

Greeley Tribune

Weld County water workshop to be held today

July, 16 2013

A local campaign to encourage the use of efficient watering techniques in Weld County will host a free community water night from 6-8 p.m. today.

It will take place at the Ubuntu Community Gardens and Orchard at the Family of Christ Presbyterian Church, 2410 35th Ave. in Greeley.

The event will be centered around efficient gardening techniques, sustainable water practices and the importance of water in Weld County and the U.S.

A master gardener from CSU's extension program will lead a discussion on proper irrigation systems, drip systems and all things water.

"Water is such a vital resource for our community," said Carlee Rosen of the North Colorado Health Alliance. "Learning to water efficiently is not only important for the health of our community, it's important for the health of our nation."

Critical mass bike ride set for Tuesday

July 28, 2013

The Weld County community health campaign, "Make TODAY Count!," announced its second critical mass bike ride of the summer.

The ride is open to the public and will begin at 11 a.m. Tuesday at the Greeley Farmers Market, 902 7th Ave.

The goals of the critical mass rides are to draw attention to the benefits of bike riding, heighten awareness throughout the community of bicycle connections and safe routes, and bring public attention to areas still in need of improvement, according to North Colorado Health Alliance officials.

The ride will last for about an hour and wind through downtown Greeley with a stop at a local community garden.

Cyclists must follow all traffic laws and are required to wear a bike helmet.

There will be a prize drawing held at the end of the ride.

For more information, contact Carlee Rosen at crosen.alliance@noco.org, or at (970) 350-4673.

Cycling event hopes to promote healthy living

July, 30 2013

The turnout was light but the passion for cycling was strong during a Tuesday event to promote healthy living in Greeley.

The Critical Mass Bike Ride invited members of the community to come out, ride their bikes and have a good time being healthy while also promoting this alternative mode of transportation.

A handful of community members came out to ride. The bike enthusiasts met at the Farmer's Market in downtown Greeley for the hour-long bike ride, which ended at the Community Garden.

Preston Ruibal, 13, the youngest cyclist at the event, wanted to do some extra biking before classes started in the fall.

"We saw the article in the paper and thought we'd come out," said Joseph Ruibal, Preston's father. "We like to ride bikes and to promote safe biking. If you don't wear a helmet, you're asking for it."

After a few minutes of waiting for what looked like a low turnout, several participants came to the event donned in their biking gear.

"I'm here to promote bike riding," said Selia Martinez. "I own my own bike and I came out to support the campaign. I think biking is important for the community, so that the riders on the road are safe."

Make Today Count hopes to make Weld County the healthiest county in Colorado by the year 2020. Organizers hope to make this happen by promoting health and strength through activities throughout the year. The organization is partnering with organizations such as Banner Health, Kaiser Permanente, Aims Community College and the city of Greeley.

Cyclist Graham Bylsma wants to be part of an effort to bring more support for biking to the city of Greeley.

"I love to ride bikes and to support any attempt at biking in Greeley," Bylsma said. "I've lived here my whole life. Biking is healthy and affordable; if you ride a bike, that's one less car on the road."

Making Greeley as bike-friendly as possible was the goal of today's event, said Eric Aakko, a member of the Weld County Health Department, and he's satisfied with the turnout. He hopes biking will become a bigger part of Greeley in the near future.

“We’re here to ... highlight that Greeley has bike-friendly streets,” Aakko said. “We also want to see where the areas are that need improvement. Sure we have some areas that need improvement, but we’ve got a lot of great infrastructure in place already.”

Northern Colorado News Channel 5

Community Water Night

Posted: Jul 16, 2013 11:29 AM MDT Updated: Jul 16, 2013 11:29 AM MDT

By Colleen Allison, Producer/Reporter - [email](#)

July 17th Community Water Night

The Weld County community health campaign, *Make TODAY Count!*, is hosting a free Community Water Night. It will be held on Wednesday, July 17th, from 6-8pm. It will take place at Ubuntu Community Gardens & Orchard at Family of Christ Presbyterian Church, 2410 35th Ave in Greeley.

The *Make TODAY Count!* campaign is a three-year effort to build a stronger and healthier community. Since community gardens play a central role in the health of the community, the campaign is supporting the community gardens here in Weld County. In addition to learning about the in’s and out’s of watering your garden efficiently, this event will cover all aspects of water, a vital resource for both the health of people and the environment. This event is not just for gardeners—all members of the community are welcome to join. Light refreshments will be available.

Make TODAY Count! is working together with community partners to improve well-being, increase healthy eating and increase active living. *Make TODAY Count!* is powered by a growing collaboration and commitment of individuals, agencies, and businesses throughout Colorado’s Weld County. It is supported by community benefit grants from Kaiser Permanente and The Colorado Health Foundation, and coordinated by the North Colorado Health Alliance.

For more information, please contact Carlee Rosen at crosen.alliance@nocoha.org or 970-350-4673. For more about *Make TODAY Count!*, visit maketodaycount.org or follow us on facebook at facebook.com/MakeTodayCountCampaign.

Northern Colorado Gazette

July 16, 2013

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Northern Colorado Business Report

Care providers cash in on cost cutting

August 9, 2013



Colorado's Accountable Care Collaborative Colorado
Department of Health Care Policy and Financing

Molly Armbrister

Northern Colorado health-care providers have made enough progress in reducing hospital readmissions and the use of high-cost imaging services that they're eligible for thousands of dollars in cash payments from the state and federal government. Like other providers across the state, however, they're struggling to find ways to reduce the use of emergency rooms. The cash payments are part of a pilot program designed to encourage clinics to find less expensive ways of caring for Medicaid patients. Lessons learned from the pilot are likely to help

shape how physicians deliver care to all their patients, experts said, not just those on Medicaid, which is a government-subsidized program for lower-income people.

