OPPORUNITY

ANNUAL REPORT 2017



OUR MISSION

Provide access to highquality, affordable, primary medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmacy services for all, regardless of the ability to pay.

OUR COMMITMENT

We value accountability for results and the elimination of health disparities. We are committed to increasing the years of healthy life in the people and communities we serve.



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LETTER from the EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

As a community health center, our purpose is to increase the years of healthy life in the people and communities we serve. This commitment guides our decisions about how best to invest our energy and resources to achieve our purpose.

We are pleased by the results of our commitment in 2017. We are growing to meet the health care needs of Whatcom County and now serve one in 10 Whatcom County residents. Over 7,000 children in our community receive dental care at our health center, contributing to a statewide effort to raise a new generation of children free of dental disease. We're seeing success in that effort. Between 2005 and 2015, the percentage of third graders with dental decay in their permanent teeth dropped by 46 percent.

Improving health is not only about the medical care we provide. The health of too many of the people we serve has been damaged by homelessness, food insecurity, domestic violence, sexual abuse, substance use, and gun violence. We cannot achieve our purpose if we do not work to eliminate these scourges in our communities. We cannot do this alone. We do it by collaborating. As an organization, we thrive when we lift up others. We thrive when we collaborate to build a web of mutually-supportive services that strengthen our community. Collaboration is how we build the community of our dreams from the reality of today. Uncertainty is part of the human condition. It can freeze us into inaction, waiting for clarity to dawn upon us. One of the great mentors in my life once advised me that in times of uncertainty, the key is to pick a clear direction that leads you to the path of your dreams and then to pursue it with intention, clarity, and energy.

The future of American health care continues to be uncertain. We rest assured that, no matter what the future holds, the nation's community health centers will be at the forefront of change, as we have been for over 50 years. We are proud of that collective history that has enabled us to provide health care to so many in our community, expand to break down barriers to health care and meet the needs of the whole person, and serve as the face of health care innovation.

We hope that you will join us in celebrating our work over the past year and the opportunities that lie ahead. Thank you for your support and for the work you do to make our community a healthier and more vibrant place to live for all of us.

Sincerely,

Wenned the.

Desmond Skubi Executive Director



REALIZING OPPORTUNITY

2017

- We were awarded a capital grant from the Washington State Legislature and New Market Tax Credits to begin construction of our new North Whatcom Health Center in Ferndale. Fundraising efforts continue, and we plan to break ground this summer.
- We hired our first therapist and psychiatrist specializing in Child and Family services, who will partner with our pediatric medical team.
- We hired our first Community Health Worker to engage homeless individuals in care.
- We expanded our chronic pain management and wellness services to include **yoga**, which is free to all of our patients. Since 2016, **646 patients have participated** in our wellness and chronic pain management programs.
- Despite a shortened Open Enrollment period and cuts to advertising for Open Enrollment at the federal level, our Outreach and Enrollment staff enrolled 678 people in health insurance during this year's Open Enrollment period compared to 580 individuals in 2016.
- O Unity Care NW continued our community involvement, partnering with a number of organizations to combat opioid addiction, participating in our county's first Housing Week, collaborating to pilot veggie and park prescription programs, and sitting on a number of community commissions and workgroups.
- Thirteen elected officials from the city, county, state, and federal levels visited our health center in 2017, more than in any previous year.
- We were honored to receive a number of clinical quality awards in 2017:
 - Our staff was recognized by the Whatcom County Health Department for increasing our HPV vaccination rates by 33% during the first quarter of 2017.
 - We were the **top performer of all community health centers in Washington for Retinal Eye Exams**, an important quality measure in diabetes care, for the third quarter of 2016.
 - Unity Care NW recently learned from the U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration that, based on the raw scores from our clinical quality results in 2017, we had the highest score of any community health center in the nation! When results were adjusted for the complexity of our patient population, we remained in the top 30 percent of health centers nationwide.

