

New Workforce Will Connect Northern Colorado Residents to Stronger, Healthier Communities

May 30, 2013

GREELEY/EVANS, CO. – The North Colorado Health Alliance today announced the formation and deployment of a Community Care Corps of neighborhood-sourced health workers in northern Colorado. This new workforce will help residents identify and address economic, environmental, and social barriers to health in the community. With this Community Care Corps, supported by a \$500,000 grant from the Colorado Health Foundation, NCHA aims to turn up the volume on a *Make TODAY Count!* community health campaign uniting public and private interests in a synchronized collaborative effort to make Weld County and Northern Colorado the healthiest region in the healthiest state by 2020.

Community Care Corps workers will identify and assess social, environmental, economic, and other non-medical factors contributing to health neighborhood-by-neighborhood; engage the public in overcoming tenacious and ubiquitous obstacles to good health and prosperity; synchronize delivery of campaign health messaging within their neighborhoods; and connect residents with existing resources.

The *Make TODAY Count!* campaign—launching in June 2013 and supported in part by Kaiser Permanente—aims to bring a decade-long process of culture change within local agencies to a tipping point and mobilize the residents of northern Colorado to realize the potential of their individual and community resources for health. *Make TODAY Count!* will engage the entire community—at the individual, public, academic, and corporate levels—in taking personal and systematic responsibility for the sustainable health and vitality of self and others and the community at large.

Dr. Mark Wallace, founder and CEO of the North Colorado Health Alliance, knows better than most that he's facing some serious challenges. Dr. Wallace, a family physician and long-time director of the Weld County Department of Public Health and Environment, grew up in Greeley, attended medical school in East L.A., served people living in poverty during his primary care residency in L.A., and then returned home, where he has dedicated the last two decades to developing a strong health safety net for the region's most vulnerable individuals and families. Thanks to the collaboration NCHA has been nurturing among health providers throughout the region, even the poorest of the poor in northern Colorado have access to top-notch medical and behavioral health care.

“But even the best of care at the individual level,” said Dr. Wallace, “falls far short of what public health experts know is needed to address the array of population-level disorders that keep costs high, outcomes disappointing, and that threaten our life expectancy, our children's health, and the vitality of the national economy.”

“There is increasing awareness across the country that what we need is culture change...we're at a kind of demographic tipping point,” said Wallace, and that is what makes him confident that the *Make TODAY Count!* campaign can raise the standard of health and wellbeing in northern Colorado.

A \$500,000 one-year grant from the Foundation will support NCHA in recruiting, training, and deploying a corps of neighborhood-sourced community workers. Supported by the NCHA's

regional network of community-based nurses, social workers, behavioral health specialists, public health preventionists, and paramedics—the Community Care Corps will be tightly connected to health care homes and neighborhoods. “The neighborhood-sourced workers,” said Vincent Atchity, Alliance COO, “will also work with students, agency staff, county and neighborhood leaders...and just plain folks all over who will catch on to the idea that by trying together to make every day count toward a common goal, we have the resources and intelligence to build and sustain a stronger and healthier community.”

Utilizing a ground-up, neighborhood-based, surround-sound approach, the Community Care Corps will motivate Weld County residents to adopt increasingly healthy behaviors within the context of an increasingly healthy community, while connecting them to quality, affordable, integrated health services. The Community Care Corps will work within their neighborhoods and social networks to make healthy choices the easy choices, in collaboration with the WCDPHE and the thirty participating agencies that designed the Weld County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), as recommended by the Public Health Act of 2008. *Make TODAY Count!* will coordinate multi-agency initiatives to improve nutrition and access to healthy food, increase access to safe and enjoyable physical activity, and intervene in conditions and behaviors that threaten wellbeing throughout the community,” said Carlee Rosen, the Campaign Coordinator.

“As members of the community, the Community Care Corps are natural, trusted partners to work with their neighbors, friends and families toward the common goal of a healthy lifestyle,” said Kelly Dunkin, vice president of philanthropy for the Colorado Health Foundation. “This is an exciting endeavor in northern Colorado. The North Colorado Health Alliance recognizes, and research confirms, that our health is largely 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.”

For more information about the Community Care Corps positions and to apply, please visit: www.northcoloradohealthalliance.org

About the North Colorado Health Alliance

The North Colorado Health Alliance was incorporated as a 501©(3) non-profit organization in 2002. The Alliance, based in the town of Evans in Colorado’s Weld County, supports creative and strategic collaboration among partner organizations dedicated to cultivating the health of the communities they serve and leverages collective action to enhance health in the region. Alliance partners recognize that community health depends on much more than the accessible, affordable, and high quality medical, dental, and behavioral health services they provide. Our community health largely depends on features of the built environment and on a variety of social determinants that make it harder for many to resist the chronic illnesses of our times. Thinking globally, the Alliance acts locally and creatively to convene, integrate, and support community partners in our common effort to make northeastern Colorado the healthiest region in the healthiest state. For more about NCHA, visit: www.northcoloradohealthalliance.org or follow us on [facebook.com/NoColoHealthAlliance](https://www.facebook.com/NoColoHealthAlliance).