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OCTOBER 21, 2022



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Americans and health: the continuing paradox

Americans have an incredibly complicated relationship with their physical and mental health.

Some of us don't exercise at all; some of us obsess over exercise and overdo it. Some of us save all our exercise for the weekend, and wake up Monday sore or injured.

We know what kinds of foods are bad for us, but eat them anyway. We know what kinds of foods are good for us, and avoid them like the plague.

From our head to our toes, there are things that can go wrong with



RICHARD COLTHARP

our bodies, and we want to know who can help fix us. At the same time, there are a million things we can do to prevent health issues, and we want to know who can help us do that.

The articles in this special section certainly don't cover all the aspects of health in the Mesilla Valley; they don't even cover a few. But they give you a glimpse of some health-related things going on in Las Cruces, and some ideas that might apply to your situation, or that of your friends and family.

Wishing you the best of health,
Richard Coltharp
Publisher

Bookmark the Mesilla Valley Health Directory

We want to invite you to visit our online Mesilla Valley Health Directory at lascrucesbulletin.com and should be in place by Oct. 31.

The directory has listings of nearly every imaginable health practitioner in the Mesilla Valley.

Whether you're looking for a doctor for your heart or your head, this is the place to look. All of the region's medical professionals in one place.

Bookmark the directory on your browser and save yourself a bunch of hit-and-miss Google searches. Look for details in the Bulletin



PHOTO COURTESY OF THREE CROSSES HOSPITAL

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Hearing loss often age related, other factors can contribute

BY MIKE COOK

Las Cruces Bulletin

“Hearing loss doesn’t discriminate,” Expert Hearing Care (EHC) of Las Cruces audiologist Dr. Allie Lambert said.

Although the tipping point for hearing loss is often “aging-related changes to the auditory system,” owner and audiologist Dr. Kelly Churchill said, EHC has clients from infancy to 105 years old.

A baseline hearing test is the starting point for every client, Churchill said.

That test will determine if there is hearing loss, how sig-

nificant it is and what steps can be taken to address it, Churchill and Lambert said.

The test can also identify tinnitus (persistent ringing in one or both ears), cerumen (earwax) buildup and other issues that may affect the quality of hearing.

In addition to aging, hearing loss can be caused by heredity, disease and prolonged or even one-time exposure to high-decibel sounds like fireworks, gunshots and loud music.

Approximately 15 percent of American adults (40 million) aged 18 and over report some trouble

hearing, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDOCOD).

Age is the strongest predictor of hearing loss among adults aged 20-69, with the greatest amount of hearing loss in the 60-69 age group, NIDOCOD said. Men are almost twice as likely as women to have hearing loss among adults aged 20-69, and non-Hispanic white adults are more likely than adults in other racial/ethnic groups to have hearing loss.

The institute also re-



Dr. Kelly Frost Churchill with Expert Hearing Care clients.

ported that fewer than one-third of adults aged 70 and older who could benefit from using a hearing aid had ever used one. The percentage is about half that for adults ages 20-69.

For many people,

Churchill said, hearing loss may come on so slowly that they aren’t even aware of it. Indicators include finding yourself frequently asking others to repeat what they have said.

Churchill’s husband, Chris Churchill, a professor in the Astronomy Department at New Mexico State University, said he began experiencing hearing loss in his 30s, probably as a result of exposure to loud music.

When there was a lot of background noise, Chris said he “would

lose all speech clarity,” and found himself withdrawing from conversations to avoid embarrassment.

For Chris, the answer was a hearing aid. “It opened the world up to me,” he said.

In addition to improving communication and relationships, a hearing aid can also help with cognitive issues that can be negatively impacted by hearing loss like memory and reasoning, Kelly Churchill said, along with balance.

Chris Churchill said he wears his hearing aid all the time “because it keeps my brain healthier.”

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Heart disease remains major health issue in New Mexico

BY MIKE COOK
Las Cruces Bulletin

Heart disease remains the No. 1 health condition in America, and one of the biggest causes of death in the country and, according to the New Mexico Department of Health, the leading killer in our state.

These are all reasons it makes sense to make a visit with a heart doctor if you have symptoms or a family history of heart problems.

