ANNUAL REPORT 2016



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

Alvin Toffler once said, "Change is the process by which the future invades our lives." We adapt to the ever-changing needs of the future in pursuit of a healthier and more resilient community. We are working to create the health care system we want rather than settling for the one we have.

It is an exciting and perilous time for the nation's community health centers. With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, we are serving more patients than ever before, creating a coherent web of primary medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmacy services, and breaking down barriers to care. We are progressing towards our goal of providing all of these services to those who choose Unity Care NW as their health care home. We are doing this while reducing the cost of health care and maintaining a patient satisfaction rate that is among the best in the nation. The future, however, is uncertain, and the fate of the Affordable Care Act is unknown. Yet our commitment to ensuring access to quality, affordable health care for all remains firm. Health centers such as ours have been a vital part of communities across the nation for over 50 years. We will continue to foster a culture of health and wellness.

"The arc of the moral universe is long," Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "but it bends toward justice." I believe that it also bends toward Unity. As we begin another year, we plan for Unity, for a world in which all people have opportunity. We respect and honor people for their diversity of race and language, religion and political belief, and gender and sexual orientation, whether poor, homeless, or rich. We seek to build bridges rather than walls and to pursue that which joins us together rather than that which divides us. We are Unity, the foundation of Community.

Gratefully,

Demond Sh. J.

Desmond Skubi, Executive Director



LOOKING BACK & FORGING AHEAD

WE NOW SERVE OVER 19,500 PATIENTS

X Unity Care NW now serves nearly one in 10 Whatcom County residents.

- In June, we opened our **new adult dental** and **expanded behavioral** health facilities in Bellingham, which will allow us to serve an additional 3,600 people.
- Construction permits for a new 23,500 square foot health center have been approved by the City of Ferndale for a new facility that, when completed, will offer integrated primary medical, dental, behavioral health, pharmacy, and lab services to over 9,500 north Whatcom County residents.
- We celebrated National Health Center Week in August, with proclamations by Whatcom County Executive Jack Louws, City of Bellingham Mayor Kelli Linville, and City of Ferndale Mayor Jon Mutchler.
- Executive Director Des Skubi received the Legacy Award from the Northwest Regional Primary Care Association in honor of his dedication to advancing the mission of community and migrant health centers in the Pacific Northwest.
- Unity Care NW's Communicable Disease Program was recognized by the University of Washington for excellence in delivering HIV and Hepatitis C clinical care to our patients. Since inception of our Hepatitis C treatment program, 77 patients have been cured, and our HIV viral suppression rate remains among the best in the nation.
- Our Bellingham and Ferndale facilities received Patient Centered Medical Home Level 3 Recognition, the highest level of recognition bestowed by the National Committee for Quality Assurance, for a commitment to quality health care.

- X Unity Care NW continues to expand our behavioral health services through the **addition of a child psychiatrist** to provide counseling and treatment services to children and families.
- X We will implement substance abuse screening, early intervention, and treatment protocols to **address alcohol and opiate addiction**.
- % Our health center is collaborating with community partners to address issues such as homelessness, food insecurity, social isolation, and early childhood developmental screening.

WE EXPECT to PROVIDE **OVER**

PATIENT VISITS

to

20,050

WHATCOM COUNTY RESIDENTS in 2017.

The LEGACY of COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTERS

For over 50 years, the nation's non-profit community health centers have been at the forefront of improving health care access to underserved communities across the country.

What started as a pilot project during President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty" is now a network of over 1,300 community health centers nationwide serving nearly 23 million people, including 7 million children. As a community health center, Unity Care NW is part of the largest primary care system in the country.

The mission of community health centers is to improve access to high-quality, affordable, integrated primary medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmacy services for all, regardless of a patient's insurance status or ability to pay. We strive to reduce health disparities and remove barriers to care. With a focus on prevention, we address the root causes of poor health, such as homelessness, malnutrition and food insecurity, unemployment, and social isolation and work to treat chronic conditions before they become costly illnesses.

Community-based health care has been proven to be cost effective, reducing the expense of health care while improving health outcomes. Community health centers save the nation's health care system more than \$24 billion a year, reduce unnecessary hospitalizations and emergency room visits, and treat patients at a fraction of the cost of an emergency room visit.

