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OPENLINES

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THE FINAL LETTER

It is with mixed emotions that I write this final letter as your CEO. For the past two years, I have had the honor of serving Jacksonville, the surrounding communities and, most importantly, all of you as CEO of UF Health Jacksonville. Prior to that, I served as your CEO from 2013 to 2017. Altogether, my time at UF Health Jacksonville has truly been the highlight of my career.

Throughout my years at UF Health Jacksonville, I've witnessed the significant growth of our organization. During my first year as CEO in 2013, we changed our name to UF Health Jacksonville, broke ground on the UF Health North medical office building, and began airing the "Two Minutes with Russ" bimonthly videos, which you know today as "A Few Minutes with Us."

Since then, we were redesignated with Magnet recognition not once, but twice, for nursing excellence, and have become a well-respected health care institution in Jacksonville. In addition, we fully opened the UF Health North hospital and broke ground on a second bed tower, expanding our services to more families in the region. And in just the last two years, I've had the privilege of seeing rapid growth with the openings of new practices, UF Health East, three new emergency and urgent care centers, and securing the funding for a new trauma center.

These achievements are all ways we have enhanced our patient care and continue to accomplish our mission of healing and caring for the community. I am confident the growth and success of UF Health Jacksonville, UF Health North and all the primary care and specialty practices will continue under the leadership of Patrick Green, MBA, FACHE. He is a dynamic leader with vast experience in health care, serving in top leadership roles for more than a decade. I couldn't imagine a better person to step in and lead UF Health Jacksonville into its next stage of growth.

I will be forever grateful for my time at UF Health Jacksonville for numerous reasons, but none more than the opportunity to meet and work beside so many of you, the wonderful people who comprise this amazing health system. With your hard work and dedication, I leave knowing our hospitals and practices are well-positioned and fully prepared to thrive in the future.

It has always been a privilege to serve as your CEO.

Sincerely,



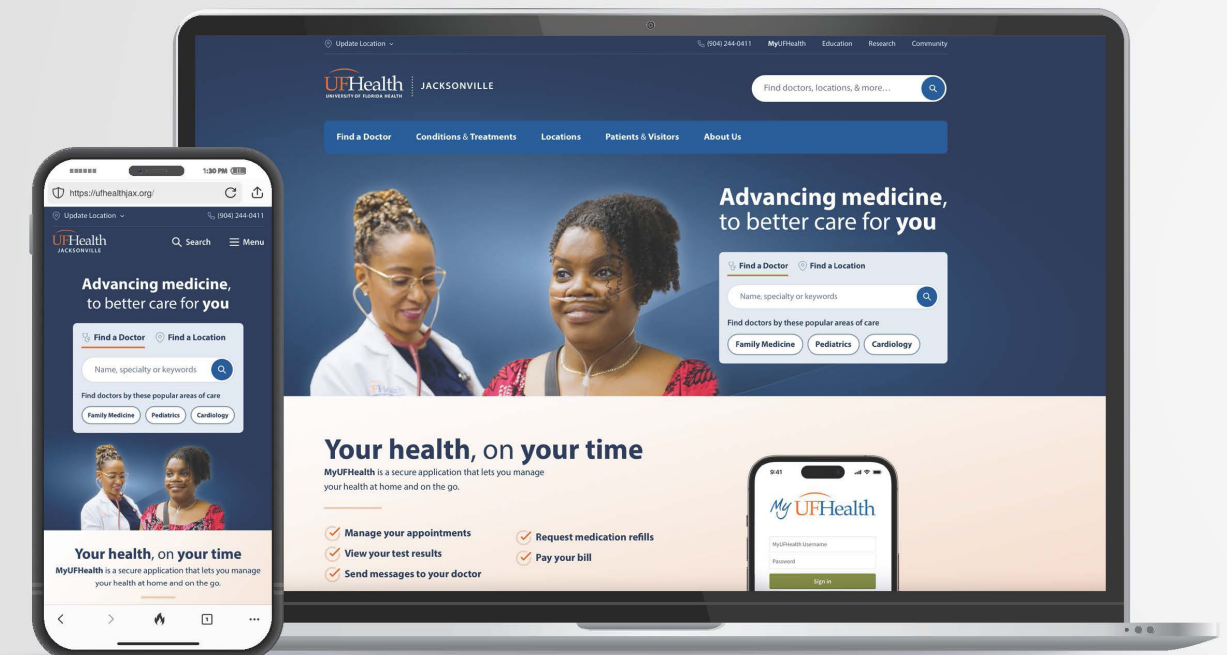
Russell E. Armistead, MBA
CEO, UF Health Jacksonville



