



# HEALTHY BITS

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

## CHI HOSTS WORLD AIDS DAY WALK IN CUTLER BAY



Hundreds laced up their sneakers to kick-off CHI's Annual World AIDS Day Walk

Leo Martinez was diagnosed with HIV at the early age of 24. In his first decade of living with the disease, he experienced intense shame and heartache. "Coming out as HIV positive and gay, together, was a challenge, a huge challenge," he said. "I won't lie, I lost family members, I lost friends."

Remarkably, Martinez remained confident that his diagnosis would be one of his biggest blessings and he would quickly realize why. He eventually made the conscious decision to transform his shame, reframe every negative aspect of life, and put a positive spin on it. Martinez detailed his road to living a normal life with HIV at Community Health of South Florida, Inc.'s World AIDS Day Walk at JL and Enid W. Demps Park on December 2nd.

Emceed by TK Owens, a seasoned non-profit professional and Miami native, the walk was organized to raise awareness for HIV and AIDS and to spread the message that HIV is preventable and treatable. Hundreds participated in the one-mile walk in Cutler Bay and enjoyed music with their family and friends.

Attendees had the opportunity to learn about testing and treatment. Many were moved by the dozens of red kites flown above to commemorate those who have lost their lives to the disease.

In a speech to the audience, Dr. Edwin Bosa Osorio, a physician at CHI, reflected on the virus's devastating impact on healthcare and the country four decades ago.

"Back in the day, having HIV was a death sentence. We have all heard that story because there was no treatment," he said. "Slowly but surely, we started getting new things like testing. We can now say that HIV is no longer a death sentence!"

Martinez is proof that life continues after a diagnosis. At this stage in his life, he credits his ability to thrive with HIV, to a growth mindset.

**"The mistakes I made were teaching me discernment and building resilience," he said. "Now, I can push myself to achieve greater things. The situations that did not work out led me to my calling!"**



Leo Martinez, who was diagnosed with HIV at the age of 24, gave a heartfelt speech to the audience

# PRESIDENT & CEO MESSAGE



Happy Holidays to all of you! I hope the warmth and joy of the season are upon you and your family. As we approach the end of 2023, I want to express my gratitude for the community partnerships that support the mission of CHI and the team that works tirelessly to care for our patients and keep our health centers running at a high-quality level. I also want our patients to know that we are so thankful for the opportunity to serve as your medical home. We know you have a choice and putting your healthcare in our hands is a privilege that we take very seriously.

The holidays are usually associated with joy and celebration, but not for some. Together we can make a difference. If you know someone who is alone, depressed, or suffering this holiday season, you can be the light to carry them through. We have a compassionate team of psychiatrists, therapists and more who are ready to help.

Don't delay in getting behavioral healthcare to change your mindset or help someone else change theirs.

I'm very pleased with the progress I'm seeing as the construction of our Children's Crisis Center moves forward. Crews have completed pouring the concrete slab that serves as the base of the center. Right now, they are making the steel structure. We hope the project will be complete by the end of 2024 so that we can have a special place to heal the young hearts and minds of children with severe mental health issues in our community. If you're looking for an impactful gift this holiday season, consider buying a Brick of Hope. The bricks will line the entrance of the Children's Crisis Center and can be personalized with your name or a loved one's name. It's a lasting impact that will always connect that person to the mission of helping these children. Just visit [chisouthfl.org/bricksofhope](http://chisouthfl.org/bricksofhope) or call (786) 293-5504.

**I wish you all love, happiness and good health in the New Year!**

Yours Truly,

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

**Blake Hall**

# THE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION PROGRAM AT CHI BRINGS STAFF TOGETHER

Ambassadors of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program took the stage during Cultural Awareness Day at CHI. This is a day that employees gather to celebrate the diversity among staff. They are encouraged to wear cultural attire and share aspects of their culture with history, food, music and more. At the start of the day, the ambassadors engaged in a workshop known as a “privilege walk.” They courageously revealed personal histories and facts about their lives as they stepped forward in response to probing questions. As CHI employees in the audience observed, they would realize that despite their differences and unique life experiences, there is common ground in their shared work environment. The goal was to stimulate a deeper understanding of unity among the diverse individuals within the organization.

Carol Blackwood-Curry, CHI’s Director of Volunteer Services and Event Coordination and DEI Ambassador, said that activities like these offer an insight into each other’s lives that provide a valuable lesson in understanding who we are as individuals.

**“We may have varying experiences, but we need to be a little bit more empathic towards the experiences that others have that we have not,” she said. “It is an eye opener usually for everybody. It did cause some conversations afterward.”**

CHI’s Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion program was created at CHI in 2022 to create a sense of belonging among employees. The organization has a diverse staff, but leaders wanted to ensure that everyone feels understood, recognized and appreciated at work.

“We value diversity, but figuring out how to help people feel like they belong in the environment, from the patients to the staff to the community, that’s a different thing,” Blackwood-Curry said. “You have to make some effort for that.”

Since the start of this program, its eight ambassadors, serving as representatives of the staff and various ethnic groups at CHI, have actively launched a series of activities and events

designed to connect employees. These initiatives create a space for open and honest conversation promoting a culture of transparency and mutual understanding within the organization. Among these efforts include themed “DEI Fridays” where each Friday for 6 weeks out of the year there are opportunities for staff to create “I am” videos and written narratives that showcase who they are as individuals. Additionally, the introduction of “DEI lunch and learns,” a 40-minute interactive conversation focused on DEI topics has been successful.

According to Blackwood-Curry, these efforts have already begun to make a difference among staff and have had a positive impact on the patient care approach.

