



GUNNISON VALLEY HEALTH
FOUNDATION

our
HEALTH

our
FUTURE

our
CHOICE

A Critical Campaign to Sustain Healthcare in Our Community

At 2:47 am on a February morning, Sarah Martinez went into labor after a difficult pregnancy—three weeks early, in the middle of a snowstorm. Her husband called 911, terrified. Within eight minutes, she was in the skilled hands of GVH’s emergency team. Mother and baby were safe.

Without Gunnison Valley Health, that same emergency would have meant a 65-mile ambulance ride over Monarch Pass in whiteout conditions. For Sarah’s family, GVH wasn’t just convenient—it was lifesaving.

This is the reality for 17,000 permanent residents, thousands of seasonal residents and workers, and countless visitors who depend on Gunnison Valley Health every single day. We are the only hospital for 50 miles in any direction. We are the difference between care and catastrophe, and each year we treat hundreds of patients whose lives would have been lost or seriously compromised if they had to be transported outside the valley for care.

Across America, rural hospitals are disappearing. More than 150 have closed in the past decade. Dozens more are on the brink of closure. The communities they leave behind face devastating consequences: preventable deaths, declining property values, exodus of young families, and collapsed local economies.

The Crisis Facing Rural Healthcare

The pattern is always the same: rising costs, workforce shortages, and shrinking insurance reimbursements create an impossible financial equation. Eventually, the hospital closes. The community never fully recovers.

Without community support, Gunnison Valley Health faces the same pressures that have closed those 150 hospitals. This statement isn't meant to alarm – it is meant to mobilize. We have a 36-month window to build a financial foundation that will sustain high quality healthcare for our community for the long term.

THE PERFECT STORM

Why Rural Healthcare Is So Vulnerable

Operating a comprehensive hospital in a small, mountain community isn't just difficult – it's economically punishing.

Here's why:

Small Scale, Fixed Costs

GVH must maintain 24/7 emergency services, essential diagnostic equipment, and minimum staffing levels required by law – whether we see 10 patients or 100. We can't simply "scale down" without abandoning our mission entirely. Although we are in a small community, we are committed to providing the same quality of care that patients would receive in larger hospitals located in bigger cities. This is important when it comes to critical care – when people come to us in cardiac arrest or when experiencing a stroke, after automobile or outdoor sporting accidents, in premature labor, or other kinds of emergencies. It is just as important for patients with longer-term illness such as cancer that require ongoing treatment

because it is nearly impossible for many to drive 100 miles roundtrip to access the care they need. We must have the right equipment and staff accessible when the need arises.

We are also facing steep competition for qualified, high quality employees. Between 2021 and 2024, our salary and benefit costs increased 28%, not because we are wasteful, but because we must offer the competitive wages needed to convince talented healthcare professionals to build their lives in rural Colorado. There is already a shortage of excellent doctors, nurses, and technicians across the country, and our quality of life alone is not enough to completely make up for the compensation they could command elsewhere. We must be able to pay well enough to recruit and retain strong talent.

The Workforce Crisis

Recruiting a single physician to a rural community costs \$180,000–\$250,000. When positions go unfilled, temporary coverage can exceed \$2,500 per day, straining existing staff and delaying patient care while doubling our per diem costs.

Supply Costs Spiraling Upward

From surgical supplies to imaging equipment parts, our costs have risen 20% in just three years – nearly twice the rate of general inflation. According to the American Hospital Association, rural hospitals face 40% higher per-discharge costs than their urban counterparts.

Geographic Isolation

Our distance from major medical centers means we can't specialize. We must offer emergency care, primary care, surgical services, imaging, laboratory work, and specialty clinics, all the services that urban hospitals distribute across massive healthcare systems and with greater economies of scale.

These aren't problems we can manage our way out of. They're the structural realities of rural healthcare in America, and this trend cannot be reversed.

THE IMMEDIATE THREAT

Federal Policy Changes

As we work to meet these daily challenges, proposed federal legislation threatens to pull the rug out from under us entirely. Proposed federal legislation, including HR1 and Medicaid restructuring, threatens to slash reimbursements to rural hospitals by billions. For GVH, the impacts would be catastrophic, including:

- **\$2 million annual reduction in Medicaid reimbursements**, representing more than 25% of GVH's operating cash flow.
- **800–1,300 local residents possibly losing Medicaid coverage** due to proposed new eligibility requirements, forcing our neighbors to delay care or seek emergency treatment they cannot pay for.
- **Loss of Critical Access Hospital protections**, reducing Medicare payments from cost-based reimbursement to just 90% of costs.

- **Massive increases in uncompensated emergency care**, which GVH is legally required to provide regardless of ability to pay.

