

In a struggling economy with so much discussion and media regarding healthcare reform and the uncertainty found within these changes nationwide, the Winter Haven Hospital Foundation continues to grow and raise funds for important patient services and needs. Funds that are raised by the Foundation touch lives and provide hope for patients and their families. These contributions make possible medical education, new technology, scholarships, equipment, state-of-the-art facilities, and top quality professional staff.

A visit to the Winter Haven Hospital Foundation's homepage and you are greeted with an outreach statement that speaks to the very heart of why...how...and what the Foundation does in the Greater Winter Haven Region. A 20-minute talk with Foundation Chairman, Eric Adamson, or Joel Thomas, Winter Haven Hospital VP/ DMPR, and the final two sentences paint a picture of the importance of their efforts; *"Gifts to the Foundation reach far beyond our walls. Gifts to the Foundation touch every facet of our community by facilitating outreach programs, support groups, charity care, and community health fairs."* The Foundation is a Not-for-Profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Trustees made up of regional, civic, and business leaders who serve without pay or compensation. Throughout our conversation, Joel repeatedly reminded me that it is the Board of Trustees and generous visionary local individuals and organizations that have made the Foundation so successful. He stated he and his staff only serve as facilitators to their vision. The start and end objective of each new campaign, event, or outreach effort is that the Foundation only exists to support Winter Haven Hospital's efforts in providing the best quality care for patients.

The Winter Haven Hospital Foundation provides philanthropic support to Winter Haven Hospital, the Regency Center for Women & Infants, and the many other services our not-for-profit organization offers to the communities we serve. Foundation funds support state-of-the-art medical care, cutting-edge technology and equipment, top quality education, and the best and brightest personnel. Contributions to the Foundation reach far beyond our walls. Gifts to the Foundation touch every facet of our community by facilitating outreach programs, support groups, charity care, and community health fairs.

<http://www.winterhavenhospital.org/getinvolved/foundation>

As a local business owner, Eric isn't a stranger to fundraising as he and his wife, Susan, have been involved for many years in giving back to the community. Eric who is a shareholder of Adamson + Co., P.A. in Winter Haven shared that there is no greater cause than that of the Winter Haven Hospital Foundation. He was invited by several Foundation Trustees, people he grew up with that were on the board, to come and serve and from there he became heavily involved. One of the Foundation events, that he leads personally, is the Mountain Lake Golf Invitational. This event is a "friend-raiser," that is to say it is a *"Thank You"* for the friends of the hospital and the foundation. The funds raised at this event have been used for everything from providing scholarships to purchasing medical equipment and providing professional training. "Scholarships are given to Winter Haven Hospital employees to help advance their careers," said Joel. "For example, nurses that want to advance their degree or support services staff seeking further education."

There is no doubt that fundraising can be challenging during these economic times, but "when the challenge involves helping to change lives, people respond," said Eric. His passion for the Foundation is matched by the other Foundation Trustees who are a dynamic force for the good of healthcare in Winter Haven. "We have a lot of energy and successes for a relatively new organization. I want people to know what we do. I left a Winter Haven Hospital Board of Trustees meeting recently where some of us took an additional 30-minutes in the hall discussing fundraising. That's engagement!" Eric shared. From that hallway meeting we will now move swiftly to another "fun-raiser event;" a term he credits Joel with. Board members waste no time in moving toward new efforts that will assist in meeting foundation goals. It is this approach that clearly explains the great success of their initiatives. There was not one question asked of Eric about his involvement that did not in some way include fundraising and networking to advance the foundation's mission. As Chairman, he is responsible for directing the board; as a volunteer his heart is clearly focused on the success of the mission statement.

Joel and Eric both mentioned many times the Foundation Chairmen of past years that laid the foundation of success for today's efforts; Larry Tucker, Richard Straughn, and Don Ingram. They shared that their work today is the legacy of these individuals assuring future generations will have access to high quality healthcare.

We all know somebody who has or will need medical care. It could be our family, friends, or neighbors and we can rest comfortably knowing that our community leaders are working hard at the Foundation to make possible the care that we will receive during our times of need. Bringing the community together and connecting the foundation's mission to patients is important. Patients are our primary concern. "The most important factor in

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delivering state-of-the-art health care isn't bricks and mortar or machines," said Joel. "It's about making sure, as a community, we have the best professional manpower. Our nurses, physicians, and support staff are the heart of Winter Haven Hospital." The relationships that the Foundation develops through special events, health fairs, community outreach partnerships, major gift campaigns, and charitable estate planning advance the success of this organization." Joel shared, "We have many events beyond The Gala and The Mountain Lake Invitational that we are fortunate to be associated with." Most important are the historical, current, and future private fundraisers that are held for the Foundation's benefit. A great example of this has been *The 100 Golf event* and a newer event sponsored by The Lewis Family, *Swing for the Cure Golf Tournament*. Josh and Jeff Lewis and their friends have created something very special with this new event and last year they took their event to the next level when they asked their friend, international golf professional, Fuzzy Zoeller, to be the keynote speaker. All of these private fundraisers are providing support for specific causes and centers of excellence at Winter Haven Hospital. A very exciting new event that will be hosted by John and Tracey Scheck of Winter Haven will take place this spring. The inaugural *Polk County Cup* tennis tournament will be held at Lake Region Yacht and Country Club. The funds raised through this event will benefit the Regency's Center for Women and Infant's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU.) Thomas stated, "We are extremely grateful for these community leaders' work on behalf of the foundation."

The word "relationships" continued to pop in and out of the conversation along with the importance of developing new board members and working with young professionals to bring new ideas and new leadership to the efforts of the foundation. Events are only the tip of the iceberg in telling our story and seeking funds. Board members and staff continuously manage the Annual Fund, a rolling campaign that seeks to raise unrestricted dollars for the most current and urgent needs of the hospital. We also encourage everyone to remember the Foundation in their will and estate plans. On

average, Eric stated, the Foundation transfers about \$250 thousand dollars a year to the hospital for patient care services and staff development. In some years, funds transferred transcend that amount to the millions. When this happens, it allows the hospital to purchase items such as the new daVinci® Robotic Surgical System now being utilized at Winter Haven Hospital's Center for Urology. When asked what Joel felt the critical need was going forward, his answer was "To continue to get our message out and to invite people to come and see the life changing things that happen at Winter Haven Hospital. Come have coffee or lunch with us and let us introduce you to our nurses, doctors, and our staff. We want to show you the wonderful things that are happening at our Bostick Heart Center, Cassidy Cancer Center, Mary Adams Strang mental health center, Joy Fuller rehabilitation center, Stroke Center, and at the Regency Center for Women and Infants. I am sure once you see for yourself our mission in action you will understand how important Winter Haven Hospital is to our community. You will also want to get involved with our efforts."

Central Florida can rest well knowing that the Winter Haven Hospital Foundation is hard at work making certain that the care provided to all patients is the very best available.

For information regarding The Winter Haven Hospital Foundation please visit their website at www.WHHfoundation.org or call (863) 291-6732.