

## **Newly renovated medical center in Immokalee ready for physicians from FSU and CHS**

By Staff Reports

Wednesday, August 5, 2009

IMMOKALEE — Dr. Javier Rosado spent a few cold winters in New Haven, Conn., for a predoctoral internship in clinical and community psychology at Yale University.

Last September, he relocated to Immokalee for a post-doctoral fellowship with Florida State University, where he will complete 2,000 clinical hours with families, mostly children, who need therapy.

Night and day communities for the 28-year-old psychologist.

He smiles, though, and says the best part of his practice in Immokalee is learning about the cultural differences with the mostly-immigrant families and helping them.

“I love it,” he says of his time so far in Immokalee. “The family system is totally different than the American family.”

On Monday, Rosado and other colleagues with FSU’s rural medicine program in Immokalee and its affiliated pediatric clinic run by Collier Health Services will occupy what used to be empty space in the FSU Isabel Collier Read Medical Center. Until now, they used other space in the building that wasn’t suitable for their purposes on a permanent basis.

The NCH Healthcare System donated the 29,000-square-foot building to FSU in December 2007 after protracted negotiations that enabled the university to bring its rural medicine training program to Immokalee for medical school students.

About \$4 million has been spent to transform what had been 11,000-square-feet of unused shell space in the building into a medical clinic. Half of the cost came from the Naples Children and Education Foundation, sponsors of the Naples Winter Wine Festival. Another 2,000-square-feet of space will be renovated in the next stage of the project.

All told, there are 17 examination rooms for the pediatrics clinic operated by Collier Health Services, a private, nonprofit organization, in a partnership with FSU where the university provides the educational component of the program for the medical students

and CHS handles the clinical operations.

"It's been a wonderful relationship," said Steve Weinman, chief operating officer of CHS. "I think there is a huge benefit being affiliated with a university."

Patients are more receptive to a university affiliation but it could also be a draw to get more physicians to come to the community, even from Naples, for the experience of teaching and to acquire courtesy privileges with the university, he said.

"We are hoping to get specialists out here at some point," said Lesa Peterson, spokeswoman for CHS.

Even an old patient transport bus was replaced with a new bus, with CHS and FSU splitting the cost, she said.

The rural medicine training program in Immokalee, which got started in January 2008, has become popular with third- and fourth-year medical students at FSU for rotations, said Dr. Karimu Smith-Barron, FSU's faculty director for pediatrics and adolescent medicine in Immokalee.

"We usually have two to three students," she said. "This winter between October and January, we will have 10 students. Immokalee is a hot spot. They want the experience in internal medicine."

She even has a second-year medical student in Immokalee this summer who is going around the community assessing perceptions about health care and shadowing doctors. As a second-year medical student, it's too early for clinical rotations for him, she said.

Today, the rural medicine program has about 10 elective options in Immokalee in terms of specialties, which include pediatrics, family medicine, women's health, internal medicine and behavioral health.

"So there's quite a few options," Smith-Barron said. "And we have students coming as far as Pensacola."

Housing has been a hindrance in attracting more students than six at a time. The students must be willing to share a room with another student in a three-bedroom, two bath home that CHS acquired near the facility.

The hope for CHS and the Immokalee community at large is that some of the medical students would return after they complete their education to set up practices in Immokalee. The program hasn't been operating long enough in the community for that to have happened.

But Rosado, the psychologist who began a fellowship in Immokalee last fall with FSU,

said he is enjoying the experience and working with the families and the issues they face. There may be undocumented family members who face deportation and he deals with the impact to the children or other issues that migrant children face, he said.

“It’s a very unique population,” he said. “I really enjoy the community.”

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