Back in the Game
A Raider Relationship

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Since beginning my work at Asante Ashland Community Hospital in September, I have been impressed by the breadth and the excellence of services and the high level of caring and commitment. I have learned that this hospital reflects both the Ashland–Talent area’s sophistication and also the community’s warmth and hometown style of caring.
Our hospital was founded more than 100 years ago, and the underlying passion to provide exceptional care has never wavered, even as economic realities caused uncertainty. Now that uncertainty is gone. Our hospital came under the local Asante umbrella in August, creating fiscal stability and strength as well as numerous advantages for our patients and employees.

The affiliation will help us maximize our commitment to using best practices and provide depth and talent to our already strong base of medical expertise. In addition, Asante plans to make significant capital improvements over the next three years, bringing even more benefits to the Ashland–Talent community.

You can continue to receive most of your personalized medical care close to home, as our medical staff continues to do what they do so well. But when certain technologies and treatments are required, your transfer to other Asante sites should be seamless.
...we are offering something not available elsewhere between Eugene and Redding.

**Overview of Services**

**Family Birth Center**
I take frequent walks through the hospital, and what I see and hear continues to surprise and delight. For those who don’t get to see what I do every day, our Family Birth Center, for example, is often at capacity, and many expectant moms choose our hospital whether they live close by or not. Why? Because our center offers unique birthing options, including doulas and water births. It also has something that can’t be quantified: a sense of deep caring.

**Wound Care**
Just down the hallway from the Family Birth Center is the Center for Wound Healing and Hyperbaric Medicine. Again we are attracting patients from throughout Southern Oregon and Northern California because we are offering something not available elsewhere between Eugene and Redding.

Hyperbaric medicine uses oxygen saturation to heal wounds that don’t respond to traditional treatments. Bill Feagin, director of wound care, credits his nursing staff with “making a real difference in patients’ lives.”

**Surgical Services**
Our hospital’s surgery department was an eye-opener. Did you know that our Retinal/Vitreal Surgical Facility is the only one in Southern Oregon? Or that orthopedic surgeons practicing here are leaders in their subspecialties, including hip replacements and arthroscopic knee, shoulder, and spinal surgeries?

Eye, general, plastic, and reconstructive surgeries have been growing at our hospital, and orthopedic and retinal surgeries continue to be mainstays.

Rod Malone, RN, BSN, director of surgery, is proud of his team, which was instrumental in earning high ratings for surgical services from DNV Healthcare Inc., a hospital accreditation provider.

Malone told me that his surgical team “has the perfect balance to get the job done while still connecting with the patient. By doing the right thing, always, we make a difficult time more comfortable.”
Diagnostic Imaging/Radiology Center

The full-service aspect of our hospital hit home when I visited our Diagnostic Imaging/Radiology Center. Patients get needed tests and routine screenings with less stress and shorter waiting time without having to leave the community. They also have convenient local access to advanced imaging:

- Virtual colonoscopy
- Coronary calcium screening
- Echocardiography
- MRI (on location at Siskiyou Imaging)

Diagnostic Imaging/Radiology Center Director Rob Hibner, RT(R)(CT), reports that his department has streamlined its process from 39 to 12 steps, making visits easier for patients and more efficient for staff. Processes are focused on patient-centered care to minimize waiting and travel within the hospital.

Hibner says that patients are the real winners in our alliance with Asante. “They are getting an instant connection to specialists, electronic health records, well-defined paths of care, and many other benefits.”

It is gratifying to be part of a hospital team that cares so deeply about its community. Medical and operational excellence existed here long before we became part of Asante, and medical and support staffs take great pride in what they have created.

From what I have seen and heard, staff commitment to continuous improvement in patient care and outcomes dovetails perfectly with the benefits of our alliance with Asante. Better together is more than a slogan; it’s a reality.
“Right away I knew what had happened,” says Hines. “In high school I injured my knee and tore the ACL [anterior cruciate ligament], MCL [medial collateral ligament], and meniscus. This felt like the same thing.”

It did not take long for Hines’s self-diagnosis to be confirmed. Hal Townsend, MD, orthopedic surgeon and partner at Ashland Orthopedic Associates, just happened to be on his usual perch at Raider home games—on the sidelines next to Yukio Kodaka, SOU’s athletic trainer. Dr. Townsend and Kodaka were at Hines’s side in a heartbeat and assisted him off the field.

