

Good Shepherd implementing health plan

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Good Shepherd Health Care System is working to implement new programs and practices based on data gathered through a county-wide survey on health.

Good Shepherd and St. Anthony Hospital in Pendleton teamed up to survey Umatilla County residents about topics ranging from drug use to diabetes. More than 750 surveys about adults and children in English and Spanish were returned. The hospitals and other area health organizations have used that information this year to each put together their own "community health improvement plan."

"The goal is to work together," said Juli Gregory, director of education for Good Shepherd. "We want everyone's health to improve."

She and community health educator Jessica Reker presented Good Shepherd's CHIP to the Healthy Communities Coalition on Wednesday. Based on the biggest areas of concern in the survey results,

the focus for the plan is on health equity, access to services, obesity, chronic disease, violence and behavioral health.

Reker said 71% of adults surveyed said they have left Umatilla County to seek medical care. Other issues surrounding access to care included high numbers of adults reporting they did not have insurance, and/or had visited the emergency room for something that could have been taken care of in a more cost-effective setting.

Good Shepherd plans to increase its efforts to educate people about when it is appropriate to seek care at an emergency room, urgent care clinic or primary care provider. Reker said they will also continue to recruit new physicians to be able to serve more people in the county, and make urgent care more available.

"We can expand hours," she said.

They will also implement "health literacy and cultural humility" trainings for staff, after only 72% of adults on the English survey and 53% of adults on the Spanish survey said their provider explained things in a way



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Good Shepherd Health Care System is holding its annual community meeting Wednesday.

they can understand.

Many of the steps Good Shepherd is taking involve increased community education through free classes, informational booths, promotional materials and other steps. For example, the community health survey found that 58% of adults and 47% of children drank at least one sugar-sweetened beverage, such as soda, per day. Gregory said in response the hospital has created a dis-

play on the health effects of sugary drinks and is bringing it to community education events.

"It's been a wow moment," she said. "It's visually very powerful when you realize how much sugar is in one of these drinks."

The hospital also plans to mail vouchers to community members for A1c/Lipid screenings, and create a community-wide strategic plan for cancer prevention.

Reker said the hospital will step up its efforts on the "Start by Believing" public education campaign on sexual assault after 8% of adults on the English survey and 14% surveyed in Spanish said they had been forced to have sexual intercourse against their will at some point in their life. They will also integrate questions about violence and sexual abuse into their intake processes.

Reker said 17% of adults surveyed in Umatilla County self-reported missing prescription medications, either by taking medicines not prescribed to them or using them with the sole intent to get high. The hospital will work to "ensure uniform compliance" with its prescription policies, she said.

As part of the community health improvement plan, Good Shepherd recently set up a prescription medication disposal box at its pharmacy. Staff are also being trained to administer Naloxone, which reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, and the hospital recently held a training that was open to the community.

"That was well received, and we plan to do it again," Gregory said.

The full community health improvement plan can be found online at http://www.gshealth.org/wp-content/uploads/gschf-cap_2019.pdf. The results of the community survey can be found at http://www.gshealth.org/wp-content/uploads/Umatilla_County_CHA_7-26-19.pdf.

The hospital is holding its second annual community meeting Wednesday.

The event takes place in the Hermiston High School commons and auditorium. The event will include a health fair with free flu shots, educational booths, food, prizes and more from 5-6 p.m. followed by a keynote address by Marcus Engel, a national speaker, adjunct professor at the University of Notre Dame and the author of five books, including "The Other End of the Stethoscope," which is the title of his presentation.

To attend the free event, RSVP to 541-667-3509 or register online at gshcsannualcommunitymeeting.eventbrite.com.

Natural gas rates to increase

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

The Oregon Public Utility Commission has approved a rate increase for the state's three regulated utilities, including Cascade Natural Gas, starting Nov. 1.

According to a news release by the commission, the cost of natural gas being supplied to the utilities "spiked" over the last year due to a pipeline explosion that affected the regional supply. In the past 10 years, the commission stated, Ore-

gon residents have seen a decrease in their rates, other than in 2013 and 2014.

PUC chair Megan Decker said in a statement that they appreciated those who testified to remind the committee that rate increases impact customers negatively.

"We recognize that existing low-income programs are inadequate at meeting the needs of all customers to help address adjustments in rates, but we'll continue to find ways to close that gap," she said.

Cascade Natural Gas, which serves Hermiston and Pendleton, received approval for an overall increase of 8.5%, raising \$5.3 million. Residential customers using 62 therms per month will increase from \$46.69 to \$50.58.

Commercial customers using 264 therms per month will see an increase of 11.5%, from \$156.73 to \$174.69. Industrial customers using 1,742 therms per month will see their bill increase from \$983.63 to \$1,119.13.

Lifeways announces purchase of former medical office

HERMISTON HERALD

Aspen Springs Psychiatric Hospital is open for public tours ahead of its opening later this year.

The facility, located at 1212 W. Linda Ave. in Hermiston, will provide Eastern Oregon with 16 beds for inpatient services for individuals experiencing a severe and persistent mental health crisis.

According to the release from Lifeways, which runs the facility, patients


"will receive high-quality, individualized care in a state-of-the-art facility designed to provide a safe place for psychiatric recovery and stabilization" under 24-hour supervision.

Tours are available by calling 541-289-2340, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Lifeways also announced Monday that it has purchased the former St. Anthony Medical Office in Pendleton.

The press release said that the behavioral health agency plans to use the building to combine all its services into one location in Pendleton and expand its services. According to the release, the agency will renovate and move into the building in phases.

"We look forward to continuing to serve our community from a location that enhances the environment in which the community can receive services," the release said.




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"I'm excited to join Dr. Jeremy Anderson in an established clinic and be an integral part of the growth of this community."

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