

AMERICA’S HEALTHIEST HOMETOWN

A weekly report on The Villages’ efforts to become “America’s Healthiest Hometown” compiled by Daily Sun Ombudsman **Larry D. Croom**. Email larry.croom@thevillagesmedia.com. Or call him at 753-1119, ext. 9366.

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Did you know?

Autumn Tripp, Colony Care Center manager, enjoys mind games like Sudoku and crossword puzzles.

All about care center manager Linda Arredondo

Primary care doctors, specialists and other medical providers have been recruited as part of an initiative to revamp health care right here in Florida’s Friendliest Hometown. The Villages Health is partnering with USF Health to bring in family doctors, care providers and specialists who will work as a team, all in the best interests of serving patients. This weekly feature will introduce these innovative medical providers who have joined this effort.

Why did you decide to become a care center manager?

I have been an administrator for a practice before. But when I heard about The Villages Health and what they were doing in health care, it really struck me. When I went through nursing school, the primary care physician was truly the center of the patient’s health care. In my 20 years of nursing, I’ve seen patients really being piecemealed out. They’ve got a doctor for this and a doctor for that and a doctor for something else. It just seems like the whole concept of getting back to good primary care medicine is where we need to go. So it was very exciting to have an opportunity to be on the cutting edge of medicine and to be building this system as we go.

What is your personal philosophy on health care?

I believe that the patient has the right to self-determination. That means that we, as health care professionals, have a responsibility to give that patient what I call the good, the bad and the ugly. That means giving them all the information that they need to make an informed decision about their health



Care Center: Specialty Care
Nursing degree: Lake-Sumter State College
Undergraduate: Ashford University (Clinton, Iowa)
Years of health care experience: 22

care, whether that be preventative services or what they need to do to make sure that they’re healthy to maintain their health. Of if it’s at end of life, give them the choices that they have to make, whether that be treatment or comfort and palliation. But allow the patient to ask all the questions they need, keep them informed and let them make the decisions that are right for them.

Next week: Find out all about Sheri Harwood, manager of the Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center.

Creating America’s Healthiest Hometown

How do you feel about the medical providers you work with?

“The people that work here are, as corny as it sounds, we really think we’re a family. We refer to ourselves as the Pinellas family. We do a lot of morale-boosting things. But what I see every day – every single day – is one of our staff members go out of their way to help a patient do extraordinary things. One time, I saw somebody give a patient their sweater because they were cold – not knowing if they’d get it back or not. And then I see our staff helping each other. Everybody has something come up in their lives that they need a little extra help, either literal help or financial help or just a prayer or whatever it may be. Each and every day, I see somebody reaching out to help another co-worker in need.”

Deneal Sullivan,
Pinellas Care Center manager, RN



Care Centers in The Villages

Primary care

- The Villages Health Colony Care Center**
280 Farner Place, 674-1710
- The Villages Health Santa Barbara Care Center**
1575 Santa Barbara Blvd., 674-1740
- The Villages Health Pinellas Care Center**
2485 Pinellas Place, 674-1720
- The Villages Health Mulberry Grove Care Center**
8877 S.E. 165th Mulberry Lane, 674-1750
- The Villages Health Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center**
1050 Old Camp Road, Building 100, 674-1760



Dr. Paul Daluga, left, discusses a patient’s medical history recently with Jacob Pierce, a medical student from the University of South Florida. Pierce also has worked closely with Dr. Michael Wald during his time at the Mulberry Grove Care Center.

George Horsford / Daily Sun

Sharing their knowledge

Villages Health doctors tout benefits of training medical students

By **LARRY D. CROOM** / DAILY SUN OMBUDSMAN

Villages Health officials say they’re quite proud to have the opportunity to train medical students here in Florida’s Friendliest Hometown.

It’s a practice that started last month when Jacob Pierce became the first University of South Florida medical student to wear a white coat at a Villages Health facility. And it’s one that will continue in the coming months as other students come here for training.

According to Dr. Joe Hildner, chief medical officer of The Villages Health, it’s a plan that benefits everyone, including the doctors doing the training.

“There is no better way to update your knowledge than to have to teach your knowledge to others,” he said. “That requires that you bone up on it and that you really stay as current as you can be. So the best way to improve a physician’s skills is to put a student next to them.”

Dr. Robert Reilly, medical director of the Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center and the physician overseeing the medical student program, agreed.

“It challenges the doctors that are working with them to be on top of things,” he said. “Medical students are going to ask you hard questions and you better know the answer. If you don’t know it, you better know how to get

the answer. So it keeps us on our toes.”

Reilly said another big advantage of having medical students here is the strong connection The Villages Health shares with the USF Morsani College of Medicine.

“We are kind of privy to cutting-edge research that’s going on,” he said. “We have the ability to exchange ideas, to be involved with giving lectures and having lectures given. For the doctors here, it keeps them on the cutting edge of things and more evidence-based.”

But perhaps the biggest advantage, Reilly added, is the opportunity to create a pipeline to bring top-notch doctors to The Villages Health in the future.

Coming Aug. 24
Renovation of Belleview Care Center gets underway.

“As some of our seasoned docs eventually leave the practice to retire, we’re going to have slots open,” he said. “And we’re going to need to hire and recruit. What better way to do that than people who have been here and kind of seen it and know what a great thing we’re doing here?”

On the teaching side of the equation, Dr. Michael Wald said medical students benefit greatly from clerkship rotations because they are put into real-life situations with patients.

“Up until now, they’ve basically been book learners,” said the Mulberry Grove doctor, who has spent the past few weeks working closely with Pierce. “They’ve learned the science of medicine, the definition of certain diseases and how to take a history. But this is their first actual experience in doing it.”

Wald added that it’s important for students to learn early on the importance of working as a team with those they are treating.

“The advantage of coming and having this kind of setting is it’s going to put them at ease with the patients,” he said. “And if they’re at ease with the patients, the patients will be at ease with them.”

Dr. Paul Daluga, who also has been working closely with Pierce, said he has found that most patients enjoy the opportunity to play a role in the training of medical students.

“I had patients in private practice that if they didn’t get an opportunity to talk to a medical student at least once a year, they were disappointed,” he said. “They felt like they were a part of the education in the students that came through my office and really took it seriously and liked to do it.”

Reilly said he likes the idea of medical students coming to The Villages Health because they will get a chance to see primary care done the correct way.

“If you’ve got a model that sustains itself, that practices quality and relationship building, it’s great,” he said. “Students can really be involved with that and learn from it.”

Dr. Elliot Sussman, chair of The Villages Health, agreed, adding that he hopes Pierce will tell all of his fellow medical students about the great experiences he’s had here.

“What we’ve wanted to do is provide an excellent place where young people in medical school can learn, so they would aspire to careers in primary care,” he said. “I wouldn’t be surprised if four or five years from now, we have some of those medical students calling us and saying, ‘remember me?’ I’d like to come back and work at The Villages Health.”

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