



# Heart to Heart

NEWS FROM ST. LUKE COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

Spring 2024

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## MEDICAID EXPANSION

### What it means for Montana

IF LEFT UNADDRESSED, on June 30, 2025, Medicaid Expansion (HB 658) will end. Passed by the 64th Legislature in 2015 and then reauthorized in 2019, this partnership between the state and federal governments, means for every \$100 dollars of Medicaid services provided Montana government pays \$36 and the federal government pays \$64. According to an annual Medicaid report, this rate of federal funding is significantly greater than the average received by other states. Current Medicaid expansion coverage provides physical and mental health coverage to working low-wage Montanans, pregnant women, students, disabled individuals, seniors and minor children. Over half of workers enrolled in Medicaid expansion utilize it as a stopgap measure and are off Medicaid within three years.

During a particularly challenging time in her life, nurse practitioner Peggy Martino experienced the benefits of Medicaid expansion. Just as she graduated as an NP, she became her mother's primary caregiver. Initially embarrassed to receive government assistance, it allowed her to assist her mother who suffers from dementia, while at the same time pass her NP board examinations, and find a



SUMMER GODDARD / VALLEY JOURNAL

Medicaid expansion helped St. Luke Nurse Practitioner Peggy Martino through a six-month period of time when she needed it. Like Martino, most utilize Medicaid expansion as a stopgap measure and have different health coverage within three years.

new job, all while receiving healthcare she required to help with her asthma and other health issues. After only six months of receiving Medicaid benefits, she found a job, and cancelled further benefit payments. Grateful for the assistance given when she needed it, she wanted any further funds and services to go to another person in need. Typical of Martino's experience using Medicaid expansion benefits, most only need help for a short period of time.

According to MARA Study Committee, Medicaid expansion not only assists individuals like Martino, but also indirectly affects many others as the approximately \$900 million in federal dollars received produces roughly \$775 million in economic activity to Montana annually. The state's economy has benefited from the thousands of new jobs created by Medicaid expansion and approximately \$475 million in personal income. In addition, Medicaid members use less

of their own money on healthcare and more on Montana goods and services. According to the Montana Budget and Policy Center, it's estimated that six in 10 Montana businesses employ a worker on expansion.

In 2021, 61,635 members accessed preventative wellness services, vaccinations, and screenings, which help identify health problems early, potentially saving lives and the cost of more progressed and serious health issues. Recipients of mental health and substance use disorder services have increased in number since the advent of Medicaid expansion. The additional funding from Medicaid expansion, along with the elimination of restrictions for the number of organizations that can bill Medicaid for treatment, has increased the number of treatment providers from 95 to 208, including community-based treatment that allows

continued on next page

## NEW HORIZONS

### Dr. James Clough retiring from St. Luke



*We wish Dr. Clough well with his future endeavors and thank him for his years of service to St. Luke, his patients, and the community.*

"ST. LUKE PROVIDES EXCELLENT SERVICES FOR A SMALL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL," says Podiatry physician Dr. James Clough. Following 32 years working at a large hospital in Great Falls, he was very pleased to begin work at St. Luke in 2017. He appreciated the surgery team and OR facility at St. Luke and thought it was one of the better ones he's worked at in his career. By June he will have phased-out the last of his patients and completed the last of his clients' planned surgeries. Although he is retiring from clinical work, he plans to market his Cluffy Insole and other products through Cluffy LLC.

Dr. Clough developed the Cluffy Insole to improve posture and core stability, as well as foot and hip mobility by addressing the root cause of most foot pain. The insoles may provide benefits for athletes, including cheerleaders, golfers, and wrestlers.

We wish Dr. Clough well with his future endeavors and thank him for his years of service to St. Luke, his patients, and the community.

