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The State of Health Care

HEROES

2009 HEALTH-CARE HEROES



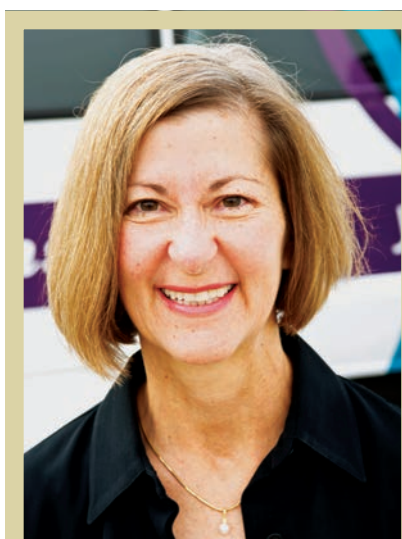
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Section B | Oct. 2-15, 2009

UCAR wellness efforts a breath of fresh air

Ergonomics key in effort to create healthy work place

BY SUZAN K. HEGLIN
news@bcbr.com

Employees are sitting pretty at the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research. With their ergonomically engineered chairs and work stations, you'll see none of the unsightly hunching that leads to muscle aches.



That's because UCAR began its commitment to its ergonomics program 10 years ago, and in that time, they've seen a 73 percent reduction in work-station injuries.

Their onsite ergonomist, Bob Wiley, is available to all 1,450 employees, even those working in Washington, D.C., or out of their homes.

"That's something we are really proud of," said Katy Schmoll, vice president of finance and administration.



MICHAEL MYERS

Katy Schmoll, left, and Cheryl Cristanelli of the University Corporation for Atmospheric Research, winner of this year's Health-Care Heroes award in the Business category.

And it is only one of the reasons that UCAR won the Boulder County Business Report's 2009 Health-Care Heroes Award in the Business Category.

Wiley was deeply involved in the move of 140 employees to temporary work sites during the recent renovation. He evaluated each employee

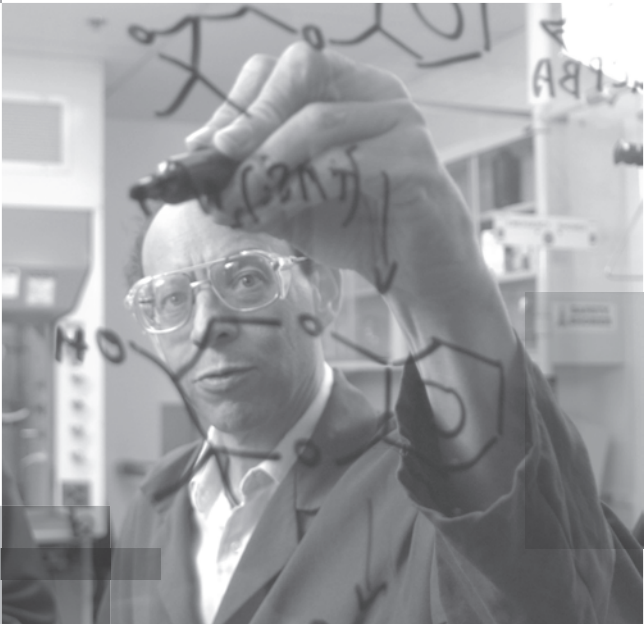
and recorded their ergonomic needs to implement into their temporary office space.

Ergonomics is just one concern of UCAR. Bob Roesch, director of human resources, has been with UCAR for about 14 years, but he is still surprised at the level of participa-

tion he sees in the annual events, as well as the health plan.


Roesch said 700 people, including relatives of employees and retirees, participate in things such as the Annual On-Site Health & Benefits Fair.

The fair has been going on for
► See **UCAR, 4B**



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Erin Pass helps neighbors help neighbors

Acupuncturist goes beyond office to help patients

BY ELIZABETH GOLD
news@bcbr.com

To Erin Pass, providing care to patients goes beyond the walls of her acupuncture clinic. She's stepped outside of the boundaries common to doctor-patient relationships to bring a community together.



Pass created the Neighbors Helping Neighbors program this year to help ease the physical challenges and isolation of one her longtime patients, Heather Gardner-Muir.

An auto accident six years ago turned Gardner-Muir's active life into wheelchair and house confinement unless someone helped her navigate

the steps of her front porch.

