

ECCL

ESTERO COUNCIL OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

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FEATURE: Lee Health Coconut Point Brings Health & Wellness to South Lee County

As the holiday season approaches, the Village of Estero warmly welcomes the best gift of all: a beacon of health and wellness located in the heart of the community. Over the past decade, the Village of Estero has grown exponentially in population, commercial and residential building, business growth, and tourism.

Up until now, however, multi-faceted, high-level healthcare services were not easily accessible – a potentially serious situation during matters of life and death. On December 3, 2018, that will change dramatically as Lee Health opens the doors of its new Health & Wellness facility at Coconut Point. For the first time, residents and visitors in the Estero area will have state-of-the-art medical attention just moments away.

PREPARING FOR THE OPENING

Lee Health’s sprawling \$140 million, 163,500-square-foot health facility is located on a 33-acre site at the intersection of Via Coconut Point and Coconut Road. Construction took about 18 months to complete, and the 200-plus staff has been trained and is ready for the opening.

Over 5,000 area residents attended the Community Open House on Saturday November 17th to get a sneak peek of what to expect.

THE TECHNOLOGY

One of the most talked-about highlights is the technology throughout the campus from e-check-in kiosks to rehabilitation equipment to digitally-enhanced imaging in the surgical suites and webcam systems in the 24/7 freestanding emergency room. Lab appointments may be reserved at home, and the user-friendly MyChart system provides easily accessible results and notifications. In addition, the Lee Health app (<https://www.leehealth.org/coconut-point/>) is a useful portal

that offers directions to all of Lee Health’s campuses, plus a host of helpful information patients can peruse.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS AND THE HEALTHY LIFE CENTER

When you enter Lee Health Coconut Point you will not feel like you are in a hospital because it is so much more than a hospital, it is truly a healthy life enterprise. The friendly staff and the procedures they follow are consistent with that appearance.

Across the spacious and vaulted hallway is the reception desk manned by friendly volunteers to help guide you through this large facility and a comfortable snack bar and coffee shop

Turning to your right is the Healthy Life Center with its education and multipurpose rooms, a kitchen where nutritious cooking classes will be offered to the community and an adjacent fitness room for yoga and other exercise programs will be conducted.

REHAB CENTER AND TEACHING GARDEN

Just north of the Healthy Life Center is the rehabilitation therapy department that showcases the latest equipment for rehabbing clients.

A system called “ZeroG” helps people who are quite prone to falling with walking and balance training. Such patients are harnessed to a pulley system attached to a track on the ceiling for testing and then training to overcome the detected deficiencies.



The rehabilitation services area also includes a virtual reality machine to test stability and an anti-gravity treadmill called “AlterG” that can help patients alleviate pain while in motion.

Just outside these facilities is a teaching garden planted with basil, kale and Swiss chard. It was planned in collaboration with Florida Gulf Coast University.

A WIDE VARIETY OF ULTRA-MODERN AUXILIARY SERVICES

Just left of the main entrance you will find a wide variety of healthcare services including the latest imaging equipment, the laboratory and a pharmacy

THE 24/7 EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT

At the south end of the first floor is the 24-hour emergency room, a surgery center, a breast health center with 2D and 3D mammography and cardiac testing.

The emergency department provides 16 exam rooms and nine short-stay observation rooms for patients who need additional care.

Lee Health expects 30,000 visits during the first year of operation of the LHCP emergency room.

Transit ambulances will transport patients who need hospital care from the Coconut Point ER to other Lee Health locations.

LEE PHYSICIAN GROUP DOCTORS, EXAMINATION ROOMS AND THE SURGERY CENTER

Lee Health - Coconut Point's second floor houses Lee Physician Group clinics and exam rooms, four general operating rooms and 23 rooms for before and after surgery.

Outpatient surgeries will be performed at LHCP, which means patients will arrive and leave within the same day of a procedure.

Lee Health is partnered with Naples-based Arthrex, one of the country's leading orthopedic device companies, to add 4G surgical imaging technology to the Lee Health Coconut Point operating rooms.

Lee Health and Arthrex also are partnering to help educate surgeons. Arthrex cameras used in procedures at Lee Health Coconut Point will show live surgeries that will help train future medical professionals from around the country.

THE PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN LEE HEALTH AND ECCL

Lowell Gerson, chairman of ECCL's health committee and a specialist in geriatric emergency medicine, took a look back to explain the depth and breadth of the long-term planning that it took to arrive at this point.

"It has been many years since Jim Nathan, President and CEO of Lee Health, anticipated south Lee County's growth and purchased the land for a future hospital in Estero," says Dr. Gerson.

