



HEALTH MATTERS  
AT  
ASPEN VALLEY  
HOSPITAL

WINTER 2015

Cover photos by  
Taylor Liebmann

# THE STATE OF MENTAL HEALTH IN OUR COMMUNITY

With a suicide rate higher than the national average, a community health assessment that shows higher than average usage of alcohol and drugs compared to both Colorado and the nation, and growing concerns about mental health in our area, this edition of *Health Matters* is dedicated to the topic of mental health.

It is important to note that there are shortcomings in the delivery of care for those with mental illness and/or addiction throughout our country. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, mental disorders are common throughout the United States, affecting tens of millions of people each year, with only about half of those affected getting treatment. In addition, a national survey conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration reports that, likewise, tens of millions of people each year need treatment for an illicit drug or alcohol abuse problem.

There are limited beds for inpatient care (14 beds per capita nationally, 10 beds per capita in Colorado, and 6 beds per capita on the western slope), access limitations due to insurance and other barriers, and the patients themselves can be challenging due to the inherent nature of their disease. In addition, Aspen does not have a large enough population to support treatment facilities that might (or might not) be available in large cities.

## WHAT IS AVAILABLE IN OUR COMMUNITY?

### Mind Springs Health

**Mission:** To provide access to quality mental health and substance abuse services, enhancing recovery and resilience in individuals, families, and communities.

This local agency, with ties to West Springs Hospital in Grand Junction, treats a full range of mental health

issues and has certified addiction counselors and the ability to connect people with psychiatric services. Aspen Mind Springs Health offers a multitude of resources to treat and heal those in need. West Springs Hospital recently opened its "Transitions" program with an 11-bed facility for patients who can benefit from short-term 24-hour mental health care but who don't need acute hospitalization. Mind Springs accepts Medicare, Medicaid, CHP+, and most other insurances. An uninsured benefit plan establishes a sliding scale fee.

**Office: 970.920.5555**

**24/7 Crisis Line: 888.207.4004**

### Aspen Hope Center

**Mission:** To extend a beacon of hope to those in emotional crisis and offer a continuum of comprehensive care while steadfastly working to decrease the stigma of mental illness through expert clinical care, public education, community collaboration, and outreach.

Formed in 2010, this agency offers an array of services including a 24-hour hotline, information and referrals, individual counseling, community training on suicide and other subjects, and crisis intervention. For "high-risk" individuals, the Individual Intensive Outpatient Program is an alternative to inpatient hospitalization. The Hope Center accepts insurance and offers discounted services as needed.

**Phone: 970.925.5858**

### Private practitioners

Psychiatrists, psychologists, and a variety of other therapists in private practice offer psychiatric services to residents of our community.

## Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH)

**Mission:** To deliver extraordinary healthcare in an environment of excellence, compassion, and trust.

While a broad range of services is offered at AVH, certain types of specialty care are not available on an inpatient basis, thus requiring stabilization and transfer to other facilities. Examples include neurosurgery, invasive cardiac procedures, care for low-birth-weight newborns, mental illness, and addiction. In each instance, our valley does not have high enough volumes to provide these services that require specialized technology, facilities, and/or professionals. Relative to psychiatric disorders, AVH physicians provide acute care in consultation with mental health professionals at Mind Springs Health and Aspen Hope Center. Contractual agreements with both agencies ensure around-the-clock availability.

### WORKING TOGETHER

When patients present to the AVH emergency department with a mental health or addiction concern, they are given a thorough medical evaluation. If a physical problem is ruled out, physicians and staff can then focus on a mental health assessment with the assistance of Mind Springs or the Hope Center.

If it is safe to do so, the patient is released to family or friends. If there is the potential for harm to self or others, he/she may be transferred to an inpatient treatment facility. In most instances, the patient is transferred within a few hours, but if a bed is not immediately available, he/she is kept at AVH until transfer is possible.

