“If it’s causing a big burden to the health of people in our community, is there anything we can do to change it?” That’s a question we’ve continuously posed to ourselves over the last 20 years at the Health District.

In health care, change swirls around us constantly. The wonderful thing about all that change is that every year, new solutions to health challenges appear, such as treatments that prevent, slow down or even cure what creates illness, pain and early death in people.

But we all know that people continue to suffer, either because we haven’t yet found the solutions that meet their particular needs, or because they haven’t been able (or ready) to access solutions.

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In this annual report, we highlight just a few of the approaches we’ve helped invent—approaches that collectively now touch thousands of lives every year. Quite honestly, it’s never easy. Tackling some of the hardest issues of our times is no simple task.

Our biggest challenges have included trying to answer questions such as: “Given that funding is limited, how can people who can’t afford to pay the full cost of dental care (or prescriptions) get the treatment they need?” And, “How can we help the thousands of people who need to sign up for health insurance understand their new options?”

Or suppose that you or a loved one happens to contract a serious disease of the brain and in attempting to calm the symptoms, subsequently develops a substance-use disorder? Both mental illness and substance-use disorders are serious health problems that can destroy health, lives and families. Our question then becomes: “Can we help people get state-of-the-art treatment for these diseases just like our community would offer for diseases such as cancer or diabetes? Can we help these people reclaim their lives?”

We are also just beginning a project to see whether it’s possible to develop an improved community approach to help people deal with chronic pain.

Side by side with our partners, we continually work toward better community solutions. A Chinese proverb says, “The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is NOW.”

Thousands of people in our community are healthier because of seeds that were planted 20 years ago, but our work is not done—we have forests yet to plant!

The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

~ Alan Kay

Inventing the Future

Executive Director
When it’s Time to Quit
The Step Free from Tobacco program works

The Step Free from Tobacco program works when it’s Time to Quit. “Being amongst peers going down the same path really helped resonate with them to make their own recipe for success.”

Another big piece of the program’s success has been its physician referral program, which trains health-care providers at Family Medicine Center, Associates in Family Medicine, University of Colorado Health Family Medicine Harmony Campus and Rocky Mountain Family Physicians to conduct brief “ask, advise, refer” interventions with patients.

“It has allowed the busy primary care provider to ask about tobacco use, advise patients who use it to quit, and then have an effective team of professionals join the patient when they’re ready to quit,” says Dr. Austin Bailey, medical director of primary care services for University of Colorado Health, who helped the Health District start the physician referral program in 2010. “The results are quantitatively better than what a physician can do alone, and it makes their work so much more efficient and rewarding.”

It also allows Pomerleau and Davidson to work with patients who otherwise wouldn’t have had the opportunity to get help quitting tobacco. “We’re really proud of that,” Pomerleau says.

Health Insurance for All
Larimer Health Connect helps get people get covered

When Judy Herzanek called her health insurance provider with questions about dental care, she was shocked to hear that she’d been dropped from the plan six months prior.

“It was scary to be without health insurance—it felt like being one accident away from bankruptcy or homelessness,” Herzanek says.

She tried to go online and apply for coverage through the Connect for Health Colorado Marketplace but found the process difficult and frustrating. “I filled out the online forms all wrong,” she says.

Herzanek sought help from Larimer Health Connect Health Coverage Guides Trudy Herman and Sarah Fritz, who helped her resubmit the application and navigate her options.

“They helped me quickly pick out a plan, enroll and now I’m covered—and I’m so relieved,” Herzanek says.

Another client gave Health Coverage Guide Devin Kepler a big hug and let him know that she would be returning every year for assistance after he helped her avoid a renewal plan that would have tripled her premiums.

The success stories continue to pour in.
A project of the Health District, Larimer Health Connect provides free, in-person assistance at multiple Larimer County locations and offers information and enrollment help for Medicaid and Child Health Plan Plus (CHP+), as well as for private Connect for Health Colorado Marketplace plans that feature financial assistance to reduce the cost of health insurance and health care.

“Understanding health-care reform policies can be overwhelming and the sometimes clunky system results in challenges accessing financial assistance,” Kepler says. “When people sit down with a health coverage guide to shop for health insurance for the first time, they realize how complex the process can be. Most of our clients are able to find far more options that are available to them than they do when researching on their own.”
The Community Dual Disorders Treatment (CDDT) program gets a new home

Jim Lucas had lost his home and family and was addicted to meth when he entered the CDDT program in 2007. Through treatment, he discovered that his drug use was a symptom of the trauma he experienced when he was younger. After going through the program and graduating from rehab, he knew he wanted to give back.

"The CDDT program saved my life," Lucas says. "I wanted to help others in the situation I used to be in."

CDDT began in 2007 as a collaborative partnership between Touchstone Health Partners, the Health District and the Fort Collins Housing Authority to serve people with severe and persistent mental health issues as well as chronic substance dependence. By providing intense case management, the program allows clients to gain back their dignity, health, and in some cases, find stable housing and employment.

