

# health+care

A PUBLICATION FROM MERCY REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

Since the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy in 1882, Mercy Regional Medical Center has been part of Durango and our surrounding communities. I'm proud to say that the legacy of care established over a century ago is continued today by a team of over 1,000 caregivers based locally in La Plata County - your neighbors, family, and friends.

I'd like to address concerns about Mercy that have been identified in our community and correct any misinformation.

Mercy hasn't and will never abandon our mission of "extending the healing ministry of Christ by caring for those who are ill and by nurturing the health of the people in our communities." As a nonprofit hospital, Mercy strives to make the communities we serve better. We believe strongly that everyone has the right to health care regardless of their ability to pay. To that end, Mercy is not reimbursed for a significant portion of the cost incurred in providing care. In fiscal year 2019, Mercy provided **community benefits at a total value of more than \$14 million**. Much of this involved providing care to patients with no insurance or to patients with insurance that did not fully reimburse Mercy's costs.

Letter from Will  
cont'd on pg. 2

Recent concerns have included the fact that Mercy is a member of the Centura Health system—which is a not-for-profit, faith-based organization. Centura helps provide our communities with a breadth of specialty services, state-of-the-art technology, and 24-hour care, most of which are not seen in communities our size. Centura helps us to provide excellent, quality, convenient care close to home including 24/7 physician coverage in both our Emergency Department and on our inpatient floors.

Rural hospitals around the United States face challenges. Mercy and hospitals like us are in a constant struggle to attract the necessary physicians to maintain long-term viability, and the competition is fierce. The Association of American Medical Colleges has projected a shortage of 121,300 physicians by the year 2030. Mercy is not immune to these struggles yet we continually strive to find qualified, knowledgeable, and compassionate physicians and advanced practice providers who are a perfect fit for our communities. We are honored to have the depth of dedicated professional care givers that we do, and will continue to work hard to ensure that our patients have access to convenient, knowledgeable care close to home.

This dedication is reflected in the many recognitions we receive for quality care including being the only hospital in the Four Corners to receive a five-star quality rating from the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services, accolades from Healthgrades, and recognition as one of the **“100 Great Community Hospitals”** by *Becker’s Hospital Review*.

Mercy Regional Medical Center should be a source of pride for the communities we serve. At Mercy we are on a mission to build whole person care and flourishing communities. To Mercy associates, physicians, and advanced practice providers - thank you. We are grateful you choose to share your expertise with the patients of Mercy and the communities we serve.




**On the Cover: CEO Will McConnell is pictured with his family.**

## What’s Inside

- 3** Mercy gives back
- 4** Four health care providers join the Mercy family
- 5** Pre-workout makes big difference
- 6** New Durango doctor takes a big step forward

*Cover photo by Kara Cavalca.*

*John Peel is a contributing writer for Health+Care.*

# Mercy Gives Back

## BY THE NUMBERS

(For the 12-month period ending June 30, 2019)

Mercy Regional Medical Center continues our mission to provide whole person care, providing a scope of services not typically available in a small, remote community, delivered with passion and commitment by more than 1,000 dedicated health care professionals. The following statistics reflect Mercy Regional Medical Center's positive impact for the community.



