



Progress Report

COLORADO HEALTH FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

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A Rural Crisis: The Opioid Epidemic in the San Luis Valley



There are some topics of conversation that, understandably, leave 15-year-old Amarah staring off into the distance, unable or unwilling to say more than the bare minimum.

Her mother's substance abuse challenges, for example, so sustained and severe that Amarah and her half-sister saw their toys sold for drug money. And her mother trading relationships for more drugs. And 16 different schools by fourth grade. These are the type of troubles that keep Amarah quiet today.

But there are topics that brighten Amarah's eyes, and elevate her voice into movie-ready voice-overs. She has created worlds upon worlds, in her mind and in her notebooks, drawing entire casts of anime-style anthropomorphic characters playing out moral crises that she herself couldn't control in her younger years.

One of Amarah's worlds is rated "E for Everyone," she says. It's populated by cheerfully drawn animals in human clothing, such as Chippie the mischievous chipmunk, and characters with backgrounds reflecting her own life experiences. Lately, she's also launched a darker "other" world, with violence and, well, reality.

As part of a family severely afflicted by substance abuse, Amarah is adamant about the need to create and populate both of her imaginary worlds. "I'd say my stories are the conversation of me telling what I've been through," Amarah said.

The story others wrote for Amarah – that of a child searching for a safe space to grow, learn and play – gets repeated over and over in the San Luis Valley these days. Like other parts of Colorado, from Denver's urban corridors to the southeast plains, the San Luis Valley has been hit hard by the last decade's uptick of opioid pill prescriptions and cheap supplies of highly addictive heroin.

There is a strong discourse in the valley that its definition of community, and the livelihood of residents, is now challenged by substance abuse and its accompanying miseries.

From a worsening opioid epidemic to pervasive issues with access to care, Coloradans are facing tough barriers that keep health out of reach. [Read the full story](#) and register to attend the [Colorado Health Symposium](#), Aug. 1-3 in Keystone, Colorado. This year's Symposium, Achieving Equity in Behavioral Health, will focus on the complex ecosystem of behavioral health and the role that inequity plays, from prevention to recovery.



Mental Health Month

May is Mental Health Month. Let's Talk Colorado offers a variety of resources to help initiate conversations around mental and behavioral health in your community.

[Learn...](#)



Symposium Unplugged Recap

In the latest post from our "In Good Health" blog, Dara Hesse, senior program officer, shares her takeaways from the Foundation's event in Cañon City last month.

[Read...](#)



Colorado Health Symposium

Registration for the 2018 Symposium is almost sold out, so reserve your spot today to join us in Keystone Aug. 1-3 to discuss Achieving Equity in Behavioral Health.

[Register...](#)

Register for Fluxx and Apply for Funding



FLUXX

Grant applications are now available through the Foundation's new grants management system, Fluxx, which aims to streamline the application and reporting experience for all applicants and grantees seeking to improve the health of Coloradans. All applicants (including those who have previously applied to the Foundation) will need to create a new account when accessing the system for the first time. [Register in Fluxx](#) and [apply for funding](#) by June 15.

Two new webinars are available to support you in the registration and application process:

- [Applicant Information Webinar](#)
- [Open Funding Webinar](#)

We encourage all applicants to [sign up for Fluxx by June 8](#) to confirm registration is complete in advance of submitting a grant application. For more information, contact [Sara Guillaume](#), senior director of grantmaking operations, at 303-953-3672.

Learn more about our [open funding](#) and apply no later than 5 p.m. MDT on June 15. Use our [interactive map](#) to connect with a program officer who focuses on the county or area you work in or [email us](#).

Foundation and Partners Applaud Increase to SNAP Eligibility Threshold



Earlier this month, the Colorado State Board of Human Services unanimously approved a rule change to increase the eligibility threshold for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) from 130 percent to 200 percent of the federal poverty level. This change aligns Colorado's regulations with federal law and will help keep seniors and people with disabilities who have low-income on SNAP. It will also provide more stability for working families.

A broad group of partners, including the Foundation, [submitted a letter of support](#) for this rule change that applauded the State Board for taking this meaningful step to help bring health closer in reach for more Coloradans. This eligibility change, which will go into effect in June,

aligns with the recommendations of the [Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger](#) that aims to provide access to affordable and healthy food to all Coloradans.

Mark Your Calendar

[Next Grant Application Deadline](#)

June 15, 2018

[Colorado Health Symposium](#)

Aug. 1-3, 2018
