OREGON OFFICE of RURAL HEALTH

43rd Annual Oregon
Rural Health Conference
October 7- 9, 2026

OPPORTUNITY Just knock.

OHSU

2026 Oregon Rural Health Conference Presentation Slides

As One We Rise

How a Rural Hospital Became a Community Health Catalyst

Merritt Driscoll, MPH
Casey Bennett, MPH



Southern Oregon's Demographic Reality



10,000
Sq Miles
(Vast, mountainous rural service area)

20%
Poverty Rate
(Well above the state average)

5-Year
Mortality Penalty
(Life expectancy gap vs. urban counterparts)

80%
depend on Medicare and Medicaid



Regional Economic Impact

$651M

Annual Economic Impact

Supporting local businesses, families, and communities across Southern Oregon.

1,700+ Employees

Largest employer in the region and a critical workforce development partner.

80,000 - 100,000 People Served

The only full-service hospital within a 75-mile radius

26 Million in Charity Care



Inspiring human potential through better health.

Sky Lakes will be a catalyst for positive change, creating a vibrant and thriving community committed to transforming the health and well-being of current and future generations.

“You won’t find the words hospital or health care in our vision statement. It is fully focused on this community.”

— David Cauble, CEO



Traditional Sick-Care → Community Health Catalyst

Operational Shift: Establishing the community-focused network & Hospital Departments to support wellness where people live, work, learn, and play.

Transforming
Community Health

Winner of the Foster G. McGaw Prize

Recognizes hospitals that distinguish themselves through exceptional efforts to improve health and well-being of everyone in their community.