A healthy community is a productive community. We are working to put the community in "community health" by forging new partnerships and strengthening the economic vitality of Whatcom County. We have initiated discussions with community partners over the past year to improve collaboration in the areas of homelessness, food insecurity, and healthy neighborhoods, and we have launched new initiatives with partners related to opiate addiction, pain management, and the identification of children with special health care needs. Unity Care NW is now among Whatcom County's largest employers with over 200 fulltime equivalent positions. We are eager to begin construction of a new health center in Ferndale that will serve 9,500 north Whatcom County residents, create 64 full-time jobs, and facilitate the economic revitalization of Ferndale's Portal Way corridor.

We look forward to another year of serving our neighbors, providing quality, affordable health care to meet the diverse needs of our entire community.

HEALTH CARE TRANSFORMED:

The passage of the Affordable Care Act, often referred to as "Obamacare," in 2010 did more than expand access to health care for 27,000 Whatcom County residents and millions across our country. It transformed the care that health care providers deliver.

> It challenged us to focus on prevention and improved health outcomes, and it charged non-profit community health centers such as Unity Care with developing new ways of integrating care to address the health needs of the whole person, the whole family, and the whole community. It reduced financial barriers to quality health care. It put many in our community on the road to wellness after years of neglected health. It has extended the life of the Medicare Trust Fund and achieved savings in the Washington State budget which can be re-invested to improve the education of our children.

At Unity Care NW, we see 5,340 more patients than we did in 2013. Our uninsured rate has dropped from 23 percent in 2013 to 8 percent today. The revenue generated from increased insurance coverage among our patients and investments in community health centers made possible by the Affordable Care Act allowed us to expand our services, including the construction of new adult dental and behavioral health facilities in Bellingham.

The IMPACT of the AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

In recent months, our patients have stepped forward to share with us the impact the Affordable Care Act has had on their lives. Here are a few of the many stories we have heard:

James needed a physical to qualify for a job for which he had applied. He didn't have insurance or a medical home.

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act. he was able to enroll in Medicaid and got the required check-up. At his exam, his provider found a lifethreatening blood clot. Through regular medical visits, he received treatment for the clot and made changes to his lifestyle. He lost 30 pounds, saw his blood pressure improve, and reported that he can now ride his mountain bike around town and climb stairs more easily. "I couldn't go 2. 3 stairs." he told us. "The last time I came here. I went the full flight of stairs" without becoming winded.

Rosie got a new job and did not yet have health insurance when she suffered a heart attack.

"My family was sitting out in the hall at the hospital wondering how they'd pay the bills." She was able to obtain insurance and not only work through her medical challenges but also receive preventive care like immunizations and cancer screenings. After three years of being out of work because of her health conditions, she now has a job with employerbased insurance. Obamacare, she says, restores the dignity of and respect for the individual. "I felt again like a part of humanity."

Access to Medicaid coverage ensured that Karen was able to get treated for glaucoma. As a visual artist, her eyes are critical to her well-being and to her livelihood. The condition had advanced to a severe level in one eye, but through treatment, she has been able to prevent further damage to her eye.

After being deserted by her husband, Monica was left nearly homeless with her children.

She had no insurance, was suffering from high blood pressure and severe sleep apnea, was diagnosed as pre-diabetic, and was struggling with back pain. She got enrolled in Medicaid and is getting the care she needs. She's now pursuing her education at Whatcom Community College with the goal of becoming a radiation technician. Obamacare "helped me tremendously. It helped a person willing to work. I have taken this opportunity to better myself."



BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Good health is more than physical health. A healthy body needs healthy emotions, behaviors, and a lifestyle that will ensure a lifetime of well-being.

As a community health center, Unity Care NW aims to be a medical home to its patients, providing the services necessary for a healthy mind and body within a single health center. Towards this goal, we expanded our counseling services for adults over the past year, and in January 2017, our first child psychiatrist joined our staff. While we are enhancing our services for adults, we look forward to building new services for children and families.

