

SUMMER 2025

THE message



A Newsmagazine of Spokane County Medical Society

**Nurse-Family Partnership:
A Worthy Intervention**

**SCMS 2025
Art, Poetry and
Essay Contest
Winners Announced**

SCMS MEMBER HIGHLIGHT

Laura S. Fralich, MD



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Advertising Correspondence:
SCMS Publications
Attn: Shelly Bonforti
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509-325-5010
shelly@spcms.org

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SCMS Mission

*Serving as the guardian of community health and wellness
while leading and promoting the professional practice of medicine.*



GET ON BOARD

The SCMS Foundation (SCMSF) is currently accepting applications for its Board of Directors. Designated as a charitable organization, its mission of "promoting and supporting the development of future physician and physician assistant leaders within our community, and identifying and funding important and innovative projects that advance the health of our community" is driven and preserved by the physician and physician assistant members of the Spokane County Medical Society.

Currently, the SCMSF offers local organizations grants of up to \$10,000 whose needs fall in line with the Foundation's mission.

For more information on the SCMS Foundation, Board Role Description and Application, please visit www.spcms.org/spokane-county-medical-society-foundation

FOLLOW SCMS ON



President's Message



Across our broader local area, I've had the opportunity to attend some truly meaningful healthcare events recently that offered excellent opportunities for physicians and healthcare professionals to connect, learn, and lead. The **2025 WSMA Leadership Development Conference** and the **SCMS Women in Medicine Conference** in Spokane stand

out as powerful examples.

WSMA's two-day event provided an opportunity to reconnect with colleagues, both familiar and new, in the beautiful setting of Lake Chelan. Participants attended sessions on burnout recovery, health policy, and advocacy. Kristin Flanary's keynote was especially moving, honoring both the beauty of caring and the depth of suffering in medicine. I also valued the chance to have honest, in-depth conversations with peers from the Thurston County Medical Society, whose community closely mirrors ours, as we shared challenges to healthcare delivery in our respective communities and celebrated successes. The conference reaffirmed WSMA's commitment to partnering with county medical societies as essential allies in advancing physician leadership and strengthening care at the local level.

Just weeks later, the SCMS Women in Medicine Conference brought together women physicians and healthcare professionals for a day of CME, networking, and inspiration at Gonzaga University. Expert panels and presentations focused on leadership, wellness, and the unique challenges facing women physicians, creating a truly supportive environment for growth and connection.



Top Left, Thurston County Medical Society. Top Right, Dr. Matt Hollon. Bottom Left, Keynote Speaker, Kristen Flanary. Bottom Right, Dr. Rana Ahmad; Dr. Elizabeth Peterson; Dr. Katina Rue

Both events concluded on an energizing note, leaving attendees with renewed purpose, practical leadership tools, a stronger connection to the broader physician community, and a deeper commitment to making a difference in the lives of the patients we serve. It was a powerful reminder that through shared experience and collaboration, we can create meaningful change in medicine.

I invite you to keep the momentum going by joining fellow members on August 21 at the historic Spokesman-Review Building for an evening of networking and meaningful conversation. I look forward to seeing you there. . ■

Saima Ahmad, MD
2025 President, SCMS

In Memoriam February – June 2025



Richard E. Steury, MD
(March 1929 –February 2025)

Mark Your 2025 Calendar Today!

AUGUST 21, 2025
SCMS GMM & Mixer

OCTOBER 10, 2025
SCMS Medicine 2025 CME Conference

NOVEMBER 7, 2025
Medical-Dental Health
& Wellness Business Symposium
Watch for more details!

Go to spcms.org for event details!

New Members:
April-June 2025

- PHYSICIANS**
- Kathryn Jones MD
 - Olivia Redline, MD
 - Paula Strait, DO

Thank you to the members listed below.
Their contribution of time and talent has helped to make the Spokane County Medical Society the strong organization it is today.

