in agriculture and community development. Matt joined WHRI as the Education Director in 2006. Six years later, he transitioned to the role of Executive Director. After 20 years in Waco, Matt was ready to come back to Colorado to be closer to his parents and two brothers. Please join us in welcoming Matt Hess to the AHEC team!
Regional Health Connectors Update

Regional Health Connectors (RHC) is a new and growing workforce in Colorado collaborating in a team to promote healthcare practice transformation. We are pleased to announce CAHEC is the recipient of funding to support the hiring of two RHC’s in our region and will serve as a host site for RHC’s in north central, northeast, and east central Colorado. Consistent with Colorado Health Statistical Regions, CAHEC will serve Region 5 (Cheyenne, Elbert, Kit Carson & Lincoln counties) and Region 1 (Logan, Morgan, Phillips, Sedgwick, Yuma & Washington counties). Larimer and Weld counties will receive RHC services from Health District of Northern Larimer County and North Colorado Health Alliance, respectively. When fully implemented later this year, there will be 21 RHC’s employed throughout the state.

The work of the Regional Health Connectors is currently funded through two federal grants awarded to the Department of Family Medicine at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, the state of Colorado through Governor Hickenlooper’s office; Evidence Now Southwest (ENSW) and the State Innovation Model (SIM). A primary goal is to promote patient centered medical homes using the tools of practice innovation & transformation.

Providers who learn how to integrate evidenced practices into their patient treatments will be prepared for the future of healthcare reform, including payment reforms. Regional Health Connectors will assist providers in connecting with public health and community based organizations to meet identified patient/population health needs. Regional Health Connectors, for example, working with Primary Care Providers (PCPs’) with significant populations of patients with cardiovascular disease are identifying community resources promoting the adoption of an evidenced-based practice known as the ABCS’s of cardiovascular disease prevention; aspirin use by high risk individuals, blood pressure control, cholesterol management, and smoking cessation. ENSW is assisting providers and communities to connect in the development of new services needed as well as currently available resources. Serious consideration to Social Determinants of Health (SoDH) such as transportation, housing, employment, education, psychosocial needs, etc. and the impact of these factors on health outcomes is a principle focus of this project.

Regional Health Connectors are available locally to provide resources to primary care providers, community, and government agency’s addressing SoDH. Based on the unique needs of the provider and the community RHC’s will work with local partners to assist in developing improved healthcare for our rural communities. Providers choosing strategies to transform their practices can use teams of RHC’s, Practice Facilitators (PF’s) and Clinical Health Information Advisors (CHITA’s) to assist in this advancement. In the future, primary care will have a much higher focus on improving patient
outcomes while maneuvering bundled payment reform. Through education and awareness, these patients will drive their own healthcare decisions. Patients who make informed choices where barriers to health have been addressed will see the benefits of cost avoidance and preventative care resulting in increased personal and community health.

CAHEC is proud to be a part of the solution to promote healthier patient outcomes, enhance patient satisfaction, and improve the economics of Colorado healthcare. The aim of our program is simple, work with local communities toward the goal of all people living a healthy life with risk reduction of disease. Healthy people create healthy communities.

CAHEC would like to hear from you. Please consider responding to the following two questions by emailing Kindra Mulch at kmulch@cahec.org. What do you want from your community to assist you in attaining your health goals? What can your primary care provider do to assist you in making healthy choices?

Western Colorado AHEC Receives 3RD Year HPV Grant

The Western Colorado Area Health Education Center (WCAHEC) has been awarded the HPV Project: Year 3 Grant by the National AHEC Organization. This grant provides continuing education to health professionals about the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. Funding for this education was made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Grant No. 1H23IP000960-01 to the National AHEC Organization.

Providers who complete the in-person or online training receive education credits. The course outlines the burden of HPV disease, defines the importance of HPV vaccination for cancer prevention, explains the rationale for vaccinating youth at ages 11 or 12 and administering the HPV vaccine to both girls and boys, provides useful and compelling information about the HPV vaccine to parents to aid in making the decision to vaccinate, and locates resources relevant to current immunization practice.

The grant will allow WCAHEC to continue to collaborate with multiple entities across Colorado to help spread education on HPV Vaccination through partnerships with clinics, health plans, and the five other
regional Colorado AHEC offices. Third year students from the University of Colorado’s Anschutz Medical Campus in the School of Medicine’s Rural Track Program deliver the training to rural providers when they visit Western Colorado to complete their Adult Ambulatory/Rural and Community Care Clerkships.

