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Supporting Local Healthcare

When Humboldt faced a shortage of ventilators to fight COVID-19, Women for Wellness took action and funded a new supply.

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Membership in Women for Wellness (W4W) is about:

• Uniting like-minded women who make “giving back” a part of their lives through compassion, knowledge, friendship, and philanthropy.

• Learning of the community’s most pressing healthcare issues, and working together to address those issues.

The $1,000 yearly membership fee is fully tax deductible. 100% of the contribution will directly benefit programs, equipment, and/or services identified as those in greatest need of support at Redwood Memorial and St. Joseph hospitals. Funding options for allocation of funds are presented to the membership and voted on in the fall.

JOIN US Oct. 22 for a free virtual event focused on women’s health!

For more information, contact Heather at (707) 269-4275 or heather.setton@stjoe.org

Working closely with St. Joseph Health-Humboldt Chief Executive, Roberta Luskin-Hawk, MD
64% of all REALTORS® in the United States are female. We at Coldwell Banker Cutten Realty acknowledge their accomplishments and professionalism in the real estate industry, as well as, their generous contributions and commitment to our local community. Thank you for your continued efforts during COVID-19 to ensure that safety remains the utmost importance for our clients and community.
Since the beginning of Eureka Natural Foods, women have played a major role in its growth. Betty Littlefield, the first woman in business for Eureka Natural Foods, has been a pioneer in the Health Supplement & Organic Food industry for over thirty years. Now Betty’s daughter Suzanne has followed in her footsteps and oversees the Wellness and Global Goods departments, also serving on the board of directors as a co-owner. We believe that a diverse workforce is an innovative workforce. Working in a diverse environment can mean better talent acquisition, increased productivity, and higher job satisfaction. Eureka Natural Foods is proud of the women who work throughout our company. In these times, women have played a vital role in showing strength, intelligence, and resilience when it is needed most. To the women of Eureka Natural Foods and Humboldt, we thank you.
With the big mix of amazing personalities that we have, our office has a lot of fun. We have runners, dog lovers, cooks, moms and cat wranglers. Every woman here is a powerhouse; they are sleuths to help you find what you need to know about a property, they are negotiators, they put their clients first and are here to help. Coldwell Banker Sellers Realty has been operating for over 50 years and we are some of the women who have proudly built the reputation of hard working, trustworthy, and caring real estate agents.

Amber Wills  Arlene Orlandi  Barbara Kadlecik  Elly Roversi  Heather Bergen  Lisa Bianchi
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Celebrating Women in Business
Highlighting some of our many outstanding Women who make Mad River Community Hospital the Hospital it is Today.

Pamela Floyd, MBA-HM
Chief Compliance Officer (CCO)
Over: Risk, Regulatory, Quality and Facilities
11 Year team member of MRCH
She has successfully lead the MRCH team through multiple accreditation surveys both federal and state as well as 7 straight years of Healthcare Industry recognized ‘Quest for Zero’ top tier Quality Awards.
Proud Mother of 5, Grandmother of 12

Tina Wood, RN BSN CCRN
Critical Care Manager
Over: ICU and ED
10 Year team member of MRCH
36 Year RN, “I like being a nurse, I look forward to the adventure that is each new day. It is tremendously satisfying to assist people in figuring out their health problems and taking some steps to solve them.”
I am also, a wife, a mother, a daughter, a daughter in-law, a sister, a sister in-law, an aunt, a niece, and a friend.

Cara Sanchez
Medical Staff Manager
3 Year team member of MRCH
A Veteran of the United States Air Force, Certified in Healthcare Management and passionate about patient care and our community. She assisted MRCH in becoming a Trauma Designated Hospital.
Proud Mother of 4 and Grandmother of 2

Deborah Fonseca
Imaging Manager
12 Year team member of MRCH
She started at MRCH as an X-ray Tech after graduating with her Degree in Radiology Technology. She cross trained in CT and MRI getting licensed in both and assumed her management role in 2011. She strives to always be moving forward and exemplifies hard-work and dedication.
Hard-working Wife and Mother of 3

www.Madriverhospital.com | (707) 822-3621 | 3800 Janes Road, Arcata, CA 95521
Dr. Roberta Luskin-Hawk, chief executive officer
St. Joseph Health, Humboldt County

