

**FEBRUARY 2018 - In This Issue:**



**A LETTER FROM OUR CEO**

**FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK**

**REVIEW MOUNTAIN FAMILY ONLINE**

**IS VASECTOMY RIGHT FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?**

**OUTREACH & ENROLLMENT DOUBLES SIGN-UPS**

**CONGRATULATIONS TO BOARD MEMBER SAMUEL BERNAL**

**DATA DOCTOR: COLON CANCER SCREENING - HOW IS MOUNTAIN FAMILY PERFORMING?**

**ARE YOU PREPARED FOR A DENTAL EMERGENCY?**

**FEBRUARY MARIPOSA AWARD: ARACELY SOLIS**



**THE TIME IS NOW: FIX THE COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTER FUNDING CLIFF**

By Ross Brooks, Chief Executive Officer, Mountain Family Health Centers

An especially virulent flu season is underway, and the number of opioid overdoses continues to climb, yet our public health is more vulnerable than ever because Community Health Centers like Mountain Family Health Centers are running out of time and money. Critical funding for our program expired on October 1st, 2017. Since then, all health centers have been operating under a "funding cliff." This phrase alone would lead one to think that this is an issue solely about money. It is much more, however. It is about people and how decisions made or left unmade by Congress can have a ripple effect.

When people are sick, they need an accessible place to go for affordable care, regardless of their insurance status or ability to pay. At Mountain Family Health Centers, we believe health care is a human right, not a privilege. We are doing everything we can to ensure our doors remain open and our patients receive the best quality of care, however the loss of our federal base funding has and will limit our ability to achieve this goal. Mountain Family Health Centers, this region's Community Health Center, provides essential integrated primary medical, behavioral (mental health and substance use disorders) and dental health care to more than 19,000 persons in Garfield, Eagle, Pitkin and Rio Blanco counties



on Colorado's Western Slope. Most of our patients are scared by the current administration's immigration policy moves, many are uninsured and the majority living below 200% of the federal poverty level. These individuals and families are our neighbors, our friends, our community.

The federal Department of Health and Human Services itself has projected the impact of the funding cliff will result in the closure of 2,800 health center locations, elimination of more than 50,000 jobs, and a loss of access to care for more than 9 million patients. Locally, this is already happening. Mountain Family has had to decrease staff, and if the cliff continues, will be forced to consolidate operations. This despite the high level of need and increasing demand for our services. This is the looming reality.

Health care for more than 27 million people is being run on a month-to-month basis because Congress has failed to extend funding for our program. This is not how a health system should run - particularly the Community Health Center program which has served the nation so well in terms of saving lives and dollars. Health centers like ours have been in place for more than 50 years, opening access to care and providing a more affordable option for preventive care than a hospital emergency room. Nationally, Community Health Centers generate \$24 billion in health care cost savings, and locally, Mountain Family generates \$18.1 million in these annually.

There is little doubt that health centers have contributed significantly to cost savings for the American taxpayer. Our record of success is why our program has earned bipartisan support from U.S. Presidents and lawmakers, including both our Colorado senators, Michael Bennett and Cory Gardner and our House representatives including Scott Tipton. Here is the bitter irony behind the health center funding cliff: most everyone agrees that Congress should extend funding and act now. Funding for Community Health Centers must be included in the federal funding legislators consider this week. Lawmakers must move beyond the political debate and focus on public health.

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970-945-2840  
contact@mountainfamily.org  
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## FACEBOOK IS CHANGING, SO HERE'S HOW TO KEEP FOLLOWING US

### By Mountain Family Health Centers

As you may have heard, Facebook is making changes to its news feed. Those changes may result in you no longer seeing our posts. We enjoy interacting with you on Facebook and hearing your feedback, so here's a quick way to keep seeing us in your news feed:

#### On your phone:

1. Go to our [Facebook page](#).
2. If you haven't already, "Like" us.
3. Tap the word "Following" to the right of the "Like" button.
4. Select "Get Notifications" at the top of the screen.
5. Look lower on the screen and tap "See First."

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## REVIEW MOUNTAIN FAMILY ONLINE

### By Mountain Family Health Centers

Mountain Family is excited to see an uptick in our reviews online. Reviews on Facebook, Google, Yelp, and other places are an important way for residents to see what services we offer & our commitment to

serving everyone, regardless of what kind of insurance you have (or don't have).

And there's a bonus. When you complete a review on Google or Facebook, you're entered in to win a \$100 gift card to City Market. We'll have the drawings on the first of each month.

Here are links for leaving us a review:

- [Click here for Google](#) (all Mountain Family locations)
- [Click here for Facebook](#) (all Mountain Family locations) and look for "My Review"

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## IS VASECTOMY RIGHT FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY?

By Mountain Family Health Centers & Dr. Chris Tonozzi, MD

There are lots of birth control options out there right now, and choosing one can be difficult. Women have more options than men, deciding between pills, shots, surgery, patches, and implants. But men don't have as many ways to help. It's important that a man use condoms if there is a risk of sexually transmitted diseases, but condoms aren't very reliable as birth control. Studies show that condoms are only 85% effective in preventing pregnancy.

An option that guys do have is getting a vasectomy. Vasectomy is a surgery in which a small opening (approximately 1 cm) is made in the skin of the scrotum (the skin around the testicles). The right and left vas deferens (the tube that carries sperm) is brought out through the opening and a section of this tube is cut out. This prevents sperm, which usually travel from the testicles to the penis, from being ejaculated during sex, preventing pregnancy. Vasectomy is almost 100% effective at preventing pregnancy.