CELEBRATING PRIDE MONTH

In observance of PRIDE month, UF Health Jacksonville is celebrating the LGBTQ+ community during the month of June. In 2022, we were recognized for the third time for our outstanding dedication to an inclusive work environment, earning a perfect score with the LGBTQ+ Healthcare Equality Index by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. We couldn't achieve this without the efforts of our employees. Thank you for continuing to foster a welcoming environment and striving for inclusive excellence for patients, visitors and staff, and for your ongoing dedication to providing safe health care to all.

Explore our New UF Health Jacksonville Website



**A cleaner, more
welcoming design**

**Easier navigation and
faster performance**

**Patient-focused
health information**

Our new website — two years in the making — better supports patients as they search for doctors, locations and treatments for their health care decision-making.

Visit UFHealthJax.org and share our exciting new website with your patients.

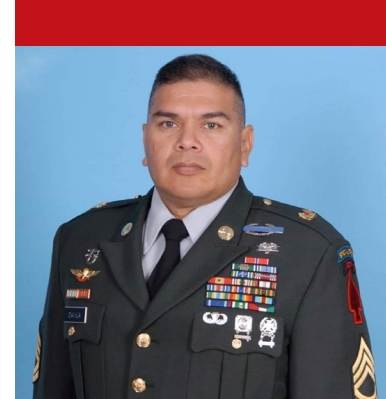


HELPING OUR MILITARY VETERANS FIND HEALING

By Alex Linton

The UF Health Jacksonville Leon L. Haley Jr., MD, Brain Wellness Program is an interdisciplinary treatment program for military veterans experiencing persistent health issues associated with mild to moderate traumatic brain injuries, along with associated behavioral health issues, such as post-traumatic stress, anxiety, depression and substance use disorder.

The program launched in October 2021 and has since treated dozens of veterans who need support. Here are the stories of just two patients whose lives were forever changed after receiving treatment through the Haley Brain Wellness Program.



LEARNING THE SKILLS TO OVERCOME

Mike Davila served 25 years of active duty as a U.S. Army Special Forces medical sergeant, or Green Beret. Since 2006, he has suffered from the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, and traumatic brain injury, or TBI.

Throughout the years, Davila's symptoms have continually gotten worse, and none of the doctors he saw could provide a sound answer as to what he was experiencing. No matter how much they helped him manage his physical pain, Davila would still find himself in constant pain.

"I struggled daily, feeling unmotivated and dealing with depression and anxiety," Davila said.

He often had trouble remembering things and battled regular migraines. Bright lights, loud noises and crowds could trigger Davila to feel angry. All of this caused him to avoid certain activities. He even struggled being around his family.

It wasn't until one of his brothers introduced him to the Haley Brain Wellness Program that he finally began to get answers. The program helped Davila understand his depression cycle, which was causing him to go from agitation to exhaustion.

As he progressed in the program, Davila learned to better regulate his emotions. With the aid of several forms of therapy, including speech, physical, art, acupuncture, K9 and equine, Davila relearned how to carry on conversation, tolerate crowds, improve his listening skills and better manage his emotions.

"Mindfulness and resiliency training taught me how to gauge my feelings," Davila said.

While Davila still suffers from TBI, PTSD and migraines, he has learned to regulate his emotions and navigate life while managing his symptoms. He continues to stay active by exercising and eating healthy, and is reconnecting with his family in a positive way.



OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF TRAUMA

After years of serving active duty in the U.S. Navy, Amanda Damasiewicz was diagnosed with PTSD and TBI. Following the diagnoses, Damasiewicz visited multiple outpatient and inpatient programs, working with numerous psychologists, but none were able to help.

In 2021, Damasiewicz connected with the Haley Brain Wellness Program and officially signed up to attend the three-week Intensive Outpatient Program in March 2022.

"I was very skeptical on the first day and scared because all of the doctors were telling me what was really going on with me, and there was no sugarcoating it," Damasiewicz said. "I didn't realize how bad trauma had held me down all of these years."

Damasiewicz persevered despite her doubts and continued working with the faculty and staff of the Haley Brain Wellness Program. As she neared the completion of the program, the hard work was paying off.

"I finally understood the connection with my trauma, and how I was dealing with death," Damasiewicz said. "I understood why I was reacting the way I had been — I had abandonment and trust issues, and wanted to change the past. I've felt that every day since 2014, and that wasn't the way I wanted to live my life."

Damasiewicz never had the opportunity to meet the late Dr. Leon Haley Jr., for whom the program is named, but wanted to express her appreciation for his vision.

"I am a living example of his legacy. He wanted to help veterans and first responders in the Jacksonville area with TBI and PTSD, and, ladies and gentlemen, he did it. This program turned my whole life around. After 22 years in the Navy, this program and staff gave me hope again, and they gave me a positive outlook on life," Damasiewicz said.

Visit UFHealthJax.org/brain-wellness to learn more about the Haley Brain Wellness Program.

GETTING TO KNOW LINDA LAWSON

By Sarah Le



From top to bottom: Linda and her husband, Danny; Linda celebrates with the nursing team during Nurses Week in May 2023; Linda with her granddaughter, Brooke.

Introducing the chief nursing officer at UF Health Jacksonville.

In May, Linda Lawson, DBA, MSN, RN, NEA-BC, stepped into the role of interim chief nursing officer at UF Health Jacksonville, following the retirement of Patrice Jones, DNP, RN, NE-BC, who served as vice president and chief nursing officer for more than a decade. Lawson holds a doctorate of business administration and a master's of science in nursing. She is a board-certified nurse executive with extensive experience leading operations and complex projects within health care settings. Lawson brings nearly 30 years of diverse experience in health care to this new role.

The foundation

Prior to being named interim CNO, Lawson was the associate vice president of nursing at UF Health North for six years, but her history in nursing and at UF Health began long before that.

Lawson graduated from the University of North Florida in the early 1990s and started her career as a registered nurse, following in her mother's footsteps, who was an infection prevention nurse at UF Health when it was called University Hospital. During this initial part of her career, she gained experience in various units, including the cardiac step-down unit, perioperative recovery room, labor and delivery, and intensive care units. She was also an advocate for implementing the 12-hour nursing shift that we know today.

Lawson's talent and hard work was quickly recognized by her peers and supervisors. She rapidly advanced in her career, becoming a nurse manager at the new labor and delivery unit at Baptist Beaches and eventually accepting a promotion to role of director.

Despite her tenacious spirit to advance her career, family is first in Lawson's book. When her son Brett was diagnosed with a brain tumor at a young age, Lawson took a leave of absence to care for him. Thankfully, treatments were successful and Brett recovered with no recurring issues. Years later, Brett joined the medical profession, becoming a doctor. Today, he works as the medical director at UF Health Family Medicine – Callahan.

Joining the UF Health family

In 2004, several years after Lawson reentered the workforce, she applied for a position at UF Health Jacksonville, which was then known as Shands Hospital. During her time at UF Health, she quickly advanced into nursing management, where she accomplished goals such as the initiation of the Magnet Unit Council structure alongside the CNO at that time. In 2011, UF Health Jacksonville received its first Magnet designation, which Lawson led as nursing division director.

"One of my proudest moments was overseeing UF Health Jacksonville's initial Magnet designation," Lawson said. "It was a long journey and I was so proud of our nursing staff for accomplishing this incredible goal."

