



Good News from the Health Clinic

By: Board and Staff of Deschutes Rim Health Clinic

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Maile Anslinger, MD, as a new addition to our team of health care providers. Dr. Anslinger will be seeing patients on a part-time basis, 1 ½ days a week, for as long as we need her. She started seeing 'Medicare only' and self-pay patients in early February but will expand to patients with other insurance carriers soon. Dr. Anslinger is an internal medicine doctor previously employed at MCMC. She lives in The Dalles. We are also pleased that Shaylyn Murphy (PA) and Rebecca Hudson (FNP) have agreed to continue caring for patients through March.

On the dental side, Dr. Ron Selis, DDS (our pro bono dentist extraordinaire), was introduced to a dentist from Hood River who has agreed to join the care team part-time in April. We welcome Dr. Margaret Anderson, DDS, who has an excellent background in public health dentistry in rural communities. Dr. Anderson will provide dental care to self-pay patients at first until insurance carriers associate her with the clinic (called 'credentialing'). To assist Dr. Anderson, the clinic will be recruiting a dental assistant. We thank Dr. Selis for continuing to volunteer a bit of his time every month providing dental care to our patients.

We continue to recruit and interview for full-time medical and dental provider positions as well as several staff positions to bring the clinic to full staffing. The health care field remains intensely competitive with many job opportunities for providers to choose from, and jobs with likely better wages and benefits. As we have said before, our situation is not unique. MANY rural clinics are struggling or have even closed. We are thankful that our clinic remains open daily, due in large part to the tax dollars we receive from South Wasco County residents. Those funds serve as a safety net in difficult times, and a safety cushion in normal times.

We are very pleased to have found a new board candidate, Dr. Sheila Murphy, DC, who will be given the oath of office at the February 22nd board meeting. Dr. Murphy was a chiropractor and faculty member of the National University of Natural Medicine in Portland, OR. She also managed medical clinics at two different medical universities. Dr. Murphy lives on Juniper Flat.

Two additional board positions remain open; we welcome individuals who are willing to roll up their sleeves and help support the board and clinic. An application can be obtained at the clinic (541-395-2911) or on the WHRD website (<https://alara980.wixsite.com/wrhd>). Board member Julie Whetzel resigned in January after having served on the board for over 2 years, helping with myriad tasks during that time including serving as Board Secretary. We wish her well and thank her for her tremendous contributions and service.

The work this board, and previous boards, has done has been extraordinary, and at times exhausting. With limited staff, the board steps in to support clinic and district operations, carrying out management-type duties to offset the absence of a District Manager and assist the part-time Clinic Manager. Each member has skill(s) and/or knowledge to share; each member has backgrounds in some element of health care and/or management. All are retired, choosing to offer their volunteer service and at times make personal sacrifices for the benefit of the health clinic and the community.

Operating a health clinic is a complicated business. Working with insurance carriers, billing, coding, and monitoring insurance payments, managing electronic health records, managing the accounting of revenue and expenditures, supporting audits, meeting regulatory requirements, and providing patient care services comprise some of the mix of operational tasks that are performed on a near daily basis. To add to that, we are actively recruiting and conducting interviews for vacant positions, updating or developing new policies, developing contracts, and pursuing networking opportunities in the healthcare field. With the help and support of other organizations, and with staff and board perseverance and determination, we are keeping this clinic open and operating – as a commitment to this community. The potential for a thriving clinic exists; we are optimistic for a better future, and we hope you are, too.

Lastly, we invite the public to an Open House at the Deschutes Rim Health Clinic on Saturday, April 6th, from 2:00 – 4:00 PM. This will be the first Open House since the new clinic facility was fully completed and operational. We are excited to share information and provide tours and hope that you will come to meet the staff, board and special guests and ask your questions and give feedback. This is YOUR clinic; we want you to feel a part of it. While a brief introduction will be given at 2:00, the public is welcome to come when it best fits their schedule during those two hours. Refreshments, SWAG, and goodies for kids will be provided. We hope to see you there!