So far, four students have delivered this education as part of the 3rd year grant to more than 20 health care professionals at three facilities on the Western Slope including San Juan Family Medicine in Montrose, the Memorial Hospital at Craig Family Practice Clinic, and Western Colorado Pediatric Associates in Grand Junction. Last year, six other students delivered this education to more than 40 healthcare professionals at six facilities on the Western Slope including Pioneers Medical Center in Meeker, Montrose Memorial Hospital, Montrose County Department of Health & Human Services, Gunnison Valley Family Physicians, Rangely District Hospital, and Primary Care Partners in Grand Junction.

WCAHEC Graduates 86 of 138 Mini Med School Attendees

The Fall of 2016 continued to bring opportunities to the WCAHEC region through expanded promotion of Mini Med School, the long-standing lecture series offered by the University of Colorado School of Medicine. The eight-week lecture series, delivered by doctors at the Anschutz Medical Campus in Aurora and live-streamed to a number of lucky communities across the state, has typically had a strong turnout among high school students in Mesa County, perhaps because there is no charge to attend the lectures and those who attend five of the eight programs receive a “Mini Med School Diploma”.

This year, through partnerships with libraries, hospitals, health departments, school districts, and the medical students and alumni of the University of Colorado, WCAHEC expanded the reach of the program to include residents not only in Mesa county but now also in Delta, Pitkin, Eagle, Garfield, Moffat, and Routt counties as well. Of the 138 individuals to register, 86 attended at least 5 of the programs and received a Mini Med School Diploma.

“We have to thank the medical students who helped assist with this program by setting up, taking attendance and relaying questions from the audiences. Without them we would not have been able to offer this program in our most rural communities,” said Georgia Stewart, Executive Director of WCAHEC. Special thanks goes out to: Carolyn Foster and Amelie Peisl, 3rd year SOM Rural Track students for their help at the Delta Mini Med School; Nicole Larson, 3rd year CU Physical Therapy student, Alaina Favaloro, 4th year CU Skaggs School of Pharmacy student and Jared Fredrickson, 3rd year SOM Rural Track student for their contributions to the Steamboat Springs Mini Med School in Routt County;
Blake Snyder, 3rd year SOM Rural Track student for his help at the Aspen Mini Med School in Pitkin County; Alice Hearn and Chelsea Boyle, 4th year CU Skaggs School of Pharmacy students for their contributions to the Eagle Mini Med School; and Paul Pokrandt, 3rd year SOM Rural Track student for his work at the New Castle Mini Med School in Garfield County.

**WCAHEC Offers Babysitting CPR/First Aid Camp over Winter Break**

Mesa County youth had the opportunity to become Babysitter/CPR/First Aid Certified by the American Red Cross at this winter’s Babysitter’s Training Camp. The camp was offered December 19-22 from 8am – Noon during the first week of Winter Break.

This summer WCAHEC held two Babysitting CPR/First Aid Camps for youth ages 12-17 in Delta and Mesa county, certifying 35 youth in American Red Cross Babysitting CPR/First Aid. The overwhelmingly positive response combined with the need for youth activities during winter break lead to the addition of the camp.

**WCAHEC Moves: New Location Boasts Training Center**

Western Colorado AHEC has moved. As of November 1, the new location of WCAHEC is 2938 North Ave, Unit B, Grand Junction, CO 81504. The new facility allows for expansion of current training programs to include the future addition of day time Nurse Aid training courses, additional American Red Cross CPR/First Aid classes, and Babysitter Training Camps. “The new location puts us closer to our major partners, (the Mesa County Health Department and the Mesa County Workforce Center) and allows us to expand our training programs,” explained WCAHEC Board President Thomas Huerkamp.
Ten Years and Counting
By: Gloria Nussbaum, RN, MSN

My nursing career has taken me to six states and many different roles. I was fortunate to be encouraged to pursue my master’s degree early on and concentrate on cardiovascular nursing. At the University of Alabama, I found myself at a cutting-edge medical center for heart surgery and a program that gave me much flexibility in clinical nursing, management, education, and research. I worked as a Clinical Nurse Specialist at the VA in Birmingham as their open-heart surgery program expanded to accept veterans from all over the eastern United States. Moving to St. Louis, I again found myself at another medical center and I directed the critical care nursing program for Jewish Hospital. After two years, I moved to Chicago and “nursing” took on another form, as I became the mother of 3 wonderful children!

After several part time jobs in physician offices, community colleges and even home care, I eventually returned to the acute care setting in one of Pittsburgh’s major medical centers. This time my focus became medical cardiology and bedside nursing. I was happy to be occupied at the bedside once again as my children were all in college.

