



January 21, 2008

"May we have eyes to see those who are rendered invisible and excluded. Open arms and hearts to reach out and include them. Healing hands to touch their lives with love. And in the process heal ourselves."

Volunteers In Medicine Clinic
Stuart, Florida

Good Morning,

The FMA and Florida Council of Medical Societies held a retreat for their executive directors in Daytona Beach on Tuesday. I was privileged to attend and address the assembled. This event was very well attended. The featured speaker was Michael Gallery, PhD, CAE (opisconsultants.com), a contributor to THE SEVEN MEASURES OF SUCCESS. Dr. Gallery presented an overview of the Seven Measures as well as practical suggestions that each society executive could use to strengthen their society and bring value to their members. The next day, attendees learned about resources that would make information sharing more efficient and were updated on the FMA's legislative agenda, marketing research efforts, and business. The event concluded Wednesday evening at a lovely reception hosted by Mrs. Gloria Barkin, Volusia County Medical Society Executive Director.

I left Tuesday afternoon to address the Indian River County Medical Society and install their President, Dr. Jeff Livingston. Dr. Arthur Palamara also attended and discussed membership in his usual passionate style. The We Care volunteers were recognized. We Care - due to the efforts of their medical community and especially Dr. Dennis Savor, who chairs the program - has been re-energized. They engaged the local high school art departments to submit designs for a new We Care logo and awarded the contest's winner, Mr. Shawn Wolfe a Senior at Vero Beach High School, a cash prize. I'll try to get a photograph of his work to you next week. It is terrific!

The next morning I drove to Martin County and visited Gayle and Jim Harrell. Jim took me to the Volunteers In Medicine (VIM) Clinic (<http://www.vimclinic.net/>) in Stuart. We were given the tour by their Executive Director, Ms. Mary Fields. I later had the opportunity to speak to their Medical Director, Dr. Bill Tozzo. This clinic was established in 1995 by Dr. Fred Carter, a fixture for many years at FMA meetings, and his colleagues. Their legacy is in good hands. The clinic staff assists 31 physicians (22 of whom are retired) in providing care to their patients (10,000+ patient visits per year). On a budget of \$565,000, over \$4,600,000 worth of services are delivered. This is funded through the generosity of local physicians, the community and Martin Memorial Hospital who provides significant support services. By the way, VIM's major fundraising Gala is this Saturday, January 26. The Secretary of the Department Of Health, Dr. Ana Viamonte Ros, visited the VIM clinic recently, mentioned her experience to me when we met last week and encouraged me to visit. After our tour, Jim took me to a fundraiser for Gayle, who, termed out from her state House seat, is running for Congress. We then went to the MCMS meeting at the Hospital.

Representative Harrell discussed the past session and the challenges of difficult budgetary times. I reviewed the FMA's legislative agenda and the challenges ahead.



Left to Right: Dr. Scott, Dr. Altenburger, Dr. West, and Dr. Goldberger

On Thursday, I drove to Ft. Myers and enjoyed the hospitality of the FMA's President-Elect, Dr. Steve West and his wife, Jane. We were escorted through Lee County's Museum of Medical History by Drs. Roger Scott and Jake Goldberger, both General Surgeons with an interest in medical history. It is quite a collection. We then attended the Lee County Medical Society meeting where I participated in the installation of their officers including their new President, Dr. Dean Traiger, a Family Physician and President Elect, Dr. Larry Hobbs who is also President of the Florida College of Emergency Physicians.

On the drive home on Friday, I listened to an interview with the Comptroller General of the United States, Mr. David Walker. Medicare is currently a 34 trillion dollar unfunded mandate and he believes we have a narrow window (5 - 10 years) to address this. Medicare Part D has already created an additional 8 trillion dollar unfunded mandate and it is growing rapidly as well. His plea was for "intergenerational equity" through fiscal responsibility. I later heard Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have A Dream" speech which, among other things, led me to reflect on last evening's Lee County Medical Society program. The Society recognized the lifetime achievement of Dr. Peter Sansone who retired recently after 35 years practicing in the community. He reminded the assembled that the natural history of freedom is that it will diminish with time. Liberty must be actively protected and promoted. It is a continuous process that is ignored at our peril. Considering the serious threats confronting our profession and our patients, this is an important point to remember this Martin Luther King Holiday.

Until next week...

Sincerely,
Karl M. Altenburger, M.D.
President, Florida Medical Association

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