



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

# Finding Care When It Mattered Most



*Patricia Philippe (left), APRN, and Andrea Clarke (right) pictured together. Philippe cared for Clarke in 2025 during her miscarriage.*

Andrea Clarke was actively miscarrying in November of 2025 when she walked through CHI's doors, scared, in pain, and unsure where else to turn. Prior to coming to CHI, Clarke had sought care at an emergency room at another health facility but did not receive the help she needed.

"I was having vaginal bleeding, and I called all the doctors within my health insurance network," Clarke said. "The only appointments they had was months out."

That's when she decided to visit the Doris Ison Health Center, where she met CHI's Director of Education and Infection Prevention and Control, Patricia Philippe. From that moment on, Clarke says, everything began to change.

"When I went there, I could barely walk in, and Philippe was extremely kind and treated me like a human being," Clarke recalled. "She was genuinely concerned for me, and the nurses were as well."

Seeing the severity of Clarke's condition, Philippe acted quickly, making calls and coordinating care to make sure Clarke received immediate attention. She was soon connected with CHI's OB/GYN, Dr. Ayita Verna.

Clarke explained that the care team at CHI supported her through every step of her miscarriage, a process that lasted approximately five months.

**"I was in so much pain," she said. "Dr. Verna and the staff were so helpful and got me the ultrasounds I needed. Even until now, she is a resource I can call if I have any questions."**

While the experience was deeply traumatic, Clarke says she emerged with a renewed sense of hope. Healing and envisioning happiness in her future became the most meaningful takeaways from her experience at CHI. She admits she did not have high expectations going in, as she is insured by Medicaid, but was pleasantly surprised by the level of care she received.

"I am grateful to have quality doctors that care and facilities that are clean," she said. "You know sometimes you think places take Medicaid and the facility is not going to be the best, but I had better care at CHI than I did at the hospital."

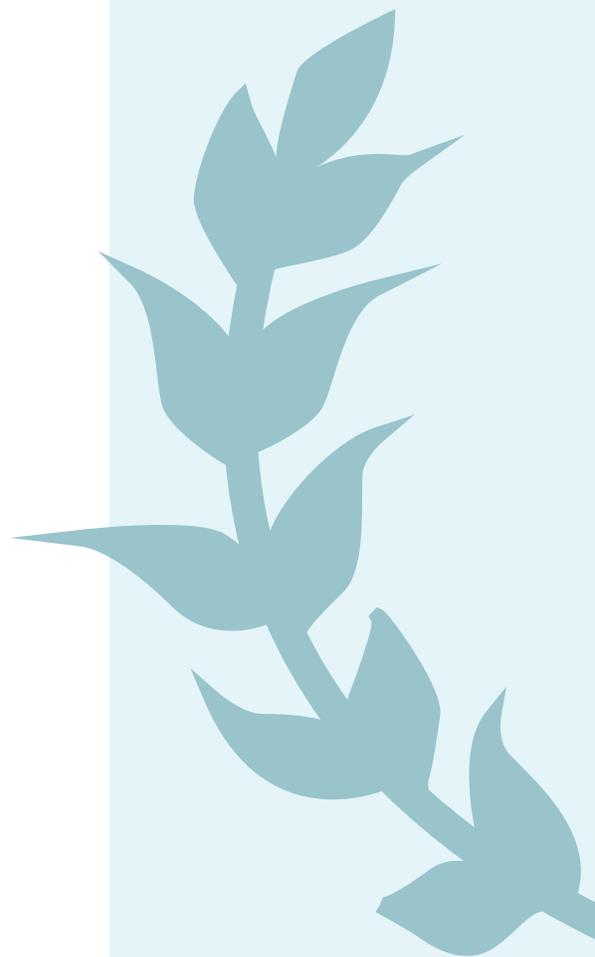
Looking ahead, Clarke plans to try for another pregnancy. For now, she is focused on healing. She says Dr. Verna has been supportive of her desire to explore holistic options first, while closely monitoring her condition.

Today, Clarke says she feels like she has a medical home and providers who care for her and feel like family.