2018

- After a year-long delay, we will break ground on a new, expanded health center in Ferndale that will provide primary medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmacy services to 9,500 north Whatcom County residents.
- Approximately 45,000 adults in Whatcom County lack access to dental care. With the expansion of our Bellingham dental facilities in 2016, we have provided dental services to more adults. With expanded capacity at our new facility in Ferndale, we will come closer to meeting our goal of offering dental care to all patients who choose us as their health care home by 2025.
- We are planning to offer Maternity Support Services, Infant Care Management, and Women, Infant, and Child (WIC) services at Unity Care NW. These programs, together with our children's dental, pediatric, and children and families behavioral health services, will create a coherent web of services for emerging families.

WE EXPECT to PROVIDE NEARLY 100,000 PATIENT VISITS THIS YEAR.

CREATING our own LUCK

There is a saying that "Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity." In the environment in which we operate, preparation is imperative.

In the past 10 years, health care has evolved quickly and continuously. We have witnessed changes in how we deliver care, with industry initiatives such as "Patient-Centered Medical Homes," electronic health records, and the integration of behavioral health services with medical care. How we bill for care has changed with new coding processes. The resources available to our patients to access care expanded with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act. Constant change requires us to be nimble, to be prepared for whatever challenges come our way and to be positioned to take advantage of opportunities when they arise.

With community health centers across the country, Unity Care NW is returning to its roots in many ways, educating our patients and the broader community about the mission that underlies all of our work, the history of the community health center movement, and how policymaking helps or hinders our efforts to improve the health of our community.

We have learned that the ground under our feet is not as firm as we thought. The bipartisan

support of community health centers that we have enjoyed in the past can no longer be taken for granted. Over the past year, we have seen continued efforts to weaken, if not repeal, the Affordable Care Act. We saw Congressional budget support of the nation's community health centers expire in September 2017 and languish for four months before a commitment to funding was renewed.

Advocacy is more critical than ever. We are committed to working with our elected officials and educating our patients and our community about the issues that affect our patients and our health center.

We also prepare for opportunity by continuing to engage with our community to build upon existing partnerships and create new ones, by participating in regional efforts to transform the delivery of care, and continually evolving in our approach to care.

There is another quote from Albert Einstein: "In the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity." We're up for the challenge.





WELLNESS at its FULLEST

Merriam-Webster's dictionary defines wellness as a "state of being in good health." The National Wellness Institute describes it more broadly as "a conscious, selfdirected and evolving process of achieving full potential."

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration identifies eight dimensions of wellness: physical, intellectual, social, emotional, financial, spiritual, environmental, and occupational. It is increasingly recognized that "wellness" is far more than being free from illness.

As a health care provider, our hope for all of our patients is that they experience wellness in the fullest sense of the word. We realize, however, that conditions of poverty make that challenging for many.

For several years, Unity Care NW has worked to integrate and coordinate care to address the health needs of the whole person. We offer primary medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmacy services for children, families, and adults. Our staff works together to meet the physical and behavioral health care needs of the individuals and families we serve, and we celebrate the recognition we regularly receive for the clinical care we provide. We recognize that helping our patients achieve wellness requires more than high-quality, affordable, and accessible clinical care. We have continually expanded our case management services over the past few years, connecting our patients with community resources such as employment and training programs, housing and food assistance, and parenting and child care resources. We now offer a weekly yoga class, free to all of our patients, to help reconnect the mind, body, and spirit. We encourage social connection through various groups offered by our Behavioral Health department, including a peer-led art therapy group, "Food Sense" classes that encourage healthy eating on a budget, and our chronic pain management group. We are moving towards participation in a parks prescription pilot program to remind our patients of the physical and mental health benefits of getting outdoors and a veggie prescription pilot program to assist patients in making healthier food choices.

We look forward to expanding resources and services at our health center that foster all the dimensions of wellness.

FOSTERING a CULTURE of HEALTH

Unity Care NW works with our patients every day to prevent illness and improve the health of those we serve. We recognize, however, that the care we provide is only part of what determines our patients' health.

