

Spotlight On: Northwest Colorado Dental Coalition

Low income and indigent residents in five Northwestern Colorado counties have the benefit of a health care service that many other rural and frontier areas of the state wish they had: the Northwest Colorado Dental Coalition (NWCDC).

The coalition was organized in 1997 by a group of community leaders in response to a common concern about the lack of dental care for Medicaid, low income and indigent adults and children. The following year, under the umbrella of the Northwest Colorado VNA, it applied for and received funding from the Moffat County United Way. That same year, it received non-profit status and expanded to Routt and Rio Blanco Counties to become a tri-county coalition. In 2005, Jackson and Grand Counties were added to the service area.

Its primary focus, as it was in 1997, is to provide access to dental services to patients who are eligible for the Colorado Indigent Care Program, Medicaid, the uninsured, and/or who have dental care needs and have no other means of obtaining that care. It is one of only two dental clinics in a five-county area that accepts Medicaid and the only provider that offers a sliding fee schedule.

The NWCDC clinic staff in Craig includes Executive Director Janet Pearcey, a full-time general dentist, Dr. Dana Fujita, dental hygienist, an EDDA, and an administrative assistant. An endodontist also is available on an as-need basis.

Dental services also are provided at a satellite office in Steamboat Springs and NWCDC plans to begin offering service in the Hygiene facility at Colorado Northwestern Community College in Rangely beginning in June, 2009. Northwest Colorado is a sparsely populated region encompassing 13,780 square miles, an area larger than the entire state of Massachusetts. For this reason, the satellite offices have been successful, allowing those in the outlying areas the ability to access dental care, Pearcey says.

In addition, it has established a partnership with the school districts in Moffat and Routt Counties to assist in the delivery of oral health education within the health curriculum. NWCDC also serves as a host site for precepting students from the University of Colorado School of Dental Medicine and for dental hygiene students from Colorado Northwestern Community College.

It was chosen to participate in the Cavity Free at Three program, a three-year statewide effort to increase access to oral disease prevention and early detection for pregnant women and children less than three years of age. Recently, it was named the Moffat County United Way Agency of the Year for 2008.

The clinic is located at 485 Yampa Avenue in Craig. For additional information, contact Janet Pearcey, executive director, at 970-824-8000 or e-mail nwcodental@qwestoffice.net.