Patients are kept comfortable and provided with compassionate care either in the emergency department, or, if transfer is delayed, in an inpatient room. In either instance, a designated staff member — from AVH, Mind Springs, or the Hope Center — stays with the patient until transfer occurs. Patients are transferred to the jail only if they exhibit violent behavior and have been medically cleared.

### WHY DOESN'T AVH HAVE A PSYCHIATRIST ON STAFF?

The role of an on-staff psychiatrist would be to avail him/herself to emergency physicians when someone in crisis presents to the emergency room. That means 24/7 availability — as needs can arise at any time of the day or night — which means at least two psychiatrists to rotate call. That is not financially feasible nor is it appealing to most professionals. As a result, AVH has been unable to attract and/or retain psychiatrists on its medical staff.

### WHY HASN'T AVH INCLUDED A PSYCHIATRIC UNIT IN ITS MASTER FACILITIES PLAN?

“Unit” is the operative word. A “room” or two is not sufficient. Regulatory requirements dictate a locked area with inpatient rooms, activity and dining areas, and the availability of specialized staff (doctors and nurses). Requirements such as these are prohibitive for all small hospitals. In fact, not a single critical access hospital in the state has a psychiatric unit. A comprehensive review of needed services during the AVH master facilities planning process determined that it was not realistic to include a psychiatric unit.

“EACH AND EVERY PERSON I ENCOUNTERED WAS EXCEEDINGLY PROFESSIONAL, ACCOMMODATING, CARING, AND ARTICULATE. ASPEN VALLEY HOSPITAL SET THE STANDARD BY WHICH I WILL MEASURE ALL MY FUTURE HEALTH CARE.”

— AVH patient

# FROM HURT TO HOPE: MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN THE ROARING FORK VALLEY

In many ways, the Roaring Fork Valley is an exceptional place to live — with its natural beauty, active lifestyle, and renowned recreation. In one important way, however, the area is very much like the rest of the nation: mental illness and substance abuse are real concerns in our community.

Bullied online, teenagers consider suicide. Families struggle with anxiety and depression due to financial stress. Fun-loving residents and vacationers indulge in illicit drugs, only to face a downward spiral of abuse and addiction.

## **TRAUMA, DISILLUSION, AND ‘BOOTSTRAPS’**

Unfortunately, there are no clear lines to define when sadness becomes depression or enjoying drinks with friends tips over into alcohol dependence. And this lack of clarity is only one obstacle for those who need help but are reluctant to seek it.

Particularly in the West, many people have a “bootstrap” mentality about mental health, according to Tony Passariello, LCSW, Director of Mind Springs Health’s Aspen office. “People look on mental illness or substance abuse as a moral failing rather than a health issue: ‘You are not capable, you’re not good enough, you’re not trying hard enough,’” he said. “That’s not true. These are really health issues.”

In addition, complex problems such as childhood trauma or sexual assault may underlie mental illness and alcohol abuse. Financial stress is an especially common complicating factor in our area. And as Michelle Muething, Executive Director of the Aspen Hope Center, points out, affluent residents aren’t immune.

“Mental illness knows no boundaries of wealth, gender, age, or any other distinction,” Michelle said. “One positive of living in the valley is you make a lot of

friends. However, often those relationships feel superficial, so people bottle up their emotions.”

## **PATHS TO SUCCESS**

Treatment plans for mental illness and substance abuse are as unique as the individual patients but generally begin with determining the nature of the problem. For example, suicidal thoughts should always be taken seriously but often signal despair rather than a desire to die.

“After 17 years as a mental health professional, I can count on one hand the number of my patients who have really wanted to die,” Michelle said. “People don’t want to live in frustration or confusion, or they don’t know how to solve their problem. They just want out of the situation.”

Tony agrees that care providers have to look at “the whole patient: Why are they here? What’s going on in their marriage, work, school? What’s getting in the way of their success?”

Treatment can take many forms, but success requires time and patience — from patients and their support network. Michelle talks about the concept of “bubble-wrapping” a patient, where family members, friends, and peers become closely involved in ensuring that the person is in a safe environment, has transportation to mental health appointments, and so on.

