

Alexander Valley Healthcare

6 Tarman Dr. • Cloverdale • 669-1777 • <http://alexandervalleyhealthcare.org>

Cloverdale health center keeps a pulse on community needs

Alexander Valley Healthcare has been serving residents of Northern Sonoma County since 1994—and since then, the Cloverdale-based community health center has evolved to provide a full scope of primary care, mental health and substance abuse services, general dentistry and more.

While the health center's services have expanded, particularly after being awarded a federal healthcare designation in 2013, Alexander Valley Healthcare remains small enough to care about every single patient.

"As the sole primary care provider from Healdsburg to Ukiah, we provide primary care to all people, whether privately insured, publically insured, or not insured at all," said Chief Executive Officer Deborah Howell.

Along with its dedication to patient-centered care, Alexander Valley Healthcare values change and innovation. "Although we are a small organization, providing in excess of 18,000 patient visits annually, we are technologically savvy," said CEO Howell. "Our services are provided through the use of electronic health records, e-prescriptions, e-laboratory ordering and results, and patient electronic access."

Family physicians are board certified and have dedicated their careers to serving patients in a Community Health Center environment. Their specialties range from OB/GYN services and osteopathic manipulation therapy to wound care and medical drug detoxing. Gary Pace, M.D. serves as the center's medical director and has been working in



The staff at Alexander Valley Healthcare (above) and the Alexander Valley Dental staff (below).

Community Health Centers in Sonoma and Mendocino Counties for most of his career.

In addition, the clinicians and support staff operate within a "Care Team" delivery model, which means every patient has their own primary care provider and is scheduled with their provider more than 92 percent of the time.

Overall, the health center provides traditional Family Practice services for all ages, including prenatal care. Since AVH is a Federally Qualified Health Center, services now include dental, medical and

behavioral health, substance abuse, nutrition and exercise education, chronic care management, and application assistance for public insurance programs and Covered California Health Plans.

Key community services consist of sports physicals for local athletics at a reduced price (no child is ever turned away because of inability to pay), health services to residents of Cloverdale Healthcare Center and Clearwater Lodge (residential nursing/convalescent homes), health screenings and education for students of Cloverdale Unified School District, DMV physicals, employment physicals and flu shots. The center also serves as the workers compensation physician for several businesses in town.

"We meet the healthcare needs by constantly keeping a pulse on the needs in the community we serve," Howell explained.

Alexander Valley Healthcare has come a long way since it was founded in 1994 as Copper Towers Family Medical Center. In 2005, the health center made a turning point when the Board of Directors assumed responsibility of the organization and changed its direction from a focus of serving primarily the underinsured and uninsured to a focus of providing healthcare services to all community residents.

Another major step forward occurred in 2013, when the Federally Qualified Healthcare Designation was awarded to Alexander Valley Healthcare. This gave the health center the financial resources to reopen general dentistry services 40 hours per week to publically insured patients (Medi-Cal) and uninsured community residents. This includes residents with Medicare coverage but no dental insurance.

Funding for the center is derived from two main sources. Patient services generate 75 percent of its financial revenues, and grant funding provides 25 percent of the annual budget to support services provided to low-income patients and quality improvement initiatives that improve health outcomes and lower the costs to the health care system as a whole.

In the future, AVH hopes to be able to improve its facility and build a state-of-the-art Community Wellness Center. The center currently operates in two small, outdated facilities in Cloverdale.

With all of its accomplishments, Howell said what she is most proud of since becoming executive director is "the dedicated Board of Directors and staff that tirelessly continue to serve the needs of the patients and community... People making a difference in peoples' lives."

