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If you’re looking for Matthew Rees, CEO of Lovelock’s Pershing General Hospital, you’re as likely to find him on a ladder or up on the roof as you are in his office. “I’m very hands-on,” said Rees. “Wherever they need me, I go. I’ll even hang Christmas lights.”

His willingness to roll up his sleeves is probably a holdover from his post-college days, when he got a job servicing equipment in the shop of a durable medical equipment (DME) company.

In fact, healthcare had never crossed his mind while he was earning his accounting degree from Southern Utah University. But that short stint in DME had sparked his interest in the healthcare field, and although Rees went on to work for a short while in public accounting, it wasn’t long before he returned to healthcare and began working in hospitals in Arizona and Utah.

Five years ago, he joined the staff at Pershing General as chief financial officer. “When I walked into the hospital five years ago, the lobby had just an old desk and a bunch of unmatched chairs,” he remembered. “Can you imagine walking into that and saying, ‘I need you guys to take care of me?’”

At that time, Pershing General had just five acute care beds and 32 long-term care beds. With annual revenues of only $6 million, the hospital was facing bankruptcy. Within nine months, Rees’ financial know-how and enthusiasm for hands-on work earned him a promotion to CEO. His work was cut out for him.

The first order of business was to use a few long-term care beds for acute care. Next was a rapid expansion of services. Due to its location – Pershing General is the only hospital within a 150-mile stretch of Interstate 80 – the hospital earned a critical access facility designation from the federal government, so that it receives tax monies from the county and federal reimbursement for Medicare patients. Thanks to these dollars, increased services were possible.

In 2005, the hospital opened the Pershing Physicians Center, a clinic enabling doctors to see patients outside the hospital. It also houses physical therapy services, a billing office and the only retail pharmacy in Lovelock.

Last year, the hospital also began offering cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation, nuclear medicine and a part-time gastroenterologist. It’s also now the only critical access facility in Northern Nevada to have a 16-slide CT scan.

And that shabby lobby? In short order, Rees made sure it was updated with modular, matching furniture inside and landscaping out front. “It really needed to be a place where people wanted to come,” he said.

In the five years since Rees joined Pershing General, gross revenues have tripled – especially impressive considering the recent closure of a large silver mine in Lovelock that resulted in a significant population drop. Roughly 25 percent of those revenues are now coming from outside Pershing County, from places like Winnemucca, Fallon, Reno and Carson City.

In 2003, when Rees led the charge to increase wages and travel pay as well as to replace agency staff with full-time staff members, positions filled quickly. “I think we’re the only hospital that can say that for the past four years, it’s had a full nursing staff,” said Rees.

Even with all this success, Rees isn’t relaxing quite yet. Revenues may have increased, but in a 47-year-old building, physical plant updates can’t be held off much longer. Eventually, Rees would like to see expanded gastroenterology offerings and an ER added to the hospital’s roster of services.

He can’t do it without the help of his staff, whom he’s anxious to credit for these extraordinary accomplishments: “My job is to facilitate the things people need to do their jobs – it all comes from the employees. They’ve helped us expand and grow, and it’s been fun to see that happen and be a part of it.”
For Helen Vos, the inspiration to become a nurse stems from the fact that her sister became ill with a neurological disease when they were children. Watching her sister battle the illness made her want to help others in the same situation. Vos received a bachelor’s degree in nursing from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa and a master’s of science in nursing from Texas Woman’s University in Dallas.

Currently, Vos works at MountainView Hospital as the chief nursing officer. In this role, which she has held since 2000, she is responsible for overseeing the nursing staff. In this capacity she also oversees the processes and functions which ensure the provision of quality patient care, creating an environment where nursing students are able to experience positive clinical experiences, developing new programs and establishing and monitoring patient care standards.

“Being a chief nursing officer has been a very rewarding position for me,” said Vos. “I believe my biggest responsibility is to create an environment which allows all the staff to provide the highest quality, safest, most compassionate patient care possible.”

In the spring of 1996, Vos moved from San Diego to Las Vegas. She was hired as the director of medical/surgical inpatient services for both Sunrise and MountainView Hospitals. Additionally, while serving as director of nursing she opened a new 10-bed skilled nursing facility at MountainView Hospital.

“I have had the unique opportunity to be able to open two new hospitals – one in San Diego and MountainView Hospital here in Las Vegas,” said Vos. “One of the biggest surprises I found in establishing a new hospital was the lack of culture in a new organization. It is hard to think about the culture of your hospital when no one on the unit knows where the IV catheters are. Culture and teamwork develops over time with much attention and hard work matched with a strong vision that all can buy into.”

Along with her dedication to her nursing profession, Vos is involved with several organizations in the Valley. She received a governor appointed position on the Nevada State Board of Nursing in 2001. The goal of the Nevada State Board of Nursing is to protect the public, to ensure safe and effective medical practices, and also to make sure there are high-quality standards for medical practice. Vos is also involved with the Nevada Hospital Association, the Nevada Organization of Nurse Leaders, the American Organization of Nurse Executives and a member of the Access to Healthcare Committee of the United Way.

During her extensive nursing career Vos has had many noteworthy accomplishments, but the one she is most proud of is co-authoring the book entitled “Neuroscience Critical Care: Pathophysiology and Patient Management.” The book was published in 1990 and was a highly-used reference book for both nurses and physicians for seven years, according to Vos.

In looking to the future, Vos would like to continue to make sure outstanding patient care is provided. She also has the goal to make MountainView Hospital a nurse magnet facility. To become a nurse magnet facility, the hospital must go through the magnet recognition program. This program makes sure the hospital has successful nursing practices and strategies. The American Nurses Credentialing Center is the organization that grants magnet designation. Currently, no hospitals in Nevada have this designation.

“I believe that every nurse or other patient care provider is a hero to the patients they care for. Each and every day heroic moments are experienced by patients in every hospital,” said Vos. “I get to see the evidence of these moments every day in the letters we get from patients thanking particular nurses or other staff members for big and small efforts. Sometimes it is the smallest seemingly simple gestures that mean the most to an ill person or their family members. My commitment is to see that these thank yous get shared with the staff.”
Nevada’s rate of senior suicide is higher than in any other state, at roughly three times the national average. With more baby boomers retiring to Nevada every year, it’s possible that, without intervention, those numbers could keep climbing. That’s what Debbie Prince Lewis and the Senior Bridges program are working to prevent.

The Senior Bridges Outpatient Program, on the Northern Nevada Medical Center campus, works with seniors diagnosed as clinically depressed or mentally ill.

“There’s tremendous grief and loss among the senior population,” said Prince Lewis, managing director of Senior Bridges, the outpatient program she joined 13 years ago. “It’s about health, loss of loved ones, the economy – people are living longer, but they retired maybe before they should have and now find meaning lost.”

The program, which is Medicare- and Senior Dimensions-approved and hospital-affiliated, has three full-time therapists – Prince Lewis included, as well as a nurse and a psychiatry, who work on a part-time basis. Following an initial assessment, patients attend both individual and group therapy sessions, gaining activity and friendship in the process. Couples’ sessions are also available.

“This program is unique, because they stay with us until they get better,” Prince Lewis explained. “As long as they’re improving, they stay. And then they’re not discharged – they graduate, because they’ve accomplished something. They’ve probably worked on issues that they haven’t shared at any other time in their lives.”

It’s a long way from where Prince Lewis started her career. Born and raised in Iowa, she majored in drama at the University of Iowa. “I wanted to be a director,” she recalled, “but the head of the drama department told me, ‘If you’re going to make it as a woman, you have to be cutthroat. Can you stab someone in the back? ’Cause that’s what you’ll have to do.’ I knew I couldn’t.”

Innately a caregiver, she had worked in hospitals since she was 19, and was impressed by the social workers she’d seen. She went on to earn both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work at Iowa, becoming a licensed clinical social worker. She moved to Nevada in 1980 when she found a position at Reno’s Crisis Call Center.

There, she put her directorial skills to work, leading some important changes at the center, including the development of the Sexual Assault Response Team and the Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Groups. She spearheaded the effort to get the Crisis Call Center moved off the University of Nevada, Reno campus and into its own space, which enabled them to start 24-hour crisis service.

After several years, she began her own counseling business; as a contractor with the State of Nevada, she counseled children and adolescents living in group homes. When the state’s funding dried up, Prince Lewis joined Senior Bridges.

