

PeaceHealth selected to participate in ACO program

PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center has been selected as one of 89 new Medicare Shared Savings Program Accountable Care Organizations (ACOs), providing approximately 1.6 million additional Medicare beneficiaries with access to high-quality, coordinated care across the United States, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) has announced.

That brings the total to 405 Shared Savings Program ACOs serving over 7.2 million beneficiaries.

Doctors, hospitals and health care providers establish ACOs in order to work together to provide higher-quality coordinated care to their patients, while helping to slow health care cost growth. PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center will be one of 405 ACOs participating in the Shared Savings Program that began Jan. 1, 2015.

Beneficiaries seeing health care providers in ACOs always have the freedom to choose doctors inside or outside of the ACO.

ACOs share with Medicare savings generated from lowering the growth in health care costs when they meet standards for high quality care. ACOs are groups of doctors, hospitals and other health care providers that work together to give Medicare beneficiaries in Original Medicare (fee-for-service) high quality, coordinated care.

ACOs can share in any savings they generate for Medicare, if they meet specified quality targets.

“PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center will be joining a program that is one part of this administration's vision for improving the coordination and integration of care received by Medicare benefi-

aries,” said Sean Cavanaugh, deputy administrator and director, Center for Medicare. “We look forward to continuing this partnership with PeaceHealth Peace Harbor Medical Center in increasing value and care coordination across the health system.”

Since ACOs first began participating in the program in early 2012, thousands of health care providers have signed on to participate in the program, working together to provide better care to Medicare’s seniors and people with disabilities.

The 89 new ACOs will bring approximately 23,000 additional physicians and other providers into the ACO program.

ACOs are starting to see promising results.

Last fall, CMS released the early findings from the ACOs who started the program in 2012. ACOs improved on 30 of the 33 quality measures in the first two years, including patients’ ratings of clinicians’ communication, beneficiaries’ rating of their doctors, and screening for high blood pressure.

ACOs also outperformed group practices reporting quality on 17 out of 22 measures. ACOs are also demonstrating promising results on cost savings with combined total program savings of \$417 million for the Shared Savings

Program and the pioneer ACO model.

While CMS is encouraged by what they have seen so far, they also understand there are opportunities to improve the program to make it stronger. Earlier this month, it published a proposed rule to update the guidelines for the program. CMS is looking forward to receiving comments from ACOs, beneficiaries, and their advocates, providers, and other stakeholders interested in seeing the ACOs succeed long-term.

ACOs are also just one way that CMS is working to reduce the rate of growth in Medicare spending while improving care. Medicare spending per beneficiary was essentially flat in nominal dollars in fiscal year 2014, and from 2010 to 2014,

Medicare spending per beneficiary grew at a rate that was two percentage points per year less than growth in GDP per capita.

While the recent slow cost growth has multiple causes, our reforms in the Medicare and Medicaid programs are meaningful contributors to these gains and are improving quality as well.

Preliminary data for 2013, for example, indicates improvements in patient safety has resulted in 50,000 fewer deaths, 1.3 million fewer patient harms, and \$12 billion in avoided health care spending.

Recent research implies that many of these reforms may be generating savings in the private sector as well.

Grano appointed to WLCF board for 2015-18

At its annual meeting held in December, Western Lane Community Foundation (WLCF) announced the appointment of Jim Grano to a three-year term on its Board of Directors.

Grano joins the board after 15 years teaching at Mapleton High School and then for 18 years at Siuslaw Middle School. He and his wife, Barbara, live in Mapleton.

In 1995, Grano formed the Stream Team, where students learned about the Siuslaw River, its environment and its marine life. Trips to salmon traps and assisting the Salmon and Trout Enhancement Program were highlights.

The program is now called Watershed Studies for grades

three through eight in Florence.

Grano is a past president of the Mapleton Lions Club board and is currently on the board of directors of the Watershed Council.

WLCF is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year, having awarded more than \$2,400,000 in scholarships and grants to local nonprofits.

The current grant cycle ends Jan. 15 for grant requests. Scholarships for 2015 will be awarded in the spring to graduating Mapleton and Siuslaw High School students.

For more information, contact WLCF Executive Director Gayle Waiss at 541-997-1274, or visit wlcfc@wlcfonline.org.



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IN BRIEF

Port special meeting set for tomorrow

The Port of Siuslaw Board of Commissioners will hold a special meeting on Thursday, Jan. 8, 2015, at 9 a.m., at the port office, 100 Harbor St.

This meeting is a work session to review and discuss the 2013-18 Strategic Business Plan. Port meetings are open to the public.

For more information, contact the port office at 541-997-3426.

FECWS committee to meet tomorrow

The Florence Cold Weather Shelter Committee will meet Thursday, Jan. 8, at 9:30 a.m., in St. Andrew’s Episcopal Church on 19th Street.

The group will discuss in detail its first opening, plans for moving forward, and the urgent need for fundraising.

Women Veterans to meet Jan. 9

The January 2015 Coastal Women Veterans will be having its monthly luncheon at The Surfside Restaurant at Driftwood Shores, 88416 First Ave., on Friday, Jan. 9, at 11:30 a.m.

All military veterans are invited to attend.

RSVP to Terri Pennington at 541-999-2400, or email her at Terri_32dunes@oregon-fast.net.

Mapleton Lions host pancake breakfast

The Mapleton Lions Club will hold its next monthly pancake breakfast Sunday, Jan. 11, from 7:30 to 10:30 a.m., at the Mapleton Lions Club, 88148 Riverview Dr., in Mapleton.

Menu will include pancakes, sausage, ham and eggs.

Cost is \$7 for adults and \$3 for children.



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