Even after eight surgeries, Gardner-Muir spends most of her time debilitated in pain. The lifestyle is a 180-degree shift from the life she used to live — running marathons and teaching English at Boulder's Fairview High School.

As a result of the accident, she no longer does either.

Her chronic pain started after a cortisone injection intended to relieve problems caused by the car accident hit a nerve root. The damage sent searing pain whenever her right foot touched the floor.

Surgeries aimed to alleviate the pain brought on a spinal staph infection and later a bacterial infection but no relief.

Medical bills mounted, while hope for relief dwindled. Little money was left after her disability checks and her husband's teaching salary covered the essentials of life with their two daughters.

She was one of Pass's first patients and over the years, the two became close friends. Pass even sometimes makes the trek to Gardner-Muir's home for treatments on days she can't get a ride.


"I wanted to do a fund-raiser for her but she wasn't comfortable with the limelight," said Pass, owner of the Acupuncture Clinic. "I asked her

► See **Pass, 6B**



Erin Pass, left, acupuncturist, with Heather Gardner-Muir at the recently constructed ramp at Heather's home.

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Physician eases hardships for cancer patients

Fleagle’s vision goes beyond chemo, radiation

BY ELIZABETH GOLD
news@bcbr.com

BOULDER — There was a time when Boulder Community Hospital had no designated cancer unit. It meant that local cancer patients who needed chemotherapy or radiation treatment had to withstand the drive to and from Denver — as well as the



side effects of the treatments. In 1983, John Fleagle, M.D., arrived in town and set his mind to changing that. He stressed the point that cancer patients need more than chemo and radiation — they need love and support from friends and family, and the process needs to be as easy as possible on their emotional and physical systems.

As treatments progress, caregivers often wear down, and the support they’re able to offer cancer patients wanes when it is most needed. The added stress of having to drive to Denver with someone who’s sick from chemo or drained by radiation puts more strain on an already stressful situation.

“John created a vision for excellence for Boulder Community Hospital,” said David Gehant, president and CEO of Boulder Community Hospital. “He provided leadership for the hospital with his vision and insight about centralizing services.”



John Fleagle helped transform Boulder Community Hospital into a center for excellence in cancer care.

Fleagle set out to collect information on cancer care in the country and visited leading cancer centers nationally to be able to create something locally, Gehant said.

He learned the impact of architecture on emotional healing and how centralizing services makes life more manageable for patients. The Cancer Care Center, which opened at Boulder Community Foothills Hospital in July 2007, is the result.

The Center makes life more manageable for patients. It’s a central location that brings together physicians, treatment technologies and support services to provide coordinated holistic care.

Alternative services available include nutrition counseling, massage, acupuncture and even a labyrinth.

“These things would not be available there without his vision,” Gehant said. “He helped developed a wide array of patient care — from a program that helps steer patients toward

resources to high-tech equipment that helps in diagnosis and treatment. His leadership helped determine what we needed.”

Rather than waiting for the funds to come in for the project, Fleagle played a pivotal role in rallying the community support that was necessary to bring it to life, Gehant said. He gave presentations, met personally with potential donors, and along with his two senior partners, became a major donor himself.

“We raised \$7.6 million in donations to build the center,” he added. “It was a vision shared by the community — more than 3,000 people donated.”

Prior to his work with the Cancer Care Center, Fleagle helped the hospital establish a designated nursing unit for cancer patients. The unit opened in 1992.

In addition, he saw to it that the nurses received specialized educa-

tion for the specialty care — he even taught some of the classes.

Boulder Community Hospital was the first hospital in Colorado to have every cancer-unit nurse nationally certified in cancer care.

Fleagle’s current focus is raising money to support local cancer patients in financial need. In February, he’ll join the board of the hospital’s foundation to help generate funds and friends for local cancer patients.

“John’s made life significantly better for people who are touched by cancer,” Gehant said. “He has tremendous integrity, is viewed as a leader among his peers and is very compassionate about his delivery of care. He always puts the patients first.”

Editor’s Note: John Fleagle is currently out of the country and was therefore unavailable for input on this story.

UCAR from 2B

20 years and offers free blood panels, screenings, information and classes.

Another high-participation event is the Annual On-Site Flu Vaccination Clinic, coming up, and likely to attract 800 people or more. It’s been going on for 25 years.

About 100 people participate in the grueling but fun Up the Hill Races.

