



## 2009 OREGON RURAL HEALTH HERO OF THE YEAR

The Oregon Office of Rural Health is proud to present the first Rural Health Hero of the Year Award to Carolyn Bauer. Following are excerpts from those who supported her nomination.

### EXCEPTIONAL CONTRIBUTION

Though she would be the last to take credit, Carolyn Bauer has been a driving force behind the improvement of dental, behavioral and medical care access in Harney County. Her contribution is exceptional because she has willingly sacrificed her time and numerous talents to do so over a 20 year span. Her dedication and commitment is steadfast as she serves in a variety of ways, as a member of advisory and directive boards, a small business owner and an advocate for post-secondary education. Her work as Harney Health District Board Chair has allowed her to be a major contributing factor toward the new hospital facility now open in Harney County, as well as the services, staff and equipment coverage now available here. She has assisted with the improvement of dental service access by teaming with local groups like the local Early Childhood Center and Harney County Health Department to identify more effective ways to provide care. Valuable post-secondary education opportunities are now available to local citizens through her diligence.

This is a far cry from the situation found in the 1980's; at that time, serious consideration was being given to simply closing the hospital, behavioral health services were housed in a small house near the hospital and there were few post-secondary scholarship or educational opportunities available. It is not often you will find a person who combines the knowledge base, skills, ambition and forethought displayed in her determination to increase the availability and quality of care in our rural community.

Through her efforts, our citizens now have access to the same quality, services and equipment that residents in more populated areas expect, in addition to educational choices which allow local residents to pursue employment dreams, often healthcare related.

### VOLUNTEERISM

Carolyn has a strong work ethic, possesses considerable organizational skills and is extremely thorough and thoughtful in her efforts. These characteristics are inherent in her work as a Business Administrator for Burns Dental Group and are obvious in all facets of her volunteer activities.

While some volunteers are content to attend meetings, offer occasional comments and assist with a work project or two, Carolyn fully participates in her volunteer efforts, accepts additional responsibilities to meet group goals and is flexible regarding her time and involvement depending on group needs. She takes her role as a volunteer seriously and accepts leadership roles with the intent of making a difference and moving the community forward.

In addition, Carolyn goes far beyond traditional volunteerism by taking part in available educational opportunities and other activities, always striving to improve her knowledge of a particular issue, show support, or offer help. She possesses a gracious manner which enables her to

relate to a wide variety of people and has earned her an impressive network of colleagues and contacts.

### **IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY**

Carolyn's impact on healthcare in Harney County has markedly improved the quality of life for residents in terms dental, behavioral and physical health access. By growing the business that is Burns Dental Group, dental health care is now easily available to residents. Their preventive care program for children ensures good dental habits start early, while their charity care program ensures children receive the care they need, regardless of insurance issues. Her leadership with Harney Behavioral Health has led to the development of a strong mental health program in terms of services and staff. Her diligence and leadership was instrumental in helping this community realize a dream which seemed out of reach; a brand new, state-of-the-art hospital facility which opened to the public in 2007. This facility was built with no additional money from an already financially stressed population, yet provides numerous benefits to that same population every day. Services continue to expand to address community needs, while access to care has increased with extended hours and the use of a Mobile Health Clinic to serve outlying rural communities.

Carolyn also sees the big picture...how the hospital affects the community not only in terms of healthcare, but in terms of employment. The hospital offers solid employment opportunities as its payroll bolsters the local economy with family wage jobs, essential to local economic well-being. In addition, good healthcare and good jobs are critical to attracting future development.

Carolyn has been instrumental in opening avenues to post-secondary education locally for those who want to further their training. She co-founded Dollars for Scholars, an organization which provides scholarship funding to local high school graduates, was a founding member of the Burns Chapter of Philanthropic Education Organization (PEO) which offers scholarships to women returning to higher education, and has championed both Cascades East Area Health Education Center (CEAHEC) and Oregon Consortium of Nursing Education (OCNE) programs for nursing students at Harney District Hospital (HDH). These nursing programs rely on HDH to provide education and a working home base for students. In addition, she has piloted on-the-job-training programs using Burns Dental Group to assist new dental hygienists in acquiring their education and supported Harney Behavioral Health's staff development program.

Carolyn is a true believer in the concept of 'home grown' employees and has consistently and enthusiastically supported these programs for local education. Not only has she improved healthcare access, she has improved the possibilities available to those interested in higher education, as well as staffing options for local healthcare organizations.

### **EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

Health care improvements in Harney County would not have reached the current level without Carolyn's dedication & leadership.

Carolyn has always been an eager learner, networker and leader. She is someone her community has come to count on to be their hero and she has never let them down.

Carolyn's ability and leadership have been evident through some challenging as well as triumphant times. I have admired her quiet and even-handed approach when dealing with emotional community members and difficult policy decisions.

Carolyn is someone who believes firmly in the commitment to family and community and who works tirelessly to makes things better without expectation of praise or accolades.

Congratulations, Carolyn, and thank you for all you have done and continue to do!