One such local physician is Dr. Lookman Lawal, the founder and chief medical officer of ASC of the



DR. LOOKMAN LAWAL

Heart Institute, 1250 N. Sonoma Ranch Blvd. Lawal is board certified in cardiology and in cardiac electrophysiology, the branch of cardiology that deals with the treatment of heart rhythm disorder. Lawal provides preventive and all other aspects of cardiac care for his patients, he said.

Individual counseling provided by Lawal helps patients deal with high blood pressure, obesity, smoking and other issues that can stress the heart, Felton said. An electrocardiogram (EKG), which records the electrical signal from the heart, is often a good start, said the institute's director of nursing, Jared Felton. Next steps can include a stress test and a discussion of a person's lifestyle choices and any history of heart disease in his or her family.

If a person is having issues breathing, has low energy or is "just



COURTESY PHOTO

Heart disease remains one of the biggest causes of death in the country and in New Mexico, according to the New Mexico Department of Health.

not feeling right," it might be a good time for a conversation with his or her family

doctor, who can then make a referral to Lawal to continue that discussion and recom-

mend healthy lifestyle changes or medical procedures, if necessary.



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FATIMA MCELVEEN
CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Physical therapy, fitness, breathing, balance

BY MIKE COOK
Las Cruces Bulletin

“Clinic balance technology is used to measure reaction strategies for NMSU athletes,” said Southwest Sport and Spine Center (SSSC) Director of Sports Medicine David Gallegos. “This helps provide insight into performance needs and baselines to measure return to normal after injuries.”

Since becoming a part of the FTBC franchise in 2017, SSSC has become a primary care provider for musculoskeletal disorders, which include tendi-

nitis, carpal tunnel syndrome, arthritis, fibromyalgia and recovery from bone fractures.

Equipment at SSSC can detect inner-ear, vision, joint and flexibility issues that could contribute to balance, falls and injuries. In many cases, she said, issues can be reversed within a few weeks using simple exercises that the patient can do at home.

Aquatic therapy is available to treat injuries and health issues like strokes, arthritis and recent surgeries for which weight-bearing exercises are not

practical.

With major scientific advances in the last decade, physical therapy and fitness are about the whole person, SSSC found Denise Campbell said, including heart-rate variability, the autonomic nervous system, the immune system, carbon dioxide levels and brain chemistry.

SSSC staff are doing work in breathing science that is not going on anywhere else in the country, Campbell said.

SSSC breathing technician Paola Quiroz helps patients deal with a wide



COURTESY PHOTO

A Southwest Sport and Spine client using a BERTEC Computerized Dynamic Posturography machine.

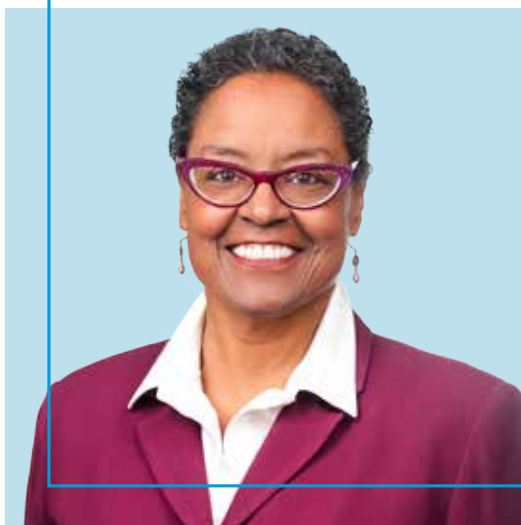
range of health issues by improving their breathing, and also

is teaching diaphragmatic breathing techniques to members of

her own family – and they are helping the 22-year-old deal with the knee and hip issues she has had for the past nine years.

“For me, it’s literally life changing,” Quiroz said. “It has opened my eyes to so many other aspects of being a health care worker. There’s a lot you can do, and we can guide you.”

Campbell’s advice to busy people taking care of families, jobs and homes: “Spend time on yourself.” It is easier to not lose it (good health) then lose it completely and never get it back,” she said.



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Damian Meza

That Tuesday started like any other for Damian Meza. At 5:30 am, he got on his motorcycle and left for work. But Damian never got to his job because an oncoming car cut off his bike.