Additionally, Roesch noted that, “People are very interested in the health-care plan.”

It is a consumer-driven, high-deductible health-care plan, and two-thirds of the employees are signed up despite the fact that it requires a certain education and commitment on the part of the employee. “We share the risks and rewards with them,” Roesch said.

UCAR/NCAR HAS FOUND that a healthy employee is a happy employee, and, indeed, what Roberts might hear now is that the employees are pretty happy: Roesch quotes a recent survey indicating that 90 percent of their employees would recommend their workplace.

Because many on its work force come from other nations or travel to foreign nations, UCAR has a Safety and Security Group that monitors communicable diseases around the world. They keep track of who is out of the country and where they are going and provide immunizations, plus contacts to local clinics.

Keeping an eye on the health of the local labs, there is a volunteer employ-

ee-activity committee. Among other things, committee members take some responsibility for the wellness centers, which house the exercise equipment and have space available for yoga and other health classes. Employees initiate many of the programs. One such program is the “blue bike” program, which has bicycles available to borrow.

That may be the most compelling

feature of their wellness philosophy, Roesch said. “We listen a lot.”

It’s a tradition that may be traceable back to one of their founders. “Walter Roberts was sort of the driving force for NCAR (the National Center for Atmospheric Research, which UCAR operates) to be what it is. He had a culture of walking around and listening to people,” Roesch said.

UCAR/NCAR has found that a healthy employee is a happy employee, and, indeed, what Roberts might hear now is that the employees are pretty happy: Roesch quotes a recent survey indicating that 90 percent of their employees would recommend their workplace.

“We want to keep our employees happy, and we only have a 4 or 5 percent turnover rate, so we do a good job of it,” Schmoll said.

Kottke drives Special Transit's services

*Passion, skills
characterize
agency's director*

BY VALERIE GLEATON
news@bcbr.com

After suffering a head injury in the late 1980s, Lenna Kottke's mother came to depend on Boulder's Special Transit to drive her to and from medical appointments three times a week



JONATHAN CASTNER

Lenn Kottke leads Special Transit, which provides transportation services to individuals who are unable to drive.

for more than six months. Although her mother eventually regained her driver's license, Kottke never forgot how the organization helped her family during one of its most difficult times. So in 1991, when Kottke saw a job listing for the executive director position at Special Transit, she

jumped at the chance to give back to the nonprofit. "I wanted to use my business skills as part of a community-based organization that helps people," she said. Special Transit, which celebrates its 30th anniversary this November, was founded in 1979 by the Boulder County Commissioners. The organi-

zation provides "door through door" transportation for people who are unable to drive — primarily elderly adults and people with disabilities — operating throughout Boulder and in adjacent areas, including Longmont, Niwot, Louisville, Lafayette, Erie, Lyons, Nederland, Estes Park, Allenspark and Brighton.

Kottke says that of the more than 120,000 trips last year, around 30,000 of them were to medical appointments: the doctor's office, the chiropractor, dialysis or chemotherapy. She explains that without Special Transit, riders would have to depend on friends and family or on taxis or

► See **Special, 7B**

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A colorful, impressionistic painting of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a person is sitting on a rocky outcrop, looking out over a valley. The mountains in the background are painted in various shades of green, yellow, and red, suggesting different rock formations or vegetation. The sky is a mix of blue and white.

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Bryant leads mental-health 'crisis team'

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BY LAURA BISHOP
news@bcbr.com

BOULDER — When someone has a mental-health issue or crisis, Jane C. Bryant's emergency psychiatric service team is there to help.

The team, also known as the "crisis team," is one of 30 clinical teams at The



Mental Health Center Serving Boulder and Broomfield Counties. Bryant's team of 28 includes people with master's degrees in counseling or social work. There are an additional 10 volunteers and interns that work on her team.

"We are the emergency service for the mental health center," she said. "We are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Team members go to local hospitals, the jail, people's homes and occasionally the homeless shelter to work on an evaluation. The center serves Boulder Community Hospital, Longmont United Hospital, Avista Adventist Hospital and Exempla Good Samaritan Medical Center.

"We see anyone that comes to the attention of the emergency room if they are there for psychiatric emergencies," Bryant said. "We are trying to see if someone can be treated on an outpatient basis or if they have to be in a psychiatric hospital. Twenty five to 30 percent of what we do is an evaluation."

