

Big Turn-Out At Diabetes Workshop

Dr. Subramaniam Ramana-
than (aka "Dr. Ram") was the
guest speaker at the Feb. 8
Diabetes Workshop at SCH,
drawing a good crowd. Dr.
Ram discussed the basics of
diabetes treatment, which he
summarized as the "4 Ms:"
Mindfulness, Meals, Move-
ment and Medication. Many
cases of diabetes can be
avoided by weight control
and regular exercise. Once
diabetes has been diagnosed,
the 4 M's are the basis of
treatment. Dr. Ram is an in-
ternal medicine specialist
who is accepting new pa-
tients. For appointments, call
548-0090.



Birthdays February



- 1 Arlene Leshner*
- 9 Sonja Clepper
- 12 Mark Rademacher
- 17 Charmaine Harvey
Merle Carpenter*
Mattie Lee Jordan*
- 24 Paula Gutzman
- 27 Kathey Richard
Brenda Benoit
- 28 Christy Warner

March

- 3 Delta Barnett*
- 6 Brittany Dilleshaw
Judy Davis*
- 7 Robert Smith
- 9 Rebecca Sanders
- 20 Cheryl Trafton
Tina Bernshausen
- 24 Lois Wells*
- 26 Shirley Ems*
- 29 Martha Webb
- 31 April Nichols

*Auxiliary

AUDITORS' REPORT: Interest Payments on Bonds Disguising Otherwise Healthy Bottom Line

After a year of
tough finan-
cial challenges, the
Sweeny Hospital
District Board of
Directors received a
mostly positive re-
port on Fiscal Year
2006 from the audit-
ing firm Parrish, Moody & Fikes.

"I don't think the year was nearly as bad as you probably felt like it was," said Deborah Whitley, the CPA who presented a draft of the report at the board's Jan. 30 meeting on behalf of the Waco firm.

Whitley noted that the hospital's business is booming in several areas, such as

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bad as you probably
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— Deborah Whitley,
CPA

physical and occupational therapies, EMS, the assisted-living facility, the lab and radiology. And while inpatient revenue is below what most hospitals this size experience, Whitley emphasized that even the inpatient business has positive points.

"Your inpatient revenue stayed consistent, and there's a lot to be said for consistency while you're bringing other projects into service" she said.

Net patient service revenues increased to \$6.1 million in 2006, compared to \$5.8 million in 2005. But operating expenses also rose, and the hospital ended the year with an increase in net assets of only \$7,203, compared to a net asset increase of

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New Employees

- Lauren Richter, Heritage
- Veronica Vargas, Heritage
- Nancy Phillips, Heritage
- Katherine Dorris,
Environmental Services
- Teresa Tranum, Dietary
- Temple Koonce III, EMT-P
- Charlotte Taggart, EMT-B



CALENDAR

Monday, Feb. 19

New Direction Diet Info Meeting

Learn about the ND program. SCH employees get a 25% discount. Questions? Call 548-1555. 6:30 p.m. The Wellness Center

Tuesday, Feb. 20

Workplace Violence

Mandatory inservice for SCH employees. Pre-register by calling Ext. 1597. 10 a.m. to noon ED Conference Room

Thursday, Feb. 22 & Friday, Feb. 23

Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS)

Fee: \$75 for SCH employees \$125 for others Taught by staff from Sweeny EMS. Pre-registration required. Call 548-1597. 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Matagorda General Hospital

Tuesday, March 13 Incident Command Systems (ICS)

Mandatory inservice for SCH employees. Will be offered throughout the year. Register by calling Ext. 1597. 10 a.m. to noon ED Conference Room

Thursday, March 15 Basic EKG Recognition

Fee: Free to SCH employees, \$75 to others Pre-registration required. Call 548-1597. 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Wellness Center



A Ride And A Tour

James Torres of Sweeny EMS helps students and teachers from Barrow Elementary in Brazoria board the hospital's van for the return trip to the school Jan. 12 after touring the hospital. The special-needs students are in a life skills class, and their teachers hoped a visit to the hospital when the kids weren't injured or sick would ease their worries if they have to come in the future.

SCH Employees Invited To Help Fund Scholarships



SCH employees who want to help students planning careers in health care can do so by contributing to the SCH Employee-Funded Scholarship.

SCH employees may contribute to this fund in lump sums or by payroll deduction. There is no deadline to donate, and all you have to do to sign up is tell Human Resources Director Grace Baty or Melissa Karst of Nursing, and they'll do the rest.

SCH employees' contributions are

usually enough to fund two \$1,200 scholarships per year. They are awarded to high school students planning careers in healthcare. One student is chosen from Columbia High School, and the other is from Sweeny High School.

Students must apply for the scholarships by March 28. Winners are selected by a committee of SCH employee donors.

