

To Your Health!

By Judy Hargis, P.A



Community Health Clinic

I began working on my next health column last week and realized that I could not stop thinking about the recent closure of the Verdura Wellness Clinic. I know that the Vernonia Health Center Board spent countless hours working on making sure that the citizens of Vernonia had access to high quality, affordable health care again. It seemed like all that effort paid off with the opening of the Verdura Wellness Clinic earlier this year. I do not know all the factors that led up to the clinic's closure. What I do know is that it was done poorly, and at great cost to the community and its staff. It seems a far cry from the Hippocratic Oath "First Do No Harm".

I recognize that health care has shifted to a

business model and has lost its true intent," to take care of patients". I never stop being amazed at how far health care has shifted away from building healthy people and communities, to the bottom line. This situation, in its own way, appears to be an example of that.

Whatever the reasons for the decision to close the clinic, I believe it was done poorly, without adequate warning, and without regard for patients or staff.

I know the Vernonia Health Center Board will continue to work towards keeping access to healthcare viable in Vernonia. I applaud them for their untiring commitment and efforts to this end. They are a testament to the strength and courage of this community, and its ability to pick up and move forward, no matter what difficulties they face. I know that emotions are raw and trust is low right now. I do believe that Vernonia will overcome this challenge and the clinic will open again. I look forward to continuing to write this health column and hope that it will make a difference for a community that I admire.

Initiative to improve patient care begins

Seventy Oregon health care practices from around the state have been selected to participate in a new public-private partnership to improve patient care at lower costs, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) announced Wednesday.

Oregon is one of seven areas in the country selected to be part of a four-year Comprehensive Primary Care Initiative. The initiative is designed to support practices that want to enhance their primary care services for their patients. Under the primary care model, doctors may offer longer and more flexible hours, provide additional services such as nutrition or smoking-cessation counseling, and receive better-coordinated care for managing multiple chronic conditions and other health needs.

"Congratulations to the 70 practices and supporting health plans that stepped up to be a model for the state and the nation. By putting patients first and focusing on wellness, we can improve health and lower costs," said Governor John Kitzhaber.

Under the initiative, these practices will receive enhanced payments from the federal government (CMS), commercial insurers and the Oregon Health Authority to support better-coordinated health care services.

"The Comprehensive Primary Care Initiative is the kind of common sense investment in health care we need," said Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius. "Businesses, families and taxpayers all benefit from a stronger primary care system that helps them improve our health and lower costs."

The goals of the initiative are aligned with Oregon's overall health reform efforts. Most of the selected practices already are or may become recognized

by the Oregon Health Authority as Patient-Centered Primary Care Homes as a piece of this initiative. Expanding the availability of primary care homes will provide better access to care now and strengthen the primary care networks as Coordinated Care Organizations emerge.

For more information on the initiative and the selected practices in Oregon, please visit www.innovations.cms.gov/initiatives/Comprehensive-Primary-Care-Initiative/index.html.

For more information on Oregon's Patient-Centered Primary Care Home Program and Coordinated Care Organizations, visit www.health.oregon.gov.

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Be careful when preserving fruit salsas to avoid food born illness

Tomato-based salsas have been popular for several years with food preservers, but there is a new twist on this favorite – fruit salsas. "Most fruit salsas are preserved to be used with meats, poultry and fish," said Susan Mills-Gray, Nutrition/Health Specialist with MU Extension. "The fruit, herbs and heat of onion or pepper, as well as the vibrant colors adds zest to meals."

Most salsa recipes are a mixture of low-acid foods (like onions and peppers) with more acid foods (like tomatoes or fruit). The types and amounts of ingredients used in salsa, as well as the preparation method, are important considerations in how a salsa is canned. Improperly canned salsas have been implicated in several outbreaks

of botulism poisoning.

So how do you can a safe, great tasting fruit salsa at home? First, choose high-quality fruit that is firm and free of blemishes. Also, make sure to follow the recipe and avoid making substitutions. "If a recipe calls for green or unripe mango, do not use ripe mango, as this results in acidity changes of the recipe and creates a potentially unsafe canned salsa, said Mills-Gray.

Peppers range from mild to scorching in taste. Mild pepper varieties include Anaheim, Ancho, College, Colorado and Hungarian Yellow Wax. Hot varieties include jalapeño, cayenne, habanero, serano and tabasco. It's fine to substitute one type of pepper for another.

See Salsa on page 10

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