“I’d never worked with seniors, and wasn’t even sure I really wanted to,” she confessed. “But I found that seniors were much more appreciative than the kids I’d worked with. They’re the last of their generation, their family may be scattered, and we become their family.”

As managing director, she’s helped Senior Bridges to double its space and move to a first-floor location – an important consideration for her patients. She’d love to eventually add Saturday hours to the program, and to see it one day become a center for counseling in the community.

The program takes up a big part of her time, but even in her free time, Prince Lewis is helping others. She and her 14-year-old Samoyed dog, volunteer with the Paws for Love Pet Therapy Program, visiting hospitals, nursing homes and other facilities to give unconditional love to those who need it.

She and her Senior Bridges team also decorate the hospital for Christmas each year – a daunting production that involves getting her seniors to make ornaments.

It’s a far cry from what she originally set out to do, but that’s just fine with her. “I feel really lucky. I get to see people get better.”
Dr. James Swift was the first in his family to go to college. His parents instilled in him the value of hard work and the importance of helping others, and were very supportive of his goal to become a physician.

Swift received his doctor of medicine from the University of Health Sciences/The Chicago Medical School. He then went to Loma Linda University Medical Center in California to complete residencies in internal medicine and pediatrics. Swift received his fellowship training in pediatric critical care medicine at the Harbor-University of California, Los Angeles Medical Center/Children's Hospital of Orange County.

In 1996, Swift founded the Children's Critical Care Network, a medical practice management company that he established to bring together the disciplines of pediatric intensive care and pediatric hospital medicine. In the same year, Swift moved to Las Vegas at the request of Sunrise Hospital to have his company, the Children's Critical Care Network, help set up a network of pediatric services at the hospital.

“When I came to Las Vegas and specifically Sunrise Hospital, I had been fostering throughout the country a movement of tying together inpatient services for children in hospitals and specifically having a continuum of care,” said Swift. “There should be people who have a certain skill set who see children in the emergency department who then can hand those children off to very skilled and capable people on the pediatric floor or the pediatric intensive care unit.”

Along with Sunrise Hospital, the Children's Critical Care Network branched out to provide its consulting services to several other hospitals in the United States. In 1998, Swift founded the Children's Emergency Medicine Network as a way to create a similar network of care in emergency medical services for children's hospitals. Four years later Swift founded the Children's Healthcare Network as a way to combine the pediatric hospital-based services of both the Children's Critical Care Network and the Children's Emergency Medicine Network. Currently, the company provides its services to four hospitals in California, three hospitals in Nevada, one hospital in Montana and one hospital in Louisiana.

Swift also continues to work closely with Sunrise Hospital. At the hospital he serves as medical director, a critical care medicine specialist and as director of the pediatric emergency medicine service, pediatric critical care medicine and inpatient services, as well as being on the board of trustees. He is on staff at Mountainview Hospital and Medical Center, and is the medical advisor for the local non-profit organization Positively Kids.

Swift is involved in the education of upcoming physicians and is currently an assistant professor of pediatrics at the University of Nevada School of Medicine. He also is involved in the school's pediatric residency training program; which is the activity that he derives the most pride from. “The biggest satisfaction or accomplishment is that there are young physicians that have left this residency training program and gone into the area of pediatric critical care because of me,” said Swift. “They felt that was their calling because of seeing what I have done.”

Swift plans to continue his movement of tying together pediatric intensive care in hospitals all over the country. He would like to bring these pediatric hospital-based services to communities that he feels are in need of them. Swift sees his future in both pediatric intensive care, as well as in health care policy relating to public perception and access to healthcare for children in the United States.

There are several criteria Swift feels are important to becoming a hero in healthcare. These criteria include being accessible to the people around you, delivering the highest level of care you can, being an ethical person and not cutting corners. “It boils down to one issue: hard work that is well done and offers value to people,” said Swift.
Throughout the country, demand for physicians exceeds supply. According to Merritt Hawkins, a national physician recruiting company, the shortage is most acute among family physicians.

For Catherine McCarthy, MD, this is a particularly worrisome trend. As associate professor with the University of Nevada School of Medicine’s (UNSOM) Department of Family and Community Medicine, she’s doing her part to remedy that situation. In addition to caring for her own patients at several area hospitals and teaching courses to first- and second-year medical students, she helps facilitate the UNSOM’s three-year family medicine residency program, and the Family Medicine Interest Group, which offers extracurricular study in various aspects of family medicine.

Additionally, McCarthy is on the board of directors and the board of trustees for the Nevada Academy of Family Physicians. She is one of several faculty members who help to oversee the UNSOM’s Student Outreach Clinic. She runs a rural obstetrics clinic in Yerington, providing comprehensive OB care, along with several residents, to 15-20 expectant mothers without access to care in that area. And she is spearheading the school’s new fourth-year Family Medicine Obstetrics Fellowship.

“[UNSOM faculty members] strive to influence the medical students about the benefits of primary care,” said McCarthy. “You can tailor your practice in a number of different directions, like geriatrics, pediatrics, women’s health and you build continuity relationship with your patients, so you get to follow them throughout their life spans. You get to know their kids, their parents, their brothers and sisters. It’s very rewarding to walk into a patient’s room and not have to flip through a chart to familiarize yourself with someone. We try to show our students how satisfying that can be.”

Medicine was always a family matter for McCarthy, whose father and grandmother were both nurses. After high school, McCarthy left her Philadelphia home for the Bay Area to study physical therapy at San Francisco State University. But her interests shifted when she began doing volunteer work with the Haight-Ashbury Free Clinic, providing care to the homeless and uninsured. It was here that she learned the rewards of family medicine, and met some influential role models who practiced in this specialty and inspired her to switch to pre-med.

Always anxious to explore the world, McCarthy went on to earn a doctor of medicine degree at St. Georges School of Medicine in Granada in 2000. “I found out that the school has a great reputation and that I’d get to live in the Caribbean for a couple of years”, she said.

A portion of her clinical training was spent in the United Kingdom, where she gained tremendous insight about the benefits of nationalized medicine, followed by training at Oakland’s Highland Memorial Hospital. She began her residency at the University of Nevada, Reno in 2000. During her three years of residency, she gained some experience teaching, and found she was drawn to it – and good at it. In 2001, she received the Arnold P. Gold Foundation’s Humanism and Teaching Award for Outstanding Resident Role Model.

“It just so happened that as I was graduating, they were quite short here [at the University],” said McCarthy, who joined the UNSOM faculty in 2003. “So they asked me to help out, and before I knew it I was part-time, then full-time. I guess I kind of fell into it.”

Now, even after so many remarkable achievements, teaching is still what McCarthy’s most proud of.

“We spend a lot of time putting together courses and teaching in addition to our clinical practices, so our interaction with the medical students is very rewarding, and we get quite attached to them,” she said. “Many of them go on to stay in this community and practice, and that’s really nice for us, to see the fruits of all our labor.”
Fate seemed to guide Dr. Lori Candela into her nursing career, but her transition from nurse to teacher was motivated by her love of learning and her gift for mentoring others. In her continual quest for learning, Candela has attained quite the education. She received her bachelor of science in nursing from Metropolitan State College in 1983, her master’s of science in nursing from the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center in 1985 and her doctor of education from the University of Southern California in 1998. Candela also holds a post master’s family nurse practitioner certificate which she received from Graceland University in 2005.

Candela moved to Las Vegas in July of 1999 to work at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). Since her time at UNLV, Candela has established innovative teaching methods in the classroom. “I very much connect my classroom to the larger curriculum and then the curriculum to the larger public – in other words the health and welfare of the public,” said Candela. “I see them all as very connected and I try to do that in my teaching.”

One of the innovative classes Candela taught was an online doctoral-level course on nursing leadership. Candela structured her course as a virtual nursing school to help her students understand how to apply the principles of leadership as they occur in an academic setting. During the semester the students played the role of faculty in the virtual school with Candela as the dean. In one exercise the students took turns chairing regularly scheduled “faculty meetings.” In these meetings they dealt with all of the issues that arose in the virtual school. Upon completion of the course the students filled out a survey to evaluate how they perceived their leadership abilities changed as the result of taking the course.

“These students are being prepared as academic scholars. They will most likely go into university settings and will be required to do research, teach and interact with other teachers in moving curriculums forward,” said Candela. “So, I thought what a perfect opportunity for them to practice that skill prior to being in the environment.”

