



DOCTOR TRADES HAMMER FOR MEDICINE TO CHASE DREAM

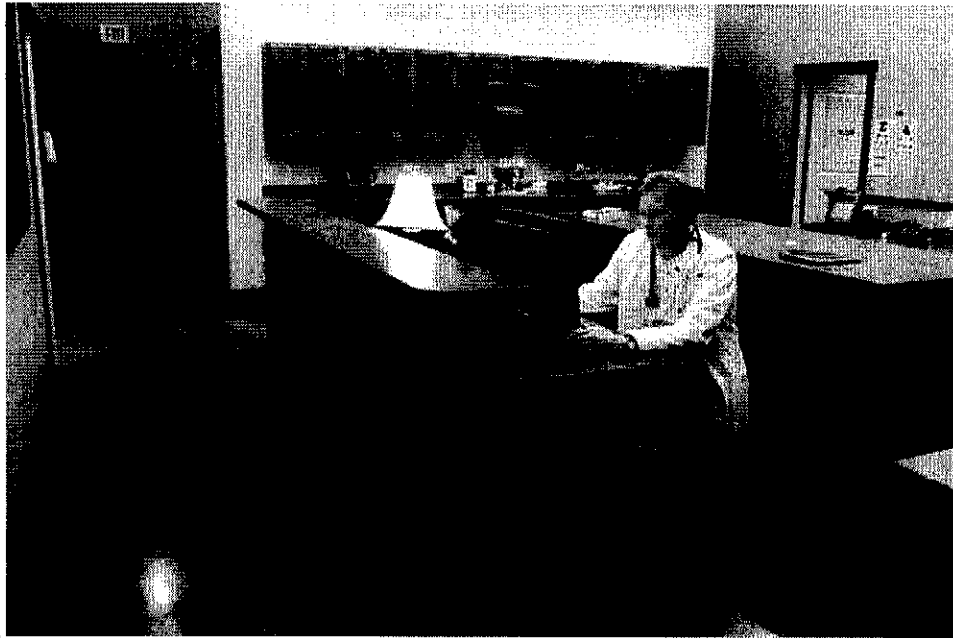
Urgent Care Clinic Opens in North Kalispell

By Keriann Lynch, 5-03-09

Dr. Shane Hill has a varied professional background – pediatrics and internal medicine, emergency room care, and construction.

For 20 years Hill worked as a general contractor. Then, at age 39, he went back to school to become a doctor. With a growing family at home, it took almost 15 years from introductory, bachelor-level classes to residency to complete the transition.

"I could remember as a child as early as 8 years old saying that I wanted to become a doctor," he said. "I didn't want to be on my death bed with a major regret."



Caption: Dr. Shane Hill checks a patient's information at the new MedNorth Urgent Care facility in north Kalispell. - Lido Vizzutti/Flathead Beacon

Now, Hill is completing another long-term goal – opening a new urgent care center on the north end of Kalispell.

Located in front of Costco on U.S. Highway 93, MedNorth Urgent Care Center opened in mid-April for medical care on an unscheduled, walk-in basis. It's independent of the other healthcare facilities in the valley.

MedNorth is aimed at treating patients who have an injury or illness that requires immediate care but isn't serious enough to warrant a visit to an emergency room. That includes everything from broken bones and workplace injuries to physicals, drug screens and the flu. Or as Hill put it: "Anything that's non life-threatening."

The center has more extended hours than most doctor's offices, working from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on weekdays, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturdays and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Sundays.

Urgent care centers first began opening in the 1970s, and since then have become one of the fastest-growing sectors of the health care industry with thousands of centers throughout the country.

Many of the centers have been started by entrepreneurial physicians like Hill who want to meet the public need for convenient access to unscheduled medical care. For Hill, that need became obvious working most recently as an emergency room doctor in Ronan and Libby.

"From an ER perspective, nothing would make me more frustrated than being bogged down with people who

didn't need to be there and have a major trauma come in," said Hill, adding that then the less-urgent patients had to endure long waits while he worked with more serious cases.

"This fits a need in the community," he said.

Hill is currently the center's only physician, though others are ready to join as the center's clientele grows. Physician assistants, nurses and office personnel round out the approximately 15-person staff.

The new building has six exam rooms and two larger procedure rooms, a laboratory and a digital X-ray system. With leather couches, TVs and wood accents, its style is welcoming – more rustic lodge than sterile medical facility.

"Our goal is to have people in and out within an hour," Susanne Hill, Shane's wife and the urgent care's business manager, said. "We want to make this as comfortable and effective as possible."

Throughout a patient's visit, technology helps expedite the process.

A clipboard-shaped computer allows Hill to record a patient's symptoms electronically, reducing chances for error and paper consumption. If a prescription is needed, he can use the same computer to immediately fax the patient's pharmacy, so it's ready for pickup when they leave urgent care. Digital X-rays can be e-mailed to another doctor.

Patients can pre-register online to save time at the office, providing necessary information like insurance months or minutes before using the center's services. Wireless Internet is available in the lobby for those who want to work or play while they wait.

For Susanne, it's her husband's varied background – from construction to medicine to being the father of their seven children – that makes him the perfect fit for this type of catch-all facility.

"His experiences give him a different perspective," she said. "He's the type of person who will tell you if he doesn't know the answer, but then work hard to find it out for you."

And while most entrepreneurs can say they've built their business from the ground up, Hill actually had the know-how and experience to help construct his.

"He was out there with a hammer and nails at times," Susanne said. **[End of article]**

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