



The State Office of Rural Health

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Member of the Month: West Custer County Hospital District

Aurora—June 14, 2013—The West Custer County Hospital District (WCCHD) was born from a vision to establish a medical clinic for the region's mountainous communities and seeks to provide responsive top quality medical care for all patients in a friendly and professional manner. A two-room ranger station and garage were acquired in 1970. With updates and expansion, WCCHD now operates an 11,000 square foot outpatient clinic in Westcliffe, Colorado. The clinic is certified by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services as a Rural Health Clinic and is the only provider of preventive and primary care services in Custer County and southern Fremont County. WCCHD's service area is home to 8,170 residents. Approximately 41% of the service area residents have income below 200% of the federal poverty level. Twenty-four percent of Custer County residents are age 65 or older, more than twice the statewide average of 11%.

WCCHD faced financial and operational difficulty in early 2012 and by June the clinic was on the verge of closing. Immediate actions allowed the clinic to reduce the net projected loss for fiscal year 2012 by more than half. The restructuring of the financial processes has allowed the clinic to maintain its role in the community and has set it to be on track to end fiscal year 2013 in a cash positive state. In fact, Custer County Clinic saw 733 patients in the month of May; an 83 percent increase from exactly one year ago.

It is now the focus of the WCCHD to be a leader in rural health care. A new culture has emerged within the clinic and the community to serve as a model for rural healthcare. Clinic staff are engaged and motivated in providing high quality care. The governing board and clinic leadership is focused upon not only providing quality health care but in endowing a sustainable business model thus insuring the clinics ability to provide primary health needs to Custer County.

A number of outstanding needs have been identified to achieve the goals established for the WCCHD. There has been no investment in the clinics physical plant, infrastructure, or equipment over the past 4-8 years. With these needs in mind, WCCHD has installed an IStyMeds dispensary. The new formulary was delivered on May 16th and will have about 90 drugs available to the providers to prescribe onsite. Additionally, patients will be able to have their insurance companies pay for the medications at the time of transaction. This will be faster, more reliable and provide a greater service to the patients visiting the clinic.

WCCHD has been a member of Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC) for nearly a decade. As CRHC continues to support WCCHD, we congratulate them for their many recent accomplishments. A staff member working closely with the clinic stated, "After every phone call with David Noble, [WCCHD's Executive Director] I am continually impressed. Each month there is a new success driving the clinic forward." For this reason, CRHC is proud to announce WCCHD as this month's Member of the Month! To learn more about WCCHD, visit their website.

Interested in supporting WCCHD? Consider attending the High Mountain Hay Fever Bluegrass Festival. Proceeds from this event support the clinic, with \$45,000 raised in 2012. The festival will be held July 11-14th at the west end of Main Street in Westcliffe, on a bluff directly overlooking the spectacular Wet Mountain Valley and the Sangre de Cristo Mountains. This year's performers include, Old Time Kozmic Trio, Foghorn String Band, Red Molly, Kathy Kallick Band, Blue Canyon Boys and Steel Pennies, to name just a few. This promises to be a great event! [Click here for more information.](#)