## MEDICAID REAUTHORIZATION CRITICAL FOR MONTANANS

WOW! IT IS HARD NOT TO GET INUNDATED WITH THE AMOUNT OF POLITICAL MAIL AND TV ADS that cross our path on a daily basis. Because there is so much energy and money put into the large political races, some things that can have an impact on every Montanan can get drowned out by the noise. When the 2025 Montana Legislature convenes, one of the most critical issues it will face, that impacts every Montanan, will be the reauthorization of Medicaid expansion (or reauthorization of the HELP Act). Montana's existing Medicaid program is set to expire if the legislature does not vote to continue it.

In 2015, Montana passed the HELP Act which expanded Medicaid eligibility to include adults with incomes up to 133% of the poverty level. The law went into effect January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016. The law provided an important safety net for the state's most vulnerable populations. It is important to pay attention to this issue now because the makeup of the legislature is mostly decided in the primary elections and how the candidates feel about reauthorization of Medicaid will impact whether or not it is passed in the 2025 session.

Here are some important pieces of information to know about Medicaid reauthorization:

- A poll by the Montana Chamber of Commerce found that 84% of Montanans are in favor of keeping the current Medicaid program.
- More than three quarters (76%) of those covered under Medicaid expansion are employed or attending school.
- Approximately 20% are caregivers for a family member or

are disabled, leaving only 4% of those recipients eligible to work that don't. This demonstrates that the legislation is working the way it was intended.

- More than 80,000 Montanans will lose their health insurance coverage if the program is allowed to expire.
- Montana is not alone in supporting and reauthorizing Medicaid expansion. Forty states and the District of Columbia have expanded Medicaid and no state has repealed it.



goes away, uncompensated care, uncovered healthcare costs, and costly delays in care ultimately shift the expense to the general public through increased cost of services and higher insurance rates, thus hurting all Montanans.

During election time you hear a lot of political rhetoric - information and arguments that are overblown or exaggerated and used to persuade, but are not necessarily the entire story. Please be mindful of this and learn how Montana's Medicaid program helps your community. It is essential that members of our state legislature understand the importance of keeping the current Medicaid program intact. I encourage you to ask your local candidates about their stance on reauthorization of Medicaid.

*Steve*



Medicaid expansion (from page 1)

Montanans to receive support near home. This is relevant to St. Luke as two-thirds of Medicaid expansion recipients live in rural communities.

According to Joel Onsager, CFO for St. Luke Community Healthcare, discontinuing Medicaid expansion would return many individuals to an environment of cost prohibitive premiums and deductibles,

often leading them to neglect pursuing healthcare to avoid the financial burden of those services.

Unfortunately, the decision to forgo preventative care doesn't always prevent future financial burdens as untreated medical complications can lead to more acute and severe medical interventions, many of which have significantly higher costs than the avoided services. Onsager went on to explain that St. Luke expects many patients no longer on Medicaid to have a

difficult time making payments incurred by necessary services, leaving the hospital with a decreasing rate of reimbursement. Speculating how decreased utilization and reimbursement would affect St. Luke, he said, "A decision to not renew the current Medicaid program is expected to produce a net loss for St. Luke in the range of \$4 to \$6 million."

Onsager believes an abrupt change to reimbursement expectations could diminish the scope of services offered as well.

Strategic preservation of the most essential services for the community could become necessary for long term sustainability, and more specialized patient needs would likely become better served outside our area at larger healthcare facilities.

Medicaid Expansion helps keep Montanans physically and mentally healthy, improves the viability of healthcare facilities, and allows them to continue to provide services needed in rural communities.



# St. Luke partners with other clinics, community organizations to assist in addiction recovery

MISSION VALLEY PREVENTION AND RECOVERY COLLABORATIVE, (formerly known as Community Café), was recently formed to bring together agencies on the Flathead Reservation addressing addiction prevention and recovery. These agencies have joined forces to better understand the needs of those experiencing addiction. Created by St. Luke's Dr. Megan Vigil and Joanna Hazen, from Tribal Health, the organizations in our area addressing addiction believe they will accomplish more working together than they can working alone.

