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### **From the Homeroom to the Hospital: Confluence Health Honored for Student Career Pathways with Heart of the Panther Award by Wenatchee High School**

**Wenatchee, WA:** Confluence Health has been named the 2026 recipient of Wenatchee High School's Heart of the Panther Award for Community Support, recognizing the organization's sustained partnership and commitment to preparing the next generation of healthcare professionals in North Central Washington.

The award was presented during a meeting for teachers and staff at Wenatchee High School, where Confluence Health was honored for its extensive collaboration with the school's Transitions Program and Medical Occupations classes.

While presenting the award, Wenatchee High School administration discussed how Confluence Health over the past year had facilitated nearly 1,500 hours of clinical experience for students, providing hands-on exposure to healthcare careers while strengthening connections between classroom learning and real-world practice. In addition to clinical placements, Confluence Health staff have supported students through guest speaking, mentorship, and guidance in professional readiness, including resume development and interview preparation.

The organization was also recognized for its responsiveness to student needs, including the creation of a customized clinical experience for a student in the Medical Assistant II class who required an alternative placement. That opportunity helped the student identify a healthcare path aligned with his interests, illustrating the impact of personalized mentorship and access.

"This recognition reflects the shared commitment between Confluence Health and Wenatchee High School to invest in our community, our students, and in the future of healthcare in our region," said Cori Bautista, chair of the Confluence Health Board who represented the organization at the presentation. "We are proud to receive this award and to support opportunities which help students discover meaningful careers while strengthening the community we serve, both now and in the future."

In considering what this award meant to organization and the future of community health, Confluence Health leadership emphasized the importance of building strong local pathways into healthcare careers.

"This partnership is about more than clinical hours. It's about helping students see themselves in healthcare and giving them the support to pursue it," explained Dr. Andrew Jones, CEO of Confluence Health. "If we want a strong and sustainable workforce in the years ahead, we have to 'grow our own'. That starts right here, with students who are learning, exploring, and finding their place in this field. We are honored and privileged to play a part in that support."

Confluence Health's collaboration with Wenatchee High School reflects a broader, long-term focus on workforce development and community investment. By providing early exposure to healthcare careers and meaningful mentorship – whether through on-site clinical experiences, career guidance, or opportunities such as the [summer CSI Camp](#) – the organization is helping ensure that the next generation of caregivers is rooted in the same community they will one day serve.

This work aligns with Confluence Health's ongoing mission of providing *local care by and for our community*, and its commitment to moving forward together with partners, educators, and students to build a healthier future for North Central Washington.

**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**

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