

# THE **Alpine** MOUNTAINEER

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BRINGING OUR MOUNTAIN RESORT COMMUNITIES TOGETHER SINCE 1985

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## Complete pulmonary testing on the mountain

By **MARY-JUSTINE LANYON**  
*Managing Editor*

The patient is having trouble breathing and presents either to a primary care physician or the emergency department.

Fortunately for patients who are treated at Mountains Community Hospital, the respiratory department has a new piece of equipment that does complete pulmonary function testing, including spirometry, DLCO (diffusing capacity of the lung for carbon monoxide) and lung volumes.

“We could do pulmonary testing before,” said respiratory therapist Kevin Horan, “but not in the manner we can now. Now we offer two additional tests that give us a calculation of the total volume of the lung.”

The DLCO test, Horan noted, can diagnose any type of disorder in the lungs that causes oxygen to not be absorbed into the blood stream.

All those tests can be done right here, on the mountain; there is no need for the patient to travel down the hill.

A patient who comes into the emergency room unable to breathe will likely see a respiratory therapist. In fact, while Horan and I spoke, he got called to the ER to assess a patient.

“The beauty of this equipment and the tests it performs is a patient can come in with shortness of breath for an unknown reason,” Horan said. “The physician starts from square one. We can run the tests and narrow down the causes – whether it’s obstructive, restrictive or a mix of the two. Then the physician can effectively prescribe medications.”

The results, Horan said, are available immediately – and close to home.

“That’s the value of this facility,” Horan said. “As part of our outreach, we want the community to be healthier. My main focus is the diagnosis and treatment of asthma, especially pediatric. We can diagnose and treat it here.”

Horan added that getting the right diagnosis and medications for patients with COPD can improve their quality of life.

In addition to this new pulmonary function testing machine, the respiratory department also does EKGs and treadmill stress tests.

Horan, who graduated from Rim High in 2004, is now raising his three children on the mountain. “This was the best option for us. I feel comfortable with my kids going outside and playing.” He and his wife just designed and built a house up here.



**Respiratory therapist Kevin Horan with the new pulmonary function testing machine at Mountains Community Hospital.** (Photo by Mary-Justine Lanyon)