



## *Volunteers in Medicine Patient Opens Small Business*

*January 2020*

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Executive Director

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### *Mission*

To improve the health  
and wellness of the  
uninsured and medically  
underserved through the  
engagement of professionals,  
community partners, and  
dedicated volunteers.

SOPA: food to comfort your soul. Although literally translated as “soup” Christopher chose the name SOPA for its personal nostalgia, reminding him of foods he grew up with, cuisine he loves, and flavors he wants to share with his customers. A lot of things about Christopher are impressive: his size for one, he’s over six feet tall and his hair brushes the ceiling of his food truck, even as he keeps his posture dipped to compensate. His work-ethic, balancing a family with four children, school, and two jobs; and his goals, which he’s steadily seeing through as he navigates finding stability for his family and creating a better life for his children. When I sit down to chat with him it’s clear that he’s excited and proud of what’s taken him nearly two decades to create.

Christopher moved to Bend 17 years ago with his wife and one-year old son. He had already begun thinking about a business plan and what he needed to do to keep himself motivated and to become educated in cuisine. As a native Spanish-speaker, his first step was enrolling in English classes. But after his second child was born he had to step away from his education to work and care for his family. After a while, when his work and family life felt more secure, he once again began taking English classes, obtained his GED, and then enrolled in the Cascade Culinary Institute at COCC.

Christopher has been cooking all his life, it was when he was six and his mom was off at work, that he learned to cook his first dish: a fried egg. It was his dream to become a chef and he was putting every ounce of energy and time into making that a reality. But family became his core focus when his third child was born, and he again put his studies on hold. Between his education, work, and family, he would often get up at 5:30am and work late into the evening to fit it all in. It took him over three years to finish his classes, and two years ago he officially became a chef.

He didn’t expect to be able to get his food truck up and running. He now has a family of four, he and his wife work to pay the bills to make ends meet. But he had come this far through so many obstacles, so he pushed forward. He got a loan and began the final steps that would lead to opening his business. He had his eye on a food cart in Washington and as the price of the cart steadily lowered, he jumped in to make the purchase. Ecstatic at his new buy, he took the whole day to drive home...because the food



*We believe in the health of our community*

truck only goes 35mph. But as the truck pattered along his enthusiasm remained strong.

By September he found available space at a food cart yard, and after his food was reviewed by the owners, he was accepted to the space. With only a month to do maintenance on the truck, paint it, get power, prep his foods, and get his permits, he was able to open on September 30, 2019. Christopher is still growing his business, and working full time as a chef at another local restaurant. His restaurant job doesn't offer insurance, and he cannot afford it as a new small business owner, so he relies on VIM for his healthcare needs. A typical day for Christopher includes working from 8:30am to 11:00pm, his time split between the two jobs. He feels hopeful that his business will grow and provide for his family. He started it because he wanted to do something for himself, and he feels that as an immigrant, if he works hard, he can earn a successful and happy future.



## 15 Years: Our Past and Future

2004. 15 years ago. **Thousands of people in Central Oregon did not have health insurance.** The iPod had been around for a couple of years, but the iPhone, Netflix and Hulu were still three years away. Ben Husaby and Suzanne King won the Pole Pedal Paddle (and Roger Gildersleeve finished first in the 70-98 age group, a feat he would continue for three more years). The year-end editorial in the Bend Bulletin hoped that Congress would start to get a handle on the national debt, the legislature would approve civil unions for same-sex couples, the water would be fluoridated, the downtown parking garage would be finished on time and under budget and that Reed Market would be improved east of the Parkway.

We now are concluding 2019 and looking ahead to 2020. 96% of the US population has a cell phone and 86% of them are smart phones. Zoe Roy and Andrew Boone won the Pole Pedal Paddle. Gay marriage is established. The national debt is higher than ever. The parking garage is full most days and has become a familiar part of our downtown. The Reed Market improvements make safer and smoother commutes. We still do not have fluoride in our drinking water.

In the midst of change and growth, some things remain the same. We care about our community. We want good schools for our children and grandchildren, clean water and a safe environment for all. Thousands of people in our community are uninsured. If you're reading this, chances are you want access to health care for everyone. Our current system for providing insurance has been broken for a long time. Some progress has been made, but there have been setbacks as well. In 2014, the ACA opened up options for millions who could not afford insurance or had pre-existing conditions. Recent political challenges have diminished its effectiveness, and **the numbers of uninsured are rising again.**

Here in Central Oregon, we have accomplished a lot as a community, creating the true safety net of the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic. Our volunteers have made it possible for us to care for over 10,000 people since we opened. We have hosted over 1,000 volunteer doctors, nurses, pharmacists, interpreters, computer specialists, financial screeners, health educators, medical and counseling students. Between the visits and medications our clinic volunteers have provided, and with help of our pro bono partners, **our patients have received over \$100 million in care since 2004.**

With your continued support, we will remain an integral part of our community, like racing in the Pole Pedal Paddle, or walking the Deschutes River Trail, or watching the sunset from the top of Pilot Butte. At VIM, we are grounded in the spirit of compassion. That is something that will never change.

Kat



Community  
Partner

Fatbeam has partnered with VIM to provide high-speed, high capacity, dedicated and secure gigabit fiber optic internet service. This connection is a vital part of the network structure required to power VIM's new electronic health record system, EPIC, ensuring improved work flows, enhanced data analytics and reporting, in addition to



# A Farewell From Kristi Jacobs

While working as the Human Resource Director at the High Desert Museum, I received a call from Christine Winters, who was working with a prestigious medical team to establish a Volunteers in Medicine Clinic in Bend. Christine had heard about my years working with volunteers and we arranged a time to meet. I found the idea of VIM captivating and a necessary asset in our community. I was drawn to the mission and goals of growing VIM team. I was enthusiastic about the prospect of building our VIM volunteer program from the ground up. I felt confident about working with volunteers, but I had never been involved in a medical setting. It was exciting and a bit scary!

