

Stuart clinic director nationally recognized for volunteer work, compassion

By Donald Rodrigue

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DEBORAH SILVER/TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS Dr. Howard Voss, medical director of the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic for the past 11 years, puts on his jacket as he prepares to see a patient at the volunteer medical clinic in Stuart on Wednesday. Voss was recently awarded the Gold Humanism Honor Society by being nominated by a former Florida State University College of Medicine student. Voss is in his fifth year of being a Clinical Associate Professor in Clinical Sciences at the FSU College of Medicine, which initiated the clinic's participation in the hands-on teaching for medical students in their third year. "It's (teaching) as important as anything I've ever done," said Voss. "To know that I've done it effectively makes me very proud and humble."

How to donate

Donations can be made at vimclinic.net/how-to-help/giving-opportunities/ and their YouTube channel

The director of a Stuart clinic serving Martin County residents without access to traditional medical care has received national acclaim for his volunteer work and compassionate attitude in mentoring area medical students.

Dr. Howard E. Voss was inducted into the Gold Humanism

youtube.com/user
/vimclinicstuart.

Donations also can be sent to Volunteers in Medicine Clinic, 417 S.E. Balboa Ave., Stuart, FL 34994. The clinic's federal ID number is 65-1064420.

For more information, call the clinic at 772-463-4128.



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DEBORAH SILVER/TREASURE COAST NEWSPAPERS Dr. Howard Voss feels the swelling in the arthritic hands of So'Nita Hayward of Hobe Sound as he meets with her during his regular appointments at the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic in Stuart on Wednesday.

Honor Society last month for showing exemplary compassion toward both his clinical patients and medical students while serving as the director of the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic of Stuart.

The clinic has only a small paid staff, which is augmented by about 90 volunteers, along with Florida State University medical students who come to spend a year doing their third-year programs at the clinic.

In addition to overseeing patient care at the clinic, Voss serves as a clinical associate professor for the Florida State University's College of Medicine satellite campus at [Indian River State College](#) in Fort Pierce.

One of his former FSU students, Brandon Mauldin, nominated Voss for induction after spending two years working under his watchful eyes at the Stuart clinic. Now doing his residency in internal medicine at Tulane University, Mauldin introduced Voss to the audience during the university award ceremony in Tallahassee last May.

"Not only is he my mentor, but he's also my friend, and I couldn't think of anybody else who better deserved to be nominated for the Gold Humanism Honor Society," Mauldin said. The honor is given by the society's parent organization, the Arnold P. Gold Foundation, which was founded by Drs. Arnold and Sandra Gold at Columbia University Medical Center in 1988 to encourage the tradition of the caring physician. Voss admits receiving the award was a special honor for him because he's always

loved to teach.

"I always try to teach and treat my students with respect as young doctors rather than people that need to be criticized," he said. "We're really both medical professionals, and I try to treat them that way and establish that kind of rapport."

Voss, 76, has served as medical director of the Volunteers in Medicine Clinic for the last 11 years, almost ever since he says he "failed miserably" at his long-awaited retirement

from medicine at age 60.

"I had dreamed of being able to read a novel on the beach but quickly discovered that lifestyle just wasn't going to cut it," he said.

Voss retired to the Treasure Coast from Stamford, Conn., in 2001, where he had served as chairman of the medical staff at Stamford Hospital and worked in private practice. Soon afterward, he began volunteering four hours a day at the clinic, which was founded by Martin Memorial Health Systems in 1995 to serve the indigent and working poor population of Martin County. He subsequently accepted a paid position as clinic director but almost immediately had to shift gears and begin a massive public relations campaign to help save the operation because of cuts in federal funding.

"We went on our crusade for donations," he said. "I just went out and told our story and the clinic sold itself. First, I went to the Martin County Commission and they gave me an emergency grant and have supported us every year. I also relinquished my salary and became strictly a volunteer director."

Nowadays Voss serves just as much as a spokesperson for the clinic as he does its medical director, constantly espousing the value it adds to the local community.

"Our clinic here is so unique because it's not a walk-in clinic or urgent care center, but rather a totally comprehensive clinic," he explained. "The people that we address are the people who really need us. We need \$750,000 a year to run the clinic, but we provide over \$7,500,000 of medical care on that budget. There's no other charity like that."