

Health care that comes to you

By Terri Harber
Spilyay Tymoo

Tribal member Shawnetta Yahtin has been working around the reservation since May as a nurse-social worker with a community-based practice.

She has an office in the Warm Springs Tribal Health and Wellness Center. But she spends much of her time with patients in their environments, not hers.

"I always look at the client as the expert on their well being," she said. "They know what works best. Some tribal members or agencies feel you can change the person. I'm not able to do that. It's up to the person."

She can help them find ways to better cope with their situations. "Educate and motivate" is how she refers to what she does with tribal members.

Being able to see clients at home provides more information for this health care worker. It helps her make the most suitable recommendations to people seeking to improve their physical and mental health.

She can make inquiries on behalf of the client and find them other forms of assistance, such as finding suitable support groups in the area. She can discuss whether medication is working and find out if there is anything in their dwelling that could impact the effectiveness of care.

She shares the information with primary health care providers so modifications in treatment can occur.

Yahtin works with families, individuals, Child Protective Services, Victims of Crimes Services, and other social workers on the reservation. She also visits people in senior housing, High Look Lodge and those incarcerated in Tribal Jail.

Most of the tribal members Yahtin deals with are sincere and willing to keep an open mind when she offers advice, she said.

"I'll do a home assessment as well as that of individual family members," she said.

This could include determining if it's a loud or stressful atmosphere, if anyone smokes, whether there are any sanitary issues such as mice



Terri Harber/Spilyay

Shawnetta Yahtin is a nurse-social worker with a community-based practice.

control or mold, or other goings-on that could affect the patient. These are types of things that might not come up when the person talks to a doctor or nurse at the clinic.

Another thing she keeps in mind when working on the reservation is that there are financial barriers, especially when trying to coordinate tribal members' needs and all of the available resources.

For example, housing is scarce and many family members live together. This means they probably do other things together under the same roof. Do they eat family style? What do they eat? Are these meals geared to children? Is there enough of a food budget to allow for special items the patient should eat?

"They know that I'm trying to help meet their needs," she explained. "I'm trying to help them cope."

Yahtin also keeps in touch with the tribes' homeless population and offers them similar advice. She also works with area churches that help these people—especially during the winter when temperatures make it dangerous to be outdoors for long periods.

She would like to see a facility created here expressly to help the homeless. Even if only offers daycare, it could ease physical and mental ills many of them suffer, she said.

She'd also like to see a storage facility established to hold basic items for people who suffer through catastrophes like fires

and floods. Furniture, food, clothes and other basics could be kept there.

Pulling together more support groups for various needs is another thing she'd like to see happen on the reservation. She's hoping that some tribal members might be willing to host some groups at their homes.

One more idea: More cultural activities for everyone, especially for children ages 10 and older. There isn't a lot to do during the winter on the reservation. These youths need more activities available to them, Yahtin said.

She suggested tutors, a place to play video games, learn to cook or do mechanics. Perhaps guest speakers and young artists from around the region could visit with the teens and tweens and show them what they do.

The idea is to teach them "how to empower themselves and let them become leaders," she said.

Yahtin also spends a lot of time counseling clients after normal business hours. While it's a job that requires a lot of hours working, "it gives me great pleasure in helping a person with their unmet needs," she said.

She obtained associate's and bachelor's degrees in social science and minored in psychology. She earned her master's degree in social work. She did her studies at Portland State University.

Tribal members with physical or mental ailments interested in her assistance can call 541-553-1196, ext. 4498.

Illegal dumping gets out of hand

By Terri Harber
Spilyay Tymoo

Large piles of garbage were visible from the road near where B100 and 180 intersect.

A freezing rainfall made it impossible for tribal employees to get the refuse off the ground because ice formed all over it. This acts like a natural version of an industrial-strength adhesive.

"It won't budge," said Tony Wergin, recycling technician. "We'll have to wait till spring to pry it up."

It would take mechanical means to pull up the junk right now. But time and expense make that solution impractical.

Sanitary employees are having to pick up large piles of illegally dumped trash around the reservation. It's not a new problem. And it costs money to pick up after people who do this.

Employees must first inspect the site of the illegal dumping. They have to see what was left and determine whether any hazardous materials are there and if there is a substantial threat to the environment.

"These sites have to be inspected to ensure they're safe and ensure they don't need remediation," Wergin said.

Special removal procedures are required if anything turns out to be hazardous. This costs the tribes extra.

It especially bothers the workers because money is tight for all types of services and operations around the reservation these days. Their efforts could be spent on more important tasks, said Wergin and Nancy Collins, the tribes' sanitarian.

Because of the cost and trouble, sanitary employees routinely act as refuse detec-



Photo courtesy Tony Wergin

This is a pile of garbage illegally dumped on the reservation. It wasn't very far from a transfer station, which baffled sanitary workers who arrived to inspect it.

tives when examining junk dumped illegally. They go through the piles in search of clues that point to the person or people who created the trash.

People dumping trash near roads or down hills usually don't take time to take out garbage that might have their name on it, both said.

While some of the frustrated workers would like to immediately throw the garbage back into the front yards of the people illegally dumping it, cooler heads prevail. They look for patterns in the garbage that point to who might be creating it. Once they figure out from whom the garbage originates they warn the people that shouldn't be doing this, Collins said.

Tribal members can go to one of the four transfer stations any time and leave refuse for no cost. There are even areas for hazardous items, such as batteries, electronics, and cell phones. The tribes now have these items recycled because it helps pay the

ills, Wergin said. "Please use the transfer stations," he said.

Tribal members on the reservation with large items—such as appliances—and special items can call 541-553-4943.

Use the same telephone number with questions about garbage. The sanitary department often can help in removing items but can't act immediately because of their other normal duties, Wergin emphasized.

These are the transfer station sites on the reservation. All four are open to local tribal members only and can be used at any time:

- Main transfer station: At landfill, Lower Dry Creek
- Seekseequa: Approximately 12 miles off Highway 26, Jackson Trail
- Simnasho: Behind old school
- Sidwalter: B100 between 160-180.

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