Even mental health and substance abuse professionals have to be patient as they explore the best options for the individual. “Therapists, physicians, guidance counselors, life coaches — none of us are magicians,” Michelle said. “I’ve had people walk into my office and say, ‘Here, fix my problem.’ I have to explain to them, ‘I can’t fix you, but I can help you fix your problem.’”

## SOCIAL ‘EXERCISE’ IS GOOD FOR YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

From skiing to snowboarding, hiking to biking, you exercise regularly to keep your body in shape. Did you know that you can also take steps to maintain good mental health? It's true. Here are some ways to give your mental health a workout:

- **Stay connected.** Maintain a social network of family and friends. Then, when a loved one asks, "Can I help?" you will feel comfortable answering, "Yes. Please."
- **Take control.** Do something every day to achieve your dreams. Knowing that you can accomplish meaningful tasks in your life can be important, even if they are small.
- **Respond positively.** Everyone encounters problems in life, but not everyone responds in the same way. Develop strategies for dealing with challenges constructively.
- **Be active.** Roll up your sleeves and get involved with groups whose work you support. Whether it's a civic group, theatre troupe, or faith community, helping others can help you, too.
- **Discover yourself.** Many people emerge from adversity with a new appreciation for life, greater feelings of self-worth, or new goals. Be open to the positive changes that difficulty may bring.
- **Enjoy life!** Pursue favorite hobbies and activities, especially things that help you relax, such as listening to music, reading, or meditating.
- **Take care of you.** Physical activity, a healthful diet, adequate rest, and stress management can only help you feel more energetic, resilient, and prepared when tough times come along.
- **Need help? Ask for it.** No one has all the answers. So if you are struggling with substance abuse, depression, or other mental health problems, seek help from your physician or a qualified mental health professional.



# FOUNDATION UPDATE

BY DEBORAH BREEN, PRESIDENT, ASPEN VALLEY HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

As we launch into 2015, we wanted to pause for a moment and reflect on the past two years and thank all of our friends and neighbors who have supported Aspen Valley Hospital Foundation. Having this upfront investment has provided the building blocks for developing a comprehensive fundraising program.

In total, over \$12 million in new gifts and pledges has been raised since this new hospital foundation was formed. These gifts, combined with earlier support for the campaign, bring our capital campaign progress to over the \$22 million mark. All of this is great news and is a reflection of our community's devotion to Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH).

This hospital has proudly served our community with progressive and comprehensive care for the past 123 years. Driven purely from the need to have critical, life-saving care close to home, the community stepped

forward and built the very first hospital in Aspen in 1891. Since that time, the community has again and again driven our progress, defined needs, and shaped AVH's future. With significant plans for rebuilding our emergency, medical imaging, and surgical services departments, we once again will rely on generous benefactors who want to help secure the future of AVH for many more generations to come.

We welcome the opportunity to talk with you about how you can help AVH accelerate the pace of its progress and bring these important, life-saving clinical areas on line. This final phase of our building and renovation project is critical to ensure our facilities are on par with our state-of-the-art technology and high-caliber physicians, nurses, and technologists already in place. In short, the time is now to make AVH your philanthropic priority.



## DON'T BE ON THE FENCE

about making Aspen Valley Hospital your philanthropic priority.

Your gift will allow our community hospital to  
SOAR TO NEW ALTITUDES.

Aspen Valley Hospital Foundation is dedicated  
to encouraging philanthropic support  
for the current and future needs of Aspen Valley Hospital.

### FOR GIVING OPPORTUNITIES, CONTACT

Deborah Breen, President and CEO, 970.544.1302 or [aspenhospital.org/foundation](http://aspenhospital.org/foundation).

You may also donate with the remittance envelope found between pages 4 & 5 of this newsletter.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### “MEATLESS MONDAY”

Vegan Dinner and Movie  
Monday, January 26  
5:00 p.m.  
Aspen Valley Hospital  
\$10.00  
Registration required  
Contact Sandy Holmes, RD,  
at 544.1145.