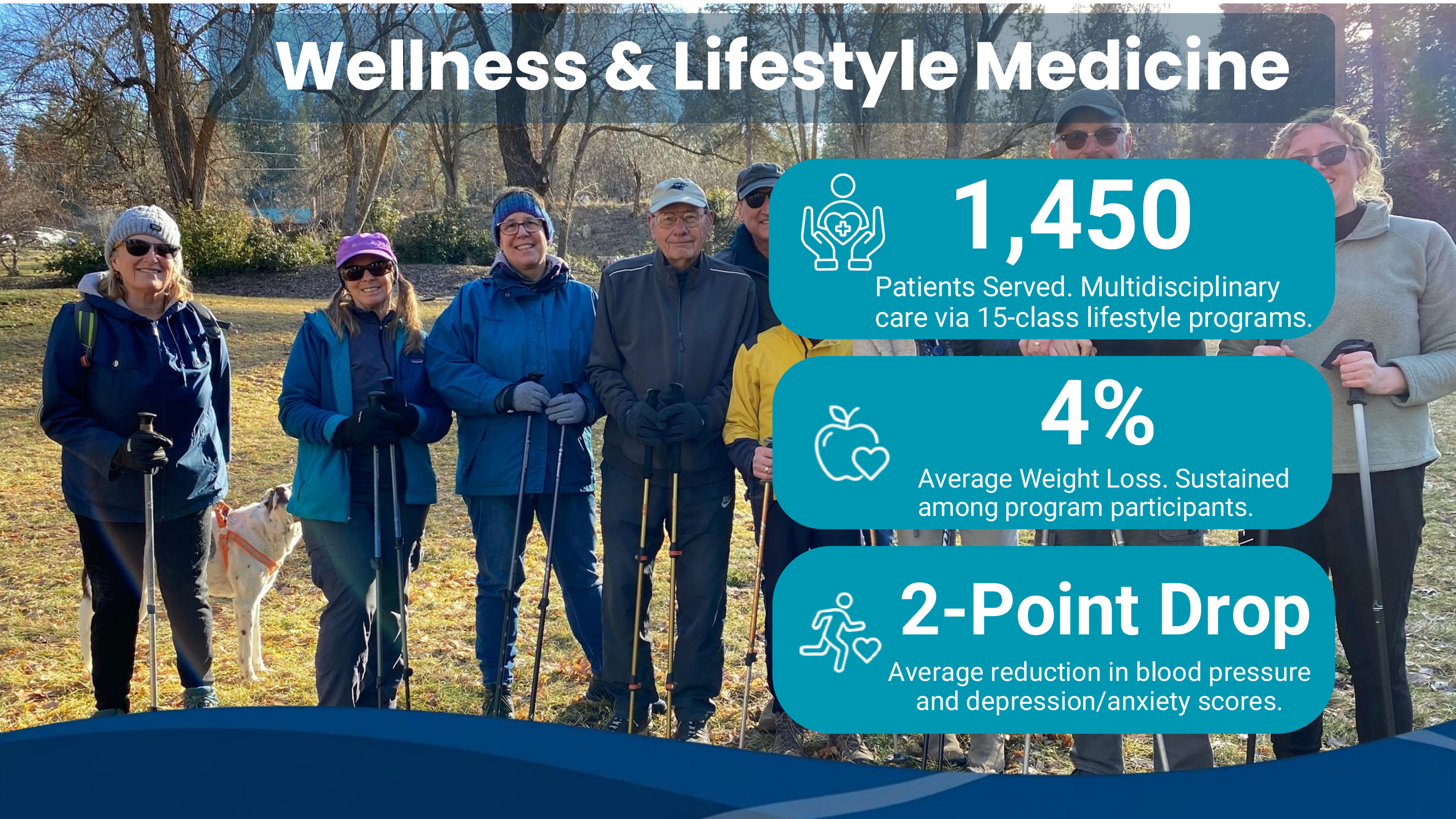



Greetings From
Oregon

The Five Innovative Focus Areas



Wellness & Lifestyle Medicine



1,450

Patients Served. Multidisciplinary care via 15-class lifestyle programs.

4%

Average Weight Loss. Sustained among program participants.

2-Point Drop

Average reduction in blood pressure and depression/anxiety scores.

Wellness & Lifestyle Medicine










“The root of what we’re doing is creating community pride and sense of place.”
As one, we rise.

Food Systems



2,500+

Youth Impacted. Educated and fed through free meal programs.

Preventative Food Pantry & Online Farmers Market

Established to proactively combat regional food insecurity.

$100,000+

Raised. Direct investment into community gardens and localized food system infrastructure.

Food Systems









Workforce Development



26%

increase in graduation rates when a student participates in CTE programs

2024 - 2025

60 Health Occ. students

2025 - 2026

150 Health Occ. students

Health Occupations:

- Real-world exposure
- Up to 30 Weeks
- 10 Units and locations
- Exposure to 20+ health occupations

Workforce Development







Surgical Tech Pipeline

SKY LAKES

Health Occupations Students need to complete the following

- Health Occupations 1
- 4 hours of shadow time
- Anatomy and Physiology (Medical Terminology)

Learn More

Apply for Surgical Ambassador position at Sky Lakes

12 week training on the job.

$15.50/hr

Sky Lakes Surgical Scholar

2 year program full tuition and fees paid by Sky Lakes

Operating Room Assistant

No Certification Required.

OR Assistants are on the surgical team. They prep and set up for surgeries, assist surgeons and nurses during operations, and maintain sterility of the operating room.

Sterile Processing Tech

Must be certified within 18 months of hire CBSPD.

Sterile Processing Techs clean, disinfect, sterilize, inspect, maintain, package, store, and prepare surgical instruments..

Surgical Tech at Sky Lakes


“This playground is supporting all ages, all different abilities and increasing access to play together.”
As one, we rise.