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## OUTREACH & ENROLLMENT DOUBLES SIGN-UPS DESPITE SHORTER ENROLLMENT PERIOD

By Mountain Family Health Centers

Mountain Family's Outreach and Enrollment team is breathing a big sigh of relief. The five team members not only successfully signed up residents for health coverage during a shortened enrollment period this winter, they dramatically increased the number of people receiving enrollment assistance. The team signed up 1,160 residents for private insurance, Medicaid, or CHP+ (Child Health Plan Plus). That's approximately double the number of people who received assistance from Mountain Family during open enrollment a year ago.

Silvia Santana is Mountain Family's Outreach and Enrollment Manager, and says she's impressed by how her team buckled down to meet demand during the shortened enrollment period.



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## CONGRATULATIONS TO BOARD MEMBER SAMUEL BERNAL

By Mountain Family Health Centers

Congratulations to Mountain Family Board member Samuel Bernal who was recently selected to receive a Media Community Health Champion Award for 2018. This award is presented by the Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) on behalf of more than one in eight people in Colorado from medically underserved communities who depend on CHCs for their health care. CCHN represents 20 Community Health Centers that operate 202 community, migrant, homeless, and school-based clinic sites throughout the state. Colorado's CHCs chose Samuel as the recipient of this award for his commitment to providing valuable information for his listeners on issues related to immigration and health care and through educating listeners about their health care options, including Connect for Health coverage options and the services provided by Mountain Family Health Centers. Residents of the Roaring Fork Valley are better able to understand their options when it comes to seeking health care services because of Samuel and the work of La Tricolor highlighting issues of importance to Spanish-speaking community members.



Thank you Samuel for your ongoing commitment to people in need of high quality, affordable health care. You are a true health care champion.

## DATA DOCTOR: COLON CANCER SCREENING - HOW IS MOUNTAIN FAMILY PERFORMING?

By Dr. Chris Tonozzi, MD, Director of Data Quality

Colon cancer is the second leading cause of cancer deaths in the United States. Lots of scientific evidence has concluded that we can easily prevent colon cancer and we have the following things on our side in this struggle:

- We know screening should start at age 50 for most people
- The screening can be very easy, like submitting a tiny sample of stool once yearly
- The cost of the test is very low: Mountain Family charges \$26

Things can get a little more complicated. Many people get colonoscopy (a scope of the colon) for their screening. This makes things easier, in that it only needs to be done every 10 years, but it is much more expensive.

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## ARE YOU PREPARED FOR A DENTAL EMERGENCY?

By Carolyn Hardin, Development Consultant

February is National Children's Dental Health Month, which is led by the American Dental Association (ADA). Their campaign slogan for this year describes the basics of maintaining oral health: "brush your teeth with fluoride toothpaste and clean between your teeth for a healthy smile." Mountain Family would add avoid or limit sugary drinks and foods and choose a "dental home" for regular dental cleanings, exams and treatment.

This year the ADA and Mountain Family ask, "Are you prepared for a dental emergency?"

Thousands of dental emergencies-from injuries to a painful, abscessed tooth-take place every day. Would you know what to do if your child broke a tooth or you had a bad toothache in the night and couldn't get to the dentist until the next day? Knowing what to do can lessen the pain and save a tooth that might otherwise be lost.

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## FEBRUARY MARIPOSA AWARD: ARACELY SOLIS

By Mountain Family Health Centers

Congratulations to Aracely Solis for being chosen for February's Mariposa Award! Here are a few words of praise from Aracely's colleagues:

"Aracely is a hard worker with a strong work ethic. I admire her personality, her respect for her co-workers and her willingness to work even on her days off. Aracely is always available to work anywhere her supervisor sends her to work, even if she is notified at the last moment without asking any questions. It is a pleasure to work with her, she makes your day easier and hassle-free. Thanks Aracely for all you do for Mountain Family and your co-workers, I really appreciate it." - Concepcion Ruiz

"Whenever I need help with charting or have questions about someone's chart, Aracely is always open to helping me out. When some of the assistants are done with their patients, Aracely will help us clean our rooms and setting up for our next patients. If she doesn't have a patient she will be in sterilization helping us clean our instruments. When she is told at the last minute if she can go and help out in El Jebel, she never says no. She also checks the schedule to see if she can fill any open spots." - Alejandro Hernandez

"Aracely has been such an important part of our team. She is the definition of teamwork, she is always willing to help out in any way possible even if she has to go out of her way to do it and sometimes without you having to ask. She is always willing to go cover at the Mobile Unit [Mobile Dental Van], even if it's last minute... she is very caring of her co-workers and patients. I am very thankful to have her on our team." - Hilda Gutierrez

"I would like to proudly nominate Aracely Solis for the Mariposa Award. Aracely is the ideal employee. She is a delightful dental assistant who has both passion & empathy for all Mountain Family patients. Aracely has a beautiful personality and a dedicated work ethic that makes her a highly prized colleague. It is a pleasure to work with her." - Crystal Mecham



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[contact@mountainfamily.org](mailto:contact@mountainfamily.org)  
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Mountain Family Health Centers, 1905 Blake Ave., Suite 101, Glenwood  
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