The group meets on the fourth Thursday of every month from 6-7 p.m. at various and representative



Dr. Megan Vigil speaks during an April 25, 2024 meeting of the Mission Valley Prevention and Recovery Collaborative. **Upper left:** Joanna Hazen, CSKT Tribal Health Prevention Specialist Program Manager, shows those attending the meeting the group's new logo and name recently adopted by vote of members.

locations throughout the entire reservation. Professionals from St. Luke Community Healthcare, Providence St. Joseph Medical Center, Tribal Health, SKC, NARSS (peer-based recovery support), and St. Ignatius police attended the April 25 meeting at Ninepipes Lodge. The interest to address addiction issues is reflected in the fact at least 17 different agencies, both tribal and non-tribal, have attended meetings thus far. A comprehensive resource directory, created by Barbara Markham, will be available soon.

These professionals are working to understand the needs of users, whether they are seeking recovery or not. Their needs include housing, childcare, employment, education, healthcare and more. Dr. Vigil works through

her St. Luke Ronan Clinic location, treating approximately 20 patients with opioid use disorder. The MOUD (medications for opioid use disorder) she currently uses is buprenorphine-naloxone or "Suboxone." This medication helps manage triggers and cravings while providing patients the opportunity to work on their recovery and long-term health and life issues. MOUD treatment has no specific time frame with patients' needs dictating the course of treatment while keeping them safe from injury, hospitalization, or overdosing.

St. Luke Community Healthcare remains on the front-line of the most pressing healthcare needs for the citizens of our communities.

## Telehealth benefits patients

ST. LUKE COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE PROVIDES TELEHEALTH for their oncology/infusion patients. Telehealth combines telecommunications and healthcare and became more used and popular during the COVID pandemic. Telehealth creates a convenient, time-saving way for patients to visit with their oncologist, saving them the inconvenience and discomfort of out-of-town travel. It's St. Luke's belief that easing the discomfort of travel and providing patients additional time at home eases the burdens on those receiving chemotherapy.

Director of Nursing Services, Abigail Byers and Kevin Boen, a nurse working in oncology infusion both

believe receiving treatment and visiting with their provider closer to home gives patients more valuable time in their own communities and with their loved ones.

All oncology and immunotherapy patients are eligible for telehealth services, with the center open Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Patients show up for an appointment just as they would if the appointment were in person and experience a video appointment with their oncologist. Patient billing is the same as if they were in a face-to-face office visit. St. Luke staff supply all the technology supplies and know-how for telehealth visits, making this service very convenient and easy for patients.

## EMPLOYEES OF THE QUARTER

**Quarter 1:**  
**Courtney Funke,**  
Business Office



COURTNEY IS CONSISTENTLY KIND, cooperative, and helpful to everyone she meets. She takes on responsibilities with a positive attitude and adapts easily to rapidly changing situations. Courtney has made herself a valuable asset to St. Luke and its patients. She does so much behind the scenes and is well deserving of this recognition. Thank you, Courtney, for all you do!

**Quarter 2:**  
**Amanda Nelson,**  
Community Clinic - Ronan



AMANDA IS ALWAYS WILLING to go above and beyond. She helps out whenever needed and is very knowledgeable about her job and her tasks. She shares that knowledge with others in a kind and patient manner. She consistently puts patient care first, making them feel comfortable and welcome. St. Luke is very fortunate to have her as a member of our team!

## FOUNDATION NEWS: Mark your calendar for annual Foundation Dinner Sept. 13<sup>th</sup>

FOR MORE THAN 70 YEARS, St. Luke Community Healthcare has provided quality and professional care for our families, friends, and neighbors in the Mission Valley. We look back with pride on those years and also with appreciation for our community's support, which has made St. Luke the largest healthcare provider in the valley. With hope and anticipation, we look forward to many more years to come, serving our community and meeting the care needs of local residents and families.