60 YEARS Edward Lester, MD 08/2/1965	30 YEARS Brian Seppi, MD 08/08/1995
50 YEARS Lyle Wendling, MD 07/07/1975 Raymond Miller, MD 07/14/1975 Robert Sestero, MD 07/14/1975	20 YEARS Stephen Lloyd-Davies, MD 06/02/2005 Kenneth McCabe, MD 07/01/2005 Jeanne Ellern, PA-C 08/01/2005
40 YEARS Samuel Palpant, MD 06/19/1985 Melissa Sousley, MD 06/19/1985 Jerry LeClaire, MD 09/11/1985 Nick Curalli, DO 09/11/1985 Daniel Lattin, MD 09/20/1985	10 YEARS Jessica Lundgren, DO 07/01/2015 Stephanie Gering, MD 08/31/2015 Mark Gaulke, MD 09/21/2015 A. Fran Watson, MD 09/23/2015



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Laura S. Fralich, MD

**Works at:**

Northwest Sports and Exercise Medicine.

Specialty:

Sports Medicine.

Why SCMS:

I believe the collective voice of physicians and PAs is essential not only for patient education and advocacy but for supporting one another through professional collaboration and collegiality. It's easy to feel siloed, worn out, and devalued as healthcare professionals because of our busy schedules and the demands of our job. The Spokane County Medical Society provides a sense of belonging and offers a network of healthcare professionals who are deeply connected to the community and committed to making a positive impact for patients and its members. Complaining, inaction, and apathy about the current state of healthcare and our roles in it is dangerous and unproductive; however, being a member of the SCMS community affords us with opportunities to be inspired and empowered to find joy in our work and remind us why we do it.

**Top concern in medicine:**

Lack of access to quality care and limited choices for patients, the increased corporatization of medicine, and insurance companies driving up the cost of healthcare while denying care recommended by trained medical professionals.

Why my specialty:

Sports Medicine allows me to work with patients of all ages and abilities who want to become active or return to their activity or sport. I enjoy the variety of my clinic days and have a nice balance of procedures, too. From diagnosing and treating an athlete's skin rash, to performing a PRP injection or tenotomy, removing a rotator cuff calcification, or providing counseling about how to optimize athletic performance, I get to partner with my patients to help them reach their goals on their terms. I also enjoy collaborating with other healthcare professionals such as athletic trainers, physical therapists, and physicians to optimize care for mutual patients.

When I'm not at work:

I'm enjoying the outdoors, spending time with family, listening to podcasts, watching a game or an old movie.

My go-to activity to unwind:

Fly-fishing.

What I read:

I recently finished reading *To Kill A Mockingbird* again and always enjoy a good biography (ie Theodore Roosevelt, Condoleezza Rice, Ruth Bader Ginsburg) and am now reading more about entrepreneurship, leadership, and philanthropy.

What you might not know about me:

I was a firefighter and high school teacher before attending medical school in England.

Proud moments in medicine:

I am humbled to have a handful of these moments and am grateful to those who have prepared and mentored me over the years to care for people in very difficult situations.

Best advice:

I once read (author unknown) “You absolutely have to become ok with not being liked. No matter how loving or kind you are, you will never please everyone. You could be a whole ray of sunshine and people will hate you because they like the rain. So just do you.”

What’s next:

I am excited to begin performing ultrasound-guided carpal tunnel releases in June, which is a game-changer for



patients looking for a safe and cost-effective non-surgical option that will allow them to return to activity in as little as 3 days. Additionally, I just completed my first season hosting the podcast “What’s Right With Healthcare” and will begin season 2 in September. ■



River City Youth Ops: Growing Skills, Nourishing Families

Thanks to the ongoing support of the Spokane County Medical Society Foundation, River City Youth is excited to kick off another impactful season of our summer agriculture program. Each summer, youth ages 14–18 come together in our garden in Spokane’s West Central neighborhood to learn about growing food, caring for the earth, and working as a team. They all receive stipends for joining our program.

Our youth are diving deep into food systems and sustainable agriculture—learning everything from planting seeds and maintaining crops to composting and harvesting. They also help tend to our on-site beehives, where they gain an understanding of pollinators, environmental health, and the interconnectedness of ecosystems. Through this hands-on work, youth build real-world skills like problem solving, communication, and responsibility.

New this year, we’re also hosting bi-weekly cooking classes for youth and their families. Using produce from the garden,



participants learn to prepare simple, healthy meals and take home extra ingredients to try recipes on their own. These shared experiences not only encourage healthy eating but also strengthen family and community connections.