“People are talking to each other and learning from each other,” she said. “It extends what was already an empathic attitude towards our patients. It reminds staff to be mindful of how they speak to one another.”



**CHI employees celebrate diversity wearing Colombian cultural attire**



# ELEVATING PATIENT CARE:

## THE BRODES H. HARTLEY, JR. TEACHING HEALTH CENTER'S EXPANSION FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



**President and CEO Blake Hall, Brodes H. Hartley, Jr. Teaching Health Center residents, and CHI providers and staff, pose for a photo inside new suite**

The Brodes H. Hartley, Jr. Teaching Health Center at Community Health of South Florida, Inc. (CHI) embraces growth with the unveiling of the new family medicine and behavioral health facility at the Doris Ison Health Center. The 7,000-square-foot space is equipped with 15 state-of-the-art family medicine exam rooms and seven consultation rooms for behavioral health services. This clinical expansion not only provides additional access to healthcare for CHI patients, but also serves as a great learning environment for the Teaching Health Center residents. Chief of Family Medicine, Dr. Elizabeth Philippe, highlights that the driving force behind this expansion was the commitment to elevate education for the residents and ensure proper care for patients.

"The goal was to have an integrative space for the residents where they can see patients and be able to provide primary care," Dr. Philippe said. "We wanted to have a bigger space with more exam rooms so we can accommodate all 35 residents on their clinic days."

In this new facility, both teams enjoy designated spaces alongside support staff and nurses. The real advantage, however, is the emphasis on residents working closely together, promoting collaboration and opportunities for learning.

"With the family medicine and psychiatry residents working side by side, they can work in a close environment," Dr. Philippe said. "If a family medicine resident needed to consult someone for a behavioral health issue they could, and vice versa."

As the Teaching Health Center continues to grow and evolve, these advancements will help better prepare residents for their future as doctors. This progress not only improves the residents' training but also promises improved patient care, reflecting a positive path for CHI.

# BEYOND MEDICATIONS: CHI'S WARFARIN CLINICS PRIORITIZE HEALTH AND COMMUNITY TIES



**Dr. Rolando Caldrin and patient Karl Mills at one of CHI's monthly Warfarin clinics**

Throughout the years, Rosa Jackson Sneed has become well acquainted with Warfarin, an anticoagulant medication that she has relied on since 1999 due to a longstanding history of blood clots. The medicine prevents her blood from clotting, which could lead to death. Understanding the crucial part that Warfarin plays in maintaining her overall health, Sneed turns to Community Health of South Florida, Inc. (CHI) for healthcare support. For more than ten years, CHI has had monthly clinics for patients taking Warfarin and other anticoagulants. These sessions provide education and create a sense of community among the patients. Actively participating in these clinics at the Doris Ison Health Center, Sneed ensures her well-being through ongoing participation.

"I have been with CHI for years and coming to this clinic for the longest," Sneed said. "It has been a help. We get our blood checked at the same time and come to class. It has been very beneficial."

At the November session, Sneed was among a handful of patients in the room who completed lab work and took to their seats for the education portion of the program. CHI pharmacists and pharmacy students addressed their concerns and provided information for treatment options.

Patient laboratory results are then closely monitored by pharmacists and doctors. The goal is to check patients on the spot and adjust their treatment plans immediately. "If their test shows us that their levels are high, they will have bleeding issues," said Dr. Rolando Caldren, a CHI pharmacist. "If their levels are low, they will have blood clots. That's why we adjust it on the spot."

CHI Director of Pharmacy Services, Dr. Samuel James, who has played a role in this initiative, recognizes that although this is a challenging time for the patient, he is grateful that they have access to services like these.

"They come to this class for us to help them stay healthy and we adjust their treatment based on what levels are on the test," he said. "It has become a small little community. It gives some of these patients who have nobody to talk to, an opportunity to talk to each other and feel better about their situation."

Dr. Caldren reflected proudly on more than a decade of collaboration between CHI clinicians. A program that started as a mere concept, has now expanded to 50 patients in the group.

"We have a whole policy and procedure that was created just for this class," Dr. Caldren said. "The idea is both compliance and education, so the patient can—to a certain point—fend for themselves. It has been successful!"



# OUR COMPASSIONATE TEAM SERVING YOU



**Dr. Jorge Exposito, pharmacist at the Doris Ison Health Center**

Dr. Jorge Exposito is a pharmacist at the Doris Ison Health Center and Martin Luther King Jr. Clinica Campesina Center. Dr. Exposito started his career at CHI as a pharmacy tech 14 years ago. In last few years, he graduated from Florida International University and Larkin University and received his pharmacist license. Becoming a pharmacist has brought more responsibility for Dr. Exposito as he sees about 300 patients in a day. But it is an incredibly rewarding job in which he enjoys interacting with his patients and taking care of their needs. He appreciates that CHI provides options for patients to have access to affordable medication. Dr. Exposito takes pride in being a first-generation pharmacist. In his free time, he likes to go out, travel, and attend sporting events.

Patricia Salazar is a dedicated member of the Environmental Service Department at CHI. She has worked with the organization for seven years and says that the best part of her job is being on the move and seeing different faces every day. She travels to four different CHI centers throughout the week, which has allowed her to build strong relationships with fellow staff. Salazar is responsible for keeping CHI centers sanitized and managing the inventory of supplies. She is dedicated to her role at CHI and is happy to contribute her efforts to the organization's success. Outside of her professional responsibilities, she finds joy in unwinding and spending quality time with her beloved family.



**Environmental Service employee, Patricia Salazar, at the Doris Ison Health Center**