Strong, resilient families build strong, resilient communities. We are working to halt the cycle of childhood trauma by preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to improve prospects for future generations in our community to live healthy lives. Working with families both before and as they develop is our best opportunity to promote wellness and improve health outcomes. Untreated maternal and post-partum depression, for example, can affect brain development and early life experience. We look forward to making group and individual services addressing these needs more readily available in our health center. We are working to enhance our services for those struggling with substance use disorders by providing screening, medication-assisted therapy, and counseling services to all those who choose us as their health care home and who wish to enter into recovery services. In the coming year, we will focus on developing new interventions at Unity Care NW for those challenged by alcohol addiction. In 2018, we will expand these services to treat opiate addiction.

Recognizing the crisis of opiate addiction in our community and across the nation, we are tackling this issue within our health center as well. Within the primary medical care setting, we are working hard to minimize the use of opiates for pain management. Our behavioral health program offers alternative therapies for managing chronic pain, including mindfulness training, acupuncture and tai chi, and our pharmacy provides Naloxone emergency kits to our patients and their family members to prevent overdose deaths. We are also partnering with the Whatcom County Health Department and other community organizations to launch an education and prevention campaign to reduce stigma, end the improper storage and sharing of prescription medications, and prevent opiate addiction across Whatcom County.

ADULT DENTAL CARE

This was a year of tremendous growth in our dental program. Our new adult dental facility opened in June, and we hired three additional dentists and two hygienists.

Since June, we have provided much-needed dental care to 2,148 adults. This year, we also saw over 1,000 more children than we did in 2015, a 16 percent increase. We now have over 7,000 children who receive dental care at Unity Care NW. Our mobile dental program provided school-based dental services to nearly 1,500 children, serving all elementary and middle schools in Whatcom County, all Head Start sites, and several high schools.

Despite this expansion in our service capacity, dental care remains one of the most needed but least available services in Whatcom County. An estimated 46,000 Whatcom County residents continue to lack access to dental care. With the construction of a new health center serving north Whatcom County, we look forward to meeting the oral health care needs of even more Whatcom County residents. With 12 dental operatories, the new Ferndale facility will provide dental services to another 4,000 children and adults in Whatcom County. Our new Ferndale health center will help us achieve our goal of providing needed dental care to all those who choose us as their health care home by 2025.

In the meantime, our focus is on prevention. We prioritize dental care for children, pregnant women, and the parents of children who are our established dental patients to break the intergenerational cycle of dental caries by treating the whole family. We continue to provide care to those with dental emergencies, but we have also increased access to preventive dental care for adults willing to be seen on a stand-by basis. For those new patients who have lacked access to dental care and have significant restorative needs, we are completing treatment plans and working with patients to foster a cultural shift from problem-based dental care to hygiene and preventive care.





PATIENT PROFILE Jessica Lohafer

Jessica had just finished her graduate studies at Western Washington University, earning a Master's degree in Fine Arts, when she lost her student health insurance.

With no job and no health insurance, she found herself suffering from depression and anxiety. She had recently received dental care at Unity Care NW and was aware of the health center. Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, she was able to enroll in insurance coverage and access care at Unity Care NW. She was able to get the behavioral health care she needed, as well as wellness and reproductive health services.

Today, about three years later, Jessica is married, insured under her husband's policy, and employed as a copy writer while pursuing her own writing ambitions. Unity Care NW is no longer the only place she can access care, but she has found a medical home at our health center. She has a medical provider that she trusts. "I can be myself and be honest," she reports, "and receive the care I need without judgment or feeling uncomfortable." She is impressed by the friendly and now-familiar staff. "They remember me," she says, "which is amazing because they see so many people."

Unity Care NW was here at a time when she needed a medical home. "I don't really want to think about what would have happened if I didn't have Unity Care at the time." She couldn't have received treatment for her anxiety and depression and couldn't have afforded regular medical care. "Even when I didn't know what I needed, I felt I could go and figure it out."

Jessica emphasizes that Unity Care NW is a place that provides health care to everyone. "While this organization was so helpful to me when I was in a much less financially-secure place, it's not just for low-income people." There's no reason for her to make a change. "It's just good care."

