

GIFFORD

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Linda Medical School.

After completing their internships, Gifford and his medical school buddy, Dr. Richard A. Carpenter, started practicing in Pendleton. The two hospitals in town at the time didn't have any emergency room doctors so town physicians covered. Gifford and Carpenter did more than their share.

"We were two young bucks covering most of it," Gifford said with a grin.

After nine months, the pair of doctors started a practice in Heppner. The young physicians had their hands full.

"In Heppner, there were no specialists. It was good to have nine months in Pendleton, before we dived into the abyss," Gifford said. "Our saving grace was the experience of the nurses there. We just acted like we knew what we were doing to hide our intimidation and insecurities."

Such humility is pure Gifford.

"I'm a people person with a type A personality, but I'm not the smartest physician on the block," he said. "I feel I have savvy, though. Savvy has gotten me



Dr. Joseph Gifford dictates patient notes into a hand-held recorder on Thursday at his practice in Hermiston.

through."

The physician, generally upbeat and ebullient, doesn't gloss over hard subjects during appointments.

"He's not afraid to be real with his patients," said nurse Nikkie Griffin. "He's honest with them. He doesn't sugarcoat."

Gifford has noticed plenty of changes during his career, both positive and negative. Doctors specialize more and insurance companies play a larger role in determining care. It's more difficult and

expensive to have an independent practice.

"The independence of physicians is gone to a great extent," he said.

On the other hand there

are "fantastic strides in medicine" such as pharmaceuticals, enhanced surgical procedures and increased human longevity.

"A lot of progress in med-

icine has happened in 44 years," he said.

Gifford moved to Hermiston 27 years ago as a family physician and obstetrician. Sixteen years ago, he added the urgent care clinic. The hospital bought and assumed ownership of Gifford Medical last July. Gifford, who continued working there part-time, is easing himself toward the door. Patients and colleagues are dreading the 19th when he officially retires.

"He is one of those people who truly cares about his patients," said Natasha Ellwanger, the practice manager. "He's gone to nursing homes. He's gone to people's houses. You just don't find that any more in a physician."

"He has a big heart," Griffin said. "Really huge."

Ellwanger, who started in 2002 doing filing, said patients are sad at the thought of Gifford's departure. Many have called the

office just to say good-bye. She said Gifford saw 1,200 patients in his practice last year and that doesn't count people he treated in urgent care. People often stop Gifford in town just to say hello.

In retirement, Gifford looks forward to traveling more with his wife, Lisa. The boat he keeps moored in the San Juan Islands will get more use. His three children and four grandsons will see him more often. He is a pilot, so he'll spend extra time in the air, too.

Good Shepherd is recruiting a doctor to take Gifford's place.

As Gifford looked back over the years, he said he is blessed to have found a profession that he loved so much. He recalled his father, a musician, telling him to look for a job that he looked forward to every day.

"You'll never *have* to work a day in your life," said Gifford, reciting his father's words. "You'll *get* to work."

RENO

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and forty five minutes of a tough practice last week with 11 youth wrestlers in attendance.

The elementary and middle school aged kids, along with their parents, practice in the high school's mat room for nearly two hours most evenings. Practices include a number of different drills paired with endurance training to keep the kids not only physically tough but mentally prepared for the competition they will face.

En route one of the two biggest tournaments of the year, the team has amassed a collection of medals and trophies.

In one of its more recent outings in Pomeroy, Hermiston had seven wrestlers stand atop the podium in first place and one with a second place finish.

This upcoming weekend, Hermiston will be facing wrestlers from coast to coast and while Larson admits placing is always the goal, seeing improvements

against some of the toughest competition the youth wrestlers will face is just as important.

"It's a very tough tournament," Larson said, "and I think last year we had one guy place. So, if you look at it like that, really we go there and it's — everybody wants to place, don't get me wrong, but we look at it as one, let's go get more matches and two, if we're not where we need to be technically, athletically, whatever, let's go find out what it looks like, let's see what our goal is."

Last year there were over 4,000 wrestlers participating in the tournament from the 6-and-under age group all the way up to age 18.

"At this age, winning doesn't matter," Larson added. "We want them to be happy. We want them to like wrestling. We want them to go get matches, we just want their skill level of wrestling to get better."

After worlds, Hermiston will be competing in the Tri-Cities before making another trip to Nevada for the Western Junior Regionals in Las Vegas.

STUDENT OF THE WEEK




BRIANNA HERNANDEZ
Senior – McLoughlin High School

Brianna is a senior at Mac-Hi and has a 4.0 Grade Point Average. She is a member of National Honor Society, Varsity Club and Key Club. Brianna is currently ASB Treasurer. Brianna is a two sport athlete she plays Basketball and Track. She has been a Greater Oregon League Scholar Athlete. Brianna is very active in the Leadership at Mac-Hi by giving many hours of community service to her school and community.



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