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Print Page

Guest Commentary: UCFS celebrates National Health Center Week

There's a lot of confusion and misinformation about how health care is changing. The good news is that more people are gaining access to insurance coverage, but the bad news is that there are still 62 million people who do not have access to primary care. According to the [National Association of Community Health Centers](#), people from all walks of life are affected.

Nearly half, 42 percent, are low-income and 28 percent live in rural areas. Surprisingly, the vast majority have insurance. But people need both insurance coverage and access to care.

At [United Community and Family Services](#), we are working diligently to see that residents of our community have both.

Our Access to Care program, a free counseling service for the uninsured, helps individuals find insurance coverage that meets their health-care needs and financial status. Over the past 18 months, our Access to Care Team has helped 2,835 individuals obtain affordable health insurance, SNAP, prescription assistance and other services in the community.



Chuck Seeman

We are also rapidly increasing our clinical capacity to provide primary care, women's health, dental care and behavioral health services to communities in Eastern Connecticut. We recently completed a major renovation of [The Edward and Mary Lord Family Health Center](#) in Norwich that increases capacity by 48 percent and is designed to improve the patient experience. We've added new medical treatment rooms, behavioral health offices, decentralized waiting areas and same-day care.

We'll also be opening a new school-based health center at [Norwich Technical High School](#) this fall, enabling the school's 650 students to access primary care, treatment for chronic diseases and behavioral health in a school-based setting.

Plans are in motion to expand our [Jewett City facility](#), which is at maximum capacity in our current location. UCFS is requesting \$3.3 million from the state to purchase land and construct a new, larger health facility in Griswold. In February, UCFS successfully attained \$1.9 million through a competitive grant proposal from the Department Of Public Health to support this project.

Our Plainfield Health Center, opened in 2013, has been well-received in the community. In our first year, we had 9,256 visits.

We're also pleased that the [National Committee for Quality Assurance](#) has recognized both our Norwich and Griswold centers as a Level 3 Patient-Centered Medical Care Home, the highest level of recognition, which means that UCFS has the tools, systems and resources to provide patients with the right care at the right time.

At UCFS, our mission is to improve the health of our community.

If you need assistance finding affordable health insurance, call our Access to Care Department at (860) 822-4246. If you need access to primary care, women's health, dental care or behavioral health services, call (860) 892-7042 or visit [UCFS.org](#).

Chuck Seeman is president/CEO of United Community Family Services.

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Print Page