Dr. Townsend is the physician for all SOU athletic teams. He has occupied that rewarding but unpaid volunteer post since August 1990, when he arrived in Ashland fresh off a prestigious one-year sports medicine fellowship, serving as a team doctor for the Los Angeles Dodgers, Lakers, Kings, Rams, and Angels. This was after earning his medical degree from Harvard University and completing his residency at Stanford University.

Dr. Townsend describes the fellowship year from his exam room, which is ringed with autographed photos from those days. But being doctor to the Big Boys of Sport didn’t turn his head.

“I had an opportunity to work for the NBA [National Basketball Association] after the fellowship,” he says. “But I wanted to live and practice in a small
Living with Joint Pain?
Be Active Again

Do you want to learn more about the reasons for your pain? Learn about the anatomy of the hip and the knee, the causes of joint pain, and the treatment options available through Asante Ashland Community Hospital.

Presented by: Guenther Knoblich, MD
Ashland Orthopedic Associates

6 p.m. | Thursday, January 16
Ashland Public Library

Please call (541) 789-3515 or visit asante.org/classes-events to register.

“Having been part of the top hospitals at Harvard and Stanford, I can honestly say that the quality of care at our hospital is comparable,” says Dr. Townsend. “The hospital has provided me with state-of-the-art equipment for the surgeries I perform, which are mostly outpatient. I feel that what truly sets us apart, however, is the personal touch we provide to those who trust us with their care. The people really care and take pride in what they do.”

So does Dr. Townsend, and he often visits athletic practices to make sure his patients are healing and not risking re-injury. He checked up on Hines, as well as other previously injured Raiders, at a recent practice.

“I am doing great,” says Hines. “I healed better than I did with the high school injury, and I have to believe it’s because I had a top surgeon and supereffective physical therapy, plus I worked really hard to get back in the game.”

Raider Coach Craig Howard does not doubt that Dr. Townsend makes a profound difference with his and other Raider teams. “In 40 years of coaching football, I have never seen a better sports doctor,” says Howard. “He knows what he’s doing and he cares.”

“I wanted to live and practice in a small community, and we were fortunate enough to choose Ashland. I enjoy SOU more than I ever did the Lakers. I see young athletes with a pure love of sports, and it is a beautiful thing.”
A national trend away from medical students choosing family medicine and another showing family practice doctors giving up obstetrics seem odd and sad to Miriam Soriano, MD.

“There were 12 physicians delivering babies in Ashland when I first came here 25 years ago,” she says. “Now there are just four, plus La Clinica docs. I would never give up delivering babies because I love it so much. That is what gives me energy.”

Dr. Soriano delivers babies at the Asante Ashland Community Hospital Family Birth Center, where she has welcomed newcomers to the world since 1989.

“Pregnancy is not an illness, so we don’t treat it as such,” she explains. “We try to do everything as naturally as possible without intervention.”

Caring across the generations has become Dr. Soriano’s happy reality, as she is now delivering the babies of women whom she delivered two decades ago.

“Three mothers even named their baby girls Miriam after me,” she says. “What an honor!”

“Dr. Soriano visits with generations of those she delivered. Left to right: Meadow (soon to have her own baby delivered by Dr. Soriano) and Miriam (named after Dr. Soriano) with her daughter Ava.”

“There is a lot to be said for continuity of care,” says Dr. Soriano. “If an OB/GYN delivers a baby, she may not see the mother again until her next pregnancy. In family practice I know the circumstances of a birth, of a child growing up, and the adult whom the child becomes. If I am lucky, I will get to deliver another baby into a family I have come to know and care about.”

Dr. Soriano arrived in the Rogue Valley in 1989 and began practicing primary care at what was then La Clinica del Valle, now La Clinica. She opened her Ashland practice in 1992 and has been treating families ever since.

“Delivering babies is rewarding,” she says. “I create a close bond with my patients—the moms—and then their children. I often hear my moms tell their children, ‘Dr. Soriano is the first person who ever touched you.’ That makes me smile.”

Something else makes Dr. Soriano smile: knowing that so long as she is delivering babies, moms will continue to have a strong voice in childbirth.

“Ashland’s Family Birth Center will always be a place where you can have your baby your way!” she says.
Expectant mothers wanting birthing options would do well to check out the Family Birth Center at Asante Ashland Community Hospital.

“I can honestly say that we have no set routine,” says Lorraine Florio, RN, CNM, MS, the hospital’s director of obstetric services and a staunch advocate for mothers-to-be having a say in their own birth experiences.

