



# Clinic Continues Legacy Of Personal Health Care



Carrie Affield, PA-C, and Dr. Owen Thompson are LRH Barnesville Area Clinic's two full-time providers.

By Michael Stein

The history of the Barnesville Clinic follows much of the change and growth in health care over the last 40-plus years.

One thing that hasn't changed in Barnesville is access to personal service that patients have come to expect from the clinic's providers, Dr. Owen Thompson, Dr. Lonnie Berger and Carrie Affield, PA-C.

The roots of the present clinic date back to the 1970s when Barnesville Clinic's long-time physician, Dr. Carl Simison, was preparing to retire after a career that dated back to the 1930s.

"At that time," Dr. Thompson said. "Many of the physicians who received their training before and just after World War II were retiring. So there started to be a shortage of physicians in smaller communities like Barnesville."

The Barnesville Area Clinic was incorporated after Dr. Simison's retirement with the hope of attracting and keeping doctors on staff. Thompson said many doctors came and went.

The clinic eventually partnered with St. Ansgar's Hospital in Moorhead. Ron Johnson, who still resides in Barnesville, came on at that time as a physician's assistant and spent 30 years in that role.

"Eventually, St. Ansgar's got out of the clinic business," Thompson said. "I came here in the early 1990s and operated the clinic until September 2014 when we merged with Lake Region Healthcare. Ron retired and Carrie Affield, PA-C, started after that."

The merger has worked well, Thompson said. "It helped a great deal when Dr. Lonnie Berger started here last year. The clinic also has a visiting surgeon come one day every two weeks, as well as a hematologist and oncologist every three weeks."

Thompson and Berger are both family medicine practitioners, which, he says, "means everyone from newborns to a few 100-plus year-olds. Our focus is primary care and wellness, treating both acute and chronic illnesses."

Since the merger with LRH, there has been a very active physician recruitment effort.

"LRH has professional recruiters

on staff," Thompson said. "We've had some come to interview, but decided not to move here for family reasons. The hope is to make our facility grow and prosper as a community health care asset for a long time to come."

Patients come to the Barnesville Area Clinic from rural Hawley, Rollag, Comstock, Baker, Pelican Rapids, Rothsay, the Cormorant area and, of course, Barnesville.

Thompson said the clinic features an excellent lab and new digital x-ray equipment.

"And we have an excellent staff," he added.

Thompson emphasized the clinic's personal approach to patient care.

"When I decided it was time to merge," he said. "I saw LRH as a regional provider with all local people, and that has been a good fit for us. LRH understands rural health and the needs of people they serve in smaller communities. Their interests and values in serving patients are the same as ours."

"We know our patients inside and out," Affield said. "When they come here for treatment, we know their history and can often tell right away if they're okay or not. That's a nicer way of doing patient care. It's much more personable and people oriented."

Dr. Berger said, "We have a more simple aspect to seeing patients here than you might see in a large city. And a nice thing is we're starting to see more young families. I'm here Wednesday and Thursday, and patients can often get same-day appointments."

Berger added that with a very aggressive strain of flu this past season, it became even more important to have quick access to care.

While both Thompson and Affield are full-time at the Barnesville Clinic, they also see patients in the nursing homes in Barnesville and Pelican Rapids.

If patients have needs after hours, Thompson said they're available by leaving a message with the clinic.

Dr. Thompson, from Henning, Minn., received his undergraduate degree from the University of North Dakota, graduated from Louisiana

State University School of Medicine and completed his internship at LSU Division/Charity Hospital in New Orleans. He and his wife, Becky, have three grown children.

Affield graduated from West Fargo High School and received her associate degree of nursing from North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton. She completed her degree in nursing with a minor in child development from North Dakota State University, and her master's in physician assistant studies from the University of North Dakota.

Affield worked at MeritCare and Essentia in Fargo and at the Sanford Clinic in Pelican Rapids.

During her 17 years in nursing, Affield has worked in pediatrics, adult ICU, surgery, hospice, home health and public health. As a PA, her expertise is in family medicine to care for people for health maintenance and acute and chronic illness.

Dr. Berger joined the LRH medical staff in 2011 and the Barnesville Clinic in April 2017.

Originally from Worthington, Minn., Berger received his bachelor's degree in human biology and a doctorate of chiropractic from Logan College of Chiropractic, Chesterfield, Mo. He earned his doctorate of medicine from the University of South Dakota School of Medicine and completed his

residency in family practice at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester.

