

Clinic hires two family nurse practitioners

By Brent Merrill

Smoke Signals staff writer

Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center Family Nurse Practitioner Lorrie Amitrano prefers to shake hands the right way.

She doesn't like any of that lightly taking her hand when she first meets you. She likes a firm handshake.

And if she likes you, she might even teach you how the Navajos shake hands.

Amitrano, who previously worked for the Navajo Nation and lived in Arizona before coming to Grand Ronde, is one of two new medical providers who recently began practicing at the Grand Ronde Health & Wellness Center.

Amitrano and Kecia Harris are the Tribe's new family nurse practitioners who have rounded out the medical staff and given Tribal members options when receiving medical services.

Amitrano and Harris see patients of all ages.

"Family practice is a generalized term that refers to caring for patients all through their lifespan. So from newborn through end of life," said Clinical Nursing Supervisor Christa Hosley. "They (family nurse practitioners) see and take care of everyone."

Hosley said family nurse practitioners are providers. They write prescriptions, diagnose, order diagnostic exams, lab tests and imaging, and make referrals.

Not only are family nurse practitioners registered nurses, but they are considered advanced practice registered nurses educated and trained to provide health promotion through diagnosis and treatment of acute illness and chronic conditions. According to the International Council of Nurses, family nurse practitioners have acquired expert knowledge and complex decision-making skills.

"One of the things we have been working on and we continue to work on is improving patient access to health care," said Hosley. "The goal is to improve access, and so by filling our positions and increasing our provider panel we have been better able to meet the needs of the Tribe and the community."

Amitrano has been on the job for four months.



Kecia Harris

"I started here in February so I am definitely the new kid on the block," said Amitrano. "I have a long history with Native American populations. I worked extensively with the Navajo people for a long time."

Amitrano said she drove around Grand Ronde before deciding to accept the position at the Health & Wellness Center.

"I thought the monies that were provided (for health care services) here were really spent well. The complex out here is just very impressive," said Amitrano. "The attention to detail said that the people who were governing the monies were spending it very wisely and it impressed me."

Amitrano said she has been welcomed to the Health & Wellness Center with open arms.

"The people that I have been working with have been fabulous. The staff here – everyone has just been so nice," said Amitrano.

Amitrano, who used to be a paramedic and ran an ambulance company, said she is ready to use her skills and knowledge to benefit the Tribe. She said she can do everything a family medical doctor can do and that the only difference is she reports to a board of nursing and doctors report to a board of medicine.

"I'm master's prepared," said Amitrano. "I've gone on to get a lot more credentials. I'm board certified as a professional nutritionist. I'm board certified as an advanced holistic nurse. I look at the whole



Lorrie Amitrano

patient and the whole person. I've been taking care of patients in so many different ways as I've continued on my caregiving. So for me, it's always been about the whole person.

"Every person that comes into my office, I really embrace the sacred nature of that person. I'm honored to be here."

Amitrano is a board-certified family nurse practitioner with the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, a board-certified advanced holistic nurse with the American Holistic Nurses Association and a certified nutrition professional with the National Association of Nutrition Professionals.

"Lorrie is very nurturing," said Hosley. "She has a passion for the holistic care style. She's looking at improving a person's health, quality of health and quality of life."

For Harris, this is her first job as a family nurse practitioner after graduating from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash., in December 2015.

"I'm a brand new nurse practitioner," said Harris, who started working in Grand Ronde in March. "I am here to help you reach your health goals. I think this is going to be a fabulous career."

Harris, who grew up in Sandy, said she had reached a point where she was looking for a change and that she wanted to gain more skills to improve her life.

Her father asked her one day if she had ever thought about a career in nursing. She looked into it and completed a two-year degree at Blue Mountain Community College in Pendleton in 2003.

Harris went on to attend Washington State University in Pullman and received a bachelor's degree in 2009 and a master's degree last year.

Harris said she feels comfortable

in her new work environment and feels supported by those around her.

"Everyone here has been very invested in my success as a provider and that's been really nice," said Harris.

She said it is the interactions with her patients that make nursing the right career for her.

"My take is we need to make this a collaborative relationship (between patient and provider)," said Harris. "Together, if you are honest with me, we can reach your health goals. Patients need to know that we are here to help and support and nurture. We want this to be a premier place for people to get care."

Health Services Executive Director Kelly Rowe said Amitrano and Harris fit not only the educational and professional criteria they were looking for when filling the two family nurse practitioner positions, but they fit the community as well.

"When we were looking at hiring for the position and when we interviewed we were really trying to find the right skill set, of course, but also the right fit," said Rowe. "We were trying to find someone who wants to be here and be part of the team and bring better health, but also for the right reasons. Both Lorrie and Kecia interviewed well and they came across like they care. They are passionate about their skill, but also about people and that's what we want."

Rowe said Amitrano's experience working in Indian Country will be invaluable and that Harris is the right fit for the Health & Wellness program.

"The sense I got from her (Harris) wasn't just empathy and compassion, it was also enthusiasm," said Rowe. "She was so passionate about wanting to work within a small community and she wanted to be a part of something bigger than her and that for me was the right fit."

"The nurse practitioners that we brought on fit incredibly well to be part of the team. They are key. They are essential. The idea is to bring people in that are a good fit and that they are here for the right reasons – to be able to care for our membership, to really be part of the community and to be part of the family. That's their role."

Harris lives on a small farm outside of Dayton with her husband, three dogs, two cats, four alpacas and 18 hens where she spins alpaca wool into yarn.

When not working, Amitrano can usually be found hiking to a waterfall or traveling to a wine tasting, farmer's market or musical event. ■

Summer Arts Program scheduled

The Art Conspiracy of Yamhill County will hold its Summer Arts Program for students 9 to 16 years of age from Amity, Sheridan, Willamina and Grand Ronde with preference given to returning students and students from these areas.

The Summer Program consists of eight days of 2.5-hour morning and afternoon classes four days a week for two weeks. Courses are taught by working artists and educators.

Classes will be held at Amity High School Monday through Thursday, June 20 through June 30. Transportation will be provided from Willamina High School at 8:15 a.m. daily and Friday, June 24, is reserved for a field trip to the Hallie Ford Museum in Salem.

Classes are limited to 10 students to maximize learning. Scheduled classes include ceramics, painting, beginning digital photography, manga/comic drawing and AM Rock Band, among others.

Registration is accepted first-come, first-served with a \$25 deposit due with registration.

For more information, visit artconspiracy.simdif.com on the Internet or the Art Conspiracy West Valley page on Facebook. ■

WIC visits Health & Wellness Center

Pregnant? Breastfeeding? Does your family include a child under the age of 5? If so, you may qualify for the Women, Infants and Children program. With WIC, people can receive answers to nutritional questions and access fruits and vegetables, whole grains, eggs, milk, cheese, juice, cereal and more. A WIC representative visits the Health & Wellness Center on the first and third Tuesday of the month, June 21 and July 5. Walk-ins are welcome between 8:45 and 11 a.m. When WIC clients arrive at the Health & Wellness Center, they should enter through the Wellness Department located at the back of the medical wing. For more information or to schedule an appointment, call 503-623-8175, ext. 2297. ■