“We were Oregon’s first hospital-based alternative birth center, and we are still in the forefront, I believe,” says Florio. “Ensuring safety is our only hard-and-fast rule. We encourage women to make a detailed birth plan, and then we abide by it as closely as possible.”

Babies may be delivered by one of eight doctors with hospital privileges or by a certified nurse-midwife with privileges. The Family Birth Center has six labor, delivery, recovery, and postpartum rooms, where families reside for the duration of their stay.

“Because the unit is small, it is easier for us to provide personalized care,” says Florio. “We also have a highly engaged staff of nurses, nurse’s aides, and doulas committed to helping moms have the birth experience they want.”

Florio says that the Family Birth Center attracts families from as far away as Lakeview, Brookings, Yreka, Klamath Falls, and numerous other communities in Asante’s nine-county service area.

Birth Plan Options
Preferences in birth plans include but are not limited to the following:

- Natural childbirth, labor, and delivery free from medication and medical intervention.
- The presence of a doula, a nonmedical birth coach, who assists the mother during labor and birth. A hospital-provided or privately contracted doula may be at the mother’s side along with the father and other family members or friends.
- Water birth—the process of giving birth in a tub of warm water. The theory is that because the baby has been in the amniotic fluid sac for nine months, birthing into warm water is gentler for the baby and less stressful for the mother. The hospital has two rooms equipped with tubs specifically for water births.
- Massage before, during, or after labor and delivery. The hospital staff includes massage therapists.

For more information on having your baby at Asante Ashland Community Hospital’s Family Birth Center, call (541) 201-4210.
Lissa Bekefi, RN, is describing to a visitor why she loves her job as the wound care coordinator and a nurse at Asante Ashland Community Hospital’s Center for Wound Healing and Hyperbaric Medicine when a colleague interrupts.

“He wants you,” says Tracey Caldwell, RN, of a patient awaiting treatment. “No one else will do.” Bekefi excuses herself and returns in 10 minutes with a story.

“This is an intimate clinic,” she explains. “We may see a chronic patient for years. Some develop preferences. It could have easily been another nurse. Some have few choices in life, and we honor patients’ preferences whenever possible.”

That attitude of caring and putting patients first is typical of the nursing staff at the Wound Center, says Bill Feagin, director of wound care.

“These are exceptional nurses,” says Feagin. “They are wound care experts who treat every patient with genuine concern. The Wound Center is one of the happiest places in the hospital because we make a real difference in people’s lives.”

Bekefi, who knew she wanted to be a nurse since childhood, has been with the Wound Center since its inception in 2005. She remains at its heart as the center attracts an increasing number of patients from throughout Asante’s nine-county region. The center offers the only hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBO) between Eugene and Redding. Patients undergoing HBO are placed in a comfortable pressurized chamber and breathe 100 percent oxygen during a series of treatments. Complicated wounds heal when saturated with oxygen.

“I am so glad to be here,” Bekefi says. “I am a people person, and we are able to develop relationships with our patients and see them heal. Some arrive with painful chronic wounds but without much hope, and we are able to help them.”

As for the hospital’s alliance with Asante, Bekefi is enthusiastic.

“I love this hospital, and we were up in the air for a while,” she says. “It is a wonderful relief to be moving forward with Asante. The future of the Wound Center is excellent as the demand for what we do grows.”
Q: How can I get the most out of my doctor visits?

A: My best advice is be prepared!

- When scheduling, be sure to tell the scheduler your symptoms. If they are persistent or have not been resolved with treatment, you may need a longer appointment.

- Write down questions before the appointment and stick with them. You want to make the most of the allotted time.

- If you are visiting because of a specific complaint, anticipate the doctor’s questions: When did the symptoms start? Where exactly is the discomfort? How do you rate the pain?

- Bring the results of any home testing, such as blood pressure, blood sugar, and temperature.

- Bring a list of the medications you currently take, including over-the-counter and herbal remedies.

- Bring a trusted person to the appointment to take notes and keep you on track.

- Tell the truth. Don’t try to hide symptoms, even if you are nervous about what they may mean.

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The Spirit of Giving
Asante is a mission-driven, not-for-profit health system created by and for the people of Southern Oregon and Northern California. To support the work of Asante, Asante Ashland Community Hospital, Asante Rogue Regional Medical Center, Asante Three Rivers Medical Center, and Asante Physician Partners; to honor someone; or to learn about planned giving, please contact:

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