Among Candela’s long list of accomplishments the one that she is most proud of is her completion of both a doctorate and a post master’s family nurse practitioner certificate while working full-time as a teacher. To maintain clinical perspective, she continues work as nurse practitioner.

Candela believes she relates to her students because of her experiences as both a student and teacher while continuing her own education, providing her with significant insight into her own students. Some of Candela’s other noteworthy accomplishments as an educator include being part of major curriculum revisions as well as leading both a committee to design a graduate level nurse educator track and a committee to design and put into place a Ph.D. nursing program.

Candela’s future goal is to continue to develop her teaching skills in order to become a better educator. She continues to use information technology, such as Second Life (a virtual reality program), to develop course content. As for her research, Candela is studying educational processes and how people learn. She has a clinical line of research on diabetes and obesity in which she is working with two colleagues at UNLV to research the self-management practices of elders with diabetes. She would eventually like to find funding to be able to research how people live well with diabetes and how the disease can be prevented.

“Looking beyond yourself and any kind of personal gain to what will be better about this program, this place or these people - how can I help,” said Candela when asked how she would encourage others to become a healthcare hero. “People that operate more from that type of framework – they are people that I consider heroes.”
Northern Nevada took a giant leap in the level of care available to its victims of sexual assault and child abuse in July, when a brand new facility for the treatment of assault victims opened on the campus of Northern Nevada Medical Center (NNMC). It’s an exciting and important event that would not have been possible without the tireless efforts of many community leaders – particularly Washoe County District Attorney Richard Gammick.

The new center will be the shared headquarters for the county’s Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) and Child Abuse Response and Evaluations (CARES) programs, which provide medical and psychological treatment, evidence collection and advocacy for the victims of child abuse and sexual assault. The County’s relationship with NNMC began in 2000, when Gammick spearheaded the effort to partner with NNMC in creating a centralized headquarters in which these programs could conduct their evaluations.

“When I came aboard as district attorney, we had some rough spots to work out,” said Gammick. “Understandably, emergency rooms didn’t feel comfortable taking in these victims, particularly the sexual assault victims, so they often didn’t receive the treatment they needed. Developing a system and educating the medical field about what we do was important to make all our jobs easier.”

It made sense to NNMC, who gave SART and CARES a room on its campus in 2000, and allowed for any necessary emergency room or lab use by the programs. It’s a remarkable community partnership that greatly enhanced law enforcement’s ability to properly address these crimes.

Once law enforcement officials are notified of an assault, those officials contact the Crisis Call Center, which dispatches a SART/CARES-trained, on-call nurse and a victim advocate to NNMC, who begin to address victims’ medical and psychological needs and to collect forensic evidence.

Since 2000, they’ve quickly run out of space in their one-room headquarters. So in 2005, Gammick approached the County Commission about the success of the program and the need for more space. Through his efforts, and those of Senator John Ensign and his staff, the commission approved a $994,100 HUD appropriation for the construction of a new facility. Combined with donations from several local foundations and private individuals this enabled construction to begin on the facility, which opened adjacent to the hospital.

As Gammick explains, the new center will house separate adult and child examination rooms, two interview rooms, staff offices, a conference room, storage for equipment and files, a large shower and dressing room, evidence collection lockers, a waiting area, a small kitchen and a children’s play area. Gammick said that Jim Pagles, former CEO of NNMC, and former Sparks Mayor Tony Armstrong, both deceased, were instrumental in forging and strengthening the partnership between SART/CARES and the hospital, both were honored at the grand opening.

Since those early days, the services available at SART and CARES have greatly expanded due to increased staffing and funding. They have their own staff of nurses, nurse practitioners and medical doctors, including a child abuse-trained pediatrician. And funds generated by the County’s Fraud Check Diversion Program are now diverted to both assault programs, as well as the Crisis Call Center.

“We can provide a lot better care to these victims than ever before,” said Gammick. “There’s still a lot of work to be done, but we’re getting there. I’m particularly proud of this program that got the legal and medical sides of the house working together and teaching each other, and the communication between us has been superb.” That’s the kind of partnership that makes sense for everyone involved.
While many other physicians are resting on their laurels in a much deserved retirement, Dr. Joel F. Bower has chosen a different path. He elected to spend his golden years striving to improve the healthcare of others throughout Southern Nevada.

Bower received his doctor of medicine from the School of Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh. After his obstetrics and gynecology residency he served as a captain in the Medical Corp of the United States Air Force. Bower began practicing medicine as an obstetrician and gynecologist in Pittsburg in 1968. He moved to Henderson in 1971 and went into practice with Dr. William Swackhammer. The following year he went into solo practice. Bower closed his practice in 1994 and became medical director at St. Rose Dominican Hospital in Henderson. He remained medical director until his retirement in 2001.

In September of 2003, Bower established the Dr. Joel and Carol Bower School Based Healthcare Center. The center serves students from kindergarten through high school and is free of charge except for high school physicals. Currently, the program offered by the center is in four schools including Basic High School, Brown Junior High, Robert Taylor Elementary School and CT Sewell Elementary School. Students can receive healthcare five days a week between 7 a.m. and 2 p.m. at the nurses’ office in each of the four schools. If a child attends a school where the program is not offered he or she may visit one of the four schools to receive care.

“The school based healthcare center is staffed by APNs, advanced practitioners of nursing, so that we can actively treat kids and keep them in school,” said Bower. “We can theoretically reduce the absenteeism rate and increase [the students] grades.”

Bower’s other major project during retirement has been his involvement with Friends For Henderson Hospice, an organization working to help relieve the shortage of inpatient hospice beds in Southern Nevada. Friends For Henderson Hospice has been able to raise approximately $4 million dollars from grant money and private donations. The City of Henderson granted 11.4 acres located near the existing Nevada State College campus where the organization plans to build an adult daycare center and a Nathan Adelson Hospice unit. Ground was broken for the adult daycare center in February of this year and construction went vertical in May.

The goal of the organization is to raise funds to build the new hospice unit. The organization chose to make the unit a part of the Nathan Adelson Hospice given its non-profit status and open door policy – not refusing care for anyone. A park will separate the adult daycare center and the hospice unit, which will both be located on a street called “Compassionate Way.”

Bower claimed he had always wanted to enter into the medical field. “When I was a kid [working in medicine] was the only goal in life I ever considered,” he said. When looking back Bower felt that the accomplishment he is most proud of was not during his medical career, but instead during retirement. “I think the thing I am most proud of is to have the school based healthcare center be active, functional and being part of the Henderson community,” he said.

Bower would find it very satisfying to complete the hospice project. He also would like to continue working with the Salvation Army LEED Center for Women. Bower visits the facility twice a month to provide examinations for the center’s residents.

“As a doc you have to be very much involved with the community,” said Bower when asked how he would encourage others to become heroes in healthcare. “We have to be so much involved in the mechanics of medicine and running the office practices and those kinds of things sometimes you just don’t take the time to be involved.”
When registering for college, Cristina Vito chose to enter the nursing program with the mindset that she wanted a career that would help people – especially seniors. Vito received her nursing education from Cerri-tos College and California State University Fullerton. Upon graduating in 1983, she began her career as a critical care and emergency room registered nurse. After spending seven years in critical care nursing Vito moved into quality of care and risk management, as well as having her own nursing-pool registry.

In 2001, Vito’s husband accepted a position at Healthsouth Hospital and the family moved to Henderson. Vito began work at St. Rose Hospital Siena as a nursing supervisor. She moved to HCA Staffing Company in 2002 to become its director of human resources. One year later her husband created the Nevada Adult Day Healthcare Centers, Inc. (NADHC) and Vito left her job to help him start and run the company.

The NADHC is an adult day care facility offering a variety of services for both elderly and disabled adults. The facility has two registered nurses and two licensed practical nurses on staff. It offers medical services such as physical therapy, occupational and speech therapy and health education. Clients can also make appointments with a dentist and podiatrist on site so that they don’t have to leave the facility. Along with meeting the medical needs of its clients the NADHC offers a wide range of activities to encourage brain stimulation and exercise. There is exercise equipment on site, a library with daily reading sessions and a board-certified music therapist that visits once a week for three hours. Transportation to and from the NADHC is also available to clients who need it.

“We are one-of-a-kind,” said Vito. “We are the only one in the entire state that provides all of these services.”

