

Changes announced at health center

Major changes are underway at the Vernonia Health Clinic. The following information was complete as of last week, but more information will be forthcoming.

As of October 1, Providence Health System has started overseeing operation of the health clinic. Some things will remain unchanged, such as the phone number, location (for now), and the scope of services. Our new name is "Providence Family Medicine — Vernonia" and we will remain a full-service family practice, with the ability to take walk-in patients on an urgent care basis. Providence Health System has a strong commitment to provide health care to all people. Providence's mission calls for serving the community "with special concern for those who are poor and vulnerable." Most importantly, Providence has a strong sense of responsibility for the communities in which it serves.

Laura Nichols, PA-C, will remain as health care provider, along with Chris Legler and Randy Randolph from Pacific University, who support the clinic on a part-time basis.

Insurance Coverage:

Probably the big question in many minds is "How about my insurance; will the change of operation affect my coverage?" The following providers are now in place, or will be very soon:

PHP — Providence Health Plan (formerly Good Health Plan)

PPO — Providence Preferred Organization (formerly Vantage)

HMOO—Application now in progress

Blue Cross/Blue Shield Care Oregon — (Application now in progress)

Blue Cross/Blue Shield - Regence

OEA

PACC/QualMed

Medicare

Medicaid

If you have insurance coverage with a provider not listed above, please check with the clinic office regarding your coverage.

Billing:

During the transition, the clinic will bill all insurances and help patients with adjusting providers in order to continue

coverage here in Vernonia. All services rendered prior to October 1 will be billed by Tuality; all services after this date will be billed by Providence.

Vernonia Health Clinic and its Board of Directors are working closely with Providence to bring about a smooth transition; anyone with questions about insurance or other issues should call the clinic, 429-9191.

Referrals:

Referrals will be made if the provider feels the patient needs a more specialized opinion regarding a medical condition. As always, your insurance may determine which specialist and where you will be referred, and the clinic will make every effort to coordinate your benefits.

Remodeling of Pharmacy Building:

Providence has active plans to remodel the Pharmacy Building, and they anticipate

that work will begin in early 1999. More information regarding expanded services in our new facility will be forthcoming.

Please feel free to call the health center with any questions regarding these changes. Vernonia Health Center patients can look forward with confidence to our affiliation with Providence Health System.

Prescriptions:

An important new policy for Vernonia patients: Pharmacy services are now provided by Providence St. Vincent Medical Center. They will deliver prescriptions on a daily basis to Vernonia, so patients can expect a 24-hour (or less) turnaround for delivery. There will be no charge for the courier service, and insurances will be billed directly. Co-pays and C.O.D. payments will be collected at the clinic at the time of pickup.

State subsidies for health insurance

A new program that offers state-sponsored subsidies is helping many uninsured Oregonians purchase the protection of health insurance for the first time. Thousands of Oregonians have already contacted the new Family Health Insurance Assistance Program (FHIAP) to find out if they qualify for subsidy assistance. While interest in the program is high, the program is still accepting applications.

"More than 30,000 people from all over the state have requested information about the program since it opened on May 1," said Howard "Rocky" King, administrator. "However, after receiving an application, some people find out they do not qualify, which means we have plenty of space for others to apply."

FHIAP provides subsidies of 95 percent, 90 percent, and 70 percent of insurance premium costs, depending upon the applicant's income. Those applying must: be uninsured for at least six months, be an Oregon resident, and meet certain income criteria in order to qualify. For example, a family of four earning less than \$2,330 a month could qualify for a sub-

sidy.

Applicants must first request a place on the reservation list. After a short wait, they receive an application to determine their eligibility for subsidy assistance. If they qualify for a subsidy, they must then enroll in their employer's health insurance plan, or if no employer coverage is available, purchase an individual insurance plan.

"If you are without health insurance and have had difficulty affording coverage, the biggest

Care home residents need friends

Oct. 4-10, 1998, has been designated Residents' Rights Week by the National Citizens Coalition for Nursing Home Reform. In 1981, the Nursing Home Reform Act was passed, guaranteeing fair and equal treatment and residents rights to nearly two-million nursing home residents nationwide.

This observance is intended to increase awareness of nursing home residents' rights. It is designed to promote awareness of issues such as the quality of care and the quality of life, that are related to residents' rights.

Health Notes

By Audeen Wagner

Women's Health Day Wednesday, October 21, 1998

Women's Health Day, October 21, will be marked with special programs all day at the Vernonia Clinic and at the Pharmacy Building. Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., and women of all ages are encouraged to attend.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, and in conjunction with this, the Tuality Mammovan will be in Vernonia on Women's Health Day (please call the clinic for an appointment).

Also available will be Pap smear exams (call for appointment); instruction on self-breast exam; bone density screening; information on hormone replacement therapy/menopause; non-Estrogens; calcium; birth control; Aids; sexually transmitted diseases; stop smoking programs, and more.

For women over 40 years of age who have no insurance, Paps, breast exams and mammograms can be paid for in full through funding from a grant administered by Columbia County Public Health. These services are available at the clinic.

Working women are encouraged to stop by during their lunch hour on October 21 for Women's Health Day. We hope that employers will allow ladies to have some time off to "take care of themselves." See you on Women's Health Day, or at any time you may need wellness information or health care.

For information or to make appointments, call Providence Family Medicine — Vernonia, (previously known as Vernonia Health Center), phone 429-9191.

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