Mostly, we hate to admit it, but it’s right there: we actually are human. Most of the time, we like to think of ourselves as invincible, strong, able to handle anything. But in reality, we’re human. While life, thankfully, has incredible rewards, it can also turn harsh suddenly. And it does. At one time or another, nearly everyone experiences it. Either you, or a loved one, is hit by a disease, an accident, a natural disaster or some other challenge or tragedy. Life is sometimes just SO not fair.

Strangely, although we know it happens all the time, we rarely anticipate it for ourselves. Our response, even while it’s hitting us, is so often, “that happens to other people, not to me!” And yet it does. It happens to us all.

But in reality, we’re human. While life, thankfully, has incredible rewards, it can also turn harsh suddenly. And it does. At one time or another, nearly everyone experiences it. Either you, or a loved one, is hit by a disease, an accident, a natural disaster or some other challenge or tragedy. Life is sometimes just SO not fair.

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So how is it that we keep on going, recover, and sometimes even learn to live life more positively and appreciate it more, despite these challenges?

Because humans, while mortal and vulnerable, have a lot going for them. We have determination, a fierce drive to improve things, large reserves of hope, and...we help each other.

Sometimes, when life’s challenges hit you, the hardest thing to acknowledge is that you’re human and you might need some help to get through it. Not only is it OK to seek help, but it’s actually really important for your recovery.

But that simple acknowledgement makes a huge difference in how people’s lives turn out. Every day, staff at the Health District and many, many other organizations in our community are actively providing that extra help. It might be simply some information you need in order to improve your life. Or it might be more: a guiding hand or a critical service. That simple support changes lives.

So if you find yourself or a loved one in need of some help, remember that it’s part of being human to reach out and ask for it – just as it’s part of being human to provide it. It’s what makes us civilized. It’s what moves our community from being human to being compassionate...to being humane.
Guiding one and all to better heart health

Fort Collins resident Sue Yajnik moved from India less than five years ago and found the transition hazardous to her health. Health conscious in India, but overwhelmed by the health system in the U.S. and just plain overwhelmed by life, she neglected her health care. Yajnik credits the Health District and specifically Cheri Nichols with saving her life. By a simple meeting at heart-health screening in April, Yajnik realized that her blood pressure was too high. So high, in fact, that it alarmed Nichols, and she got Yajnik immediate medical attention.

“I had no time to take care of myself,” says Yajnik. “I have no words to express how a meeting like this can change your life. Cheri told me: ‘Get yourself checked, take your medication and live your life better.’”

Nichols and Julie Abramoff are the Health District’s heart-health screening nurses. They travel throughout the district to different community locations and screen for total cholesterol, HDL, LDL, triglycerides, blood glucose and blood pressure. The key to these screenings is the in-depth consultation with each patient that includes discussion and materials on what all the cholesterol numbers mean and how to manage your overall cardiovascular health.

“Cheri brought me out of ignorance and realized I was going through a big trouble,” says Yajnik. Nichols made phone calls on Yajnik’s behalf, scheduled appointments, provided a blood pressure monitoring cuff and continues to follow up with her to this day.

1,436 Health District residents received heart-health screenings in 2011

The heart-health screenings and blood pressure checks are a part of Health Promotion Services, which includes stop-smoking counseling that uses proven techniques to help Health District residents improve their health.

“My family in India cried when I told them of Cheri’s kindness — they were so happy I had found her,” says Yajnik. “They blessed her all the way from India and still do — as I do — every day.”

Your partner in emotional support resources

Life does not come with an instruction manual and when life throws you for a loop it may be hard to reach out. Many people do not get help for mental health or substance abuse problems because they don’t know where to turn or they cannot afford treatment.

That is where the Health District’s Mental Health Connections (Connections) steps in.

Connections is a partnership of the Health District and Touchstone Health Partners. It helps people of all incomes and all needs find the mental health or substance abuse care that’s right for them. The service is confidential and all services are free except for counseling, which is based on ability to pay. They work with providers, insurance companies and other resources to help people find the most affordable care available.

The program is very unique, especially in its ability to help right away. “Someone can walk in, and a therapist will see them usually within 15 minutes,” says Dee Colombini, Connections program manager. Walk-ins and appointments are available on weekdays and crisis help is always available after hours by phone.

Connections’ network of providers is extensive. With information on more than 300 local providers and mental health and substance abuse programs, staff members help clients select a counselor based on training, gender, specialty, office location and need. Staff takes the time to find out what care is needed and involves the client in every decision along the way.

The program gives back to the community, in places like the school district, and has developed a strong track record with its disaster response work. Their network of counselors is on call for any community crisis.

“My family in India cried when I told them of Cheri’s kindness — they were so happy I had found her,” says Yajnik. “They blessed her all the way from India and still do — as I do — every day.”
Kids come first – just ask any parent. That goes for health care, too, especially when money is tight or there’s no insurance.

“You always take care of your kids’ teeth but there’s never enough money left over to take care of your own,” says Amy, a Fort Collins single mother of two who has no dental insurance.

For Amy that meant putting off fixing a broken molar and replacing the crown on an adjacent tooth.