As a community-owned and operated healthcare organization, St. Luke strives to understand the needs of those we serve, by soliciting feedback after hospital stays and through the Community Health Needs Assessment – most recently completed in 2023. Our team has worked to respond quickly to feedback and requests, including purchasing equipment when specific needs are identified.

In 2019, St. Luke upgraded our imaging systems to offer 3D Mammography. In 2020, we further upgraded our imaging technology and implemented telehealth services for specific areas of care. In 2021, we upgraded our Obstetrics equipment with a new state-of-the-art Baby Warmer. These purchases were made possible in large part by partnering with our biggest supporters...you! Many advancements have been accomplished in the last few years and we couldn't have done it without your help.

As we look ahead, we seek to tackle a long-time goal of bringing full-time Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) in-house. We're listening when you share that waiting lists and hours of travel for an MRI add layers of difficulty and impact your healthcare experience. We understand that having access to essential and timely diagnostic care can greatly reduce these challenges and

improve health outcomes. It's important to you and it's important to us!

With your support at the 2023 Foundation Dinner & Auction, we made significant progress towards that goal and we're hoping we'll get even closer with your support this year! Please mark your calendars for Friday, September 13th, 2024 for our 24th Annual Foundation Dinner & Auction at the Ronan Community Center, where we will further raise funds to help make this vision a reality. You can also help support this project by donating at any time to the St. Luke Foundation. Please contact Liane Clairmont in Administration at (406) 528-5218 if you would like to donate or if you have any questions about this year's Dinner & Auction. Please watch for more information as we get closer and thank you again for your continued support of this meaningful and impactful project!



# Austin Turner commended for care

ON AN UNLUCKY DAY IN OCTOBER, Delores Rogers found herself in Convenient Care struggling to breathe. Her condition required her to be transported by ambulance to Community Medical Center in Missoula. Delores doesn’t recall much about the experience, but she does know she had a bit of luck on her side with St. Luke Respiratory Care Practitioner, Austin Turner. Austin assisted Delores in Convenient Care, helping her breathe with the use of a ventilator, and stayed right by her side during the ambulance ride to Missoula. Since she was sedated, Austin wanted to make sure she had as much support as possible and see that she made it to Missoula safely.

After six days in Community’s ICU and four stents later, Delores stabilized and progressed to cardiac rehab at St. Luke, where Austin was overjoyed to work with her again. Delores completed her therapy on Feb. 12 and she and her family gifted this custom-made plaque to Austin to show their appreciation for the care he provided. Austin explained that positive experiences like this are exactly why he became an RCP and he values people like Delores who make his job so meaningful. Thank you for taking the time to share such a kind gift, Delores and family!

Following this story there were over 22 additional posts from colleagues, and clients including the following statements:

“Amazing co-worker and teammate! You rock!” -  
“This is awesome, Austin is great, job well done and glad to hear Delores is doing good!! Glad to have you at St Luke!!” - “So proud of you, Austin! I’m always glad to know you’re there backing me up if needed at work!” – “Great clinical practitioner right there. Well deserved. Thanks for all you do!” - “Austin you are the greatest even when I had therapy with you it was great Thank you for being a caring person. God bless you.”



ST. LUKE PHOTO

Respiratory Care Practitioner Austin Turner was recently gifted a special plaque by a patient he helped through an emergency last October.

Austin’s humble response was, “Thank you! It’s not me ... just part of a team ...a well-oiled machine ... I’m just blessed to be part of it.”

# St. Luke welcomes new staff members

## Mike Reed, DPM

A physician specializing in podiatry mentored Dr. Mike Reed and this encouraged him to choose the field of foot and ankle care. He graduated from the University of Montana in 2003, Scholl College of Podiatric Medicine at Rosalind Franklin University in Chicago and completed his residency at the University of Utah, Intermountain Medical Center in Salt Lake City as Chief Resident in 2010. He then moved to Anchorage, Alaska, to work in private practice for two years before returning to Missoula in 2012. He lives with his wife and two children in Missoula.



