



FUN FOR FUNDS: Terri Morelos of Barnacle Bill's restaurant joins David Wingrove and Marjorie Evans at the Broward Children's Center in Pompano Beach. The restaurant will sponsor a golf tournament this Saturday to benefit the facility for disabled youth, many of whom must rely on ventilators like the one shown here. The center often uses funds raised at benefits to help fund equipment purchases. [Photo by Maria Barbero]

Teeing for tots!

Barnacle Bill's hosts a golf tournament Saturday to benefit the Broward Children's Center for disabled youth, one of Pompano Beach's best kept secrets

By Darrell Hofheinz

PELICAN STAFF
David Wingrove knows that it doesn't take much for people to appreciate the work done at the Broward Children's Center in Pompano Beach. "One tour is all it takes," he says.

The non-profit, independent agency serves physically and developmentally disabled children and young people, the majority of whom are described by the staff as "medically fragile." Many live at home but visit the center, 200 S.E. 19th Ave., for daily medical care, therapy, educational training and recreational activities. More

than 65 are full-time residents in one of the center's three group homes or its pediatric skilled-nursing facility, of which Wingrove serves as administrator. That facility provides 24-hour nursing and respiratory care.

The center also runs two pre-school programs, provides a respite-care program for overwhelmed parents, offers home-health services, runs an after-school program and even provides clients with transportation to and from the center and local schools. All in all, the center serves between 250 and 300 clients in Broward County, most of whom are either confined

to bed or must use specially equipped wheelchairs to get around. Their ages range from birth to 21.

Now celebrating its 27th anniversary as the sole free-standing licensed pediatric-care facility in the state, the Broward Children's Center has been working of late to increase its visibility in the local community, says Wingrove. And those efforts appear to be paying off: The facility has become a frequent beneficiary of local service organizations, including the Pompano Beach Rotary Club, the Exchange Club of Pompano Beach and the Pompano Business and Professional Women's Organization. Members of the Pompano Beach Fire Rescue Department have also been actively involved in helping support the center.

And this Saturday, Sept. 20, Barnacle Bill's restaurant in Pompano will sponsor a charity golf tournament at the Palm-Aire Country Club to raise money for the Broward Children's Center.

"We're physically and emotionally involved with the center," explains Terri Morelos, who with partner Frank Bilotti co-owns Barnacle Bill's, 2780 E. Atlantic Blvd. Two months ago, for instance, Barnacle Bill's sponsored a "Christmas in July" party for the children at the restaurant, providing toys and holding a raffle that raised about \$1,000 for the center.

"We want them to understand"

The upcoming golf tournament will feature a prime-rib awards dinner at the restaurant, Morelos adds, as well as contests for putting and longest drive. Local merchants have also donated a variety of prizes to be raffled off, including a trip to the Bahamas, hotel getaway packages and a Coca-Cola golf bag valued at more than \$150, Morelos says.

The tournament allows the restaurant to increase customer base by offering a fun recreational outing while at the same time building awareness for the Broward Children's Center, says Morelos. "We don't just want them to come play golf," she explains. "We want them to understand what they're supporting."

Indeed, Wingrove calls the Broward Children's Center Pompano's "best kept secret."

The center, which is an independent health-care agency not affiliated with the county, moved to Pompano Beach from its original home in Fort Lauderdale 10 years ago. "We had \$65,000 in the bank and 12 kids," recalls Chief Executive Officer Marjorie Evans, who has been with the center since its earliest days, first as a volunteer, then as an employee.

Since moving to Pompano, the facility has grown to require an annual budget of \$3 million and a staff of 150. The physical plant houses several buildings and a variety of innovative programs, including two preschools. Plans are now in the works

Continued on page 14

Children

Continued from page 11

to build two new buildings to house a preschool and offices within the year.

"All the struggles and all the achievements have been quietly done," Wingrove says.

Since Wingrove was hired a year and a half ago, he has promoted the center by joining the Greater Pompano Beach Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary club, a move that Evans praises. "I've never had time for those kinds of things," says Evans. But lately, she adds, "more people have begun to know who we are and where we are."

Individualized care

All of the center's clients have severe disabilities—either genetic or, more commonly, problems stemming from trauma such as auto accidents, gunshot wounds, burns and near drownings. Many of the clients, who range in age from infants to 21, need respirators and ventilators to breathe or are dependent on other life-sustaining medical equipment.

The client base at the Broward Children's Center covers a broad spectrum: Some of the children and young adults, for instance, are physically but not mentally disabled, so they can take advantage of educational and recreational opportunities that

going to put them on machines, then we've got to keep them [well taken care of]," she says.

But that can be expensive. Medicare typically pays its maximum payments for clients in the nursing program, says Wingrove. But even that's not enough to meet all the costs: "We staff greater than Medicaid requires," says Wingrove.

And state and federal aid is becoming harder to come by. "It's very critical," says Evans. "The cuts are coming right, left and center."

Those funding shortages have forced the center to lobby state legislators for help. Last year, for instance, State Rep. Debby Sanderson (R-Fort Lauderdale) played a critical role in securing funding for the center's group home that serves young adults who are wheelchair-bound and ventilator dependent—but who lost much of their Medicare funds once they turned 21. "Debby Sanderson is like a lifesaver to us," Evans says.

Community support and charity events, such as this Saturday's golf tournament sponsored by Barnacle Bill's, have also become an increasingly important source of funding for the center, says Wingrove, particularly as a source of funding for medical equipment that could not be purchased otherwise.

As word about the center has

IF YOU GO

• **What:** "Barnacle Bill's First Annual Charity Golf Tournament" benefiting the Broward Children's Center.

• **When:** Sat., Sept. 20; 12:30 p.m. shotgun start.

• **Where:** Palms Golf Course, Palm-Aire Country Club, 3600 N. Palm-Aire Drive, Pompano Beach.

• **Special events:** \$10,000 putting contest; longest-drive contest; \$10,000 hole-in-one contest.

• **Entry and sponsor fees:** \$65 per player includes green and cart fees, soda and beer on the course, golf shirt and towel and prime-rib dinner at Barnacle Bill's.

• **To register:** Call 943-9662.

would not be appropriate for other clients.

Above all, Evans says, the center aims at providing individualized programs and care for children at whatever level they can handle. Doing the bare minimum, she says, is just not good enough because "this is the only life these children have."

Because of technological increases in medical care and equipment, the number of "medically fragile" clients has steadily increased over the past decade, Evans explains. "Every child in the skilled nursing facility would not have been alive 10 years ago," she says soberly. Society, in turn, must accept responsibility for its medical advances: "If we're

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spread through Pompano, Evans immediately, especially when they adds, the response from the local meet children who have been community has often been injured in an accident. "Seeing the heartfelt. Evans explains that kids in here, parents can say, people who tour the center for the 'There but for the grace of God go first time often respond I,'" says Evans.