Vito handles all of the day-to-day operations of the NADHC including processing inquiries, taking potential clients and their families on tours and working on policies and procedures. The facility, which is licensed by the state, has processed more than 600 clients in the five years it has been operational. The NADHC works with other organizations to help its clientele cover the cost. Currently, the Alzheimer’s Association and Helping Hands, non-profit organizations dedicated to improving the lives of the elderly, offer monetary vouchers to assist elderly in paying for NADHC’s services. Medicaid covers the cost of adult day care and 75 percent of the NADHC’s clientele are on Medicaid.

Vito is thrilled that she is able to provide the adult day care services to the Las Vegas community. “The thing that is most rewarding for me is when I hear families say ‘Cristina, you guys are wonderful here. You have added years to my mother’s life,’” said Vito. “I have some clients that have been here for four years and I compare how they are now to four years ago when they first walked in through my door – it is such a difference.” Vito’s goal is to keep the NADHC going strong. She wants the NADHC to remain a family business and eventually would like to pass it on to her daughter.

Along with her work at the NADHC, Vito is a member of COCHELCO Corporation, a healthcare management company that provides consultation for various healthcare organizations. She is member of the Philippine Nurses Association.

Vito believes that in order to become a hero in healthcare, a person must have a passion for what they are doing and their actions should reflect that passion. She believes that healthcare professionals should make a difference with the services they are providing to the community.

Vito feels that all of her accomplishments with the NADHC would not have been possible without her husband. He is the one who believed and supported her throughout the entire endeavor.
During 2007-2008 at the University of Nevada, Reno (UNR), the Student Outreach Clinic increased its average number of patients from five to 40, and greatly expanded its breadth of services. They helped two young girls in Southeast Asia receive life-saving surgeries. Either there’s something in the water, or there’s something special about the School of Medicine’s class of 2010.

Most of the 62 members of the class are modest about their accomplishments, but clearly a unique chemistry and coming together of students helped make long-needed changes happen. Take the Student Outreach Clinic, formed in the mid-90s, which provides free medical care on a monthly basis to the uninsured in the community. Under the direct supervision of licensed faculty physicians, volunteer medical students gain valuable hands-on experience as they run the clinics, which specifically target general health, pediatrics or women’s health and offer complete physical exams, various diagnostic tests, referrals and free immunizations on a first-come, first-served basis.

Until this year the clinics took place in a spare room at the Salvation Army, and saw an average of five to six patients. Although Nevada ranks 50th in child immunizations, the clinic didn’t offer them.

Then the class of 2010 arrived. Clinic President Carissa Sparrow explained that when her class took over the clinic, they saw there was extraordinary potential to do more, if only some changes were made. “I thought it would make a good resource for the community, so we started increasing services and getting more volunteer help, and we outgrew our location,” said Sparrow. “Last spring, we started working on a new location and figuring out where to go to make it legitimate and make a difference.”

Sparrow spearheaded research into the potential effects of relocation. The class honed its business skills as they encountered legal matters, administrative tasks, policy creation and a mountain of research and marketing.

Pediatric clinic manager Whitney Law helped write the grant proposal that earned the clinic $25,000 from the Redfield Foundation, helping them expand services like immunizations, pap smears and STD screenings.

“$25,000,” said Law, “is a lot of money, and it’s all because of the class of 2010.”

Richards presented the problem to her classmates, and they voted unanimously to help. The fundraiser, held on April 21, 2007, raised nearly $8,500. Both girls received their surgeries and are doing well.

“We focused on how healthcare is global, and took the mentality that what we do here affects people elsewhere,” said Richards. “It’s important for people to know that a lot of people in the field are aware of the problems in healthcare and that we do care.”

As Whitney Law points out, the caring won’t stop in 2010. “I think we’ve really shown the next classes how excited and passionate we are, and that’s rubbed off on them. And it’s just going to keep growing.”
How far you go in life depends on you being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because someday in life, you will have been all of these.

–George Washington Carver

Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada

congratulates Dr. Edwin Kingsley for being selected as the recipient of the 2008 Healthcare Heroes Humanitarian Award.

The physicians and staff of Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada thank you for your contributions to our community.
Dr. Edwin Kingsley always had an interest in science and helping people. He thought the perfect way to combine his two interests was to have a career in medicine. For his premedical education, Kingsley attended the University of Utah where he received his bachelor’s degree in biology. He then received his doctor of medicine degree from the University of Utah College of Medicine. Kingsley went to the University of Arizona College of Medicine for his internship, residency in internal medicine and fellowship in hematology and oncology.

Upon completion of his fellowship in 1985, Kingsley moved to Las Vegas to begin a private practice in oncology and hematology. He worked in private practice until 1989 when he founded the Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada (CCCN), formerly known as Southwest Cancer Clinic and Nevada Radiation Oncology Centers. The Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada has grown to be the largest cancer center in the state. “We are truly comprehensive in terms of offering radiation for the pediatric and adult oncology,” said Kingsley. “Right now there is about 25 physicians total and six different clinics throughout the Valley.”

Some of the medical services offered by CCCN include medical oncology, hematology, radiation oncology, nuclear medicine, diagnostic imaging, chemotherapy, pediatric oncology as well as cancer prevention and screening. The center also provides support services for patients including financial counseling, educational services, diet and nutrition, alternative medicine and support groups.

Kingsley is the medical laboratory director for CCCN and is very passionate about clinical medical research. The center has a research committee and 55 clinical trials in which the sponsors range from the University of California, Los Angeles to U.S. Oncology to the National Cancer Institute. Kingsley is the principle investigator of two different studies and is responsible for the actual clinical research at the facility.

Along with his work at the Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada, Kingsley is also a clinical adjunct professor of internal medicine and oncology for Touro University College of Osteopathic Medicine and is a clinical assistant professor of internal medicine and oncology for Western University of Health Sciences. “I feel strongly committed to the education of our future doctors, which is why I have been involved in Touro. [The education of our future doctors] is really critical to our success as a medical community in Nevada,” said Kingsley. “I think Touro University is going to be a blessing for Nevadans because it will help eventually temper the physician shortage in Nevada.”

Kingsley’s professional affiliations include the American Society of Clinical Oncologists, the American Medical Association and the American Society of Hematology. He is also involved in the Clark County Medical Society, serving as past president and currently as a board member. Kingsley views his involvement with these organizations as a necessary service to the community – supporting both patients and physicians.

Kingsley has no plans to retire. In the future, he would like to continue practicing medicine, providing compassionate care to his patients. Kingsley is also involved with Sunrise Hospital Medical Center, as well as Nathan Adelson Hospice. He would like to continue with his work as a trustee for both of those organizations viewing such service as a way to positively impact their futures.

In encouraging others to become heroes in healthcare, Kingsley would like them to focus on helping those in need here in the Valley instead of focusing on international projects. He feels that medical professionals should provide passionate, ethical and quality medical care to their patients. “Believe in oneself and ones capacity to do much good,” said Kingsley. “There is a great deal that can be accomplished for the betterment of mankind right here in our own backyard.”
For someone who helps to improve people’s lives on a daily basis, Louis Bonaldi, M.D., F.A.C.S. is remarkably modest about his accomplishments and the contributions he’s made to the Northern Nevada community.

After all, his Center for Plastic Surgery, which he opened in 1989, is one of the area’s finest and most respected practices. He was named one of the Best Doctors in the America Pacific Region in 2000 to 2002, and one of the Top Plastic Surgeons in America by the American Consumers’ Research Council in 2005-2007. He’s a proud father to five children. He’s even an accomplished pianist who has performed at Carnegie Hall.

But he’s especially low-key about one of his greatest accomplishments, New Beginnings, a program that provides one free reconstructive or cosmetic surgery per month to a patient with some sort of physical defect who could not otherwise afford treatment. Bonaldi absorbs all associated costs, and through close relationships with, and generosity from, local anesthesiologists, breast implant manufacturers and other related providers, the patients pay nothing. Surgeries have ranged from post-mastectomy breast reconstruction to ear-pinning or facial reconstruction – procedures that significantly affect patients’ quality of life.

Bonaldi and his son, Nick, began the program informally in 1998, occasionally providing free procedures when needed, more formalized guidelines, and the program’s name, came later.

“It was just an idea for doing something nice for the community, because it had done so many nice things for me,” Bonaldi explained. “But as it grew, we had to get a little stricter about the rules in order to help the people who really needed it. We started getting applications that said things like, ‘I need a tummy tuck to feel better about myself.’ That’s not what this is about.”

