



Newsmaker you should know / Mt. Lebanon doctor plans to use Alaskan experience in his new job



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After completing his medical residency in San Francisco, Eric Lantzman of Mt. Lebanon wanted to go on a “wild adventure.”

He set his sights on Alaska, where he had previously spent a summer getting a taste of what he described as “crazy Alaska life” and was drawn to what he found to be an interesting health care system.

Board certified in obstetrics and gynecology, he began his adventure as an OB/GYN staff physician at Southcentral Foundation in Anchorage, a nonprofit health care organization owned by natives of Alaska.

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For the past six years, Dr. Lantzman, 36, served low-income natives of the state in areas with high rates of drug and alcohol abuse.

Half of all primary care patients he treated had an underlying mental health issue due to the high rate of domestic violence, sexual abuse, alcoholism and drug abuse, he said.

One of the ways the community is working to address the problems is through its health care system, he said.

Dissatisfied with the care they were receiving from the non-native community, Anchorage natives about 25 years ago raised enough money to buy the foundation back from the federal government. In the years since, Dr. Lantzman said, they have established a system that is engaging and patient-centered.

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One of their novel approaches to health care, he said, has been to integrate mental health professionals into primary health care. This enables patients with mental health needs to receive immediate assistance from an on-site mental health professional during a visit with their primary care physician.

A highly effective case management system also was instituted through which each patient is assigned a case manager who is a registered nurse and can provide phone triage, set up appointments, schedule labs, refill medications and handle referrals to specialists.

Dr. Lantzman said it's a thoughtful approach to health care and a highly functional system. As a provider, he said, he could rely on the case manager to be the point of contact for the patient and help manage the person's care.

In addition to caring for patients at the foundation, Dr. Lantzman traveled by plane to tend to the medical needs of the native population in the remote areas of the state's bush communities of Kodiak Island, Nome, Barrow and Dillingham.

"It was pretty amazing," he said. "When you actually get out of the big cities, you get a real feel for what Alaska really is and how the native communities function."

Dr. Lantzman returned to his hometown in May and plans to use the experience he gained in Alaska in his new role on staff at Jefferson Women's Health, part of the Allegheny Health Network.

He hopes to mirror the patient-centered care model at the new office that recently opened in Clairton, a state-designated distressed community where 30 percent of the population lives below the poverty line.

"The challenge of trying to help people take care of their own health while being challenged from an economic standpoint is something that interests me," he said. "I've generally been attracted to the idea of helping people who are most at need."

Although he is happy to be among family and friends again, Dr. Lantzman said he plans to visit the community he left behind in Alaska.

ERIC LANTZMAN

Age: 36

Hometown: Mt. Lebanon

Education: Dual degrees in religious studies and chemistry, Colby College in Waterville, Maine; medical degree, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine

Hobbies: Home brewing and outdoor sports such as back-country skiing, mountain biking and hiking

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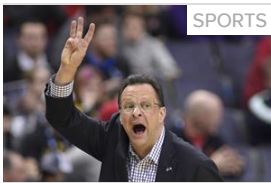
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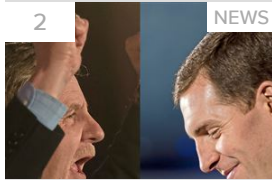
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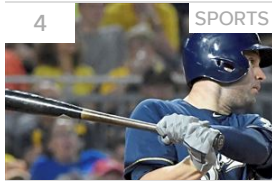
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