The evaluation also includes looking at safety issues, if someone is being held against their will and medical reasons for their condition.

Bryant, who is a licensed professional counselor with a master's degree in counseling, has been in her



MICHAEL MYERS

Jane Bryant's team provides emergency mental-health services throughout Boulder and Broomfield counties.

“Her staff thinks the world of her. She is always calm, but cares deeply about the clients. She realizes the crisis has to be evaluated and the staff worker has to assess the level of imminent danger.”

Susan Williams

MARKETING MANAGER,

THE MENTAL HEALTH CENTER SERVING BOULDER AND BROOMFIELD COUNTIES

current job for three years and a team member at the center for 20 years. She enjoys training people, organizing a large team that works all hours of the day and encouraging teamwork.

Last July, the center took 30 to 60 calls in a 24-hour period by phone or in person. Suicide-intervention calls are a big part of what the team is involved in. Bryant does some of the phone work and will soon be taking out interns and doing evaluations.

"We do the initial assessment and

provisional diagnosis," Bryant said. Walk-in clients often immediately receive brief support and therapy. The team also consults with nursing homes and offers help with depression and behavioral problems.

The center, which has a wide range of services, focuses on people most in need and those with severe and persistent mental illness. The center works mostly with people receiving Medicaid. Funding comes from Medicaid, Boulder and Broomfield

counties, Longmont, Boulder and donations. The 2009-2010 budget is slightly under \$30 million.

Susan Williams, marketing manager for the center, said that last year, the center responded to more than 15,000 calls. This year, that number is expected to increase to nearly 20,000 due to the economic downturn. About 1,200 people a month receive help from the center.

The center has to respond to phone calls within 15 minutes and finish an evaluation within an hour.

Williams, who nominated Bryant for her award, shadowed Bryant's staff on a late shift. She was impressed by how calm the staff was under pressure. Williams said Bryant has the right leadership skills for her job.

"Her staff thinks the world of her," she said. "She is always calm, but cares deeply about the clients. She realizes the crisis has to be evaluated and the staff worker has to assess the level of imminent danger. She advocates for her staff. She is right there in the trenches for everyone and is clinically astute."

PASS from 3B

what I could do instead, and she said she couldn't get her wheelchair down the front steps, and that kept her housebound a lot of the time."

The cost of building a wheelchair ramp was out of the family's range of financial motion.

So that's where Pass started — bringing together volunteers and donors to make it possible for her friend to rejoin the world.

"I was in a class on self expression and leadership, and one of the prem-

ises of leadership is that it's not about me but about inspiring people in the community," Pass said.

"I contacted Heather's friends and my friends, and they said what they wanted to do. It just kept growing."

She posted 70 fliers throughout Gardner-Muir's neighborhood that described the project and invited everyone to a potluck. Fifty people showed up on the final build day.

Nahid Cohen was one of the friends who pitched in to help. "People want-

ed to put their hearts and their time into it," she said. Inspired by the project, Cohen nominated Pass for the Community Service Award.

Individuals, coffee shops and restaurants donated food; contractors and good Samaritans donated expertise, labor and supplies.

"Heather and Alan [her husband] have been awed by the results. People did a perfect job."

On her Web site, Pass writes: "This project wasn't just about function, it

was a labor of love. I'm not sure who is happier, Heather or me. This project has profoundly affected my life."

For more information on the Neighbors Helping Neighbors program, see: www.acupunctureclinicofboulder.com/interest.html.

Pass encourages people to contact her through the Web site with ideas for projects for the Neighbors Helping Neighbors program.

"I'm inspired. I want to do more," she said.

Myhre takes passion for care worldwide

Mante mission takes Boulder doctors abroad

BY LAURA BISHOP
news@bcbr.com

BOULDER — Jodelle Myhre has a passion for delivering first-rate medical care to less-fortunate people around the world.

Myhre, service coordinator for patient care at Boulder Community



Hospital in the operating room, has been involved with the Mante Medical Mission for 17 years. Mante, which is Boulder's sister city in Mexico, is in an economically depressed area with little medical care for the poor and unemployed. For the past 20 years, Boulder medical professionals have been donating their time to the mission once a year — at the end of January and early February.

