

Health care: Agreement with St. Charles

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In the past, when a patient was referred to an off-reservation provider, Managed Care would not hear back from the provider as to the service provided, diagnosis, future treatment, etc. In order to get this information, Managed Care would have to rely on the patient: This would involve the patient providing a release of information, for instance.

The situation was inconvenient, requiring additional and at times unnecessary contact with the patient.

The new Care Coordination Agreement now allows Managed Care and the clinic to hear directly from the provider without the need of inconveniencing the patient, or creating additional hurdles for Managed Care.

The billing for the off-reservation services will also be streamlined. Billing for patients covered by Medicaid can now be covered directly and 100-percent by the federal program. In the past the Oregon Health Plan was a partial payer, and would then seek reimbursement from the federal program. The new agreement creates the more direct billing option.

In the end the goal of the agreement is to improve care for tribal patients of the clinic, said Michael Collins, director of Man-

aged Care.

The Care Coordination Agreement was about three years in the making, with the finalization coming together over the past several weeks.

On hand for the signing at the Joint Health Commission was Joseph Sluka, president and chief executive officer of the St. Charles Health Care System. "We're privileged to have this agreement, and to serve the Warm Springs community," Mr. Sluka said.

Other business

In some other business from the Joint Health Commission meeting:

The commission elected

the officers. Heather Crow-Martinez was nominated and approved to continue as chairwoman. Caroline Cruz will continue as secretary; and the vice chairwoman is Michelle Miller, acting clinic director. Ms. Miller will serve as vice chair until the new permanent clinic director is on board in a few weeks.

The new director, Chippewa tribal member, is moving to Warm Springs from North Dakota, and will be here in mid December, Michelle reported.

She said there will be two new nurses, and a new dental assistant starting also in December.

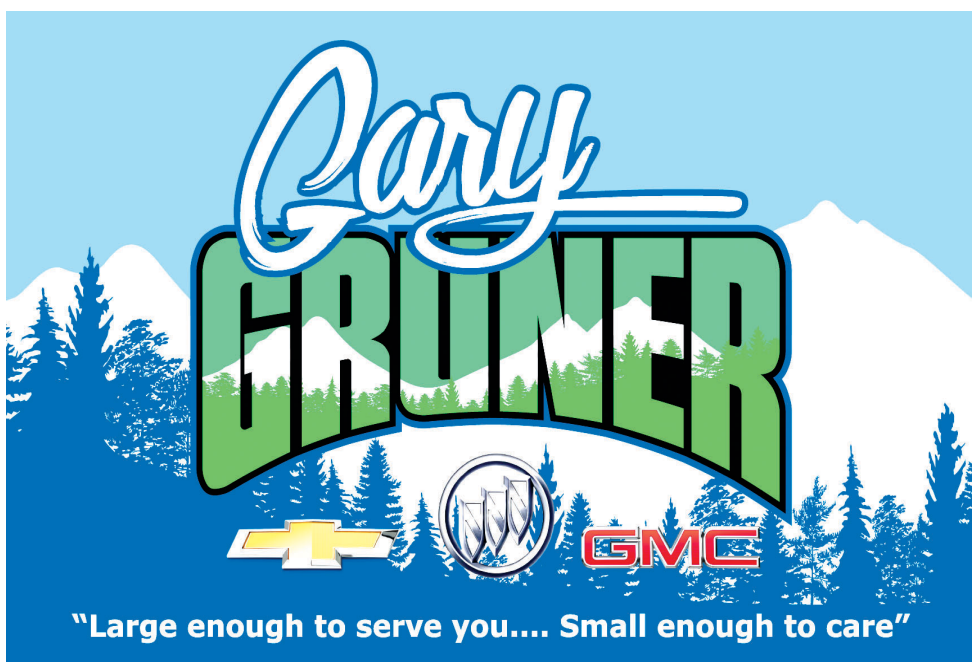


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