

CELEBRATING
40
YEARS

the WAY FORWARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

 **Unity Care NW**
Health Care for Everyone

VISION

Everyone has the opportunity to live their healthiest life.

MISSION

To increase the years of healthy life in the people and communities we serve.



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VALUES

RESPECT

We treat people as we would want them to treat us and strive to understand and reconcile our differences. We practice professionalism and kindness with each other.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We accept responsibility for our work, invest wisely, and do what we say we will do.

INTEGRITY

We strive to make honest, responsible decisions and act in alignment with our mission, vision, and values.

COLLABORATION

We work alongside our patients, staff, and community partners to improve health.

INNOVATION

We adapt to the ever-changing needs of the future.

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DEAR FRIENDS and PARTNERS

Dear Friends and Partners,

Unity Care NW reached two important milestones in 2022: caring for more than 21,600 patients, the highest number in our history; and celebrating our 40-year anniversary – a testament to the vision, compassion, and generosity of hundreds of partners across Whatcom County over the past 4 decades, including several of you who have been a part of our story from the very beginning!

We lost two dear allies in 2022: board member Larry Thompson and longtime volunteer Dr. Milt Schayes. Their passings are poignant reminders of both the vital role community members have played throughout the history of our health center and the responsibility we share to further the legacies of those who have given so freely and benefited so many.

We invite you, in the following pages, to join us in a brief recap of the past 40 years, a celebration of the life-saving difference Unity Care is making, and a glimpse into what's ahead as we continue to grow our services, our reach, and our impact.

We are honored to play an essential role in our community, and to be able to serve all who seek our care regardless of their ability to pay. Thank you that, through your support and investments, we are increasing the years of healthy life in the people and communities we serve.

Thankful to be your partners in the continued pursuit of our vision: a future where everyone has the opportunity to live their healthiest lives,

Jodi Joyce
Chief Executive Officer

Jen Moldver
Chair, Board of Directors



MILESTONES ALONG THE WAY

Unity Care NW as we know it today has evolved over the years from its beginning in 1982 as Interfaith Family Health.

In the beginning . . .

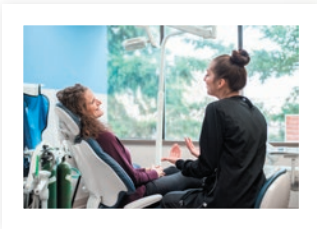
Federal budget cuts to human services in the early 1980s set a group of clergy members to work, meeting regularly to discuss how to prevent people in need from falling through the cracks in the healthcare system.

The Interfaith healthcare program began as a referral service providing Low Income families access to medical care from physicians in our community who agreed to accept discounted fees for their services. Interfaith Coalition provided funding and volunteer support, Opportunity Council matched volunteer doctors with patients, and doctors provided services.

Today, 40 years later and under a different name, Unity Care NW is an independent, nonprofit Federally Qualified Health Center with nearly 300 staff members providing integrated medical, dental, behavioral health, and pharmacy services to one in 10 Whatcom County residents.

1981 – Don Clinton, pastor at Christ Lutheran Church, is inspired to organize an interfaith response to federal budget cuts to human-service programs.

1982 – Interfaith Medical Care begins as a phone service at the Opportunity Council, with referrals to volunteer doctors.



1981 – Representatives from 29 local congregations gather and the Interfaith Coalition is chartered.

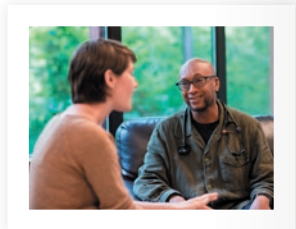
1983 – Volunteer dentists are recruited.

1987 – Interfaith Family Health Center opens on C Street staffed by one nurse practitioner and volunteer physicians.

1992 – The C Street Health Center is staffed by three nurse practitioners.

1996 – Interfaith's pediatric dental program begins and becomes the leading provider of dental care for children from Low Income families in Whatcom County.

1998 – St. Luke's Foundation donates a van for a Mobile Dental Program for children from Low Income households in daycare centers and Head Start programs throughout the county.



1994 – Interfaith Family Health Center moves to a space donated at St. Joseph Hospital.

1997 – Mental health services are added to the health center with new counseling staff, a volunteer psychiatrist, and 40 local therapists.

1999 – Veterans Administration partners with Interfaith to provide clinical services to local veterans in the first such partnership with the VA in the nation.