In November, 2003, when the clinic was about to open, I applied for the Volunteer Coordinator Position and was hired. I've been with VIM since the beginning and I've seen it grow from a small local clinic to a well-respected member of the national VIM network. We have approximately 200 active volunteers, a handful of whom were here with me from the very start. Our patient population has grown to reflect the diverse population of Central Oregon, and VIM has followed suit to become a leader in equity and inclusion. We are one of nearly 100 clinics across the country who compassionately care for the low-income uninsured in our communities.

During my 16-year tenure at VIM, I've experienced many ups and downs, including some devastating losses in my family. If it hadn't been for the volunteers and staff at VIM who surrounded me with love and compassion, I don't know how I would have survived. Coming to work here is like experiencing daily therapy for my soul. Every day is a new adventure and a fresh start. That is certainly why it's hard to say goodbye. These are the best people I've ever known. I have made many lifelong friends and I know we will stay in touch. "Shall we make a date for lunch?"

*Kristi Jacobs*

## 15 Year Volunteer Service Awards

We are thrilled to have our very first group of volunteers who have contributed 15 years to VIM! These dedicated individuals have left an impression on the lives of our patients, staff, and fellow volunteers. Thank you!

Judy Alford  
Susan Appel  
Ann Bruckner  
John Corso, MD  
Bobbie Dagostino  
Kathy Ingelse  
Gynis Jones

Harley Kelley, MD  
Becky Kierulff  
Dorlee Kingen  
Steve Knapp, MD  
Sharon Lichti  
Betty Marshall  
Jeff Walkup



Kristi with her husband, Rob

increased productivity for staff and volunteers. Most importantly, this service will enable connection to our community medical partners to provide the highest quality of care to patients by improving patient care coordination, as well as reducing risk through standardized work flows and offering better provider-to-patient communication. Fatbeam has made this connection possible by donating all the monthly networking and maintenance fees for the next five years in addition to some construction and equipment fees for the build and service of VIM's fiber network, totaling \$41,700.

## Board of Directors 2019-2020

**John Teller, MD - Chair**  
(retired)

**Kate Wells - Vice Chair**  
PacificSource Health Plans

**Kurt Barker - Secretary**  
Karnopp Petersen, LLP

**Jenn Welander, CPA, MBA**  
**Treasurer**  
St. Charles Health System

**Stephen K. Hacker**  
Transformation Systems  
International, LLC

**Rev. Dr. Barry Heath**  
(retired)

**Fran McCabe, MD**  
St. Charles Health System

**Erika McCalpine**  
OSU Cascades

**Roxana Ocaraza**  
Bridges to Communication  
Elixir Wine Group

**Karina Smith**  
The High Desert  
Education Service District

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*Emeritus*

**Bob Hakala, MD**  
Volunteers in Medicine

**Jim Lussier**  
The Lussier Center

**Jim Petersen**  
Karnopp Petersen, LLP

**Rod Ray, PhD**  
Bend Research

## Karina Smith, New Board Member

As a bilingual, bicultural educator working to promote equity, Karina is a valuable addition to our board. When she speaks about her work, her concern for the people around her makes an impression. She's enthusiastic about the impact VIM has on the underserved in our community and how she can help. When asked what her goals are Karina says, "I realize I'm here to serve. I help students see education as a tool to navigate the world and give back to create systems of change. The more I can talk and engage with the community, the more I can heal and help others."

20 years ago, with one year left of law school, Karina moved from Argentina to the United States. Arriving in the states she encountered obstacles formed by racism, perceptions of her accent, and being educated in a different country. She wanted to go into medical interpretation but was rejected because of her accent. Despite nearly obtaining a law degree in Argentina, she was asked to get her GED and start from square one. Karina felt worn by the push-back, it made her doubt herself. She was struggling with something she sees her children mediating today: *nebalda*, or trying to navigate two worlds.

Although painful, these setbacks became learning moments. When she was studying to become a lawyer the thought of what her life would be like in that career felt abstract, but as she took her options into consideration, she decided she didn't want to embark on a path where the people in her life were anything less than individual, unique, meaningful, and most of all, human. In the end she felt she couldn't serve the community in the capacity she wanted to as a lawyer.

Karina began to develop a sense of personal responsibility for educating her community in cultural competence and equity. She wants to make sure the next generation doesn't have to face the same challenges she faced, so she started a career in social services. When Karina moved to Central Oregon 13 years ago she used her skills to teach language and culture, worked for DHS, and was drawn more and more to education. When she worked at DHS she was engaged in each individuals' environment and saw the impact of her work taking effect. The question she always asks herself is, "how can we engage with human beings in a way that allows us to connect on a deeper level? How can we listen and learn what their life is like and what their needs really are?"

Karina has noticed that white communities are engaging more with communities of color, they are beginning to listen. "It has been empowering to give the people a voice and to validate that voice and bring it to action." There's a need to redesign the barriers currently in place, there's a growing intention to do so, and Karina means to be on the forefront of this transformation.

Karina joined the VIM board in January and is currently working as the Director of Regional Migrant Education Services at The High Desert Education Service District and obtaining her doctorate in education.