Two days later, Damian woke up in the hospital, remembering nothing and experiencing extreme back pain. But he woke up. That fact was huge for Damian's family, who counted the days, hours, minutes, and seconds to see his eyes again.

Though this was leaps and bounds of progress, the lifelong injuries Damian sustained in the accident would drastically change his way of life. Damian suffered a spinal cord injury, among other traumatic injuries, in the crash. Nurses told Damian that he would spend the rest of his life with paraplegia and no hope of moving his lower limbs again.

This news crushed Damian. As an avid car lover and racer, how could Damian ever do what he loves again without the use of his legs?

After spending 29 days in the hospital, Damian transferred to the Rehabilitation Hospital of Southern New Mexico. There, for the first time since his accident, Damian began to feel hope. This hope took the form of Cooper and Linda (aka Mama Linda), Damian's therapists at RHSNM and his biggest cheerleaders during his rehab stay.

When he first arrived at RHSNM, Damian couldn't even sit straight up in bed. But by his discharge day, Damian sat perfectly upright and with a wide-eyed smile. Cooper and Mama Linda had taught Damian not to lose faith. They helped him find the motivation he needed each day and celebrated every win with him, big or small. Before leaving the hospital, Damian made sure to express his gratitude to them for all they helped him achieve.

Through the experience, Damian saw an already tight family increase their support for him tenfold. His dad has a new understanding of the spine, the body, and how our entire body works together. Both of Damian's parents are very hands-on with helping him out.

Damian discharged from rehab 65 days after his crash, excited to just "be." To be in his own home. To be with his family and friends. To be with his dog. And, of course, to get back to the car he loves -- a Camaro, to be exact. Damian also looks forward to returning to the "Syn Club," a car club of which he is the president. The whole time he was hospitalized, the club worked to support Damian by fundraising to help with his medical bills and associated expenses.

Though Damian's life has changed, he refuses to let his spinal cord injury define him or his life. "You can drive a modified car with your hands," Damian noted, adding, "You can use ramps as your friends." Lowe's and members of the Moose Lodge graciously and generously supplied materials to build a custom ramp and Damian's home, too.

With the mindset of "I am me, I am not my injury," Damian is taking a saying from Cooper and Mama Linda: "Miracles do happen." He is determined to have full balance and beyond motivated to walk. Someday, Damian also hopes to get back to his work. With his family and his extended car club family, Damian believes "anything is possible when you don't give up!"

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FYI+ receives 'transformative' financial grant

BULLETIN REPORT

Families and Youth Innovations Plus (FYI+) of Las Cruces has received a nearly \$4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) "to transition into New Mexico's first certified community behavioral health clinic (CCBHC), FYI+ said in a news release.

"In 2021, our team reimaged, recharged and rebranded our agency as FYI+," CEO Brian Kavanaugh said. "Today, we accept this transformative award from SAMHSA that will strengthen our responsive, collaborative efforts and impact by increasing access to and availability of a comprehensive range of quality behavioral health and community-based services in our region, which it wholeheartedly deserves."



BRIAN KAVANAUGH

Kavanaugh said the grant will mean eight-10 new hires at the onset, and that number could double or triple "as the model is built over the coming year and beyond," he said.

The central operation of CCBHC will be housed at FYI+'s main office at 1320 S. Solano Drive, Kavanaugh said.

FYI+ received SAMHSA funding for its grant submission "Advancing Care in Southern New Mexico through CCBHC Implementation," which indicated that one-third of the region's residents need mental health services, and 30 percent of those residing in colonias

identify a need for mental health support, FYI+ said, citing a New Mexico State University Center for Community Analysis September 2020 report.

"Knowing that we played a role in FYI+'s growth and the region's increased capacity for behavioral health support is why we do what we do," said Janet Mendoza, a senior strategist for the Incite Network, which has offices in Las Cruces and El Paso and helps health and human services organizations and others with strategic planning, program design and fund development, according to www.incite-network.com.

FYI+ said the grant is "strongly supported" by New Mexico Human Services Department's Behavioral Health Services Division (BHSD) Director Neal A. Bowen.