However, Bonaldi acknowledges the benefit of publicizing New Beginnings’ work. “Anybody can do this in their practice – it doesn’t have to be a Reno thing. I’d like to bring more attention to it so people know what a great thing a program like this can be for a community.”

Bonaldi became an important part of another community effort this past winter when Brianna Denison was kidnapped from a friend’s home near the University of Nevada, Reno campus and subsequently murdered. Perhaps no event in recent years has galvanized the Northern Nevada community to the extent that Denison’s disappearance did. But it hit closer to home for the staff at the Center for Plastic Surgery, because Brianna’s mom, Bridgette Denison, is one of the Center’s estheticians.

In those long days following Brianna’s abduction, when many in the community were volunteering to help in the search, Bonaldi put his musical talents to use and wrote the song “Bring Back Bri.”

“My idea was to write a song that might appeal to this guy who might have had her, to make him feel some remorse,” he said.

These days, Bonaldi is once again turning to his piano to help the community. He appeared in Rockin’ Docs, a medical music fest featuring three local bands comprised of area physicians, all performing in lab coats and scrubs to raise funds for the University of Nevada, Reno’s Student Outreach Clinic and the Healing Arts Program at Renown Medical Center.

While Bonaldi, who grew up in Northern Nevada and attended high school and college in Reno, is honored to be recognized as a Healthcare Hero, that’s certainly not why he makes these humanitarian efforts.

“I feel I have a responsibility, I really do, because I have the resources. And with others’ help it’s really simple for me to do all this,” he said. “And if you can change somebody’s life, it’s really amazing. It doesn’t get any better than that.”
Three years ago, Dr. Tracey Green received some sobering news from her cardiologist at 240 pounds, she would have to lose some weight, or her heart would be in trouble. So she asked her cardiologist for some advice, and was told, “Why don’t you buy a book?”

“I realized then that there weren’t a lot of people who understood much about weight management,” said Green. “Having grown up in a house with an anorexic mom, I definitely knew that eating was about more than just food.”

She realized she wasn’t alone. One in four Nevadans is obese. As a family physician with her own practice, Sierra Family Health Center, Green saw an opportunity to help patients in their battles with weight. She became certified with the American Society of Bariatric Physicians, to medically treat patients in the areas of obesity, weight loss and dieting. Then, in October 2007, she developed InnerThin, a comprehensive, medically supervised weight-loss program.

InnerThin assists patients of all ages — even children — in meeting their own personal weight-loss goals by providing a nutrition plan, a supervised fitness program and a series of 12 behavioral sessions that address various weight-related issues, such as low self-esteem or relapse prevention.

“I came up with the name InnerThin as a way of suggesting that, inside us all, we have thin representations of our outer selves,” said Green.

The program isn’t just about helping participants shed pounds; it’s about helping them live healthier, longer lives by making eating well and exercising life-long habits. Patients have access to a full gym, intended for InnerThin participants only, and are supervised by a fitness trainer. Complete nutrition plans are provided, and Green refers patients to psychologists if a need exists.

Green feels the group approach is key. “People become very friendly in the group, and we share in their lives. Obesity is really an isolation disease, so to have people come out and be with each other is a huge milestone for many of them,” said Green. “Everybody here has been through the struggle or has dealt with weight in some way. So it’s truly a family effort.”

Born and raised in Brookline, Massachusetts, Green has always seen medicine as a family affair. Her dad, a psychologist, was an inspiration to her. She went on to attend Tulane University in Louisiana to begin an undergraduate program in psychology. But when an opportunity arose to join the University of Nevada, Reno’s (UNR) project to teach sign language to Washoe the chimpanzee, she seized it and left Tulane. It was in Reno that a colleague suggested she pursue a medical degree; inspired by her father, who “had always wanted to be a ‘real doctor,’” she decided to try it.

She completed her psychology degree, and then embarked upon a biology program and medical degree all at UNR. After her residency at Altoona Hospital in Hershey, Pennsylvania was complete, she returned to Reno in 1994, and opened Sierra Family Health in 1997. Today, the practice, which also houses InnerThin, is located on the Northern Nevada Medical Center campus.

Green has high aspirations for InnerThin. A meditation class was recently added, to enhance the spiritual aspect of the program. They’re also testing a sensor device that monitors patients’ exercise, sleeping and eating patterns, enabling Green and her team to closely monitor patients’ progress and provide more specific feedback.

“We’ve always focused on illness instead of wellness,” she said. “It’s my drive to focus on wellness. I want to encourage people, in whatever state they’re in, to be better, physically, mentally and spiritually. The real goal is making us all healthier.”

Her approach is catching on, which is why she’d also like to eventually move InnerThin to a larger location. Since October, 90 participants have gone through the program, and she’s projecting even greater numbers in the future. If the program’s successes thus far are any indication, that future’s not too far off.
As a child growing up in Nigeria, Dr. Echezona E. Ezeanolue witnessed many people around him die from infectious diseases that were preventable. This experience sparked his interest in medicine, especially the area of preventable diseases and preventable infections such as HIV, Syphilis and Hepatitis B. After receiving his doctor of medicine degree from the College of Medicine at the University of Nigeria, Ezeanolue moved to the United States. He then completed his pediatric residency at Howard University in Washington, D.C., as well as his fellowship training in pediatric infectious diseases and his master’s of public health degree with emphasis on disease epidemiology at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Ezeanolue was hired by the University of Nevada School of Medicine in 2005 to train pediatric residents, as well as to provide infectious disease consultations to the University Medical Center of Southern Nevada and Sunrise Children’s Hospital. Upon his arrival Ezeanolue noticed that there was a significant need in the community to help prevent HIV-positive mothers from passing the disease along to their babies.

“I came to the community to find out there was a clinic for HIV infected kids,” said Ezeanolue. “I started trying to redesign the clinic into a program more geared towards prevention instead of waiting for kids to be infected and then seeing them at the clinic.”

Ezeanolue first brought together all of the organizations in Southern Nevada which help people with HIV and AIDS to create a system for all of them to work in collaboration towards the goal of preventing the transfer of HIV from mother to baby. His next goal was to acquire funding for the project, which came in the form of a grant from the American Academy of Pediatrics, a generous anonymous donor from the Las Vegas community and from the State Department. With a plan and funding in place, Ezeanolue founded the Nevada Care Program. This comprehensive maternal-child program provides HIV-infected mothers with prenatal counseling and care. It screens infants exposed to HIV and provides care for children and adolescents infected with HIV.

The Nevada Care Program has been able to reduce the rate of HIV transmission from mother to baby from 30 percent to 1 percent. In 2007, 25 uninfected babies were born to HIV-infected mothers. “My proudest moment here in Las Vegas was looking back at last year and seeing that there were 25 kids born and none of them were infected,” said Ezeanolue. “I can’t tell you how satisfied that made me. When I look back, I tell myself that in some little way I have been able to help this community.”

Ezeanolue is working toward self-sustainability for the Nevada Care Program over time and is committed to the goal of zero HIV-positive infants born to mothers with HIV or AIDS within the next five years.

Along with working as the director for the Nevada Care Program, Ezeanolue is also an assistant professor of pediatrics and clinical epidemiology for the University of Nevada School of Medicine and director of the Scholarly Activities and Research for the Pediatric Residency Program. He also serves as chairman on the Committee for Infectious Diseases and Immunization for the Nevada Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics and is the chairman of the Southern Nevada Preventable Perinatal Infection (PIP) Initiative.

Ezeanolue would like to encourage medical students to choose something they are very passionate about. “I am blessed in what I do. It is not often that people find a job that is also a passion for them,” said Ezeanolue. “It is not just about making a lot of money. It is about trying to give back by finding the something in need that you happen to know how to do and you are passionate about.”
The proceeds from the 2007 Healthcare Heroes events held in Las Vegas and Reno were donated to universities. The university has created a scholarship for deserving students to benefit from the annual proceeds of the Healthcare Heroes events sponsored by Nevada Business Journal and Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield.

We invite you to share in the words of gratitude written by some of the recipients of the scholarship for the Spring 2008 semester.

“I would like to thank you for your generous contribution to my education at Touro University. Through your generosity, you have given me the opportunity to pursue my goals and fulfill my dreams of achieving a successful nursing career.”

- Norka Vallejo

“I am very honored to be a recipient of this award and appreciate your recognition of my efforts in the nursing program. Becoming a nurse has been a dream of mine and it is because of people like you that these dreams can come true. Receiving this scholarship motivates me to continue to work hard and excel in the program.”

