
Confluence Health Celebrates Grand Opening of Moses Lake Radiation Oncology Center

Moses Lake, WA: Last weekend Confluence Health held a grand opening ceremony to officially open the doors at the new Moses Lake Radiation Oncology Center. The new facility – which is anticipated to be under its \$14.8 million budget at project close – is the fulfillment of many years of advocacy and effort to care for cancer patients in the region and was a top priority that had been in the works for several years.

“This new facility will help patients undergoing radiation therapy, who previously would have needed to travel to Wenatchee, Spokane, or other locations for treatment, to get their needed care closer to home and their support network of families and friends,” remarked Dr. Andrew Jones, CEO of Confluence Health. “We are so excited to be able to offer this state-of-the-art care right in the Columbia Basin.”

The grand opening was possible due to the efforts of many groups working together, including many in the area it will serve, helping this to truly be a community-minded project. Founded in 2000 as the Moses Lake Cancer Foundation, the Columbia Basin Cancer Foundation focuses on providing services and support for cancer patients in both Grant and Adams County. The Confluence Health Foundation and Columbia Basin Cancer Foundation began partnering on the Your Local Cancer Care campaign in 2018. Since then, donors from throughout the region contributed \$3.5 million dollars towards the cost of the radiation treatment center.

Additionally, through the efforts of Washington State Sen. Judy Warnick (13th Legislative District), Rep. Alex Ybarra (13th Legislative District), and Rep. Mike Steele (12th Legislative District) who championed the project, a state grant was also secured for the facility. \$1.2 million in grant funding has already been allocated in an initial installment and current efforts are being finalized to hopefully bring the final amount to a total of \$3.7 million in state grants. Efforts by Rep. Steve Tharinger (24th Legislative District) were also crucial in getting the state grant into the capital budget and the support from the Washington State Legislature was important to the project’s success. To support this goal and bring the latest in treatment to the area, Confluence Health also agreed to contribute the remaining funding required towards the new treatment center last year.

“Our vision was to create a space prioritizing patient well-being and meeting top construction standards,” commented Brent Witt, project management office (PMO) program manager with Confluence Health and lead on the project. “With our dedicated team and trusted partners, we’ve turned this into a symbol of unwavering commitment to exceptional care for our patients and community, and we are immensely proud to have played a part in this project.”

A dream in the works for many years, the grand opening was a festive event with many donors, staff, and leaders getting to see the results of their long collaboration. After the guests arrived and greeted each other, several leaders involved in the project gave speeches, including Confluence Health CEO Dr. Andrew Jones, Confluence Health Foundation vice president and executive trustee Abel Noah, Columbia Basin Cancer Foundation volunteer board president Dr. Michael Graham, Columbia Basin Cancer Foundation executive director Angel Ledesma, and Confluence Health radiation oncologist Dr. Thomas Carlson. Confluence Health staff and providers were also excitedly on hand to see the new facility for the first time, with many in the oncology department wearing colorful custom lanyards prepared to mark the occasion. The lanyards featured images of different colored ribbons in memory of those who lost their lives to cancer, to honor the living who have or are currently undergoing treatment, and in support of future efforts for care for various cancers, something this new facility will support.

“[Those who helped found the Columbia Basin Cancer Foundation] had a vision and that was to bring care closer to home so people weren’t away from family and friends. They could sleep in their own bed; they could live a more normal life and have more quality of life,” remarked Dr. Graham during the speeches given. “And that’s really the vision for this whole thing.”

“Because I was born and raised in this community, I never once doubted that you all would be behind this. Not one time,” continued Angel Ledesma in her remarks speaking to the Moses Lake community members and Confluence Health staff. “I just knew that, if we kept going, we would eventually reach our goal. We appreciate Confluence Health for their partnership and finishing – getting through this – and the state representatives for all of their help, and making this real.”

Before and after the ribbon cutting, community members and staff were invited to tour the new facility, with Confluence Health technologists and oncology radiologists on site to discuss how radiation treatment would be given in the new facility and to show the linear accelerator, a specialized medical device that aims radiation at cancer tumors in a highly targeted and accurate way to provide treatment while not damaging the surrounding healthy tissue. There was an excited buzz in the air as people met others who had contributed to the facility, had been patients, or had provided care to those fighting cancer in the halls of the new facility that would give hope to so many in the area when treatments began. Searching for their names on the donor wall, sharing stories of efforts to secure the funds, or talking about what this meant to their families to know that this care would be available close to home, the event was filled with gratitude and excitement for the future.

“This is a really important day, not only for Confluence Health staff, providers, and patients, but for all the residents of the Columbia Basin,” remarked Spencer Green, oncology service line director for Confluence Health who was heavily involved with the development of the project. “This project represents the hopes, efforts, and investment of this entire community in the health and well-being of their friends and neighbors, and we’re so happy to be a part of it.”

About Confluence Health

Confluence Health serves the largest geographic region of any healthcare system in Washington State, covering over 12,000 square miles of Okanogan, Grant, Douglas, and Chelan counties. Confluence Health is one of only two locally-lead healthcare systems in the state with the purpose of maintaining availability and access to high-quality, cost-effective healthcare services for North Central Washington. The Confluence Health Board of Directors provides governance for Confluence Health and includes nine community board members and six physician board members.

For More Information

Adam MacDonald, *Corporate Communications Program Manager*

adam.macdonald@ConfluenceHealth.org

###