"The CCBHC model is considered as the 'gold standard' of de-



COURTESY PHOTOS

FYI+ has received a nearly \$4 million grant to become certified behavioral health clinic.

livery system transformation, according to the National Council for Mental Wellbeing," Kavanaugh said. "The award from SAMSHA was simply not possible without the countless contributions and the high level of passion, commitment and dedication the FYI+ team has provided to our community throughout the years.

"The CCBHC model reinforces and accelerates our drive to continuously strengthen the care continuum, focus heavily on person- and family-centered integrated services and collaborative efforts across sectors and organizations, and to not only expand the number and variety of services available, but to make certain the services that are available are

provided in a timely manner," he said.

"Additionally, the CCBHC model allows for FYI+ to build a comprehensive delivery system of care in a financially sustainable manner, which will enhance our ability to recruit, retain and train and develop a strong workforce," he said. "Building out the CCBHC model at FYI+ will bring more opportunity for all of us to better understand, influence and change social inequities in health care and related support services and serve our community better."

"We were awarded this grant because our application demonstrated the highest levels of readiness and capacity to participate in the CCBHC certification process,"

Kavanaugh said. "The award does not instantaneously make us a CCBHC; what it does is provide us the funding and technical assistance from SAMSHA and the state to work towards certification and ultimately become a 'certified community behavioral health clinic.'"

FYI+ offers a wide range of community-based services to children, young adults and families, including its summer food program, therapy programs, housing and shelter resources and child well-being supports. The nonprofit began service in 1977.

For more information, contact Martinez at jmartinez@fyinm.org. Call FYI+ at 575-522-4004.

Visit <https://fyiplusnm.org/>.



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Memory care program staff member has four legs, big heart

BY MIKE COOK
Las Cruces Bulletin

An unexpected staff member at the Village at Northrise (VaN) Memory Support Program is a six-year-old lab mix named Tusk, an emotional support animal (“resident dog”).

Tusk was being fostered from the Animal Service Center of the Mesilla Valley by Starr “Foster” Schneider when the program’s resident care director, Bonnie Zeiler, met him for the first time Dec. 27.

“It was an instant hit,” said Zeiler, who adopted Tusk the next day and took him to VaN. “We didn’t look at any other dogs,” she said. “His eyes just told me he was the one.”



COURTESY PHOTO

Tusk, a six-year-old lab mix, is an emotional support animal

VaN’s memory care program residents and the staff have fallen in love with the sweet-tempered and intelligent dog, who doesn’t bite, jump or bark.

Tusk has two beds at VaN, including one in Zeiler’s office, where he stays during residents’ mealtimes. Otherwise, with residents sharing food with him in addition to his regu-

lar meals, Tusk “would be as big as a bus,” Zeiler said.

Throughout the day, Tusk follows the staff around, visiting residents.

“He goes from room to room,” Zeiler said, often helping to get residents up first thing in the morning.

“It makes such a difference to our residents,” Zeiler said. “It’s helpful for everybody, especially people with dementia. It helps to bring a little normalcy to their day,” she said.

He’s also very popular with residents’ loved ones and other visitors to the center, Zeiler said.

“It blesses the residents and their families,” Zeiler said. “He gets a lot of love. It’s really a benefit for all of us.”

State offers reporting for dementia sufferers

“Persons with dementia are vulnerable to abuse and exploitation,” the New Mexico Aging and Long-Term Services Department (NMALTS) said on its website, which allows people to file reports and provides useful information.

The intake form is at nmaging.state.nm.us/protecting-adults/senior-protective-services. Or visit nmaging.state.nm.us/ and click on “PROTECTING ADULTS” and “Senior Protective Services.”

The website also includes Silver Alert, “a notification sent out statewide, similar to an Amber Alert, if a loved one goes missing, is an endangered person 50

years or older or an endangered person with a clear indication the individual suffers from Alzheimer’s disease or another form of dementia, of any age.”

The website has links to NMALTS Long-Term Care Ombudsman program advocates “for the civil and human rights of residents in long-term care facilities,” including one in Las Cruces who can be reached at 1-800-762-8690.

The website also offers live chat, and links to information from the Alzheimer’s Association.

To report abuse, neglect or exploitation, call Adult Protective Services Statewide Intake at 1-866-654-3219.

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