

An Annual Report to the RCMS Community

A photograph of a lighthouse on a cliff at sunset. The lighthouse is illuminated, and the sky is a mix of orange and blue. The ocean is visible in the foreground.

# Meeting the Challenge of Change

Fiscal Year 2020 – 2021

Where We've Been.  
Where We Are.  
Where We're Heading...

**Hello Friends, Neighbors  
and Community Partners . . .**

**F**orty-two years have passed since Redwood Coast Medical Services opened its doors in Stewarts Point in 1979. During these more-than-four decades, RCMS moved to Gualala, expanded to Point Arena with medical and dental services, and established Urgent Care services.

In more recent history, RCMS faced a major financial emergency in 2019 that almost closed our clinic doors. This challenge was met, however, by phenomenal community leadership, support, and fundraising, coupled with teamwork among RCMS providers and staff determined to continue providing high quality patient services regardless of fiscal uncertainty and the emergence of Covid-19.

**F**iscal year 2020 – 2021, completed June 30th, saw further stabilization and improvement in the clinic's financial health. We ended the year operationally in the black – and with about \$3 million in operating cash – thanks to Covid-19-related grants and generous donors who contributed over \$1 million. Throughout the year, our staff continued to work heroically.

Other achievements during the past year included restoring Behavioral Health services, administering over 9,500 vaccine doses, continuing patient satisfaction with Urgent Care, implementing an employee-satisfaction survey, and adding financial contributions to employee retirement plans. Providers

and staff operations contributed significantly to all these accomplishments.

Like most Mendonoma institutions and businesses, RCMS continues to struggle to recruit staff at all levels, due in major part to the low availability and high costs of housing in the coastal area – not to mention the most obvious test of our collective fortitude, that Covid-19 is still with us.

**D**espite the present challenges, however, we are positioning for the future. This current fiscal year, 2021–2022, we are focusing on our staffing, technology, and facility requirements, as well as improving patient services and communications.

We at RCMS very much appreciate the support you've provided to enable us to negotiate these difficult times.

*Stay tuned,  
Ara Chakrabarti, CEO, & Leslie Bates, BoD Chair*



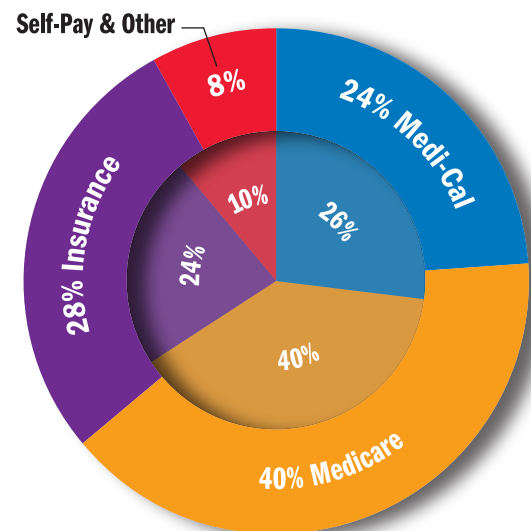
*“RCMS doctors have made diagnoses and referrals that have improved my quality of life and increased my longevity.”  
—Susan Levenson-Palmer  
Manchester/Irish Beach*

