

‘RAISING THE BAR’: Amy’s Kitchen opens health care center for employees

The Amy’s Kitchen plant in Pocatello held a grand opening for its new Amy’s Family Health Center on Monday afternoon.

The Amy’s Family Health Center is a primary care provider directly on the premises of the Amy’s Kitchen plant that provides entirely free health care to company employees and their families.

“It’s really convenient being able to set up an appointment right after or before work,” said Cindy Gillespie, the vice president of human resources for Amy’s Kitchen. “For a lot of people, it’s difficult to leave work, drive quite a ways, sit in an office and wait. The way that this model is set up, people are hardly ever waiting.”

With this health care facility, employees and their immediate family members are able to simply set up an appointment and see a primary care provider whenever needed. There’s no co-pay or insurance information. They even have certain antibiotics and maintenance medication for free.

The center will be operated by Vera Whole Health, a company that provides on-site primary care centers to large- and mid-size companies.

“We’re very excited to partner with Vera Whole Health,” Gillespie said. “It’s a very supportive and consistent and integrated approach to health care, which is very unique as an employee benefit these days.”

The center is staffed by local health care providers hired by Vera Whole Health. They currently have one primary care provider and one medical assistant, but they hope to hire one more person.

“This partnership with Vera is essential because it allows us to provide the quality of care that our people are looking for at no cost,” said Xavier Unkovic, president of Amy’s Kitchen. “It’s part of our philosophy at Amy’s to not only provide a good salary, but also to bring a complete, holistic approach of building a great place to work.”

The Pocatello plant was the last of the three Amy’s Kitchen plants to receive an on-site health center because when it opened in 2014, there were not yet enough employees for the company to be able to cover the cost of a facility.

The other two plants, in Santa Rosa, California, and White City, Oregon, received health centers in 2012 after Unkovic said the company was searching for ways to improve the lives of their employees.

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by Madeleine Coles

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“We were thinking about how we could provide our people with a great workplace environment and what elements would help them feel very much connected to our company and our values,” he said. “And this is what we did.”

Pocatello Mayor Brian Blad was also at the ribbon-cutting ceremony, and he said he believed the health center to be an example of what companies can do for their employees.

“It’s incredible to have a corporation like Amy’s in a community like ours,” Blad said. “Every time you turn around, it feels like they’re raising the bar for their employees.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 9.8 percent of people in Bannock County are uninsured, and many people only see their doctor if it’s urgent.

According to Gillespie, Amy’s Family Health Center tries to put a focus on preventive care and provide people with an opportunity to take an active interest in their health.

Another service provided by the center that Gillespie said was particularly nice was health coaching. That allows patients to meet with a certified health coach who will help them create a plan for healthy living.

“(Amy’s Kitchen) really, truly is a company that has a desire for their employees to be healthy and stay in good shape,” Blad said. “They’ve shown from the very start that employees are a priority for them, and this just shows that they are taking the next step.”

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