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# The Health Care District Celebrates Edward J. Healey Rehabilitation and Nursing Center's 100th Anniversary

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*Staff at the Edward J. Healey Rehabilitation and Nursing Center celebrate the facility's 100th anniversary*

The Health Care District of Palm Beach County marked the centennial of the Edward J. Healey Rehabilitation and Nursing Center with a ceremony on April 11th, 2018. More than 50 community leaders, county and city officials, current and former staff, and residents attended the celebration at the 120-bed facility in Riviera Beach which is owned and operated by the Health Care District. The Healey Center, a U.S. News 2017-18 and 2016-2017 Best Nursing Homes recipient, opened at its current site five years ago. The facility relocated from West Palm Beach where the formerly named "Palm Beach County Home" and "Poor Farm" had served the community since 1918.

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“The legacy of the Healey Center dates back to the birth of this county and the mission to serve those in need continues to this day,” said Darcy J. Davis, CEO of the Healthcare District of Palm Beach County in her remarks.

“The Health Care District is proud to recognize our skilled nursing home for reaching this historic milestone.”

The Healey Center serves eligible Palm Beach County residents with traumatic injuries or debilitating illnesses. Unlike a typical nursing home, the average age of the residents at the Healey Center is 55 years old. Residents often arrive at the Healey Center unable to walk or talk. The Healey Center’s professional staff delivers occupational, physical, and speech therapy that successfully returns residents to their highest optimal capabilities and gives long-term residents a second chance at quality of life.



*Commissioner Philip H. Ward, III, Chair of the Health Care District Board,<sup>TOP</sup> delivers his remarks at the Edward J. Healey Rehabilitation and Nursing*

### *Center's centennial celebration*

“The Health Care District is a unique public health care system that serves as the county’s health care safety net,” remarked Commissioner Philip H. Ward, III, Chair of the Health Care District Board of Commissioners. “This facility is a critical component of that safety net, delivering high-quality care to over 100 residents.”

Historians note there are few institutions in the county or anywhere in South Florida that are a century old. Keynote speaker, veteran Palm Beach Post reporter and historical author Eliot Kleinberg, described how Dr. A. H. King, Palm Beach County’s first health officer, urged county leaders during World War I to find a place where the poor and underserved could receive medical help.

“An April 11, 1918 Palm Beach Post story says the ‘county poor farm’ had opened after the county rented out some existing buildings, and five patients had moved in,” Kleinberg said.

“In just nine months the poor farm was established on a citrus grove on the southeast corner of 45th Street and Australian Avenue. The property was converted to a hospital in 1941, to a nursing home in 1948 and to the Palm Beach County Home and General Care Facility in 1968.”

The Health Care District began operating the facility in 1995 through an agreement with the county. It was renamed in honor of the late former Florida Representative Edward J. Healey who helped create the Health Care District in 1988 and served on the Health Care District’s Board of Commissioners.

“It’s profound to know that this facility was established at a time when health care was deemed as important for our neediest residents as it is

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today,” said the Riviera Beach Mayor Thomas A. Masters in his remarks. “So as we learn more about our past, we understand how we got to this point today and where we are likely heading in the future. And from what I see, the Healey Center’s future looks bright!”



*From left: Glen J. Torcivia, Esq., Darcy J. Davis, CEO, Health Care District of Palm Beach County, James T. Howell, MD, MPH, Assistant Dean of Professional Relations and Professor of Public Health at Nova Southeastern University and former Secretary, Florida Department of Health*

Attendees also included Riviera Beach City Councilman Terence Davis; Verdenia Baker, Palm Beach County Administrator; Jon Van Arnham, Assistant County Administrator; Dan Liftman, Staff Assistant to U.S. Congressman Alcee Hastings; Ben Durgan, Legislative Assistant to Florida Senator Bobby Powell; Kelley Burke, Legislative Aide to Mayor Melissa McKinlay; Alina M. Alonso, MD, Health Care District Board Member and

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Director of the Florida Department of Health for Palm Beach County; former Health Care District Board Chair Randee S. Schatz, Esq. and James T. Howell, MD, MPH, Associate Dean, Professional Relations/Professor for the Departments of Public Health and Rural & Underserved Medicine at Nova Southeastern University's Dr. Kiran C. Patel College of Osteopathic Medicine.

The ceremony opened with the Riviera Beach Police Department Honor Guard, followed by an invocation by Reverend Robert L. Rease, member of the Lakeside Health Advisory Board, which guides Lakeside Medical Center, the Health Care District's acute care teaching hospital in the Glades.

The program, hosted by Robin Kish, Health Care District Senior Corporate Communications Strategist, concluded with remarks from Karen A. Harris, Health Care District Vice President of Field Operations and Shelly Ann Lau, Healey Center Administrator. They invited guests to tour the modern facility, which is rated 5-stars by the U.S. Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The tour featured a video about the Healey Center's history and interviews with residents like 64-year-old Lionel Darville, a former high school football star now confined to a wheelchair who says he loves his home, the staff, and the therapy he receives.

"I've seen a couple of people walk out of here," Darville said. "They came up here, their body was all mashed up, bent up and they straightened them up, they stood up and they walked right out of here."

For more information, visit [www.hcdpbc.org/healeycenter](http://www.hcdpbc.org/healeycenter)

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