**"Dr. Verna will be helping me with my next pregnancy," Clarke said. "Not to say I did not go through anything during the process, but I felt very positive and hopeful. I don't know if that would have been the case if I never met Ms. Philippe."**



*(From left to right) Philippe and Clarke share a moment at the Doris Ison Health Center.*



# President & CEO Message

I am filled with gratitude and pride as I reflect on our continued commitment to keeping our communities healthy and empowered throughout the year. At CHI, we believe that preventive care is the foundation of long-term wellness, and there is no better time than now to take proactive steps toward your health.

As we continue the new year, I encourage everyone to schedule their annual wellness visit. These yearly appointments are an important opportunity to connect with your provider, review your health goals, and identify concerns early, before they become more serious. Routine checkups play a vital role in maintaining overall well-being and ensuring you stay on track for a healthy year ahead.

Flu season also remains a top priority for our community. Flu activity often extends well into the spring, and this year we have seen higher-than-usual numbers. Protecting yourself and your loved ones is more important than ever. CHI offers flu vaccinations at all health center locations, and I strongly encourage patients to speak with their physicians about getting vaccinated. Taking this simple step can help prevent serious illness and reduce the spread of the virus throughout our community.

February is also recognized as American Heart Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about cardiovascular disease, which remains the leading cause of death in the United States. This observance reminds us of the importance of heart health and the everyday choices that can reduce risk. This month, CHI is encouraging everyone to take charge of their health by focusing on lifestyle changes such as healthier eating habits, regular physical activity, and stress management.

In support of this effort, I invite you to join CHI's "Walking Toward Better Health" challenge this month. Whether you are walking on your lunch break, with family after dinner, or alongside co-workers, every step is a step toward a healthier heart. Together, we can motivate one another to build habits that support lifelong wellness.

As we move into March, I also want to recognize Doctors' Day on March 30, a special



opportunity to honor the physicians who care for our patients. Our CHI doctors work tirelessly every day to ensure our communities receive high-quality, patient-centered care. I want to personally thank each of our physicians for their steadfast commitment to the South Florida community and the heart they bring to their work.

As always, thank you for being part of the CHI community. Let us continue to care for ourselves and each other and move forward with the same spirit of compassion and service in 2026.

To sign up for the walk challenge

[CLICK HERE](#)

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

Blake Hall

# Protecting Colon Health Through Prevention and Early Detection

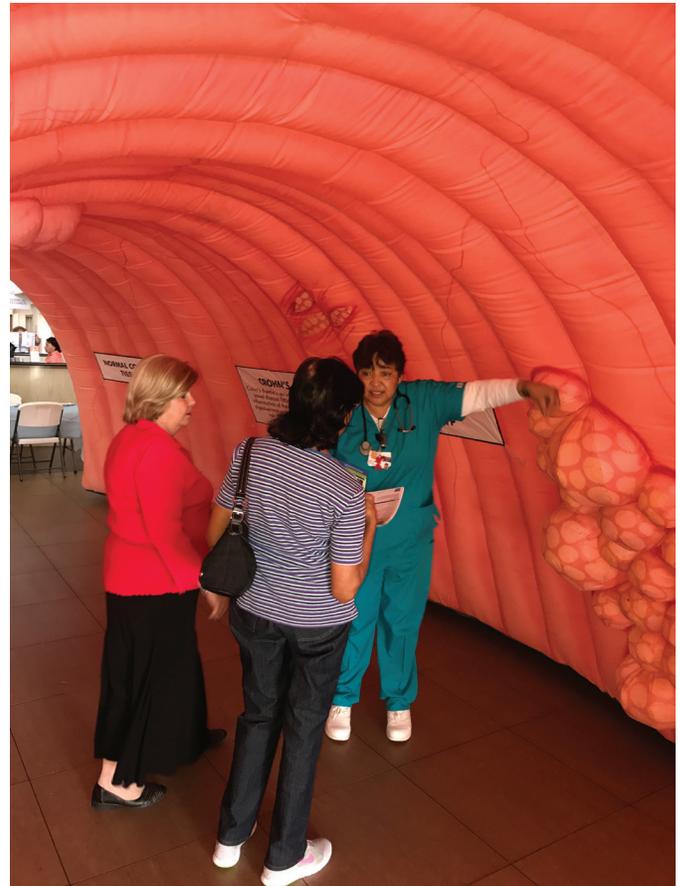
March is recognized nationwide as Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, a time dedicated to raising awareness about colorectal cancer and the importance of prevention and early detection. Colorectal cancer remains one of the most diagnosed cancers in the United States, yet it is also one of the most preventable when caught early. This month serves as a powerful reminder that informed choices, healthy habits, and routine screening can save lives.

