

\$500K grant will help northern Colorado group deliver health care

For more information about Community Care Corps employment opportunities and to apply, visit the North Colorado Health Alliance website.

An organization called the Community Care Corps will be launched this month to help northern Colorado residents address barriers to receiving health care.

Thanks to a \$500,000 grant from the Colorado Health Foundation, the group will be comprised of neighborhood-sourced health workers throughout the region, and the work will be organized by the North Colorado Health Alliance.

Community Care Corps workers will identify economic, environmental and social barriers to receiving health care. The group will assess these issues neighborhood-by-neighborhood and work with residents to overcome obstacles to good health, help deliver health messaging and connect residents with existing resources.

The North Colorado Health Alliance announced the formation of a Community Care Corps as part of its “Make TODAY Count!” community health campaign, launching this month.

The campaign aims to work with the community at the individual, public, academic and corporate levels to take responsibility for health. The goal is to make Weld County and northern Colorado the healthiest region in the healthiest state by 2020. The campaign is sponsored in part by Kaiser Permanente.

Dr. Mark Wallace is founder and CEO of the North Colorado Health Alliance. A family physician and longtime director of the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment, Wallace grew up in Greeley and attended medical school in East L.A. During his primary care residency he served people living in poverty. He has spent the last two decades back home in Weld County developing a health safety net for the region’s most vulnerable individuals and families. The collaboration NCHA has helped create among health providers in the region enables even the poorest people in northern Colorado to have access to high quality medical and behavioral health care.

Wallace says that even the best individual care can’t fix population-level issues. Changing perceptions could mean that the time is right for the “Make TODAY Count!” campaign.

“There is increasing awareness across the country that what we need is culture change ... we’re at a kind of demographic tipping point,” Wallace said.

That's why Wallace is confident that the campaign can raise northern Colorado's standard of health and well being.

Kelly Dunkin, vice president of philanthropy for the Colorado Health Foundation, says that research suggests health is influenced by social and economic factors.

"By engaging community members to identify and improve the social and economic barriers to health, this effort has the potential to transform the community," Dunkin said.