LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

El Paso County Public Health serves the most populous county in Colorado, and works to prevent the spread of disease, promote healthy behavior and protect our environment.

This year, we adopted a new agency vision: for all El Paso County residents to live in thriving communities where every person has the opportunity to achieve optimal health.

Accomplishments in 2016 reflect this vision: Public Health worked with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and local water providers to respond to concerns about drinking water safety in southern El Paso County. Communicable Disease staff teamed up with medical professionals to provide education and guidance about Zika virus, an emerging public health threat; and we convened more than 40 community partners to begin working on the heartbreaking problem of youth suicide.

We have successfully secured alternative funding sources, including grants from local agencies such as the El Pomar Foundation, as well as federal and state grants. This funding allows us to support new youth-focused prevention efforts and to expand our reach into southeast Colorado Springs where we are working to close the health equity gap and increase the availability of health services.

We do this with 145 staff who are dedicated to the health and safety of the entire community. Partnerships and collaborations in the cities and towns of El Paso County, and across the state, are an essential component of our daily work – we couldn’t do it without you. We look forward to building new opportunities for the community to be healthy in 2017 and beyond.

~ Dan Martindale, M.P.A., Public Health Director

MISSION

Our mission is to promote and protect public health and environmental quality across El Paso County through people, prevention and partnerships.

Our Public Health agency serves all residents and visitors of El Paso County, which includes the cities of Colorado Springs, Manitou Springs, and the towns of Calhan, Fountain, Monument, Palmer Lake, and Ramah. Public Health is defined by the Institute of Medicine as, “fulfilling society’s interest in assuring conditions in which people can be healthy.” Programs are targeted toward the general population and specific populations with higher health risks or poorer health outcomes to aid in making healthy choices, and provide interventions to prevent spread of disease.

VISION

Our vision is for all El Paso County residents to live in thriving communities where every person has the opportunity to achieve optimal health.

GOVERNANCE

El Paso County Public Health is governed by a nine-member Board of Health. Members serve five-year terms.

STRATEGIC PLAN

View our strategic plan online at www.elpasocountyhealth.org/about/mission-vision-values. Please provide your feedback at healthinfo@elpasoco.com.
The El Paso County Board of Health governs El Paso County Public Health through the establishment of policy, approval of budgets, and appointment of the executive director. The nine members of the Board of Health serve as volunteers and are appointed by the El Paso County Board of County Commissioners. Members are an essential link between public health services and a healthy community. Board of Health members are engaged in the community, and dedicate hours of volunteer time in their role on the board.
PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONDS TO CONCERNS ABOUT DRINKING WATER

El Paso County Public Health plays an important role in responding to drinking water contamination and actively works to keep water safe.

At times, Public Health must also help educate people about the health risks of new contaminants. This was the case in 2016 as local and state public health learned about the presence of Perfluorinated Compounds (PFCs) in the Widefield Aquifer. PFCs are human-made chemicals that do not occur naturally in the environment. These compounds are found in firefighting foams, coating additives and surface protection products for carpets and clothing, and other common commercial products.

Throughout the year, Public Health worked with residents, water providers, businesses and schools in Fountain, Security, and Widefield to understand the emerging health concerns related to PFCs, and staff collaborated with state and federal agencies to provide individuals with safe drinking water.

The Widefield Aquifer, southeast of Colorado Springs near Fountain Creek and Windmill Gulch, supplies water to private wells, small drinking water systems, and three large water districts serving an estimated 71,000 people.

Public Health first learned of the presence of PFCs in the aquifer in early 2016 when the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released results from the Third Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR).

Data indicated that samples from public water well sources detected PFCs. Later, the EPA lowered the health advisory-guidance on what was considered healthy for consumption of PFCs in drinking water. Some public water well sources had concentrations of PFCs above the updated health advisory.

El Paso County Public Health’s efforts were focused on residents who receive their water from a private well. Public Health conducted an educational campaign to encourage homeowners to test their well water. Public Health arranged for PFC testing at no cost to residents through a grant from EPA and the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). Of the 60 wells tested in 2016, 32 were above the EPA health advisory.

Those with levels of PFCs above the health advisory were provided bulk water delivery and later, reverse osmosis (RO) systems, an under-the-sink treatment option, through an United States Air Force rapid response effort. The public water districts are currently only using surface water that does not contain PFCs and are exploring treatment options to remove PFCs from their public wells.

The health effects of PFCs depend on many factors, including duration and amount of PFC exposure, and personal factors including age, lifestyle, and state of health. Some studies suggest a link between PFCs and low birth weight, as well as a possible link with kidney and testicular cancers.

