

# 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?

Dr. Tomas Perez, a primary care doctor at the Pinellas Care Center, is a big fan of the television series, "The Sopranos," which aired from 1999-2007.

## Fixing health care: All about Dr. Christine Stopyra

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'll tell you what I wrote on my med school application. When I was a little girl, 11 years old – I'm the daughter of a retired firefighter and he's from Boston – he said to me, 'Christina, when you get older, I want you to become a nurse. That way, if you marry a bum, you can take care of yourself. At the time, I thought, 'Eww, science, gross.' But that's why. And my dad has some chronic illnesses, too, which were things I wanted to learn more about.

### Can the initiative here change health care across America?

Yes, because this is proactive medicine. Part of what we do is very much proactive medicine. We're evidence-based, preventative care. If we can prevent disease, then we won't have to admit you to the hospital. You don't get sick. That's quality versus quantity. It wins every time. And quality is not only the evidence-based medicine we practice, but the common-sense way we treat people. You treat everybody in a medical setting the way you would want your parents to



**Care Center:** Lake Sumter Creekside  
**Age:** 43  
**Undergraduate:** Boston College  
**Medical school:** Eastern Virginia Medical School  
**Internship, residency:** Naval Medical Center Portsmouth (Virginia)  
**Board certified:** American Board of Internal Medicine; Diplomate in Internal Medicine

be treated or your siblings to be treated, and everybody wins. The people love to go to work and your patients enjoy coming to the doctor.

**Next week:** Find out all about Dr. David Ethier, an orthopedic surgeon who practices at the USF Health Specialty Care Center in The Villages.

### Creating America's Healthiest Hometown

## What's it like to work in a facility like the Mulberry Grove Care Center?

*"It's nice because you have a smaller number of patients that you can pay closer attention to. Plus, you've got a team of people who are helping you. So when the patient has an acute problem and you're either off that day or you're really busy and don't have any room, you've got a physician's assistant or a nurse practitioner who can help and see the patient. You can advise them on what to do."*

**Dr. Paul Daluga,**  
Mulberry Grove  
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, 352-674-1750

**The Villages Health Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center**

1050 Old Camp Road, Building 100, 352-674-1760

### Specialty care

**USF Health Specialty Care Center**

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



Submitted photo  
Dr. Reed Panos, left, poses with the pilot of an S-3 Viking before taking a flight in the submarine-hunting aircraft. Panos retired from the Air Force in 2002 as a colonel.

# THE JOY OF FLIGHT

## USF Health surgeons recall special airborne adventures

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

Just about everybody who goes into the Air Force dreams of living the words of the famous anthem, "The Wild Blue Yonder."

Not surprisingly, Dr. Reed Panos and Dr. David Ethier, both of whom practice at the USF Health Specialty Care Center, are no different.

And even though they came out of the military as physicians – Panos is a plastic surgeon and Ethier is an orthopedic surgeon – they lived the dream of flying while serving their country.

The two doctors, both of whom are private pilots, spent a combined 44 years in the Air Force.

Panos experienced the kind of flight most only dream of, as well as the chance to be part of a special flying medical team that traveled around the globe.

And for a time, Ethier served as a flight surgeon and enjoyed the opportunity to fly on a regular basis.

Panos, who served as a line ordnance officer in the Army for four years and another 20 in the Air Force as a physician, enjoyed the opportunity to fly off an aircraft carrier aboard an S-3 Viking, a twin-engine jet used by the Navy to identify and track enemy submarines.

But before he could strap into the specialized plane, Panos had to complete a very difficult regimen of egress training.

"You have to be dunked upside down, inside a helicopter, and get yourself out with no air," the retired colonel said. "If you can pull that off, they'll let you on the airplane. The Navy does that because if the plane goes in, the helicopter has to come get you. And if it goes down, then you have to do helicopter egress."

Once Panos had passed the test, he joined the air crew aboard the USS Abraham

### Coming June 8

David Roth, director of the Center on Aging and Health at Johns Hopkins University, offers his thoughts on the initiative to revamp health care in The Villages.

Lincoln (CVN-72), a Nimitz-Class nuclear-powered aircraft carrier that was just off the West Coast of the United States at the time.

"I was on the right seat, pilot on the left seat," Panos recalled with a smile. "And we just took off and we were in a war game off of San Diego. It was a blast."

Ethier, who spent part of his 24-year Air Force career as a flight surgeon at RAF Greenham Common in England, said he particularly enjoyed the opportunity to fly with KC-135 crews on various refueling missions.

"We refueled all kinds of planes, F-4s, F-111s, really the whole Air Force inventory," the retired lieutenant colonel said. "That was really neat to



Submitted photo  
Dr. David Ethier prepares to take a flight in a T-37, a twin-engine jet trainer aircraft, at Randolph Air Force Base near San Antonio. Ethier served 24 years in the Air Force – 14 on active duty – and retired as a lieutenant colonel.



**Panos**



**Ethier**

be able to go up and see those guys in action."

The orthopedist, who joined USF Health last year after a long career at a private practice in Belleview, said he also enjoyed the chance to fly in a C-130 cargo plane with a team that was making a night parachute training jump.

"All these guys are standing up with their parachutes and they're hooked into a line and just one at a time, they're jumping out of the back of the airplane," he said. "And when you look out the back, there's just black. You can't see anything. There are no lights and these guys are just disappearing into the abyss."

Panos also experienced a night flight he won't ever forget, shortly after he joined the Air Force and started attending medical school at the

Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences in Bethesda, Maryland.

"We flew into a specialized operation that was going on somewhere in the Sinai," he said of one of the missions he participated in as part of an aeromedical evacuation team. "As the plane was coming in, it was pitch-black and I watched the pilot take the mike and he goes, click-click. All of a sudden the runway lights just came on and we were only about a hundred feet off the deck."

Panos said the pilot of the Aerovac flight knew exactly what he was doing.

"The minute he touched down, he went click-click again and all the lights went off," Panos said. "So who knows what this secret base was all about."

Panos said the crew quickly picked up an airman who was recovering from an appendectomy.

"We took him home and took care of him," he said. "But secret flights like that, it's kind of interesting what the military does and what's required to defend the country."