Mike Reed

## Brian Schenavar, DPM

A native Montanan, Dr. Brian Schenavar grew up in Thompson Falls. As a lifelong problem solver, he enjoys the opportunities podiatry offers him for creating solutions and relieving pain. He graduated from the University of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and went on to receive his Doctorate of Podiatric Medicine at the Mid-western University in Glendale, Arizona. He completed his surgical residency at Ascension/Wheaton Franciscan Health in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He has worked at Marcus Daley Memorial Hospital, Community Medical Center, Providence St. Patrick’s Hospital and Providence Surgery Center. He lives with his wife and four children in Lolo.



Brian Schenavar

Dr. Reed and Dr. Schenavar of Western Montana Montana Foot and Ankle will rotate seeing patients at the Polson Southshore Clinic once a week, (either Tuesdays, Wednesdays or Thursdays), beginning May 1. Dr. Reed and Dr. Schenavar treat patients with foot and or ankle issues through all stages of life from infancy forward. The most common complaints they treat are bunions, ingrown toenails, hammer toes, heel pain and ankle instability. They encourage patients to check their feet daily, and to wear shoes and sandals with good arch support or a supportive insert. Good calf stretching also helps to keep feet and ankles healthy. If you have persistent foot or ankle pain, don’t hesitate to see one of these podiatrists. To make an appointment call 406-543-5333 or have your primary care physician send a referral to Western Montana Foot and

Ankle. According to the doctors, there are a number of conditions that can improve with conservative treatment.

## Phillip Anuta, DO

St. Luke welcomes Phillip Anuta, DO one of the newest doctors in their team of Emergency Medicine Physicians. Dr. Anuta grew up living on a farm in rural northern Indiana. He completed his undergrad degree at Indiana University in physics and German and then moved to Austria for over a year teaching English. Upon returning to the United States, he began work as an Advanced-EMT in rural Nevada/Utah and eventually earned his Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine through Des Moines University, Iowa. He started residency in general surgery at the University of Texas, San Antonio, and finished his training through the Family Medicine Residency of Western Montana. In his residency, he focused on critical care and emergency medicine, with a particular interest in working in underserved communities.

Outside of the emergency room, you’ll find Dr. Anuta playing a traditional Southern Appalachian fiddle/banjo, cooking, gardening, and skiing. He is happy to serve those in need in the greater Ronan area and the Flat-head Indian Reservation. St. Luke welcomes him to the team and is proud to staff their emergency room with board-certified physicians, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



Phillip Anuta

## Stacey Burdett, NP

Stacey Burdett, NP, moved from Washington state to Montana at a young age. Stacey feels called to help others and intends to serve others in some capacity for the rest of her life. She became a nurse and worked in that field for many years and later received her graduate degree from Gonzaga University. Now a Nurse Practitioner, Stacey is eager to deepening her relationship with the community working in primary care, exploring her passion for preventative care and women’s health.

Stacey loves traveling and has served poor and underprivileged communities in her world travels. Outside of



Stacey Burdett

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# PROVIDER DIRECTORY

## St. Luke Community Clinic – Ronan Family Medicine and Obstetrics 406-676-3600

Joanna Billings, DO  
John Foster, MD  
Laura Hoganson, MD  
David Springs, MD  
Megan Vigil, MD  
Ed Vizcarra, MD  
Peggy Martino, NP-C  
Katherine Mitchell, NP-C  
Stacey Burdett, NP

## St. Luke Community Clinic – Ridgewater Family Medicine and Obstetrics 406-883-3737

Isaac Billings, DO  
Kelli Larson, DO  
Mike Schallock, PA-C  
Jamie Engeldrum, PA-C