Influenza Confirmed West of the Brazos

Confirmed cases of the flu have begun showing up in the SCH Emergency Department. So far, they are mostly Type A and seem to be affecting young adults and children the most.

Flu shots are still available through the SCH ER for anyone age 9 and up.

The fee is \$25, with no out-of-pocket expense to those on Medicare. For information, call 548-1555.

From The Administrator Better Days Are Finally Here

Because we have been very concerned about financial matters since last fall, it seems important to pass along some good news when it occurs. Last week, we received more tax money, about \$341,000 (in round numbers). Also, we learned that Medicaid will be paying us more on some of our old cost reports, about \$95,500. This latter amount will come sometime in the weeks ahead, but it's



H.A. Turk
Administrator

nice to know it's due.

With what we received last week, we have been able to pay more old bills. As of today, we owe about \$333,000 in bills, almost all of which are current (i.e. under 30 days old). By contrast, a few months ago, the total might have been \$1.5 million. So you see, taxes and increased patient activity (our "business") make a big difference.

Our old health claims have been satisfied and now we don't owe any over 30 days old. This, I hope, will be welcome news to many of our staff.

Delores Merchant reports that despite a slow month for admissions (6) but a lot of observation patients (22), it looks like we will be very close to making our budgeted gross revenue ("charges") target which is \$918,500. This is excellent and must be due to some major patient activity in our outpatient areas including therapies and EMS.

Now that Dr. Ram is practicing next door, we hope for even more need for the services we offer. And soon The Fountains will have all its apartments leased (except for the two respite rooms that need to be available).

Just to keep things in perspective, however, we are not out of the woods yet. We know taxes will taper off soon but if collections from increased levels of patient activities go up, we could make it to July in decent shape. And in July, we stand to receive another \$1 million in taxes.

This won't necessarily be easy but with the hard work and sacrifices many of you have made already, if we can tough it out a little longer, we can make it to easier times.



Board Member Carves Tiger

Sweeny Hospital Board Member Ronnie Griffin of Old Ocean has turned wood-carving into a money-raising venture for the schools attended by his grandchildren. Most recently, he carved this Sealy High School tiger that raised \$2,500 from Sealy businesses for that school's Project Graduation 2007. The donors' names will be placed on the base of the tiger. Griffin's granddaughter, Hilary Griffin, is a senior at Sealy High School. The tiger will be displayed in the main entry area of Sealy High School. Griffin started seriously carving in 1997, and this is his eighth carving in that period of time. Plans are in progress to do a Sweeny Bulldog for a friend who has a son graduating next year. Currently, Ronnie is carving an eagle for the Brazosport Christian School, where he has two granddaughters in high school.

Auditors' Report

Continued from Page 1

\$342,577 in 2005. The increase in expenses was almost entirely due to depreciation on the new buildings and interest on the bonds -- totaling \$700,000 in 2006 -- leading Whitley to conclude by saying, "The interest payments are really pulling down your profit numbers. Your bottom line wasn't as bad as it appears."

She also complimented the SCH accounting staff, telling the hospital board, "It's very

important for you to know there were no errors or irregularities" in hospital district accounts, and adding that management quickly addressed any problems or suggestions made by the auditors.

This was the first audit at SCH done by Parrish, Moody & Fikes, although the company has dozens of hospitals as clients throughout Texas.

The report Whitley presented was based on a draft of the audit. Final numbers are due soon.

Workplace Violence

Classes Teach Prevention, Reaction Techniques

An alarm went off in the ER, and Staff Development Coordinator David Filipp waited patiently for SCH employees to respond from elsewhere in the facility. When they did, he took them hostage.

That marked the beginning of a new effort to make SCH employees safer by making them realize the possibility that patients or visitors may be armed and/or dangerous.

“You don’t normally think of a hospital as a place of violence, but that can change in an instant,” David said, noting that malls are generally peaceful, too, but just this week a teen gunman in Salt Lake City, Utah killed six people and wounded several others at random in a shopping mall.

David is certified in non-violent crisis intervention and with the help of two Sweeny EMS employees who are also police officers (Wayne Thompson and Ryan Jones), he developed the class on “Workplace Violence” that is currently being offered as inservice training for all SCH employees.

The class has two main parts: 1) Recognizing the potential for violence, and 2) Ways to protect yourself and your co-workers when things go from bad to worse.

Social Services Director Audrey Bess has had similar training before, but found the SCH program useful. One technique anyone can use to cool down a heated argument: Lower your voice. “You can’t talk if everyone is screaming,” she said. “Be respectful, and if you can’t talk, then be quiet. Eventually the other person will be quiet, too.”

Another technique to help defuse anger is to restate what the angry person is saying, so they can be sure you heard them.

