

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**
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Did you know?

Marykate Drake, a physician assistant at Pinellas Care Center, says her all-time favorite movie is the 1965 classic “The Sound of Music,” starring Julie Andrews.

Fixing health care: All about Dr. Mariel Gonzalez Mendoza

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 doctor?

I was probably like 12 or 13 years old and I just kind of admired my pediatrician because I felt like he knew so much. I wanted to be like him, so that’s how I chose it.

What is your favorite thing about being a doctor?

That I get to know people in a way that not everybody can get to know them. They can put their trust in me and say things to me and share things with me that they would not share with anyone else. I think that’s the best part of being a doctor.

What is your philosophy on health care?

It should be available for everybody. I think everybody has the right to be able to see a doctor when they need to. They shouldn’t have to wait for weeks or months to be able to see their doctor – especially their primary care doctor.

Why is primary care important?

As primary care doctors, we’re in charge of getting to know the patient. We’re the first contact. We’re their guide. They need to put their



Care Center: Pinellas
Age: 38
Certified: American Board of Family Medicine
Undergraduate: University of Puerto Rico
Medical school: University of Puerto Rico School of Medicine
Internship, residency: Penn State Family Practice Residency Program (Hershey, Pa.)

trust in us so that we are able to provide the care they need.

How does it feel to be part of a health care initiative that’s being looked at by other communities?

It’s a privilege. I’m honored and blessed that I’m having this opportunity.

Next week Find out all about Rosemary Kipp, a nurse practitioner who practices at the USF Health Specialty Care Center in The Villages.

Creating America’s Healthiest Hometown

What are patients saying about the initiative?

“They’re excited. They’re excited that something like this is going on and that they can be so involved in their care. It’s not just one-sided – it’s a partnership. It’s a relationship. It’s not just us telling you, ‘here, this is what you should do. Now go home, read it and do it.’ It’s ‘let’s talk about this. Let’s see what’s the best thing that we can do for you.’ It’s evidence-based medicine in a relationship/ partnership with the patient.”

Beverly Dorson,
physician assistant,
Colony Care Center



Care Centers in The Villages

Primary care

The Villages Health Colony Care Center

280 Farner Place, 352-674-1710

The Villages Health Santa Barbara Care Center

1575 Santa Barbara Blvd., 352-674-1740

The Villages Health Pinellas Care Center

2485 Pinellas Place, 352-674-1720

The Villages Health Mulberry Grove Care Center

8877 S.E. 165th Mulberry Lane (Opening March 10)

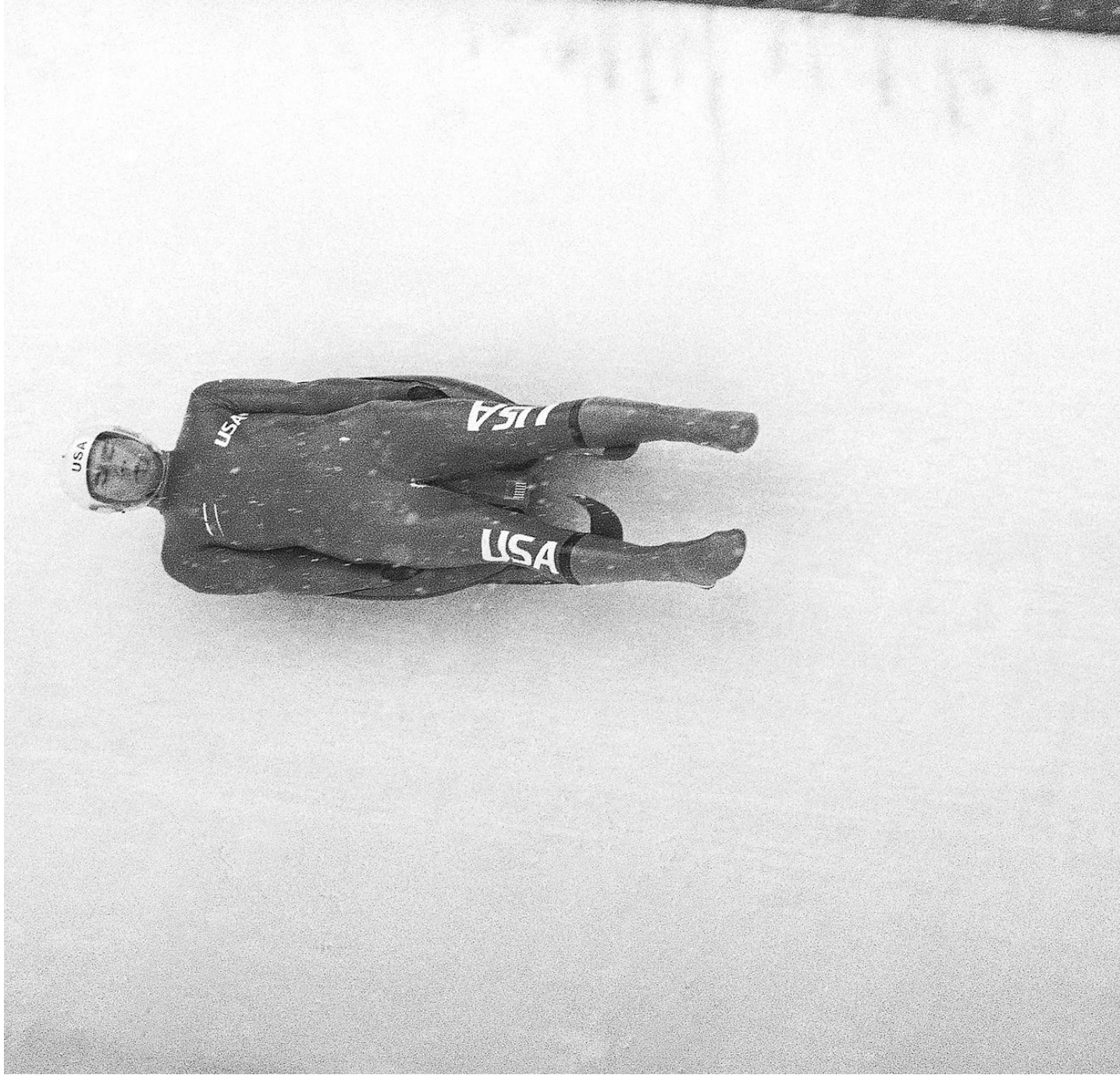
The Villages Health Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center