With your support, we’re helping young people build roots—in the soil and in themselves.



SCMS Foundation Awards \$1,000 Grant to UWSOM - Spokane Medical Students' Association



The SCMS Foundation (SCMSF) awarded a \$1,000 grant to the University of Washington School of Medicine - Spokane Medical Students' Association (MSA) in support of their Medical Spelling Bee Fundraiser held on April 18, 2025, on the campus of community partner, Gonzaga University.

"We want to once again thank the Spokane County Medical Society Foundation for the funding to support our Medical Spelling Bee Fundraiser," stated Joshua Reneau, E24 President, Spokane Medical Student Association, MD Candidate '28, UWSOM. "The event was a success with over 40 attendees! Our competitors and spectators came from a variety of ages and backgrounds. The winning word was esophagogastroduodenoscopy.

The event was a fundraiser for the MSA at the UWSOM campus in Spokane, with proceeds going towards funding interest groups for different subspecialties on campus and funding events for medical students throughout the year, ranging from wellness workshops to public speakers and extra discussion sessions about important topics related to medicine. This event serves as an opportunity to gather members of the medical community, students and non-students alike, in a fun, slightly competitive, medicine-adjacent setting.

SCMS Foundation Awards AED to Nathan Denison, First Responder of the Year



The SCMS Foundation (SCMSF) awarded an Automatic External Defibrillator (AED) to the EMS First Responder of the Year, Nathan Denison, Director of On-Site Education at EMSconnect, at the annual Spokane County EMS Awards Ceremony on May 13th. The AED was presented by Foundation board member Travis Prewitt.

The SCMSF provided the AED award to recognize the importance of EMS to the healthcare system in our area and to advance the Verified Responder Program which enables trained off duty healthcare workers to respond to cardiac arrests near their location with personal AEDs.

SCMS Foundation Awards Grant to Family Medicine Residency Spokane

The SCMS Foundation (SCMSF) awarded a \$4,000 grant to Family Medicine Residency Spokane in their effort to raise funds to attend the 2025 AAFP National Conference, a premier national recruitment event for medical students pursuing family medicine.

Due to recent funding reallocations related to institutional changes, the program is unable to access traditional travel funds to support this important activity. The goal is to maintain national visibility, attract top candidates to Spokane, and ensure the ongoing strength of their residency program—even amidst planned reductions in class size. "A strong recruitment presence is critical at this time to communicate our continued excellence and commitment to full-scope family medicine training," stated Dr. Michelle Drobny, Program Director for Spokane Teaching Health Center (STHC) Family Medicine Residency Program.

Although the Foundation historically supports investments in the community and community programs, in this case, the board agreed it's about the viability of the family medicine residency program. This grant supports the SCMS Foundation mission by promoting future physician leaders and enhancing the visibility and strength of a longstanding community-based training program. This program graduates the majority of family physicians practicing in Spokane and surrounding rural areas. Supporting recruitment at the national level helps secure a pipeline of future physicians who will serve and lead in our community.



Nurse-Family Partnership, A Worthy Intervention



Alicia Kreutzer, BSN, RN - Nurse-Family Partnership Manager, Spokane Regional Health District

Every day, babies are born to parents who face a variety of challenges and adversities such as low socioeconomic status, low social support, mental health challenges, housing instability and homelessness,

substance use disorder, and racial and social inequities.

Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) at Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD) is a longstanding, evidence-based community health program which works to address these challenges by matching eligible pregnant persons with a bachelor's prepared nurse during pregnancy until their child's second birthday.

To be eligible locally, the client must have low socioeconomic status and be currently pregnant. The best practice is to enroll clients 28 weeks or sooner in pregnancy. The earlier the referral, the better to build trust and rapport while having the greatest effect on pregnancy outcomes. By supporting clients through an individualized, holistic approach, with the client as the expert in their life, NFP works to close the gap on disparate pregnancy and birth outcomes that occur in marginalized populations due to social and economic inequalities.

