

CHAMPS Executive Committee on CHAMPS' 30th Anniversary

February 2015

30 Years – Where were you in 1985?

The hit songs in 1985 were “We Are the World,” “Miami Vice Theme,” and “Like a Virgin.” The Bears beat the Patriots in Super Bowl XX, and the Kansas City Royals defeated the St. Louis Cardinals in the “Show-Me” World Series. Compact Discs were introduced to American consumers, VH-1 made its broadcast debut, and the first “.com” was registered.

And, a group of committed individuals formed Community Health Association of Mountain/Plains States “to enhance cost effective delivery of health care in the Region through shared services and the improvement of clinical activities.”

It is hard to believe that CHAMPS has been around for 30 years already. The idea of forming a regional association to work with the community health centers in Region VIII started out as discussions over a beer - I know because I was sitting at the table with many of my colleagues. Today CHAMPS is one of only two federally-funded Regional Primary Care Associations in the country; the organization remains strong providing education and training, workforce development, and networking opportunities for the health centers in Region VIII.

How we provide health care has definitely changed in 30 years. 1985 was a time when computers were used for practice management programs - and word processing if you were on the cutting edge. There was no email or smart phones; electronic medical records were just a pipe dream down that information highway and their cost was considerably higher than what it is today. Our interaction with the Bureau of Primary Health Care was with our Regional Field Office based in Denver - they reviewed each of our grants and made funding decisions.

In today's fast paced and ever changing health care industry we have found that one thing remains constant: there are still individuals that without community health centers would be unable to access affordable, quality health care. As each community health center continues to partner with BPHC to provide quality health care, all too often that one voice gets lost in all of the voices striving to be heard by BPHC and Congress. We have learned that when we come together and speak as one through our State PCA, CHAMPS, and NACHC, our voice is strong and our ideas and concerns are heard. As Aristotle stated, “The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.” With all of the changes today that impact the way we deliver health care and how we are paid for those services, and the challenges in front of us such as the “Funding Cliff,” it is imperative that we continue to work together to ensure affordable quality health care remains a right and not a privilege.

Thank you to CHAMPS members, funders, partners, and staff who have contributed to CHAMPS success over the past 30 years. Our longevity is thanks to the many people who have dedicated so much to maintaining the strong ties in Region VIII. We look forward to many more years of service to Region VIII – the best Region in the Nation!

With much appreciation for your support and involvement,

John Mengershausen, CEO of Horizon Health Care, Inc. and President of CHAMPS

What is CHAMPS to You?

CHAMPS to me is somewhere I can meet and talk to people in the Community Health Center world that have “been there and done that,” talk to people who are going through the same ups and downs as our health center, and talk to old and new CHC employees who have great new ideas. I can gain valuable knowledge through webinars, face to face meetings, salary surveys, conferences, and one on one networking – just to name a few! Thank you for all you do to support the work we do back home.

Cindy Smith, CEO of Bullhook Community Health Center and Montana Representative of CHAMPS

