



# HEALTHY BITS

Healthy Bits – A Newsletter Published by Community Health of South Florida, Inc.

## CHI HOSTS FIRST ANNUAL WORLD AIDS DAY WALK



**On the count of three, community members cheerfully kick off CHI's first World Aids Day Walk.**

When Ashley Nicole Cason was diagnosed with HIV at the age of 15, she thought her life was over. Cason suffered with depression and suicidal thoughts as a teenager and sadly did not see a positive future for herself.

"I wanted to give up. I felt like my life was over and I couldn't go on," she said. It wasn't until Cason received support from loved ones as an adult that she began to feel hope for her life.

Cason is a national advocate for HIV and AIDS. She spoke to the crowd at Community Health of South Florida, Inc.'s first World AIDS Day walk on December 3rd at JL and Enid W. Demps Park.

World AIDS Day is an annual international day that encourages people to come together to tear down the barriers that prevent people from accessing HIV testing, prevention, and access to treatment.

CHI highlighted this important cause to raise awareness for HIV and AIDs and to mourn the lives lost to this terrible illness. The community gathered on the tracks to participate in a one-mile walk, an energetic warm up and enjoyed great music and food with their families. CHI's mobile medical van was also on site to administer free HIV screenings.

"I am so happy to see such a great turn out today," said Blake Hall, CHI's President and CEO. "It is my goal that CHI will always be here for those who are living with HIV. You are not alone."

Cason believes events like this help tackle HIV and AIDS head-on by having open and honest discussions with others.

"When you are battling a chronic illness, it is important to have a good support system. There are many people who are HIV/AIDS positive that live and work amongst you," said Cason. "While you are walking today, keep in mind the purpose of why you are here. We all need to support each other."

# A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO



Happy New Year! It's a fresh start for all of us as we clean the slate and strive for good health, happiness and success in 2023. I know the team at CHI will be forging ahead to continue with high quality compassionate care with new innovations, programs and services this year. I hope the new year brings new opportunities to all of you.

Hopefully, you were able to round out last year with us at the CHI Holiday Festival. I am so grateful to the dozens of organizations who stepped up with donations to ensure the children in our community received toys during the holiday season. It was such a delight to see

the joy and excitement on their faces as they received toys, danced with the Grinch and sat down for the holiday movie "The Grinch."

Then came another gift on New Year's Day when CHI doctors delivered the first baby of the New Year in Miami-Dade!

As I reflect on 2022, I am emotional when I consider the way the community continues to rally around our capital campaign to build the Children's Crisis Center. Last year, donors gave more than \$260,000! We are now just \$377,000 away from reaching our \$5.5 Million Goal. This tremendous support will ensure children with severe mental illness receive the intensive care that they need.

I am also amazed and humbled by the care and devotion of the CHI team. They continued to provide high-quality healthcare to all of us in the midst of an ongoing pandemic with new challenges and illnesses such as monkeypox and more. They did this while caring for themselves and their own families during difficult times.

I hope you all will remain resilient and optimistic. Having a positive mindset is key to happiness and success. Look around you, just as I have, there are signs of hope and gifts among us.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Blake Hall". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Blake Hall

# CHI OFFERS FINANCIAL RELIEF TO EMPLOYEES WITH THE “ANGEL FUND”

Community Health of South Florida, Inc. (CHI) employee, Angela Robbins (named changed for confidentiality), did not know how she was going to keep her lights on this past holiday season after recently running into challenging times.

“Life just caught up with me, I was so scared,” she said.

A holiday miracle came to Robbins when she was selected as one of the first recipients of the “CHI Angel Fund.” The new fund aims to provide financial relief to employees that may encounter unexpected crises. CHI established it to offer aid with the goal of supporting the overall financial well-being of its team members.

Coming off the heels of a global pandemic and soaring inflation, many families are currently feeling the burden on their wallets. CHI cares for its employees and wanted to give back to the people who provide exceptional care to the community. The wellness of CHI staff is of top priority to President and CEO, Blake Hall.

“We would not be able to care for the South Florida community in the way that we do at CHI, without our wonderful team,” said Hall. “We are here for them and want to support those in need.”

Robbins, who is a single mom of three, recently purchased a home three years ago. She admits that maintaining the home and other financial responsibilities has been difficult.

“I’ve had to cancel gym memberships and other things that were important to me. I was expecting my lights to be cut off at any time,” she said.

So, it is no surprise how thankful and relieved she felt when she found out that she had been selected for the Angel Fund.



**CHI establishes the “Angel Fund” for employees experiencing financial hardships.**

“I’ve been working here for seven years. I have an amazing team and I’ve always been proud to say that I work at CHI,” Robbins said tearfully. “To finally have that recognition that we are not just employees, that we are much more, I feel very blessed and lucky.”

Natalie Franco (named changed for confidentiality), the second recipient of the “CHI Angel Fund” felt gratitude that she was able to help pay her 77-year-old mother’s mortgage.

“Joy. I felt not only joy but happiness,” said Franco. “It felt welcoming to know that CHI and this program were there to help me and my family at a tough time.”

A year ago, Franco’s father sadly passed away leaving her mother in financial hardship and facing foreclosure. Having the ability to pay her mother’s mortgage brought her peace of mind.

“It meant a great deal to me. My mom had been in that home for over 50 years. It means so much that we could save her home and she did not have to move away from her comfort zone,” said Franco.

