

# TELLURIDE DAILY PLANET

NORWOOD POST > NEWS

## West End to get heart healthy

*Tri-County Health network to offer free screenings*

By **PATRICK ALAN COLEMAN**

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A new program adopted by the Tri-County Health Network (THN), a supporting organization of the Telluride Foundation focused on community health in Ouray, Montrose and San Miguel counties, will begin offering free health screenings to West End residents beginning in September.

The Colorado Heart Healthy Solutions program (developed by the Colorado Prevention Center) is meant to promote healthy lifestyles, particularly in rural communities that've had historically poor access to healthcare services, by connecting people with community health workers who will provide full heart health workups free of charge.

Tests provided will check blood pressure, blood glucose, body mass index, and screen for risk factors that could lead to cardiovascular disease or diabetes, all with the intent to inspire individuals to make changes that result in positive health outcomes.

THN Executive Director Lynn Borup explains that the program seeks to bridge some health care gaps.

"The goal is really to identify those people most at need," Borup says. "So, more of the underserved population: those who don't have insurance or those who can't afford insurance due to money issues."

While the program is slated to start early next month THN currently has community health workers out in the field identifying workplaces, events, or specific populations that might benefit most from the screening. They're also identifying resources, from exercise groups to community organizations, where individuals can seek post-screening support .

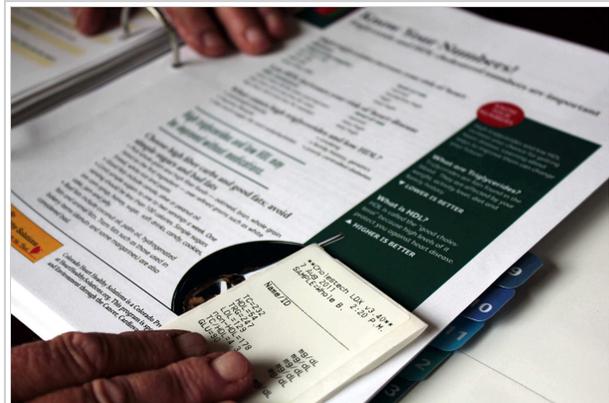
Deon Tempfer, THN community health worker for Norwood, explains her role. "We're going to listen to the people," she says. "We're going to be their health coaches. By no means do we diagnose or suggest treatment. What we will do is refer them to the patient navigators, clinics, or any health provider of their choice."

Beyond referrals, Tempfer notes that the program is also partnering with community members looking to support their neighbors' health, like the owners of Paradox Produce who will provide people who undergo screening a voucher for 10 percent off fruits and veggies.

"I feel like we're circling the wagons," says Tempfer. "Everyone is working together."

Individuals who're commonly nervous about medical tests will be happy to note the screenings are a "very pain free" process that relies on a simple pin prick to draw blood from the side of the finger. This blood is then processed in a Cholestech machine that reads an individual's glucose, "good" and

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A printout shows levels of cholesterol and blood sugar levels, helping community health workers direct participants to appropriate resources [Photo by Patrick Coleman]

"bad" cholesterol and lipid profile. In addition to the blood test, participants are asked to fill out a cardiologist-developed Framingham Risk Score questionnaire that calculates cardiovascular health based on basic questions about diet and exercise. The entire process takes only 15 to 30 minutes.

The Colorado Heart Healthy Solutions program was adopted by THN specifically to address recent concerns from the 2011 regional health assessment. While that study found fewer overweight and obese people in Southwestern Colorado compared to the rest of the state, heart disease remained one of the top killers in the region, as physical inactivity increased and consumption of fruits and vegetables decreased.

In San Miguel County specifically, heart disease was second only to cancer as the leading causes of death.

Those who are interested in scheduling screenings when the program begins, or are interested in more information on the program, can contact Deon Tempfer at 209-8811

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