“Instead of asking, ‘How do you feel,’ you would say, ‘I understand you’re angry,’ and then repeat back what they’re saying,” Audrey said. “This makes them feel like you’re listening. People speak loud because they don’t

think they’re being heard.”

The course also presents various techniques for breaking free from a physical attack, she said, and reminds employees never to turn their backs on a confrontational patient or visitor.

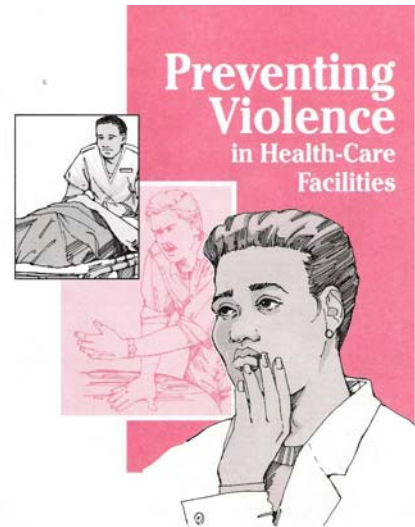
The program reminds SCH employees of code phrases: “Dr. Purple,” which is the traditional code for a combative patient, and “Dr. Armstrong,” a new code indicating a situation involving a violent patient or visitor who is armed.

Kathey Richard of Accounts Payable attended the Feb. 13 class and learned how to get free from a choke hold or from a grip on the hand. “It’s something I hope I will remember,” she said. “It was a very interesting program.”

The next Workplace Violence program is set for 10 a.m. Feb. 20, with additional programs throughout the year.

“Workplace Violence” is a mandatory inservice, as are two other programs, “Incident Command Systems” (ICS) and “National Incident Management Systems” (NIMS). These are required by federal directive and are designed to help health-care facilities and emergency responders “speak the same language” when dealing with disasters. ICS is for incidents handled locally; NIMS is for incidents requiring federal management.

All dates, times and locations for these inservice classes are posted on a calendar near the SCH employee time-clock. For more information, call David Filipp at Ext. 1597.



“You can’t talk if everyone is screaming. ... People speak loud because they don’t think they’re being heard.”

— Audrey Bess

Current and past issues of Positive Findings are available
at www.sweenyhospital.org



Use These Tips For Avoiding Colds and Flu

Since there are no known cures for colds and flu, prevention must be your goal. A proactive approach to warding off colds and flu is apt to make your whole life healthier. The most effective way to prevent flu, frankly, is to get the flu shot. It may not be natural, but it works better than anything else. But there are other strategies you can employ as well. These suggestions are from Charles B. Inlander, president of The People's Medical Society:

#1 Wash Your Hands

Most cold and flu viruses are spread by direct contact. Someone who has the flu sneezes onto their hand, and then touches the telephone, the keyboard, a kitchen glass. The germs can live for hours -- in some cases weeks -- only to be picked up by the next person who touches the same object. So wash your hands often. If no sink is available, rub your hands together very hard for a minute or so. That also helps break up most of the cold germs.

#2 Don't Cover Your Sneezes and Coughs With Your Hands

Because germs and viruses cling to your bare hands, muffling coughs and sneezes with your hands results in passing along your germs to others. When you feel a sneeze or cough coming, use a tissue, then throw it away immediately. If you don't have a tissue, turn your head away from people near you and cough into the air.

#3 Don't Touch Your Face

Cold and flu viruses enter your body through the eyes, nose, or mouth. Touching their faces is the major way children catch colds, and a key way they pass colds on to their parents.

#4 Drink Plenty of Fluids

Water flushes your system, washing out the poisons as it rehydrates you. A typical, healthy adult needs eight 8-ounce glasses of fluids each day. How can you tell if you're getting enough liquid? If the color of your urine runs close to clear, you're getting enough. If it's deep yellow, you need more fluids.

#5 Take a Sauna

Researchers aren't clear about the exact role saunas play in prevention, but one 1989 German study found that people who steamed twice a week got half as many colds as those who didn't. One theory: When you take a sauna you inhale air hotter than 80 degrees, a temperature too hot for cold and flu viruses to survive.

#6 Get Fresh Air

A regular dose of fresh air is important, especially in cold weather when central heating dries you out and makes your body more vulnerable to cold and flu viruses. Also, during cold weather more people stay indoors, which means more germs are circulating in crowded, dry rooms.

#7 Do Aerobic Exercise Regularly

Aerobic exercise speeds up the heart to pump larger quantities of blood; makes you breathe faster to help transfer oxygen from your lungs to your blood; and makes you sweat once your body heats up. These exercises help increase the body's natural virus-killing cells.

