

thrive

A Simple Test May Have Saved His Life





PCH Achievements

I'M PROUD TO SHARE...

- ✔ The National Organization of State Offices of Rural Health (NOSORH) announced its **2025 Community Stars**, honoring outstanding rural leaders—including PCH's Director of Rural Health Clinics, Lori Minert.
- ✔ PCH is proud to announce the installation and launch of a new, **cutting-edge CT scanner**, the SOMATOM go.Top from Siemens Healthineers.
- ✔ Pender Medical Clinic has earned a **5-Star Rating** from the National Rural Rating System (NRRS), placing it among the first rural facilities recognized for outstanding patient experience and quality care.

From our CEO



LAURA GAMBLE

Every day, I'm reminded how grateful I am for the incredible team we have across the Pender Community Hospital District. Their dedication, compassion, and skill make it possible for us to do more than care for people when they're sick—we help our friends, families, and neighbors stay well. Preventative wellness is truly at the heart of what we do.

That means making care easy to access, whether you visit one of our medical clinics in Bancroft, Beemer, Emerson, or Pender, or see one of our expert visiting specialists at the specialty clinic.

Lately, I've heard so many encouraging stories from patients who've shared how quickly they were seen and how seamless their visits felt. One person told me she received "the best care I've ever had"—from check-in to follow-up. Hearing things like that makes me so proud of our team.

We're also honored to be recognized for the quality of care our teams deliver every day with awards such as the BP Gold+, 2025 Performance Leadership, and Five-Star Clinic Rating awards.

But for me, **it is most rewarding to carry on the culture of compassionate care that has already been established and to keep quality healthcare local.** It's a tradition we're proud to continue and a responsibility we take to heart.

With gratitude,

LAURA GAMBLE, RN, CEO

Pender Community Hospital & Medical Clinics

Annual Wellness Visits: Know What Your Insurance Covers

At Pender Community Hospital, we believe exceptional healthcare begins with prevention and early detection. Our dedicated team of health professionals works to ensure every patient receives the right care at the right time to support long-term wellness.

Annual wellness exams go beyond just physical health. We address social needs by asking about lifestyle, social history, and mental health. **Connecting social needs and physical health can significantly impact overall health outcomes, and our team is dedicated to helping patients manage their health effectively.**

Coverage for wellness exams varies among insurance plans, making it essential to understand what your specific plan includes. Most insurance providers cover a wide range of preventative services that include common screenings, lab tests, and immunizations, such as:

- ✓ Mammograms
- ✓ Colonoscopies
- ✓ Low-dose lung CT (with smoking history)
- ✓ Immunizations (flu, COVID-19, pneumonia, shingles, RSV, TDAP)
- ✓ Routine lab tests such as comprehensive metabolic panel (CMP), prostate antigen (PSA), complete blood count (CBC), and lipid panel (cholesterol)
- ✓ Depression/anxiety screenings
- ✓ Social history screenings

To prevent unexpected costs, patients are encouraged to contact their insurance provider before scheduling. The customer service number on your insurance card or your insurer's website is the best resource. If you are covered through an employer, your human resources department may also help clarify your preventative care and wellness benefits.



When booking your visit at any of our medical clinics in Pender, Emerson, Bancroft, or Beemer, please say: “I would like to schedule my annual exam.”

This assists our team of health professionals in properly identifying your appointment and conducting a comprehensive chart review. Your provider will then be prepared with a personalized list of recommended screenings based on your:

- ✓ Age
- ✓ Personal medical history
- ✓ Family health

We encourage every patient to take an active role in understanding their coverage, scheduling annual wellness visits, and utilizing the preventative services available to them. Staying informed and proactive not only reduces health risks—it promotes a longer, healthier life. At Pender Community Hospital, we are proud to be your partner in preventative care and wellness.

 **Schedule your annual wellness visit today at your local PCH Medical Clinic.**



A Simple Test May Have Saved His Life

JED JOHNSON'S STORY OF PREVENTION, GRATITUDE, AND LOCAL CARE

When Jed Johnson walked into the Beemer Medical Clinic for his annual wellness exam last February, he expected another routine visit. He's had high blood pressure since his twenties and figured it would be more of the same—checkups, lab work, maybe a few lifestyle reminders.