### “MATTERS OF THE HEART” HEALTH FAIR

Thursday, February 12  
8:30 - 10:30 a.m.  
After-Hours Medical Care, Basalt  
Call 544.1305 for information.

# HOSPITAL EARNS TOP CERTIFICATION FOR ITS ENVIRONMENTAL FRIENDLY BUILDING

Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) has been awarded “gold” LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) certification for its new hospital construction by the United States Green Building Council. Gold LEED certification is rare in the healthcare industry. In fact, only one other hospital in Colorado has achieved gold certification.

The project includes the addition of an inpatient unit, oncology and infusion services, rehabilitation services including physical, speech, occupational, and cardiopulmonary, as well as medical office space. The addition opened in the fall of 2012.

LEED is recognized throughout the world as a mark of achievement in green building. LEED-certified buildings save money and resources while promoting renewable, clean energy. The hospital building doubled in size, but utility bills have remained the same.

“We were anticipating a ‘silver’ rating and would have been very pleased with that,” said John Schied, manager of the hospital’s construction project. “To have received the higher gold rating is a testament to the expertise

and commitment of the entire team — the board of directors, architects, contractors, and all others who contributed to the project.”

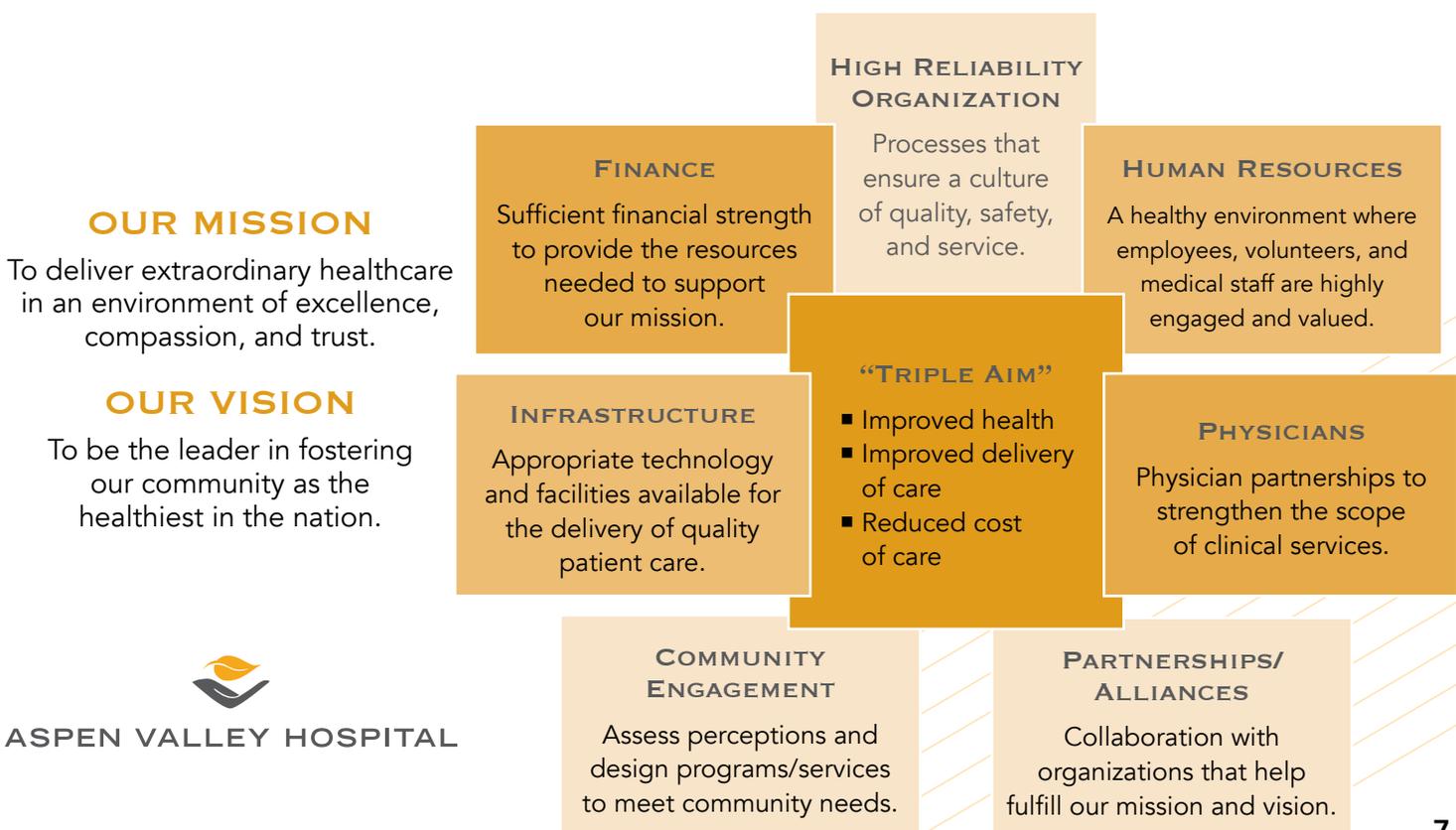
“This is an historic milestone,” said lead architect Russ Sedmak of Heery International. “The Colorado hospitals who have Gold LEED certification are two of only a handful of such facilities in the world.”

