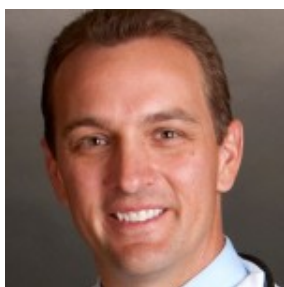


Opinion: A healthier Lake Tahoe community

By Clint Purvance

This week, June 4-10, is Community Health Improvement Week. It is a national celebration to recognize the work and efforts of health professionals to improve their community's health.

One thing you will hear from Barton Health professionals is that improving the health and wellness in our community takes collaboration and commitment. This can be seen in the actions taken in the last two years to address South Lake Tahoe's most pressing health concerns.



Clint Purvance

The top three concerns identified in the 2012 and 2015 Community Health Needs Assessment were mental health, substance abuse, and access to care issues. This assessment, one of the requirements from the Affordable Care Act, is not only a comprehensive report, but also an action plan to help our community members who need it most.

Here are some of the highlights of progress:

Access to Care – Two-Year Highlights

- Expanded the Barton physician directory to include community health resources.
- Increased the number of Mommy & Me classes and Daddy

Bootcamp classes offered to new parents.

- Expanded Barton Community Health Center hours to include same day appointments and Saturday availability.
- Through the UC Davis Cancer Care Network and in collaboration with the Gene Upshaw Memorial Tahoe Forest Cancer Center, patients have access to state-of-the-art oncology care coordinated through Barton oncology.
- Barton Foundation funded the Barton Cancer Wellness Program for community members undergoing cancer offering guided exercise, yoga, and nutrition services.
- Developed an innovative partnership with the U.S. Forest Service to serve patients through guided walks with medical providers on public lands. Increased our commitment to women's health by hiring three female OB/Gyns and starting construction on Barton Medical Imaging's Women's Suite adding advanced technology, including a 3D Tomography mammography system improving accuracies in diagnostics.
- Barton Foundation provided \$8,000 in grants to local nonprofit organizations to improve processes and access to care.

Mental Health – Two-Year Highlights

- Hired a full time adult and child psychiatrist providing services at Barton Psychiatry and Barton Community Health Center.
- Barton Foundation provided \$47,000 in grants for local nonprofit organizations serving people with mental health needs.
- Conducted two mental health presentations with psychiatrists.
- Hosted two community forums on mental health needs in our community with an attendance of over 75 community members at each forum.
- Developed the Community Mental & Behavioral Health Cooperative in an effort to increase awareness, reduce

- stigma and improve access to mental health services.
- In cooperation with the city of South Lake Tahoe proclaimed May as Mental Health Awareness Month in 2016 and 2017.
 - Created an annual 31 day Mental Health Challenge during the month of May increasing awareness and reducing stigma.
 - Introduced five mental health kiosks to the community providing mental health information and resources through the Community Mental & Behavioral Health Cooperative.
 - Implemented a Survivors of Suicide support group through the Suicide Prevention Network meant to help those who have lost a loved one to suicide.
 - Educated 7th-, 8th- and 9th-grade students in spring 2017 on “signs of suicide.”

Substance Abuse – Two-Year Highlights

- Participated in the annual Drug Store Project impacting 6th-grade students.
- Attended South Tahoe Drug-Free Coalition meetings and Pain Management meetings.
- Implemented education and monitoring programs of Barton providers on drug-prescribing practices.
- Barton Foundation donated \$23,000 to nonprofits with the goal of reducing substance abuse in our community.
- Hosted two community lectures on opioid use and abuse.
- Provided medical expertise for the Tahoe Regional Young Professional’s Tahoe Hall Talk on cannabis.
- Presentation to STHS freshmen class on the effects of cannabis.
- Hosted a Drug Take Back Day through the Drug Free Coalition.
- Presented medical point of view on cannabis risks to the South Lake Tahoe City Council.
- Engaged local community pharmacies in collaboration

efforts for prescription drug monitoring.

While as a community we are making progress, significant collaboration and work need to continue. Barton is committed to lead the charge in many of these efforts, but cannot achieve these goals alone. We have immense gratitude for the commitment of the partners involved in this effort, and look forward to together creating a healthier community.

Community Health Improvement Week is put on by the American Hospital Association's Association for Community Health Improvement. For a complete report of Barton Health's 2015 Community Health Needs Assessment, go **online**.

Clint Purvance is the CEO and president of Barton Health in South Lake Tahoe.