



Health Matters

Health and Wellness Information for Our Community



Clinic Hours

Lopez Island Medical Clinic is located in Lopez Village at 103 Washburn Place.

Clinic hours:
Monday–Friday,
8:30 am– 5:00 pm

To schedule an appointment, call 468-2245 during regular hours.

Medical emergency?
Dial 911.

www.lopezisland-medical.org/

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Are We in Danger of Losing Lopez Island Pharmacy?

Across the country, rural pharmacies are being forced out of business. Will Lopez become a statistic in this trend?

According to Rick and Marge McCoy, 21-year owners of Lopez Island Pharmacy, closing their doors is a possibility unless things turn around. “People think we’ll always be here, but that may not be the case. It’s not something we discuss with patients over nachos at a pot-luck, but it’s a very important issue that is impacting the pharmacy, our patients and this community.”

What is causing some hometown pharmacies to go under?

The problems are complicated and multi-faceted, but two factors are clear. Mail order drug companies are:

1. Taking patients away from local pharmacies
2. Shrinking pharmacy’s already modest profit margins

A short history: about 15 years ago, in an effort to generate higher profits, insurance companies began opening their own mail-order pharmacies.

Here’s how it works. Joe Smith takes medicine for high blood pressure (or any other medical condition that requires daily medication.) Joe goes to his local pharmacy and has his prescription filled. The pharmacy files his insurance claim. The insurance company (which now operates its own mail-order pharmacy) sends a letter to Joe, urging him to save money by getting his meds through their mail order service.

If Joe doesn’t switch over, they up the pressure and call him at home. (“We see you got two prescriptions filled this month at your local pharmacy, Joe. Did you know you’d save money with us?”)



Rick and Marge McCoy at Lopez Island Pharmacy

In a nutshell, while the plan looks like a win for the consumer (discounted medications), communities are finding that the real cost can be devastating: losing their local pharmacy.

Barbara and John Nason, who have been on the receiving end of the corporate campaign, refuse to switch to mail order. “The reason a local pharmacy is worth its weight in gold is because the pharmacist knows you. If there are questions, inconsistencies, they figure it out. Mail order just sends you a package. Marge and Rick don’t just push a button and pull a pill off the shelf. They look at drug interactions, they make sure it works for you, they even consider if you can afford it. They take everything into consideration.”

What’s happening on Lopez?

“We’ve lost a lot of patients; they are being harassed,” reports Rick. Insurance companies see on their computer read out that customers are getting their meds here and go after their

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Pharmacy: Are We in Danger?

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business. One person told us she was getting called several times every month.”

In addition to luring customers away, insurance company’s mail order operations undercut local pricing. With tens of thousands of customers (everyone they insure is a potential buyer), they can charge less for mail order meds and still turn a profit.

Another islander who is willing to pay more for prescriptions compares rallying behind the pharmacy to Lopez Island’s successful campaign to keep our transfer station in local hands. “Sure we could take our pickup loads to Skagit County and pay \$10, but paying the regular rate here keeps it local. It’s the same with the pharmacy. There are so many problems that are hard to fight. We can make a difference with the pharmacy. As a community we can turn this thing around. The solution is simple: shop local.”

While people may think all pharmacists are in the high-income bracket, that’s not the case for many independent rural pharmacists. “Together Rick and I make one pharmacist’s salary,” says Marge. “We would double our income if we were working at Walgreens.” She laughs, “It’s not like we’re getting wealthy here, but that’s okay. We love living and working on Lopez.”

Now in their 60s, Marge and Rick are beginning to think about retirement. “Our goal is to eventually sell the business. This type of practice is very attractive to someone who wants to be a real pharmacist, who wants to make an impact in their community,” says Marge. But a sale won’t be possible without a robust bottom line and a strong patient base.

In addition to feeling the squeeze from insurance companies, Rick explains that some well-meaning islanders may not understand how their choices hurt the pharmacy. “Insurance companies lobby people taking maintenance medications to switch to mail order because those refills are the bread and butter of any pharmacy’s business. Lopez folks sometimes say they feel okay about using mail order for their daily pills because they still come to us for emergencies. But here’s the problem: There aren’t that many emergencies on a small island like ours. We can’t keep the doors open helping folks with bumps and bruises.”

What is the solution?

“If we filled just 25% more prescriptions, three things would happen: that money would filter back into the community in employee wages; we would strengthen our ability to sell when it’s time to retire; and the community would keep its pharmacy,” says Marge.

Another way to help: buy non-prescription items like bandages, toothpaste, first aid supplies, reading glasses, lotions, vitamins, cough and cold medicine and over-the-counter medications at the pharmacy. Every purchase, large or small, helps.

Crystal Rovente, manager of Lopez Island Medical Clinic, has a unique perspective on the importance of keeping the pharmacy on island.

“When you get your medications from Rick and Marge you know there’s a real person there to support you. They go the extra mile with exceptional patient care, discussing medications and treatment options. They really know their stuff and are up to date on everything.”

“Rick is at the clinic three times a day, before work, at lunch and right before we close, five days a week, to check on patients’ medication needs. He’s the first person I see when I come to work. Just imagine if we didn’t have a pharmacy right around the corner. It would be scary. A lot of us might not have moved here without this wonderful resource. I’m sure some phone option is available with mail order, but it’s certainly not face-to-face. It’s not like the service Rick and Marge give this community by being on call 24 hours a day, every day of the year.”