## St. Luke Community Clinic – Southshore Family Medicine and Obstetrics 406-883-2555

Tyler Thorson, MD  
Tanner Staley, PA-C

## St. Luke Community Clinic – St. Ignatius Family Medicine and Obstetrics 406-745-2781

Joanna Billings, DO  
David Springs, MD  
Simon Crawford, PA-C  
Steve Shepro, PA-C  
Stacey Burdett, NP

## St. Luke Community Orthopedics 406-528-5580

Adrian T. Davis, MD  
Robert Alfiero, PA-C

## St. Luke Community General Surgery 406-676-3600

Zach Hovorka, DO  
Jesse Alfiero, PA-C

# EMERGENCY ROOM

Abi Nutt, MD	Cara Harrop, MD
Darren Brockie, MD	Alex Nutt, MD
Ben Grass, MD	Ronald D. Dean, DO
Mark Harding, MD	Kenneth Lindsey, MD
Phillip Anuta, DO	

# SPECIALIST DIRECTORY

## INDEPENDENT SPECIALISTS PROVIDING SERVICES WITH ST. LUKE COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE

<b>Cardiology</b> Morgan Kellogg, MD Matt Weiss, MD Douglas Waldo, MD Robert Minor, MD 406-327-4646	<b>Psychiatry</b> Eleanore Hobbs, MD 406-676-3600
<b>Ear, Nose and Throat</b> Kyle Tubbs, MD Kent Keele, DO 406-752-8330	<b>Radiology</b> Northwest Imaging 406-676-4441
<b>Neurology</b> Kurt Lindsey, MD 406-752-5095	<b>Sleep Medicine</b> Kim Damrow, MD 406-676-4441
<b>Podiatry</b> Stephen Latter, DPM 406-755-5250 Brian Schenavar, DPM Mike Reed, DPM 406-543-5333	<b>Maternal Fetal Medicine</b> M. Bardett Fausett, MD 406-676-4441
	<b>Interventional Pain</b> Michael Dumouchel, DNP, CRNA, NSPM-C Anthony Young, MAE, NSPM-F, CRNA 406-676-4441



# ECF PROFILE: Donald E. Olsson Jr.

DONALD (DON) E. OLSSON JR. WAS BORN AT ST. PATRICK’S HOSPITAL in Missoula on June 22, 1947. Don’s father, Don Sr., was attending law school in Missoula. The family moved up to Ronan when Don Jr. was three and his father opened a law practice. Their first home was in the Adler Apartments on Main and Fourth, above what was then Moody’s Market. Eventually, Don Sr. moved on from law to banking at Ronan State Bank. Don Jr.’s grandfather, Harald, had been with the bank for many years, working his way up from cashier to bank president. The family later moved to an 80-acre parcel of land, south of Ronan.

The family went on to have two more children – Debby and Shelley. Don has fond memories of his childhood, which was “a simpler time.” They floated Spring Creek and the canal. They biked, fished, and rode horses. Don completed grade and high school in Ronan. He also has warm memories of his mother, Mildred, lovingly called “Pete” since her childhood. Pete was very involved in the community and possessed incredible musical talent – playing piano expertly.

Don attended college at Montana State University. During the summers, he worked at Plum Creek Timber and Dupuis Lumber. After college, he moved to California and worked at Wells Fargo Bank, where he also studied management. Don had the unique opportunity to travel to Europe as a young man, where he spent six months exploring the countryside with a friend. He recalls buying a Volkswagen for \$400 and putting around 6,000 miles on the vehicle in that short time. After his travels, Don decided that California was too busy; he wanted to go back to a simpler life. So, in 1972, he returned home to Montana and went to work with his father and grandfather at the bank. Some of Don’s best memories were working alongside and learning from his grandfather.

