

# 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](mailto:larry.croom@thevillagesmedia.com). Or call him at 753-1119, ext. 9366.

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

### Did you know?

Karen Price, a registered nurse who serves as the clinical supervisor at the Colony Care Center, is a big fan of the 2001 movie, “A Beautiful Mind.”

## Fixing health care: All about Dr. Tomas Perez

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 the innovative medical providers who have joined this effort.

### Why did you become a physician?

I always liked science and I always looked up to my uncle, who was a physician back home. It was one of those things where I always said I wanted to become one. I did well in school, went to college, did my biology and ended up going to medical school and here we are.

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

My philosophy has always been not to be paternalistic. I think the key is to partner with your patients, establish a good relationship and provide them with the tools and resources they need for them as individuals to make medical decisions based on their own personal circumstances and beliefs.

I’m not here to impose. I’m here to educate and to give you the tools for you to make the decision.

### What will it feel like if this health care initiative is picked up by other communities and you were on the ground floor of it?

I think that’s why we we’re here. That’s why I left a practice of nine years in Citrus County, because I believe



**Care Center:** Pinellas  
**Age:** 39  
**Undergraduate:** Emory University (Atlanta)  
**Medical school:** Universidad Central del Caribe (Puerto Rico)  
**Internship, residency:** Penn State University/  
Good Samaritan Hospital  
**Board Certified:** American Board of Family Medicine

in the model. I believe the model is going to work and at the end of the day that we’re going to provide good medical care.

And if it becomes a model to be used as an example, it’s a privilege and it’s an honor to have been part of it and contributed to it.

**Next week:** Find out all about Ginger Clive, an advanced registered nurse practitioner with The Villages Health

## Creating America’s Healthiest Hometown

### Why did you decide to become a primary care doctor?

“I wanted to be able to take care of the whole person. I really enjoy doing a variety of different aspects of medicine and had excellent family practice mentors in medical school that showed the depth and breadth of what family practice can do. I chose a residency that was primary-care-focused at Florida Hospital. We got to be side-by-side with the heart surgeons, the general surgeons, the gynecologists and obstetricians. So we got excellent training there and I wanted to be able to continue to do the broad spectrum of medicine.”

**Dr. Glen Morgan,**  
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



**George Horsford /** Daily Sun

Dr. Reed Tuckson, who spent 13 years as executive vice president and chief of medical affairs for UnitedHealth Group, the largest single carrier in the United States, says the changes that are happening in Florida’s Friendliest Hometown make it one of the most exciting places for health care in America.

# A SPECIAL BOND

Health care expert offers praise for Villages Health, social connectedness in community

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

### THE VILLAGES

When Dr. Reed Tuckson recalls his first visit to The Villages about two years ago, one thing clearly sticks out in his mind.

“So many people were holding hands,” said the longtime executive vice president and chief of medical affairs for UnitedHealth Group, who is now the managing director of his own health care consulting firm, Tuckson Health Connections. “If we are connected to another person in a loving and caring way, our lives are filled with hope and we want to do right, not only because we want to feel better, but the person that cares about us wants us to do better.”

Tuckson said studies have shown that it’s important in people’s lives to be socially connected to their community. He said he wasn’t surprised to learn that a USF Health study completed by more than 33,000 Villagers in 2012 showed that social connectedness literally is off the charts in Florida’s Friendliest Hometown.

“What we’re learning is because of so many opportunities to live our lives beyond just ourselves, be involved not only with social groups, but also in volunteerism and giving back, all of these things give me as a physician the opportunity to connect clinical health with prevention and wellness, with living lives that have meaning,” he said. “It all falls together as a whole, and I think that without that we can’t achieve this goal of maximum health. The Villages has an unprecedented set of these kinds of resources and assets that’s really quite remarkable.”

Tuckson took that thought one step further when speaking about a recent second visit here, calling The Villages one of the most exciting places in America.

“What the community is trying to achieve, along with the founders and the medical care system, is remarkable,” said the former commissioner of public health for Washington, D.C. “We’ve never seen any opportunity anywhere else in the country that rivals what you can do to enhance the fullest maximization of health, well-being and quality medical care for people 55 and over. I am just totally energized by the whole experience.”

Tuckson, who also has served as the physician in charge of medical programs for the March of Dimes, said he also was impressed by how smoothly the partnership between The Villages Health (primary care), USF Health (specialty care) and United-Healthcare (Medicare Advantage partner) is working.

“I think these primary care centers are really on the cutting edge of what America is trying to achieve throughout all of health care,” he said. “This unique partnership has started to come together in a holistic symmetry of patient-centered care, where people are put at the center of the health care experience, and the delivery

### Coming May 18

Four physicians at the USF Health Specialty Care Center in The Villages share a special military connection.

system is wrapping itself around the comprehensive, total needs of the individual.” Tuckson also offered praise for the doctors who are providing care at the centers. “I think the model of what these primary care physicians are doing, their orientation toward spending lots of time with people, listening, engaging, I think is really terrific,” he said. “There are very few places in this country where primary care doctors are afforded the luxury of time spent with patients.”

Overall, Tuckson said his visit was quite enjoyable and educational. He said he believes the health care initiative here will lead to positive changes for Villages residents as they seek various levels of treatment.

And he said he thoroughly expects what’s happening here to eventually lead to changes in health care across America.

“It’s going to teach us an awful lot about how to promote patient-centered, primary care,” he said. “And it’s going to teach us a lot about how to have a relationship that is maximally healthful between primary care, specialists and an insurance company like United. Putting all of that together, we’re going to learn a great deal.”

Dr. Elliot Sussman, chair of The Villages Health, said he’s known Tuckson since their days together at the University of Pennsylvania. He added that he’s thrilled to have someone with such impressive credentials onboard as a trusted adviser.

“We asked Reed to talk about patient engagement

### The Dr. Reed Tuckson file

**Currently:** Managing director, Tuckson Health Connections

**Age:** 63

**Education:**  
**Doctor of medicine** (Georgetown University School of Medicine, 1978)  
**Undergraduate degree** (Howard University, 1973)  
**Studied at** (Wharton School of Business, 1981-83)

**Other work experience:**  
■ Executive vice president and chief of medical affairs, UnitedHealth Group; member, board of directors, United Health Foundation (2006-13)  
■ Senior vice president, consumer health and medical care advancement, UnitedHealth Group (2000-06)  
■ Senior vice president, professional standards, American Medical Association (1997-2000)  
■ President, Charles R. Drew University of Medicine and Science (1991-97)  
■ Senior vice president for programs, March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation (1990-91)

with their providers, with each other and with their community,” Sussman said. “He’s really one of the experts in that and he understands, as we believe, that engagement may be even more important as we get older and critical to good health and longevity.”