

Health Matters

Summer 2011

Health and Wellness Information for Our Community



How to Contribute to CWMA

Donations to the Catherine Washburn Memorial Association (CWMA) are gratefully accepted any time.

Tax-deductible contributions can be sent to:

CWMA
P.O. Box 309
Lopez, WA 98261

www.
lopezislandmedical.org

New EMT Team Ready for Action



Front: Laine Nichols, Nicole O'Bryant; **Middle:** Ben Kercksmar, Bob Parrish, Tommer Roush, Dayvid Ripinski, Sally Reeve, Janis Miltenberger; **Back:** Audrey Wakefield, Dan Post; **Not shown:** Donna Hasbrouck, Alex Zoerb

Ever wonder who arrives when you dial 911 for a medical emergency on Lopez? The team at your door will include either Marty Clark or Tracy Red Elk, our two professional paramedics, but the others are all volunteers: friends, neighbors, maybe someone you've never even met, come to help you through.

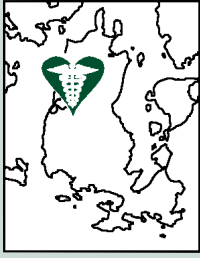
About every three years, the call goes out for new Emergency Medical Technicians, commonly called EMTs. This year, 22 Lopezians signed up with hopes of taking the five-month training class, passing the rigorous Washington state exam and using their new skills to help fellow islanders in crisis. Of that group, 12 finished the program and are set to join the seasoned crew of nine Lopez EMTs.

Training to be an EMT is daunting: from January through May, students commit to

a three-hour class every Wednesday night plus six more hours each Saturday. The college-level coursework involves reading medical texts, lots of memorization plus a minimum of one written test every week. "The Clinic is integral to our program," explains Marty, who heads EMT training on Lopez. "Dr. Wilson loves to teach and does it very well. It's fun to watch new students with him. Medicine is a fascinating field, and Dr. Bob makes it even more so."

Once they've reached an initial level of comfort and competence in the classroom, trainees go to Bellingham where a larger community means more 911 calls and more opportunities for hands-on training. Student EMTs do an eight-to-ten hour shift with local emergency responders where the goal is to see five patients in the field, take part

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New EMT Team

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in the entire treatment cycle and write a report. Then the stakes get higher: an ER shift at St. Joseph's Hospital working with Dr. Michael Sullivan, the Medical Program Director for San Juan County. "Two of our students were in the ER this spring when a patient went into cardiac arrest," explains Marty. "Dr. Sullivan had them take responsibility for CPR and resuscitation. Those two guys can own CPR now. They've done it. They know what it feels like to be under the pressure of a life and death situation. Other students had similar experiences. You read about these things in a book, but when you're actually there, it's incredible."

Laine Nichols, 26, born and raised on Lopez, is one of the youngest in the new class. "It's an intense course, you learn so much: general anatomy, how to move and transport patients, warning signs. On the mainland you'd have to pay for training like this, but because we volunteer, we get it for free. Our class became close. It's great to work as a team. I'm really glad I did it. Probably the highlight was the ride-along with the paramedics in Bellingham. Being in the ambulance, exposed to more advanced life-support work, was amazing."

Most EMTs say their motivation is having the opportunity to help others, but with an average of only one or two medical emergencies per day, much of the EMTs' shift time is actually spent "on call." Since shifts generally run one week on duty, one week off, this isn't as simple as it sounds. Marty clarifies: "On-call EMTs can't consume alcohol and must drop everything when their beeper goes off. That means they're not having a glass of wine in the evening, not heading off island, not taking a hike in the woods, not giving a dinner party, not even tending a burn pile. They're ready to jump in their vehicle and respond *right now*. It's an amazing level of commitment. These people fit their lives around EMT work. They're fantastic."

Dr. Wilson seconds that. "I've never seen EMTs or paramedics anywhere do what ours do. They not only cover duties of their off-island counterparts, they pitch in with nursing responsibilities in after-hours calls, spend much longer in direct care with patients, and fill multiple gaps that are inevitable with a small clinic. They go way above and beyond, and also happen to be exceptionally caring people. I am very grateful for their fine work."

CWMA Welcomes Three New Board Members

After all the ballots were counted, Carol Avent, Joe Goodner and Bob Myhr were voted in for three-year terms on the CWMA board. "We are delighted with the skills and depth of experience these folks bring to us," said Board President San Olson, presiding over the organization's 2011 annual meeting. "We're extremely fortunate."

Olson thanked outgoing board members Cherill Perera, Don Langrock and Wendy Mickle for their service and leadership. "We all know the value of your dedication and the amount of work that serving on our board entails. Most of you have been involved for more than six years and that is clear evidence of the esteem you hold for our clinic."

The Catherine Washburn Memorial Association and Island Hospital have long shared responsibility for the Lopez Island Medical Clinic. The nine-member CWMA board meets monthly to handle management and maintenance of the clinic building and all its equipment. Island



L to R: Joe Goodner, Bob Myhr, Carol Avent

Hospital handles operations, staffing and all activities relating to patient care.

"The Lopez Clinic wouldn't be in existence without the outstanding work of the CWMA Board," says Clinic Manager Jill Blair. "Their energy and generosity are key to our ability to continue to provide quality healthcare on Lopez Island."