NURSE-FAMILY PARTNERSHIP EVIDENCE AND EVALUATION

Nurse-Family Partnership was developed by David Olds, Ph. D, in the early 1970s. Over three decades, Dr. Olds conducted three randomized control trials (RCTs) in three different communities, to compare the outcomes of mothers and children who participated in the NFP program against a control group of mothers and children who did not participate. The original RCTs occurred in Elmira, New York in 1977, Memphis, Tennessee in 1987, and Denver, Colorado in 1994. Since the original RCT, Dr. Olds, in partnership with his team at the Prevention Research Center for Family and Child Health at the University of Colorado, continues to study the short- and long-term outcomes of NFP participants, with 14

completed longitudinal studies. In addition to RCTs, several high quality quasi-experimental design studies have been conducted to highlight the outcomes of NFP in large scale replication across the nation.

Further, of the 72 models reviewed by the Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness, NFP is one of 27 models meeting the United States Department of Health and Human Services criteria for an "evidence-based early childhood home visiting service delivery model."

CLIENT RISK AND OUTCOMES

Ongoing research and evaluation have demonstrated that clients with the highest risk reap the highest benefits and outcomes from NFP participation. Peak effectiveness is seen with clients who have three or more risk/complexity characteristics such as race or ethnicity with increased susceptibility to health disparities or inequities due to systemic racism, experiencing or facing homelessness/residential instability, significant mental health concerns, and increased risk of intimate partner violence. In reviewing the local NFP Client Risk Profile from the fourth quarter, 2024, Spokane demonstrated that 81.51% of clients served had ≥ 3 complexities, with 42.02% having ≥ 5 complexities.

NFP has a history of proven results while supporting people with the greatest need. Spokane outcomes from the fourth quarter, 2024, demonstrate that 88.3% of clients delivered at >37 weeks gestation, 94.7% of clients initiate breastfeeding at birth with 62.5% breastfeeding at 6 months, 53.8% breastfeeding at 12 months, and 93.3% up-to-date immunization rates at 24 months. All meet or exceed the NFP benchmark for that measure. The evidence is clear; NFP works!

PREVENTION IN ACTION

The local NFP team consists of seven nurses who carry a caseload of 21-23 clients. Nurses are initially trained in the NFP model over 18 months. Normally, client visits occur every other week for an hour following a general visit format. Clients choose who participates in visits and where visits occur.

NFP believes that clients are experts in their own lives, and NFP nurses work alongside the client to support their health, family, and individualized goal achievement. Nurses utilize client interest, assessment, nursing diagnoses and interventions, and client stage of change to deliver education on topics that can have the most effect. NFP nurses recognize the individual strengths of each client and that only a small change is necessary for a better future. They provide just the right level of support necessary to help clients achieve their goals, while working towards self-empowerment and self-advocacy.

LOCAL PROGRAM SUPPORT

NFP programs require the support of their community to send ongoing, eligible referrals to NFP. Locally, NFP has found that referrals work best when referring providers have a good foundational understanding of NFP to provide their patient with a summary and then initiate the referral. The NFP case manager is then able to engage the potential client in an informational meeting to explain more about the program and set up an enrollment visit. Integrating the screening and referral process into the referring staff's day-to-day workflows minimizes time needed and helps ensure that all eligible patients are aware of the NFP program.

NFP would love to partner with the perinatal clients you serve and are always accepting referrals to the local NFP program at SRHD. Please visit www.srhd.org/nfp to learn more or to place referrals. ■

SPOKANE PHYSICIAN FAMILY SUPPORT GROUP



Group support is available for physician family members in Spokane. During times of stress or crisis, whether it involves your spouse, your children or yourself, a listening and confidential ear is often just what physician families need.

The group meets in the evening every week. Its members have experience in substance use disorders, behavioral health issues and many other common problems that occur in families. Limited to physician families and their spouses.

You are welcome to come to the group as a couple or alone. Contact Carl at (509) 991-3537 or Bill at (509) 710-0636.

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SCMS Resident/Student Recruiting Fair

In its continuing support of medical education and recruitment for GME programs in Spokane, the Spokane County Medical Society hosted the SCMS Resident/Student Recruiting Fair on April 17, 2025, in collaboration with the SCMS Medical Education Committee.

Immediately following the Northwest Medical Research Symposium held at Providence Auditorium, the fair featured organizations who are hiring in the Spokane/E. WA area. Participating organizations included CHAS Health, Coulee Medical Center, Heritage Health, Kaiser Permanente - Talent Acquisition, MultiCare Talent Acquisition, and Providence.

