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### Healthy Brain Initiative: Lee Memorial Health System Receives \$1.5 Million National Grant

Comments often heard in our home include, “*Now, where did I put my car keys?*” or “*I can’t find my glasses!*” After fifteen minutes of searching, my wife, Karen, or I realize they are in a very logical and obvious place.

We all forget things. When these memory lapses become more frequent, many of us think it’s just a sign of getting older. Not so!

Memory loss is in no way an inevitable part of the aging process, and Lee Memorial Health System’s Lee Memory Care, one of only 14 state-designated memory disorder programs in Florida, is at the forefront of a national movement to help adults preserve their memories for as long as possible.

The Healthy Brain Initiative, or HBI, is a community-wide program spearheaded by Lee Memory Care and launched in 2008 as a way to help adults 40 and older improve their brain function and memory power. The HBI is based on a four-week program developed by the UCLA Center for Aging and uses scientific, research-based techniques and exercises to help participants develop strategies and routines to enhance their cognitive memory power. Lee Memorial Health System also has a Brain Spa, which incorporates computer programs into the HBI, and a Memory Boot Camp, which combines nutrition, physical fitness and cognitive function activities. The program is not intended for adults diagnosed with memory loss or signs of memory loss.

In less than two years, the HBI has helped more than 4,000 people in Southwest Florida exercise their brains and improve their memories. What an accomplishment!

Through the Florida Department of Elder Affairs, Lee Memory Care recently received a \$1.5 million grant from the Administration on Aging, which is tied to the National Institute on Aging, to take the HBI program one step further. Lee Memory Care and three other memory clinics in the state—in Sarasota, Broward and Melbourne counties—will develop a HBI program for those diagnosed with early stage dementia. Thus, our little fledgling Healthy Brain Initiative will now take on an even bigger role in our community and state.

That’s not all! The HBI is looking to go national. Recently, Lee Memorial Health System was invited to attend the AARP National Conference in Orlando to begin the process of creating a national brain fitness program. AARP revealed the organization was inspired to create the program after many of their members indicated that their most pressing health concerns are Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

Our health system was one of 30 organizations throughout the country and abroad invited to participate in the AARP conference to begin developing the program. This is one of the most innovative grassroots health education efforts in the nation.

Lee Memorial Health System truly is on the cutting-edge when it comes to brain function and memory preservation, and it will be an exciting time as we see what happens in the future as we work toward becoming a national model for brain health.

If you'd like to put your memory to the test and have a little fun, participate in the HBI's Brain Game Challenge from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Nov. 18 at Edison Mall, where you can win great prizes while playing various games to exercise your brain. Cost of admission is one can of food to donate to the local soup kitchen or a \$1 donation that will be used to purchase food for the soup kitchen.

If you would like to learn more about the Healthy Brain Initiative or register for the Brain Game Challenge, please visit [www.leememorial.org/healthybrainfl/index.asp](http://www.leememorial.org/healthybrainfl/index.asp).

### **Passing of a Special Lee Memorial Health System Family Member**

Sharon Akin, RN, former long-time Lee Memorial Health System nurse and more recently a trusted patient confidant for Hope Hospice, passed away last Monday. A beautiful service for the wife of our Board of Directors Chairman, Richard Akin, was held Saturday. Sharon was a truly special and compassionate nurse, mother, wife and friend who touched many lives in countless positive ways. Please join me in support of Richard and his family by recognizing Sharon's wish, in lieu of flowers or tributes, that each of us take a few minutes to love and cherish those close to us. A beautiful message from a beautiful lady.

Note: Two weeks ago I shared about the passing of Lee County's first black female physician and now this week the passing of a long-time member of our health system family. Both of these special women touched many lives. At the same time, so do so many of our more than 4,300 volunteers, 1,200 physicians, 9,400 staff members and all their families. We use our *Lee Bee* website as the primary vehicle for family announcements, but in the case of these two recent examples, I'd like to have them also serve as a reminder that with the size of our system, every day there are significant milestones of exciting achievements, wonderful "family" stories, serious illness and tragedies. We do not use *Teaming Update* for all of these announcements, but I felt that Sharon Akin and Dr. Debra Skinner could also serve as a reminder of the impressive, compassionate and *caring people...caring for people* that make up the Lee Memorial Health System culture for success.

Peace and prayers,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jim Nathan  
President, Lee Memorial Health System