New Phone System Means More Time with Patients

The Clinic’s upgraded phone system has made a big difference for staff and patients. No longer answering calls “every 16 seconds,” the staff has more time to help people directly. The system features an automated menu directing patients to the individual who can best assist them.

Tip: If you’re calling for an appointment or to speak with the front desk, it’s easy to bypass the menu (otherwise please listen for the prompts):

Press 4 for an appointment

Press 9 to speak with a front desk person



Bill Clinton, Mollie Fromm and Peter Fromm at the front desk with Patient Appointment Coordinator Trusanda Lyons.

Please Donate Today

The Catherine Washburn Medical Association's Board is the all-volunteer group that organizes financial support for Lopez Clinic, collects and manages its operating funds and works with Island Hospital to assure that Lopez islanders have excellent medical care. Because the clinic relies on community funding, it's fair to say it belongs to all of us. Please make your contribution today. Supporting Lopez Clinic with your annual membership donation and financial gifts is the best way to keep outstanding medical care here on the island.

2015 Clinic Wish List

Dr. Wilson and the staff keep a list of items that the clinic needs. If you'd like to fund a Wish List gift, please contact Dr. Wilson or Office Manager Crystal Rovente directly at 468-2245.

- Elliptical trainer workout machine for physical therapy, new or used \$1400
- Hoyer Lift for the emergency room \$750 - \$1500
- Hand stabilizer for x-ray machine \$29

Recent Gifts to Lopez Clinic

In Loving Memory

Islanders often honor the passing of friends and loved ones by making a donation to Lopez Clinic in their name. In recent months, the clinic received two gifts honoring the passing of Michael Rigik.

Sponsor Gifts

Bob & Pamela McCabe
Robert Fries & Debra Dahlen
Rodger & Margo Fagerholm
Lawrence & Mary Ellen Hughes
Ginni Keith & Richard Strachan

Monte & Candy Midkiff
Bette Shuh
Janne Spieker
Lopez Thrift Shop
Anonymous

Patron Gifts

Bob and Jeanne DiNicola
The Henry Bull Foundation

Thank you to all our generous donors!



Support For Lopez Clinic

Annual CWMA membership (\$25 family household / \$15 individual) \$ _____

Your additional gift will make a big difference

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS FUND \$ _____

Upkeep of the clinic building and grounds

SIKSTROM FUND \$ _____

Assist those who are unable to afford medical care

EQUIPMENT FUND & WISH LIST \$ _____

Purchase state-of-the-art medical equipment for Lopez Clinic

List item you would like to purchase _____

RESERVE FUND \$ _____

Available for capital improvements or emergency needs

ENDOWMENT FUND \$ _____

Provide perpetual income for funding major capital improvements

Total tax deductible donation (credit card payment or checks to CWMA; no cash please) \$ _____

☐ Please check here if you'd like your donation to be anonymous

Name _____ Address _____

City/State/Zip code _____

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard# _____ Exp. date _____ Billing zip code _____

Please mail to CWMA • P.O. Box 309 • Lopez Island, WA 98261

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Catherine Washburn Medical Association
P.O. Box 309 • Lopez, WA 98261



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Suicide Prevention: What to Do When Someone is in Trouble

While we'd all like to believe that the quiet pace of island life insulates us from the world's more serious problems, San Juan County Sheriff Ron Krebs says that isn't so. Most problems found on the mainland exist here, too.

Suicide is one. In 2013, county deputies responded to 18 reported suicide attempts, one of which resulted in suicide. In 2014, there were 16 calls and one suicide. The numbers are significant.

According to Sheriff Krebs, the best way to help a struggling friend or family member is to pay attention to warning clues and get help before an attempt takes place. "Most friends and family look back and say, 'I saw that coming, I should have known.' Hindsight is always 20/20. My advice is: *Don't wait.*"

What You Can Do

"Call 911," counsels the sheriff. While dialing 911 may seem like an over-reaction when we're unsure of a friend's intent, that is definitely the best number to call. "Responding to this kind of call is our number one priority. We will go by and do a welfare check. The sooner we get there, the better the chances are that a problem will be avoided. *Your call will be completely anonymous.* No names given. Basically we go to the home, tell the individual that someone is concerned about them and that we're there to check in, have a conversation, and get them help if they

need it. We have excellent resources: the hospital, AA sponsors, Compass Health for mental health. Most folks who are suicidal are looking for help. When we show up, it's usually a breath of fresh air for them."

"The most important advice I can give is this: if that little voice in the back of your head is talking to you, listen to it. In my experience, it's right 100% of the time. If someone gives you the feeling that they may commit suicide, don't ignore them. Give us a call, that's exactly what we're here for."

Suicide Warning Signs

- Increased alcohol consumption (most of the time, drinking is involved)
- Lifestyle changes: loss of a job or a partner, financial stress, running out of money
- Depression, withdrawal from friends and family
- A sense of hopelessness, lack of interest in day-to-day activities

People considering suicide may:

- Begin giving away their most valued possessions, including their pets
- Talk or write about death or harming themselves: "I hope someone takes care of my kids when I'm gone..."
- Seek weapons or drugs to use for attempt