# Financial & Operational Matrices

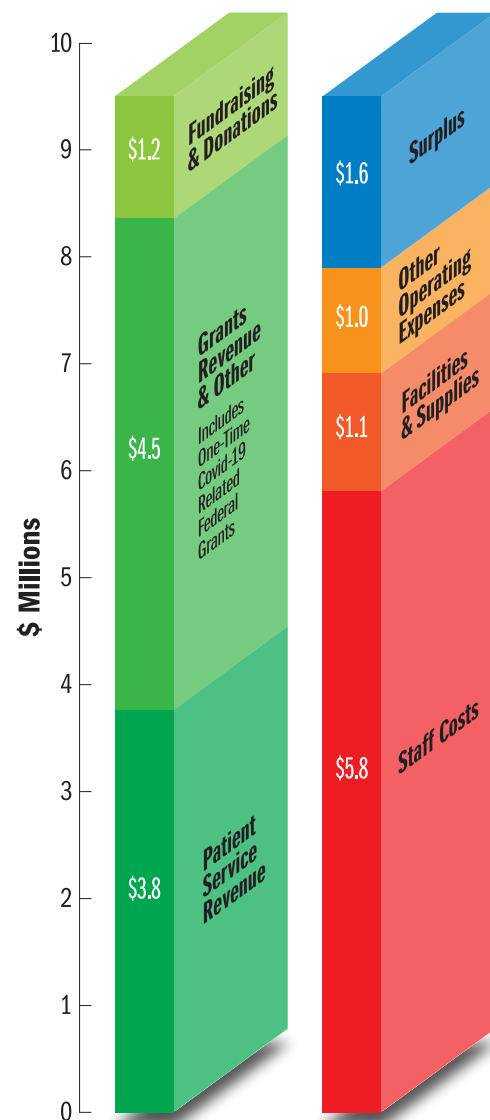
## FY 20-21

What would our annual report be without some solid financial and operational information? Take a look at these graphic representations of the current data for a succinct overview of budget allocations and services provided.

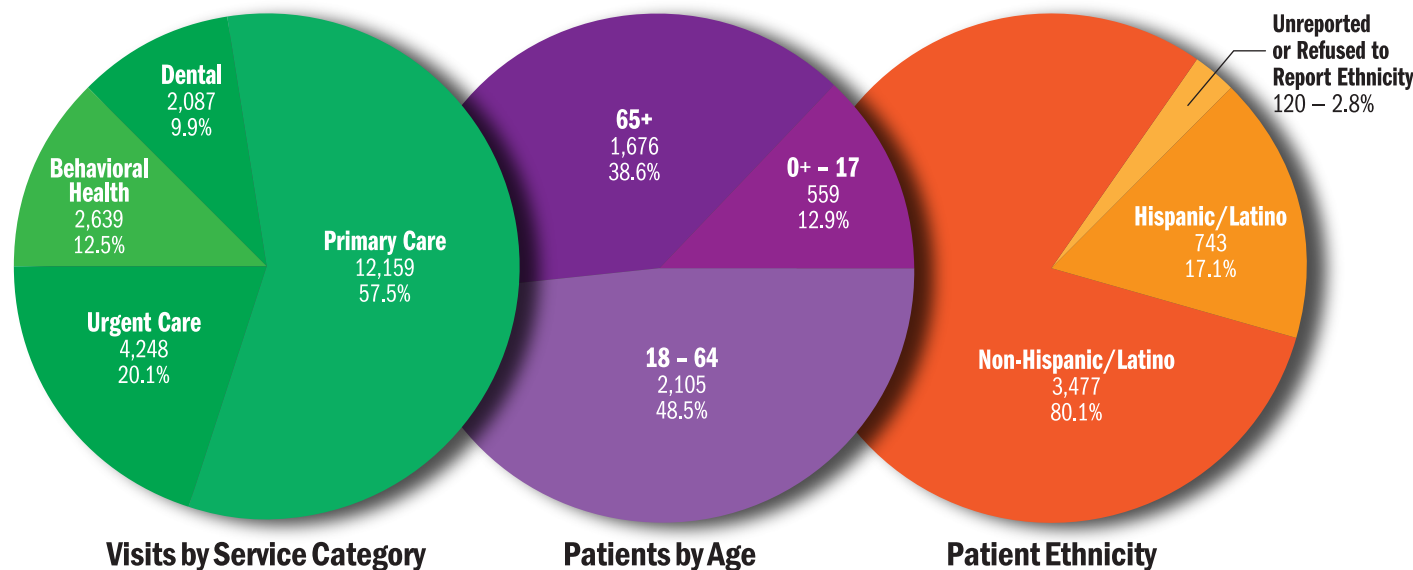
Here, at a glance, you can see the stability of our financial position as well as the comprehensiveness of our services.