Many factors contribute to poor or good health. Regular exercise, a healthy diet, adequate sleep, stress reduction, and access to regular health care are familiar recommendations for improved health. We also recognize that homelessness and housing insecurity, food insecurity, environmental quality, income, educational opportunity, loneliness, and social connection determine the health of individuals, with a corresponding correlation to the cost of our health care system. When a community suffers from poor health, the cost of health care predictably rises.

Over the past year, we have worked with partner agencies to develop community solutions that support improved health outcomes. We partnered with Sustainable Connections, Opportunity Council, and Kulshan Community Land Trust to host Whatcom County's first "Housing Week." On "Healthy Housing Day," we welcomed Dr. Suzanne Lennard of International Making Cities Livable Conferences to Bellingham to speak about the relationship between health, the built environment, and strengthening our community's "social immune system." With the Whatcom County Health Department and a number of other partners, we helped launch "Whatcom Has H.O.P.E.," an initiative to educate the community about opiate addiction prevention and response. Our staff serve as members of the Public Health Advisory Board, the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee, and the Bellingham-Whatcom County Commission Against Domestic Violence.

In 2018, we look forward to strengthening our relationships with existing partners and working with new ones towards the goal of creating a "culture of health." In August, we will welcome the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to Bellingham to speak about this topic.

Watch for information about this event on our website in the coming months!





TRANSFORMING CARE

As changes in the health care landscape continue, Unity Care NW is an active participant in efforts to improve health outcomes across our region.

Last year, Washington State received approval for a "Medicaid waiver" from the federal government to improve health care services for Medicaid patients. The goal of the "Healthier Washington Medicaid Transformation" demonstration is to implement systemic changes to improve health outcomes and reduce costs. Success in achieving these goals could bring up to \$1.5 billion in federal funding to our state over the next five years.

Over the past year, Unity Care NW staff participated in regional implementation committees. Health care leaders across the five-county north Puget Sound region identified interventions to treat and prevent opioid abuse, improve reproductive and maternal and child health, prevent and manage chronic disease, and expand access to oral health services. The initiative also impacts factors that contribute to poor health outcomes, such as unemployment and housing instability. Perhaps the most immediate result of this initiative is our community's decision to move quickly towards the integration of physical and behavioral health services. Washington State has mandated that Medicaid managed care plans adopt a whole-person approach to health care by 2020 that integrates treatment of the mind and body. Our community, however, has chosen to move that timeline up, with implementation coming in 2019.

This is an exciting development, as we believe that the integration of mental and physical health will reduce barriers and ease access to mental health services. As a health center, we have moved in this direction over the past several years. Soon, insurance companies will too.

ADVOCACY for PATIENTS

Every day, public policy decisions are made at the local, state, and national levels that can positively or adversely affect the health outcomes of our patients.

Passage of the Affordable Care Act and our state's decision to expand Medicaid, for example, had a dramatic effect on the ability of Whatcom County residents to access health care, on our ability to expand to meet the need for health care services, and on the way we deliver care.

The goals and implementation of some policy initiatives are clearly stated and understood. Others, not so much.

One policy that has rivaled the Affordable Care Act in supporting our ability to expand services is the "340B program." "340B" refers to a provision of the 1992 Veterans Health Care Act that created an outpatient drug discount program for pharmaceutical companies wishing to contract with Medicaid and other federal agencies. The intent was to stretch federal resources without raising taxes. Pharmaceutical companies are required to sell medications to "covered entities," including community health centers, at a discounted cost. The savings achieved through lower costs are used to improve and expand our services and provide lower cost medications to our patients.

Pharmaceutical companies contribute a modest amount of profits – less than 2 percent of overall drug spending in 2011 – for the right to contract with federal payers. Safety net providers spend less money purchasing medications and use the savings to improve quality and access to health care services for our patients. Taxpayers pay nothing for the improved and expanded services.

Like so many policies benefiting our patients, the 340B program has come under increasing scrutiny. The Affordable Care Act expanded insurance coverage and the number of people who could afford needed medications, greatly benefiting pharmaceutical companies. Critics charge that the program has grown far beyond Congress's original intent. Congress has held hearings on the 340B program over the past year and demanded more accountability for the use of the funds received by covered entities.