“It was uncomfortable, and it affected my ability to eat,” she recalls. Amy was unable to find affordable dental care and had trouble getting an appointment the Health District’s Family Dental Clinic, where overwhelming demand sometimes leads to long waits for adults who aren’t having an emergency.

Then Amy learned about Dental Connections, a new program that connects people to dental services in Larimer County. It is a partnership between the Health District, the Women’s Resource Center and local dentists, with support from other individuals and organizations.

Amy qualified for a Dental Connections service that matches people who meet financial qualifications to participating private dentists and allows them to pay on a sliding fee scale. A Fort Collins dentist with the program was able to repair both of Amy’s troubled teeth.

“The system worked so well for me,” she recalls. “It was so streamlined and proficient, and everyone was very kind.”

Dental Connections also offers a phone referral service to help people of all incomes locate a dentist that meets their needs. Another of the program’s services coordinates local treatment options for those with developmental disabilities and others who must have dental care under general anesthesia. They are all ways in which the community-supported Dental Connections program is making a difference one smile at a time.

“So many people lack dental care.” Amy says. “Dental Connections is a godsend.”

The Prescription Assistance program is an outstanding example of how Health District personnel go to great lengths to help qualified residents get the medications they need.

Residents of Fort Collins and northern Larimer County who lack insurance for prescriptions and are struggling to pay for their medications can call the Health District to see if they are eligible to receive assistance. The Prescription Assistance program offers two types of assistance: vouchers and the Patient Assistance Program.

With a phone call and a visit to the Health District, Prescription Assistance clients get help accessing and paying for their medications.

The voucher program entitles the participant to pay reduced prices for a one-month supply of medication. Vouchers are limited to participating pharmacies, and participants must get a voucher monthly. A fixed number of vouchers are available each month.

The Patient Assistance Program provides medications for free or at a reduced cost, courtesy of the drug manufacturer. Participants must submit an application to the manufacturer to determine eligibility, after which a two- or three-month supply is typically sent to the prescribing doctor.

Given the inherent complexity of paperwork, Health District personnel will help residents complete the application and then walk them through the remaining process, which might include regular re-applications. Health District personnel follow up with participants to make sure they meet deadlines and stay on task to get their medications. This level of follow-through is what sets the program apart.

For those individuals who don’t have a doctor because of financial constraints, the Health District can help find a prescribing doctor. Finding adequate health care can be a challenge to anyone, but is often overwhelming to those with financial limitations. Health District personnel can help lighten the burden of qualifying applicants.
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Our services are open to those who live within the Health District, including Fort Collins, LaPorte, Wellington, Livermore, Red Feather Lakes and Timnath. The Health District serves residents of all incomes, though some services are specifically for families who have low incomes and no health insurance. Most services have a fee, but sliding fees are available to make good health affordable for all.

Corporations and Foundations
- Bohemian Foundation
- Caring for Colorado Foundation
- The Colorado Trust
- Fort Collins Cycling Club
- Henry Schein Cares
- Hewlett-Packard Employee Giving Program
- Leonard and Carol Mahoney Philanthropy Fund
- Wells Fargo Foundation

Ongoing Project Partners
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- City of Fort Collins
- Colo. Department of Health Care Policy and Financing
- Colo. Department of Public Health and Environment
- Colo. State Internet Portal Authority
- Colorado State University Foothills Gateway
- Fort Collins Housing Authority
- Fort Collins Police Department
- Homeward 2020
- Larimer County Criminal Justice Plan
- Larimer County Dept. of Health and Environment
- Larimer County District Attorney’s Office
- Larimer County Health and Human Services
- Larimer County Office on Aging
- Poudre School District
- Poudre Valley Hospital Foundation
- Project Smile
- Thompson School District
- United Way of Larimer County
- Women’s Resource Center

Sponsors and Partners — HealthInfoSource.com
- Associates in Family Medicine
- Centers for Gastroenterology
- Columbine Health Systems
- Eye-Center of Northern Colorado
- Larimer County Department of Health and Environment Pathways Hospice
- Poudre Valley Health System Foundation
- The Vein and Laser Center of Northern Colorado
- The Women’s Clinic of Northern Colorado

Individuals
- Jim Becker
- Bernard Birnbaum, MD
- Marjorie Boehner
- Geoff Englehardt, DDS
- Ray Jenkins
- Celeste Kling
- Ryan Scarborough
- James Wise, MD

2011 revenues, total
$6,868,817

2011 expenditures, total
$6,694,887

2011 expenditures, by program
- Community Impact Team: 9%
- Mental Health Connections: 10%
- Dental Services: 34%
- Grants, Partnerships & Special Projects: 3%
- Health Promotion: 13%
- Mental Health, Substance Abuse & Primary Care: 13%
- Prescription Assistance: 11%
- Resource Development: 1%
- Assessment, Research & Evaluation: 2%
- Dental Connections: <1%

With thanks
A heartfelt “thank you” to the individuals, businesses and organizations that gave generously to the Health District in 2011. Our special programs included enrolling more families and children in insurance programs and improving access to dental care, especially for those with certain disabilities. We continue to seek community support for the Tooth Fairy Fund (helping adults afford dental care), for the efforts of the Dental Health Partnership of Larimer County and for the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Partnership. For information or to make a donation, contact Jim Becker at jbecker@healthdistrict.org or (970) 224-5209.