



Jeremy Barker spots James Torres during a weight-lifting break at The Wellness Center. Both are EMTs with Sweeny/West Brazos EMS.

Sweeny/West Brazos EMS Makes Exercise A Priority

It's a fact of life for many health care workers: You eat what you can when you can, and chances are you eat it fast. Couple that with 24-hour shifts and you end up with an employee too tired even to think about exercise. The result? Weight gain.

"Among EMS employees who run fewer than 300 calls per month, the average weight gain is 2 pounds per week for the first two months," said Sweeny/West Brazos EMS Director David Philipp. "They eat fast and irregularly -- a Coke here, a burger there. If we can just get them to slow down with eating it'll be a big accomplishment, but they're afraid they'll get toned out."

Last summer, Sweeny/West Brazos EMS decided to tackle the prob-

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Birthdays

January

- 1 Wandalon Bryant
Sara Torres
Rossana Tiirado
- 2 Christene Christensen
- 3 Ranonda Wells
- 8 Karen Waddell
Dr. Ron Slate
- 11 Dorothy Hamlin*
- 12 Charmaine Harvey
Darla Beaty
- 13 Frank Knezek
- 14 Melissa Karst
- 15 Jim McGuire
Betty Bruce*
- 16 Jerri Morris*
Delicia Woodard
- 23 Mamie Sanchez
- 25 Peg Spivey



February

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

* Auxiliary

New Employees

- Donald Crawley
LMSW, Heritage
- Darla Beaty, LMSW,
Heritage



New Doctor Joining SCH Staff

Sweeny Community Hospital is pleased to announce the addition of a board-certified internal medicine specialist to the active medical staff.

Dr. Subramaniam Ramathan, 46, (aka "Dr. Ram") closed his practice in Woodville to relocate to Sweeny. A native of India, he is a graduate of Stanley Medical College at Madras University. He completed a graduate residency at Cornell Center, New

York Hospital Center of Queens.

He has a wide range of other experience and education, including a master's degree in radiology and radiotherapy, training at the Institute of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine in Dublin, Ireland, and work in urgent care at Sloan-Kettering Center in New York.

He is married and will be relocating to the Sweeny area soon with his family.



Dr. Ramanathan
Internal Medicine

CALENDAR

Tuesday, Jan. 11 Diabetes Workshop

Monthly gathering of people interested in diabetes. Frequent guest speakers. Free and open to the public. For information, contact Audrey Bess, 548-1590. 7 p.m. Main Conference Room

Tuesday, Jan. 30 Hospital Board of Directors

An agenda is posted in the lobby before the meeting. 6:30 p.m. Main Conference Room



Auxiliary Swaps Cookies At Christmas Party

The Pink Ladies mostly dressed in red for their annual Holiday Party, held this year on Dec. 13 at the First Baptist Church in Sweeny. After a meal of fried chicken, scalloped potatoes and fruit salad, the ladies enjoyed pralines for dessert while competing for prizes and answering a questionnaire about the history of chocolate. Charlotte Phillips won first place and Eldine Oglesby won second place in the cookie-tin decorating contest, which was followed by a cookie exchange. Edna Earle Pettigrew and Eutabelle Albritton were on the committee planning the party.

EMS Exercise

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lem with an idea borrowed from the Missouri City Fire Department: For 100 days, Sweeny/West Brazos EMS personnel would be required to spend one hour per shift at The Wellness Center, where they have the opportunity to work out. Then they shower and go back on duty.

While time at The Wellness Center is mandatory, working out has been optional, although most have chosen to do so. "A few of our people have never had an exercise routine before, and now they look forward to working out," Filipp said.

Several have lost weight, including Assistant EMS Director Mike Nixon, who has dropped more than 20 pounds since the program started.

Filipp said studies show that for every \$1 invested in employee wellness, the return is \$5 to \$6 per employee in reduced sick time, worker's compensation claims, etc. And the chance to exercise has helped in other ways, too.

