

Dr. Nicholson accepts position in Alaska

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 17 October 2013 18:41 -

Dr. Doug Nicholson has dreamed of working in Alaska for many years.

That dream is now becoming a reality. Nicholson informed administration and staff at Chase County Community Hospital last week that he will be accepting a new position in Tok, Alaska.

His wife Rita has also been offered a position in the area of women's health and mental health. They will start their new careers in December. Dr. Nicholson's last day of service at Chase County Community Hospital is tentatively set for Nov. 14.

Nicholson first came to Chase County Community Hospital in September of 2008. When asked why rural Nebraska, Nicholson said, "I've always enjoyed the rural areas and never have been one to live in the city. I enjoy visiting the urban areas but really have no desire to live in one."

Imperial was also a good location, he said, as it is between Rita's hometown of Omaha and the Rocky Mountains which both enjoy.

The Nicholsons will once again be making their home in a small, remote community. Tok is a village of around 1,200 people, where he will be employed at the Chief Andrew Isaac Health Center which is part of the Tanana Chiefs Conference.

This organization is dedicated to tribal empowerment through health, employment, economic development and family services. According to Nicholson, approximately six area villages access services at the health center.

Tok is located about three hours southeast of Fairbanks and about six hours northeast of Anchorage.

When reflecting on his time at Chase County Community Hospital and Clinic, Nicholson said,

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“This has clearly been the most rewarding job I have had in my career. The five years have been a real gift for me and will be tough, like big tears darkness tough, to leave.

“I’ve never stayed this long in one place and it has been very rewarding. However, Alaska has been a dream of mine for years and this opportunity gives both Rita and I the chance to realize some of our dreams. We are excited and a little scared,” he said.

Nicholson also thanked the staff and community.

“From a deep part of me, thank you for letting me be a part of your world and enriching my life. Chase County Community Hospital has big strengths and a good core of people. I would recommend this hospital to any doctor who is looking for a place to practice where you are surrounded by a great support system,” said Nicholson.

Chase County Community Hospital is in the process of recruiting medical providers to replace both Dr. Nicholson and Carol Cornelius, PAC. Cornelius resigned to take a position in Grant where she resides with her family. Her last day of service is today (Thursday).

Recruiting process underway at the hospital

By Russ Pankonin

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The Imperial Republican

“We’re going to miss him,” said Chase County Community Hospital Interim Administrator Gary Bieganski, referring to the resignation of Dr. Doug Nicholson.

Bieganski said Nicholson has served the hospital and his patients well.

The upcoming exit of Nicholson and the recent departure of Physician’s Assistant Carol Cornelius will thin the medical ranks at the hospital and clinic.

Cornelius resigned recently to take a position in Grant where she resides with her family.

That leaves Dr. Jon Richman and P.A.s Jodi Spady and Brandy Hanes to cover the patient load at the clinics in Imperial and Wauneta, along with hospital duties.

Bieganski said the hospital has been actively recruiting a pair of physicians but neither are available in the immediate future.

In addition, the hospital board is working with some doctor recruitment firms to identify doctors that may be interested in this area.

Locum Tenes

Bieganski said the hospital will use locum tenes doctors for a period of time to provide relief for the medical staff.

He said they have a locum tenes scheduled to cover the emergency room during the first weekend in November.

Dr. Lori Ripley, who presently works on the front range of Colorado, is also working some weekends at the hospital.

Bieganski said they are working with a locum tenes doctor who's already familiar with the area.

Bieganski said the locum could work for a one- to two-week period in both the clinic and the hospital. That would help take some pressure off the current medical staff. Bieganski and his staff are reviewing four applications from nurse practitioners and P.A.s interested in working here.

While the hiring of a mid-level provider could occur first, the top priority remains adding a new doctor to the staff, he said.

The schedule at the Wauneta Clinic could be affected, based on the hiring process of a mid-level provider.

The most important thing, he said, is finding people who are compatible with staff and the local communities.