2000 – Elementary schools are added to Mobile Dental Program, bringing the total sites visited each year to 21.

2001 – Interfaith Community Health Center (CHC) is awarded federal grant to provide health care to people living with HIV in Whatcom and Skagit counties.

2002 – Interfaith CHC partners with Hoagland Pharmacy to provide low-cost prescriptions through the federal 340B program.

2008 – Interfaith CHC establishes a new Health Center in Ferndale.



2001 – Health center moves to 220 Unity Street site with 9 exam rooms, 11 dental chairs, and 3 behavioral health rooms.

2002 – Interfaith CHC becomes an independent non-profit organization, leaving the umbrella of the Opportunity Council.

2007 – Interfaith CHC is granted Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC) status from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).



2015 – Interfaith Community Health Center changes its name to Unity Care NW.

2019 – Unity Care NW partners with The Opportunity Council and PeaceHealth to create The Way Station, a unique facility for those in need of health and hygiene services and medical respite beds.

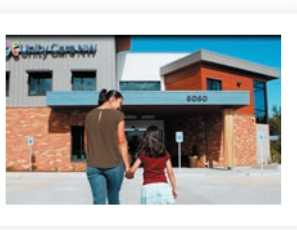
2010 – The Affordable Care Act (ACA) is signed into law by President Barack Obama, expanding access to health care for 27,000 Whatcom County residents.

2013 – An on-site pharmacy is established at our 220 Unity Street location.

2012 – Interfaith CHC establishes a new site at 1616 Cornwall Avenue in Bellingham for behavioral health and administrative services.

2013 – Interfaith CHC begins to enroll uninsured people in new insurance options available through the ACA. Our uninsured patient rate drops from 23% before the ACA to 8%.

June 2019 – North Whatcom Health Center opens at 6060 Portal Way in Ferndale to provide services to 9,500 patients.



September 2020 – Respiratory Clinics open at our health centers to help quarantine and treat patients with COVID-19 symptoms.



2021 – The Population Health Department hires four Vaccine Outreach Specialists to contact more than 7,600 Black, Indigenous, and People of Color patients to encourage, schedule, and provide transportation for vaccine appointments.

2021 – 12,500 COVID-19 vaccines are administered to patients and community members.

March 2020 – First positive COVID-19 test of a Unity Care NW patient.

2020 – Whatcom County offers use of their building at 1500 N. State St. as the home of The Way Station.

February 2021 – First COVID-19 vaccine clinics begin for patients and community members.

March 2021 – Community Vaccination Center opens at Bellingham Technical College with operational and clinical support from Unity Care NW.

2022 – Unity Care NW distributes 80,000 free rapid at-home COVID-19 tests via the Bellingham Fire Department & Whatcom County Public Library.

80's

90's

00's

10's

20's

the **WAY** **FORWARD**

CELEBRATING **FORTY** YEARS

After four decades of serving as the health care home for so many community members, Unity Care NW is not slowing down.

On the contrary, our health center has big plans to expand services to deepen our impact on the health of the community. In 2019 we identified a list of ambitious strategic priorities and, despite the challenges of the pandemic, have made great progress towards reaching our goals in the coming years. The purchase of the 1616 Cornwall building, and The Way Station partnership are both major components of our strategy to broaden health care access to more people who need it.

Expanding Medical and Pharmacy Services in Bellingham

The Purchase of the 1616 Cornwall building will help us achieve one of our strategic priorities to expand medical and pharmacy services in Bellingham where the need has grown in recent years. According to the US Bureau of Primary Health Care, there are approximately 20,000 people in Bellingham who are low income and are not being served by a Federally Qualified Health Center. Current Bellingham Unity Care NW medical services are at capacity. In the next few years, we will be working on a strategic planning design for services and exploring how to configure our downtown campus to respond to the needs of Bellingham residents. A capital campaign will begin in earnest once plans are finalized to ensure a state-of-the-art facility.

Unity Care NW is committed to furthering the legacy of our founders by doing all we can to expand health care access until everyone in Whatcom County has the opportunity to live their healthiest lives.

Creating Dedicated Services for People Experiencing Homelessness

The number of individuals experiencing homelessness continues to increase in our region. This overwhelming reality has resulted in an increased need for bathroom, shower, laundry, case management, and health care services. In response, Unity Care NW has partnered with PeaceHealth, Opportunity Council, and Whatcom County to provide all these services in one place. The Way Station will open in 2024 and coalition partners have worked hard to create strong operational plans to address the foundational needs of our most vulnerable community members.