**Payor Mix**  
Outer Circle - Current Fiscal Year  
Inner Circle - Prior Fiscal Year



Note:  
All figures are unaudited at this time.



# RCMS Looks Forward

“Although it would not be easy, we could live here without a grocery or hardware store, a bank or a restaurant, but we could not survive here without RCMS.”  
—Mary Alinder The Sea Ranch

## Challenges in Our Coastal Community

Living with the Coronavirus pandemic for the last two years has highlighted a number of challenges RCMS is certain to face in the coming years. The challenge of recruiting and keeping skilled medical professionals – made more difficult by an ongoing housing shortage and high costs of living – tops the list. Clearly, the needs of our coastal community will not decrease, nor will the two-hour drives necessary to reach hospital facilities. Finally, our aging facilities are increasingly inadequate and are further endangered by potential earthquakes, fires, and scarce water supplies.

## Major Changes in Healthcare

RCMS must address these challenges in the context of changes to healthcare, as our systems shift to a stronger focus on quality of life, to providing virtual services that allow for outpatient testing and treatment at home, and to more and better use of data to improve services. These changes should put us in a stronger position to respond to new and different pandemics that will almost surely arise.

## Actions Now Being Taken

In recognition of these changes and challenges, RCMS is taking action now, initiating a long-range planning process to analyze and improve services, staffing, and facilities. In addition, detailed plans for the renovation of our Gualala Clinic are well under way. It's clear that the future is here and that we are increasingly ready for it!

## Donor Support is Going Strong

During 2019, the Mendonoma community stepped up enthusiastically to support RCMS, and this trend has not only continued but outpaced earlier efforts. 2020 – 2021, another banner year for RCMS, brought in 1,265 individual donations totaling \$1,182,000, a nothing-short-of-amazing number for a community of roughly 8,000 residents and a clinic serving about 4,500 patients.

In recognition of the exemplary way in which RCMS managed and responded to the Covid-19 pandemic, our community donations soared some \$200,000 over the year's target goal and helped ensure the financial

health of RCMS. In particular, donations allowed the clinic to maintain the quality of both Primary and Urgent Care while also providing funds for enhanced compensation and benefits for employees and for some badly-needed facilities maintenance.

An anonymous and oh-so-welcome major donation of \$500,000 arrived just in time to pay for new and necessary equipment and to cover the cost of improvements to our Clinic facilities.

Ongoing and generous community support is crucial for all rural health agencies, and particularly for Urgent Care at RCMS, which is never fully covered by state or county funds. Rather, this key component of our health care system must always be subsidized. We are fortunate indeed that our community understands this important need and continues to provide the support necessary to maintain high-quality Urgent Care.

## In Honor of RCMS “Angel,” Alex Long

Longtime Chair of the RCMS Board of Directors Alex Long is remembered and honored for his deep commitment to the health and wellbeing of our community as well as for his ongoing and inspirational leadership. Deeply respected as a model of civility in word and deed, Alex was modest to a fault, always seeking ways to show gratitude to others. Near the end of his life, he is quoted as saying, “Tell everyone I had a wonderful life and it was all because of them.”

And it is because of the wonderful life of Alex Long – and of the 32 years he and Anne devoted to this community – that RCMS can look forward to good health in the future.

Together with his wife, Anne, son Greg, and daughter-in-law Erika, Alex Long pledged a donation of \$1 million dollars to provide seed money for a long-term RCMS capital campaign. This legacy comes at a pivotal moment in the history of RCMS, when the need for expanding and improving facilities is extreme. We will be giving thanks to Alex Long and his family for generations to come.



# Historic Start

**O**ne November day in 1976, on the front steps of the Stewarts Point Store, Bus Richardson, Joe Griffin, Sylvia Moore, and Pauline Satur were mourning the news that the only doctor in the area was leaving. Soon after, The Group to Organize Coast Medical Services held its inaugural meeting, with seven people attending.

