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Coast Community Health Center grows to meet community need

Bandon, OR– If you think you know your neighborhood community health center, you may want to take a fresh look.

Coast Community Health Center opened its doors as Bandon Community Health Center in 2010 and earned a Federally Qualified Health Center grant in 2013 to expand services for patients in South Coos and North Curry counties. Moving to the larger facility at the Bandon Professional Center in 2014 was the first step.

In the last two years, the health center has recruited new staff to round out their health team and bring additional services to North Curry County residents. The group cut the ribbon at their new community outreach office in downtown Port Orford in August.

Health center visitors will meet new staff in every department: patients services at the front desk, administrative staff, nurse and medical assistants in the exam rooms. Richard Standiford, Licensed Clinical Social Worker, now works with the primary providers to bring education, counseling and skills training so patients can manage their mental wellbeing.

Helen Thompson is one of four new Community Outreach Workers. Thompson has worked with a variety of public and nonprofit organizations, including the Women’s Safety Resource Center for Coos County. As part of the health team, Thomson helps patients make the most of local health resources and goes the extra mile so patients can be well and stay well.

"As a Community Health Outreach Worker, it’s my job to identify essential services for each patient, especially those living with or recovering from illness. We're here to help, whether you need a core service such as senior nutrition, housing, or a temporary dog walker for the furry extension of your family," she said. "It’s my job, and I love it!"

A timely mission

In 2009, 65 volunteer community members organized to create a health center committed to high-quality primary health care for everyone, whether privately or publicly insured, or without insurance.

The idea was to involve more residents in preventative health care, explained John Logan. Logan was one of the first health center volunteers. He recently retired as the center's board chairman.

The group's action was timely. While the number of health care and social assistance businesses in Oregon has steadily increased in the last decade, the number in Coos and Curry counties has dropped.

Since 2010, the health center has welcomed new patients. And, staff members work together with patients to remove obstacles that may limit their access to preventative care.

Logan notes that household income isn't the only potential barrier. Working adults may only be able schedule appointments after work, so the health center offers evening appointments. The health center coordinates with local transit companies for those who need transportation to appointments at the health center or with a referred specialist.

Residents in North Curry County have two options to connect with the Coast Community Health Center team close to home. Port Orford/Langlois school district students and families can schedule appointments at Pacific High School during the school year. Staff at the new outreach office in Port Orford provide health insurance enrollment and wellness resources year-round.

Open House September 19

Everyone's invited to the Coast Community Health Center Open House on Saturday, September 19, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Drop by the open house to see your local community health center in action. Tour the facility, enjoy refreshments and live music. The health center will give away three bikes—sign up for free to win either a child's, woman's or man's bike from South Coast Bicycles.

The event is free and open to the public. For more information, call 541-347-2529, or visit coastcommunityhealth.org.

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Photo: Three outreach workers joined the health team at Coast Community Health Center in 2015, Monica Alexander, Ginger Pearson, and Helen Thompson.

Coast Community Health Center provides caring attention from highly skilled medical professionals. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, the center offers comprehensive primary health care to residents of Oregon's South Coast in Bandon and at the Pirate Wellness Center at Pacific High School. New patients are welcome. Contact staff at 541-347-2529, or visit coastcommunityhealth.org.