Meet Erica Taylor

Newest Member of the Clinic Staff

In some ways it was natural to become a nurse," says RN Erica Taylor, 38, flashing her sunny smile. "As the oldest of four girls, I always was a bit of a caretaker. Nursing is a great fit for me."

Erica is a great fit for Lopez Clinic, too. Hired as Reserve Nurse last winter, she fills in for nursing staff who are on vacation or taking a sick day. "Erica's experience, ability to see what needs to be done, and positive attitude are a great addition to the team spirit of the clinic," says Aimee Nasso, clinic nurse since November, 2009.

Erica and her husband, San Juan County Sheriff Deputy Scott Taylor, moved to Lopez in 2009 when Scott returned from a tour in Iraq. Previous to active duty, Scott was a deputy on Orcas Island for six years. "When Scott came home, we took a month off, sold our house, took the family to Disneyland, then moved to Lopez."

Lopez is not Erica's first island home. Born in Tacoma, her family moved to tiny Raft Island near Gig Harbor when she was in 8th grade. "There were maybe 150 houses there. Our road was only about a mile long, but the island had a bridge, so we didn't have ferry issues. I loved the water, especially going down to the beach at night."

Erica brings a wealth of experience to her new position. "I've done a lot of different things. About the only thing I *haven't* done is deliver babies and do surgery," she laughs. She began her nursing career at Ashley House, a group home for medically fragile children near Tacoma. "We provided hospice, respite, transitional and long-term care." Her night shift, 6 p.m. to 6 a.m., was hard, "but I loved the kids and learned a lot."

Moving to St. Clare Hospital in Lakewood, Erica worked on a 10-bed Intensive Care Unit. Promoted to a charge nurse, she was responsible for the smooth running of the ICU. She also mentored three nursing students during their final semester of school. "The fun thing was, they all were hired at one of our sister hospitals. That was great!"



Erica Taylor, RN

During her six years at St. Clare, Erica also worked in infection control and employee health. "In essence, my job was to keep the staff healthy. I gave hundreds of flu shots. At one point I actually roamed the hospital with my push cart giving employees their inoculations." Screening cultures and tracking employees' and patients' potential exposure to infection and disease was a key part of her job.

When she and Scott moved to Lopez, Erica worked at Island Hospital's ICU unit in Anacortes. Ferrying over for her 3 – 11 p.m. shift, she'd spend the night in a hotel, report to work again from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., then finally catch the afternoon boat home. "I did it anywhere from two to five nights a month," she recalls. "Working here at Lopez Clinic is so much nicer. No ferries – I'm hoping to get a bike and *ride* to work! I love the staff. Everybody is very supportive, knowledgeable and friendly, and it's really great getting to know my neighbors and community through my work. This is a wonderful, wonderful situation."

CWMA Board Members

San Olson, President

Bob Riggins, Vice President

Ron Shively, Secretary

Rick Gadd, Treasurer

Carol Avent

Tamara Cowan

Joe Goodner

Diana Hancock

Bob Myhr

Bob Riggins

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Clinic Hours

Lopez Island Medical Clinic is located in Lopez Village at 103 Washburn Place.

Clinic hours:
Monday–Friday,
8:30 am– 5:00 pm

To schedule an appointment, call 468-2245 during regular Clinic hours.

For medical emergencies dial 911.

<http://www.lopez-islandmedical.org/>

Patient Satisfaction Survey

Lopez Gives Clinic High Marks

As Lopez population grows each year, so do the number of visits to the clinic. 2009 was busy, but records for 2010 show even more patients being seen: just under 6000 appointments with Dr. Bob Wilson and nurse practitioner Cathy Doherty plus an additional 1200 appointments with clinic nurses and physical therapy staff.

Always striving for excellence, the entire clinic team works hard to deliver top quality healthcare.

But what do islanders think of Lopez clinic?

As part of on-going efforts to monitor patient satisfaction, Island Hospital regularly engages independent polling firm Health Stream Research to conduct patient surveys. In the most recent poll of Lopez residents, conducted via phone during the last half of 2010, Lopezians gave their clinic high ratings.

“It’s wonderful to find a community as supportive of their healthcare as we see on Lopez,” says Anita McCoy, Director of Quality at Island Hospital. “Comparing Lopez Clinic to Health Stream’s database of clinics, Lopez was in the 95th percentile or higher in key areas such as office staff treat-

ing patients with courtesy and respect; to the doctor’s respect for patients; and to the doctor’s knowledge of patient’s medical history. The clinic ranked in the 86th – 89th percentile when patients rated their doctor’s listening and communication skills; whether the physician spent enough time with patients; and the doctor’s ability to give clear instructions. Follow-up with test results and same-day response to medical questions were at the 84th percentile.”

The reason for the exceptional showing?

Clinic Manager Jill Blair explains that the staff took information from previous surveys and brainstormed ways to address patients’ concerns. Obviously their diligence paid off. Not that

the staff will rest on their laurels. “We’re always looking for improvement,” Jill says. In particular, she says the staff is interested in lowering patient wait times. But as a rural clinic, that’s not always easy. “We’re an emergency room too, so sometimes the wait time is out of our control. Still, we’re on the lookout for ways to keep wait times low. It’s important to our patients and it’s very important to us.”

