

Hanging up the stethoscope

Longtime Keizer MD retiring

By ERIC A. HOWALD
Of the Keizertimes

It's been the summer of the long goodbye for Dr. Jay Jamieson of Willamette Valley Physicians on River Road North.

After 34 years as a family care physician in the area – 30 of them in Keizer – Jamieson is retiring. The goodbyes have taken on a now-familiar form: Jamieson talks with the patient about the problem of the day and is about to leave when the patient asks if he “has a minute.” Then a new space is opened up.

“They will recall some poignant moment in their health and thank me for helping them through it,” Jamieson said.

In those moments, Jamieson is awed by his profession and the ways in which things he learned years ago, or just last year, make a difference in people's lives.

“You have six billion chemical reactions going on in your body right now and I have skills that allow me to ask you questions regarding what's going on and then examination skills that can lead me to the possibilities of A, B, C or D. And, if that's the case, we do X, Y or Z to figure it out,” Jamieson said.



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Several people loomed large over Jamieson's decision to become a doctor. His own childhood primary care physician and Dr. Grant Thorsett at Willamette University were two of them, but Jamieson's mother, a registered nurse, had some of the biggest impact.

“She would come home with stories of amazing things that happened,” Jamieson said.

Jamieson was born in New Jersey and moved to the west coast after his father was transferred, as a civilian contractor, to Vandenberg Air Force Base in Lompoc, Calif. He received his pre-med degree from Willamette University and then studied medicine at Northwestern University in Chicago.

Jamieson said serving in many capacities for only a month at a time during a three-year residency prepared him for the day-to-day work of being a family physician.

“Every month during your

residency, you're working in a new field, with new patients and new systems. You are sort of taught resiliency,” he said. While he tried to keep an open mind, he stuck with general practice over a specialization because it gave him the opportunity to do a bit of everything.

Jamieson returned to the mid-Willamette Valley in 1983 and began working for Northwest Human Services office in west Salem. After working off his student loans, he performed medical missionary work for more than a year and then made his return to the Salem area.

At the time, there were only two doctors in Keizer. Dr. Vernon Casterline and Dr. Greg Thomas, and Casterline was planning his retirement. Jamieson took over Casterline's side of the practice in 1987 and Thomas and Jamieson purchased and bought the property where WVP now sits in 1996.

Both Keizer and the medical field have changed a lot since Jamieson first came to town.

On the civic side of things, Jamieson said one of the biggest treats was the arrival of the Salem-Keizer Volcanoes. For a while, Jamieson was tapped as the Volcano's team physician, but the responsibilities alongside raising five kids and being a partner in the clinic eventually prompted him to step aside.

In the grand scheme, medical practice has changed more drastically.



KEIZERTIMES/Eric A. Howald

Dr. Jay Jamieson, a Keizer doctor for more than 30 years, is retiring Aug. 31.

When Jamieson started out, his responsibilities entailed regular visits to the hospital either to admit patients or simply make the rounds on patients already there. Those duties are now performed by interning physicians who send Jamieson updates. It might seem like a small thing, but the change helped Jamieson get more sleep and focus on patients at the clinic. There is also significantly more outpatient treatment available for most problems.

“If you had a blood clot when I started, you'd be in a hospital for seven days and I would have to go to the hospital and check in on you every day. Now they start you on shots you give yourself and a pill and it works fine,” Jamieson said.

In 2011, with major changes coming as a result of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Jamieson and Thomas sold the clinic to WVP Medical Clinics.

Jamieson sees both good and frustrating things in what the ACA accomplished, but if 34 years in medicine taught him anything, it's flexibility.

Still after all that time, and with retirement a mere week away, Jamieson can still find himself reeling at the thought of all his career has entailed.

“I was doing a sports physical the other day and I looked over at the boy's mom and said, ‘You know, you would have been about the same age when I first started seeing you,’” he said.

Jamieson has treated as many as five generations of the same family, and has numerous families in which he's treated three generations. Given that entrenchment in people's lives, he's tried to assuage the fears that come with change.

“I won't be here, but people will still come before paper and our patients' time will be treated as valuably as our own,” he

said.

More than that though, it's left him with a different sense of awe – at the lessons in humility his patients have taught him. Jamieson and Thomas never put up billboards or paid for a lot of advertising even when competition came to town. They relied mostly on word-of-mouth. It was only recently, during the summer of the long goodbye, that Jamieson is able to comprehend the scope of his impact on the lives of his patients, in those moments after the scheduled appointments are over.

“It's been humbling to realize that they trusted me and the other staff with their healthcare needs and we take that very seriously,” he said. “Hearing people thanking me has been very humbling and I did not realize the impact I had. I always figured I'm just one of many family doctors, but some of my patients kept coming back for 30 years.”

Cornhole tourney Sept. 9

Shangri-La and Salem Ale Works present the second annual Capitol City Cornhole Classic on Sept. 9 at the State Capitol State Park, 155 Waverly Street NE. The event starts at 10 a.m. and goes to 5 p.m.

Capitol City Cornhole Classic is a fundraiser for Shangri-La. Proceeds will help people with disabilities


and families with disadvantages realize and achieve their full potential.

Pre-registration is required by Sept. 5 at 10 p.m. Entry fees are non-refundable and non-transferable. Admission is \$45 per team for two player teams. One player rule breaker division for children ages six to 12 and people with disabilities who need accommo-

dation is \$10.

For more information, go to ShangrilaOregon.org or contact Ashley at community@shangrilaor.org.

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