



The State Office of Rural Health

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Colorado Rural Health Center Celebrates National Rural Health Day with Southwest Health System

The Colorado Rural Health Center celebrated with a luncheon in Cortez, CO, honoring a valuable partner in healthcare and quality care.

Cortez, CO – November 20, 2025– The Colorado Rural Health Center (CRHC), The State Office of Rural Health and State Rural Health Association, celebrated National Rural Health Day today alongside Southwest Health System in Cortez, Colorado. The annual celebration has taken place on the third Thursday in November since 2011 and is designed to honor and celebrate rural communities and the vital work they undertake across the state.

“National Rural Health Day is a day to celebrate the Power of Rural,” said CRHC CEO Michelle Mills. “Each year on National Rural Health Day, we take some time to pause and acknowledge how important rural healthcare facilities are to communities across rural and frontier Colorado!”

This year, CRHC celebrated by visiting Cortez, Colorado’s Southwest Memorial Hospital, part of the Southwest Health System. Thursday’s celebration consisted of a locally catered meal and remarks from CRHC and Southwest Health System leadership. CRHC also secured and read a [Governor’s Proclamation](#) to honor the service of rural healthcare facilities across the state.

“We’re honored today to have CRHC recognizing the good work at Southwest Health System and the work we do every day to care for people. It’s a real honor to have our staff, our caregivers, and the people in our community who we partner with every day together to celebrate rural healthcare nationally, within our state, and in our own community,” said Southwest Health System CEO Joe Thein.

Southwest Health System serves as a vital safety net hospital in the state’s geographically isolated Montezuma County. In addition to providing urgent and emergent healthcare serves, the health system serves patients with comprehensive primary and specialty care.

“As stated in the governor’s proclamation, rural healthcare providers and staff are the back bone of medical care in our community. With unwavering commitment, resourcefulness, and compassion, [we] ensure our everyday patients receive essential health services, often under challenging circumstances,” said Lisa Gates, Southwest Health System Chief Nursing Officer in her remarks at the event.

“It’s a true joy to celebrate the work of Southwest Health System and so many other incredible facilities in rural Colorado today.” said Mills. “Thank you to all our rural facilities and communities on this National Rural Health Day!”

The Colorado Rural Health Center serves as Colorado’s State Office of Rural Health (SORH) and State Rural Health Association, partnering in its latter capacity with NRHA to maintain strong relationships with a robust coalition of rural members across Colorado.

About The Colorado Rural Health Center

The Colorado Rural Health Center was established in 1991 as Colorado's State Office of Rural Health. As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, CRHC serves dual roles as the State Office of Rural Health and the State Rural Health Association. The organization’s mission is to enhance healthcare services in the state by providing information, education, linkages, tools, and energy toward addressing rural health issues. CRHC’s vision is to improve healthcare services available in rural communities to ensure that all rural Coloradans have access to comprehensive, affordable, high-quality healthcare. For more information visit www.coruralhealth.org, call 303-832-7493, or call toll free 800-851-6782 from rural Colorado.