

# Living HEALTHIER

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## Chief of Staff, Russ Nichols, MD



When I was attending medical school at Oregon Health & Science University, there was a popular saying, "if you have seen one rural hospital, you've seen one." This statement rings true when it comes to Morrow County Health District.

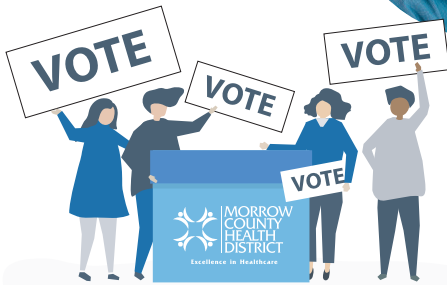
Unlike some rural healthcare systems, Pioneer Memorial Hospital is only one aspect of a much larger picture. Morrow County Health District includes primary care clinics, home health & hospice services, emergency ambulance teams and other important services across the county. The work we do to promote health and wellness in schools and other local organizations are prime examples of how we are working to ensure families, friends and neighbors continue to have access to high quality care as close to where they live as possible. Unfortunately, that is not the case in many rural communities across the state and country.

When I joined Morrow County Health District (MCHD) in 2008, rural healthcare was not making national headlines as it is today. The availability of accessible and efficient primary care in rural America is a growing concern as rural hospitals and clinics are closing across the country. Fortunately for all the communities served by MCHD, this organization continues to grow and invest in technology, infrastructure and services that are necessary for rural family medicine providers like me to deliver care that is of the highest level of quality and safety.

Practicing medicine in Morrow County continues to be a rewarding experience for my family and me. I am privileged to take care of multiple generations of patients in the same family and to have a team of skilled nurses, technicians and others by my side in our clinics, while saving lives in the ER or providing important cancer screenings such as colonoscopies and other procedures at the hospital.

In reflecting on my good fortune and how my work here every day is made possible, I thought about the importance and significance of community support. As you prepare to cast your vote on the five-year local option tax supporting the general operation of Morrow County Health District, please take time to learn more about our mission, the challenges rural healthcare faces and the ways we are working to protect local healthcare resources.

Please join me and my fellow healthcare providers and the staff at Morrow County Health District in helping our communities grow and thrive and keep our health district moving forward.



*Working Together  
to be a Healthier  
Community  
Today and  
TOMORROW*

# Board Member *Spotlight*

## Meet Leann Rea, Vice Chair



Leann Rea grew up on a farm outside of Ione and attended school in both Ione and Heppner.

After she and late husband Jerald were married, they moved to Condon, followed by purchasing land outside of Lexington where they farmed.

Eventually, the Rea's moved to the north end of the county and she began working for Irrigon's Irrigation District as their bookkeeper, soon after its manager. Later, Leann went on to become a Morrow County Commissioner where she spent eight years, and 13 years on the County Planning Commission. Since 2005, she has served on the MCHD Board, today as its Vice Chair.

Leann embodies service to others which is why she was honored with the Heppner Chamber of Commerce Town and County Life Time Achievement Community Award.

When asked why she serves, "I have lived all over this county. We are all the same and we have to work together." On supporting local healthcare, her answer was simple, "Yes, it costs the taxpayers a little bit of money, but how do you put a price tag on a life?"

# Connecting the Dots

## *See the bigger picture*

MCHD is deeply rooted in the communities we serve. Wherever we can be of assistance, oftentimes behind the scenes, you'll find us supporting area schools, non-profit organizations, and initiatives that aim to improve the health and wellbeing of county residents. We understand that a healthier Morrow County can't be achieved by one. It's working together that makes us all stronger.



## Do you have service in your heart?



MCHD is always looking for community members interested in volunteering. Contact Katie Siri, [katies@mocohd.org](mailto:katies@mocohd.org), 541-676-2930 to explore opportunities.



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## IRRIGON

MCHD's Community Benefit Fund donated two Automatic External Defibrillators to Irrigon's elementary and high schools. The fund was established to advance health improvement services and community building activities in Morrow County.

