

UF Center for Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine exceeding expectations

BY LISA ZAHNER
STAFF WRITER

In November 2008, something downright miraculous happened — The University of Florida Center for Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine opened in Vero Beach.



Eleonora "Ellie" McCabe

Now approaching the one-year mark, the facility and its leader, Dr. Wayne Creelman have exceeded the expectations of the handful of local families, many from the beachside, and the foundations who financially made the center possible.

"When we started working with the University of Florida, our goal was modest," said Eleonora "Ellie" McCabe, who spearheaded the effort to bring the UF Center to Vero Beach. "We wanted to create a center that would train and retain highly qualified psychiatrists to our community. The plan was for one Eminent Scholar and two fellows in training. However, no one could have anticipated the demand for services."

The waiting list to see one of the county's few psychiatrists, even for a patient with financial means and good health insurance, was several months for adults, longer for children and adolescents. Access to pro bono outpatient psychiatric care for indigent residents was almost nonexistent.

Over the past year, UF has dispatched two additional full-time physicians to work at the center and help meet this dire need.

"The number of psychiatrists that UF has placed in Vero Beach goes far beyond the original agreement," McCabe said.

Fostering a robust offering of psychiatric services in Indian River County, especially services for children, has long been the driving force behind The Robert F. and Eleonora W. McCabe Foundation. For decades, the McCabes

worked to achieve this goal by bolstering local organizations dedicated to mental health and funding grants for programs and services.

Though the community was making strides with the established profes-

sional resources, the missing link still existed — how to get new, highly skilled and trained mental health professionals to set up shop in Vero Beach.

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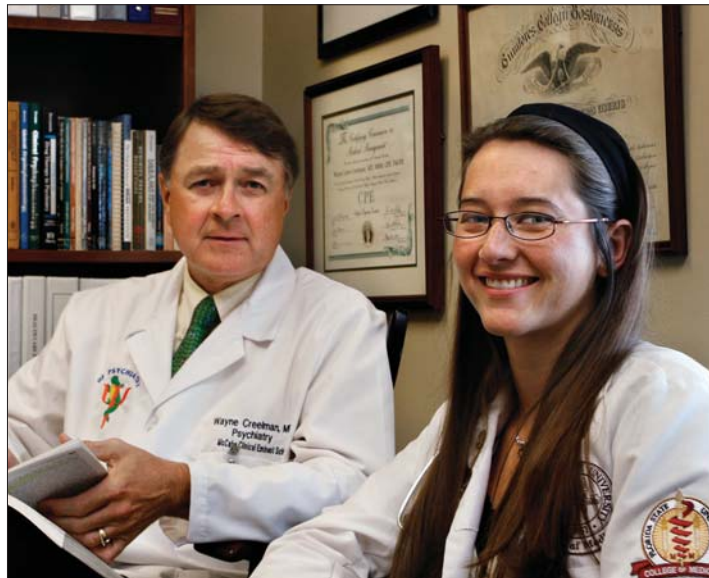
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Beyond that, there was a need to provide the best possible care to local patients in need, regardless of their ability to pay.

McCabe approached the University of Florida about this problem and worked with Dr. Mark S. Gold, MD, to come up with a solution. Gold, a Donald Disney Eminent Scholar, Distinguished Professor & Chair of the Department of Psychiatry at UF, and McCabe came up with The University of Florida Center for Psychiatry and Addiction Medicine.

With a \$2 million donation from the foundation in June 2008, UF established the Robert F. and Eleonora W. McCabe Clinical Eminent Scholar Chair in Psychiatry and Community Mental Health, with the condition that the chair would reside full-time, practice and teach in Vero Beach. The esteemed Dr. Creelman was brought in to fill that chair and to attract other physicians to Vero Beach to practice with him and study under his tutelage.

"They have taken great care in ap-



Dr. Wayne Creelman, and Sarah McIver, from Florida State University who is completing a six-week internship in behavioral medicine, at the UF Center. Photos: Tom McCarthy Jr.

pointing psychiatrists who have only the best credentials, starting at the very

top with Dr. Creelman," McCabe said. Leveraging social, business and phil-

anthropic connections, McCabe and foundation Executive Director Lenora Ritchie gathered a small group of generous local families and individuals, mostly from the barrier island, to fund the other \$2.3 million needed over four years to launch the center to train doctors and to treat local patients.

"At the core of the Founding Partners' commitment is a deep awareness that services offered at the Center might have made all the difference in the lives of those who have already been lost," said Ritchie in a document about the center's origins. "Their hope is that one day every person and family in need in Indian River County will be able to easily access mental health and addiction services through a well-organized, strong and stable continuum of care."