Life takes some interesting turns and I followed my husband’s employment opportunity in Colorado! After over thirty years in nursing, I was going to work in public health. Meeting Kris Wenzel was an interesting experience as she guided me from a clinical mentality to one of a community perspective. Central Colorado AHEC became my world. Nursing was still to be a part of my work but there was so much more! I now guide students to pursue health care careers, helping professionals to see the needs of the underserved and providing health professional students with experiences that would forever impress them with a love for what is possible in health care. Simulation became standard in nursing and medical education as clinical sites became fewer. The Institutes of Medicine recommendations focused us on higher education as a standard for all nurses and helped us understand what mid-level practitioners could do for greater access to health care for all people. Residency programs for nurses made sense in acute care but what about public health? My work in this area has made me realize how AHEC can partner with higher education to influence the future of a profession!
Working with nursing students has been a major joy in my life as I see their excitement as they experience nursing in the community events I expose them to. In a broader scope, the annual Science Fair has helped develop the scientific inquiry in middle and high school students, many of whom will be our future doctors, nurses and scientists of all kinds!

From the beginning of my career at AHEC, we not only encouraged students to become health professionals but we also supported them in their journey with scholarships and recognition. The Corps Community Day event, the Golden Stethoscope Preceptor recognition and especially the Nightingale Luminary Awards showcase the great work our health care providers do—often with the help of AHEC! Grant funding has come and gone (I still miss the Summer Health Institute and all those job shadows we managed!) but our mission remains as we work to “connect students to careers, professional to communities and communities to better health”. Ten years have gone by fast but looking back I feel nothing but pride in an organization that knows Colorado is better because it is here to stay!

Get to Know Krislyn Erickson

Krislyn Erickson joined Central Colorado AHEC’s team in September 2016 as the Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) Instructor. Krislyn is originally from Iowa and recently graduated with her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology at Buena Vista University. She is currently pursuing her Masters of Arts in Counseling at Regis University. She became a YMFHA Instructor because of her passion for helping others and destigmatizing mental health.

YMHFA is an 8-hour evidence-based public education course that teaches adults how to recognize psychological distress and warning signs of mental health challenges in youth, and how to provide initial help (“first aid”) in crises and non-crisis situations. This is the fourth year that Central Colorado AHEC has hosted an AmeriCorps member through the national Youth Mental Health First Aid Corps program ran by Northwestern Connecticut AHEC.

In November 2016, Krislyn became certified as an YMHFA Instructor in Sacramento, California through Mental Health First Aid USA. With her certification, Krislyn will be teaching YMHFA courses in the Central Colorado AHEC region. At the end of her AmeriCorps term of service, she will have more than 100 people trained in YMHFA. To hear more about YMHFA courses, email Krislyn at Krislyn@centralcoahec.org.
DURANGO, CO – On November 3rd, The SW Colorado Healthcare Sector Partnership gathered regional healthcare leaders and community partners for an industry-led effort to strengthen the competitiveness of healthcare in the southwestern Colorado four corners region. The sector partnership connects healthcare related businesses with workforce, education, and economic development partners. In a collaborative effort, the Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center, The Colorado Workforce Development Council and Region 9 Economic Development District, assembled healthcare industry leaders in a round table discussion to identify growth opportunities and seek innovative solutions to improve the economic viability of healthcare in the region.

Healthcare employers discussed potential opportunities for working with local partners, such as Southwest Colorado Community College, Fort Lewis College, La Plata County Human Services and Senior Center, Durango High School, Colorado Workforce Center, La Plata Family Centers Coalition, and Archuleta County Social Services in solving challenges that impact the future of the healthcare sector.

Key opportunities include:
• Attracting clinical staff (primary care providers, MA’s and nurses) with adequate training, certification, and expand the clinical job opportunities
• Enhancing changes in payment structures
• Addressing social determinants of health: housing, transportation, patient transition of care, and health literacy
• Improving continuing education for care providers

This “Single Table, Multiple Issue” approach will address issues that greatly affect the future of our healthcare in the Southwestern region,” said Kathleen McInnis, Executive Director of the Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center. “Our hope is that we can engage industry leaders, cultivate a think tank, and attract high quality healthcare professionals who enjoy living and working in the area.”
Industry leaders in attendance at the Durango meeting included:
Bern Heath, CEO Axis Health Systems; Bobbi Lock, Director of Montezuma County Public Health; Dr. Rhonda Webb, Chief Medical Officer, Pagosa Springs Medical Center; Cathy Roberts, Vice President of Mission Integration, Mercy Regional Medical Center; Flannery O’Neil, Deputy Director, San Juan Basin Health Department; Haley Leonard, Marketing & Public Relations Director & Public Information Officer, Southwest Health System; Lesley Reeder, RN, representing Patrick Gordon, Rocky Mountain Health Plans RCCO-1.