Myhre, who is a surgery team leader in charge of 34 people, has been involved in a leadership role for 10 years. Surgeons from Boulder and other communities participate in the mission. There are general surgeons, as well as others specializing in ear, nose and throat; plastics and reconstruction; gynecology and eye care. There are 10 to 15 people a year from Boulder that help with the surgery.

"It's to help people," Myhre said. "The people there are so appreciative. It fills my emotional bank. You will never work harder, but something will touch your soul every day."

Myhre, who stays with the same host family each year, believes she is part of that family. One of her most-memorable surgeries was for a woman

with a 40-pound ovarian cyst. People in her village shunned her because they thought she was pregnant when she was unmarried. The following year, the woman came back to thank the surgical team and tell them she

“It's to help people. The people there are so appreciative. It fills my emotional bank. You will never work harder, but something will touch your soul every day.”

Jodelle Myhre

SERVICE COORDINATOR FOR PATIENT CARE,
BOULDER COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

was engaged.

In addition to leading a surgical team, Myhre works on receiving donations for the mission. "The minute I get back from the mission, I plan for next year's mission," she said. Companies donate anywhere from \$100 to several thousand dollars through the hospital's foundation. The money pays for surgical supplies, medications and hearing aids. Mike Moran, vice president and chief quality officer at Boulder Community Hospital, said the donations amount to about \$100,000 a year.

"We get a lot of donations from a lot of companies we work with at the hospital on a regular basis," he said. The hospital pays for the majority of the people from Boulder that go on the mission. Moran, administrative leader for the Mante Medical Mission, said Myhre has been an outstanding leader with her work.

"She manages the whole campaign where we do roughly 250 surgeries in a week," he said. "She spends a lot of time preparing for the campaign. She has to get all of the supplies — medications and surgical supplies,



MICHAEL MYERS

Jodelle Myhre has been involved with the Mante Medical Mission in Mexico for 17 years.

organizes the team of surgeons and nurses. She has to basically run the show. The surgeons have the highest respect for her. She knows how to take care of patients."

Not only does Myhre do medical work in Mexico, she is also affiliated with San Francisco-based Rotaplast International Inc. Rotarians sponsor the organization. Plastic surgeons fix cleft lips and palates. She has done work in India, Vietnam, Peru, Guatemala and Brazil. This year, she has gone on two Rotaplast missions

— one to Guatemala City, and the other was in Brazil. Myhre has worked on one medical mission for Boulder Community Hospital in Tanzania.

Moran said through Myhre's team efforts, she has helped at least 5,000 people in Mante over the years. She enjoys the work and friendships she makes.

"I wanted to help people who couldn't get health care," Myhre said. "It's about friendships and family connections. It's like going down to treat your family."

SPECIAL from 5B

regular bus services to get to these appointments, a big challenge for those with limited mobility.

"When people talk about access to health care, they're usually thinking of insurance and affordability," Kottke said. "But the issue of physical access is just as important and can be just as big an obstacle."

Although many riders primarily use Special Transit to get to medical appointments, drivers also take riders to the grocery store, department stores, the library, friends' houses — almost anywhere they want to go.

"Sometimes, those trips are equally

important to a rider's emotional health," Kottke explained. "A lot of people say that if it weren't for Special Transit, they would be totally isolated."

Rider fares (usually \$2 for a one-way trip), account for only 2 percent of the organization's total costs. The remainder comes from more than 30 grants (Boulder Community Hospital and Longmont United Hospital are significant contributors), as well as from three earned-income contracts with the Regional Transportation District, for which Special Transit operates one of the access-a-Ride programs, the call-n-Ride program,

and the HOP shuttle service around Boulder.

Since Kottke joined Special Transit as executive director, the organization's budget has grown to around \$13 million, with \$3 million of that going directly toward the organization's door through door ride service. Not including its contract programs for RTD, Kottke estimates that Special Transit employs about 60 people, from mechanics to call-center operators to drivers.

"I'm kind of like the conductor," Kottke said. "But the people who work with our riders on a day-to-day

basis are the real health-care heroes."

But Kottke's nominator for the Health Care Hero award, Boulder Community Hospital Foundation president Ron Secrist, who served on the Special Transit Board for four years, insists that the honor is well-deserved: "I've known Lenna for more than 10 years ... and saw first-hand what an effective leader and consensus builder she is. Lenna is so passionate about the mission of Special Transit and truly throws all of herself into her work. She's incredibly bright and loves to engage. She is the quintessential nonprofit leader."

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