

## COVID UPDATE

We are seeing less Covid-19 positive patients these days, and it has been trending down for a couple of months now. When we do have a positive patient we are able to offer the Monoclonal Antibody infusion.

We continue to have sick patients wait outside until a room is ready for them, at which time we will call or text them to let them know their room is ready. We are working on a better system for checking in and being notified when your room is ready. Well patients will have the choice of waiting inside, in their vehicle or on the front patio once we get additional seating.

We are still a mask required facility, especially for those here for medical services and definitely if you are symptomatic. We continue to be concerned for the health and safety of our patients since we still have symptomatic patients on a daily basis. While the percentage of positives remains very low, we don't know who is positive until they are tested. So we respectfully ask for your continued support.

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## SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2021

### CLINIC EXPANSION IS MOVING FORWARD

Shortly after the opening of the Firefighters Health & Wellness Center in 2013, discussions of future expansion began. The overwhelming usage, support and appreciation of the facility by our firefighter families could never have been imagined and we are so grateful for that. Thanks for our huge success goes 1<sup>st</sup> to the Board of Trustees for believing in the vision and giving the utmost in support to staff to create a facility that provides exceptional medical care which has saved countless lives, and has improved the quality of life in so many others. While the Trustees main goal from day one was to provide better medical care, it turns out that the medical facility, while accomplishing that goal, has also consistently turned out to be a money saver for the Insurance Fund.

Next in line for our thanks is the medical team, led by Dr. John Villa. We have been able to acquire the absolute best medical providers we could find. We couldn't be more appreciative of their dedication, compassion, knowledge, and well just love for each and every one of you. Without our medical team, from front desk to medical director and everyone in between, we would not be where we are today.

Without a doubt our biggest appreciation goes to you, the participants of the Fund and the patients of the Wellness Center. Without your patronage and support the Wellness Center would not have had the opportunity to provide the great medical care that we can.

It's hard to believe that when we opened in 2013 we started with four employees and now we employ 43 hardworking individuals. When we opened, we saw about 10-15 patients a day and now we are averaging over 120 patients per day. When we started, we felt the absolute maximum the facility could accommodate would be 120 patients per day. Last month alone we have had several days seeing over 150 patients! Additionally, from January 2013 to April 2021 there has been an increase of 1,284 patients to the clinic family, for a total of 5,649 patients today...and continually growing.

The COVID pandemic threw a monkey wrench into our expansion plans, just like it threw a monkey wrench into everyone's 2020 plans. Today, most are back to normal operations and the clinic is no different. We do not have many options left to grow the facility as it currently sits due to zoning issues, although we are working on one last option to gain a little more space in the urgent care side of the operation.

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## SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2021

### The Plan - Phase 3

Phase 3 will encompass decisions on whether to build a permanent facility on our land in Palm City. This project is estimated to take 2-3 years once a decision is made to move forward. Also involved in this project would be finding partners to lease space in the building that would offer beneficial medical services for our members or to find partners looking to contract medical services from our facility. Both of these opportunities have been explored to some point and we would have much better insight and maybe some commitments prior to embarking on this project.

### Final Thoughts

All of these plans are exciting opportunities to bring even better medical care to our brothers and sisters, to expand to those currently not taking advantage of all we have to offer, and to make it more convenient for those already taking advantage of our services.

For those of you from Jupiter north to Ft. Pierce and west to Okeechobee, please consider giving the new facility in Palm City a try. Unless there is a major disruption we will be open and ready to serve you **Monday, August 2nd @ 10am.**

The facility can be reached through the main switchboard by calling **561-969-6663**.  
The address of the new facility is **3228 SW Martin Downs Blvd., Suite 33A, Palm City, FL 34990**

Learn more at [www.myffbenefits.com](http://www.myffbenefits.com)

Or give us a call: **561-969-6663**

# CLINIC EXPANSION IS MOVING FORWARD (continued)

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It was decided a few years back that the best viable option for expansion of the medical services provided to you by the Health & Wellness Center was to open additional locations. This also makes sense because not everyone lives in the original 20-mile bubble that we used for the current location, and we also found that not everyone uses the facility due to the distance they would have to travel. We do get people visiting daily who live in Dade, Broward, Martin and St. Lucie Counties, but not everyone who lives in those counties comes to the facility.