- Kilsa Plicka

“I moved to Nevada specifically for the Nursing Program here at Touro University. The money I received will help me continue to pursue my completion of my baccalaureate nursing degree. Thank you for the support you are showing Touro University in general and my education specifically.”

- Stephanie Hase

“I have lived in Las Vegas for 18 years and recently made a career change from hospitality to nursing. Switching to nursing is one of the best decisions I have ever made. I plan to use my scholarship to purchase my textbooks for the semester and additional NCLEX review books. I also plan on receiving my master’s at Touro and continuing on to get my nurse practitioners. Thank you for your generous donation!”

- Christina Anderson
Karla Jay has been working in the medical field for more than 28 years. It all started in 1980 when she began working for Bronson Methodist Hospital in Kalamazoo, Michigan. She received a bachelor’s of science in economics and business administration from Rockford College and her master’s degree in business administration with an emphasis in finance from Western Michigan University. Jay has worked for Baxter-Travenol in Deerfield, Illinois, Martha Washington Hospital in Chicago and Beloit Memorial Hospital in Beloit, Wisconsin. She has also lectured throughout the country on practice management for Palmer Associates, Inc. of Chicago.

In 1987, Jay moved to Las Vegas and began a private consulting practice specializing in medical practice management. Twelve years later, she became the practice administrator for Nevada Neurological Consultants, LTD. Jay and the physicians she worked with at Nevada Neurological Consultants noticed that the community was lacking an organization to provide social services for those in Las Vegas who have or are newly diagnosed with neurological disorders. Jay was instrumental in the creation and development of the non-profit Nevada Neuroscience Foundation, which opened in November of 2002.

The foundation employs a full-time social worker to assist patients with social service issues such as helping them fill out disability applications, assisting them in obtaining medical care and medications, as well as offering transportation and nutrition services. If a patient has insurance, the foundation will work with the insurance company. If a patient does not have insurance, they will receive the services at no cost. To help raise funds to support patients without insurance, the organization holds an annual gala fundraiser, which began in 2006.

Jay currently holds a full-time position as administrator for the Department of Internal Medicine for the University of Nevada School of Medicine (UNSOM) and has the part-time position of executive director for the foundation. In her executive director position, she manages the business affairs including accounting, funding for patient grants and planning for fundraisers, as well as working with the foundation’s public relations firm and neurologist advisors. It is an independent organization whose services are available to all the physicians in the Valley. “We wanted other neurologists to feel comfortable using the services,” said Jay. “It was designed to help all of the neurologists in the community.”

The foundation would like to partner with other organizations to create a network for patients. It has partnered with ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) of Nevada to design and create a multidisciplinary ALS clinic located at the University of Nevada School of Medicine Department of Neurology, as well as the Muscular Dystrophy Association.

Jay’s goals include expanding the existing muscular dystrophy clinic into a more multidisciplinary facility offering a wider variety of services to patients and establishing multidisciplinary clinics for both Parkinson’s and Multiple Sclerosis patients. Currently, she is investigating potential funding sources so that when she can open the clinics, funds will be available to pay for services needed by patients without insurance.

During her career, the accomplishment that Jay is most proud of is starting the Nevada Neuroscience Foundation. “Work is a day-to-day thing and I think you do what you need to do in your job, but I think that starting the foundation was something that didn’t have to be done,” said Jay. “It was something that we did because we knew it was the right thing to do.”

“It was something that we did because we knew it was the right thing to do.”
According to Robin Keith, a good portion of her success in life, and as president of Nevada Rural Hospital Partners (NRHP), comes from being in the right place at the right time. But it’s also clear that it’s derived from her deep commitment to making sure all patients have access to quality healthcare.

The overall function of NRHP is to support its 15 member hospitals in the state by improving and sharing services, resources and advocacy. It fulfills this mission through four separate entities: Nevada Rural Hospital Partners, Inc., which is a 501(e) shared services organization; NRHP Foundation, a 501(c)(3) charitable foundation; NRHP Management Services, Inc., a for-profit corporation; and the Liability Cooperative of Nevada (LiCON), a self-funded, professional liability insurance trust.

The NRHP was formed to meet the challenges faced by Nevada’s rural hospitals, chief of these being a lack of patient population to support its work. In the mid-80s, many discussions took place between these hospitals about the benefits of pooling resources. In the center of this discussion was Robin Keith.

Keith had earned a nursing degree from the University of Nevada, Reno and began her career as a critical care nurse. But after stints in Reno, Boulder City, Colorado and Henderson’s St. Rose Dominican Hospital Rose de Lima campus. Keith, now a mother, sought a career with more predictable hours.

“I’ve been very fortunate in that everyone I’ve ever worked for has seen, I suppose, some potential in me, and has made it possible for me to grow and take on more opportunities,” she said. “So I got out of clinical nursing and into more management work. And through that experience at St. Rose, I learned a lot about how hospitals operate and what their role is in the community.”

These lessons served Keith well when she and her family relocated to Reno and she went in search of work. “I went to visit a friend, the director of the Nevada Hospital Association (NHA), to find out if he knew of any job openings.” He did – that of vice president of the NHA, which Keith accepted.

“I began to really see how hospitals fit into the whole healthcare delivery system, and how politics and state level resource allocation affects the ability of hospitals to operate,” she said.

The eye-opening experience also made her privy to those early discussions about a rural hospital partnership. With her clinical and administrative experience, Keith was able to help secure grant funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. In 1987, the NRHP was formed and Keith, now an essential part of the organization, became president.

When she came on board, NRHP had two employees (herself being one) and was wholly reliant on grant monies. And although Keith left in 1992 to do consulting work, she was asked in 2000 to return. “I told them, ‘I guess I could do that for a little while. I’ll give you a year.’ And here I am.” she laughed.

Since her return, NRHP has earned $5.8 million in grant funding, which has helped to establish many new and exciting programs. These include a number of technological investments, such as a teleradiology network, which, as Keith explained, enables the transmission of radiological images across great distances, 24/7, to specialists who interpret those images and consult with rural doctors in real time. A shared data archive has been developed to allow member hospitals to store patient data electronically, as well as a wide-area network, which enables the secure transmission of this information between hospitals.

NRHP is certainly not a solo effort; numerous individuals and organizations help to make it successful. Keith, whose entire career has been in service to nonprofits, is honored to have been a part of it.

“I was fortunate enough to have been hired and help bring it into reality,” she said. “I’m proud of that vision and having a sense of what this could and ought to be. And I’m proud of the amount of resources we’re able to generate for our members.”

Non-Profit, Northern Nevada

Healthcare Hero

Robin Keith

Nevada Rural Hospital Partners

2008 Healthcare Heroes Special Report Nevada Business 23
It’s been said that the best leaders have sense enough to pick the best people for the job, and enough self-restraint to keep from meddling while they do it. That’s certainly the case at the University of Nevada, Reno’s College of Health and Human Sciences, where tremendous strides have been made since Charlie Bullock took the helm as dean in January 2006.

Bullock, a North Carolina native, earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees, began his career and spent 17 years on the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It was here that he developed and directed a nationally known research center, and where his primary interest in disability and health began and took root.

“In my classes, I ask my students, ‘If you could be anywhere right now, where would you be?’ None of them say ‘in class’ or ‘at work.’ It would be on a beach, or on the ski slopes, hiking, that kind of thing,” Bullock explained. “But as I realized early on, many people with disabilities never have the opportunity to do those things they really enjoy. So that really became sort of a rallying point for me, and I decided I wanted to spend my career teaching advocacy and helping to improve the lives of people with disabilities.”

In the early ‘80s, Bullock spent considerable time researching ways to improve the health and well-being of people with disabilities, and to improve recidivism rates in acute care or rehabilitation facilities. His work not only earned funding dollars from such agencies as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Rehabilitation Services Administration and the Office of Special Education, but it also helped to establish practices that are still widely used today.

In 1996, Bullock joined the University of Nevada, Reno faculty to chair a department that as yet didn’t exist: The Health Sciences department was about to merge with Recreation, Physical Education and Dance to create a Health Ecology department.

The department grew quickly, which soon illuminated for Bullock a need to do more. “Nevada has some of the worst health statistics in the country. We didn’t have the public health aspects in the state that were needed to deal with those things,” said Bullock. “So we started the Master of Public Health program. And then it became very clear that we need to move that program into a school of public health, which we did.”