Built Environment & Placemaking



3.5M

Raised for Park Development



64.5%

Expanded public park access (from 40%)



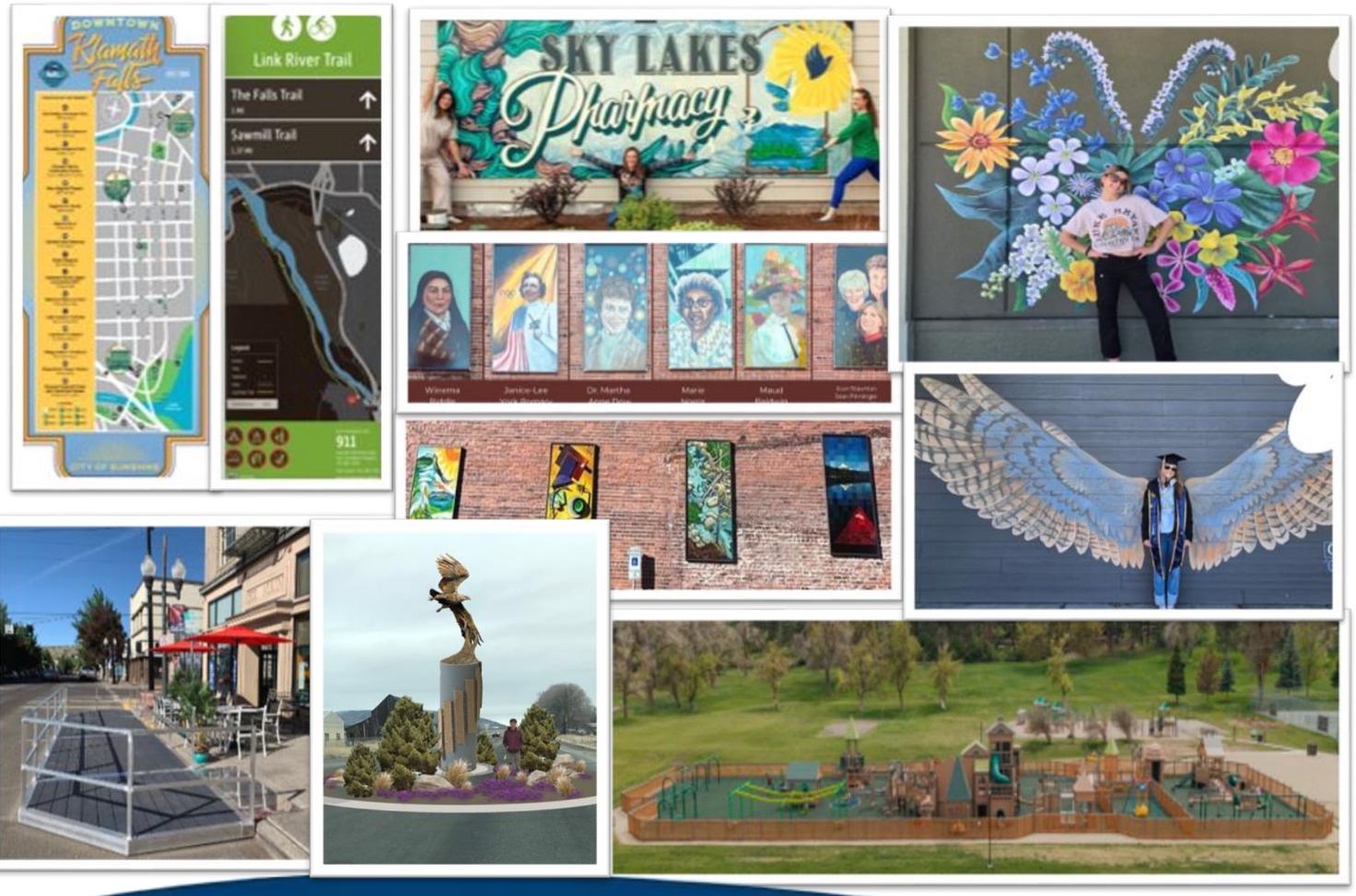
Art & Transit

Increased public art & active transportation

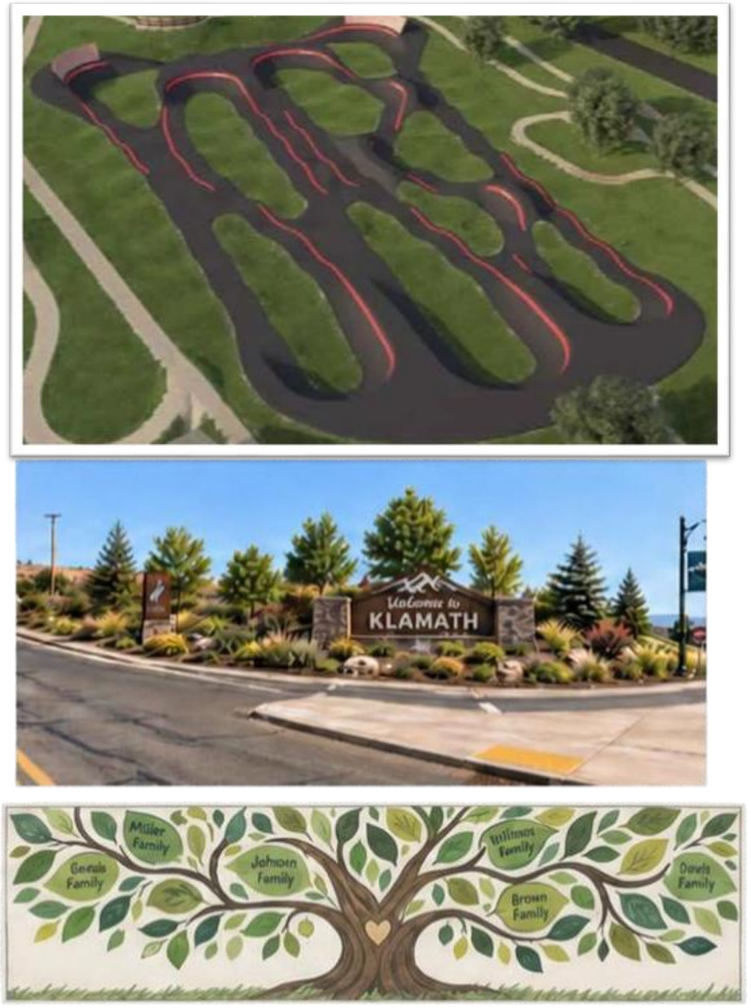
Built Environment & Placemaking



Installed 2023–2026



Coming 2027–2028



Tobacco Prevention



4 POLICIES

passed to protect the community and youth from the harms of tobacco.

86%

decrease in youth illegal sales.
From 35% in 2018 to 5% in 2024.

37%

reduction in tobacco litter downtown

Tobacco Prevention









The Evolution of a Community Health Catalyst

A decade of compounding momentum to transform community health in Klamath

2012

The Spark

Healthy Klamath Coalition created to unite community stakeholders.

2015

The Framework

Blue Zones Project launch, shifting to systemic well-being.

2018

National Recognition

Awarded the prestigious RWJF Culture of Health Prize.

2020

Community Certification

Officially designated a Certified Blue Zones Community.

Sustainable Partnerships & Community Honor

Honored with the Foster G. McGaw Prize for excellence in community service.

Intent to Impact

Engage & Assess

Engage community members and partners to identify needs

Co-Invest

Pivot funds upstream to target root causes, not just clinical symptoms.

Execute

Launch targeted, cross-sector initiatives & projects

Measure

Track community health and economic metrics.

What was Essential for Success

Rooted in Community

- Listening to community first
- Involving people from the start
- Strong partnerships & trust built over time
- Common goal of improving community

Powered by Strategy & a Plan

- Using data to inform need
- Form strategic plan/community health improvement plan & workgroups for each priority area
- Dedicated staff to implement and track

Sustained by Resilience

- Long-term commitment and patience
- Strong fundraising skills
- Adaptability
- Sharing the stories & successes



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