Under the pilot program, Northern Colorado providers received nearly \$56,000 in incentive payments in the fourth quarter of 2012, the most recent period for which data is available. Enrollment in the pilot program is growing quickly. In Region 1, which includes Larimer County, enrollment has topped 42,000, according to Patrick Gordon, associate vice president of Rocky Mountain Health Plans, the regional-care collaborative organization overseeing Larimer County. In Region 2, which includes Weld County, enrollment has grown to more than 31,000, up from 17,000 at the beginning of 2013.

The Accountable Care Collaborative, as the pilot program is known, focuses on three key metrics: hospital readmissions within 30 days of initial release; emergency room visits and use of high-cost imaging.

Providers have reduced readmissions and high-cost imaging by better coordinating care. They

continue to look for ways to reduce emergency room visits, but that has proved challenging. Of the seven regional-care collaboratives statewide, only one, operating in southeastern Colorado, has been able to reduce emergency room visits.

Officials with the Accountable Care Collaborative suspect that this may be because many Medicaid patients haven't had a relationship with a primary-care provider, and prior to enrolling in the collaborative, visiting an emergency room was their "focal point of care," according to Marc Williams, spokesman for the Department of Health Care Policy.

"This is a culture shift for these clients," Williams said, "and it takes time for the (regional care collaborative organizations) to change that behavior."

The care collaboratives, launched in 2011, use a three-pronged approach which includes a data contractor who collects statistics from providers, primary care providers who decide what care to provide and how it is delivered, and the regional care organizations, according to Laurel Karabatsos, deputy Medicaid director for the Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Financing.

Meeting new benchmarks in key areas is rewarded with incentives paid to both the providers and the regional care collaboratives. Incentives in the program are awarded on a per-patient, per-month basis.

For regional care collaboratives where the occurrence of these three elements is reduced by less than 5 percent, 22 cents per patient per month is awarded. If improvement of more than 5 percent is achieved, 33 cents per patient per month is awarded.

In the fourth quarter of 2012, the most recent data available, the regional care collaboratives operating in Larimer and Weld counties, called Rocky Mountain Health Plan and Colorado Access, respectively, received \$55,943 in incentives, according to the state.

Historically Medicaid has been funded on a fee-for-service basis. The "per patient, per month" idea is a part of the ACC pilot program.

When the program started, this payment was \$4 per patient per month, according to Mitzi Moran, president and chief executive of Sunrise Community Health, an Evans-based provider of medical, dental and behavioral health for indigent populations.

For fiscal 2012-2013, \$1 was subtracted from the per-patient, per-month total given to both providers and regional organizations to fund this year's incentive program.

The program is funded through a 50/50 split between state and federal funds, according to Williams.

As the program unfolds, providers across the region are determining how to adapt to the program and the changes coming to Medicaid and health care in general.

The Accountable Care Collaborative, or ACC, is being explored as an alternative to the current payment method for reimbursing providers statewide.

Changes mandated by the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will mean a shift to a new type of reimbursement for Medicaid patients. Providers will be paid based on outcomes for patients, but perhaps the biggest challenge is finding an effective way to measure those outcomes and provide the proper reimbursement.

The ACC is a "baby step" toward a different model, according to Moran. Moran's organization was the first primary-care provider to enroll members in the ACC program in Colorado in May 2011, according to Gretchen McGinnis, senior vice president of public policy and performance improvement for Colorado Access, the regional care collaborative organization operating in Weld County.

Sunrise produced "promising" results, McGinnis said, but the challenge for many primary-care

providers is that they made large strides early on, earning incentives for improving their outcomes in the three key areas outlined by the ACC, but now with more patients enrolling, the providers have been able to maintain their results rather than continuing to improve them at the rates they once were, resulting in smaller incentive payments.

Because of increasing enrollment and limited resources, some providers are experiencing a plateau effect when it comes to receiving incentives, McGinnis said. For this reason, the performance measures still are being evaluated.

Almost anyone who is eligible for Medicaid can enroll in the program, McGinnis said, but there are a few exceptions. For example, patients who have dual eligibility for both Medicaid and Medicare cannot enroll.

The Department of Health Care Policy and Financing also is seeking approval to require those who will be newly eligible for Medicaid under the impending expansion to be enrolled into the program right away, McGinnis said.

The Affordable Care Act authorizes new coverage levels beginning Jan 1 that will allow Coloradans earning up to 133 percent of the federal poverty level to enroll in Medicaid. This means more than 160,000 new Medicaid patients in Colorado. ACC administrators hope to enroll many of them in the care collaboratives.

While the program faces challenges, providers have found the benefits great enough that they support further expansion of the ACC.

"I would be very interested in exploring what it would look like to have everyone on a program like this," Moran said.

The statewide data repository is also a boon to providers, who are able to access more information than ever about the patients they are treating. "It is a good source of historical data and historical trends," said Paul Kellogg, managed-care senior director for Banner Health. All of Banner's primary-care clinics are participating in the ACC. Improvements in data collection would be even more helpful, according to Kellogg.

"A more vigorous model would provide real-time data to support active care coordination activities," he said.

MOLLY ARMBRISTER