

**The Oregon Office of Rural Health proudly presents this year's Rural Health Hero of the Year
Sharon DeHart, PA-C.**

Meet Sharon!



Sharon has been the clinic director of the Deschutes Rim Health Clinic and its only full-time healthcare provider since it was established in 2007. Sharon is also the District Manager of the White River Health District, President of Central Oregon Independent Practice Association, and a profoundly involved member of the South Wasco County community. Sharon consistently goes above and beyond the duties of her job, and excels at finding creative solutions when conventional solutions fail.

The Deschutes Rim Health Clinic is the culmination of years of dreams, vision and hard work on the part of several residents of the Maupin, OR area. Sharon DeHart answered the call for a clinician, answering the prayers of many. She dove right in and began the process of planning to provide services to all of South Wasco County, including the thousands of visitors who recreate on the Deschutes River each year. She has, almost single handedly, created a medical environment that prevents local citizens from having to travel nearly 100 miles to the next nearest source of care.

Sharon encountered an untold number of challenges and roadblocks along the way: unsatisfactory building construction, creating a tax base, meeting national, state and local mandates, and so much more. Sharon took the vision of the clinic's founders and continues to expand it. Her tireless efforts were recently rewarded with \$1,000,000 to meet the needs of a growing community – area residents will soon benefit from a larger facility for more providers, dental services and expanded lab and diagnostic capabilities.

Sharon's epitomizes the "care" in healthcare. As a primary health care provider, Sharon contributes significantly to rural life in South Wasco County and beyond. Count on her to be at the Wasco County Fair, Maupin Daze and any other community gathering to offer blood pressure screenings and answer questions from all who ask. She makes home visits when needed, and frequently works out of her home to make sure that patients receive test results, medical advice and follow-up. She frequently attends those in hospice during their last hours, often throughout the night, supporting them and ensuring the comfort and compassion of a dear friend. When a patient in Antelope needed visiting health services, Sharon exhausted every lead in her determination to help her patient continue to live independently in his beloved rural community, and ultimately obtained a grant that allowed Deschutes Rim Clinic to expand its services to Antelope.

Sharon works outside the box to serve patient needs across the vast area of South Wasco County: tele-medicine options for behavioral health and psychiatric care; in-house behavioral health care, acupuncture and licensed massage therapy; walking and yoga groups. Sharon is actively creating age friendly communities that integrate youth and elders through the Building Intergenerational Relationships Program.

Sharon has become invaluable to the combined South Wasco communities. She is a planner, a designer, a fundraiser, a professional speaker, a project manager and a public liaison. Her efforts impact the entire community, enhancing the livability of the South Wasco County Area: providing quality local urgent care near the river where extreme sports are enjoyed, improving the general health and wellbeing of residents who access local healthcare, and increasing opportunities for independent living. She is tireless and mission driven while remaining an endearing friend to all.