In coordination with CDPHE, Public Health hosted a community forum at Mesa Ridge High School. More than 1,000 people attended the meeting and listened to representatives from CDPHE, the U.S. Air Force, EPA, El Paso County Public Health, and the area’s three large water districts in Fountain, Security and Widefield.
EMERGING DISEASES: ZIKA

As news and information began to evolve about Zika virus, El Paso County Public Health’s Communicable Disease staff – the agency’s “disease investigators” – began to monitor and respond to community concerns about this emerging disease that has since been linked to severe birth defects.

As more knowledge is acquired about how the Zika virus spreads, whether by contact with a mosquito or through sexual contact of an infected individual, the Communicable Disease Program staff will continue to monitor this emerging infectious disease and provide updates to the medical community and public.

WHAT IS ZIKA AND WHO IS MOST AT RISK?

- Zika is a disease caused by a virus that is spread to people through the bite of an infected mosquito. For people who get sick, the illness is usually mild.
- The Zika virus is also spread through sexual contact.
- Pregnant women/women of childbearing age traveling to affected countries are most at risk.
- El Paso County, Colorado does not have the Aedes mosquito species which carry Zika, so the likelihood of local (mosquito borne) transmission is extremely low. Aedes species need a warm, humid climate during its entire life cycle. In Colorado, our winters break that cycle.

WHAT IS EL PASO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH DOING?

- The Office of Communication and the Communicable Disease Program prepared Zika Virus Frequently Asked Questions and other documents, based upon information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for public education. This team also worked to educate Public Health staff who work closely with pregnant women.
- A Zika virus page is available at www.elpasocountyhealth.org.
- Medical experts and staff provided interviews with local media to explain the virus and known risks.
- Health Alert Network messages regarding Zika virus were sent to key partners in the medical community.
- Information about Zika virus was delivered in the weekly What’s Going Around publication for medical partners.
- The Communicable Disease Program provided key staff with Zika virus outbreak information, and laboratory submission processes.
- When necessary, the Communicable Disease Program will actively monitor pregnant women with possible Zika Virus infection in conjunction with the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the CDC.

CO-Help, a toll-free statewide hotline, was activated for this issue and is taking calls from the public (1-877-462-2911).
El Paso County Public Health received a planning grant from the El Pomar Foundation to work with southeast Colorado Springs residents to create a seven-year action plan for creating healthy families, healthy communities, and a healthy economy. The resident-led coalition is called RISE Southeast Colorado Springs, which stands for Resilient, Inspired, Strong, and Engaged (RISE). With 40 partner organizations on board, including the City of Colorado Springs, the Pikes Peak Workforce Center, and University of Colorado Health-Memorial Hospital, the group is positioned to make the resident-created action plans reality.

In the short term, RISE hopes to spark neighborhood unity, while building a stronger voice for the people in the area. During the seven-year project implementation period, El Pomar will provide up to $350,000 to RISE projects to improve communication about resources and opportunities for residents, create a community gathering space, improve access to employment opportunities, and improve access to healthy food and safe places to recreate.

RISE VISION:  
A vibrant, connected community that provides opportunities for all to thrive.

RISE MISSION:  
Enhancing southeast Colorado Springs from within (through citizen-led change).
PROTECTING YOUTH THROUGH STRONG COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

El Paso County Public Health is committed to working with community members and multidisciplinary collaborations to advocate for youth. Public Health uses a population-based approach to improve health on a large scale. To do this, our efforts are focused on evidence-based interventions aimed at addressing a broad range of risk and protective factors, which involves policy and systems change.

In June 2016, Public Health partnered with Safe2Tell, and community leaders from cities and towns across El Paso County, to discuss issues facing youth. The group identified teen suicide and youth substance use as the top two concerns. In response, Public Health secured grant funding in 2016 to support prevention efforts for youth suicide and youth substance use, and began to strategically engage communities.

YOUTH SUICIDE PREVENTION

In recent years the number of youth suicides in El Paso County has increased significantly. In 2016, suicide accounted for almost half of all child deaths in the county. The public health approach to suicide prevention requires the community to work together to address system, community, family, and personal risk factors that can lead to suicide. Public Health has convened a work group of nearly 40 community partners committed to: improving communication and coordination across youth-serving agencies to better identify and assist at-risk youth, increasing depression screenings in primary care settings, and reducing mental health stigma.

Public Health is also supporting elementary schools to implement suicide and bullying prevention strategies that build connectedness, resiliency, and life skills. These efforts include providing resources, training and evidence-based curriculums to schools and places where youth gather, such as community centers.

YOUTH SUBSTANCE USE PREVENTION

Leaders in Fountain are taking important steps to prevent youth substance use, and are the first in the county to implement Communities that Care (CTC), a process that has proven to reduce alcohol and tobacco use, crime, and violence among youth.