Robertta Luskin-Hawk has served as CEO of St. Joseph Health, Humboldt County, since 2018, leading St. Joseph Hospital, Eureka, a 139-bed regional medical center, and Redwood Memorial Hospital Fortuna, a 25-bed critical access hospital. Previously, she served as regional president/CEO for Presence Saint Joseph Hospital, Chicago, and Presence Saint Francis Hospital in Evanston, Illinois. Luskin-Hawk’s administrative career follows her clinical career as an infectious disease specialist, educator, clinical researcher and physician leader. She co-founded one of Chicago’s first inpatient HIV units at Saint Joseph in 1987, which served thousands of patients from Chicago and its suburbs. In 1989, Luskin-Hawk successfully sought National Institutes of Health funding and founded AIDS Research Alliance, Chicago, an independent, not-for-profit clinical research consortium, where she served as principal investigator for 15 years. Luskin-Hawk earned her bachelor’s degree in biology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and her Doctor of Medicine degree with honors from the University of Illinois College of Medicine. She completed her internal medicine residency, where she served as chief resident, at Michael Reese Hospital and Medical Center, and she completed her infectious disease fellowship at the University of Chicago Medical Center.

Luskin-Hawk was born in Chicago, where her family ran a jewelry business.

Q) What sparked you to be in the health care industry?
A) Luskin-Hawk says her grandfather arrived in America in a boat with his family from Russia “with no money.”

“His family was able to save enough money for his brother.
to go to medical school. That did not work out, but there was just enough money left for my grandfather to go to school to become a pharmacist. I would have him tell me the story of coming over in the boat over and over. My aunt also died of breast cancer at a young age.”

These events, her grandfather’s persistence in crossing over for a better life and her aunt’s passing affected her decision to enter the health field. “I really wanted to make a difference,” she said.

Q) Beside the current pandemic, what is a top community health care issue?
A) “That’s a big question, so what helps us to determine that is we conduct an annual community health needs assessment with our partners in the community.”

Luskin-Hawk says gathering the data and assessing it helps community health professionals plan strategies and programs “to address prevention and education regarding common health issues.”

Luskin-Hawk added that “much of it (resource appropriation) is for addressing obesity and diabetes.”

Another issue she identified is the need for the education and training of more primary care physicians to be able to work with local families. A primary care provider typically acts as first contact and principal point of continuing care for a patient. The physician case manages and coordinates with other specialists the care that the patient may need.

To this end, Luskin-Hawk described a St. Joseph Health, Humboldt County partnership with the Open Door Community Health Centers developing a Family Medicine Residency Program.

“We currently are working with 12 physicians that...”

>> CONTINUED
are getting internship and education opportunities, learning all aspects of family medicine care,” Luskin-Hawk said, adding, “We will be able to bring more primary care services to more people in the community.”

Luskin-Hawk also points to a recent resurgence of a Humboldt State University (HSU) Nursing Bridge Program. The bridge program supports College of the Redwood nursing program graduates (or other individuals working as nurses or nurse aides who already possess some type of nursing degree) who want to move to the next academic level at Humboldt State University.

Humboldt State’s LVN to RN curriculum is designed specifically for the local area, focusing on “physical and psychosocial health needs and disparities within the region’s rural and tribal communities,” according to the program description. St. Joseph Hospital, Eureka, committed $2 million toward bringing the once-eliminated program back in operation after a years-long hiatus.

Q) What advice would you give to a high school student interested in entering the health care field?

A) “Follow your heart! A career in health is the intersection between humanity and science. It can fulfill double interests. (It is) a career of science and knowledge and a career of service, a career of taking care of others. There is a lot to be said for that. I would want them to know these are the kind of jobs that fill the soul. I want them to know that a health career can make a lot of difference all of the time. You can touch people’s lives every single day. I would want to tell them that there are a lot of jobs in health care, and there is more and more training available now to develop the skills” for a good-paying job in the health care industry.

Q) As a leader in the health field, what have been challenges and responding to COVID-19?

A) “COVID made us have to change everything. We had to plan for and institute safe infection procedures and practices for all staff and patients. We had to keep assuring enough PPE (Personal Protection Equipment) supplies were in supply. We were on the phone every morning with 51 other Providence St. Joseph Health ministries across the country (St. Joseph Health, Humboldt County, is one of the ministries). By being in constant communication with such a large network, she said, “We were able to share resources, information and collaborate on resources daily,” shifting materials and resources between the hospitals that had supplies at-the-ready to the hospitals that needed support on any given day.