Within a year, a group of residents, including the original four, developed Redwood Coast Medical Services, assessed the need, surveyed the population, were granted state funding, found a physician, and hired a staff. It was not easy to establish a nonprofit rural health clinic, but they did it.

When The Sea Ranch was in its early stages of development, Dr. Jack Woodruff's house on Highway 1 provided a temporary site for RCMS and its first physician, Dr. Donovan Cooke. The early RCMS Board of Directors considered other sites for a permanent clinic, including the current ICO site in Gualala and the site depicted in a photo at Stewarts Point. Local architect Don Jacobs offered renderings for each location.

The debate on location was lengthy and sometimes contentious; everyone had strong opinions. The California Rural Health Commission threatened to withhold funding unless the clinic was built in the original Stewarts Point location. The Richardsons had already offered to donate the land at the corner of Highway 1 and Stewarts Point-Skaggs Springs Road. Architect Don Jacobs designed the building; JK "Jack" Richardson and Jay Baker built it, along with the sewer systems and parking areas; Matt Sylvia brought the water system up to state requirements. The cottages across the street from the site were used on an interim basis and replaced by a mobile clinic until opening day in September 1979.

Before the clinic was even completed, however, some Board members were already planning a move to Gualala. In July 1985, RCMS moved from Stewarts Point to its current location at 46900 Ocean Drive in Gualala on land owned by Ida and John Bower. RCMS operated the clinics at both Stewarts Point and Gualala until 1986.

The current RCMS building was constructed as a small office building by John Bower. On acquiring the facility, RCMS remodeled and expanded it to increase services offered to our community. Local residents donated labor and money to create the clinic we know today.

In 1999, when all California rural clinics lost State funding, RCMS was fortunate to receive Federal funding in 2000 as well as proceeds of an urgent care related parcel tax. As a result, RCMS continued to make healthcare available to everyone in our community, seven days a week.

Today, RCMS has expanded further: the RCMS Dental Office in the Cerruti building at 175 Main Street and the RCMS Medical Office in the Fred Morgan building at 30 Mill Street in Point Arena, rented from the Point Arena Medical Center, are operated and staffed by RCMS.

From these humble beginnings, we still have three staff members from the early days:

- ◆ Lois Falk, FNP, 1979
- ◆ Kathy Hall, Billing Manager, 1984
- ◆ Tom Bertolli, MD, 1984

They, along with a strong and unwaveringly committed staff, have steered RCMS steadily from the past to the future.

From the steps of Stewarts Point Store to our medical and dental clinics in Point Arena and our medical clinic in Gualala, much has changed—and much has stayed the same. We are still challenged by urgent needs: hiring and finding housing for staff, funding urgent care, serving an aging population, and assisting home-bound patients.

*"After more than 40 years of valued care, RCMS has become a lot more than my primary medical provider . . . it's more like part of my core support group. Like my best friends that I depend on, I trust that RCMS will always be there for me and for my community."*  
—Janis Dolphin Point Arena

**T**oday, we are focused on the future, guided by the words of cofounder Sylvia Moore who, in 1979, said as she handed the gavel to her successor:

*" . . . timid beginnings, sure confidences, passionate maelstroms, generosity of all kinds, self questioning, helping-hands, silent prayers, false starts, and renewed determination; over and over we struggle to reach our goal of helping us all to live each day with joyous health. RCMS is strong because you are strong."*

*"It's a sad, traumatic time when a loved one comes home from the hospital to live their final days at home. That was the situation that faced me when my husband, Rick, came home in mid-October of 2020. RCMS sprang into action, enveloping Rick into the Hospice program. It was due in large part to RCMS's Hospice program that Rick was able to pass away in my arms, with no pain, a gentle breeze coming through our bedroom window, and our golden retriever sleeping alongside the bed. I'm forever grateful."*  
—Jeanne Jackson Anchor Bay



Stewarts Point Clinic, 1977



Stewarts Point Clinic

Gualala Clinic, 1985



Helicopter landed in a field at Stewarts Point, 1979

# RCMS Services



Leon Koenck and Gretchen Duran  
Urgent Care Providers

## Urgent Care— A Vital Community Resource

**L**iving in our remote and beautiful corner of the world means that urgent medical conditions can pose a challenge. With long drive times to regional hospitals, the ability to handle many urgent medical situations locally saves patients time, money – and sometimes their lives.