At Unity Care NW, the savings generated in our pharmacy have fueled the growth of our facilities, services, and programs, including restorative dental, behavioral health, and wellness services that are not covered by insurance. The 340B program allows us to make prescription drugs more affordable to our patients. Even with 340B, some patients struggle with the cost of their medications. We offer programs and work with community partners to make life-saving medications affordable to patients struggling with high co-pays and deductibles. We conduct monthly program audits to ensure that we are in compliance with program requirements, and we are subject to audits and oversight by the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration.

As we continue to monitor actions affecting 340B, we welcome your support.

Sign up for "Advocacy Alerts" on our website to keep up-to-date on the latest developments.

FERNDALE FORWARD!

KERT

Our journey to construct a new, expanded North Whatcom Health Center in Ferndale is a reminder that progress is never linear.

In 2014, we identified the expansion and relocation of our Ferndale health center as a strategic priority, and we expanded our services in Ferndale to include behavioral health a year later. With our medical and dental services at capacity in our current facility, we leased space across the street from our main Ferndale health center to add behavioral health services. Population growth and demand for affordable and coordinated health care made it clear that we needed a better solution.

Planning began for a new health center that would offer primary medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, and lab services to serve 9,500 patients in north Whatcom County. We purchased a property located on Portal Way in Ferndale and began the design and permitting process. We intended to break ground in the summer of 2017, but the uncertainty around the future of the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid expansion upended our plans. We postponed a year.

The uncertainty around health insurance and the future of health care in our country continues. However, with the award of a capital grant from the Washington State Legislature and New Market Tax Credits, as well as other fundraising opportunities being pursued towards the \$15 million cost of the new facility, we are moving forward! We will break ground this summer and expect to open our doors to patients in the summer of 2019. This project will improve the lives of Whatcom County residents. Access to dental care is consistently ranked as one of the most needed but least available services in our community. This project will include 12 dental operatories to serve more Whatcom County adults and children. North Whatcom County faces provider shortages in medical, dental, and behavioral health. When fully operational, the North Whatcom Health Center will employ over 64 staff, providing needed services and contributing to the economic revitalization of the Portal Way corridor. It will be the largest behavioral health facility in north Whatcom County.

We couldn't proceed without our community partners. Whatcom County, Ferndale's mayor, and the Ferndale City Council have been fervent champions of the project. Funders like The Chuckanut Health Foundation, Arcora, The D.V. and Ida J. McEachern Charitable Trust, PeaceHealth, the Washington State Legislature, and local donors have helped make this project possible. We have yet to meet our fundraising goal, and there are many grant opportunities on the horizon.

Follow our progress in the coming months and find out how you can support this project on our website. Watch for ground breaking events this summer!





PATIENT PROFILE Peter Bemment

Peter immigrated to the United States from England with his American wife and two young sons almost three years ago.

They were returning to the U.S. to care for his wife's parents. It has been a difficult, chaotic time since their arrival, and they both struggled to find full-time work.

About a year ago, his wife established their sons as Unity Care NW children's dental patients. On a visit with one of his sons to the health center for a dental exam, the receptionist told him that, as a parent of a child receiving care at our health center, he too could receive dental care at Unity Care NW. He had not had dental care since arriving in the U.S., so this was welcome news.

During his first visit, Peter received an oral examination by one of our dentists, who noticed an ulcer on his tongue. Peter had never noticed it. He was referred to an oral surgeon, who recommended a biopsy. When removed, the ulcer was found to be cancerous.

Peter considers himself to be very fortunate. He is grateful to the receptionist who first told him of his ability to receive dental care and to the dentist who caught his cancer early. "They have given the best possible care," he says.

In addition to detecting his cancer, he has received long-neglected dental care. "I needed four sessions for cleaning, as I neglected dental care in the past," Peter reports. He has been impressed by the facilities, the "amazing service," and our professional staff.

"I would like to thank everyone involved."

PROVIDER PROFILE Kate Wojnicki, ARNP

Kate has deep roots in Whatcom County, having grown up here and graduated from Whatcom Community College as part of the college's first class of registered nurses.