Each year, more than 150,000 people in the United States are diagnosed with colorectal cancer, and over 50,000 individuals lose their lives to the disease. It is currently the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among men and women combined. In recent years, healthcare providers have also seen a rise in diagnoses among younger adults. Awareness and proactive care at every age is more important now than ever before.

CHI physician, Dr. Saint Anthony Amofah, emphasizes that maintaining a healthy colon often begins with everyday lifestyle choices.

**“Things like a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fiber support healthy digestion and can significantly reduce the risk of colorectal disease,” he said. “Limiting processed foods and red meats, staying physically active, and maintaining a healthy weight all contribute to improved colon health.”**

Avoiding tobacco use and limiting alcohol consumption also play an important role in reducing overall risk, Dr. Amofah explained. While healthy habits are essential, screening remains one of the most effective tools in preventing colorectal cancer. Many cases develop without symptoms in their early stages, making routine screening critical.



*Iliana Rodriguez, RN, gives demonstration inside Giant Colon to patients*

According to medical guidelines, adults at average risk should begin colorectal cancer screening at age 45 and continue regular screenings through age 75. Individuals with a family history of colorectal cancer or other risk factors may need to begin screening earlier, based on guidance from their healthcare provider.

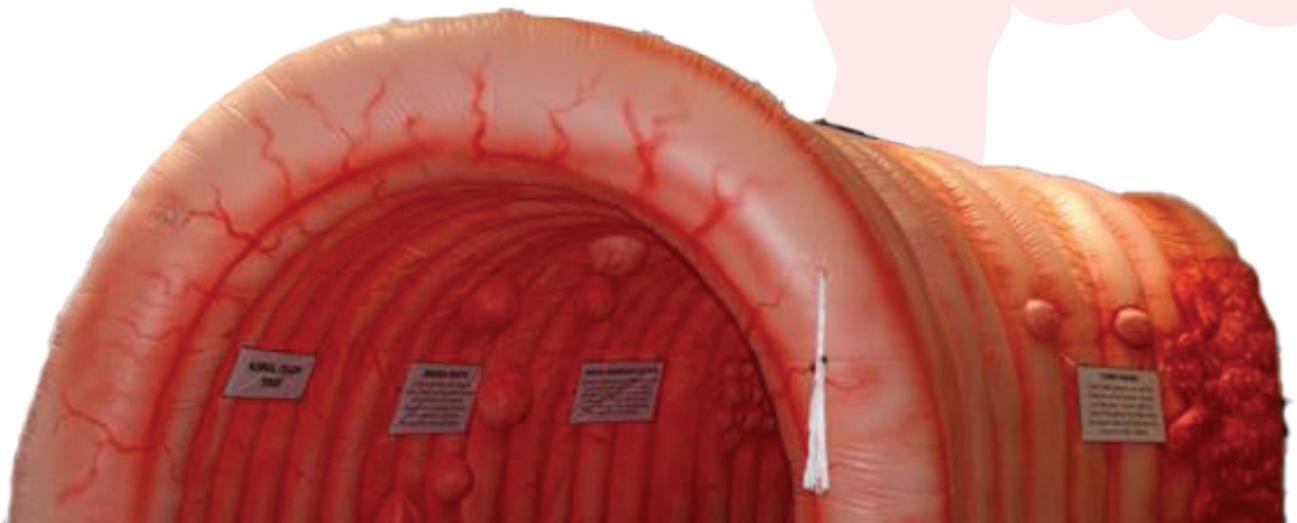
CHI will host a Colorectal Cancer Awareness event on March 26 from 10am to 3pm at its Doris Ison Health Center. Guests can walk

through a giant colon and learn about the signs of colorectal cancer. There will be free screenings, demonstrations, and guidance from clinical teams.

