

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?

Dr. Michael Clifford, a primary care physician at the Colony Care Center, enjoys playing golf, swimming, biking and lifting weights.



Peter Travers / Daily Sun
Mary Sharkey, right, of the Village of Piedmont, talks with UnitedHealthcare's Mike Bricker during a recent fan-appreciation fair at the Mulberry Grove Care Center.

Villages Health encouraging patients to attend weekly fairs

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

THE VILLAGES – The Villages Health is in the midst of a series of six appreciation fairs to show its patients just how important they are to the organization. So far, fairs have been held at Colony Care Center, Mulberry Grove Care Center and Lake Sumter Creekside Care Center. The next event will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday at the Pinellas Care Center, 2485 Pinellas Place. Entertainment will be provided by the Still Kickin' Bluegrass band and Latin Zumba.

"The fairs are going phenomenal," said Sheri Harwood, the care center manager at Creekside who is also serving as project manager for all the appreciation fairs. "We have little giveaways, bags for them and sports bracelets. We want to encourage them to go out and walk but we want them to be safe."

Those attending the fairs will find plenty of games to keep them busy, such as bag toss, spill the milk, ring toss and high striker. Inside the care centers, patients will find chair massages and a variety of free screenings, such as blood pressure, body mass index, body fat percentage and basal metabolic rate. Free healthy snacks and refreshments also will be served.

Harwood said she has thoroughly enjoyed each event – especially the opportunities to see patients spending time with their medical providers outside the clinical setting.

"Patients are so excited that they got to sit and talk with their physicians and see them in a different light," she said. "They are seeing them on a more personal level, being up close and having that interaction."

Harwood said that one-on-one time strengthens the bond between patient and medical provider.

"They see them not only as a clinician but as a person," she said. "So they develop a friendship outside of the medical home."

Each fair also has representatives from UnitedHealthcare on hand to share information about Medicare and Medicare Advantage plans. With the Medicare open enrollment period now active until Dec. 7, Harwood said plenty of patients have a unique opportunity to ask pertinent questions about their health-care needs for the coming year.

"We have a Medicare information session that has been very well attended," she said. "A lot of people are just so appreciative that we've given them additional information to make an informed choice. They like having that overall feeling that someone is guiding them and helping them, because it can be very confusing for our patients."

Kathy Liefkort, chief operating officer of The Villages Health, said everyone who wants to learn more about The Villages Health or Medicare is encouraged to attend any of the remaining fairs.

"People might drive by and want to stop in and that's encouraged," she said. "Most of our employees and the physicians will be attending. So I hope that they come out and enjoy it."

A patient-appreciation fair also will be held Nov. 1 at the Belleview Care Center, 5051 SE 110th St. Singer George Robinson will provide entertainment.

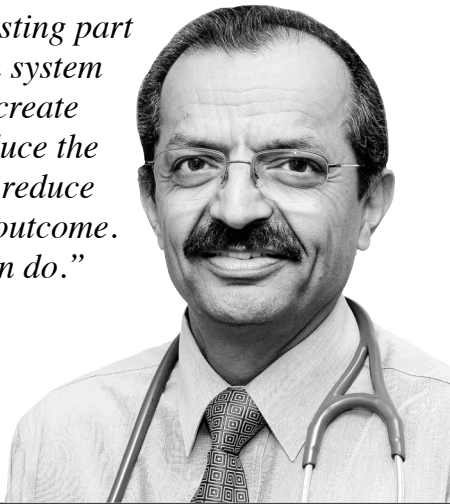
And the final event will be Nov. 8 at the Santa Barbara Care Center, 1575 Santa Barbara Blvd. Both events will last from 10 a.m. until noon.

Creating America's Healthiest Hometown

Can any member of the medical team make or break the patient experience?

"I agree with that. Communication is so important in this entire team. A breakdown in communication, at any step, be it between me and my nurse, my nurse and somebody else, that's very critical. We try and set up systems. In as much as we rely on the individual, we don't want to be relying on the individual. We would like to set up these systems. That's what I found was the interesting part in creating this health system was that you want to create these systems that reduce the chances of error, that reduce the chances of a bad outcome. That's the best you can do."