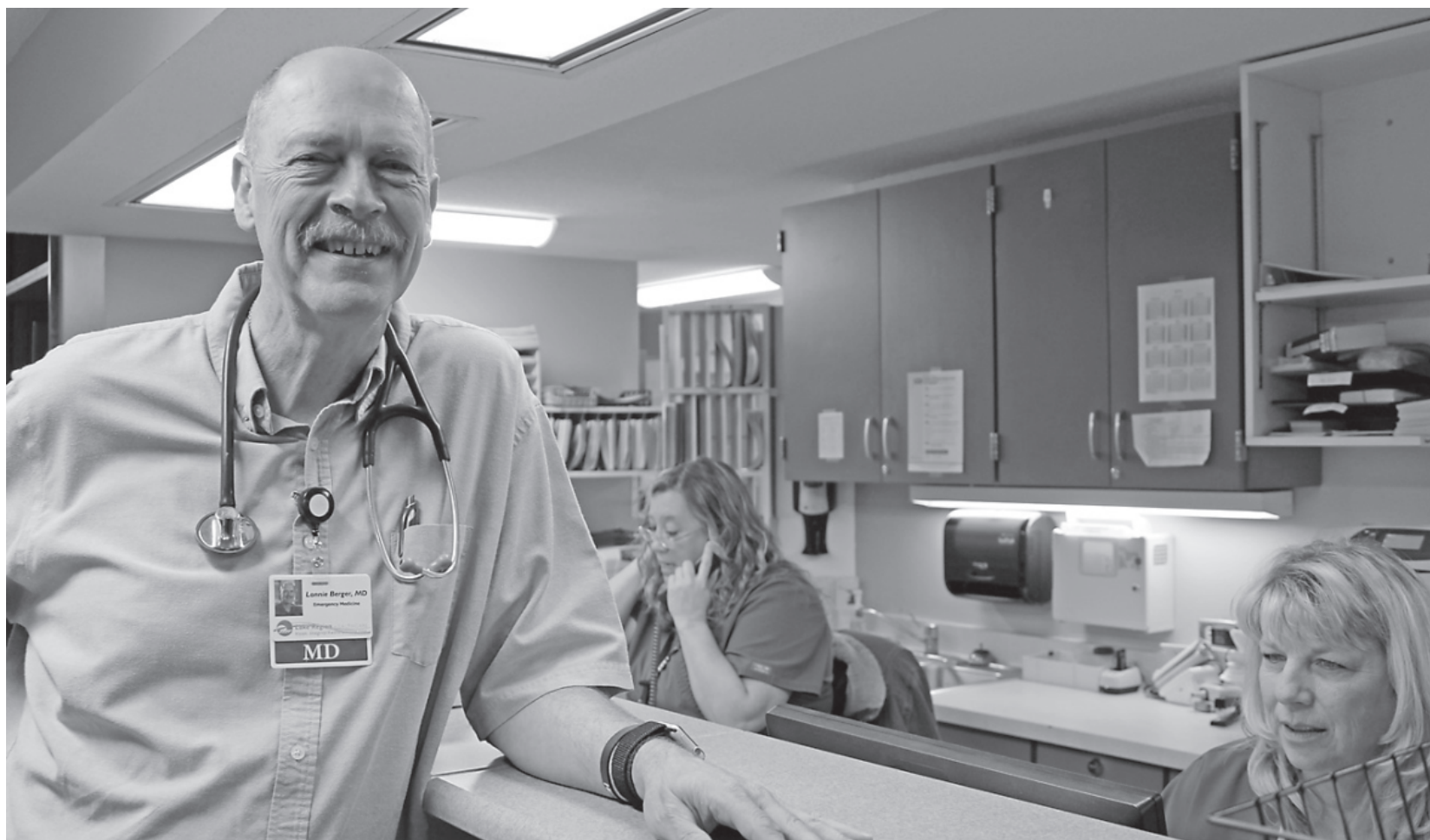
Berger and his wife have four daughters, one son, and two grandsons.

Berger is available for walk-in patients Wednesday and Thursday. He still serves as an ER doctor in Fergus Falls.

LRH also operates clinics in Ashby, Battle Lake, Elbow Lake, and Fergus Falls.

The Barnesville Area Clinic is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For more information on the clinic, click on the "Clinics" tab at [www.lrhc.org](http://www.lrhc.org).



Dr. Lonnie Berger sees patients at LRH Barnesville Area Clinic Wednesday and Thursday, effective the week of April 1, 2018. At the desk, from left are Kari Walters, LPN, and Toni Affield, LPN.



The Barnesville area clinic has been a part of the Barnesville health community for nearly 40 years.

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