SWCAHEC’s Summer Health Careers Camp Participates in Telluride Gives Donation Day

Donations Help Young Students Explore a Career in the Healthcare Industry

DURANGO, CO – Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center (SWCAHEC) was part of TellurideGives.org. On December 15th, citizens had the opportunity to log on to the website and donate to their favorite nonprofit.

The Health Careers Camp draws in 25-30 students interested in exploring a path to healthcare from the eight counties: Archuleta, Dolores, Hinsdale, La Plata, Montezuma, Ouray, San Juan and San Miguel. The camp was founded 4 years ago by Kathleen McInnis, Executive Director of the Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center and has continued to grow each year, expanding their reach to engage a diverse group of students. In June, at Fort Lewis College 9th, 10th and 11th grade students attend the Summer Health Careers Camp, where they learn hands-on medical activities such as application of sutures and checking for vital signs to shadowing professionals in their healthcare facilities. One of the highlights from the 2016 camp included a tour at the Durango Tech Center with Easton LaChappelle, a 20-year old prodigy and TEDX Talks alum who pioneered prosthetics using 3D printing.

“Last year with support from The Colorado AHEC Program, The Telluride Foundation, and Alpine Bank, among other sponsors, 55% of students were able to attend the camp with a scholarship and we are most grateful to everyone who donated money,” said McInnis, SWCAHEC’s Executive Director. “We hope we can build upon that support this year, expand the program, and inspire more young adults to get excited about a future in healthcare.”

About Southwestern Colorado Area Health Education Center:
SWCAHEC is a regional non-profit organization in Southwestern Colorado that broadly focuses on improving access to quality healthcare in eight counties; Archuleta, Dolores, Hinsdale, La Plata, Montezuma, Ouray, San Juan and San Miguel. SWCAHEC provides support and coordinates programs for the community, health professionals and students interested in advancing health.
The SLVAHEC has spent some time in pursuing grant funding for the “Grow Your Own” Program. Of late, this program has not been able to receive funding from private foundations in Colorado, as many of them are re-tooling their initiatives or emphasis and moving away from funding youth health careers pipeline programming. It has become quite a challenge to find funding for our evidence-based program. So, the SLVAHEC has turned its focus, at least for now, to local resources. The first phase of the campaign took place on October 8, 2016.

SLVAHEC put on “Comedy for a Cause”. This event had nothing to do with healthcare, just a money-maker. Brought to Alamosa was an up-and-coming New Mexico comedian, Carlos “Gravel de la Plaga” Medina to the Alamosa Knights of Columbus Hall. He was funny and quite entertaining. After the event, the SLVAHEC received great reviews on this program. A good start to raising funds for the program began with this event. It was a bit of work for the staff but worth it in every respect. The next phase is a Donor Letter Fund Raising Campaign. The SLVAHEC has constructed a $500.00 donor letter and a “One Fifth Donor Letter of $100.00. To put on the “Grow Your Own” program next summer, a minimum of $15,000.00 is needed. This part of the campaign will begin very shortly. The “Grow Your Own” program has enjoyed great community support and it is the hope of the program that the community can rally behind the program for the 2017-2018 program as the SLVAHEC continues to address the need for local healthcare access.
Carlos Jaquez, from Centennial High School in San Luis, Colorado, was selected as a 2008-2009 “Grow Your Own” participant. In a cohort of twenty students, Carlos was the only male in the group. That certainly did not hinder this young man’s success in the program. He was admired by his peers and was an integral part of that year’s program. Carlos graduated as Salutatorian from Centennial High School in 2011. He attended Colorado State University and graduated with honors in 2015. He has always had his sights set on pursuing a career in health, specifically becoming a primary care physician. That reality has just become closer. In his own words, Carlos thanks those who played a role in the pursuit of his life-long goal:

“I am proud to announce I will be attending the University of Colorado School of Medicine beginning August 2017! I would like to thank each and every single person who has helped me achieve this tremendous accomplishment as it could not have been possible otherwise. I would specifically like to thank all of those involved with the San Luis Valley AEHC Summer Health Careers Institute, CREATE Health Scholars (currently known as CO-HPD Scholars Program), and the Undergraduate Pre-Health Program. My involvement in these programs opened doors of opportunity for me I never imagined possible as I come from the small, rural town of San Luis, Colorado. I intend to use my medical knowledge and skills to provide exceptional healthcare to underserved populations, similar to my hometown, and improve the health disparities affecting such communities.”