"Our job is to keep people out of the newspapers, hospital and jail so that they aren’t using those really high-cost services," says Tiffany Pallas, clinical team lead with the CDDT program.

And it’s working. The Health District’s evaluation of the program found substantial and almost immediate reduction in client emergency room visits, ambulance transports, arrests and jail days, and psychiatric, substance-related and medical inpatient days.

This year, the Health District’s Healthy Mind Matters program is excited to be providing a new home for CDDT and the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) program, which serves clients with severe and persistent mental health issues, so that both programs can operate under one roof.

The new building, purchased by the Health District in December 2014, will allow for better collaboration, efficiency and coordination of services within the two programs, Pallas says. CDDT and ACT both use a team-based approach to support some of the most difficult-to-treat cases.

Lucas has been clean for six years, and sober for 13, and now works as a peer specialist for the ACT program. Clients appreciate that they can to relate him. "When I was at my worst, I felt like I didn’t have anything to lose," Lucas says. "I have a purpose now of helping other people and I can be an inspiration to them because they know where I’m coming from."

Dental Services makes affordable dental care possible

A local woman without any dental insurance was in urgent need of a root canal and a crown when she called the Health District’s Dental Connections program and explained her situation. A mother of three, she works part time and her husband is a full-time student. With young kids at home and limited income, money for the family is tight.

The Dental Connections team connected the woman with a local volunteer dental care provider and she was able to get the work done. "I’m so excited to see her with a new smile," says her husband, who is now planning to utilize the Dental Connections program in order to get a much-needed tooth extraction.

People who have dental insurance and access to affordable care often take such services for granted. But for those with oral health issues such as tooth pain and no dental insurance, lack of affordable dental care can become a significant problem.

Closing the gap between the need for affordable dental services and the availability of local care has always been a top priority of the Health District. Its Dental Services programs serve patients on Medicaid, operate on a sliding fee scale basis for those who don’t qualify for Medicaid benefits, and provide a reliable source of affordable dental care for the community members and families who need it most.

"Our Family Dental Clinic provides direct dental care to low-income patients of all ages who are either covered by Medicaid or who have no dental insurance," says John Newman, Dental Services director. "And our Dental Connections program matches low-income individuals without Medicaid or dental insurance with providers in the community who offer dental services to our clients at very low costs."

And since the Affordable Care Act expanded the Medicaid benefit for adults, the Health District encourages new patients on Medicaid to call for an appointment.
with thanks

A heartfelt “thank you” to the individuals, businesses and organizations that gave generously to the Health District in 2014. 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.

Ongoing Project Partners

Corporations and Foundations
- Caring for Colorado Foundation
- Colorado Health Foundation
- Connect for Health Colorado
- The Colorado Trust
- Fort Collins Cycling Club
- Fort Collins Lions Club

Sponsors and Partners of HealthInfoSource.com
- Associates in Family Medicine
- The Women’s Clinic of Northern Colorado
- Centers for Gastroenterology
- Total Vein Care
- Columbine Health Systems
- Touchstone Health Partners
- Eye Center of Northern Colorado
- Larimer County Dept. of Health and Environment
- Larimer County Dept. of Human Services
- Pathways Hospice

Individuals
- Bernard Birnbaum, M.D.
- Marjorie Boehner
- Ray Jenkins
- Celeste Kling
- Luther MacKinnon
- Hannah Rose
- Laird Walton

Board of Directors

The Health District is governed by a publicly elected board of directors. Directors for 2014 were:

Bernard Birnbaum, M.D.
President

Tess Heffernan
Vice President

Michael D. Liggett
Secretary

Tracy Nelson
Treasurer

Steven Thorson, M.D.
Liaison to PVHS Board

Dental Connections

Refrigerated to dentists and help finding affordable care
202 Bristlecone Drive
(970) 483-3366

Family Dental Clinic

202 Bristlecone Drive
(970) 416-5331

Health Promotion

Step Free from Tobacco; cholesterol and blood pressure testing
(970) 224-5209

Healthy Mind Matters

Mental health and substance use issues and solutions
(970) 224-5209

Integrated Primary Care/Mental Health Program

(970) 224-5209

HealthInfoSource.com

A comprehensive guide to local health information

Larimer Health Connect

Connect for Health Colorado and CHP+/Medicaid Outreach; prescription assistance
(970) 472-0444

Mental Health Connections

mental health and substance abuse services
525 W. Oak Street
(970) 221-5551

2014 revenues, total

$8,429,315

2014 expenditures, total

$9,212,965

2014 expenditures, by program

- Dental Services: 34.8%
- Cholesterol Testing/Quit Smoking: 14.2%
- Mental Health Connections: 7.8%
- Grants, Partnerships & Special Projects: 14.2%