Attendees visited with organization representatives who provided an overview of their opportunities for physicians and physician assistants, and all enjoyed hosted appetizers and beverages. ■



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SCMS “Healing Off the Clock” Art, Poetry and Essay Contest 2025 Contest Winners Announced

The Spokane County Medical Society’s (SCMS) Medical Education Committee is pleased to announce this year’s three \$500 award winners for their “Healing Off the Clock” Art, Poetry & Essay Contest held in March, with prizes generously funded by the Spokane County Medical Society Foundation.

The Medical Education Committee (MEC) hosted its 5th annual arts and humanities contest in a continuing effort to help promote wellness and social wellbeing among our Spokane medical/PA students and residents, receiving 12 submissions this year. This contest is one way to show these individuals the supportive nature of the Spokane Medical Community, allowing for a platform to engage all the schools involved in UME and GME that exist in the community.

All current Spokane-based medical residents, medical students and physician assistant students were invited to submit an entry by March 28, 2025, on the topic of “Healing Off the Clock” in one of three categories: Best Poem, Best Essay, and Best Image (unpublished original art, photograph, or video). The winning entries were chosen by the committee’s contest judging panel and were blinded to the entrants’ names and programs.

Best Poem “Healing off the Clock” winner Mitali Kumar provided insight on her inspiration for her entry. “As a first-year medical student, winning the “Best Poem” award in the Spokane County Medical Society’s “Healing Off the Clock” competition has been deeply meaningful. Amid the long hours of studying and clinical exposure, writing has become a quiet refuge — a way to process, reflect, and reconnect with the human side of medicine. This poem was my attempt to explore how healing often happens not just in clinics or classrooms, but in the still moments outside of them — in stories, in silence, and in self-expression. I’m honored to have that perspective recognized by the medical community and grateful for the space this competition creates to celebrate the art of healing beyond the clock.”

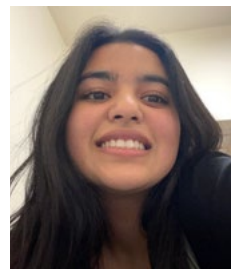
Bryce Dreslinski, PA-S, Best Essay “Healing off the Clock” winner, stated, “I am honored to accept the Spokane County Medical Society scholarship and deeply grateful for your recognition of my essay, Healing Off the Clock. This award reaffirms my commitment to advocating for the well-being of healthcare providers. When we care for ourselves, we are better equipped to care for others. Thank you for supporting my journey in medicine and my dedication to building a more

compassionate, sustainable future for both patients and providers.”

“This artwork is a reflection of my favorite ways to decompress: painting and spending time outside hiking and camping,” explained Caitlin Murray, PA-S, Best Image winner. “Taking time to be creative and get outdoors has been critical for stress management during PA school. Thank you for this award!”

“The members of the contest judging panel were moved and impressed by the heartfelt words and images expressed in all the submissions,” stated committee chair Dr. Geoff Jones, “but selected the entries which most closely captured the essence of the goals of the contest.”

We’re pleased to present all submissions in the SCMS Healing Off the Clock Art, Poetry and Essay Contest digital book posted on our website at www.spcms.org.



BEST POEM

Healing off the Clock

Mitali Kumar, MS

WSU Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine



BEST ESSAY

Healing off the Clock

Bryce Dreslinski, PA-S

MEDEX Northwest PA Program



BEST IMAGE

Exhale

Caitlin Murray, PA-S

MEDEX Northwest PA Program

Following are the three winning entries. We hope you enjoy them as much as we did!



BEST IMAGE 2025 - CAITLIN MURRAY



BEST POEM 2025 - MITALI KUMAR

Healing Off the Clock

Peeling orange slices,
She passes the fruit over wordlessly.
Biting into the flesh, we share slices of summer—
One slice, then another.
She offers, her frail fingers trembling as she peels.
No, we don't discuss where her hair went,
Amid the steady hum of monitors and machines
That drip toxic liquid into her veins.

She tastes it in her mouth, metallic and sour—

Rust and rot.

Her stomach churns, skin burns, and bones ache from the
war inside.