PROVIDER PROFILE Dr. Aaron Moore

Dr. Moore isn't sure whether it was nature or nurture that led him to become a psychiatrist. A family tradition of public service was instilled in him at an early age.

His dad was a social worker; his mom was an elementary school teacher. His grandfather was a psychiatrist, and his grandmother was a nurse.

He grew up in a small lumber and fishing town on the Northern California coast. After completing college, where he studied American politics and history, Dr. Moore served as an Americorps volunteer at an orphanage in the U.S. Virgin Islands. Working with neglected, abused, and abandoned kids, he says, was "harder than medical school." He shifted his attention to public health after returning to the United States, working as a VISTA volunteer with maternal and child health programs across Oregon and advocating for community and migrant health centers. In his 30s, with the support of his wife and son, he decided to enroll in pre-med and medical school. He completed his residency in Massachusetts and found himself drawn to community health centers where discussions of "integrated care" were evolving. Wanting to return to the West Coast, he chose Unity Care NW.

Unmet mental health and substance use needs of Americans can be overwhelming, often leading to preventable and premature death. Expanding access to psychiatry and caring for vulnerable and underserved communities is a gratifying privilege.

Today, the complexity of health care and the intricacies of human behavior are what he finds both most exciting and most challenging. "Trying to figure these things out is never boring," he says. When Dr. Moore joined our staff about four years ago, he was our only psychiatrist. He is now one of three psychiatric providers. The developing partnership between psychiatry and primary medical care at Unity Care NW is well worth any challenge. "In theory and practice, it's a good place to be. But it's still in its infancy." It's a partnership that can help Unity Care NW get closer to the goal of improving health outcomes, reducing cost, increasing patient satisfaction, and supporting provider resiliency and retention.



TDAP Vaccine Patient Increase



Colorectal Cancer Screening Patient Increase



Pneumovax Vaccine Patient Increase



COMMITTED to QUALITY

Quality Improvement

Providing high-quality health care to our patients and continuously working to improve the quality of care we deliver are top priorities at Unity Care NW. In 2016, our Bellingham and Ferndale facilities received renewed Level 3 recognition by the National Committee for Quality Assurance, the highest level of recognition awarded, for our commitment to quality care.

Quality care helps our patients live healthier and fuller lives. Partnering with patients to help them achieve their health goals is central to our work. We are proud that the care we provide enriches the lives of our patients and improves their well-being.

Prevention Measures	2012	2014	2016
TDAP Vaccine	44%	63%	70%
Flu Vaccine	25%	31%	34%
Pneumovax	47%	63%	68%
Screening Measures			
Pap Smear	48%	52%	64%
Diabetic A1c Screening	81%	92%	92%
Colorectal Cancer Screening	Not measured	41%	51%
Control Measures			
Diabetes: Good A1c Control	69%	76%	79%

We are pleased that many of our preventive and screening measures have shown significant improvement over the past few years. More patients are receiving recommended preventive care, and at the same time, our patient population is increasing. From 2012 to 2016, our patient population grew from 14,035 to 19,615, nearly a 40 percent increase. Providing better care to more people ultimately improves the health of our entire community.

	2014	2016	Unity Care % Rank*
Overall Satisfaction with Care	89%	90%	97%
Reception Staff Courtesy and Helpfulness	91%	92%	95%
Provider Listening	92%	93%	77%
Provider Time Spent	92%	91%	90%

*Percentile rank compared to a national survey of Community Health Centers



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Revenue



Expenses



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The Annual Benefit Dinner:

We gathered in October to celebrate our 2016 accomplishments. We premiered a new Unity Care NW video produced by Spicer Dent Productions, and we were joined by Aaron Katz, Principal Lecturer of Health Services, Global Health, and Law at the University of Washington. Thank you to our sponsors and attendees who made the evening a success.

Look for information about our 2017 Annual Benefit Dinner, to be held in October. We look forward to seeing you there! Sponsorship opportunities are available. Contact us at (360) 594-6616 to learn more.

We have checked and double-checked name spellings. We apologize for any oversights we may have made. "There are actually people in this world that really care! Thank you for your time and care."



BELLINGHAM

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Adult Dental, Behavioral Health, and Administration

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