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Western Sierra Medical Center Clinic names new chief medical officer

By: Tricia Caspers of the Auburn Journal

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Heather Lucas-Ross

While most children decide to be doctors, firefighters or veterinarians when they're in elementary school, many of them change their minds as they grow older.

That was not the case for Dr. Heather Lucas-Ross.

The recently named chief medical officer for Western Sierra Medical Clinic knew she wanted to be a doctor from the time she was 9 years old, and no other career ever sounded more appealing.

Lucas-Ross, is stepping up from the post of chief physician and will help guide care and delivery for the Grass Valley-based medical clinic as it expands into Auburn and takes over for the Placer County Medical Clinic. She will identify where services are lacking and where the clinic might expand with the goal of improving patient health.

Here are a few more things you might find interesting about Lucas-Ross:

1. The 39-year-old graduated from Nevada Union High School, but she won't let that old Miners-Hillmen rivalry cloud her care for Auburnites.
2. Lucas-Ross was the first person in her family to go to college. As a person who grew up in poverty and on welfare she always knew she wanted to help others who are in the most need.
3. She earned her medical degree from the University of Nevada, Reno, and completed her residency through Sutter Health in Sacramento.
4. She married her high school sweetheart and together they returned to Grass Valley nine years ago. They have one son.
5. The doctor will continue to spend 30 percent of her time seeing patients. She loves medicine, and being in the trenches will help her identify patient needs and connect with staff.
6. One of the biggest challenges in medical care, Lucas-Ross believes, is how to meet the needs of a growing population of insured patients as a result of health care reform.
"It's a great problem to have," she said.
Still, the new patients often haven't had medical care for years and have complex health issues that require extra time, so the puzzle is how to get them all seen in a timely fashion.
7. When she began practicing medicine, Lucas-Ross was surprised at how much time she spent, and how much she enjoys, counseling and coaching patients, and identifying barriers to health and helping them overcome those barriers....