During the 2020–21 fiscal year, our Urgent Care department had over 4,200 visits. In many instances, these visits saved patients from long drives to regional hospitals on roads that are challenging at best.

Our Urgent Care Team received high marks, as reflected by the number of patient survey respondents who indicate a high rate of satisfaction with the service they received.

*“We recently have had to rely on RCMS for family emergencies. They provided excellent care and were able to get us where we needed to be. Thank you RCMS for your ongoing services to our coastal community.”*

—Chris & Stacy Aitchison  
Annapolis

## Primary Care

**T**he RCMS Primary Care Team provides primary care services to all ages in our Gualala and Point Arena clinics. As a Federally Qualified Health Center, our mission is to provide quality, family-oriented, community-based primary medical care, including a broad range of preventive health services to residents and visitors within the coastal area of Southern Mendocino and Northern Sonoma Counties. During the 2021–21 fiscal year, our Primary Care team had more than 12,000 patient visits.

We thank our community members who have chosen RCMS as their Primary Care provider.



Jessi Maness and Mark Minder  
Behavioral Health Providers

## Our Behavioral Health Program Reopens

**A**fter a several year hiatus, RCMS reopened our Behavioral Health program in 2020. Licensed Clinical Social Workers Jessi Maness and Mark Minder help patients navigate challenges big and small. Jessi’s background lies in treating trauma, anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, dissociation, PTSD, sleep disorders, and dysregulation from stress. Mark has over 25 years of diverse experience in Behavioral Health, most recently in HIV, homelessness, and severe and persistent mental illness.

There is no doubt we are living in more stressful times. Add to that a layer of uncertainty due to a global pandemic that has stretched over 18 months, and RCMS’s Behavioral Health services are in high demand. RCMS is actively recruiting for a third Behavioral Health provider to join the team.



Harm Wilkinson, Javier Chavez, and Dawn McQuarrie,  
Outreach Team Members

## Outreach Team— Connecting Our Community

**T**he RCMS Outreach Team helps individuals and families access and navigate State and Federal programs and resources available to those who meet certain criteria. The team provides enrollment assistance for Covered California, MediCal, Cal-Fresh, Medicare, Social Security, and more.

Outreach Coordinators Javier Chavez and Harm Wilkinson are the “boots on the ground” making sure community members know about these programs and also helping people to enroll. Our Outreach, Grants and Development Manager, Dawn McQuarrie, secures grants to help fund our outreach efforts and does the follow-up reporting.

Over the last fiscal year, the Outreach Team provided assistance to over 350 individuals and/or families, making a direct impact on our community’s access to fresh food, healthcare services, and other benefits.

## Dental Services

**T**he RCMS Dental Team at the Point Arena Dental Clinic provides comprehensive dental services to patients of all ages. The team, who saw over 2,000 visits in 2020–21, offers preventative care, including exams, digital x-rays, and cleanings, along with restorative dental care. In addition to patient care, the team does outreach and education and provides dental health kits to local schools.

## Hospice Program— Critical for Our Community Health

**W**e recognize an ongoing need in our community for a well-supported Hospice Program with in-home care that focuses on the physical, psychological, social and spiritual comfort of a terminally-ill patient.

RCMS is currently working to restore a robust volunteer program that will provide respite to caregivers and non-medical staff along with companionship to the dying. RCMS is also encouraging and monitoring a program under development by Mendonoma Health Alliance to train and certify home health aides that could be of great help to hospice patients and their families and/or caregivers.