# NEW YEAR, NEW YOU!

The start of a new year is a time where many of us reflect on our life and determine the changes we would like to see in ourselves. One of those areas that you might consider improving is your health. Community Health of South Florida, Inc. (CHI) physicians Dr. Kelly Mudon and Dr. Howard Pratt offer their medical advice on leading a healthier lifestyle and why it's so important!

## Keep up to date with health appointments

Scheduling a health appointment with your primary care physician is the first step in focusing on your health in the new year. A physician will look at your blood work and vitals to make sure that you are in good health. Visiting a doctor that is aware of your medical history is crucial, according to Dr. Mudon.

"Your primary physician is more able to make informed decisions on your health when they are aware of the details of your history," said Dr. Mudon. In these cases, early recognition of problems is easier."

## Healthier eating

If you are looking to drop a few pounds this year, evaluate your eating habits! Eating a well-balanced diet is a key factor in one's health. Healthy eating has several benefits including weight loss and increased energy, said Dr. Mudon.

"It's important to work on a healthier lifestyle and moderation in food and drink," said Dr. Murdon. Losing weight helps improve chronic issues, like Hypertension and Diabetes.

## Exercise

Moving your body and engaging in physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. Dr. Mudon said it is linked to improved mobility, a reduced risk of chronic diseases, and a better mood. Increasing physical activity in your everyday life may be challenging at first but there are ways to overcome this hurdle.

"Exercising 150 minutes per week will greatly benefit your health," Dr. Mudon said. "Participate



**Associate Director of Family Medicine, Dr. Kelly Mudon (left) and Behavioral Health Medical Director, Dr. Howard Pratt (right).**

in an activity that you love, and you'll be more likely to continue with it."

She recommends fun workouts like swimming if you experience pain in your joints.

## Focusing on your mental health

Your mental health has a direct link to your overall wellbeing. People with mental health conditions are at high risk of experiencing chronic physical conditions. Psychiatrist, Dr. Howard Pratt recommends being aware of your mental state and practicing self-care to relieve conditions like anxiety and depression.

"Do small things each day that bring you joy," he said. "Instead of sitting around and dwelling on your current situation, find activities that allow you to disconnect."

However, there are still times when professional help is needed. If you are struggling with your mental health, Dr. Pratt encourages patients to speak to a mental health professional.

"We need to have honest conversations about our mental health," he said. "No matter how strong you may feel, sometimes we need help from others."

To make an appointment with a primary care physician or mental health professional visit [www.chisouthfl.org/appointment-requests/](http://www.chisouthfl.org/appointment-requests/) or call 305-252-4820

# FIRST BABY OF 2023 IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY DELIVERED BY CHI DOCTOR



**Ingrid Gonzalez Perez holds her newborn baby boy at Jackson South Medical Center after the baby was delivered by Dr. Amine Khachani**

It's a boy! As the clock struck midnight and cheers erupted in celebration of the new year, CHI's Dr. Amine Khachani delivered Miami-Dade County's first baby of 2023 at Jackson South Medical Center.

Ingrid Gonzalez Perez and her husband welcomed a beautiful baby boy, Nelson Diaz Gonzalez on January 1, 2023, at 12:01 a.m. Weighing in at 7 pounds and 2.6 ounces, baby Nelson is the couple's third child.

Perez expressed her gratitude to Dr. Khachani for the beautiful moment.

**"This was such a positive experience, and I am very happy."**

CHI is committed to offering comprehensive quality care to the community from birth through adulthood.



# Give Kids A Smile Day

## February 3, 2023

Free cleanings, oral screenings, varnish sealants, and giveaways

### Kids ages 1-16 years old

#### Doris Ison Health Center

10300 SW 216th Street  
Miami, Florida 33190  
8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

#### West Perrine Health Center

18255 Homestead Avenue  
Perrine, Florida 33157  
8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

#### West Kendall Health Center

13540 SW 135th Avenue  
Miami, Florida 33186  
8:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.

#### South Miami Health Center

6350 Sunset Drive  
South Miami, Florida 33143  
8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.

#### Martin Luther King Jr. Clinica Campesina

820 SW 1st Street  
Homestead, Florida 33030  
8 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

#### Naranja Health Center

13805 SW 264th Street  
Naranja, FL 33032  
8:30 a.m. - 6 p.m.



SCAN HERE

**Appointments required**

Make yours today: (786) 272-2100 | [chisouthfl.org/smileday](https://chisouthfl.org/smileday)

# OUR COMPASSIONATE TEAM SERVING YOU



**Maurice Lee stands in front of his CHI delivery van.**

Maurice Lee is a Warehouse Supply Technician at Community Health of South Florida, Inc. Employed at CHI since 2020, Lee is responsible for printing and delivering supplies to all 14 CHI health centers and school-based programs. A treasured part of his job is completing tasks for staff and patients that are of high importance. Lee takes pride in ensuring that CHI logistic operations run smoothly. In his free time, Lee enjoys fishing and real estate.

Dr. Maxwell Cardenas is a dentist at Community Health of South Florida's Doris Ison Health Center. He performs dental procedures, and comprehensive oral examinations for his patients. Dr. Cardenas takes pride in offering quality service to his patients and taking care of their dental needs. He loves to perform extractions and plans to continue his dental education in 2023. Originally from Nicaragua, Dr. Cardenas likes to exercise and spend time with his family on his free time.



**CHI Dentist, Dr. Maxwell Cardenas at Doris Ison Health Center.**