



## Dear West County Health Center Community,

Almost 50 years ago community advocates and National Health Service Corps doctors in Guerneville and Occidental saw the health inequities in their communities and started the Russian River Health Center and Occidental Area Health Center to ensure their neighbors would have access to comprehensive health care. From that community spirit West County Health Centers was born.

In 2022, living within our communities, seeing each other through a lens of equity, and valuing the most vulnerable among us has never been more important. I am grateful for your continued partnership and am incredibly proud of the deep and meaningful work our staff and partners do every day. Here are some highlights from our many projects and services in 2022:

### Health Center of the Future — The New Russian River Health and Wellness Center

On December 26th, 2015, after serving the community for 42 years, the Russian River Health Center burned down, creating a severe disruption in our medical and behavioral health services and a loss of our dental services in the lower Russian River area. Out of this crisis, we had the opportunity to be purposeful in building a physical space that supports a vision for a transformed primary care delivery model.

Opened in August 2022, the new Russian River Health and Wellness Center campus includes a three-story OSHPD-3 compliant medical, dental, and behavioral health facility located on 1.8 park-like acres in Guerneville. Completing this transformative project creates a beautiful healing space as an enduring community benefit. It is a testimony to the vision and hard work of so many people, organizations, partners, and donors.

*“Many in our community have struggled to access dental care since the COVID-19 pandemic. With the opening of the new Russian River Health and Wellness Center, we are thrilled to bring dental care back into Guerneville - proactively and strategically removing barriers to comprehensive health and dental care for our local communities.”*

**- Dr. David Thai, Dental Director**

### Resiliency Center as a Space for Community Collective Action

Addressing complex, entrenched issues within the lower Russian River area, such as homelessness, intergenerational trauma, addiction, access to critical services, poverty, and education attainment are critical to the health of our community. This type of work requires deepening of existing partnerships and the forging of new ones. We are excited to offer our new Resiliency Center, with its two large meeting rooms located on the new Russian River Health and Wellness Center property, as a space for organizations or community groups who are working for the community good within the lower Russian River, to meet free of charge. Offering this space as a community benefit is in keeping with our origin story and we hope will provide a catalyst for innovation and transformation together.

### Supporting our Young People in our Schools

We are drawn to the unique and profoundly important needs of our young people, particularly as we emerge from the COVID pandemic. We feel strongly that our young people are best served in their own environment and are essential in identifying needs and participating in the co-design of our services. It has been deeply

touching to witness the transformation within our staff, school faculty, and families as our young people gain meaningful access to behavioral health, addiction treatment, harm reduction services, peer-led support and as we create a bridge to supportive services for parents and family members who struggle with many of the same issues—all within the school environment. I am eager to continue this work within our schools and deepen the many community partnerships focused on supporting the families within the West County

### **LGBTQ+ and Transgender Equality**

Gender Affirming Primary and Specialty Care, including medical and behavioral health for all ages, is a priority for WCHC and is aligned with our mission to reduce barriers to health care and health disparities. We are proud to provide a wide variety of services, including individual, group, and family services along with extensive resource navigation and support. Advocating and creating an authentic, safe, and nurturing environment for this diverse population requires a commitment to engage in the deep work of culture change within our organization and our leadership. We are proud to be recognized as a [‘Top Performer for LGBTQ+ Equality by the Human Rights Campaign’s Healthcare Equality Index \(HEI\)](#), the nation’s foremost benchmarking survey of health care facilities on policies and practices dedicated to the equitable treatment and inclusion of their LGBTQ+ patients, visitors and employees.

“Each week, I speak to patients and families for whom access to gender affirming medical care is life-saving and essential. It is profoundly meaningful to witness, guide and facilitate care for our patients and I remain committed to continue to develop and grow our services.”

**- Dr. Brooke Vezino, Program Medical Director, Gender Expansive Services Program**

### **Homeless Services**

We are committed to providing effective primary care, behavioral health services, psychiatric services, addiction treatment, housing navigation, legal services, and resource navigation to our chronically unhoused residents and those who are experiencing housing insecurity. Lack of stable housing remains a profound problem for many of our patients. This work requires building trusted relationships over time and approaching every person with dignity and empathy. Our staff spend hundreds of hours meeting people on the streets, in camps, within shelters, in our Third Street House in Guerneville, and working with community organizations and partners to coordinate care and connect to available resources.

### **Thank You**

Thank you for your generous support for our mission to provide health care for all. Philanthropic partnership and financial support are vital to our success, and we are grateful for donations of any amount. Please join with me in this inspiring work through your financial partnership. I hope that we can count on you to help us safeguard access to comprehensive, quality, and accessible medical, dental, and behavioral health services for our communities.

Please consider making a donation today at <https://www.wchealth.org/help/donations/>

If you would like to hear more about our work or would like to learn more about how you might partner with us, please feel free to contact me at [jcunningham@wchealth.org](mailto:jcunningham@wchealth.org).

Warmly,



**Dr. Jason Cunningham**  
Family Physician  
Chief Executive Officer