Communities that Care is a public health model that guides communities, increases resiliency in youth, and helps prevent problems before they develop. These strategies focus on creating a stronger sense of connectedness to families, community and society. Scientific studies have shown young people from CTC communities are 25 percent to 33 percent less likely to have health and behavior problems, such as binge drinking, smoking, and engaging in crime.
NEW IN 2016

PUBLIC HEALTH SUPPORTS CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE

Children and youth in foster care are more likely to experience abuse, neglect, trauma and instability. These factors contribute to children in foster care experiencing poorer health outcomes and increased medical expenses when compared to other children. In 2016, El Paso County had 305 children and youth placed in foster care throughout our community.

Public Health has partnered with the Department of Human Services (DHS) and Community Health Partnership (CHP) to support this population. Through HCP, a program for children and youth with special health care needs, care coordinators work with foster children, families and caseworkers to identify child-specific needs. Coordinators help families gain access to resources, referrals, and coordinated care to improve the health and wellbeing of children and youth in foster care.

VITAL RECORDS IMPLEMENTATION OF ELECTRONIC DEATH RECORDS

El Paso County Public Health’s Vital Records Office recently transitioned from paper to electronic death records. The transition to electronic death records significantly improves data quality, timeliness, and access to records and provides cost savings to funeral homes, health care providers, and families.

Vital Records works closely with funeral homes and local health care providers to encourage participation, coordinate access to electronic death records, and provide ongoing training.

~ IMPROVEMENTS RESULTING FROM ELECTRONIC DEATH RECORDS ~

Saves Time
Electronic death records reduce registration times and allows death certificates to be seen within 1-2 business days (as opposed to two weeks or longer).

Saves Money
Electronic death records provide cost savings (transportation, printing, etc.) for funeral homes and health care providers and significantly reduces the need for correction fees.

Improves Quality
The electronic death records system uses technology to cross reference information and electronically issue corrections, ensuring a higher level of accuracy.

Improves Efficiency
The availability of death certificates is no longer limited to county of death. Electronic death records are available at any Vital Records office in Colorado.
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

WOMEN’S WELLNESS CONNECTION/COMMUNITY HEALTH PARTNERSHIP CANCER SCREENING OUTREACH

In 2016, 4,232 community members received information regarding the importance of cancer screening to prevent breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer. This effort focused on individuals who had the lowest rates of cancer screening in El Paso County. More than 12,000 educational materials were distributed, and staff worked to connect people with health care providers in the community. Mobile mammography was offered to women in areas with fewer cancer screening resources. Preliminary results demonstrated an increase in breast, cervical, and colorectal cancer screening for individuals with Medicaid.

EL PASO COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH PROVIDES COMMUNITY EDUCATION FOR WATER WELL AND ON-SITE SEPTIC MAINTENANCE

El Paso County Public Health and Colorado State University Extension partnered in May to present a Water Well and On-Site Septic Maintenance class at Black Forest Community Center. This event was the first of its kind, and was an opportunity for residents to ask questions while strengthening partnerships between CSU Extension and Public Health. Seventy-three participants attended. Most attendees were from the Black Forest area, where a wildfire in 2013 destroyed more than 500 homes and damaged the water wells of many others.

Participants received information for troubleshooting, testing, and maintenance for their water wells and on-site septic systems. Knowledge gained will help well and septic owners save money through proper maintenance, as well as protect ground water, public health, and natural resources.

2,673
Private Well Water Tests

3,967
Microbiology Tests for Public Water Systems

507
On-site Wastewater Permits Issued
CITY OF FOUNTAIN DEMONSTRATES SUCCESS WITH YOUTH TOBACCO ACCESS POLICY

The Tobacco Education and Prevention Partnership works with cities and towns in El Paso County to educate people about the harms of tobacco use, the importance of protecting kids, and the benefits of local tobacco retailer licensing.

In 2012, Fountain became the first municipality in El Paso County government to adopt and implement a tobacco retailer licensing ordinance. Tobacco licensing is a common policy tool that local governments use to protect kids from illegal tobacco sales. As a result, Fountain has seen a reduction in sales of tobacco to minors. During inspections of 18 tobacco retail stores in Fountain in August 2016, all the stores were complying with the law by refusing to sell tobacco to minors.

“We want to protect our kids from tobacco and other drugs and alcohol,” said Lieutenant Matt Racine of the Fountain Police Department. “With tobacco retailer licensing, we have a chance to enforce laws that are already in place and make sure it’s more difficult for kids to get a hold of tobacco. The City of Fountain is a leader in Colorado. We’re showing how effective licensing can be.”

THE TOBACCO EDUCATION AND PREVENTION PARTNERSHIP HOSTS THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKEOUT

Centennial Hall and the Citizens Service Center in Colorado Springs are the first El Paso County buildings to become tobacco-free campuses. A Great American Smokeout event was held in November 2016 at AspenPointe Café in the Citizens Service Center to celebrate and promote the building’s new tobacco-free campus policy.

