A career of caring

Longtime baby doctor Linda Harris retires

July will bring a new start to Dr. Linda Harris. After nearly 35 years of welcoming babies and caring for women in the Rogue Valley, the respected gynecologist and obstetrician is retiring.

“I am very grateful,” she said, reflecting on her career. “It’s been an extraordinary opportunity to share in people’s lives.”

Harris has worked at La Clinica’s Women’s Health Center since 2005. She previously was in private practice in Medford at the OB-GYN Health Center, which became part of Providence Medford Medical Group.

“She was a great colleague, someone to talk over patients with,” said Dr. Lanita Witt, who first met Harris when they were both training in Los Angeles in the late 1970s and worked alongside her in California and for decades in Jackson County. “She really stands up for patients and their care.”

Witt praised Harris’s patient-first approach, her commitment to data-based science, her pioneering spirit in persevering for advancement for women, and, most of all, her integrity.

Harris plans to spend more time gardening, traveling, reading, biking, hiking, cross-country skiing, and playing the horn in community music groups including the Rogue Valley Symphony and Ashland City Band.

“Risk matters. Of every 1,000 patients, studies show, about 200 need extra care. That 20 percent of patients account for 80 percent of total healthcare spending in the U.S.”

Our 30th anniversary video: Find it at laclinicahealth.org/30

10th annual fundraiser brings in $100,000: Page 3
La Clinica aims to care for 5,500 new patients and open two in-house pharmacies by the end of 2021, and it will launch a $3 million community campaign next year to support costs of the expansion. The new patients will be supported by 41 full-time equivalent employees, including about a dozen medical, dental, and behavioral health providers and staff. La Clinica is creating new patient space in its Birch Grove and Phoenix health centers and Wellness Center and will open the in-house pharmacies at Phoenix Health Center and the Wellness Center, offering patients a simple way to get low-cost prescriptions. It also will expand mental health and substance use disorder services and bring dental hygiene services to medical patients.

“We are thoughtful about when we absolutely need to ask for financial support, knowing there are so many worthy causes and such a high need,” said CEO Brenda Johnson. “We are certain that our expansion in services to the homeless or those suffering with substance abuse or mental health disorders is exactly what this community is asking us to do.”

About 40 percent of Jackson County residents are low income, and La Clinica estimates that many thousands continue to lack access to low-cost health care.

“A tool developed by La Clinica’s quality staff found about 950 medical patients. It also will expand mental health and substance use disorder services. Staff have prioritized patients could benefit from the program today. In the coming year, it will add a new option for patients: in-house pharmacies and the Wellness Center, offering patients a simple way to get low-cost prescriptions.

Program halves cost of most medications

Joe is a diabetic who once struggled to cover the rising costs of his insulin every month. Now he gets help through La Clinica’s low-cost prescription program. The federal program allows patients to get most prescription medication at half the regular price or even less. Without such assistance, insulin runs about $450 a month, according to the Health Care Cost Institute.

La Clinica works with partner pharmacies to administer the program today. In the coming year, it will add a new option for patients: in-house pharmacies and the Wellness Center, offering patients a simple way to get low-cost medications of their choice.

Doctors will be able to order medication during appointments, and patients will pick it up on the way out the door.

Support for community programs: Fundraiser brings in $100,000

La Clinica has another $100,000 to help children and homeless residents receive dental services and care through school and community programs thanks to its annual Raise Your Heart for Health fundraiser, held May 4 this year at Ashland Springs Hotel.

“Many, many thanks to all who made this event such a success,” said Maria Ramos Underwood, chief development officer. “We’re especially grateful to our 47 sponsors, whose support covered all event expenses. We applaud your dedication to our community and your support of our mission.

This year’s event marked Raise Your Heart for Health’s 10th year and La Clinica’s 30th. Sponsors at the $1,000 or higher levels included:

- Brown & Brown Northwest
- Propulsion Insurance
- First Interstate Bank
- Medical Eye Center
- Minuteman Press
- Neuman Hotel Group
- Robert Witenovski, O’Connell Investments
- Southern Oregon Spine Care

Equity

Statement commits to respect for all

“At La Clinica, we commit to engage everyone in a welcoming, respectful, and loving way and to maintain the dignity and value of all people.”

That’s the opening line of something new at La Clinica—a formal equity statement. This companion to La Clinica’s mission, vision, and service statements describes in three paragraphs La Clinica’s approach to its long-held values around equity, diversity, and inclusion.

It’s a critical piece even for an organization built around equity. From Page 1

A tool developed by La Clinica’s quality staff found about 950 medical patients. To help patients, the plan in mind. To help patients, the plan in mind. To help patients, the plan in mind.

New operations leader

Kirk has deep expertise in business systems, quality

La Clinica has a new operations chief who worked her way through the organization as it grew, expanding beyond a single location to a network of health centers providing primary care, dental, behavioral health, and wellness services.

Tara Kirk first came to La Clinica in 2002 as a medical records clerk and quickly moved into a related leadership role. She discovered that she enjoyed building the systems and structures that would help the organization grow and evolve.

She left to work for the state of Oregon in 2010, but “within a year my heart brought me back home to La Clinica,” she said. She took a role supporting quality, process improvement, risk management, and compliance work at La Clinica. She was most recently performance excellence director.

“The transformation in size and scope and how we deliver care to the whole person is incredible,” Kirk said. She’s looking forward to continuing La Clinica’s innovation and growth.

Kirk is a certified Lean Practitioner in healthcare quality and a certified practice coach for primary care innovation. She is also a Baldrige examiner for Performance Excellence Northwest, an organization dedicated to business effectiveness.