The founding partners of the Center, in addition to the McCabes, are Mr. Harry J. Bolwell, The L.W. Pierce Family Foundation, Mollie and Glenn Ireland, II, Connie and Donald Rebar, Helen Sarah Steyer of California and Tommy and Simonetta Steyer. Supporting partners who signed on to help with oper-

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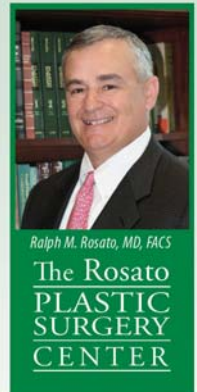
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Health

ational needs of the center are Debbie and R. Champlin Sheridan,

The Hill Group (Mr. and Mrs. Toby and Tuny Hill) and the Indian River County Hospital District.

"We are so thankful not only for the philanthropic partners who stepped forward to fund the UF Center, but also for the local artists who donated their work to create the peaceful atmosphere," McCabe said. "I will be forever grateful to them all."

Since the center opened, with precise timing in the fall of 2008, the need for mental health services has risen exponentially as economic recession injected financial stress and anxiety into the lives of more and more local residents who had lost jobs, homes and life savings.

The UF center has handled 1,897 outpatient visits and currently has 344 active patients being served by five attending physicians. Indigent patients can now receive the care they need thanks to a public-private partnership between the center and the Indian River Hospital District, which has dedicated \$200,000 to the treatment of patients with no other way to afford the care.

"The UF Center offers people seeking mental health care a calm and healing environment, alongside the very best that academic medicine offers," McCabe said.

Creelman is Board Certified in both General Psychiatry and Medical Management and is a Distinguished Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association. He has been awarded Masters' degrees in Medical Management, Business Administration and Theological Studies. He earned his undergraduate degree from Boston College and got his medical training at the Georgetown University School of Medicine. He is published extensively, called upon as a nationwide expert both in clinical practice and research in various psychological disorders and the proper use of pharmacological drugs in treating a wide range of illnesses in adults and children.

"We are thrilled to have such a well-trained, highly regarded physician leading the UF Center – one who literally wrote the book on psychopharmacology," McCabe said.

The center focuses exclusively on outpatient treatment.

"Our goal is to keep people out of the hospital," Creelman said.

The outpatient care being embarked upon by the center's staff is not a "quick fix," but is dedicated to being there for the long haul to be there for patients with complex problems related to family relationships, addictions and the stressors of life which have, in many

cases been made worse by the current economic recession.

"These issues are not only exacerbated by the tough economic times but are also cause by it," Creelman said.

The top reasons for patients seeking treatment being recurring depressive disorders, anxiety states, attention deficit disorder with hyperactivity and alcohol abuse associated with other problems.

Patients have come to the center mostly through word of mouth, but also through referrals from other local professionals and from residential treatment facilities when patients are discharged to go home but need psychiatric help on a regular basis to build on the progress made during an inpatient stay.

The faculty of the center includes Robert Bartucci, M.D., Child Psychiatry; Alan Barnes, M.D., Adult Psychiatry and Peter Gold, PsyD, Clinical Psychologist. The current fellows at the center are William Braun, M.D., Addiction Medicine and Guillermo Cadena, M.D., Forensic Psychiatry.

Dr. Cadena is reaching outside the walls of the center and making a great impact both in the court system and at the county jail. He has been conducting psychological evaluations of inmates and also helping the court determine defendants' competency to stand trial.

In addition to the five attending physicians, third and fourth-year medical students from the Florida State University School of Medicine rotate through the center to observe and evaluate patients under the guidance of Dr. Creelman.

Third-year FSU medical student Sarah McIver just started her psychiatric rotation at the center. She spends her mornings working with patients at the hospital's psychiatric facility and her afternoons sitting in on outpatient sessions with Dr. Creelman. Even in the short time she's been in Vero, McIver said she's been touched by the impact the center is making.

"I was amazed at the number of children with serious mental health problems who are in need of treatment," she said.

To better serve those children and also adolescents, Creelman is working on developing programs which the center can offer to target the mental health needs of Indian River County's youngest residents.

Creelman said he's grateful for the opportunity to be in Vero Beach and to be leading the center, which he said has the resources and the flexibility to remain nimble in meeting the psychological needs of the people that the McCabes and the other donors were and

are so passionate about serving.

"I've very honored to be the director of the center and to be the McCabe scholar, it's a great honor," Creelman said.

Looking forward, McCabe said she and her husband and co-founder of the foundation, Robert McCabe are "encouraged by how the community has embraced this transformational project.

"People understand the serious deficit of well-trained psychiatrists throughout our nation and continue to be willing to step forward and work

with us toward a solution," McCabe said.

"UF has provided the foundation for this change and we are excited about where it will lead."

The UF Center for Psychiatry and Addictions Medicine, Division of Community Psychiatry is located at 840 37th Place, Suite 2, Vero Beach. For more information, call (772) 794-0179.



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