Dr. Ashok Ojha,
Santa Barbara
Care Center



"This building and those who work within it stand dedicated to the ideal that health – like life itself – is a precious gift, worthy of diligent stewardship. May all who enter here know the joy of living life healthfully and productively, and of helping others to do so."

Quote displayed at every Villages Health primary care center



Photos by George Horsford / Daily Sun
Medical providers work inside the new-and-improved huddle zone areas of the Belleview Care Center recently. The improvements to the huddle zones were put in place to facilitate better communication and patient care.

Enjoying the changes

Belleview Care Center staff thrilled with recent renovation

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

BELLEVIEW

There's no doubt that the Belleview Care Center staff is enjoying treating patients in a freshly remodeled facility.

"There have really been some great changes all around," said Susan Bonenclark, a physician assistant who has been at the center for 11 years. "Not only is it very pretty, but it is going to facilitate patient care even better than what we had before."

The 10,000-square-foot facility, which first opened in 1997 and once was featured on the cover of the Belleview Chamber of Commerce directory, was home to Family Doctors of Belleview until that practice merged with The Villages Health in November 2012.

And while the care center clearly was ahead of its time, the recent renovation brought it more in line with The Villages Health's other five primary care centers that are located throughout Florida's Friendliest Hometown.

"It's so fresh and inviting," said Chad Collins, the interim care center manager who also serves as operations and human resources manager for The Villages Health. "It had many years of use and a lot of care had taken place in these hallways. But to come in now, it's like new life has been brought back to Belleview."

The care center's face-lift included new paint and flooring, as well as a new conference room, a comfortable living room where patients wait for appointments, expanded huddle zone areas where medical providers work together, and a new cafe for employees, to name a few things.

Coming Oct. 26

■ Villages Health physicians say Medicare Advantage makes them better doctors.
■ Meet Dr. Kimberly Giovannelli, a primary care physician at the Santa Barbara Care Center.

Collins said he likes all of the improvements, but the living room area and the new conference room are among his favorites.

"When you walk in there now, it just feels very warm and inviting and comfortable," he said of the living room area. "And our conference room area is much larger than it used to be. So that's a great place for all of us to get together for our staff meetings and provider meetings."

Dr. Stephen Fischer, who along with Dr. Joe Hildner opened the original facility in 1997, said he's thrilled to have a large conference room that can be used in a variety of ways, including group sessions for patients.

"We'll be able to sit 20 to 25 people and teach them all about diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, headaches



Brittany Gagnon, a physician assistant at the Belleview Care Center, works in the huddle zone area of the recently renovated medical facility. Gagnon, a graduate of the University of Florida, says it's extremely important for patients to have good relationships with their primary care doctor and his or her team.

or whatever the topic of the day is," he said. "That's going to be a much more important thing as we kind of mature in the practice."

Bonenclark said she's looking forward to seeing success stories that come from those sessions.

"Studies are definitely showing that group education is beneficial for our patients," she said. "The more education we can offer them, the more likely they are going to take responsibility for the diseases that they have and get better."

Bonenclark added that the improved huddle zones will help medical providers work even more efficiently than they did before the remodel. "The most important thing is that we're able to communicate with each other," she said. "We're not trying to find each other down the hallway. It really facilitates patient care."

Dr. Daniel Whinnen, who has been at the care center for 12 years, agreed.

"Now I have my physician assistant working right next to me so we can exchange

information all day long," he said. "So that's nice and convenient."

Collins said he's also glad to see the improvements to the cafe where employees take breaks or eat their lunches.

"You spend more time at work than you do at home with your families," he said. "So to be able to come in and have a space that's comfortable, that you can take pride in, I think that's really important. It keeps morale high and it keeps people happy to come to work."

Along those lines, Hildner said it's extremely important that all of the Belleview Care Center's employees enjoy coming to work.

"They know they're going to laugh and they know that they're going to have a chance to get to know the people that they're working with," he said. "They're going to communicate about good ideas and explore new things together. We really try to facilitate that kind of cross-pollination and we have created spaces and support for interactions like that as well."