

HealthReach Community Health Centers



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Bethel Family Health Center: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow

BETHEL - Bethel Family Health Center (BFHC) has been a fixture in the Bethel community for 36 years. Starting out on Main Street in 1979, the practice moved to its current location, a converted A&P grocery store, in 1986. Coming out of St. Elizabeth Medical Center Family Practice Residency, NY, together in 1993, Drs. Richard DeCarolis and Kevin Finley have steadfastly served the community for over 20 years. They have recently been joined by Kristen Waitt, a Family Nurse Practitioner, and Dr. Catherine Chamberlin.

Nearly four thousand people from more than 25 towns rely on BFHC for their health care, the only medical office within 25 miles. In 2014, they made over 13,000 visits to the health center for services ranging from well child checks and care for chronic diseases, such as diabetes, asthma and heart disease, to setting broken bones, to learning new strategies for managing their emotional health. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, BFHC has the unique mission to serve all members of the community, regardless of age, medical condition, or their ability to pay for services. Over 370 patients benefit from our Affordable Care program, which allows low income patients and their families to receive services at discounted prices, going as low as \$10 for a visit. Eligible, low income patients may also qualify for assistance with paying for needed medications. Last year 62 patients obtained free prescriptions for a savings of \$252,000.

Providing services to the whole person is an important and growing part of Bethel's mission. Leslie Lufkin, LCSW, who has practiced clinical social work for 25 years, supports patients with behavioral health and substance abuse needs. Dental hygiene services for children are available two days a month at the health center provided by Sharon Smith-Bouchard, an independent practice dental hygienist. Crystal Fitch, a social worker, works with patients to solve problems with medical expenses, obtaining medications, food, housing and transportation, as well as to connect them to legal, elderly, behavioral health, disability and employment services. Tele-psychiatry services **as well as care management** will be offered in the near future.

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Collaboration with other community, state and national organizations further distinguishes the Bethel Family Health Center. BFHC has achieved recognition as a Level III Patient Centered Medical Home by the National Committee for Quality Assurance and has recently been accepted into the Health Homes program, a statewide initiative to improve the quality of services to MaineCare patients. BFHC staff participate in community collaborations, most recently Mollycoddett Days. The health center also belongs to the Bethel Chamber of Commerce in order to contribute to the overall economic progress of the community and maintains working relationships with Gould Academy, local schools and recreational centers by co-sponsoring physical activity and wellness programs.

In 1999, BFHC became part of HealthReach Community Health Centers. HealthReach began providing medical care in Bingham and surrounding towns of Somerset County in 1975, 40 years ago. Today HealthReach oversees Bethel's health center and 10 other Maine Federally Qualified Health Centers which are located in Albion, Bingham, Belgrade, Coopers Mills, Kingfield, Livermore Falls, Madison, Rangeley, Richmond and Strong. The HealthReach administrative team works closely with BFHC and the local advisory board, Northern Oxford Health and Service Council, Inc. to ensure ongoing care and high quality services well into the future.

Northern Oxford Health and Service Council, Inc. members represent the towns served by the center. They maintain the health center facility and provide ongoing feedback to the staff from the community perspective. The current Council members are: Eleanor Jodrey-President, Troy Jordan-Treasurer, Jarrod Crockett, Betsy Doyon, Sande Parker-Secretary, Dennis Wilson, and Sarah Tucker. The Council and BFHC are working together on a long range plan to bring additional services to the community.

BFHC's NEWEST MEDICAL PROVIDERS:

Born and raised in Maine, our two most recently hired providers are cheerfully settling in at Bethel Family Health Center. At Bethel Family Health Center, Catherine Chamberlin, DO and Kristin Waitt, FNP work alongside physicians Rich DeCarolis and Kevin Finley, as well as clinical social worker, Leslie Lufkin. 3,600 people from Andover, Bethel, Gilead, Greenwood, Hanover, Newton, Upton, Woodstock and neighboring towns visit the health center each year for a variety of medical and behavioral health and dental hygiene services.

Catherine Chamberlin, DO

"When I started here, every patient welcomed me on behalf of the community and the health center," shared Catherine. She fell in love with Bethel through her work with Outward Bound and Mahoosuc Guide Service. "I try to be a healthy role model for my patients. I like to run, bike, hike, paddle, ski - most anything that keeps me outside."

Catherine was committed to working in the Family Practice arena. "I love people and relationships and in Family Practice you become part of the patient's family," said Catherine. She continued, "I believe in treating the whole person, the

whole family and the whole community. My philosophy is to discover and pursue wellness through traditional and integrative medicine,” she continued.

Catherine recently completed the Maine Dartmouth Family Practice Residency. In 2011, she obtained a Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree from Maine’s University of New England. Previously she graduated from Dartmouth College.

Kristen Waitt, FNP

“All of the patients I have met have been very welcoming and happy to see me; it has been wonderful to get to know them,” stated Kristen.” She has a lifelong relationship with the Bethel-Newry region, which has been her home away from home. Her entire family would visit Bethel nearly every weekend to ski Sunday River, with some summer hiking trips as well. “I am a big skier and a season pass holder at Sunday River. I also love hiking, kayaking and water skiing. I was in some water skiing competitions when I was young. I have cousins and an uncle who rank nationally!”

Kristen also sought out a position in Family Practice. She explained: “As a registered nurse, I discovered that many people do not have access to quality primary care. Because of this, a number of patients have preventable diseases that have progressed uncontrollably because of a lack of early detection. I wanted to move to Family Practice, a preventive system that works to identify potential issues before they develop. Here at our practice, I have the opportunity to continue working with patients and building relationships.”

Kristen graduated from the Family Nurse Practitioner program at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee and is board certified through the American Nurses Credentialing Center. She obtained her undergraduate nursing degree at Boston College in Massachusetts and brings experience from her work in a Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Epilepsy Patient Care Center.

Bethel Family Health Center is part of HealthReach Community Health Centers, a group of eleven Federally Qualified Health Centers in Central and Western Maine. Dedicated providers deliver high quality medical and behavioral health care to citizens in over 80 rural communities. To ensure access for everyone, HealthReach accepts Medicare, MaineCare and major insurances. In addition, an Affordable Care Program is available to uninsured and underinsured residents as well as assistance with applications for programs that help with the cost of health care and medications including the Health Insurance Marketplace. A private, non-profit celebrating a 40-year history, HealthReach is funded by patient fees, grants and individual donations.