

Blue Mountain Hospital names interim general surgeon

By Steven Mitchell
Blue Mountain Eagle

Blue Mountain Hospital District named a new interim surgeon while they continue to search for a permanent replacement for Dr. Keith Thomas, who resigned late last month.

District CEO Derek Daly said Dr. Imudia Ehanire will take over on Jan. 27 and will cover three weeks per month for at least the first part of the year.

According to the Texas Medical Board's website, Ehanire currently practices general surgery and completed her medical degree in 2009 at Howard University College of Medicine in Washington, D.C.

In addition to a medical degree, Ehanire has a Master's in Business Administration, Daly said.

"She is a very impressive lady and is very well-educated," he said. "Dr. Thomas and I were floored when she came across as a coverage opportunity."

Daly said he is working on hiring a permanent part-time surgeon to pick up the remaining week every month.

"The plan is to solidify coverage in the short-term, and expand access and coverage in the long-term," Daly said.

Daly said Thomas left on good terms after being in the position for almost 15 years.

"He (Thomas) is a phenomenal surgeon and an even better man," Daley said. "I'm really sorry to see him go, but I'm really excited for him and his new opportunity."

Thomas relocated to Colorado, Daly said. Recruiting health care professionals from larger cities to a rural area like Grant County has its challenges, Daly said.

Interested candidates got cold feet, said Daly, once they realized the remoteness of the area.

"One of the (challenges) we hear is the distance from a larger city," he said. "In a lot of people's case that means distance from an airport."

Selling the candidate's spouse on the idea of small-town life is an equally — if not more — important part of the recruitment process, he said.

The candidate is looking to come here for a reason, said Daly.

"It (the idea of relocating) probably matches the job they're looking for, the type of area they're looking for and the type of environment they want to live in," he said. "Oftentimes you have to recruit the spouse harder than the candidate."

Many projects planned for forests in 2020

Cash reward offered for tips leading to theft convictions

By Rudy Diaz
Blue Mountain Eagle

Plans were announced regarding projects and activities on the North Fork John Day Ranger District of the Umatilla National Forest during a Grant County Court meeting Jan. 8.

North Fork District Ranger Paula Guenther shared with the county court Olive Lake is one focus for 2020. The regional set of dam engineers have put together a comprehensive risk assessment for the dam and identified the values downstream to Olive Lake that are important.

"There are definitely some big highway bridges and other things that, should Olive Lake dam and spillway become inoperable and fail, there could be a rush of water down there that could put that at risk," Guenther said.

Guenther sent out an invitation for county search and rescue and county emergency management to participate in a simulation of how to respond if a flood were to happen. The simulation is scheduled for Feb. 19, and it will be in either Ukiah or Dale.

"This is intended as a practice exercise for us to figure out who we need to notify of what and how that will work," Guenther said.

The dam engineers also provided a variety of options for stabilizing the dam in the long term. Some of the ideas were to breach the dam and lower the lake water level, which would influence the recreational development experience at the lake, or a complicated method of boring some holes and installing a concrete curtain that would separate the lake water from the wooden parts of the dam.

In late spring, Guenther plans to put out a proposal, and the public will have the opportunity to review and comment on it.



North Fork District Ranger Paula Guenther shares with the county court the focus for 2020 and plans for Olive Lake.

"It's not just recreational activities," said County Commissioner Jim Hamsher. "It's having the water there for fire-fighting and for lake stream flows and the salmon and steelhead."

Another project planned for early spring 2020 is the implementation of the 10 Cent environmental impact statement decision, Guenther said. The impact statement decision allows for a variety of timber and fuel treatment projects along 10 Cent Creek and the area south of the county border near the Granite and Greenhorn communities.

Guenther added that three out of the four planned timber sales have been made from the impact statement with two going to Dodge Forestry.

In other county court news:

- Due to the many cases of theft and burglary in the last four months, Grant County Undersheriff Zach Mobley asked for \$1,000 from the county. This money will be used for a tip and reward program with the community.

The county court approved the \$1,000 for the program.

An award of up to \$1,000 will be given for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the people involved with thefts or burglaries. To leave a tip, call 541-575-1132 and leave a message from the Major Crimes Team, and they will call back.

- The county court approved the purchase of a flatbed pickup and training hours for Tammy Workman since Kathy Gillam will be retiring on Feb. 1.

- The county court approved giving \$4,322.49 from the remaining 2018 marijuana tax funds to the Community Health Improvement Coalition. This group has helped in suicide prevention, substance use disorders in youth and community health.

- The county court made MASA Medical Transport Solutions coverage available to county employees.

MASA will cover the out-of-pocket costs for all emergency medical air and ground transportation in the U.S. and

in Canada. This will save thousands of dollars that is not covered by insurance, according to Tony Urioste, MASA's Western States Regional Director.

"Most people don't understand that the transport companies that we have available in Oregon and throughout the country (AirLink, Life Flight Network and Mercy Air) have no reciprocity with each other," said Urioste. "The false sense of security, when somebody has the air ambulance membership, is that they're covered by anyone where they're not."

According to Urioste, insurance will cover about a quarter to half of a bill from air transport, which could range from \$40,000 to \$70,000. MASA will work with the provider to cover the balance of the bill and will provide coverage regardless of the company providing the emergency medical transport. Community members interested in the program can sign up for the program as well but only to the platinum membership.

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