The School of Public Health was formed in 2004, and after successfully spearheading considerable research and helping the school to grow, Bullock became dean of the College of Health and Human Sciences in 2006. The college encompasses 13 schools and programs, including the School of Public Health, the Orvis School of Nursing and the School of Social Work.

Although Bullock doesn’t get to do as much hands-on research as he used to, he does have the opportunity to facilitate numerous research projects by securing funding and hiring well. Bullock appointed an associate dean for research, whose job is to help faculty find more funding sources and mentors, provide research seminars, and connect people with similar research interests. Also, in the last two years, four of his faculty hires have generated research funding for the college of more than $3 million.

Bullock has also helped to spearhead the Building a Healthy Nevada (BHN) initiative, which identifies five priority areas for multi-disciplinary research in collaboration with local, county and state partners.

Bullock’s insight and tremendous vision will be useful as the College of Health and Human Sciences merges with the School of Medicine this summer, to form the Division of Health Science. “We’re all concerned about health issues in the state, so it doesn’t make sense to have us on opposite sides of the campus,” he said.

Ultimately, with Bullock at the helm, big things are in store for the university, and for the health and well-being of all Nevadans. “There’s an energy about what’s going on here in the college,” said Bullock. “And that will really help to build a healthy Nevada.”

Healthcare Hero
Charlie Bullock
University of Nevada College of Health and Human Sciences
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Dr. Bruce Shapiro began reading medical books before he reached the age of 10. “I really learned to love medicine from a very early age and knew that I wanted to be a physician from the very beginning,” said Shapiro. For his education, Shapiro went to the University of California, Santa Barbara where he received his bachelor’s in zoology and psychology. He then attended the University of Nevada, Reno where he received both his master’s of science in biology and his doctor of medicine. Shapiro did both his internship and residency at Yale-New Haven Hospital’s department of obstetrics and gynecology. He then did his fellowship at the Yale University School of Medicine in the department of obstetrics and gynecology and the division of reproductive endocrinology.

In 1988, Shapiro returned to Nevada and brought several “firsts” to Las Vegas. He was invited by the University of Nevada, Las Vegas School of Medicine to become a professor, as well as to establish and direct a division of reproductive endocrinology and infertility. “What [starting the division] entailed was the development of a curriculum to teach and change the mindset of the residents and the medical students to look at obstetrics and gynecology patients from the perspective of reproductive endocrinology and infertility,” said Shapiro.

Shapiro established the Fertility Center of Las Vegas in 1998, which was the Valley’s first infertility practice. In 1997 Shapiro made a breakthrough in his research for invitro-fertilazation by performing blastocyst transfer, when the embryo is allowed to develop in the laboratory for five days after the egg has been retrieved. By using a blastocyst transfer the physician can select the most viable embryos which allows for a higher pregnancy rate with less chance of multiple births. Today, the center primarily does blastocyst transfers for its patients.

Shapiro has also improved upon existing protocols for freezing both eggs and embryos, as well as identifying some of the major factors that prevent some women from getting pregnant. “Some of those factors involve the failure of the endometrium to be in synchrony with the embryo development. So we have identified many of the factors that are associated with a lack of synchrony between embryo growth and endometrium development,” said Shapiro. “This allows us to individualize treatment so that we can put the embryos back into women that haven’t optimally synchronized endometrium with their embryos.”

Out of his accomplishments Shapiro is most proud of his innovations into preventing hyper-stimulation syndrome in patients undergoing treatment for invitro-fertilazation. Hyper-stimulation syndrome is a potential side effect that patients can get when they develop a large amount of eggs during a cycle in which the eggs are going to be harvested. Shapiro has developed techniques to ensure an optimal chance of pregnancy and at the same time minimize or eliminate the chance of a patient developing that syndrome. Currently, he is in the process of disseminating his findings on hyper-stimulation syndrome to other physicians so that they can apply it to their practices. He will also be giving a lecture on the subject to a large number of physicians at a symposium here in Las Vegas at the end of the summer.

Shapiro hopes to continue his medical research to come up with better ways to help his patients. He would like to improve pregnancy rates and techniques in hopes of making a single embryo transfer and pregnancy a reality.

“Do what you do best and continue to do it,” said Shapiro when asked how he would encourage others to become heroes in healthcare. “I think if you focus on taking care of your patients and focus on improving the type of healthcare that can be delivered to your patients then you should automatically fall into that category.”
Since he arrived in Las Vegas in 1950, Irwin Molasky has been very influential in the growth of the Valley and has been a major player in creating the skyline seen today. Molasky, a designer and builder by trade, is chairman of The Molasky Group of Companies.

Molasky's contributions to Las Vegas' healthcare community have been significant. He designed and built Sunrise Hospital Surgical Center and Medical Center, which was the city's first private hospital. When Sunrise Hospital opened it had 58 beds, as well as two surgical units, a laboratory, pharmacy and x-ray unit. Within one year, Molasky helped double the hospital's size and in five years he helped build it up to 300 beds. When the hospital opened there was a core medical staff of only 11 physicians. Now Sunrise Hospital has more than 1,300 physicians on staff. The number of beds has increased to 688 of which 28 are set aside for surgical patients. “We opened the doors in 1958 and that was 50 years ago,” said Molasky. “They are going to have their 50 year anniversary this December.”

Molasky’s other contribution to the Valley’s healthcare industry was Nathan Adelson Hospice. Molasky and his partner, Merve Adelson, were inspired to create an environment for people to face death with dignity after someone close to Adelson passed away. The hospice opened in an office building with only a few nurses and volunteers. Today, it has three campuses and treats on average 450 people each day. “Our motto is: We are a friend to those in need and we turn no one away for their inability to pay,” said Molasky. “We take care of indigent patients and spend about $1.5 million a year in so doing for indigent patients that we don’t get reimbursement from and we have to go to the public for that money, which is a very difficult task, especially in today’s climate.”

The Nathan Adelson Hospice consists of a care team, called the Inter-Disciplinary Group (IDG). This team designs and implements a treatment plan for each patient and their family under the supervision of the patient’s physician. Members of the team include hospice physicians, pharmacists, registered nurses, certified nursing aides, medial social workers, chaplains/clergy and trained volunteers. Most of the time patients receive care in their own homes, but if special attention is needed then a patient may receive treatment at one of the Nathan Adelson in-patient facilities. The in-patient facilities are designed to have a very “homey” feel instead of a sterile hospital-like environment. The facilities include living rooms, comfortable furnishings and private patios. Families may come and go as they please since there are no specific visiting hours.

Molasky’s non-medical additions to Las Vegas include Paradise Palms, the area’s first master-planned community; seven golf courses and their communities; thousands of apartment communities; the Park Towers at Hughes Center, which was the first high-rise luxury condominium project; and the Bank of America Plaza, which was the first high-rise office building in downtown Las Vegas. He also designed and developed the 1,350,000-square-foot Boulevard Mall, which was Nevada’s first and largest enclosed shopping mall.

While Molasky has designed and built many structures over his career, he is proudest of the healthcare facilities. “Sunrise Hospital and Nathan Adelson Hospice give me the most pleasure because [both institutions serve] so much good to humanity,” said Molasky. He is also proud of the Molasky Corporate Center, which was recently built in downtown Las Vegas. The center is a LEED gold certified office building, which is a step above the green certification for being eco-friendly. The Molasky Corporate Center is the only gold certified building in the state.

In looking to the future, Molasky hopes to continue operating The Molasky Group of Companies with integrity. His commitment to the Las Vegas community remains strong. “We build places for people to live and to work and to play,” said Molasky.
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The early ’80s were riddled with fear about HIV and AIDS. The immediacy of the epidemic bred misinformation, which ran rampant. People feared doorknobs, public toilet seats and drinking glasses – items they thought could potentially carry this terrifying disease. But in Northern Nevada, Trudy Larson was working with HIV and AIDS patients that others wouldn’t touch.

“I believe in science, not fear,” said Larson, who in her 30-year career has not only played a considerable role in the development of the University of Nevada’s School of Medicine (UNSOM), but who has been a pioneer in the research and treatment of patients with HIV and AIDS.

Larson, a native of Reno, didn’t grow up in a healthcare-oriented family, and had no real interest in the field in high school. But she enjoyed her biology courses, so she went on to pursue a Biological Sciences degree at University of California, Davis, unsure of the particular path her career might follow — until she began working at the campus crisis call center.