What Would Whatcom County Look Like Without Unity Care NW?

It's an uncomfortable thought but when reflecting on the last 40 years at our community health center, a question persists: what if Unity Care NW were to disappear or to have never existed at all? What would that mean to the lives of the 1 in 10 Whatcom County residents who count on us for their care?

While the impact of our work on the lives of the over 100,000 people who have received care from our providers over the last four decades is hard to gauge, we know a few things for certain about who we serve today. Without Unity Care NW, 21,685 people, some with intersecting challenges, would have been without a healthcare home in 2022. 600 of our county's veterans, 6,887 kids and 2,304 of our elders would not have a single location for their primary, dental, and behavioral health care. 3,137 of our patients, who are best served in a language other than English, would face uncertainty about whether their care team would understand their symptoms. 9,389 of our patients living in poverty would be confronted with the challenges of navigating their medical benefits and finding transportation to their doctors' offices without the help of our Population Health team.

Our outsized impact was apparent in the fight against COVID-19 when staff organized to distribute masks and tests and to host vaccine clinics on site as well as at the Community Vaccine Center at Bellingham Technical College. To date, Unity Care NW has administered over 15,000 COVID vaccine doses; over a quarter of which were given to ethnic and racial minorities and nearly a third of which to rural residents. Despite the challenges brought on by logistics and misinformation, Unity Care NW exceeded our goal to vaccinate 70% of our patients. This was in part due to an initiative from our Population Health Department to hire Vaccine Outreach Specialists to contact more than 7,600 Black,

Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) patients to encourage, schedule, and provide transportation for vaccine appointments. This effort resulted in vaccination of 70% of our BIPOC medical patients.

This type of resourcefulness amid complex challenges is built into the fabric of Unity Care NW. Since the beginning, our small but mighty staff, has innovated to remove barriers for people who may not otherwise have access to health care. When we started our Health Center, we relied on volunteer physicians recruited from the community and slowly built our capacity to now employ nearly 300 healthcare workers at 3 locations. Now, our Communicable Disease Program offers comprehensive primary care including dental, pharmaceuticals, lab services, and nutrition counseling for our patients living with HIV/AIDS. Our pharmacy offers a free home delivery program, developed in the early days of COVID-19, that continues to serve patients who can benefit from the convenience of having their medications delivered to their homes. Our mobile dental program visits every elementary school and Head Start preschool in the county to provide sealants, exams, and hygiene education to nearly all children in Whatcom's public school system.

Life presents enough challenges; accessing health care shouldn't be one of them. With gratitude for those who laid the foundations of what would become the Federally Qualified Health Center that so many people rely on today for comprehensive, top-notch care, we look forward to continuing to broaden our reach and deepen our level of support among the community. We can rest assured that Unity Care NW will continue to help our patients and the community at large in their pursuit of a healthy life and, thanks to our supporters, will be able to continue to serve our community for years to come.





PATIENT PROFILE

Teresa, a survivor of domestic violence and medical hardship, is frank when she talks about her struggles

“The man that I married, he hit me, and I had kids with him, and I believed he loved me, and I still believe that he did love me, but he was not capable of loving in a manner that was healthy,” Teresa says. “The last straw was when he punched my daughter, who was 15 at the time, and she said, ‘if you can’t leave him for yourself mom, please leave him for us.’” Teresa did leave her abuser but struggled to find housing.

“I stayed in shelters for a while. You have to sleep with all your belongings under your head and there’s headlice and bed bugs and all the other stuff that goes along with it.” After Teresa became a patient at Unity Care NW, her provider, Muriel Handschy ARNP, told her she needed surgery.

“Normally when a patient has surgery, they stay in the hospital until they’re stable and then discharged to home or an extended stay care facility,” says Muriel. “If someone is experiencing homelessness, they may end up being discharged to the street before they are fully recovered if there isn’t space for them in one of the local facilities.”

Teresa was forced to find an alternative place to recuperate.

“I went down to maritime park where they had containers.” Teresa found large plastic bins that

had been used for transporting fish and put two together to create a makeshift shelter. For Muriel, this outcome was heartbreaking.

“It’s important to have access to hygiene facilities; to a bathroom, to a sink, to soap and water to have the best recovery from whatever your surgery is. In an instance like Teresa’s, she found a dry place to stay but had no bathroom facilities to use during her surgery recovery process.”