“But,” she said, “we also had to sit down as a team and to figure out how to take care of both COVID patients and regular health care patients.”

Luskin-Hawk said she “had a great team that was able to design a special Negative Pressure Respiratory Care Unit,” a location for COVID-19 patients to have their air constantly filtered out of the room and sent safely outdoors through an extensive HEPA filtering system.

“I believe we have a state-of-the-art health care environment for patients,” she said.

Luskin-Hawk believes her health infection and anti-viral research background helped her connect with a certified research laboratory. Her past experience and connections to colleagues resulted in a COVID-19 research therapy drug coming to Humboldt County much earlier than other locations in the United States.

“I know it (the research drug) helped save lives here,” said Luskin-Hawk.

Q) If there was one community healthy living behavior you could affect, what would it be?

A) Luskin-Hawk believes the impact of substance abuse has had a significantly negative effect on the general health of the community. She offered simple advice and encouragement for “everyone to just take the time to take care of their individual mental and physical health, whatever it may be for them alone.”

She added: “And simply go along with following other public health guidelines regarding regular health screenings, smoking, diet and cancer screening.”
Cheyenne Spetzler, chief operating officer and founder Open Door Community Health Centers

Cheyenne Spetzler has been involved with Open Door Clinics since 1979 and was instrumental in the founding of Open Door Community Health Centers. Open Door started as a single clinic in Arcata in 1971. It now has 12 community health centers across Humboldt and Del Norte counties — a service area larger than the state of Connecticut — serving more than 55,000 patients a year and employing almost 600 members of the community. Open Door provides a variety of health care programs, including family practice, pediatrics, women's health, prenatal and birth, family planning, geriatrics, dental care, urgent care, mental and behavioral health, STD testing and counseling, HIV/AIDS care, alternative medicine, health education and smoking cessation.

Spetzler was raised in Missouri, and moved with her mother and siblings to Glendora, California, when her father, an electrician, transferred to a job with General Mills.

Q) What sparked you to be in the health care industry?
A) “You aren’t going to like the answer. I wanted to become an anthropologist, so I kept studying towards getting an anthropology degree, which brought me up to Humboldt. … Herrmann (Spetzler) was the one who first got into health care.”

Spetzler’s husband had worked as an interim director of Mental Health for Orange County before moving to Lake Tahoe, where he took a job as the director a network of alcohol recovery clinics. During this time, she was attending community college while raising the couple’s young children. After a while, the Spetzlers had to choose to either follow her studies in San Diego or move to Humboldt County.

“We liked being free as little kids growing up in the Midwest, as did Herrmann living in the Midwest after emigrating here from Germany. We wanted the same things for our kids, so we moved here,” she said.

Spetzler said her husband took the job at Open Door even though it “paid less than unemployment.” She began writing grant proposals supporting the clinic in 1977 — the year her husband joined the clinic — and started working at the clinic in 1979 running the front office with her infant son, Gabe, at her side. “Herrmann angered somebody, and she quit,” Spetzler recalled. “He said, ‘You gotta come in, because I don’t know how it’s gonna get done.’”

Spetzler remembered that when “Gabe grew old enough to start unloading file cabinets, I told Herrmann, ‘(Gabe) has to go to day care, you have to pay me.’ So, I started being paid.”

Spetzler calls health care “a puzzle.” “I love puzzles,” she added. “Health care is an interesting puzzle, and health care is a good one — how to put infrastructure in place. Herrmann would come up with 50 ideas a week. My struggle was to be able to manage the number of ideas he could come up with into a number I could pull off without embarrassing the family!” (laughing).
Q) Beside the current pandemic, what is a top community health care issue?

A) “Health care is a place you can make a difference.”

Spetzler noted that youth are “idealistic and want to pick something that is going to make a difference.”

“I think the problem with health care means that you have to be paying attention and doing well in school at a time when that might not be the main focus. If you want to make a difference, you’re going to have to pay attention, especially in science and math,” to be able to become a licensed provider, she said.

Spetzler added: “Right now, there is a lot of opportunity in health care, from every perspective. You can approach health care from the IT (information technology) perspective or you can approach health care from technical (perspective), like a radiology technician. You don’t have to be a nurse or you don’t have to

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be a doctor or you don’t have to be a physician’s assistant.”

But she points out that you have to make a decision on what to do “and focus.”

Q) As a leader in the health field, what have been challenges in responding to COVID-19?