I know she weeps in her lonely white sheets at night,

Powerless as the clock ticks louder,

But I sit with her and swallow the bitter,

Orange juice dribbling down my chin,

One slice at a time,

Swallowing sweetness together.



BEST ESSAY 2025 - BRYCE DRESLINSKI

Healing Off the Clock

It wasn't the 3 a.m. code blue that broke me. It wasn't the endless hours of studying or the heavy weight of my OR scrubs, filled with notes, reference cards, and the expectations of those who had worn them before me. It wasn't even the stories I carried home—the ones that stayed behind my ribs, pressing into my breath long after I'd left the hospital halls.

What nearly broke me was the silence.

The silence of my house after a day spent inside the pulse of a hospital, where machines beeped in tandem with human fragility. The silence after delivering news that split someone's world into "before" and "after." The silence when I realized that healing others was so consuming that I had forgotten how to heal myself.

I had entered PA school to become a healer. But what no one tells you is that healing isn't just about patients—it's about surviving yourself. It's about making space for your own wounds while carrying the weight of others'.

Healing, I've come to learn, doesn't always look like medicine. It doesn't always happen in hospital corridors or sterile exam rooms. Sometimes, healing happens in the spaces between the seconds.

It happens when I step outside after a long shift and let the cold Spokane air bite my skin, reminding me I am still alive. It happens when I put on my running shoes and chase my breath through the streets, pounding out the stress and sorrow with each stride. It happens in stolen moments with my classmates, when we laugh over bad coffee and worse mnemonics, finding lightness in the gravity of what we do.

Healing happens when I let my hands create something that isn't tied to survival—when I write, not because I have to, but because I need to remind myself that I exist beyond my ability to diagnose and treat.

It happens when I sit across from my patients, not just as a clinician, but as another human being. When I hold the hand of an elderly woman whose heart is failing, or listen—really listen—to the single mother who just needs someone to acknowledge that she is doing her best. These moments, these tiny, unmeasured acts, are healing. Not just for them, but for me.

Before PA school, I worked as a respiratory therapist. There was a moment in my career when I questioned whether I could do this forever. Whether I could keep giving and giving

without losing pieces of myself along the way. And then I met a patient—a young boy with cystic fibrosis. He had spent more time in the hospital than out of it, yet he still found joy in the small things: the pattern of the ceiling tiles, the way the sunlight hit his bed at just the right angle.

One afternoon, I found him coloring, completely absorbed in his world of crayons and imagination. He looked up at me and grinned. "Do you want to color too?" he asked, sliding a crayon across the table.

And so I did.

For the first time in weeks, I stopped thinking about ventilators, oxygen levels, and critical care protocols. I let myself exist in the moment, filling empty spaces with color. When I handed the drawing back to him, he smiled and said, "You're good at this."

But what I realized in that moment was that I wasn't just good at coloring—I was good at being present. At remembering that I was more than my scrubs, my protocols, my ability to fix and stabilize. That healing off the clock wasn't just something I owed to myself, but something that made me better for my patients.

That moment stayed with me. It was one of the many reasons I chose to become a PA. I wanted to do more—to see beyond the immediate crisis and provide holistic care. To take time not just to treat, but to truly connect. I wanted to understand not just the physiology of disease, but the humanity behind it. I wanted to have the knowledge to address the root cause, not just the symptoms.

In medicine, we talk about burnout like it's a badge of honor—like the more exhausted we are, the more we have proven ourselves. But I've learned that healing isn't about how much you can endure. It's about how much you can let go.

It's about remembering that before we were healers, we were human. That before we took oaths, we had dreams. That before we learned how to save lives, we had to learn how to live.

And so, as a didactic year PA student, I heal in the in-between moments. In the laughter with friends, the rhythm of my feet hitting the pavement, the quiet nights spent journaling my thoughts. I heal by reminding myself that I am not just a PA student. I am a daughter, a mother, a wife, a friend, a runner, a baker, a writer. I am someone who feels deeply, who carries stories, and who, despite the weight of it all, still finds joy in the spaces between the seconds.

Because healing doesn't just happen in hospitals. It happens in the way we choose to live. And I choose to live whole. ■



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- **LOCATION:** INLAND IMAGING INTERVENTIONAL RADIOLOGY & VEIN CLINIC
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To learn more or schedule a consultation, call (509) 363-7554