



**NEWS RELEASE**  
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Community Health Champions Named: Recognition for Exceptional Contributions to Health of Coloradans

DENVER— Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN), the association of Colorado Community Health Centers (CHCs), announced its Community Health Champions last night at its annual legislative gathering.

The Community Health Champion award recognizes state legislators, and volunteer clinicians for their work to improve the health of Coloradans. The 2011 awardees are:

The Honorable Jeanne Nicholson  
Colorado Senate District 16

The Honorable Spencer Swalm  
Colorado House District 37

Dr. Velusamy Kailasam  
Volunteer Clinician for Sunrise Community Health

### **Community Health Champion Legislators**

The Community Health Champion award for legislators is given to lawmakers who have gone above and beyond to support legislation and positions that directly support CHCs and increase access to primary health care for the underserved.

**Sen. Nicholson** has been a strong supporter and advocate of CHCs beginning with her work as a county commissioner, and continuing now in the Colorado General Assembly.

In 2011, Sen. Nicholson worked hard to help restore some of the funds to CHCs that were proposed for cuts, cuts that would have impacted patient care. She also worked to stop cuts to the family practice residency program, which is important to rural Colorado. Sen. Nicholson encouraged colleagues on the House Education Committee to support CHCs by helping them make the connection that a child with a good education has better health outcomes and a healthy child learns better.

Sen. Nicholson, a public health nurse for many years, has always supported the role of CHCs as a critical complementary resource to public health. She has been a strong advocate for getting people access to the care they need at a Health Center and for public health to focus on populations and other health issues. She has consistently said that a CHC is the right model to deliver high quality primary health care throughout Colorado and has expressed her gratitude to have a CHC in her mountain community.

Sen. Nicholson supported the work of Mountain Family Health Centers (Mountain Family), Clinica Family Health Services, Inc., and Salud Family Health Centers when she was a public health nurse in Boulder County and as county commissioner in Gilpin County. In particular, she has been a strong supporter of Mountain Family's clinic in Black Hawk, where she knows the staff by name. She made sure that Mountain Family was a high priority for funding from Gaming Impact Funds from the Department of Local Affairs (DOLA). In her current role on the Limited Gaming Commission, she has been a persuasive voice to DOLA to continue to fund health care, not just roads, bridges, and jails. In 2009, when CHCs faced cuts to state funding, Sen. Nicholson encouraged her fellow commissioners to find more funds to keep the Black Hawk clinic open and succeeded despite some resistance.

“We honor Sen. Nicholson for her belief and work to ensure that all members of the community have the right to access health care,” said Annette Kowal, CCHN CEO. “Her public service record reflects this value.”

**Rep. Swalm** has been a strong supporter of CHCs since becoming a state representative in 2006. He has consistently brought his personal beliefs and compassion to the debate around access to health care and has publicly demonstrated his support for patient-centered health care and CHCs.

In 2010, Rep. Swalm was the House sponsor for Senate Joint Resolution 10-023, supporting CHCs, which many CHC staff and board members were lucky enough to hear read in both the Senate and House chambers.

In 2011, Rep. Swalm again sponsored legislation in support of CHCs through House Bill 11-1101, which exempts CHCs from duplicative clinic licensure requirements. The bill passed both the House and the Senate with unanimous support, and was signed into law by Governor Hickenlooper. Also in 2011, Rep. Swalm was part of a group of Republicans in the House who let their leadership know that they supported restoring particular funding for CHCs.

Rep. Swalm is a visible figure at Metro Community Provider Network’s (MCPN) public events. In the past year, he has attended events such as the inaugural ribbon cutting ceremony for MCPN’s Extended Care Clinic in Aurora, the ground breaking ceremony for their Jefferson County Family Health Services Clinic, and MCPN’s Annual Green Tie, a gala fundraising event.

“Rep. Swalm is very accessible, always promptly returning emails and phone calls. He is genuinely happy to be out among his constituents and has been extremely generous with his public comments about MCPN. He makes the effort to stay in touch.....and never fails to ask how he can help,” said Dave Myers, President and CEO of MCPN.

### **Community Health Champion Volunteer Clinician**

Each year, CCHN recognizes a volunteer clinician who is dedicated to serving the needs of the medically underserved. This unpaid clinician is someone who provides direct patient services in a CHC or to CHC patients in his or her office, leads advocacy activities on behalf of the medically underserved, and has provided volunteer service for a minimum of three years.

**Dr. Kailasam** has donated his time and expertise to patients from Sunrise Community Health’s (Sunrise) Monfort Children’s Clinic and Monfort Family Clinic. He practices at Northern Colorado Asthma and Allergy Clinic in Greeley, Loveland and Fort Collins and volunteers at Sunrise on a monthly basis. Dr. Kailasam has brought staff and equipment from his private practice to Sunrise’s clinics when he felt that they were needed by the patients. He was instrumental in establishing the current evidence-based protocol for treatment of asthma patients—now in place at all of the Sunrise sites. Dr. Kailasam is board-certified in Allergy and Immunology and Internal Medicine, and has a special interest and training in Dermatology. He has helped Sunrise clinicians evaluate and treat patients with dermatologic needs, needs that could not otherwise be addressed in the community.

In addition to the time Dr. Kailasam spends on a monthly basis at the two Sunrise Monfort clinics, he also schedules evening hours for follow-up with patients who cannot be accommodated during his regular volunteer schedule.

A patient nominated Dr. Kailasam for a Channel 7 Everyday Hero award, which he received in 2011. In honoring Dr. Kailasam with a CCHN Community Health Champion award, CCHN recognizes his commitment to provide specialty care to patients who might not be able to access this care otherwise.

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*The Colorado Community Health Network (CCHN) is the unified voice for Colorado’s 15 Community Health Centers (CHCs) and their patients. CHCs provide a health care home to more than 500,000 of their community members - one in 10 people in Colorado - from 57 of the state’s 64 counties. Without CHCs, hundreds of thousands of Colorado’s low-income families and individuals would have no regular source of health care.*

CCHN's mission is to increase access to high quality health care for people in need in Colorado. For more information about CCHN, please visit [www.cchn.org](http://www.cchn.org).

To learn more about careers at Community Health Centers, please visit [www.missiondrivencareers.org](http://www.missiondrivencareers.org).

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