

# 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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Contact The Villages Health at 352-674-1700 or visit the website at [thevillageshealth.com](http://thevillageshealth.com).

### Did you know?

Linda Arredondo, care center manager at The Villages Health Specialty Care Center, enjoys reading romance novels and thrillers in her spare time.

## Fixing health care: All about Dr. Smita Ojha

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 bringing 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 come from a family of physicians. I’m a third-generation physician, so I saw in my father and my grandfather the love of caring for people. That’s what made me decide that I wanted to do what my father did, what my grandfather did. And I love to help people and take care of people.

### What is your favorite thing about being a family doctor?

Developing the close relationship with my patients and knowing them well. Helping them through all the medical decision-making and just being there for them when they need me.

### What is your personal philosophy on health care?

That I should guide my patients to the best medical decision-making. That can be based on the recent evidence, where studies have shown what’s best in terms of outcomes. That is my biggest belief in the philosophy of medicine.

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

I strongly believe it can, because our ideas for the way



**Care Center:** Lake Sumter Creekside  
**Age:** 53  
**Undergraduate:** Patna Women’s College, Patna University (India)  
**Medical school:** Patna Medical College (India)  
**Internship, residency:** Patna Medical College Hospital (India); Billinge Hospital (England); Mayo Clinic/St. Cloud Hospital (Minnesota)  
**Board certified:** American Board of Family Medicine

we manage patients is the way it should be across the country. That’s what made me come here.

**Next week:** Find out all about Dr. Ashok Ojha, a primary care physician at the Santa Barbara Care Center.

## Creating America’s Healthiest Hometown

### What is the importance of a patient-centered medical home?

“The patient is at the center of everything we do. It’s about us building a relationship with that person so that they trust us to deal with their health care and medical issues that come up. And also to educate them. What are the best practices for us to be able give you the information and make sure that you’re healthy and that you can live the lifestyle that you came here for. That’s why we’re really focused on being America’s Healthiest Hometown. A lot of these folks are retirement age. They’ve worked all these years and you want them to continue to have longevity.”

**Sheri Harwood,**  
Lake Sumter Creekside  
Care Center manager



## 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, 674-1750

**The Villages Health Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center**  
1050 Old Camp Road, Building 100, 674-1760



George Horsford / Daily Sun

Pete Clarkson, chief executive officer of North/Central Florida for UnitedHealthcare Medicare & Retirement, confers with sales director Lisa Riley at the Lake Sumter Landing MedicareStore recently. As part of the upcoming National Medicare Education Week, the Lake Sumter Landing store will host a workshop for those who want to learn more about Medicare Advantage and the kinds of benefits those plans offer.

# Planning out your health care

## National Medicare Education Week coming back to The Villages

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

UnitedHealthcare is bringing National Medicare Education Week back to Florida’s Friendliest Hometown.

The event, which will be held Sept. 15-21, is designed to provide key information about Medicare before the beginning of the annual open enrollment period, when beneficiaries can make selections or changes regarding their coverage. Open enrollment begins Oct. 15 and runs through Dec. 7.

“The baby boomer population is absolutely skyrocketing, and as a result of that 10,000 people a day become Medicare-eligible across the country,” said Pete Clarkson, chief executive officer of North/Central Florida for UnitedHealthcare Medicare & Retirement, in explaining why UnitedHealthcare started National Medicare Education Week in 2012. “That’s one every eight seconds across the country becoming eligible for Medicare.”

Clarkson said the goal of National Medicare Education Week is to help beneficiaries get answers to key questions before making decisions about their health care. Here in The Villages, he said, there will be four seminars that offer a variety of answers about all facets of Medicare.

“National Medicare Education Week gives you an opportunity to really reintroduce yourself to what Medicare is all about,” he said. “And it gives you an opportunity to look at the options that are available to you so that you can begin to do your research. Those choices that you make should be on a annual basis, because your needs are going to change many times, year over year.”

Clarkson said two larger presentations, which will be held at Savannah Center, will

**Coming Sept. 14**  
UnitedHealthcare’s Pete Clarkson answers pertinent questions about Medicare.

offer a general overview of Medicare. He said those two meetings, which will be presented by both UnitedHealthcare and The Villages Health, will be similar to the ones that drew a record Medicare Week crowd of more than 600 beneficiaries last year.

“We’ll have information in there in terms of what you need to know about enrollment,” Clarkson said. “Things like when you’re eligible, what happens if you delay enrollment and additional services that are covered in the different types of plans.”

Clarkson said he also is excited about two smaller workshops that will benefit those who are new or soon will be eligible for Medicare, as well as those who want to learn more about Medicare Advantage plans. Those will be held at The Villages Health’s Pinellas Care Center, 2485 Pinellas Place, and at UnitedHealthcare’s Lake Sumter Landing MedicareStore, 1049 Lake Sumter Landing, respectively.

### National Medicare Education Week

#### Medicare overview presentations

**Sept. 15:** 2:30-4 p.m.

**Sept. 18:** 6:30-8 p.m.

**Location:** Savannah Center

**RSVP:** Call 866-629-5270, 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or visit [nmew.com](http://nmew.com)

#### Medicare workshops

**Sept. 17:** New to Medicare (10-10:45 a.m.)

**Location:** The Villages Health’s Pinellas Care Center Cafe, 2485 Pinellas Place

**Sept. 19:** Medicare Advantage (9-9:45 a.m.)

**Location:** Lake Sumter Landing UnitedHealthcare MedicareStore, 1049 Lake Sumter Landing

**RSVP:** Pick up a ticket at any UnitedHealthcare MedicareStore in The Villages.

#### Medicare resources

[medicaremadeclear.com](http://medicaremadeclear.com)  
[Medicare.gov](http://Medicare.gov)

1-800-MEDICARE

“Those two smaller ones will be in a little more intimate, smaller settings,” he said. “We can have a little bit more open-ended dialogue and discussion.”

Overall, Clarkson said, there are a variety of factors that Medicare beneficiaries should consider before open enrollment begins, such as:

■ Do you have changes in your health status?

■ Have things happened throughout the year that make conditions different?

■ Are there changes in terms of the network and is your doctor still in the network?

■ Are the specialists and hospitals that you want to use still in the network?

■ Have the benefit designs changed?

■ Do you have an increase in costs and does your plan still meet your budget?

“And then I really encourage folks to take a look at the pharmacy benefits,” he said. “You’ve got to make sure that the prescriptions that you take on a daily basis are going to be covered on that plan.”

Clarkson said that he encourages all Medicare

beneficiaries to examine their needs on a yearly basis. He added that National Medicare Education Week should provide a good start to that process.

“This is the venue where nobody’s going to sell you anything,” he said. “This is where you have the opportunity to do your research, to learn and have a better understanding about Medicare in general, as well as the different options you have for insurance coverage under Medicare.”

Dr. Elliot Sussman, chair of The Villages Health, said he’s thrilled that area residents will have a chance to learn more about planning for their health care during the upcoming event.

“This year in The Villages, we’re going to have about 4,000 current residents who age into Medicare,” he said. “And of the people who live in The Villages today, about 70 percent are eligible for Medicare. So I encourage Villagers to take the time to understand the program, what their choices are and what the advantages and disadvantages of each of those might be.”