When we opened the facility in 2013 the goal was not to make money, although the clinic has been very successful financially, but to provide better medical care and we think we have achieved that, for the most part. Now, we think it is time to expand out to additional locations so our brothers and sisters to the north and south will have more convenient locations to utilize.

We understand there has been some concern about satellite facilities being opened outside of Palm Beach County, but we have to remember that we serve the employees and retirees of Palm Beach County Fire Rescue, we do not serve the residents of Palm Beach County. The County does not require you to live in Palm Beach County. They do not require you to spend your paycheck in Palm Beach County and there is no reason to assume you are required to spend your health care dollars in Palm Beach County. We must do what's in the best interest of the Fund for all of our brothers and sisters. We cannot expand our current facility in its present location, so the options are to move our current operation or to branch out and bring our services closer to those not living in the original 20-mile radius.

## The Plan - Phase 1

In order to determine the most viable places to open our satellites we looked at some very hard data. We looked at population studies to determine where our people live, then we looked at claims data to determine potential saving by having our own medical facility instead of paying others to provide medical care for our members. The demographic data shows that approximately 20% of the population resides north of the PBC line and 20% of the population resides south of the PBC line. The claims data shows that there is more potential savings to the north side so the Board elected to open that site first.

As you may have heard, the Board purchased two and a half acres of land in Palm City a couple of years ago that was the perfect size, location and price. The building that we would eventually build on that location should provide everything our participants should need. Initially, the plan is to open up a small clinic in a leased location so that the initial investment for a trial would be on the low side. We have located the perfect office space for our trial location. The office is 2100 square feet and will offer four exam rooms and a couple of offices. The space is currently being updated and we hope to open by August 2nd.



The new location is located 3 miles from the I-95 exit @ Kanner Highway or ½ mile from the Stuart exit of the Florida Turnpike. Additionally, for our Jupiter families the new location is the exact same distance as the main facility from the Florida Turnpike entrance on Indiantown Rd. For those finding travel north a bit less congested than driving south, the new Palm City location might just be the ideal location.

Initially we will be staffed with one provider and a couple of support staff to offer walk-in urgent care services, including x-ray and labs. We will also stock urgent care type medications and a variety of vaccines. We hope to rapidly offer extended services such as school and sports physicals, follow-up appointments and other services. Also, our mental health staff, Dr. Milone and Mary Birse, will be scheduling days at the new facility to offer their services to patients that live in the area. The hours of operation at the new location will initially be 10am to 6pm Monday - Friday. We will expand staff and hours as patient needs dictate.

We will begin by rotating provider staff through the new facility on a weekly basis, right now we are planning on having Lance Powell start out the first week, followed by Kerri Robertson, Brad Burdette and finally Dr. John Villa. Dr. Villa will be in and out of the facility during the first couple of weeks in his role of Medical Director, so you may see his smiling face at any time.

## The Plan - Phase 2

We expect that once 'Phase 1' has been up and running for about six months we will have a pretty good idea if satellite locations are beneficial for both participants and the Fund. We should be able to see the traffic the facility generates and what load it takes off the main facility. This information will guide us in making decisions about the future.

We fully expect 'Phase 1' will be successful, and if so we will decide the path for 'Phase 2' which will be to begin discussions and planning for opening a southern facility to serve those in southern PBC, Broward and Dade. We have not determined the location that would be best suitable for our southern brothers and sisters, but we will be sure to include them in the discussions on that topic.

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**HAVE QUESTIONS? WANT TO DISCUSS YOUR PLAN? GIVE US A CALL @ 561-969-6663**