El Paso County staff and citizens received information about free tools and resources to help them quit tobacco. More than 200 people attended the event. Eliminating tobacco use at these buildings protect staff and visitors’ health and reduce exposure to secondhand smoke.

180

Colorado Tobacco QuitLine
(1-800-QUIT-NOW) Calls from El Paso County Residents
In 2016, El Paso County Public Health’s Women, Infants and Children (WIC) offices in Colorado Springs and Widefield served an average of 12,882 individuals every month. WIC’s lactation professionals supported thousands of WIC mothers with the education and resources to breastfeed their children.

Partnered with Penrose St. Francis Health Services/Centura Health and Public Health’s Nurse Family Partnership to provide breast pumps.

Loaned 150 hospital-grade electric breast pumps to 431 breastfeeding women.

Saved families an average of $100 per month with loaned equipment.

$8,087,087.19 in WIC Food Vouchers Used in Community
Following the first hospitalized case of the flu in 2016, the El Paso County Public Health Immunization Clinic established a walk-in day for clients from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Tuesdays, including availability during the lunch hour. It was planned to be implemented for just two weeks, but it was so successful that it has been continued.

Allowing walk-in opportunities is important because it increases access to care. It has greatly increased the number of clients being seen. The Immunization Clinic provided service for more than 950 walk-in appointments in 2016.

In March, the Immunization Clinic contracted with VaxCare to provide vaccines to children and adults with most forms of insurance. This affiliation reduces client out-of-pocket costs for those with insurance and also is more affordable to get all recommended vaccines.

Working with Vaxcare results in cost savings for Public Health, and increases staff efficiencies related to management of vaccine inventory.

In preparation for students returning to school, the Immunization Clinic collaborated with community partners to offer three Back-to-School events: Fountain-Fort Carson School District 8 Back2School Fair, Back to School Summerfest in conjunction with YMCA and Sierra High School, and the Back to School Extravaganza at Springs Church. The outreach helped bring services to where they are needed. Children received vaccinations in order to reduce common childhood illnesses, such as whooping cough and chickenpox.
HEALTHY COMMUNITY COLLABORATIVE

More than 50 community partners, facilitated by El Paso County Public Health, have come together to form the Healthy Community Collaborative (HCC). The Collaborative reviews community health data and determines health priorities for the focus of community-wide efforts. These priorities inform the direction of the El Paso County Community Health Improvement Plan.

The 2012-2017 Health Improvement Plan focuses on stopping the upward trend of overweight and obesity in El Paso County with a focus on increasing healthy eating and active living in the community. HCC partners and other community organizations have made significant progress towards achieving this goal.

Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs achieved “fit” and “active” community status through the LiveWell Colorado HEAL Cities and Towns Campaign by improving access to healthy foods and active living opportunities for residents.

64 worksites are participating in wellness programs through the YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region.

61% of WIC parents surveyed said they included more physical activity in their family’s daily routine.

80,901 people lost 265,296 pounds through Kaiser Permanente’s Weigh and Win Program.

65% of parents surveyed in the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program said they included more fruits and vegetables in their family meals in response to 5-2-1-0 Let’s Go, a childhood obesity prevention program.
PUBLIC HEALTH BY THE NUMBERS

Infectious Disease Control and Prevention

- **60** Number of infectious diseases monitored
- **609** People reported sick from disease outbreaks
- **35** Reported outbreaks
- **734** Number of infectious disease cases reported

**Tuberculosis**

- **775** Skin tests completed
- **10** Active cases
- **64** Latent cases

**Vital Records**

- **124** Case referrals
- **21,629** Birth certificates issued
- **36,322** Death certificates issued

**Environmental Health Services**

- **784** Food workers completed public health food safety education classes
- **129** Retail food establishments plan reviews
- **5,071** Retail food establishments inspections
PUBLIC HEALTH BY THE NUMBERS

**Environmental Health Services**

- **112** Air quality permits issued
- **109** Land-use reviews
- **52** School safety inspections
- **437** Water recreation inspections (public pools)
- **106** Body art establishments inspections
- **264** Child care center inspections

**Education and Health Services**

- **9,822** Immunizations provided
- **2,161** Nurse Family Partnership visits
- **232** HIV tests performed
- **106** Coordinated care for children with special needs
- **3,198** Reproductive health visits
2016 TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE
$15,469,172

51.5%
Program Specific Grants
$7,954,942

21%
El Paso County Funding
$3,285,804

6%
State of CO Per Capita
$935,918

.5%
Miscellaneous Revenue
$74,825

21%
Licenses, Fees
$3,217,683