Carlos Jaquez
10/27/2016
My name is Isaac Fonken and I’m a third year medical student at the University of Colorado Denver Anschutz Medical Campus. I’ve spent the month seeing patients with diabetes in southeast Colorado. I’ve learned that people here are hard working and care about their health. They want to know more about caring for their bodies. Here are some health tips and important information about managing diabetes.

What is Diabetes?
Diabetes mellitus (or diabetes) is a disease of high blood sugar when the body either can’t make or can’t use insulin (the blood sugar regulating hormone). Long-term, high blood sugar damages nerves and blood vessels in the entire body causing organ problems. Controlling blood sugar, helps to delay and prevent heart disease, eye damage, kidney damage, and nerve damage in the arms and legs.

What do I eat?
1. Choose healthy snacks -One of the best ways to eat healthy is to pick healthy options instead of unhealthy ones. For example, eat plain roasted nuts instead of chips. Almonds, peanuts or walnuts haven’t been fried, sugared, or processed so they fill you up, provide fiber and vitamins, and they don’t raise your blood sugar as quickly.
2. Drink water, plain iced tea, or sparkling water instead of soda pop. A refreshing drink can make a day better, and a drink without sugar or sweeteners is a great way to cut out 39 grams of sugar from your diet.
3. Eat something green with every meal. Eating green vegetables such as peppers, spinach, broccoli, and zucchini is a great way to add vitamins, minerals, and flavor to your food.

The idea is to make healthier eating a habit, which helps you eat fewer calories and makes the calories you eat worthwhile. If you think the foods you usually snack on have too many calories and are not healthy, think about similar foods you can use to replace them or improve them. Make it a goal to try one of these things in your diet.
**Remember to know your numbers!**

To take control of your health, it’s important to know your numbers and know what they mean. In diabetes, there are a couple of important numbers that help doctors measure your risk of heart disease and other diabetes problems.

**Hemoglobin A1c** - This is a blood test that gives a 3-month estimate of blood sugar levels. A normal value is less than 5.7%. Doctors define diabetes as a hemoglobin A1c of 6.5% or higher. Careful control of blood sugar through medications, diet, and exercise can lower the A1c to under 7% which helps protect you from long-term effects of diabetes such as heart disease, kidney disease, and vision loss. This is the tattle tale test that we discussed in class. It will let your provider know how you have been doing the last three months.

**Cholesterol** - your body regulates the fat floating in your blood stream by packaging it into fats called LDL, and HDL. When the balance of these fats is wrong this puts you at risk for heart disease. Diabetes also puts your heart at risk so it’s important to know about and treat high “bad” cholesterol. Ask your provider what your cholesterol levels are.

**LDL** - this is what doctors refer to the “bad fat”. LDL less than 130 is usually thought of as low risk. Patients with diabetes have a higher risk of heart disease. A “statin” medication is almost always used to lower LDL that is higher than 130.

**HDL** - Think of this as the “happy” cholesterol. This type of cholesterol helps to clean the blood vessels and prevent heart disease, similar to the way a garbage truck collects trash. HDL above 60 is usually thought of as healthy.

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**Oral Education and Outreach Provided to Pueblo and Huerfano Counties**

Southeastern Colorado AHEC has teamed up with Delta Dental of Colorado Foundation to educate parents on three key oral health messages to help their families. Colorado AHEC focuses on, but is not limited to, educating families of children 6 years and younger in the counties of Pueblo and Huerfano.
Tooth decay is the #1 chronic disease of childhood. Dental disease in children is 5 times more common than asthma even though it is preventable in nearly every case.

Baby teeth matter as cavities spread from a child’s baby teeth to adult teeth. Enamel on baby teeth is thin, making young children especially vulnerable to cavities. Healthy baby teeth guide the adult teeth so they come in straight. If any baby teeth come out too soon because of disease, the adult teeth are more likely to come in crooked and in poor health. This is expensive to correct and can cause monetary hardships for families if children require braces or other corrective procedures.

The two additional messages are less sugar and more water. Parents and caregivers need to reduce the amount of juice and other sugary drinks given to young children. Parents provide juice to their children as a healthy alternative to soda or other drinks, not realizing juice can contain as much sugar as soda. If juice is provided to children, parents are asked to limit it to meal times only and to give water in between meals and at nighttime.

Southeastern Colorado AHEC trains volunteers to help educate parents. Volunteers provide each child in the home with a smiley bag that includes tooth brush, toothpaste and floss. Last year they utilized over 20 volunteers and reached over 800 families within the Pueblo and Huerfano counties. This year Otero County has been included in the outreach effort.
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