But CHI offers accessible screening options throughout the year, designed to meet the needs of patients. These include Cologuard, a non-invasive, at-home screening test that looks for signs of colorectal cancer and precancerous changes. The CHI team can also connect you to scheduling a colonoscopy, the gold standard for colorectal screening. A colonoscopy allows doctors to both detect and remove precancerous polyps during the same procedure, helping to stop cancer before it starts. As one CHI physician notes, the most important screening is the one that gets done, and having multiple options helps patients take that first step.

**“Colorectal Health Awareness Month highlights the importance of prevention, education, and early detection,” Dr. Amofah said. “By adopting healthy lifestyle habits and staying up to date with recommended screenings, you can significantly reduce your risk of colorectal cancer.”**

CHI remains committed to supporting the health of the communities it serves by providing preventive care, education, and access to life-saving screenings. Protecting colon health today helps build a healthier tomorrow for families across Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.



# CHI Urges Vaccination as Severe Flu Season Strains South Florida Communities

Flu season is here, and health officials are reporting high numbers of influenza cases across the South Florida community. Influenza A is known to have a quick and intense onset that may have symptoms of fever and chills, cough, severe body aches, and more. This strain is highly transmissible and has contributed to record levels of flu-related visits to CHI and across the region.

CHI's Director of Education and Infection Prevention and Control, Patricia Philippe, notes that this season's intensity is the result of a "perfect storm" of factors.

"We are seeing a highly contagious strain of influenza that is spreading rapidly across the US and that has risen recently after a brief decline," Philippe said. "The virus is still spreading actively across many parts of the country, particularly in settings where people are in close contact."

Nationwide, influenza activity is on the rise as well, with millions of illnesses already reported this season and tens of thousands of hospitalizations due to the flu. Philippe explained that many people delayed their vaccination this season, this made it easier for the virus to circulate widely. The current flu season has seen more activity than many recent years, with high hospitalization numbers and tens of thousands of flu-associated deaths so far.

Philippe stresses that despite challenges in predicting how well the yearly flu vaccine matches circulating strains, vaccination remains one of the most effective tools in reducing severe illness, hospitalizations, and complications.

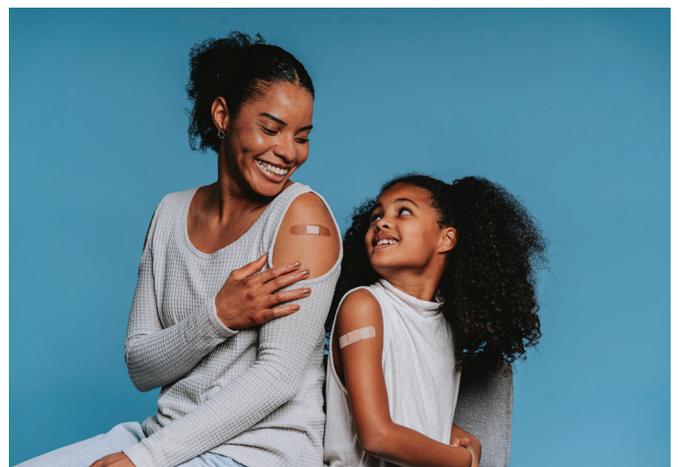
"The flu vaccine helps the body mount a response that can reduce the severity of the illness," Philippe said. "It is not too late for those who haven't been vaccinated to get

their flu shot. They are available at all CHI health centers"

In addition to vaccination, Philippe recommends several practical steps individuals can take to protect themselves and their families. She urges people to practice good hand hygiene, stay home when they are sick to avoid spreading the virus, cover coughs and sneezes, and talk with their healthcare provider about what treatment options are appropriate if symptoms develop.

"The flu season often extends into the spring," she said. "Staying vigilant now can help protect our most vulnerable populations, including young children, older adults, and people with chronic health conditions."

CHI is offering flu vaccines at its centers throughout Miami-Dade and Monroe counties. Patients are encouraged to contact CHI and speak to their providers to schedule an appointment for their flu shot. Preventive care, including vaccination, and timely discussions with healthcare providers are essential parts of staying healthy during this challenging flu season. With proactive measures and community awareness, residents can better navigate the flu season and reduce its impact on families and the community.



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