Don was also reunited with his long-time family friend, Annette Arrington, whose family had a lake house just a few doors down from the Olsson’s. Annette took Don to a Christmas party on their first date and they were married eight months later. Now, after fifty years of marriage, they look back on a happy life filled with three strong, successful children – Karli, Donnie, and Abby – and six beautiful grandchildren. Their family comes to see them for a week during Christmas and as often as possible in the summers. Don spent many years golfing, enjoying time on the lake, and “collecting boats” – including sailboats.

Following in his family’s footsteps, Don worked his way up at the bank, helping his father grow and eventually re-brand the bank to “Community Bank,” as the bank and the community had grown substantially together. Don Jr. would go on to become bank president and also serve as the informal “PR guy” too. Incredibly civic-minded, he served numerous clubs and boards, including the Helena Branch of the Federal Reserve of Minneapolis. He enjoyed representing the bank out in the community. He even served on the “Miracle of the Mission Valley” committee, which helped raise funds to create the St. Luke Extended Care Facility.

In 2010, Don was diagnosed with Parkinson’s and retired from the bank. He spent two months in the hospital in 2019, fighting an infection in his back. He traveled to Arizona in 2020 to recoup, but it took several months to get back home due to the pandemic. As he began to require more support, Don chose to move into the Extended Care Facility in 2022 and has received “very good care” there. He still enjoys going out to dinner and spending time with family. Annette often takes him out for drives and up to see the lake.

As a long-standing mainstay of the community, there are countless lessons to be learned from Don. He shared a few of his favorite words of wisdom, gleaned from years of listening to his father, mother, and grandfather: “Sail fast, live slow.” “Work hard, play hard. In that order.” “Learn how to golf before you’re 70.” Don has been such an incredible contributor to the community, in a myriad of ways. St. Luke is honored to give back by caring for him now – it’s the least we can do after all he’s given to others in the valley.



Donald E. Olsson Jr.

# NUTRITION CORNER



## Eat more plants

by: MacKenzie Stark, RDN, St. Luke  
Registered Dietitian Nutritionist

YOU’VE PROBABLY HEARD THE PHRASE “PLANT-BASED DIET,” but what exactly does that mean? A plant-based or plant-forward diet simply focuses on eating primarily plants at each meal. This includes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes (beans and lentils), nuts, and seeds. A plant-based diet does not necessarily mean that you are vegetarian, vegan, or that you never eat meat or dairy; instead, you are proportionately choosing more of your foods from plant-based sources.

As a plant-based dietitian, the number-one question I am asked is, “Can you meet your protein needs on a plant-based diet?” The answer is yes! Amino acids are the building blocks of proteins, and they originate in plants. You can eat the animal who ate the plant or cut out the middleman and eat the plant directly. Some good sources of plant protein to include in your diet are peas, beans, lentils, soy products (edamame, tofu, tempeh), quinoa, hemp seeds, chia seeds, nuts, nutritional yeast, spirulina, and plant-based protein powders. It’s important to note that there are a lot of plant-based meat substitutes on the market—some of these are heavily processed, so I wouldn’t recommend eating them all the time. However, I think these are great for people transitioning to a plant-based diet. Ways to add more plant-based protein to your diet include adding lentils/beans to pasta sauce and soups (there are also high-protein legume pastas on the market); sprinkling pumpkin seeds and/or hemp hearts on salad, oatmeal, and yogurt; adding your favorite nut butter to oatmeal and smoothies; blending tofu into soups, dressings, and sauces; snacking on edamame, hummus, and nuts; sprinkling nutritional yeast on pasta, salads, and popcorn.