19,861

Emergency department visits



4,290

Hospital admissions



1,188

Inpatient surgical cases



109,167

Outpatient visits



732

Babies delivered



4,042

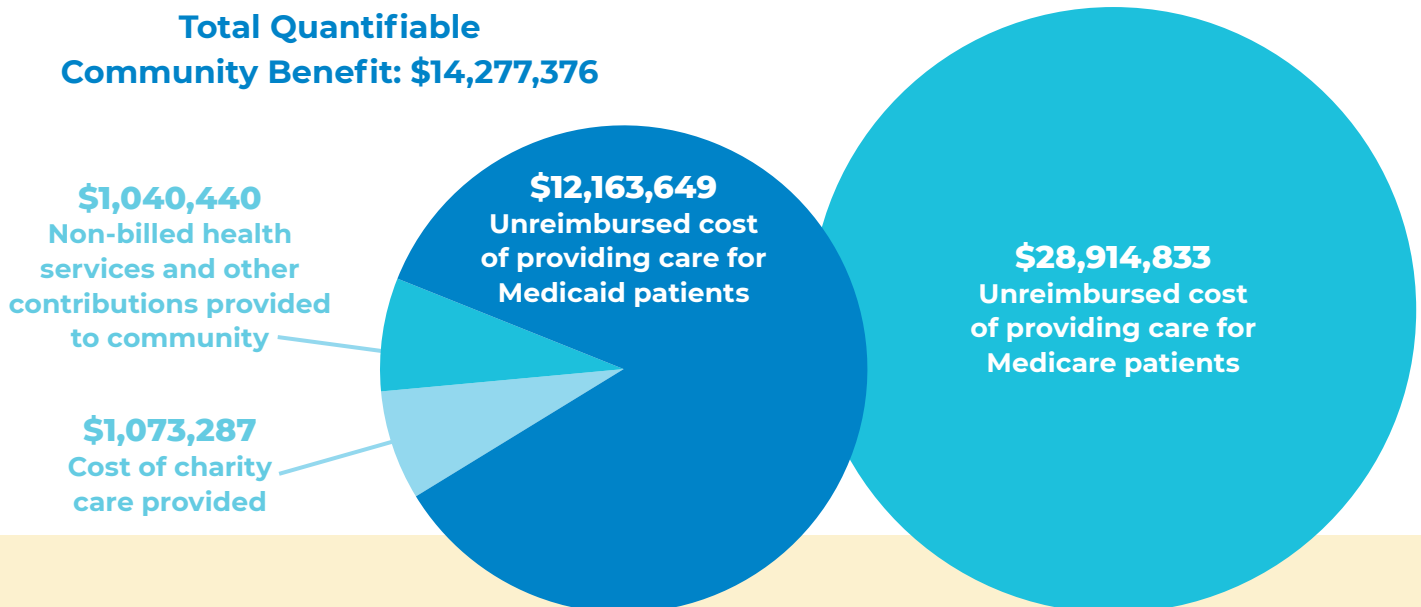
Outpatient surgical cases

## Community Involvement and Giving

Caring for the community has been an integral part of Mercy Regional Medical Center since it was founded in 1882. As a faith-based not-for-profit, Mercy provides medical care and services for the Durango community, yet, for a variety of reasons, a significant portion of the cost incurred is never reimbursed. In fiscal year 2019, Mercy provided community benefits at a total value of more than \$14 million. Much of this involved providing care to patients with no insurance or insurance that did not fully reimburse Mercy's expenses. Mercy also provides care for thousands of patients covered by Medicare. The total expense of providing that care far exceeds the payment Mercy receives from the Medicare system.

### Total Quantifiable

Community Benefit: \$14,277,376



# Four Health Care Providers Join the Mercy Family

## A WARM WELCOME

**M**ercy is delighted to welcome the following physicians and advanced practice providers to our family.

- Osteopathic physician **Michele Hannagan, D.O.**, joined Mercy Family Medicine's (MFM) Three Springs location. Dr. Hannagan is board-certified in family medicine and brings with her 20 years of experience in patient care. She has experience working in a patient-centered care model in which she receives input from and coordinates care with multiple sources allowing her to provide exceptional, complete care.

Dr. Hannagan completed her undergraduate work in biology, graduating magna cum laude from Monmouth University in West Long Branch, NJ. She received her Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine from the University of Medicine & Dentistry of NJ – School of Osteopathic Medicine in Stratford, NJ.

- Family nurse practitioner **April Coates, MSN, FNP-C**, joined MFM's Horse Gulch location and has transitioned to MFM's Bayfield location full time. April provides compassionate care to patients of all ages.

She holds the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners' Family Nurse Practitioner Certification. April received her undergraduate degree in nursing from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, AZ. She earned her Master of Science in Nursing from Frontier Nursing University's Family Nurse Practitioner Program in Hayden, KY.

- Family medicine physician **Dennis Wales, M.D.**, sees patients at Mercy Family Medicine's Horse Gulch location. He specializes in urgent care, sports medicine and skin cancer screenings.

Dr. Wales earned his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Texas Medical School at Houston, TX. He completed his residency in family medicine at the Greenville Family Medicine Residency Program in Greenville, SC. He is a member of the American Academy of Family Medicine. He has spent more than eight years in general practice in New Zealand.

- Orthopedic surgeon **Bret Smith, D.O., MS, FAOAO**, joined the team at the Mercy Foot & Ankle Center. His specialties and clinical interests include total ankle replacement, bunions and hammertoe disorders, arthritis of the foot and ankle, deformity correction (Taylor Spatial Frame), Charcot arthropathy, foot and ankle trauma, flatfoot and tendon transfers.

Dr. Smith is board certified by the American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopaedics; is a member of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgery; and a member of the American Orthopaedic Foot and Ankle Society.

Dr. Smith received his master's and medical degrees from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, Philadelphia, PA. He completed his internship and residency at Doctors Hospital, Ohio University, in Columbus, Ohio, and completed a fellowship in foot and ankle surgery at the Orthopedic Foot and Ankle Center in Columbus.

