



»INSIDE

Astorian

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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Columbia Memorial Hospital is saving for a new facility in Astoria expected to cost more than \$100 million.

A new hospital on the horizon

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Over the past five years, Columbia Memorial Hospital's operating margin has nearly doubled from 5.7% to 11%, the highest among rural or nonprofit medical facilities in Oregon.

The high rate of profit became a rallying cry for nurses seeking better pay in a new contract last fall and part of why the Portland Business Journal recently named Columbia Memorial the financially healthiest hospital in the region.

But Columbia Memorial's leaders argue the relatively plush financials are a necessity for an independent hospital trying to take care of the community and its employees. The hospital is also funding an expansion of services that will see two new clinics open on the North Coast this year, with a brand new hospital in Astoria for more than \$100 million on the horizon.

Having stable financials helps offer competitive wages and recruit more nurses and doctors, said Zach Schmitt, the hospital's chief financial officer. Over the past five years, Columbia Memorial has grown by nearly 150 employees to more than 700, with salary and benefit costs growing by 40%. In that same time period, inpatient discharges have grown by 40%, outpatient discharges by nearly 30% and net patient revenue by 70%.

"The growth was deliberate," said Erik Thorsen, Columbia Memorial's CEO. "This was a strategic plan that our board adopted really about 10 years ago. The board wanted to provide more services locally than we were providing at the time. And all of our work over the past decade has really been centered around that theme and that mission of we want to provide services locally. We want

Columbia Memorial Hospital performance, 2014 vs. 2018

Item	2014	2018	Difference
Operating margin	5.6%	10.9%	5.3 pct. points
Operating expenses (\$ millions)	\$74.7	\$117.9	Up 57.8%
Net patient revenue (\$ millions)	\$76.1	\$129.7	Up 70.3%
Salaries and benefits (\$ millions)	\$42	\$59.1	Up 40.9%
Charity care (\$ millions)	\$1.4	\$2.3	Up 56.2%
Occupancy rate	47%	61.5%	14.5 pct. points
Inpatient days	4,289	5,611	Up 30.8%
Inpatient discharges	1,436	2,010	Up 40%
Average length of stay	3 days	2.8 days	Down 6.7%
Outpatient visits	167,548	212,483	Up 26.8%
Emergency room visits	13,046	13,765	Up 5.5%

Source: Apprise Health Insights

EO Media Group graphic

to take care of our community in our community."

The transition from small-town community hospital to regional medical center started more than a decade ago, when Columbia Memorial opened the Health and Wellness Pavilion near its main campus. It soon added MRI and PET — positron emission tomography — scans. Outpatient chemotherapy, cut in 2003 when the hospital was hemorrhaging money, was added back in 2008.

In 2010, the hospital partnered with Oregon Health & Science University on a chemotherapy clinic in the newly constructed Park Medical Building. The hospital has since partnered with OHSU on ophthalmology, cardiology and telemedicine. The surgery department is entirely staffed by

OHSU doctors. The hospital's board recently added a full voting member from OHSU.

OHSU retains a small ownership stake in the Knight Cancer Collaborative, a partnership between the two institutions that recently added radiology and strengthened chemotherapy services on the North Coast.

Cancer treatment is one of the more lucrative services of a hospital, and the demand on the North Coast has outstripped Columbia Memorial's initial projections. The opening of the Knight Cancer Collaborative resulted in a spike of the hospital's operating revenues from \$114 million in 2017 to nearly \$140 million in 2018.

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SEASIDE

Man pleads guilty to child sex abuse

Pickering sentenced to 20 years in prison

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

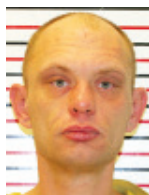
A Seaside man was sentenced to 20 years in prison Friday for encouraging child sex abuse.

Joshua Allen Pickering, 36, pleaded guilty to eight counts of encouraging child sex abuse in the second degree. He was originally charged with 18 counts for possession of child pornography.

Pickering has a long criminal history in Clatsop County, including numerous arrests and charges related to sex abuse and assault.

District Attorney Ron Brown argued that Pickering is anti-social and has not been open to treatment. He called three witnesses to the stand in court to testify to Pickering's behavior, including his mother.

Jail staff described Pickering as challenging to work with and volatile and threatening when he doesn't get what he wants.



Joshua Allen Pickering

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Parks and rec scholarships scaled back

Annual costs to the city had ballooned

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Astorian

Astoria is preparing to roll out a revamped parks scholarship program depleted by heavy demand and inefficiencies.

The Parks and Recreation Department and Community Foundation, city and local businesses have partnered for the past several years on fundraisers to support scholarships for lower-income residents to access health and wellness programs. Chief among them is Run on the River, a race cosponsored by Buoy Beer Co. that last year netted around \$26,000.

Scholarships went to anyone financially eligible who applied. But over the past several years, the annual cost of the scholarships ballooned from \$6,000 to \$46,000, said Gad Perez, the foundation's secretary. The program was further overwhelmed during the federal government shutdown a year ago, when many U.S. Coast Guard families utilized the free passes, although nobody regrets helping them out, she said.

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County will get new homeless count

Annual event links people to services

By NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

Clatsop County will soon get an updated count on homelessness.

Clatsop Community Action will host the 10th annual Project Homeless Connect on Tuesday at the Seaside Civic and Convention Center.

Over 40 other nonprofit, governmental and faith-based agencies throughout the North Coast will also offer services.

"I think it's a way of instilling hope in people who are experiencing homelessness who are already feeling very, very hopeless with the situation that they're in," said Susan Prettyman, Clatsop Community Action's housing manager.

"They come in and they're not judged by any agency that's in there. They know those people are there to help them."

Volunteers will help people identify their needs through an intake form.

The intake will also ask people where they slept the night before, and if they mark that they slept in a car, street or camper, volunteers will ask them to complete a point-in-time survey.

The survey occurs nationwide every two years during the last 10 days of January as part of a joint effort to count people experiencing homelessness.

Other agencies, including the state Department of Human Services, school districts, Helping Hands and The Harbor also participate in the count.

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Joshua Bessex/The Astorian

Boxes of clothing sit on a table for people to take during a Project Homeless Connect event.

