

Buck returns to his home range

Hermiston High grad returns as an emergency room physician

By **JADE McDOWELL**
Staff Writer

A Hermiston native, returning home to work as an emergency room physician, is just what the state is hoping for as it looks to combat a shortage of rural doctors, dentists and nurse practitioners.

Daniel Buck, M.D., graduated from Hermiston High School. And after completing his family medical residency in Edgewood, Kentucky, he has returned to his hometown to become Good Shepherd Medical Center's newest ER doctor.

According to a news release from Good Shepherd, Buck moved to Hermiston with his family, which includes eight children ages seven to 22.

"My parents still live in the same house that I grew up in," Buck said in the release. "Hermiston is still pretty much how I remember it — friendly and welcoming, though there are a lot more housing developments and new shopping centers than I remember as a kid, and I think that is great for our community to be actively wanting to grow."

Buck comes to Good Shepherd Health Care System with "a lot of extensive



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY GOOD SHEPHERD HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

Daniel Buck, M.D. is a graduate of Hermiston High School and has returned to his hometown as the newest physician in Good Shepherd Medical Center's emergency room. Buck is an example of a doctor willing to return to rural Oregon after medical school.

training," according to the release. That includes an internship in surgery, caring for patients on the burn unit of a Level I trauma center, time as an EMT in the Oregon Army National Guard, work as a certified anesthesia technician and "hundreds of intubations and other invasive procedures.

"I have a very diverse set of skills, and I believe that all of the training that I have has prepared me to care for this community," Buck said.

Shortages of medical practitioners in rural areas has been a concern across the nation, including in Oregon. To combat

the problem the state legislature created Scholars for a Healthy Oregon in 2013. The program provides full tuition scholarships to Oregon Health and Science University for a limited number of students each year in return for a commitment from them to work at least five years in an underserved rural area in Oregon after graduation. It covers doctors, dentists, physicians' assistants and a master's in nursing.

Buck was not a Scholars for a Healthy Oregon participant, but the program hopes to foster more stories like his of students who left their rural Oregon hometown for medical school and returned later to practice medicine there.

Winding Waters Clinic in Enterprise and OHSU are celebrating the 25-year anniversary this weekend of a "rural training" program where doctors completing their residency program spend three months in Enterprise or John Day to gain experience in a rural setting.

Other programs available to potential rural doctors are the loan forgiveness programs administered by the Oregon Office of Rural Health. The Oregon Medicaid Primary Care Loan Repayment Program, for example, provides up to \$105,000 in loan forgiveness for providers that work at least three years serving Medicaid patients in underserved rural areas.

Robert Duehmig, deputy director of the Oregon Office of Rural Health, said those

types of programs have "absolutely" helped rural hospitals and clinics hire more medical practitioners.

"Providers come out (of school) with a lot of debt," he said. "That kind of loan repayment really helps them start a practice without having to worry about that."

Duehmig said it tends to be harder to make money as a doctor, dentist, or other provider away from the big cities because there tends to be fewer patients available and more on Medicaid. Doctors have to practice a wider range of medicine when there aren't specialists down the hall, and less backup means more hours at work and on call.

He said sometimes doctors also don't want to move to a rural area because their spouse working in a different field might have "limited professional opportunities" in a small town.

"It's important for practice sites to remember they're not just recruiting doctors, they're recruiting their families," he said.

Programs like loan forgiveness or scholarships can at least guarantee a hospital or clinic a provider for three to five years that they might not otherwise have had, Duehmig said. And some providers end up spending most of their career in the same town. He said as a result, OHSU looks for applicants who are from rural Oregon to begin with.

"They're the most likely to come back and stay," he said.

ANNIVERSARY

Frank and Lois (Hageman) Myrick of Umatilla are celebrating their 65th anniversary. They were married in Hermiston in 1951.

They raised their four children in Hermiston.

Frank and Lois retired from Myrick Chrysler Dodge in 1993, and moved to Umatilla in 1996. They enjoyed their many camping trips, cruises and adventures with family and friends.

Joining in celebrating their milestone are their children Susan Keesy of Cornelius, Ore., Karen Sligar of Twin Falls, Idaho, Steven Myrick of The Dalles, and Lori Myrick. They also have seven grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.



Lois Myrick in 1951



Lois and Frank Myrick in 2016

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