

# Health Highlights



Community Newsletter  
Winter 2026



## CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON THE NEW CALAIM OFFICE

With the flurry of construction activity happening above the Nifty Thrifty on Commercial Street, you may be wondering what all the commotion is about. If you haven't already heard, this space is designated to be the new CalAIM office. For years, the CalAIM Team has longed for a dedicated space to provide care coordination, outreach, and patient support programs. Now it's happening, because through this solely grant-funded project not reliant upon hospital funds or taxpayer dollars — construction is underway.

A grant-funded project means money was awarded specifically to improve community-based care and health access infrastructure, which aligns perfectly with CalAIM's goals.

The new CalAIM office will be a much-needed transformation of a building that has been underutilized for more than a decade. The remodel preserves the structure and improves

both functionality and appearance, benefitting downtown Portola's aesthetics and vitality.

Once completed, the building will be a multi-use facility for the CalAIM program. The project adds a new conference and meeting room that will host public hospital board meetings for transparency and accessibility, be available for educational workshops, staff trainings, community health classes, and provide additional hospital office space to support expanding services.

Not to mention, this project boosts the local economy. Construction and renovation are being performed by local contractors, supporting local jobs and small businesses. This keeps the investment within the community while improving long-term assets for Eastern Plumas Health Care.

With this project, everyone wins,

because it also supports Nifty Thrifty's Community Mission with enhancements that help support their Christmas Boutique and other fundraising activities, which directly benefit community programs and patient care needs.

The CalAIM Team will continue to provide the community with updates on this project, so follow along on EPHC's social media channels and visit the News & Events section on the website at [ephc.org](http://ephc.org).



## WORKING TOGETHER TO BRING MOBILE MRI SERVICES TO EVERYONE

Through the collaborative efforts of four other rural hospitals that include: Plumas District Hospital, Seneca Hospital, Modoc Medical Center, and Mayers Memorial Hospital District, weekly diagnostic imaging services will be available to patients at Eastern Plumas Health Care.

Because the cost of a fixed Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) system would be prohibitive, the partnership to share a mobile MRI unit that travels among these hospitals and provides services to rural patients is an ideal solution. With this mobile service, patients who otherwise would have to travel outside the community now have access locally.

Until the collaborative effort, it took about a year for EPHC to be able to provide these services, as it was difficult to find a mobile MRI company willing to service just one rural hospital. The new company, Heritage Imaging, who now serves all the other rural hospitals, provides fully-staffed MRI solutions that for EPHC, act as an extension to the healthcare facility, providing patients with MRIs, and helping the medical providers with the information needed for more efficient care.

For MRI services, patients check-in at the clinic or hospital just as they do for all appointments and procedures, and the technologists at Heritage Imaging run their scans.

The MRI schedule at EPHC is available every Monday, and an additional Tuesday on the second week of the month.

Those interested in scheduling an MRI appointment or learning more about the MRI services should call the Radiology Department at 530-832-6516.

## EPHC'S ENHANCED CARE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM INVESTS IN ITS PROGRAM CAPACITY TO SERVE MORE MEMBERS



Left to right: Lori Cohen, Laura Lophthien, Sean Lunde, Charles Donovan, Joanna Garneau, Fayth Harris, Venissa Irwin, and Carol Torimino.

With thanks to **California's Department of Health Care and Human Services (DHCS)**, **EPHC's ECM team** is partnering with **43 Strategic Consulting** to strengthen and advance the ECM program's efficiency and effectiveness. The EPHC ECM team was selected to receive this support as DHCS is investing in communities across California to strengthen the services for Medi-Cal members. 43 Strategic Consulting is an approved DHCS Technical Assistance vendor.

The ECM team is proud to share that they have already served over 184 individuals and families in Plumas and Sierra Counties. 43 Strategic Consulting is building on this strong foundation to support the ECM team with improving its efficiency and effectiveness so that the team can serve more members in our local community!

As Program Manager, Joanna Garneau said, "Partnering with 43 Strategic Consulting has enabled us to look under our own hood and identify opportunities for improvement. We embrace a learning culture and

appreciate the outside perspective and expertise that Lori Cohen and Sean Lunde brought to our team." Venissa Irwin added, "At our recent two-day site visit, 43 Strategic Consulting came to our offices in Plumas and Sierra Counties. They helped us understand our current state and design our future state with confidence and clarity."

Together, Eastern Plumas Health Care and 43 Strategic Consulting are advancing rural health care by creating solutions that honor culture, build upon individual and organizational strengths, and create sustainable solutions to serve more members!



