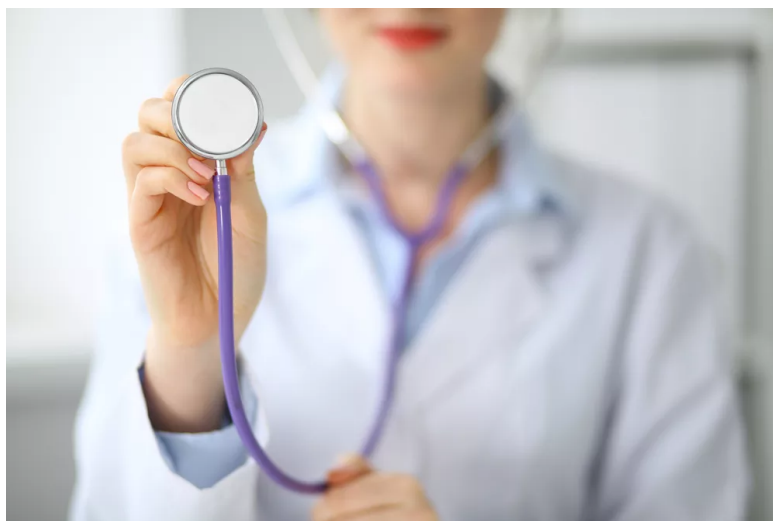


'These' Three Doctors Want to Make Healthcare Accessible to All

Newtown residents now have access to regular, affordable health care in their own neighborhood at Sarasota Memorial's Health Care System's Jean & Alfred Goldstein Health Center.

By [Susan Burns](#) • 1/23/2018 at 12:02pm • Published in the [February 2018](#) issue of *Sarasota Magazine*



Staying healthy while poor is difficult. You need access to doctors, transportation, medicine and the know-how to find and receive benefits you may qualify for. Fifty-two percent of Newtown residents live below the poverty line, and for many, emergency rooms were the only place to see a doctor; by the time they went, treatable conditions had often become chronic or fatal.

But since July 2017, under the leadership of Drs. Wilhelmine Wiese-Rometsch, Karen Hamad and Vida Farhangi, that's changed. Newtown residents now have access to regular, affordable health care in their own neighborhood at [Sarasota Memorial's Health Care System's Jean & Alfred Goldstein Health Center](#). In its first six months, the center—which is a physicians' group practice, not a walk-in clinic—saw 303 patients and kept 35 of them from being hospitalized.

Wiese-Rometsch, Hamad and Farhangi, who oversee the center, are part of the Florida State University College of Medicine Internal Residency Program at Sarasota Memorial Hospital. The 13 doctors staffing the center are the program's first class of resident physicians. The center is a win-win: The underserved get their own regular doctors, while the center serves as a training facility with the goal of keeping many of these new doctors in Sarasota.

Legal Aid of Manasota, All Faiths Food Bank and the Good Samaritan Pharmacy have also joined the center to help patients at no or little cost with government benefits, legal issues, food and nutritional

education and prescriptions, making the center a model for holistic health care.

It's taken three years and tenacity to bring together and manage all these moving parts and players, as well as to attract donors. But these three physicians say the work is the dream of a lifetime. "We're changing lives," says Hamad.

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