How to build a healthy and satisfying plant-based meal:

Add veggies/fruits: leafy greens, cabbage, broccoli, berries, apples, mango, carrots, cucumbers, tomatoes, bell peppers, onions

Add a starch/complex carb: whole-wheat, brown rice, quinoa, millet, buckwheat, oats, corn, potatoes, squash

Add some plant protein: beans, lentils, peas, hummus, tofu, tempeh, nuts,

seeds

Add some healthy fat: avocado, olives, nuts/seeds (protein + fat)

Add some flavor: vinegar, your favorite dressing/sauce, fresh lemon/lime juice, herbs/spices



MacKenzie Stark, RDN

Adopting a plant-based diet is one of the best things you can do for your health. Evidence suggests that many diseases can be prevented, controlled, or even reversed with a plant-based diet. This evidence is especially overwhelming when it comes to diabetes and heart disease. In 2018, a report found that for people with type 2 diabetes, a plant-based diet was more beneficial than the diets recommended by several diabetes associations. A 2019 review of 99 studies found that diets based on plant foods significantly lowered the risk of cardiovascular disease compared with diets high in meat and dairy products. When you eat more plants, you’re eating more fiber and phytonutrients, which have numerous health benefits such as reducing inflammation, regulating metabolism, and promoting a healthy gut microbiome. And, when you limit your consumption of animal products by eating more whole plant foods, you reduce the amount of saturated fat and cholesterol in your diet, which are both associated with increased rates of heart disease, diabetes, and obesity.

If you’re new to plant-based eating, I encourage you to experiment with new foods and have fun in the kitchen or at your favorite eatery. If you normally eat meat with every meal, try substituting a plant-based protein with just one of those meals per day or week. Today, there are many creative ways cooks, chefs, and food manufacturers are preparing fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds in delicious ways that make plant-based eating enjoyable and easier in any setting.

Recipe to try: Easy Quinoa Salad (<https://www.twopeasandtheirpod.com/easy-quinoa-salad/>) – consider adding chickpeas, white beans, or shredded chicken to make this side dish a protein-filled main dish!

### new staff (from page 3)

676-3600.

work, she assists with the family business and loves spending time outdoors running, fishing, and bow hunting. Stacey and her husband, Gary, raised eight children together.

She is assisting Dr. Joanna Billings at two St. Luke Community Clinics. Stacey will be available in St. Ignatius on Mondays and Fridays 406-745-2781 and in Ronan on Tuesdays and Thursdays 406-

### Tanner Staley, PA-C

Tanner Staley, PA-C, was born and raised in Helena. He completed his undergrad studies at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah and then graduated from Rocky Mountain College in Billings’ PA school. Prior to joining the team at St. Luke, he practiced medicine in Libby.

As a sports player, Tanner originally

found interest in physical therapy, but his passion changed to being a physician’s assistant particularly following a two-year service mission to the Four Corners area, where he lived and served the people on the Navajo and Apache Reservations. Tanner enjoys



Tanner Staley

building relationships with patients and helping them live happy and healthy lifestyles. Growing up in a family of six, family has always been Tanner’s biggest source of joy. He now enjoys a family of his own with his wife and two sons. Having grown up in Montana, he has always enjoyed the outdoors and continues this today with his family, walking, hiking, swimming, or biking. Tanner serves the community from the St. Luke Community Clinic - Southshore in Polson 406-883-2555.



[www.stlukehealthcare.org](http://www.stlukehealthcare.org)

#### IN RONAN:

St. Luke Community Hospital  
St. Luke Community Convenient Care  
St. Luke Community Extended Care  
St. Luke Community Oxygen & Medical Equipment  
St. Luke Community Hearing Center  
St. Luke Community Healthcare Foundation  
107 6th Ave. SW 406-676-4441  
St. Luke Community Clinic – Ronan 406-676-3600  
St. Luke Orthopedic Clinic 406-528-5580  
St. Luke General Surgery 406-676-3600  
126 6th Ave. SW

#### IN POLSON:

St. Luke Community Clinic – Ridgewater 406-883-3737  
St. Luke Community Clinic – Ridgewater PT 406-883-2666  
107 Ridgewater Drive  
St. Luke Community Clinic – Southshore 406-883-2555  
104 Rufus Lane

#### IN ST. IGNATIUS:

St. Luke Community Clinic – St. Ignatius  
330 Six Tracts Way  
406-745-2781

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