A) “I (had) not anticipated a weak response of the American health care system. I think that we drill and we practice and we think about pandemics and what to do and we never imagined doing that, especially in the early times (of the infection), without masks, without PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), without hand sanitizer. Those things were not available. So, you are looking at how do you provide care for people when you can’t keep your staff safe and you don’t know how bad it is going to be? And you have a health care system that pays you for seeing people, so how are you going to sustain your workforce? How are you going to keep your focus on trying to improve things when all you’re doing is struggling to get through the next day? I think one of the big challenges, if not the biggest, is the unknown. We don’t know. We don’t know how bad the pandemic is going to be in Humboldt County.”

Spetzler acknowledged that the PPE supply chain (for staff) “is pretty good right now, but if we have to bring everybody back into the clinic, we don’t know how well the supply chain will hold up. If we get widespread COVID in the entire United States, what happens to the supply chain?

“One of the really good things I attribute the success of Open Door to is the practice of telemedicine since 1999,” said Spetzler, who attributes the success of Open Door’s telemedicine program to her late husband.

Spetzler admits that at first she thought telemedicine was “archaic.”

“It was weird. I fought against it a lot because it was expensive, and I couldn’t see the value of it,” she said. “But, once we got to the point that everything had to pivot to not being in-person, the fact that we knew how to do it meant that our organization pivoted in one week — from being entirely face-to-face with patients to almost entirely seeing patients by video. We had the infrastructure to pivot in just one week.

“We still have lots of people working remotely. I’m working remotely today,” she said. “Not knowing what to plan for next week is a big challenge, not being able to see people (staff) in person is as well. People are starting to feel the effects of not getting regular health care, so we’ll see how that turns out.”

Q) If there was one community healthy living behavior you could affect, what would it be?

A) “I think there is a lot of illness and stress that’s caused by the lack of social justice in our world and our community. So, sometimes I think the path to health is better treatment for all people. Some of that is access to health care.”

She also pointed out individuals have to “do for themselves what they have to do to be healthy.” Spetzler pointed to her own life as an example — “I’m sorry that I’m not still playing soccer. I think that in the days when you had that to look forward to, and you spent quite a bit of your week and weekends running around chasing a ball, that was very health promoting. Being outside, being active, being involved with sports. Just that one thing.”

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Dr. Ostermeier received her bachelor’s degree from the University of Arizona and her doctorate degree from Central Michigan University. We are honored to have her expertise serving our community and proud to be a locally-owned and woman-owned business!

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Proud to be
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Dr. Ellen Mahoney, surgeon and medical director, St. Joseph Hospital Eureka Cancer Program

Dr. Ellen Mahoney was raised in Monterey, where her “father was an insurance agent and mother was a housewife.”

With the help of a scholarship from a nun, she was able to attend the private Santa Catalina High School, which she says, “was an experience that launched me into Stanford. I don’t know I would have gone to Stanford if not for that high school. ... It was a turning point in my life and education.”

Mahoney says originally, she intended to be a doctor “but got immediately distracted by the protests against the Vietnam War.”

Instead, she first got a degree in psychology, then turned around and completed her pre-med requirements, “because I’d actually decided I really did want to do medicine.”

When she was 28 and five months pregnant, Mahoney was in the midst of the interview process for medical schools. “A lot of medical schools did not know what to make of me. I got a couple of offers, including Stanford (University School of Medicine), so I decided to stay there,” Mahoney said.

Later, as a student intern doing clinical rotations (trying different specialties) there, Mahoney discovered she was “really attracted to surgery.”

“I liked the people involved. I liked the problems. I liked the feedback loop. I liked everything about it,” said Mahoney, who also completed her residency at Stanford and was then offered a fellowship clinical faculty position at the school in addition to having a private practice in Palo Alto.
Humboldt County says that's when they relocated to half of his career, and Mahoney served community for the second wanted to work in an under-
medically overserved commu-
spent half his career working "in
also a surgeon, realized that he'd
did. Mahoney oversaw a team of
eight doctors who would "operate
day on cancer cases and oper-
all night on trauma cases."
At the same time, Mahoney
was tasked with launching Stan-
ford's trauma program, which she
did. Mahoney oversaw a team of
eight doctors who would "operate
all day on cancer cases and oper-
ate all night on trauma cases."