Combined, these changes total over \$9 million in lost reimbursements over three years while demand for charity care climbs and operational costs continue to rise. The legislation is real; the timeline is urgent; and the math is unforgiving. Our community is not only at risk of seeing residents and visitors go untreated or treated in a substandard manner; we are at risk of losing many in our community to other places because they will not be able to live here without healthcare. Without intervention, these changes could force impossible choices: closing the Family Birth Center, eliminating specialty services, or shutting down entirely. This is the kind of downward spiral that too many other rural hospitals have experienced before they had to close.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The True Cost of Losing Local Healthcare

When a rural hospital closes, the damage radiates through every corner of community life.

Medical Consequences

- **Emergency care becomes inaccessible.** Heart attacks, strokes, accidents, and complications in childbirth become death sentences when the nearest hospital is 65 miles away.
- **Chronic disease management collapses.** Cancer care, diabetes, and heart disease require regular monitoring – nearly impossible when patients must drive hours for appointments.
- **Preventive care disappears.** Cancer screenings, immunizations, and wellness checks decline sharply, leading to later diagnoses and worse outcomes.

Economic Devastation

- **Property values decline** 6-12% on average after hospital closures.
- **Local businesses struggle** as families relocate and visitors choose destinations with better healthcare access.
- **Employers cannot recruit talent** when quality healthcare isn't available locally.
- **Tax revenue shrinks**, forcing cuts to schools, roads, and public services.

Social Disintegration

- **Young families leave**, accelerating population decline.
- **Seniors become isolated**, unable to age safely in their own homes.
- **The community's identity erodes** as the institution that welcomed every new life and comforted every loss disappears.

WHY GUNNISON VALLEY HEALTH MATTERS

Every Single Day

While we fight to prevent the loss of local healthcare and secure GVH's long-term future, the hospital continues serving our community in ways large and small, including:

- **9,200+ emergency visits annually.**
From skiing accidents to heart attacks to complications in pregnancy, GVH's ER is here for you 24/7/365.
- **1,751 community members**
participated in preventive blood draw screenings in 2024, a record year for early detection.
- **\$1.7 million in charity care**
was provided in 2024, ensuring no one is turned away in their time of need.

Dennis Earley is just one resident whose routine screening at GVH caught early-stage colon cancer. Today, after treatment coordinated through our oncology partnerships, he's cancer-free and back coaching youth soccer. Early detection saved his life, and it happened here.

Partnerships with local organizations like Gunnison Tough, Living Journeys, and the Cancer Screening Access Fund extend specialized care to uninsured and underinsured neighbors.

GVH employs hundreds of residents with competitive wages and benefits that circulate through our community. As one of the region's largest employers, GVH is a driving economic engine of the Gunnison Valley.

Every baby delivered, every broken bone set, every chronic condition managed, and every life saved happens because GVH is here – fully staffed, fully equipped, and fully prepared.

THE GUNNISON VALLEY HEALTH FOUNDATION

Provides Essential Support

The Gunnison Valley Health Foundation exists to ensure healthcare remains in the Gunnison Valley – regardless of federal policy, insurance reimbursements, or economic headwinds.

Through community philanthropy, the foundation bridges the gap between what insurance pays and what quality care costs. Private contributions enable GVH to:

- *Recruit and retain healthcare professionals in a fiercely competitive national market.*
- *Invest in technology and equipment that keeps advanced care available locally.*
- *Sustain essential services threatened by insurance reimbursement cuts.*
- *Provide charity care to neighbors facing financial hardship.*
- *Support prevention and wellness programs that keep people healthy and out of the hospital.*

Your contribution is more than charity—it's an investment in community survival.

THE CAMPAIGN

Building a Foundation for the Future

The Gunnison Valley Health Foundation is launching a campaign to raise \$5 million in community support over the next three years—creating a sustainable funding model that can meet our residents' and visitors' needs while weathering federal policy shifts and economic uncertainty.

These funds will:

- 1** Establish a workforce stabilization fund to recruit and retain healthcare professionals.
- 2** Create an equipment and technology reserve ensuring GVH can upgrade and maintain essential diagnostic and treatment tools.
- 3** Build an emergency services endowment protecting 24/7 care regardless of reimbursement changes.
- 4** Expand the charity care fund for neighbors who fall through coverage gaps.

A CHOICE ONLY WE CAN MAKE

No angel is coming to save rural healthcare – not the federal government; not the insurance companies; and not corporate health systems.

The only people who can save GVH are the people who depend on it: us. This is our health system. Our emergency room. Our lifeline. And our responsibility.

It's also our opportunity, and the next 36 months will determine whether the Gunnison Valley controls its own healthcare future or becomes another statistic, another rural community that lost its hospital and never recovered.

The Time is Now

Your gift today – whatever the amount – is a vote for local healthcare, community resilience, and the future we want for the Gunnison Valley. Because here, we take care of our own.

PLEASE JOIN THE CAMPAIGN

Make your gift today

Online

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about major gifts, planned giving, or endowment opportunities, please contact the Foundation office at 970.641.7200.

Gunnison Valley Health Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Your gift is tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law. In addition, individuals who pay Colorado State Income Tax are eligible for an Enterprise Zone tax credit on their Colorado return. Donations of \$100 or more earn a 25% tax credit.

Please join the campaign today.



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