#8 Eat Foods Containing Phytochemicals

"Phyto" means plants, and the natural chemicals in plants give the vitamins in food a supercharged boost. So put away the vitamin pill, and eat dark green, red, and yellow vegetables and fruits.

#9 Eat Yogurt

Some studies have shown that eating a daily cup of low-fat yogurt can reduce your susceptibility to colds by 25 percent. Researchers think the beneficial bacteria in yogurt may stimulate production of immune system substances that fight disease.

#10 Don't Smoke

Statistics show that heavy smokers get more severe colds and more frequent ones. Even being around smoke profoundly zaps the immune system. Smoke dries out your nasal passages and paralyzes cilia. These are the delicate hairs that line the mucous membranes in your nose and lungs, and with their wavy movements, sweep cold and flu viruses out of the nasal passages. Experts contend that *one* cigarette can paralyze cilia for as long as 30 to 40 minutes.

#11 Cut Alcohol Consumption

Heavy alcohol use destroys the liver, the body's primary filtering system, which means that germs of all kinds won't leave your body as fast. The result is, heavier drinkers are more prone to initial infections as well as secondary complications. Alcohol also dehydrates the body -- it actually takes more fluids from your system than it puts in.

#12 Relax

If you can teach yourself to relax, you can activate your immune system on demand. There's evidence that when you put your relaxation skills into action, your interleukins -- leaders in the immune system response against cold and flu viruses -- increase in the bloodstream. Keep in mind, relaxation is a learnable skill, but it is *not* doing nothing. People who try to relax, but are in fact bored, show no changes in blood chemicals.

SOURCE: Charles B. Inlander is author of *77 Ways to Beat Cold and Flu*.

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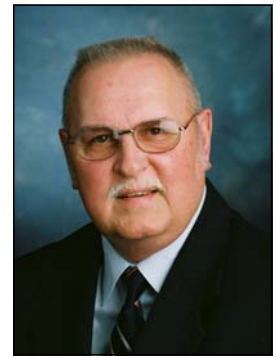
www.sweenyhospital.org



Drew Jolly



Ernelle Orr



Lanny Henderson

Snoop Scoop

Three positions on the Sweeny Hospital District Board of Directors will be up for election on May 12. The seats are currently held by board president **Drew Jolly**, secretary **Ernelle Orr** and **Lanny Henderson**

The deadline to file as a candidate for the hospital board is 5 p.m. March 12. See **Cindy Burge** in Administration for more information.

Hospital district board members serve two-year, unpaid terms. Other members of the current board include **Doug Dunham**, **Ronnie Griffin**, **John McGraw** and **Don Schulte**.

* * *

It's soon to be moving day at the hospital, with four staff members changing offices, and the Sweeny Home Health staff moving out of 411 N. Main and into the hospital. Among staff members getting new offices are:

Gracy Baty, Human Resources, moving to the office formerly occupied by **Melissa Karst** of Nursing.

Rhonda Moran, Community Relations & Grants, moving to the old Human Resources office.

Care Program Coordinator **Lola Paige** will move to Room 127, which will be much more convenient for Care Program patients who have to pay for their medications at the ER before picking them up from Lola.

Pat Anderson, radiology tech and Performance Improvement Coordinator, will move her office to Room 128 across from Cardiopulmonary and closer to Radiology, which should cut down on the distance she has to walk every day.

The biggest move of all will bring Sweeny Home Health into the old Physical Therapy offices (where Lola, Rhonda and Pat formerly officed). Moving home health into the hospital -- rather than maintaining a separate address -- is expected to save money, and that's the reason behind all these moves.

* * *

Congratulations to **Ryan Jones**, who is newly engaged to be married.

* * *

Several staff members recently recertified in Pediatric Advanced Life Support. They include **Elaine Montier**, **Marie Breakiron**, **Charles Bailey**, **Cathy Sisson**, **DeDe Rodriguez**, **Wayne Thompson** and **Dr. Nick Giannone**.

Pink Ladies Schedule Luncheon, Style Show For March 15

Tickets are now on sale for the Sweeny Community Hospital Auxiliary annual Salad Luncheon and Fashion Show set for noon Thursday, March 15 at the Sweeny Community Center, 205 W. Ashley Wilson Road.



Tickets for the luncheon and fashion show are \$10 each and are available by advance purchase only. No tickets will be sold at the door, and seating will be limited. Door prizes will be awarded during the event, which will have a St. Patrick's Day theme.

All proceeds will be used to pay for hospital equipment and volunteer training.

The Pink Ladies are also sponsoring a raffle, with the winner to be announced at the luncheon. Raffle tickets area \$1 each or six for \$5.

For more information or to purchase luncheon or raffle tickets, call Ext. 1578 or visit the hospital's gift shop.



It's a Valentine's Day surprise for Lola Paige, whose children sent her a teddy bear and roses.