But that day, his provider, Dr. Matt Felber, took a moment to ask about Jed's family history. Jed mentioned that his dad had needed a heart stent at just age 49. That detail caught Dr. Felber's attention.

"Based on Jed's family history and his blood pressure numbers, I recommended a calcium scoring test," Dr. Felber explained. "It's a simple scan that measures calcium buildup in the arteries. It's not always covered by insurance, but it can reveal a lot before symptoms ever appear."

Jed had never heard of a calcium scoring test before. But when Dr. Felber explained that it could help spot potential heart blockages early, Jed didn't hesitate. "I told him, 'Schedule me for whatever you think is best,'" he said.

Later, Jed had the test done at Pender Community Hospital. The results came back fast—and they were startling. His calcium score was over 600, signaling severe plaque buildup in his arteries. "I was shocked," Jed recalled. "My wife was, too. Neither of us expected it [to be that high]."

From there, things moved quickly. Dr. Felber immediately referred Jed to Dr. Martin, a cardiologist who regularly visits PCH. Within three weeks, Jed had a stress test, followed by a heart catheterization, where two 80% blockages were discovered, and stents were placed that same day.



MATTHEW FELBER, MD
PRIMARY CARE



STEVE MARTIN, MD
CARDIOLOGIST

“The whole process—from that first appointment in Beemer to the follow-ups in Pender—was smooth,” Jed said. “It was all local. I didn’t have to travel far, and I was home that evening after the stents were placed.”

Looking back, Jed doesn’t take that February visit lightly.

“Honestly, it could have saved my life,” he said. “I didn’t have major symptoms. I felt fine. But because Dr. Felber took the time to ask questions and recommend that scan, we caught it before it was too late.”

– JED JOHNSON

Dr. Felber emphasizes that preventative wellness visits are about more than just checking boxes—they’re an opportunity to listen, detect, and act early. “It’s a lot easier to prevent a heart attack than to treat someone after one,” he said. “Managing blood pressure, cholesterol, and lifestyle is important, and early detection of calcium buildup is crucial before permanent heart damage happens.”

Jed now shares his story every chance he gets. “People think, ‘I feel fine, so I don’t need to go in.’ But you never really know what’s going on inside,” he said. “If you have a family history of heart disease, or you just want peace of mind, ask your provider about a calcium scoring test. It takes 10 minutes. It could save your life.”

Pender Community Hospital and its medical clinics are committed to helping patients take charge of their health through early detection, education, and accessible local care. Jed’s story is a powerful reminder that prevention isn’t just about staying healthy—it’s about staying here, for the people who love you most.



Johnson’s care team (left to right): Dr. Steve Martin, Jed Johnson, Dr. Matthew Felber

What Is a Coronary Calcium Score?

A SIMPLE WAY TO UNDERSTAND YOUR HEART’S PLAQUE BUILDUP

A coronary calcium score is a quick, noninvasive CT scan that measures the amount of calcium buildup in the arteries of your heart. Calcium buildup is an early sign of plaque, which can narrow arteries and increase your risk of heart disease or a heart attack.

The scan takes about 10–15 minutes and typically costs approximately \$200. It’s especially recommended for individuals with a family history of heart disease, high cholesterol, high blood pressure, or those seeking peace of mind. Ask your provider if a calcium scoring test is right for you—it could be the most important 10 minutes of your life.



Schedule your wellness exam with Pender Medical Clinic today.

Empowering the Next Generation of Healthcare Workers



Left to right: Student: (Ashley Bohannon), Patient: (Jerry Karlen), Physical Therapist: (Brock Simonsen PT, DPT)

At Pender Community Hospital (PCH), investing in the future of healthcare means investing in people—especially students who are beginning to explore their calling to care for others. Through shadowing programs, clinical rotations, and partnerships with schools across the region, PCH is helping shape the next generation of healthcare professionals while strengthening rural medicine for years to come.

HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE, REAL-WORLD IMPACT

For many students, their first introduction to healthcare happens right here in Pender. “Our student shadowing and clinical programs allow students to see the wide range of career paths available—from nursing, radiology, and lab work to pharmacy, therapy services, and administration,” explains Lori Minert, Clinic Director. **“Several of our current providers began here as students. They fell in love with the culture and came back after graduation.”**

The hospital partners with programs such as Pathways 2 Tomorrow, which allows high school students to rotate through departments and discover where their interests lie. College students complete their required clinical hours through affiliations with universities such as UNMC, Creighton University, and Northeast Community College. Some students even join the team for summer employment opportunities.

WHY RURAL HOSPITALS MAKE GREAT CLASSROOMS

At larger hospitals, students often focus on one specialty area. But at PCH, they experience the full spectrum of care. “In a rural community, they see everything that walks through the door,” says Lori. “They get a broader view and more one-on-one attention.” David Frey, HR Generalist, adds, “They quickly realize it takes the whole team—from nurses and therapists to administrators—to make great care happen.” Haley Haymart, OT Rehab Manager, agrees. “Students are always surprised by how much variety and collaboration exist here. It puts a bright spotlight on rural healthcare.”

A LEGACY OF LEARNING AND COMMUNITY

In the past seven years, PCH has welcomed 47 medical students from five states, in addition to local high school and college participants. Many return later as employees or advocates for rural healthcare. **“It’s incredibly rewarding to see students grow into confident professionals,” Haley says. “We love what we do, and we want to pass that passion on.”**

For students or parents interested in exploring healthcare careers, Lori encourages them to reach out directly to the human resources department to see what opportunities are available. “Pick an area you’re most interested in—and one you don’t know anything about,” she advises. “There’s no better way to decide what you might want to do than to experience it firsthand.”



Left to right: Lori Minert, Haley Haymart, David Frey

Breathe Easier with Respiratory and Pulmonology Services at PCH



CAROLINE NORTON,
CARDIOPULMONARY
MANAGER

Breathing well is something most of us take for granted—until it becomes difficult. At Pender Community Hospital, our Respiratory and Pulmonology Services teams are here to help patients better understand, manage, and protect their lung health through comprehensive testing, expert care, and early detection.

Caroline Norton,
Cardiopulmonary Manager,

oversees cardiac and pulmonary rehab, respiratory therapy, and sleep services. She and her team care for both inpatients and outpatients, providing a range of services that include oxygen assessments for newborns, cardiac monitoring, and pulmonary function testing (PFT) for adults.

“Pulmonary Function Tests are one of the best tools we have for detecting lung conditions early,” says Caroline. “They help us identify issues like COPD, asthma, emphysema, or even long-term effects of COVID-19 before symptoms worsen.”

A PFT is a simple, noninvasive test that measures how well your lungs move air in and out and how efficiently oxygen transfers into your bloodstream. Patients breathe into a mouthpiece, following a few easy instructions—no needles, no discomfort. Establishing a baseline early allows providers to track changes over time and recommend treatment before serious complications arise.

Early detection means earlier intervention—through medication, pulmonary rehab, or simple lifestyle adjustments—helping patients stay active and maintain their quality of life.

“The big thing is we can offer these tests right here in our community,” Caroline says. “You don’t know what you don’t know. So if breathing feels harder than it should, talk with your provider about scheduling a PFT.”



Left to right: Angie Liston, James Blanco, Lynette Vesely, Audrey Kaser



Left to right: Ashley Fuchser, Caroline Norton, Andrea Magana

YOU MAY BENEFIT FROM A PFT IF YOU HAVE:

- ✔ A persistent cough, wheezing, or shortness of breath
- ✔ A history of smoking or vaping
- ✔ Exposure to chemicals or lung irritants
- ✔ A family history of lung disease
- ✔ Recent medication or lifestyle changes affecting breathing



TARGET BP™ GOLD PLUS AWARD

Pender Community Hospital & Medical Clinics earned Gold+ level recognition from the American Heart Association and American Medical Association through the Target: BP™ initiative for improving blood pressure control using evidence-based practices, a critical effort as nearly half of U.S. adults live with hypertension—only a quarter of whom have it under control—and heart disease and stroke remain leading causes of death and disability.