"For three years, I was the
highest volume surgeon at Stan-
ford," she said. It all came to
a halt, however, when Mahoney
herself needed to have several
surgeries on her back, and had
to step back from her work at
Stanford as she recovered.
During that same time,
Mahoney says her husband, who's
also a surgeon, realized that he'd
spent half his career working "in
a medically overserved com-
unity in the Stanford area." He
wanted to work in an under-
served community for the second
half of his career, and Mahoney
says that's when they relocated to
Humboldt County.

Mahoney spent her ini-
tial time on the North Coast
recovering from her back
ailments. "But," she said, "then
I began to look around and the
more I started seeing that this is
the other end of the spectrum of
medical care — from the really
elite research university side to
the absolutely gritty, hard work
of being a rural doctor."
She noted: "I was gratified
to find that there were amazing
health professionals here, and
very dedicated people. ... But,
what I was seeing as lacking was
organization, because a lot of
the health organization in the
area just happened, with a lot of
small, personalized private
drivers that delivered great
care, but there was no sort of
underlying structure."
She went on to say that it
may be OK for most things, "but
not for cancer."

Mahoney said, "When I
arrived in 2000, there was radi-
atation at St. Joe's, which is great,
and there were three different
medical oncology practices in
town, and there is the American
Cancer Society, but no organized
cancer support. I got a glimpse
into how the field was evolving.
So, I said we need to get these
people together. We need to have
everybody under one roof in an
oncology medical home model,
where a patient goes in one door,
and behind the door are all the
people that they need.
In time, and with the collab-
orative efforts of several local
physicians, all three medical
oncology practices were brought
under the roof of St. Joseph Hos-
pital, which already was offering
radiation oncology.
"When that happened,"
Mahoney said, "there was enough
money generated from various
programs that we could use for
support that we were able to put in
cancer support services, we revi-
talized the tumor board, which is
a high point for anyone with cancer.
... Patients admitted to the tumor
board can expect 40 professionals
all chiming in with ideas, or the
latest thing they've read. Basically,
different ways to accomplish the
goal for the patient.

"Cancer support services
also has an oncology social
worker and an oncology-certified
dietician, an oncology-certified
financial counselor. And we are
all supported by an amazing
cadre of nurses, some of whom
were in (local) private practices
(before merging)," said Mahoney.

Q) What sparked you to be in
the health care industry?
A) "Maybe it's an impulse
that arises in everyone, but I
just thought that 'I've got this
life' and I want to make sure it
means something. That at
the end of it I've left a better
place than I found it .... I just
wanted to make sure that I
made a difference, that I was
all used up by the time I was
done."

Q) What advice would you
give to a high school student
interested in entering the
health care field?
A) "There wasn't any other
job where I felt I could make as
big a difference in the lives of
people that deserve a break. I
know everybody has their own
justification for whatever field
they enter, but for me it was
the combination of science and
heartfelt care that led me in
this direction.

Mahoney says she tells her
staff all the time, "We want a
patient who has been diagnosed
with cancer, who is terrified,
who will feel a virtual quilt
wrapping around them of family
saying, 'We're gonna get you
through this, and we're
going to make sure you have the
best outcome that science can
give you these days, and we're
going to try to do it in the most
personal way.' We can be that
personal here because we are
smaller.

Mahoney said she's had a
couple of her young patients
come back to tell her they want
to become surgeons.
"There was something they
recognized in me that they
could see themselves doing," she
said. "... You don't have to be the
typical star student to get in as
long as you're willing to work

>>CONTINUED
hard and you get some breaks."

Q) As a leader in the health field, what have been challenges and responding to COVID-19?

A) COVID has changed everything about everything. We have had to have help from Public Health and the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) about how to keep our (cancer) patients safe. They are already in a compromised state during treatment. Unlike what you may hear from the president, it is not a light flu, it would be lethal for them. We buckled down and had to suspend some services for a while ... but they are back now, including a new lung cancer CT screening available for patients. We had to figure out how to reconfigure the hospital to make it safe. The next challenge was convincing the patients who were frightened that it was safe.

Q) If there was one community healthy living behavior you could affect, what would it be?

A) It would be smoking. Not just smoking tobacco, but smoking anything. I think that the people who use cannabis products, if they want to do that, the tinctures and edibles are a whole lot safer than the toxic things coming into your lungs. Anything you have to do to have tissue have to keep repairing itself, like smoking being a continual irritant to the lining of the breathing tubes, is going to create more cancer because you are giving your cells more chances to make mistakes.
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