## CONTACT US .....

### Mercy Family Medicine — Three Springs

1 Mercado St., Ste. 160  
Durango, CO 81301  
**970-385-9850**

### Mercy Family Medicine — Bayfield

480 Wolverine Dr., Ste. 3  
Bayfield, CO 81122  
**970-764-9150**

### Mercy Family Medicine — Horse Gulch

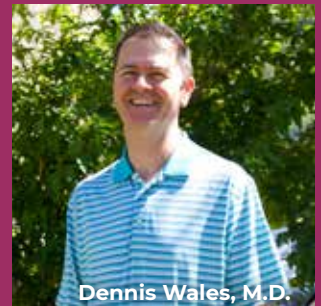
810 E. 3<sup>rd</sup> St., Ste. 201  
Durango, CO 81301  
**970-764-1790**

### Mercy Foot & Ankle Center

*(Located inside Mercy Orthopedic Associates)*  
1 Mercado St., Ste. 202  
Durango, CO 81301  
**970-764-9400**



Michele Hannagan, D.O.



Dennis Wales, M.D.



April Coates,  
MSN, FNP-C



Bret Smith,  
D.O., MS, FAOAO



on the left: Jolie Ensign  
Wellness Coordinator

on the right: Taylor Montgomery  
Senior Mercy Rehab Technician

## Pre-workout makes a big difference.

From the sedentary senior to the topnotch athlete, everyone is working to stay in the best possible shape. And one of the keys, no matter your age, is flexibility. But more than just touching your toes, Mercy Wellness professionals advise, the bigger goal should be mobility—the real-world, everyday application of body movement. Mobility means actively working through your range of motion. If you're an athlete, mobility allows you to jump higher, run faster, be stronger. If you're aging, it allows you to simply keep from falling, or to get yourself back to a standing position if you do end up on the ground. Over time—with injuries, overuse, or underuse—you lose range of motion in crucial joints such as the knee, ankle, and shoulder. So how to achieve mobility? Jolie Ensign, Mercy Regional Medical Center's Wellness Coordinator, and Taylor Montgomery, Senior Mercy Rehab Technician, suggest an exciting, new, successful method called self-myofascial release, or SMR.

Self-myofascial release is a soft-tissue therapy for treating immobility and pain in muscle and fascia. Used before or after either exercise or stretching, SMR can increase blood flow, improve range of motion and promote recovery. And it is simple to do. Mercy Sports Medicine and Mercy Wellness uses a variety of rollers and balls

made specifically for myofascial release. These tools come in different shapes and firmness to access various tissues and body parts without doing damage. A foam roller, for instance, can harm someone with spinal problems, whereas SMR tools accommodate bony processes and work around the spine and neck. The balls help break adhesions in the neck and back that can restrict movement. Getting results takes as little as 10 minutes a day. An expert such as Ensign or Montgomery can evaluate people and offer instruction on how to properly use specifically designed tools.

This technique isn't just for athletes, it can also benefit cardiac patients and others recovering from injury. They can be used while standing, seated, lying down, and up against a wall. "So it really meets every population," Ensign says.

### ✦ INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

For information on upcoming classes, check the website: [wellnessliving.com/schedule/mercywellness](http://wellnessliving.com/schedule/mercywellness)



## We're going DIGITAL!

At Mercy we take stewardship of both our financial and environmental resources seriously. Therefore, we will begin transitioning our **health + care publication** to a digital format throughout the remainder of 2019. If you would like to receive the same great content you've come to enjoy digitally, please send your email address to [mercycomm@centura.org](mailto:mercycomm@centura.org).





## New Durango doctor takes **BIG** step forward

**E**ven the word bunion does not sound pretty. Having a bunion—or hallux valgus, in medical parlance—is even less lovely. But thanks to a recent advancement, having that ugly deformity in your foot fixed surgically can be a beautiful, long-term thing.

A recent addition to Mercy Orthopedic Associates' Foot & Ankle Center has helped create this large step forward in foot surgery. Dr. Bret Smith, foot and ankle specialist, has worked alongside engineers to develop a cutting-edge procedure for bunions called Lapiplasty. It's easy to get lost in the medical jargon, but simply stated, this procedure considers a third dimension: frontal plane rotation. Traditionally, bunions have been considered as basically two-dimensional.

"It's been really fun to be part of developing something that is changing what we know about something we thought we knew about," says Dr. Smith, who started practicing at Mercy in August. He consults with a company that patented the procedure. "They're engineers, so they need some doctors who are actually touching patients."

The new step-by-step procedure uses a jig system, so the foot bones can be precisely aligned and measured, two or three times, before cutting a slice of bone. In the past, cuts were eyeballed by the surgeon. The new system incorporates the carpenter's credo: "measure twice, cut once," Dr. Smith says. The big toe is then properly realigned using titanium plates.

That's all great, but what does it mean for the patient? Well, that's what it's all about, Dr. Smith says. Lapiplasty offers a more predictable outcome in bunion surgery, he says, with failure rates of 1 percent vs. 50-75 percent failure rates with the old method. Also, his patients hit the ground sooner. Traditional bunion surgery keeps patients in a cast and off their foot for up to six weeks.

