The Villages

SHARING A VISION
Support group members optimistic about The Villages-USF Health partnership

By DAVID R. CORDER
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THE VILLAGES – The intensity of the questions spoke volumes about the club members’ interest in The Villages-USF Health partnership to advance health care practices in the community to a level, perhaps, never seen before anywhere.

Members of The Villages Airheads Club, composed of Villagers with a common interest in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, became the first group in the community to hear firsthand during an informal gathering Tuesday morning about the benefits this new health care partnership will create.

Those Villagers left the group’s regularly scheduled monthly meeting with a much clearer perspective on the strategic vision being developed by USF Health – a partnership between the university’s colleges of Medicine, Nursing and Public Health.

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“It tells me that they’re extremely interested in a cross-section of The Villages,” Nick Jones, a Village of Santiago resident who, along with wife Jan, co-founded the community health care support group, said after the meeting. “This is still so much in its infancy, but it’s an important step forward.”

Club members’ interest, curiosity and openness encouraged Ginny Sublet, an associate professor in the USF Department of Environmental & Occupational Health who led Tuesday’s discussion.

“Oh, I think they’re great,” said Sublet, who possesses a doctorate in toxicology. “I think they’re great, because they wanted to participate and share information. And I think we had everyone in the group participating.”

The strategic vision of this one-of-a-kind health care partnership centers on education, behavior change and personalized medicine, Stephen Klasko, USF Health chief executive officer and College of Medicine dean, said.

Beginning soon, USF Health will embark on a massive community survey to assess residents’ health care needs, wants and desires, Klasko said.

Once the initial phase of the survey is completed, Klasko said, USF Health researchers would compile survey information into a confidential patient-centric database — accessible by patients and their physicians only — to not only gauge health care needs in the community, but also to craft wellness education programs for residents.

“We think this is the first opportunity for a community of this size that’s this connected that’s getting together with a university for the sole purpose of making the citizens healthier, happier and living longer,” Klasko said in a recent interview. “So, the goal will be to say, this is where you are now; because of this partnership, you’ll live longer, healthier, and we think that will make you happier.”

During the meeting, Richard Baker expressed hope that The Villages-USF Health partnership could address the problems that patients have with the multiplicity of health care treatment and pharmaceutical choices.

The Village of Lynnhaven resident, who attends meetings in support of his wife Diane, thinks tighter controls are necessary to ensure Villagers get only the right choices.

“I’m hopeful the health partnership will shine a light on some of those issues,” Baker said.

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