

## NEW MEXICO PROGRAMS – Local Projects Division The SPOT for Community Wellness

### The SPOT Offers Exceptional Programs

The SPOT for Community Wellness in Peñasco, New Mexico, continues to offer exceptional services and programs to residents of a large frontier area in north-central New Mexico. The SPOT, which stands for Strengthening, Pride, Optimism, and Trust, is a local project of the National Center for Frontier Communities in cooperation with the Picuris-Peñasco Community Coalition (PPCC). The SPOT is funded by a Rural Health Services Outreach Grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, HRSA, Office of Rural Health Policy

Now in its third year of operation, the SPOT is humming with programs eagerly embraced by the community including parenting classes, fitness classes, workshops, trainings, and a mental health support group. A successful community basketball tournament was organized in the summer of 2006. A weekly "Story Time" and lending library draws an enthusiastic group of babies, preschoolers, parents, and caregivers.

The SPOT, along with the PPCC, organizes many community events. In April 2007, hundreds of area residents attended the sixth Honoring Our Elders, Honoring Our Traditions celebration of local history, traditions, and the contributions of community elders. Elders are recognized for their achievements and students provide a large art exhibit as well as musical and dance entertainment.

Last fall, the Health and Wellness Fair at Picuris Pueblo brought together forty health and human services providers from throughout Northern New Mexico. Free lipid panel and blood glucose screenings, Body Mass Index (BMI), water testing, HIV and STI testing, and other clinical preventive health screenings were provided. Educational information was also available. Over 400 people participated in Health and Wellness 2006.

### History of The SPOT

The SPOT program was envisioned more than nine years ago when the Council of Picuris Pueblo, a federally-recognized tribe, identified the need to improve local health services. They led the way by establishing the Picuris-Peñasco Community Coalition, a multi-cultural coalition including local health and human services providers, churches, the local school district and supportive individuals in this remote, mountainous area. The PPCC chose the

NCFC as its fiscal agent for its proven leadership, administrative expertise, and longstanding commitment to the community. In 2003, the PPCC applied for and received the ORHP Rural Health Outreach Services Grant in 2004.

### Successful Review Brings Technical Assistance

As the result of a successful 2006 federal review, the SPOT has received a series of three federally funded trainings on issues of local importance.

In January, Ann Kirkwood of Idaho State University engaged local leaders in social marketing. The sessions focused on using tools, adapted from commercial marketing, to address and reduce stigma, particularly related to mental illness and substance abuse. Participants learned skills to encourage people to change their attitudes/behaviors and to empower those who are stigmatized.

In May, Roberta Leis of "Join Together," a program of the Boston University School of Public Health, and Ray Daw, executive director of NCI, a 150 bed residential treatment facility in Gallup, NM, offered a workshop for Peñasco-Taos area community organizers focusing on policy changes that support reduction of alcohol and drug abuse. NCFC arranged for Leis and Daw to bring their message to the Taos County Commissioners, the Picuris Pueblo Governing Council and the Peñasco Independent School District Board of Education.

The HBO documentary, "Addiction," was shown, followed by a panel discussion. The film offers new science on the causes of and treatments for addiction as well as policies that affect treatment options. For more information or to view the video, go to <http://www.hbo.com/addiction>. Participants set four action steps to address substance abuse in the Picuris-Peñasco community. The first project is the promotion of an alcohol-free graduation on May 26<sup>th</sup>.

The final training will be held in the Summer of 2007 and will teach methods for changing the social norms of a community.

The entire process of preparing for the HRSA Performance Review, having experts on site reviewing the program, and the subsequent technical assistance has been a fantastic help to this under-resourced service area. The performance review system as conducted by the Office of Program Review is a great example of how HRSA helps communities succeed.

national  
center  
for  
**frontier**  
communities  
1997-2007  
celebrating 10 years

# Frontier Area Report

the newsletter of the National Center for Frontier Communities

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### National Center Celebrates First Ten Years

The National Center for Frontier Communities (NCFC) was founded in 1997 by a talented group of frontier experts from around the United States. Each was dedicated to the establishment of a strong, united voice for frontier communities. Originally named the Frontier Education Center, in 2006 the name was changed to better reflect the mission of the Center. The National Center is entering its second decade as the only national organization dedicated exclusively to the smallest and most geographically isolated communities in the United States.

The mission is to conduct research, provide education, offer leadership, and serve as a clearinghouse for issues of importance to frontier communities. The Center uses a 'healthy community' approach, defining health holistically to include physical, emotional, economic, educational, environmental and spiritual wellness.

The NCFC works with community-based organizations throughout the U.S., policy makers at all levels of government, universities, geographers, journalists, and other interested individuals. Research projects focus on health services, community economics, education, and transportation. The Center issues frequent reports and policy briefs calling attention to and offering solutions for diverse issues such as workforce shortages, the impacts of seasonal population fluctuations, and changing demographics. The Frontier News and Updates e-newsletter keeps subscribers up to date on frontier issues. Visit [www.frontierus.org](http://www.frontierus.org) for more information and to subscribe.

### Expert Panel to Study Challenges to Frontier Wellness

The National Center for Frontier Communities is convening its annual Frontier and Rural Expert Panel meeting on May 31 in Washington D.C. to discuss environmental and programmatic ways to improve wellness in frontier communities.

Cynthia Mildred Duncan of the Carsey Institute, University of New Hampshire, and Maya Rockey Moore of Leadership for Healthy Communities will address the group. Martin Harris of the National Association of Counties, Center for Sustainable Communities and Louis LaRose of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska are discussants. These participants bring different perspectives on the unique challenges to and strategies for creating wellness programs that overcome social and geographical barriers.