1050 Old Camp Road, Building 100 (Opening spring 2014)

Specialty care

USF Health Specialty Care Center

1400 N. U.S. Highway 27/441, Building 810
352-674-8731



Above: Frank Masley, of Team USA, speeds down the course in the third run of the luge event at the 1984 Winter Olympics in Sarajevo, Yugoslavia. **Below:** Dr. Jack Hocutt, a primary care physician at Colony Care Center, served as the head team physician for the U.S. Luge Team from 1980-88.

Wild Olympic ride

Villages Health doctor spent 8 years treating US luge team

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

In 1979 Dr. Jack Hocutt opened a letter from the United States Olympic Committee that would soon change his life.

The organization was looking for physicians who thrived in the world of sports medicine, and since that was one of Hocutt’s passions, he responded with interest.

A few conversations and several months later, the family doctor from Wilmington, Del., found himself traveling to Lake Placid, N.Y., to show the USOC his medical skills. And not too long after that initial trip, the doctor, who now practices at the Colony Care Center in The Villages, took it a step further by agreeing to serve as the head physician for the U.S. luge team – a group of athletes who pretty much existed on a grassroots effort with a lot of heart, dedication and determination to make a name for themselves against competitors from other countries with top-dollar backing.

“The luge athletes pretty much look like us, everyday people, and they didn’t have



Bill Mitchell / Daily Sun

a medical team,” said Hocutt, who was also serving as medical director of a sports medicine facility. “I recruited doctors to form a network because they needed physicians in big cities around the country in case any of them got injured or needed help.” Hocutt said many memories from his luge days stand out, but one, a trip to Sarajevo, Yugoslavia, for competitions being held prior to the 1984 Winter Olympics, will never be forgotten. It was an adventure that ended in lost luggage and medical supplies, a Yugoslav rental car that would barely run, and a “speeding” fine of 200 dinar – the equivalent of \$1.60 – that apparently was required of any Americans driving on the roads near the Belgrade airport.

Luckily, Hocutt arrived just in time to help one of the luge athletes, Erica Terwillegar, who had suffered injuries to her hands, ankles and feet during a training run mishap. The German team

Coming Feb. 23: University of South Florida medical students will get up close and personal with The Villages Health.

doctor, who was helping out until Hocutt arrived, had sent Terwillegar to a local hospital for X-rays and was strongly suggesting that she be admitted for treatment. But the team’s manager felt differently, so he grabbed the X-rays and said he’d speak with Hocutt when he arrived.

“She just had big bruises, so we iced her and taped her tight,” Hocutt said. “And we repeated that every hour. So by the next day, she was ready to slide.”

The German doctor, however, was somewhat confounded, so he quickly sought out Hocutt to find out what type of “miracle drug” had been administered. Hocutt said the German doctor also vowed to keep it quiet and then share some of his treatment methods as well.

“I said, ‘it’s not a secret. It’s called ice and tape, plus a trainer doing it every hour around the clock,’” Hocutt recalled with a chuckle. “He said, ‘oh, you’re not going to level with me.’ He thought for sure that I had some illegal steroid or some medication that I had given her.”

Hocutt stepped down after the 1988 Winter Olympics in Calgary so he could spend more time with his family. But he said his eight years with those luge athletes

will always hold a special place in his heart.

“It was just a fun, interesting experience and it showed that you can accomplish a lot of goals if you’re diligent and work at it,” he said. “Those athletes had to go out and pretty much get their own sponsors. They were using their connections and it just showed that teamwork, ingenuity and diligence can really pay off.”

Not surprisingly, Hocutt’s unique background in sports medicine – including his days as an Olympic physician – are viewed as a huge asset here in Florida’s Friendliest Hometown.

“It’s so applicable to the patients that we’re seeing here,” said Dr. Joe Hildner, chief medical officer of The Villages Health. “The same sort of injuries that you might have as an Olympian on the luge team, might be similar to the kinds of injuries you might have playing pickleball. So Dr. Hocutt is a real asset to have within our walls.”

Dr. Elliot Sussman, chair of The Villages Health, agreed.

“I think it’s special and indicative of the kinds of physicians that, with the help of Villagers, we’ve been so lucky to attract to our community – just unique people with special and unusual experiences,” he said. “Frankly, I’ve never known a physician who was this involved with the Olympics before, so I see this as one of those stories that just makes this place such a special community.”