CalAIM Team – 43 Strategic Consulting



# AN ABUNDANCE OF AWARDS GARNERS MUCH GRATITUDE

There is much to be thankful for at Eastern Plumas Health Care (EPHC) with the latest grant award of \$203,151 from Providing Access and Transforming Health Capacity and Infrastructure Transition, Expansion, and Development Round 4 (PATH CITED R4), bringing in an astounding three-year funding total of over \$2.8 million for the CalAIM (California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal) program. The windfall of funding comes from a variety of sources that include three PATH CITED grants, two Incentive Payment Program grants, and consultation support through the Technical Assistance Marketplace. Congratulations to our Director of CalAIM and Program Manager, Joanna Garneau, for her dedication, determination, and skill at creating, obtaining, and managing these grants.

"It's really something to celebrate," says Garneau, "not just the total amount of funding we've received, but with this latest grant, only 17% of applicants were awarded and the EPHC CalAIM Program was one of them."

Funding helps the CalAIM program grow to meet the care management needs of both Plumas and Sierra Counties by expanding staff, capacity, and workspace, developing employees, and supporting the purchase of hard goods like cell phones and SUVs required for member outreach and safety in the field. A recent PATH CITED grant supports the remodel of the new CalAIM office space located above the Nifty Thrifty on Commercial Street in Portola.

"EPHC initially anticipated hiring two employees and providing care management services for up to 80 members. We have grown due to the needs of our counties and now serve 120 members with a team of four.

Our overall project goal is to expand our program once more, assisting us to reach our current objective of serving 180 - 200 members at any given time," stated Garneau.

The importance of the CalAIM program is vital to ensure that community members receive the additional support they need to be successful in managing their care. For more information about the CalAIM program call EPHC's CalAIM Department at 530-832-6622, or email [CalAIM@ephc.org](mailto:CalAIM@ephc.org).

## Anne-Claire Benoit Office Patient Coordinator

Senior Life Solutions is pleased to announce Anne-Claire Benoit as the new Office Patient Coordinator. With a variety of responsibilities, Anne-Claire will obtain and complete referrals, implement educational classes and community education, conduct insurance verification, and transport individuals that require transportation to group sessions.

Before joining EPHC, Anne-Claire worked as an International Humanitarian, supporting emergency response efforts in the Middle East, Central Asia, Central Africa, and the Pacific. She holds a master's degree in public administration from the Middlebury Institute of International Studies.

Anne-Claire is thrilled to be home in Plumas County where she can invest in the community and apply her experience in service to others through various wellness initiatives, such as Senior Life Solutions. Outside of the office, she enjoys hiking, trail running, and exploring all that the Lost Sierra has to offer. Please welcome her to the team, and for more information about Senior Life Solutions visit [ephc.org](http://ephc.org) or call 530-832-6780.



# CELEBRATING OUR BOARD



As we begin the season for celebrations and reminders of how thankful we are to be in such a wonderful community, EPHC also celebrated Gail McGrath for her 18 years of devoted service as a member of the EPHC Board of Directors. Gail has been instrumental in guiding the organization through an array of successes and challenges over the last two decades, always with the goal of providing the best possible care to our community. Through leadership changes, the COVID pandemic, construction projects, and new service programs, Gail's commitment and passion for our organization have left a legacy that benefits everyone in our District! While we will miss her as a member of our leadership team, she will always be part of our EPHC family!

I am excited to announce that Bob Duncan has been appointed to our Board of Directors to fill Gail's position. Bob brings decades of hospital executive experience to EPHC including CEO positions in several critical access hospitals. As a member of the EPHC Foundation Board and Graeagle resident, Bob's perspective will be valuable as we continue our strategic initiatives in 2026.

EPHC wishes all of you a safe and happy holiday season!

**Doug McCoy, CEO**  
Eastern Plumas Health Care District

## PROVIDER SPOTLIGHT: DR. JOHN LILLEGRAVEN



**John Lillegraven, MD**

In this edition, the Provider Spotlight shines upon Dr. John Lillegraven who joins the team of our talented providers and works as a family practitioner at the Loyalton Medical Clinic. Prior to his pursuit in medicine, Dr. Lillegraven worked as a nutritionist, coach, personal trainer,

cook, and musician. He graduated from University of Houston with a Bachelor of Science then went on to attend St. George's University School of Medicine and completed clinical rotations in New York City and England. Dr. Lillegraven started his residency training in family medicine at Stony Brook University on Long Island, New York, and completed residency training in Hampton Roads, Virginia, at Eastern Virginia Medical School, now Virginia Health Sciences at Old Dominion University. He received his certification from the American Board Family Medicine while in residency and has held medical licenses in five states.

Dr. Lillegraven was a medical student in New York City at the onset and height of the COVID-19

pandemic and was on the front lines of the pandemic taking care of COVID-19 patients in the ICU. He also conducted research on COVID-19 during clinical clerkships. On the personal side, he has an interest in helping people with neurodiversity, as his eldest daughter was diagnosed with Down Syndrome in utero which inspired him to participate in events for Down Syndrome Awareness. With an early influence in eastern medicine through his practice of Kung Fu at the age of four, he went on to achieve his 4th degree black belt and by fourteen competed in an international tournament in Beijing, China, winning a silver medal.