Following the presentations, the Expert Panel will identify the issues that the NCFC will research and compile into a report for frontier and rural communities and policymakers.

**Frontier and Rural  
Expert Panel**

**PETER G. BEESON**  
Nebraska Commissioner of  
Mental Health, retired  
Lincoln, NE

**MARTIN BERNSTEIN**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Northern Maine Medical  
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Fort Kent, ME

**PATRICIA CARR**  
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**GAR ELISON**  
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Cecil G. Sheps Center for  
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University of North Carolina  
at Chapel Hill  
Chapel Hill, NC

**KARL STAUBER**  
President,  
Northwest Area Foundation  
St. Paul, MN

## Border Health HIT Paper to be Published

### "Public Health and Information Technology at the United States-Mexico Border: Examples Show Potential"

*In March 2006, the NCFC Frontier and Rural Expert Panel met in Tucson, Arizona to hear presentations on the topic of Border Health and Health Information Technology (HIT) by border health experts followed by group discussion and a field trip to visit hospital administrators in the border towns of Nogales, AZ and Nogales, Sonora, Mexico. The meeting was convened to inform the Office of Rural Health Policy and other policymakers about this important topic. This report is an outgrowth of the Tucson-Nogales meetings.*

#### Complex Challenges Along the Border

As policy makers at the State and Federal levels take steps to mandate the use of health information technology (HIT) in health care delivery, there is recognition of challenges, many of which are especially complex in the bi-national, bi-lingual United States-Mexico border region. This report explores the use of HIT technologies in the United States-Mexico border region. The focus is the current state of HIT used to manage specific health issues; tuberculosis, diabetes, and immunization programs at the border and along the migrant stream.

A successful national HIT system requires interoperability of various systems, strong networks of organizations and individuals, and modern technologies. The establishment of national standards that can be effectively implemented across a broad range of settings and service delivery contexts is essential. Most applications are developed in urban areas and are dominated by urban perspectives, but there is recognition of the need for frontier and rural-specific systems.

Public health challenges at the border only increase the complexity of HIT in border health applications. It is important to document the experiences and perspectives of early HIT users in the most challenging of settings to inform the development of flexible, appropriate, and functional national standards and guidelines.

#### Positive Implementation Methods Identified

The region is characterized by predominantly frontier geography; dynamic and diverse populations; special health care needs with relatively poor access to health services; and broadband information networks. This context creates unique challenges, opportunities, and uncertainties for the deployment of HIT by public health and healthcare agencies within the region. The diversity of the region also translates into diversity of experience with HIT; there are many positive examples of IT implementation as well as challenges.

#### Sign-up to Receive This Publication

The Health Resources and Services Administration, HHS, will be publishing the report, "Public Health and Information Technology at the United States-Mexico Border: Examples Show Potential". NCFC, among others, will distribute the publication. Contact NCFC if you wish to receive a copy or sign up for e-news at [www.frontierus.org](http://www.frontierus.org) and you will receive a notice when copies are available.

## Executive Director Receives "Going to Bat" Award from the National Association for Rural Mental Health

The "Going to Bat Award" of the National Association for Rural Mental Health (NARMH) was presented to Carol Miller at its 2006 Annual Conference held in San Antonio, Texas. This award is given from time to time to an individual who has been a strong voice and advocate for rural mental health.

The award was presented by NARMH Board Member, Helene Silverblatt, MD, in recognition of Miller's leadership efforts, outreach, education and advocacy for better mental health programs and services on behalf of rural and frontier communities. The presentation noted that the National Center for Frontier Communities, which Miller founded, is an excellent model for addressing critical issues facing frontier communities.

## Important New Partnerships Benefit Frontier Communities

### CancerCare Brings Free Services to Frontier Communities

In the fall of 2006, the national CancerCare organization contacted the Center for help in publicizing their numerous programs to residents of frontier and rural areas. CancerCare provides a large array of services, educational materials and support to people with cancer. A regular schedule of free telephone workshops on cancer topics is available. Leading health professionals make presentations that can be heard by anyone calling a toll-free 800 number. This is an important resource, particularly for people in remote areas.

For more information about CancerCare visit <http://www.cancercare.org/> or call 800-813-HOPE.

### Family Caregiver Alliance: the National Center on Caregiving

This partnership like many others, began with a telephone call to the National Center for Frontier Communities. That call was from the Family Caregiver Alliance at National Center on Caregiving in San Francisco, California ([www.caregiver.org](http://www.caregiver.org)). The Alliance was looking for information about the state of family caregiving in frontier communities.

A relationship was developed from this first call. NCFC Executive Director Carol Miller has keynoted a northern California regional caregivers meeting in Redding last October and spoke on rural issues at an invitational leadership meeting held in conjunction with the Chicago meeting of the American Society of Aging in March 2007.

## NCFC Announces Endowment Campaign!

Over the past ten years the National Center for Frontier Communities has grown from being the dream of a handful of advocates to a highly regarded national organization. With new issues and needs continually arising in the American frontier, it is imperative that the Center continues to expand its reach.

To ensure a secure future for the organization, the Board has undertaken an ambitious endowment campaign to include funding from private and foundation sources. With a permanently protected endowment fund, the Center will continue to efficiently and creatively generate solutions to the problems that no other organization addresses.

To participate in the endowment campaign or contribute to the endowment fund, visit <http://www.frontierus.org/form3.htm> or call us at 505-820-6732.

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