"We've been busy and short-handed, so this has been a stress-



Jeremy Barker, EMT-I, works out at The Wellness Center.

reducer for all of us," Filipp said.

He added that The Wellness Center staff (physical therapist Lisa Brunner and physical therapy assistant Jason McCarey) "have been great." While EMS personnel are sometimes there during regular Wellness Center hours,

they may opt for other times as the work load allows. Sometimes that's midnight. Now and then workouts occur at 6 a.m. after a crew has worked all night.

The 100-day fitness initiation program ended Jan. 3, but Filipp said it has been extended indefinitely, based on mostly positive reviews from his staff.

Among the comments he received as feedback:

- "I think it is a good program. I only got to work out about 50 % of the time, but that is more than I would have done without the opportunity the hospital gave me. I know there is an expense to the hospital, but I think it helped with ... EMS personnel morale."
- "My experience with the physical fitness program is positive. I've managed to lose 15 pounds since the program started. Even though I have not exercised regularly due to job responsibilities, somehow I have managed to keep those 15 pounds off."

From The Administrator

Reflecting On 2006, Looking Forward To A Better Year In 2007

During the busy holiday season, there seemed to be hardly any time to sit and just think, but as we have wrapped up 2006, some reflection seems to be in order. You might not be any worse off if I didn't write this article, but there have been some events or accomplishments that need to be shared so that no one has a misconception of what our current situation is "organizationally." Stated differently, there are circumstances to be joyful over.



H.A. Turk
Administrator

Perhaps the low point of the year was around the first week in October when it looked like we would have trouble funding payroll 100 percent. But when many of you stepped forward and made the sacrifice to wait for a few days, it all worked out. After that payday, things got progressively better and we didn't revisit the public embarrassment we'd incurred again. Thank goodness.

When resources have been strained, we have learned many valuable lessons about conserving, reducing, or otherwise managing expenses. These lessons will serve us well even when times are not as challenging.

The arrival of significant sums of tax payments the first week in December permitted us to start catching up on the many overdue bills we had accumulated. Of course our different vendors are happy to see the payments to them and although we are not caught up 100 percent, it feels a lot better not owing so much. The taxpayers will continue to make payments through January, and we will continue paying down our bills. It's great not to worry all the time about where the funds to pay the bills will come from.

And more good news – starting in November, our inpatient admissions increased. We seem to be getting the type of support

we wanted from our hospitalist doctors. In November we recorded 29 admissions and in December, we had another 27 plus 22 observation admissions. For comparison, in November 2005 we recorded 19 admissions and in December 2005 it was 17 (for the whole month).

Why is this worth mentioning? Well, for one thing, "Inpatient Nursing" -- where our dedicated staff has always been ready to care for more patients -- has seen admissions and observation admits increase, which will raise the revenue or charges for that department quite nicely.

Most of the other revenue-producing cost centers have been contributing well. Oh, they each have some ups and downs, but over all, they've contributed consistently to the financial well being of the organization.

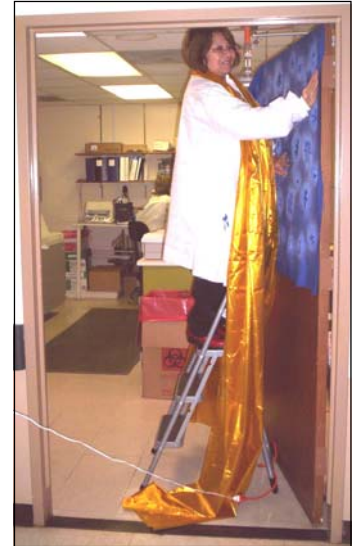
If our inpatient numbers will stay up, it will make a major difference in our financial image. We've been through a lot together, and it's no time to lose heart now. We are so close to major advances, you ought to be able to smell them. Okay, figuratively, I mean.

This month, another physician is joining our medical staff. Dr. Subramaniam Ramanathan, M.D., is an internal medicine physician who has practiced in Woodville for the last two years. All indications are he is a doctor well regarded by his patients, and one interested in being very busy. We will be glad to accommodate such a great work ethic.