In 2013 when Lee Health's proposal for a hospital was denied by the State, the firm decided to start with an ambulatory care facility addressing all the inaccessible healthcare needs of the area built to hospital standards in order for the community to be prepared for the future.

Dr. Gerson discussed the importance of the relationship between the ECCL and Lee Health from the beginning.

"Alex Greenwood, CEO of the Coconut Point facility, came to talk to us very early in the process. I spoke with him about a

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specialized geriatric emergency department, and thus began my involvement. We formed a health committee comprised of people from all over Estero and from Lee Health whose common goal was to make Estero the region’s healthiest community. Our unique collaboration has fostered forward-thinking alignment of our vision, mission and goals.”



THE ECCL HEALTH COMMITTEE’S PLATFORM ENTAILS:

Vision

Estero and Southwest Florida will be the healthiest community in Florida in which to live, work, play and learn.

Mission

To create a physical, social and economic environment that will foster good health outcomes. To encourage the establishment of local high quality health facilities to meet the wellness and treatment needs of our community.

Goals

Cooperate with local health providers to identify needed preventive and health care services.

Foster two way communication between local health care providers and south Lee county residents regarding health issues and programs.

Assist Lee Health Coconut Point operate a patient-centric facility that will focus on the health needs of all individuals in the region.

Along with the health committee, ECCL’s leaders joined in the collaboration to inspire community support for the new facility. The community:

Recruited 140 residents to tour the facility in October,

Wrote 400 unique letters of support of State approval of a Certificate of Need for an 80 bed hospital tower on this site,

Recruited 90 people to act as patients in simulated service provider situations in order to train the new LHCP staff prior to its opening.

Dr. Gerson participated in a scenario as a simulated patient in need of arterial testing.

“I experienced the gamut from coming through the front door, registering at the desk, and then proceeding to the cardiovascular imaging section,” explained Dr. Gerson. “It was extremely

impressive every step of the way, from the warm welcome at reception to the advanced technology throughout.”

“We are delighted about how far we have come,” said Dr. Gerson. “It’s incredible to see the most modern surgical theater outside of the Mayo Clinic right here in our community. Under the same auspices, we have a healthy kitchen designed to educate and communicate the most current nutritional guidance to keep our community healthy. What’s more, the facility is patient-centric and esthetically pleasing, with colors and illumination carefully thought out to make the experience comfortable, less stressful, and easy to navigate.”

“Lee Health’s commitment to patient-centric care, and the ECCL’s help in bringing that to fruition is an accomplishment of which we and the whole community can be proud,” Dr. Gerson concluded.

The Lee Health Team: Compassion, Communication, & Prevention

Carrie Bloemers, registered dietitian, nutritionist, and manager of the Healthy Life Center, emphasizes Lee Health’s dedication to health and wellness education as the pathway to disease prevention. Lee Health Coconut Point offers a wealth of resources to encourage people to stay active to avoid chronic disease. With a culture based on compassion and communication, their staff is trained in navigation to help patients find and partner with like-minded providers.



They assist with helping patients make appointments with labs, x-ray, physical therapy, or any other specialists they might need. Ms. Bloemers explains that the research shows that people who routinely visit their primary care physician have less chance of visiting the ER. Ms. Bloemers describes built-in opportunities for the community to use Lee Health’s spaces: classes are free and open to the public as are the teaching garden and other community spaces.

“Our culture is very important to us,” explains Ms. Bloemers. “We have created a welcoming, open, and caring atmosphere where each of us can be real and true in our roles.”

There were many other community interactions along the way. Molly Grubbs, Lee Health’s Community and Business Relations

Representative, has participated in many ECCL meetings, made many gated community presentations, and worked with many area businesses. Lee Health Coconut Point CEO Alex Greenwood has proactively continued outreach, working closely with ECCL to create awareness and collaboration in the community.

The Prescription for a Healthy Future

Also designed for acute patient care, Lee Health Coconut Point is constructed to hospital standards and is prepared to move forward with a full-service hospital as soon as it is approved by the State, most likely in 2019.

While the facility officially opens on December 3rd, Lee Health's work is far from finished. In fact, the imagining, the planning, and the building for the future have only just begun.

"We are attuned to our growing and changing population," concludes Ms. Bloemers. "Many people in our community are active but aging, so our plans moving forward may include memory care, related specialists, and programs to keep people in the community. We want to provide the best experience, setting the tone for health and wellness with prevention-based plans and the highest quality care."

The Village of Estero and the surrounding communities can look forward to a bright, healthy future.

Follow healthcare issues in Estero at:
<https://esterotoday.com/estero-news/healthcare/>