After becoming a nurse, Kate left Whatcom County to pursue her education and training as an ARNP at Seattle Pacific University. Her experience at the University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC) and her year-long residency at Community Health Care, a community health center in Tacoma, inspired her to return to Bellingham and to join Unity Care NW in 2013.

At the UWMC, Kate worked in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. Her work there convinced her of the importance of primary care. She saw too many premature babies born to mothers who lacked health insurance and had not received prenatal care. She dedicated herself to improving the health of emerging families and preventing poor outcomes. Drawn to the mission of community health centers, Kate joined Community Health Care and spent a year working in the health center's HIV program. When she learned of a similar opportunity at Unity Care NW, it was an opportunity to return home.

Today, Kate works in our Communicable Disease Program and in family practice. She continues her work with women and children, with a focus on children, women's health, and family planning. She also cares for patients living with HIV/AIDS and has been at the forefront of our efforts to treat and cure Hepatitis C. Since 2015, Unity Care NW has cured over 100 patients with Hepatitis C. She appreciates that Unity Care NW has been a community leader in this effort.

It is the mission of community health centers that brought Kate to Unity Care NW and what keeps her here. There is "nothing glamorous about the work," she says. The degree of change in the health care industry is necessary but difficult to navigate as a provider. The trauma and effects of poverty cannot be adequately addressed in an exam room. But she has the privilege to watch families grow. She has cared for multiple generations of the same families, giving her the opportunity to improve the health of the entire family.

Fostering a "healthier community is why we are here," she says. Kate looks forward to the day when there is a cure for HIV/AIDS, and she welcomes our work in the community to help create the conditions for improved health. She envisions a community where "every kid and adult gets a fair shot, has agency, and is empowered."





ADVOCACY CENTER of EXCELLENCE



COMMITTED to QUALITY

Quality Improvement

Overall Patient

Unity Care NW is dedicated to delivering high-quality, affordable care to our patients and continuously working to improve the quality of that care. In 2017, Unity Care NW was recognized by the U.S. Health Resources & Services Administration for posting the highest raw scores from our clinical quality results of any community health center in the nation! When results were adjusted for the complexity of our patient population, we remained in the top 30 percent of health centers nationwide. We are grateful to our staff for the work they do every day to provide such high-quality care.



Dental Patient Population Growth



We are proud that we are simultaneously expanding our services to meet the health care needs of our community. Our medical, dental, and behavioral health departments are serving more patients than ever before, and we are thrilled to be able to say the words "You're cured!" to an ever-growing number of our patients living with Hepatitis C.

Behavioral Health Patient Population Growth





FINANCES

Revenue



Expenses



DONORS & VOLUNTEERS

These generous supporters make it possible for our patients to live their healthiest lives. We are truly grateful for their commitment and dedication.

DONORS

Individuals

Anonymous (15) Dan and Maria Altman Ann McQuade, RN and Charles Ariz, MD David Ashley, MD and Kate Ashley Brenda and Carl Asplund Mike and Diane Bates Pam Borso Erik Bracht Ethan Branduff Robert Bray Barbara Brenner Steen Brochner Nielsen Denise and Steven Bruce, MD Naomi Sullivan, MD and Stephen Buetow, MD Curtis Bush Teresa Thornberg and Ken Carpenter Abie Castillo Richard and Karen Clark Kerry Breit and Gilbert Clarke Barb Clure, MD and Brad Clure Becky and Paul Connor, MD Nancy Corbin Jen and Jim Curlett Brandi and Derek Damon, DDS Melvin De Jong Tamera Devoss

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Len and Grace Kolodychuk Dawn and Barry Landau Maite Lasmarius Molly Linnell Elizabeth Gabay and Stephen Liu Jack and Cindy Louws David and Tisch Lvnch Dr. John and Mrs. Bronwyn MacGregor Bret Manring Catherine Martin Jonathan Martin Leah and Marco Mass. DDS Amy and Phelps McIlvaine Jennifer Moldver Katherine Montzingo Robert Moverley Gregory and Grace Munson Christopher and Astrid Newell Cheryl and Peter Niles Marilee McGuire and Randy Ohlendorf Janine Shaw and Dan Ohms Marv and Buzz Ostlund Elizabeth Pernotto and Robert Marshall Chris Phillips and Maggie Mamolen, MD Chris Kubota and Michael Pietro. MD Pam Pontious Sallve Quinn Deborah and Daniel Raas Brenda Rader Linda Read Madeline Reed Dorothy Regal Sue and Pete Rittmueller

