

August 20, 2024

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Leveraging Community Health Workers to Promote Coordinated Care

### Public Health Student Explores CHW Pathways and Opportunities

August 20, 2024

Healthcare is becoming more complicated and expensive, with longer waits to see a doctor. Minnesota hospitals (and state and county government) are looking for better ways to keep us healthy. Community health workers are an important part of the solution. Creighton University Public Health senior Daylen Kallberg, of Duluth, MN presented research exploring the work of community health workers to healthcare leaders and community partners on August 6, 2024 at a Wilderness Health meeting. Daylen also presented to the Wilderness Board of Directors on August 20.

Community health workers (CHWs) are people from your neighborhood who can help you on your healthcare journey. They can help you communicate with your doctor and find resources like lower cost food and housing. They can visit your home and help you understand your health conditions.

Zomi Bloom, Wilderness Health Program Manager, applauded Daylen for her commitment and passion for the research. “There are so many opportunities to bring community health workers in to support care navigation. CHWs have unique potential because they connect with community members in a culturally aligned way. That builds trust.”

Daylen presented her findings on how CHWs are being utilized in Minnesota, around the world and in other key states like Michigan. She dove into how health systems are using these types of staff, talked about training models, reimbursement, and future pathways to support patient and community health. She also focused on how CHWs can support behavioral health care coordination and serve as digital navigators to support use of telehealth.

Cassandra Beardsley, Executive Director at Wilderness Health commented: “Daylen’s review exemplifies the importance of fresh perspectives in addressing the complex challenges within healthcare. We are excited to build upon her findings in our ongoing efforts to improve health outcomes in our region.”

*National Community Health Worker Awareness Week is recognized this year during the week of August 26-30.*



***About Daylen***

Daylen served as a Population Health Student Intern with Wilderness Health for the summer. She is a senior at Creighton University studying Public Health with a concentration in Undergraduate Research and Scholarship. Daylen plans on continuing her education following undergraduate graduation as in the fall she will be applying for Master's of Public Health in Epidemiology programs. At Creighton University she is a Dean's Fellow in the College of Arts and Sciences, participates in Undergraduate Research, a member of the Health Administration and Policy Student Association, and is an active member in several other organizations throughout campus. Daylen has participated in various global, public health work as she has traveled to Peru, Costa Rica, and Ecuador for service trips which focused on providing free healthcare services and follow-up to rural and low-income communities.

Funding Acknowledgement – Care Navigation program activities and materials produced by WH are supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling \$296,000 with 10% financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.



***About Wilderness Health-*** a non-profit collaborative of independent providers working together to improve rural health care in Northeastern Minnesota and Wisconsin. Headquartered in Two Harbors since 2013, Wilderness Health aims to create a unified and supportive network for its members through its core values of collaboration, independence, networking, and quality. For more information about Wilderness, visit <https://wildernesshealthmn.org/>.

**Wilderness Health Members:**

- Bigfork Valley Hospital
- Community Memorial Hospital
- Cook Hospital
- Ely-Bloomenson Community Hospital
- Fairview Range / Range Regional Health Services
- Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital
- Aspirus Lake View
- North Shore Health
- Aspirus St. Luke's