

# MORE

# THAN JUST A

# HOSPITAL



Blue Mountain Hospital

## Expanding rural facility provides a variety of services

By Sean Hart

Blue Mountain Eagle

**A**lthough known for its forests and mountains and country lifestyle, Grant County also features a flourishing rural hospital that offers many of the services available at larger institutions in urban areas — with a much better view.

Tucked away on a hill near the heart of John Day, Blue Mountain Hospital's large windows provide patients with a peaceful atmosphere overlooking the serene landscape. Behind the scenes, however, is a bustling medical institution that employs about 250 people in a county of about 7,000.

Hospital CEO Randall Mee, who started last year, said the hospital strives to provide “high quality care close to home.”

“We want to be of service to this community and ensure that they know they’re going to be well taken care of,” he said. “After I’ve been here six months, I’m confident that we have got some phenomenal employees and a board that are committed to this community.”

Despite its name, Blue Mountain Hospital actually comprises a variety of medical services beginning with transportation. Mee said the hospital has eight ambulances throughout the county, staffed with three paramedics and forty volunteer emergency medical technicians.

Patients can be transported to the three-bay emergency room, which is staffed by a medical provider at all hours every day, at the hospital. The facility is a level four trauma center serviced by two air ambulance companies for higher levels of trauma care. It features a three-bed intensive care unit and 24 total beds.

About 50 babies are delivered each year in the hospital's two labor rooms. A full-time general



Eagle photos/Sean Hart

**Receptionist Wendy Reames is the first face most patients see at Blue Mountain Hospital.**

surgeon performs a variety of operations in the two-room surgical suite. The doctors and nurses have all obtained advanced certifications, Mee said, and a new scholarship program will help reimburse employees who further their education.

“They’re all learning all the time,” he said. “They’re always advancing their level.”

The hospital also provides a swing bed program, where patients can remain in their hospital bed but be treated as if it were a rehabilitation center during their recovery. The physical ther-



**Blue Mountain Hospital CEO Randall Mee started about six months ago and said he is very pleased with the professionalism of the staff and the medical offerings provided in rural Grant County.**

py department has expanded into a full range of rehabilitation services, including occupational therapy and speech pathology, and one of the therapists is a certified acupuncturist.

Blue Mountain Hospital also offers home care and hospice programs, as well as a highly-rated 40-bed care center in Prairie City.

In addition to the hospital, therapy and care services, Blue Mountain provides a family practice clinic. Three physicians — with two more starting this fall — and three nurse practitioners provide “reasonable access” for patients before they need emergency care, Mee said.

And the hospital continues to grow. Mee said a telemedicine unit was recently acquired, and he hopes to add an automated medicine dispensing machine and to integrate behavioral health services into the mix.

“We’re continuing to expand services,” he said. “We’re bringing in more specialists so people can stay here. We definitely want to reinvest back into the community and help to promote health and wellness.”