## MAKING AVH “GOLD”

The following contributed to AVH’s Gold LEED certification:

- State-of-the-art, maximum-efficiency boiler
- Electric tower crane (vs. diesel)
- Recycled materials
- High-efficiency windows and wall coverings
- Storm water management system
- Heavy-duty insulation
- Minimal noise and air pollution by reusing site soils, thus decreasing truck traffic
- Recycling of construction materials (e.g., steel, glass, aluminum)

## STRATEGIC SUCCESS FACTORS 2015





## ASPEN VALLEY HOSPITAL

0401 Castle Creek Road Aspen CO 81611 (970) 925-1120

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This publication in no way seeks to diagnose or treat illness or serve as a substitute for professional medical care. Please see your physician if you have a health problem.

## HONORS AND AWARDS

### DR. BROOKE ALLEN RECOGNIZED FOR MS CARE

Neurologist Brooke Allen, MD, recently was named a "Partner in MS Care" by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society. This designation recognizes exceptional commitment to MS patient care. Dr. Allen is the first physician in the Colorado-Wyoming area to attain this recognition and is the Society's first Partner in MS Care on the western slope.

Partners have demonstrated knowledge and experience in MS care and have a special interest in treating people living with this central nervous system disease that can impact vision, cognition, and mobility.



Dr. Brooke Allen (center) receives her "Partner in MS Care" award from representatives of the National MS Society.

### "OVERALL EXCELLENCE" AWARDS

Aspen Valley Hospital (AVH) recently received notification of its "top quartile" performance status in the areas of patient satisfaction and financial stability compared to all acute care hospitals in the nation. According to the Colorado Rural Health Center, "Rural health facilities are proving to be sources of innovation, driving advancements in the delivery of high quality patient care with outstanding efficiency and cost effectiveness."

"We're excited to be one of the rural hospitals to be recognized," said Dan Bonk, AVH Chief Executive Officer. "Exceeding our patients' expectations is in the forefront of our minds every day. We have a talented team of professionals in place, and our staffing levels support an environment of individualized care. We also recognize the need for strong financial management in order to continue to provide a comprehensive level of services to the residents and visitors of our community."



Emily Goudreault, MA,  
CCC-SLP

## SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST JOINS OUR STAFF

Speech-language pathologist Emily Goudreault, MA, CCC-SLP, is passionate about helping children and adults with speech and language challenges. Whether it's brain injuries, strokes, swallowing issues, voice disorders, speech/language delays, articulation, autism, or other speech/language concerns, she looks forward to helping. Trained at the University of Northern Colorado, Children's Hospital Colorado, and Denver Health, Emily has a broad range of experience and is available on a weekly basis to those needing services in the upper valley. For more information about Emily, or to schedule an appointment, call **970.988.6718**.