

WHA Members in the News

Steve Perry, CEO of Star Valley Medical Center and WHA Board Chairman, has been named the Citizen of the Year by the Star Valley Chamber of Commerce. The 2007 Salute To Business Banquet was held March 21.

Hot Springs County Memorial Hospital was honored as the Thermopolis Chamber of Commerce 2007 Business of the Year at the Annual Chamber Banquet March 8. Among the criteria for selection was a commitment to customer service and service to the community.

Endowment Challenge Deadline

Time is running short for critical access and rural hospitals to request matching funds from the first year of the Wyoming Critical Access/Rural Hospital Endowment Challenge Program. The State Treasurer's office must receive requests for the first fiscal year by June 30.

In 2007, the Legislature appropriated \$4 million to be distributed to eligible Wyoming hospitals over a two-year period. As a result, \$125,000 in matching funds is available to each of the 16 eligible hospitals for each fiscal year. Under the terms of the program, the matching funds must be invested by the hospital's Foundation similar to other permanent funds, and the earnings can be used to promote and benefit the mission and operation of the hospitals.

To receive matching funds, each hospital must have collected pledges of at least \$10,000, and must have submitted the basic forms to the State Treasurer's office. For more information about the program, the application process, or to receive the forms that must be submitted, please call the WHA at 307-632-9344.

Senator Enzi 10 Steps, 10 Stops Tour

U.S. Senator Mike Enzi kicked off his '10 Steps, 10 Stops' tour in Cheyenne on Monday, launching a statewide effort to promote his healthcare reform program. Sen. Enzi also planned stops in Rawlins, Rock Springs, Pinedale, Lander, Worland, Lovell, Casper, Lusk, and Gillette. Describing the program as a comprehensive solution to expand access to affordable healthcare for all Americans, Sen. Enzi said his plan builds on market-based solutions and strengthens current insurance programs. The 10-step program emphasizes the elimination of unfair tax treatment of health insurance, increasing affordable insurance options, increasing pooling options across state lines to help control insurance costs, utilizing technology to improve healthcare delivery, and increasing access to primary care in rural and frontier areas. Sen. Enzi said his plan could pass as a single, comprehensive package, or each component could be passed as an

individual bill. Either approach will improve the system and expand access, he said. For more details about the '10 Steps' plan, visit <http://enzi.senate.gov>

Electronic Health Records Touted

A team of federal health officials visited Wyoming last week to tout the economic and health advantages of using electronic health records and to urge Wyoming to apply for inclusion in a new electronic health records demonstration project. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services in the federal Department of Health and Human Services is planning a five-year demonstration project that will encourage doctors in small and medium-sized practices to use electronic health records.

Kerry Weems, acting administrator of CMS, says Wyoming or some of its larger communities should apply for the project. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt launched the demonstration project to show doctors how electronic health records can improve patient care as well as save money. "The goal is to revolutionize the way health care information is managed, producing better health care outcomes and greater patient satisfaction," CMS said in a background fact sheet about the demonstration project. The project will involve doctors in 12 areas around the country and involve an estimated 3.6 million patients. Federal health officials hope to show a marked improvement in quality of patient care over the five-year project. The program will pay participating doctors up to \$58,000 and group practices up to \$290,000 over the five-year period, but Weems said cost savings should more than pay for those payments. CMS currently is accepting applications for the project and will announce its 12 communities early in June.

Wyoming Department of Health Joins National Exercise

The Wyoming Department of Health successfully participated recently in a national pandemic flu-related distribution exercise. Called "Operation Western Spindalis," the exercise involved deployment of 25 percent of the federally held influenza pandemic countermeasures such as antiviral medications and masks to selected areas. The exercise was designed to support CDC's top priority of preparing for an influenza pandemic. CDC's Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) program has large quantities of medicine and medical supplies to help protect the public if a public health emergency occurs that is severe or unique enough to overwhelm local inventories. Wyoming has developed detailed plans to receive and distribute SNS medicine and materials to local communities as quickly as possible. A December 2007 CDC evaluation of the Wyoming Department of Health's SNS plans reported Wyoming is meeting national standards and resulted in a 40 percent improvement over the 2006 review.

Senator Barrasso Opposes Cuts

U.S. Senator John Barrasso recently joined 58 other senators and 264 representatives in urging Congressional budget leaders to reject billions of dollars in proposed cuts to Medicare and Medicaid. Days later, both the U.S. House and Senate passed resolutions that rejected President Bush's proposed cuts. The President had recommended more than \$182 billion in cuts to Medicare over the next five years, as well as \$18 billion in cuts to Medicaid. If passed, those proposals would cost Wyoming hospitals about \$70 million over five years.

Budget resolutions are non-binding documents that establish the parameters for tax and spending decisions by Congress. The differing House and Senate resolutions must now be reconciled in conference before the self-imposed April 15 deadline for completing the budget.

Residents Invited to Participate in National Fitness Challenge

Wyoming Governor Dave Freudenthal, the Wyoming Department of Health and the Governor's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports are inviting state residents to take part in the "National President's Challenge." The National President's Challenge is an online-based, six-week health challenge that involves tracking physical activity. States will be competing against each other based on participation rates, and individuals may earn awards. After registering, participants are given an activity log and can log in each day to track their activity. To learn more about the challenge and to register, visit www.presidentschallenge.org online. Follow the links to register. To support the Wyoming group in this challenge, include **68127** in the "Group ID Number" box and **State of Wyoming** for your "Group Member ID/Name." There is no cost to participate. The program ends during National Physical Fitness and Sports Month on May 15.