



The Health Center

Advancing the success of students by addressing their physical, emotional, and social needs.

Spring Newsletter 2017

What's Been Building....



The Hub on Third

A dynamic partnership created to meet the needs of our youth.

Blue Mountain Action Council (BMAC)

Owns The Hub and will provide employment/training services.

Catholic Charities

Will operate an overnight emergency shelter and coordinate homeless youth prevention services.

The Health Center

Will provide primary and mental health care services.

Children's Home Society

Will provide Early Head Start child care for parenting teens.

The Hub is scheduled to open later this summer!

Successful 1st Year @ Pioneer Middle School

- 3rd school-based health center in WW
- Doubled the # of students who have access to primary care and counseling at school
- Two full-time counselors, one grief group, primary care three mornings each week



83%

*of recently surveyed Pioneer staff say having access to a school-based health center is **helping the students at Pioneer very much!***

The Health Center opens @ Walla Walla High School in fall!

- Doubles again the # of students with access to primary care and counseling
- "The importance of social and emotional well-being is a key component of the district's strategic plan." – Wade Smith, WWPS Superintendent



Donate Online at: www.TheHealthCenterWW.org/donate



A Day in the Life of the Pioneer Team

“Before working here, I was so unaware of how much need there is, especially in middle school.” – Darcy Betancourt, Care Coordinator

On my visit to The Health Center at Pioneer Middle School, I first met Darcy, a medical assistant who also provides care coordination services to students, and Katie, a mental health counselor. These two provide services full time at Pioneer. For Darcy, a **typical day includes checking vitals, calling parents, and referring students to the primary care professional on duty or other services in town.** On a busy day, she sees 4-5 students in a two-hour period, some for medical attention, others to see a counselor.

By the numbers...

Since September 2016,
at our three clinics
combined....

Over **1604**
counseling visits

Over **1588**
primary care visits

3 students have been set up
on **health insurance** with the
help of our Navigator care
coordinator

*Thanks to our wonderful
supporters for making this
much help possible*

Laura Norris (nurse practitioner) and Dr. Alison Kirby (pediatrician) provide primary care three mornings a week. Dr. Kirby also brings her partner Xaila (Shayla), a service dog who provides extra special therapy! One important aspect of The Health Center is how it helps reduce the number of days students go home sick. If a student visits The Health Center for a minor ailment, instead of being sent home, the student is often taken care of, and can likely return to class. Laura explained to me, **“We do what we can to keep students in school,” to minimize the amount of time students are away from the classroom. By doing so, The Health Center helps boost academic performance for students.**

Michelle, another counselor, who splits her time between Pioneer and Lincoln High School also shared that **when students feel emotionally supported, they are more motivated to come to school.** One student told her, *“I want to come to school on Thursdays because I want to see you.”* It is critical for students to have their emotional needs met, especially at a time as vulnerable as middle school.

While there are 670 students at Pioneer, just half are signed up to utilize its services. The Health Center is new to Pioneer and will continue to raise awareness to teachers, parents and students. In the future, the team hopes to **visit and present in classrooms to educate teachers and students on the resources and support that The Health Center offers to its school community.**

During my observation at the Pioneer Health Center, I had the privilege of chatting with a student. She shared with me that she recently had pneumonia. The Health Center helped not only to diagnose it, but also helped her family get needed medication. In addition, **The Health Center was able to connect her family with health insurance and a primary care provider in Walla Walla.** Currently, this student frequently visits The Health Center to chat and pet Dr. Kirby’s friendly service dog. As she left, she told me with a smile, *“There is nothing I would change about The Health Center.”*

by Jamie Friedman, Whitman College, Psychology Major



A Unique Perspective

The integration of physical and mental health

Recently, a student came into the clinic for medical care complaining of congestion and a cough. This student had been having difficulty with asthma and allergies. We got to know each other a bit, and soon thereafter, the student made an appointment for counseling. That student had endured a difficult childhood, including the loss of a parent. The student had low self-esteem, recurrent depression, and overwhelming feelings of anxiety about the future. I was privileged to have this student share so much, and was glad to work together toward a more balanced and fair sense of self, and a more hopeful outlook.

As a community pediatrician, the mental health needs of my clients have been a top priority for me. **It has always made sense that a child's early experiences and environment contribute to overall health and development.** Most of my patients have had limited incomes. They have experienced many difficulties with economic and social instability, exposure to traumatic situations, parental pathology, and many neurodevelopmental challenges. There always seemed to be insufficient resources for mental health services and too few providers willing to take on patients with no insurance or state-funded insurance.

When my family moved to Walla Walla, I decided to get a master's degree in counseling psychology from Walla Walla University. I find that the blend of primary care and mental health counseling helps me to be more trauma-aware, and offer more complete information to clients. **This integrated approach allows me to be present and attuned to students whose symptoms stem from depression, anxiety, and grief.** It makes me a better clinician and a better colleague to other behavioral health professionals. I believe my histories are now more comprehensive, and the referrals I make are more judicious.

With counseling training, I have also been able to participate more in **mentoring and promoting positive health behaviors and self-esteem among students.** It has been a delight to interact with students during individual and group sessions that foster self-care habits such as good nutrition, sleep-hygiene, and exercise as well as a sense of self-worth, acceptance, and belonging. This new way of being with clients has shown me the benefits of integrated care and the essence of prevention and health promotion.

by Dr. Lisa Ponce MD, LMHCA



“I have found over and over again that checking out a student for a cold, sore throat, or other health concern leads to the trust and rapport needed to initiate a therapeutic relationship.”

You Can Help!

Opening a new clinic at WaHi, expanding our team, and transitioning to electronic health records means we are staring in the face of some big ticket items, such as:

Vaccine Storage Fridge for WaHi Clinic (\$600)
Vitals Cart for WaHi Clinic (\$1800)
Automatic Electronic Defibrillator for WaHi Clinic (\$1200)
Laptops Computers (6 needed @ \$800 ea)

But the reality is, every *little bit* helps! Things like **granola bars, Band-Aids, or office supplies** are items the kids need and that our clinics use regularly. *When you donate funds or any of these items to The Health Center you help support our mission of providing needed services to students at no charge.*

Check out a full list of needs on our website, where you can also access our Amazon Wish List: www.TheHealthCenterWW.org/donate

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TheHealthCenter

www.TheHealthCenterWW.org

509-529-5661

info@TheHealthCenterWW.org

PO Box 1075
Walla Walla, WA 99362



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