*“RCMS’s response to the pandemic has been outstanding! We were able to get our entire staff vaccinated so quickly while larger communities had long wait times. They just made it so easy!”*

—Hilla Ahvenainen  
& Margaret Smith  
Twofish Baking Stewarts Point

*“RCMS is vital for our coastal community – a well-run, competent source of health care, ensuring the possibilities for living peacefully and healthily in this glorious setting, with medical assistance close at hand when needed and secure transport elsewhere should that be required. It enables us to joyfully age in place. Without RCMS, this region could not have thrived as it has and would be a very different place for both residents and visitors, young and old.”*

—Donlyn Lyndon FAIA  
The Sea Ranch, since 1966

“As our friends in the City struggled to find Covid vaccine appointments, we felt incredibly lucky to have RCMS offer them to us. We were taken care of right away and it was so simple and easy, we almost couldn't believe it! To live in such a remote area and have this kind of service offered by our local clinic, is quite extraordinary. Thank you RCMS, you will have our continued support!”

—Wendy Van Dyck & Gordon Uhlmann Elk

**T**hey say “it takes a village,” and that has certainly been true here for our Mendonoma coast village. Together, members of our community have stepped up, repeatedly and often heroically, to meet the challenges of the last two years. RCMS staff and providers have continued to deliver first-class medical care. Our valiant volunteers have given unstintingly of their time and effort. Our partners, Coast Life Support District, local first responders, and Mendonoma Health Alliance, have been there for us time and time again. Our donors have dug deeper into their pockets than ever to provide financial support. And members of our community have done their part to keep themselves and their families safe and healthy.

“When asked about medical services here on the Mendocino/Sonoma Coast by new entries and historical locals, I have been privileged to explain the services offered at RCMS. In the height of a pandemic, RCMS has provided Covid-19 preventative inoculations to upwards of 4,500 people. This is the type of continued service that little building on the top of the hill is providing. RCMS stands at the top of my list for a medical health presence, a public health service ability and great follow through for the whole patient.”

—Randy Burke MPH Gualala



**RCMS coordinated more than 70 community vaccination and booster clinics and administered over 9,500 vaccine doses. Local first responders and community volunteers helped make these events a success.**



*Together, we have met the challenges, with true Mendonoma spirit!*



**Thank you to our community members who spearheaded the “No Plan B” fundraising campaign. In less than 30 days the Mendonoma community donated over \$600,000 to keep the clinic doors open and set us on our path to financial stability.**



**We received our first batch of the Pfizer Covid-19 vaccine for our frontline clinic staff on December 21, 2020.**



**Thank you to RCMS staff, board members, community organizations, and valiant volunteers, who logged many hours supporting the helipad permitting, painting, and upgrading project, saving RCMS a significant amount of money in the bargain. We appreciate you!**

“We wondered about leaving our San Francisco health care network. When a cut finger needed more than a bandaid, we were directed to RCMS Urgent Care. That's when we discovered the whole RCMS clinic. We checked it out, heard good stories from neighbors, and signed up as Primary Care patients.”

—Carolynn Abst Timber Cove

**The RCMS Covid-19 Response Team members were recognized by The Sea Ranch Board of Directors for their critical work in preparing the clinic for the Covid response.**



This annual report is the work of a group of talented and dedicated volunteers, who planned, wrote, edited, photographed, designed and produced the piece, working with Ara Chakrabarti, CEO, and RCMS staff to communicate to the community it serves the current status of RCMS after this challenging two year period.

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**C**ommunity health clinics make a significant positive impact on overall health-care outcome in our county. Over the last 18 months, during Covid-19, Mendocino County Public Health Department has partnered with clinics to coordinate all pandemic and other healthcare related initiatives, such as testing, vaccination, community outreach and communication.

RCMS, like other healthcare providing entities in our county, played a key role in this and we expect to have this relationship continue. RCMS is a great example of how community focused healthcare providers can make a positive difference to the community.”

**Dr. Andy Coren**

Mendocino County Public Health Officer

[www.rcms-healthcare.org](http://www.rcms-healthcare.org)