“When you’re homeless, you’re in survival mode,” Teresa insists. “So, I don’t even know if I thought about infection.”

Having a safe place to recover, to take a shower, and do her laundry would have been life changing for Teresa. That’s why Unity Care NW is partnering with PeaceHealth, Opportunity Council, and Whatcom County to create The Way Station. In one location, unhoused individuals can access health and hygiene services as well as medical respite beds when they need them.

Today, Teresa is healthy, has a home, and has recently been promoted at her job. We are proud to be able to provide a health care home for Teresa. It’s stories like hers that inspire us to go further to ensure health and hygiene services are accessible to everyone.

STAFF PROFILE

Meet Marco Mass Pascua, DDS
Our Singing Dentist at Unity Street Children’s Dental

Dr. Mass grew up in Tegucigalpa, the capital of Honduras. According to Dr. Mass, poverty and unmet needs were a daily issue. Long lines at public hospitals and a shortage of healthcare workers initially sparked his desire to work in community health. As a child, he had a knack for working on very small things and enjoyed building models. Dr. Mass knew he wanted to work with children because they are the most vulnerable population and in dentistry, he found the same rewards restoring small things in small spaces as he had working on model planes, cars, and boats. Shortly after dental school in Honduras, Dr. Mass attained a master’s degree in Pediatric Dentistry from the University of Barcelona in Spain.

Dr. Mass met his wife Leah as a volunteer in Honduras. After they were married, the pair decided to return to her home county and start a family in Bellingham. Dr. Mass became a US citizen in 2020 and at Unity Care NW, he has found a great fit for his passions.

“Unity Care NW has allowed me to reach out and help,” Dr. Mass says. “My job has enabled me to

change the lives of hundreds of people within the community that has become my home and that has given me so much. To do such work on a day-to-day basis is without a doubt a privilege and something I am very thankful for.”

More than 1,700 of our patients are best served in Spanish and bilingual staff like Dr. Mass are important to ensuring Unity Care NW can provide the best possible service to everyone who entrusts us with their care.

Dr. Mass is also sometimes known as “The Singing Dentist” because of his willingness to burst into song if it will help his young patients feel relaxed in the dental chair.

“We want to integrate all the knowledge that we have and surround patients with great options,” Dr. Mass says of his team at Unity Care NW’s Children’s Dental office in Bellingham. “A good environment, a good workplace, a good place for patients to receive treatment, where we can definitely deliver the best healthcare and we can definitely improve the lives of the people around us.”

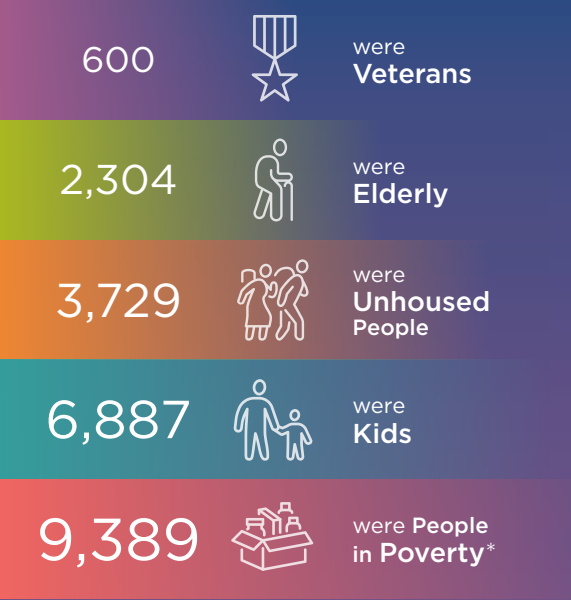


COMMUNITY HEALTH AND THE POWER TO SAVE

Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) are community-based health care providers that receive funds from the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Health Center Program to provide primary care to underserved populations. FQHCs must meet a stringent set of requirements, including providing care on a sliding fee discount based on ability to pay and operating under a governing board that consists of mostly patients.

Unity Care NW is proud to be a part of this network of community health centers that, for over 50 years, have provided integrated health care to underserved populations, reduced barriers to health care, and offered high-quality care at lower costs, saving billions of dollars for taxpayers.

Of the **21,685 patients served** in 2022 at Unity Care NW...



***Poverty** here is defined as patients who live on 138% or less than the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG) of \$14,580 a year. People in poverty, as defined by the federal government have an annual income at or below \$20,120 for an individual and \$41,040 for a family of four.