“What I really liked was the personal interaction, talking about problems and seeing if we could solve them together,” said Larson. “The human touch got me looking into medicine.”

She earned her doctor of medicine at University of California, Irvine, and completed her internship and residency in pediatrics at Davis. Then, in what she calls “one of those pivotal points in my life,” she took a fellowship in pediatric infectious diseases at University of California, Los Angeles. It was there that she was introduced to medical research and her first AIDS patient. It was work she knew she wanted to do for the rest of her career.

Larson and her husband moved to Reno in 1983, where she began treating HIV/AIDS patients. In 1984, she began teaching as clinical faculty at the University of Nevada, and since then has progressed through a number of positions there, including assistant and associate professor; vice chair and chair of the pediatrics department; professor of pediatrics; and associate dean for primary care research education and service. She was elected for a three-year term to the faculty senate. From 2004 to 2005, she worked as assistant chancellor for the University and Community College System of Nevada, under Chancellor Jim Rodgers.

“I was totally out of my field, but I liked learning a whole lot more about higher education, the economics and politics. It was really an eye-opener,” said Larson.

Just three weeks after moving to Reno in 1983, she was asked by the ACLU to speak at a public debate on the UNR campus, in front of 300 to 400 people, about whether, considering the AIDS epidemic, the gay rodeo should be allowed to come to town.

“I was on the front page of the paper the next day. So I think I really became known for this,” she said. “I’ve advocated loudly, and I’ve never had fear. It’s a lifetime sense of being active, speaking out and not being afraid to do it — ever.”

Larson has remained active in the field of HIV/AIDS, advocating for patients at the legislature and speaking to groups locally and nationally about research and treatments. In 1990, Larson helped to found the first clinic for HIV care in Reno at the Health Department, becoming its co-medical director. In 1997, the clinic became a part of Northern Nevada HOPES (HIV Outpatient Program, Education and Service), and Larson remained co-medical director until 2004. Today, she is a program physician and its medical director.

Today, her primary responsibility is teaching clinical problem-solving and microbiology courses, as well as coordinating the UNSOM’s pediatric clerkship. But aside from raising two boys, now 18 and 21, she’s particularly proud of her work in the classroom, teaching future physicians.

“I truly believe it’s the noble profession. There are very few professions where you can affect someone’s life,” she said. “Even though it’s tough, look at what you get back.”
KTNV, Channel 13 Action News is proud to be a sponsor of Nevada Business Journal’s Healthcare Heroes and salutes all the honorees. We also want to thank the thousands of healthcare workers in Southern Nevada who work so hard making our lives better.

At Action News, we’re always looking for the positives to report on in the medical field and when Nina Radetich joined the Action News team in June, she wanted to kick our coverage up a notch. She wanted Action News to become more proactive in our medical news reporting. In other words, rather than just airing stories on “medical miracles” or other “health alerts,” Nina wanted to give the average person something that might help keep them healthy. Thus was born, STAY FIT LAS VEGAS, which consists of special on-air reports plus a website, dedicated to keeping people fit. Watch for Nina’s special STAY FIT LAS VEGAS reports on Action News. To get to the website, visit KTNV.COM and click on the STAY FIT LAS VEGAS banner.

With this sponsorship we hope it is apparent just how sincere our thanks and appreciation is to all of the healthcare workers of Nevada and especially the 2008 Healthcare Heroes.
 Comprehensive Cancer Centers of Nevada (CCCN) began in May 2000 as a collaboration between the Southwest Cancer Clinic and Nevada Radiation Oncology Centers, which have helped Las Vegas residents in their fight against cancer since 1974.

The oncology practice provides medical services such as chemotherapy, pediatric oncology, radiation oncology, medical oncology, nursing services by oncology certified nurses, hematology, diagnostic imaging, pharmacy, hydration, physicist, therapeutic phlebotomy, nuclear medicine and cancer prevention and screening.

CCCN also initiates and conducts phase I, II and III clinical trials, which are key to advancing cancer care in the U.S. and around the world. The trials provide patients with access to new treatment options overseen by local experts.

Many of CCCN’s 25 physicians have practiced for more than 10 years in Las Vegas and, like Dr. Edwin Kingsley, have donated time and expertise to a variety of community organizations and causes.

“Our physicians are very productive members of the Las Vegas Valley community and are committed to raising awareness for many health-related issues and advancing cancer research,” said Executive Director James Kilber. “Dr. Kingsley is a shining example of how such dedication benefits the community and its residents.”

CCCN’s six medical offices also provide supportive services including financial counseling, nutritional counseling and community support groups.

In late 2008, CCCN will open a satellite office at the intersection of Stephanie Road and the 215 Beltway, which will provide medical oncology services in the southeast area of the Las Vegas Valley.

CCCN is accredited by the American College of Radiology and is affiliated with the US Oncology physician network, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) as part of the Translational Oncology Research International (TORI) network and the Community Clinical Oncology Program (CCOP) established by the National Cancer Institute.

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Where News Comes First
Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is Nevada’s second largest health benefits provider, and the only one licensed to sell insurance in every county. Among the oldest Nevada health insurers (established in 1969), Anthem is headquartered in Las Vegas and is staffed with friendly and attentive local office staff – from a state president, to sales staff, to medical personnel. Located in two offices – one in Las Vegas and one in Reno – the company employs approximately 250 Nevadans.

Anthem offers a full spectrum of benefits, including medical, dental, vision, life and disability, pharmacy and behavioral health. Not only do Anthem’s total benefits offerings meet the needs of a diverse workforce, they also eliminate the need for multiple carriers.

Anthem offers a broad suite of products for individuals, and small and large employers, that are innovative, simple to administer and affordable. For example, the Lumenos Consumer-Driven Health Plans put consumers in control of their healthcare dollars and offer them incentives to spend wisely and demand better healthcare quality and value.

EmployeeElect, a portfolio of 14 health plans, puts control and flexibility in the hands of small group employers. Employers can choose to offer one, a mix-and-match, or all 14 plans to their employees. The Tonik health plans, which were designed to expand healthcare access to 19 to 29 year-olds – one of the fastest growing uninsured populations – are easy to use, all online and very affordable.

Anthem offers one of the largest provider networks in Nevada. Because Anthem is a member of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, members also have access to the BlueCard provider network – nationwide and around the world – when they are away from home.

Since 1999, Anthem has worked to relieve the crisis in children’s dental health, donating more than $1 million to improve the oral health of more than 15,000 of Nevada’s children through the Miles for Smiles mobile clinic. Each year, Anthem also partners with Nevada Business Journal to host the Healthcare Heroes.
Northern Nevada Medical Center, the first and still only hospital in the fast-growing city of Sparks, this year celebrates 25 years of providing quality healthcare for Sparks, Reno and surrounding communities. The 100-bed full-service acute care hospital is located on a scenic hillside providing stunning views of the entire Reno-Sparks valley.

With more than 500 employees and physicians on staff, Northern Nevada Medical offers 24-hour emergency care known for rapid response times, inpatient and outpatient surgery, intensive care, cardiac catheterization, New Vision alcohol and drug stabilization treatment program, Senior Bridges geropsychiatric services, orthopedics and Joint Care Center and laboratory. The hospital’s diagnostic imaging recently received accreditation from the American College of Radiology in all services, including CT, mammography, MRI, ultrasound and nuclear medicine.

Northern Nevada Medical Center’s campus includes two medical office buildings, home to dozens of physicians in a wide array of primary care and specialty areas. The hospital’s offers community health and wellness programs including an every-other-month health fair, educational seminars and the Senior Advantage program.

Northern Nevada Medical Center is committed to providing compassionate care. Employees are committed to a Service Excellence program which emphasizes exceeding patient and family expectations.

Northern Nevada’s goal is to provide the highest level of healthcare with the greatest degree of compassion and the best available technology. The hospital also is driven to provide a rewarding work environment in which employees are encouraged to constantly learn and grow in their professional aspirations.

As a dynamic provider in a diverse community, Northern Nevada Medical Center also strives to contribute to the citizens of Sparks and Reno as a sponsor of numerous charities. The hospital has been awarded a Truckee Meadows Tomorrow Silver Star Quality of Life award for its affordable community health fairs. Northern Nevada’s volunteer program also was recognized with a Public Relations Society of America Silver Spike Award for volunteer and community programs.
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