Tamara Tregoning and Caleb Sanders Carol Sandvig Sheila Sondik and Paul Sarvasy, MD Jackie Saul Milt and Sharon Schayes Miriam and Greg Schwartz Sue and Phil Sharpe Janice Sheeley Drs. Marin and Ben Siemanowski Alice and Jerry Simmons Rebecca Frevert and Desmond Skubi Ruby and Curt Smith, DDS Nathan Brown and Becky Spithill Diane Staves Ruth Steele Tom Moore and Caty Strong Chi-Na Kim and Jason Stoane Shaun Sullivan, MD Mary Swenson Millie and Gary Tetrick, DDS Larry Thompson Susan and Loch Trimingham, MD Willy and Del Vande Kerk Pinky Vargas Elsie and Charles Walter, DDS Wendy Lawrence and Cathy Watson Katie Welch John and Kathy Whitmer Holly and Dan Whittle Josselyn and Francis Winslow Elaine Woods Katie Wright David and Rena Ziegler

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Superfeet Worldwide, Inc.* Swing Set (in-kind) Thomas and Martina Horn Foundation Thrivent Choice Thrivent Financial For Lutherans Foundation TRUEretirement, Inc. Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions* Umpqua Bank Whatcom Alliance For Health Advancement Whatcom Community Foundation Whatcom Educational Credit Union*

Public Funders:

Bellingham Public Library (in-kind) City of Bellingham Ferndale Library (in-kind) North Sound Behavioral Health Organization Washington State Legislature* U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration

VOLUNTEERS

Linda Blackwell John Trimingham

*Signifies donor to our North Whatcom Health Center Capital Campaign. Thank you for your generous support! Thanks also to Visiting Nurse Home Care which made a donation to this campaign in 2016.

All efforts were taken to ensure accuracy of this list. Please contact our Planning & Development Department with questions or concerns: Development@ucnw.org or (360) 788-2628

2017 ANNUAL GALA

With a sold-out crowd of 130 supporters, this year's Gala in October was a night to remember. It was held in the exceptional new Ciao Thyme Commons space located across the street from our Bellingham health center. Music was generously provided by local band Swing Set, tours of our Unity Street health center were given throughout the evening, and the food was dining at its finest. Most importantly, more than \$15,000 was raised for our Pain Management Program which helps 150 individuals manage chronic pain through alternative pain management options such as Yoga, Qi Gong, meditation, and acupuncture. A big thank you to the sponsors, attendees, and volunteers who made this evening a remarkable success. Join us at our 2018 Annual Gala on Friday, September 28th. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Contact us at Development@ucnw.org or (360) 788-2628.



Gabriela, age 10



Beckett, age 6



Scarlet, age 7

Senna, Age 7

2017 'What Health Means to Me' Art Contest Winners

"Thank you for another fantastic year of caring service. It is a joy to come to Unity Care NW knowing that I will be received with total respect and get the best of care."

- Unity Care NW patient



BELLINGHAM

Medical & Dental Services

220 Unity Street Bellingham, WA 98225

(360) 676-6177

Adult Dental. Behavioral Health, and Administration

1616 Cornwall Ave. Ste. 205 Bellingham, WA 98225 (360) 676-6177

FERNDALE **In-House Pharmacy**

218 Unity Street

(360) 752-7406

Bellingham, WA 98225

Medical, Dental, and **Behavioral Health Services**

5616 3rd Avenue Ferndale, WA 98248 (360) 676-6177

POINT ROBERTS

Medical Services

2030 Benson Road Point Roberts, WA 98281

(360) 945-2580

UnityCareNW.org