"I let people bear weight in a post-op shoe or boot day one of surgery," he says. Getting the "foot pump" going, with blood circulating, is vital to recovery. And the mental aspect of getting that foot back on the ground quickly is just as important, he says.

"We want patients happy with their outcomes and doing what they want to do," Dr. Smith says. "No pain."

### **NOT JUST BUNIONS**

Dr. Smith's practice is comprehensive, and he's well-versed on any issues below the knee. Some of his clinical interests include deformity and post-traumatic reconstruction and limb salvage, ankle replacement, and Charcot reconstruction—often for diabetics with neuropathy.

To keep up with all the advances, Dr. Smith is heavily involved with national and international experts. He's currently on the education committee of the American Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society, and is past chairman of the Foot and Ankle Section of the American Osteopathic Academy of Orthopedics. He has lectured at numerous seminars, and trained surgeons in techniques such as Lapoplasty.

The Philadelphia native graduated from medical school at The Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine in 2002. Since then he completed a fellowship at the Orthopedic Foot and Ankle Center in Columbus, Ohio, and for the last 11 years has practiced at the Foot and Ankle Division of the Moore Center for Orthopedics in Columbia, S.C.

With his brother-in-law as a Colorado connection, Dr. Smith and his wife, Reynell, a practicing ophthalmologist, decided a move to Southwest Colorado would fit their lifestyle. It has also proved to be a boon for their sons – Liam, 9, and Luke, 7 – who are diving enthusiastically into the local mountain bike

scene. Dr. Smith, who began racing BMX at age 10, has done nothing to discourage his sons.

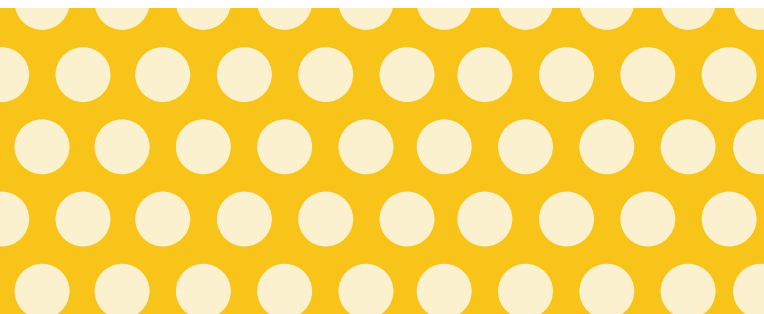
For those who toe the start line for the 2020 Iron Horse Bicycle Classic, don't be too surprised to see Dr. Smith next to you. He's already ridden it once—and beaten the train.



Bret Smith, M.D.

✚ **Contact us:**

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**970-764-9400**



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If you have an address change or would like to be removed from our mailing list, please call 970-764-3990.

mercydurango.org

## Mercy Outpatient Laboratory Services MEETING YOU WHERE YOU ARE



**W**e know it's not always easy to get to the hospital for a blood draw or other needed testing. That's why we offer six convenient lab locations. All are staffed with knowledgeable, compassionate, experienced staff ready to serve you.

- **Outpatient Laboratory Services**

Mercy Medical Office Building  
1 Mercado Street, Ste. 153 | Durango, CO 81301  
Hours: Monday - Friday 6:30 a.m.-6:00 p.m.  
Saturday 7:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.  
*Appointments available*  
**970-764-9120**

- **Mercy Diagnostic Services at Horse Gulch**

810 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, Ste. 203 | Durango, CO 81301  
Hours: Monday-Thursday 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.  
Friday 7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
Saturday 8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.  
**970-764-9740**

- **Mercy Diagnostic Services at Durango Urgent Care**

2577 N. Main Ave. | Durango, CO 81301  
Hours: Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.  
*(Closed daily for lunch from 12:30-1:30 p.m.)*  
**970-764-1180**

- **Pagosa Mercy Outpatient Lab**

2800 Cornerstone Dr., Building 2, Unit 1  
Pagosa Springs, CO 81147  
Hours: Tuesday 7:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.  
**970-764-1191**

- **Bayfield Outpatient Lab**

*Located inside Mercy Family Medicine*  
480 Wolverine Dr., Ste. 3 | Bayfield, CO 81122  
Hours: Monday and Wednesday  
8:00 a.m.-noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m.  
Friday 8:00-11:00 a.m.  
**970-764-9162**

- **Mercy Diagnostic Services at Aztec Urgent Care**

604 Rio Grande Ave. | Aztec, NM 87410  
Hours: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday  
8:00 a.m.-noon and 1:00-5:00 p.m.  
Thursday and Friday 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m.  
and 3:00-6:00 p.m.  
**505-334-5640**