## HEPPNER

When Community Counseling Services in Heppner requested a donation of \$5,200 for the Students Providing Understanding and Respectful Support (SPURS) peer mentoring program in Morrow County, MCHD answered the call.

## BOARDMAN

MCHD contributed \$10,000 to the new Boardman Pool and Recreation Center for lifeguard training and rescue equipment. The equipment ensures the safety of its community members and allows the pool staff to provide lifesaving services in the event of an emergency.

## IONE

MCHD contributed \$10,000 toward the lone Community School Fitness Center Project. The new 1425 sq. ft. facility will provide health, fitness and wellness education and training to students and members of the community.

# You Asked. We Answer.

### Q: How Does Morrow County Health District's permanent base tax rate compare to other Health District's in Eastern Oregon?

The permanent rates outlined below were established by voters when the Districts were originally formed and cannot be changed. The only way to generate additional tax support is through a local option levy, like the one you'll see on the ballot for renewal in May 2019.

MCHD's permanent rate is the lowest of all the Districts; Even with the additional local option levy rate of \$.39, the two combined rates total \$ 1.00, the lowest compared to the other District's permanent rates alone.

#### Health District Permanent Rates rounded per \$1,000 of assessed property value

Blue Mountain Hospital District- Grant County	2.13
Lake Health District- Lake County	2.03
Harney County Health District	1.93
Wallowa County Healthcare District	1.05
<b>Morrow County Health District</b>	<b>0.61</b>

### Q: What construction is MCHD planning during the next five years?

The Executive Team and Board of Directors of Morrow County Health District are in preliminary discussions focusing on a proposed new clinic facility in Heppner to be located at the south end of the hospital. Ongoing talks also include the prospect of remodeling and expanding patient care areas of the existing hospital. Both proposals include considerations to ensure easier patient access throughout the facilities and improving efficiencies in the delivery of care. A growing staff of medical providers in Heppner, as well as the need to accommodate visiting specialists and the use of telemedicine, are among the factors driving the expansion conversation, as is repurposing outdated space in the hospital to make room for additional outpatient services.

### Q: What will the local option levy operating funds be used for?

MCHD plans to use the funds to maintain its full-time, employed emergency medical services personnel in Irrigon and Boardman, replace Ambulances in Boardman, Heppner, and Irrigon, retain diagnostic imaging equipment and ensure equipment upgrades according to industry standards, make facility improvements to areas of the Heppner campus, as well as upgrade computer and software components as they near obsolescence. The District also makes routine annual investments in capital items that improve patient experience and treatment outcomes; for example, the purchase of specialized wound care bed mattresses and vein location devices.

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This newsletter is not intended as a substitute for the medical advice of physicians. The reader should regularly consult a physician in matters relating to his/her health and particularly with respect to any symptoms that may require diagnosis or medical attention.

# Meet Chuck Fogoros

After an early morning of hunting in the Blue Mountains, Chuck Fogoros, and his friend Adrian, returned to their camp for a lunch break. While working on his crossword puzzle, Chuck uttered, "I think I am having a stroke." He communicated that his left side was weak, he was having trouble standing and moments later began to slur his speech. As a former volunteer firefighter and EMT Chuck was no stranger to medical emergencies which is likely the reason he knew the symptoms he was experiencing were serious. As for Adrian, he knew Chuck needed medical attention, fast!

Knowing he was at least 45 minutes to the nearest town, Adrian stopped in Heppner where he was directed to Pioneer Memorial Hospital. Once they arrived, Chuck's care team immediately went into action and established a telehealth connection with a neurologist at Providence St. Vincent Medical Center in Portland.



Chuck was stabilized and flown via Life Flight, demonstrating that a small rural hospital plays a big role in delivering life-saving care. "They knew just what to do. They knew they were on a tight time limit. They were double checking everything to make sure I was good before loading me on to Life Flight," Chuck said when asked about his experience. Today, he wants everyone to know that they need not have second thoughts when it comes to the local hospital in Heppner because they are saving lives when every second matters and whenever a community member or seasonal visitor is in need.



MORROW COUNTY  
HEALTH DISTRICT  
Excellence in Healthcare

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