81.7% of our patients are considered **Low Income***

Our Low Income patients can expect to spend



***Low Income** here is defined by the state of Washington as people who live in households with less than 80% of the median income for Whatcom County of \$70,011 - \$56,008. The median rent in Whatcom County is \$1,995 a month or \$23,940 a year. These patients can expect to spend as much as 58% of their income on rent.

138% of Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG) is significant because it is the cut off for eligibility for Medicaid. An individual living at or below 138% FPG a year would not be able to afford to pay for health care without Medicaid. Unity Care NW provides further cost savings for our patients, including those on Medicaid, through programs funded by grants, corporate partnerships, and individual donors.

SAVINGS to the SYSTEM



while KEEPING it LOCAL

This cost savings to the system and the people we serve comes while contributing to the local economy as a sought-after local employer and by choosing local vendors for our administrative needs as much as possible.

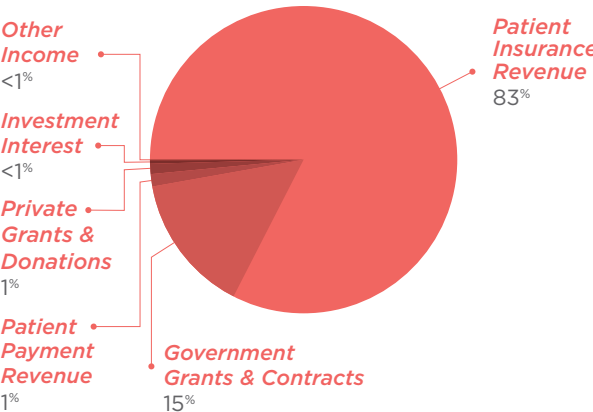


Source: American Journal of Public Health, IMPLAN Group LLC

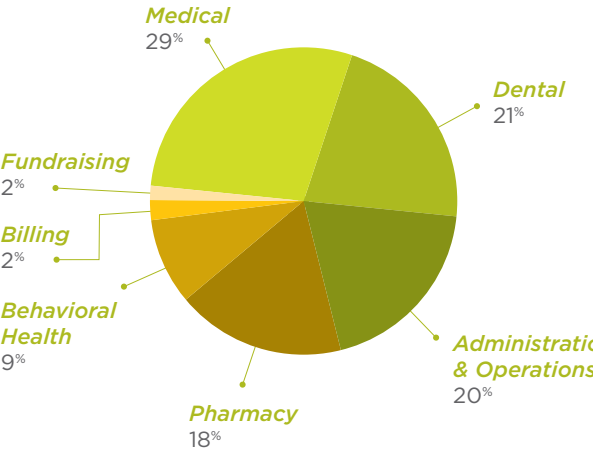
FINANCES

Patient visits and revenue continued to recover in 2022 from declines brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. The organization benefited from Federal COVID-19 relief funding. Expenses increased due to the need to retain and recruit staff in an ever increasing competitive environment.

Revenue - \$42,365,873



Expenses - \$40,020,290



THANK YOU to our 2022 CONTRIBUTORS

Generous supporters of Unity Care NW help make it possible for us to provide care inside and outside the exam room. They are an important part of ensuring health care for everyone in our community.
We are truly humbled and grateful for their contributions.

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Bellingham Public Library (in-kind)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration
Washington State Health Care Authority
Whatcom County Library System (in-kind)

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Community Health Plan of Washington (CHPW)
PeaceHealth
Puget Sound Energy
Quest Diagnostics
RMC Architects
SCS Retirement, Inc

“I had someone explaining to me just how it should be, ‘this is what your body wants and needs.’ I’ve never had that.”

– Roberto, Unity Care NW Patient

BELLINGHAM

Medical & Children's Dental Services

220 Unity Street
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 676-6177

Adult Dental, Behavioral Health, Donations and Administration

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

In-House Pharmacy

218 Unity Street
Bellingham, WA 98225
(360) 752-7406

Quest Diagnostics Lab

218 Unity Street
Bellingham, WA 98225

FERNDALE

Medical, Dental, and Behavioral Health Services

6060 Portal Way
Ferndale, WA 98248
(360) 676-6177

In-House Pharmacy

6060 Portal Way
Ferndale, WA 98248
(360) 752-7408

Quest Diagnostics Lab

6060 Portal Way
Ferndale, WA 98248



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