



Health West receives \$20,000 grant

May 20, 2009

The Regence Foundation has awarded a \$20,000 grant to Health West, a Southeast Idaho community and migrant health care center working to increase access to care, reduce health disparities and assure quality of care regardless of income.

Regence employee Vance Nielsen nominated Health West as part of the Regence's second annual employee-nominated transformation grant program.

"I nominated Health West for a transformation grant because I admire the work they do to not only break down barriers to care for underserved communities, but also to provide quality care in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way," said Nielsen, Regence sales executive and grant nominator.

Health West has been serving the Southeastern Idaho community for 30 years and is one of the few health care agencies in the area accepting new Medicaid and Medicare patients. Started in Aberdeen, it now has clinics in American Falls, Lava Hot Springs, Downey, Pocatello and McCammon. In 2008, its bilingual staff treated nearly 8,000 patients and conducted about 29,000 patient visits.

"Over the past year, as a result of the difficult economy, we've seen a significant increase in our patient volume and the number of people needing care at a free or reduced rate," said Stephen Weeg, Health West executive director. "This grant from The Regence Foundation is especially timely because it will both help us meet the rapidly rising need for our services and continue our focus on quality improvement."

Health West is developing a new, centralized model of care for its patients called a medical home. This model enables patients to receive medical care, mental health care, health education and patient advocacy services all in the same office visit.