We will get busy and publicize his arrival and do all we can to launch his new practice successfully. And if you think his name is a little hard to pronounce, he also answers to "Dr. Ram." That's helpful.

The last page in the 2006 pocket calendar I kept notes in quotes Abraham Lincoln, who said: "**Always bear in mind that your own resolution to succeed is more important than any one thing.**" I am resolved that SCH will soar to new heights in 2007. I hope each of you feels the same.

Make it a happy New Year.



Door Décor

Estella Ellis decorates a door to the Lab for the holidays. The Lab was among the first SCH departments to display holiday spirit.

Things To Know About Your PTO

In October, the hospital changed its policy to include sick leave under Paid Time Off (PTO), so that our PTO now includes sick time vacation and holidays. The old accrual rate was increased to account for sick leave.

But many employees aren't aware of another big change to the policy: Our PTO accrues by the number of hours worked, not per pay period as before.

This is especially meaningful to employees who work 24-hour shifts, or who work a lot of overtime. In the past, no matter how many hours you worked, you earned the same PTO as someone who worked a 40-hour week. Now, more work means more PTO.

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Ambulance Holiday Offer Had Some Takers

Sweeny/West Brazos EMS had some takers on the special "Home For the Holidays" transport program offered for the first time in December. For a flat fee, ambulance crews picked up patients who, for whatever reason, couldn't ride in cars. EMS crews took them home, then returned at a pre-determined time for the ride back.

EMS Director David Filipp said his crews transported "two or three patients" under the new program. It's a service that will be offered again.

ATM Experiment In ER Comes To An End

Old Ocean Federal Credit Union has decided to remove the ATM machine in the ER, due to low rates of use, so those who were used to this convenient way to get cash will have to find another source.

What we really need is a machine that gives change when the vending machines say "correct change only."



Got Mugs?

Melissa Karst (left) and Grace Baty display the 2006 coffee mugs presented to SCH employees at the annual holiday dinner Dec. 14. Mr. Turk began the tradition of giving the mugs when he came here in 1995.

Snoop Scoop

Gary Foose of Lake Jackson won the Christmas quilt offered in the auxiliary's annual raffle, which brought in more than \$900 this year. And that's aside from the money raised by the annual Tree of Remembrance.

Peggy Boineau has been appointed by the American Society of Hand Therapists' (ASHT) Board of Directors to be the division director for the Education Committee of ASHT beginning this month. This will involve overseeing all of the work done by the Education Committee, including all educational conferences, treatment guidelines and all educational products developed by ASHT.



SCH Pink Lady Olga Schulte holds the box while her husband Don, a hospital board member, draws the winning raffle ticket.



Fountains Administrator Crystal Johnson eyes "Jack Frost," a friendly Jack Russell terrier who showed up with no ID at the facility's back door on a recent frosty morning. Residents took a vote and decided he can stay.

Occupational Therapists **Anita Barnett, Marla Cook** and **Peg Spivey** recently attended a pediatric rehab course in Houston, which cost only \$20 for tuition but yielded valuable information. The "freebies" and door prizes they came away with were worth more than the tuition.

Larry Fernandez proudly announces the birth of his first granddaughter, **Nolla Rayann**, born Dec. 30 at 1:54 a.m. weighing 7 lbs., 10 ounces, and measuring 19.5 inches long. The mom is Larry's daughter, **Joann Alvarado**, who lives in Pearland.

In the lobby of the Fountains is a grandfather clock donated by **Bethan Walker** in memory of her late mother, **Mrs. JoAnn Fears**, who was the first resident of The Fountains. Mrs. Fears was also a member of the SCH Auxiliary.

Congratulations to Fountains Chef **Meeghan Dietz**, wife of former SCH paramedic Steve Dietz, on the birth of their son, Zane Autrey, on Dec. 4. He weighed 6 lbs., 6 ounces.