Between 2012-2014, Lawson left UF Health to further grow her career and served as CNO at South Georgia Medical Center. However, Lawson's heart and passion remained in Jacksonville and she sought to return to UF Health. In August 2014, Lawson returned to UF Health as a division director.

In 2017, Lawson accepted the role of associate vice president of nursing at UF Health North. While in this role, Lawson continued to excel by building a collaborative nursing team and engaging in the highest hospital standards for our patients. She also played a major role in the successful opening of the first inpatient care tower at UF Health North and led her teams to maintain high levels of patient satisfaction.

One major accomplishment Lawson is proud of during her time at UF Health North was her initiative to improve and change the culture of nursing surrounding taking breaks. She facilitated a "restorative break" research study. While promoting the components of the study, Linda encouraged the staff to take a quick break from their unit to help improve their overall mental and physical well-being. Lawson published, "On the Restorative Break, Understanding the Role of Breakroom Design on Nurse Engagement and Satisfaction" in Workplace Health & Safety in March 2023.

Moving forward with a plan

As Lawson steps into her new role as CNO, she aims to rally the nursing staff and be a visible leader they can trust and rely on. As we move forward from the past few years, Lawson wants the nursing teams to know they are appreciated and supported.

One of her main goals will be filling open positions throughout the nursing units and focusing on quality. Lawson also wants to support new nurses and ensure they have the resources and training they need to succeed in their new roles, as well as understand the goals and needs of more seasoned nurses.

When Lawson isn't working hard at UF Health, she is a proud Gator and season ticket holder to the University of Florida football games. She also enjoys relaxing at the beach. Lawson and her husband, Danny, have been married for almost 37 years and are proud to share that they were recently promoted to grandparents after their son, Brett, and his wife, Brittany, welcomed their daughter Brooke.

Lawson wants to leave nurses with this quote of encouragement:

"Start by doing what is necessary; then do what is possible; and suddenly you are doing the impossible."

— Saint Francis of Assisi

Be Aware, BE FAST

LEARN THE WARNING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STROKE.



Strokes affect approximately 850,000 people a year, which means one in every 400 Americans will experience this type of potentially life-changing medical emergency. Strokes are the leading cause of acquired physical disability in adults in the U.S., and the fourth-leading cause of death. For this reason, there is no better time than now to spread awareness about the warning signs and symptoms of a stroke.

A stroke can be caused by ischemia, which is lack of blood flow commonly due to a clot, or a hemorrhage from burst or bleeding blood vessels in or around the brain.

WATCH FOR WARNING SIGNS

Scott Silliman, MD, medical director of the UF Health Comprehensive Stroke Program, discusses what you need to know, including the importance of early action. "Time is crucial when it comes to strokes, and the longer a patient goes without medical attention, the more damage can be done to the brain," Silliman said.

Typically, there are six signs of a stroke, and they are best remembered by the acronym BE FAST:

**B**

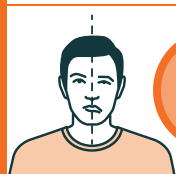
BALANCE

Is the person suddenly having trouble with balance or coordination?

**E**

EYES

Is the person experiencing suddenly blurred or double vision, or a sudden loss of vision in one or both eyes without pain?

**F**

FACE DROOPING

Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile.

**A**

ARM WEAKNESS

Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?

**S**

SPEECH DIFFICULTY

Is speech slurred, are they unable to speak or are they hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence like, "The sky is blue." Is the sentence repeated correctly?

**T**

TIME TO CALL 911

If the person shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 911 and get them to a hospital immediately.

SYMPTOMS CAN DIFFER

It's important to know that not all people experience the same symptoms. Atypical symptoms include the following:

- ▶ Sudden and explosive severe headache
- ▶ Sudden numbness in the face or arms described as zero feeling, not tingling

WHO IS AT RISK?

Although anyone can have a stroke at any age, certain factors may increase the chances of having this neurological event. The best way to protect yourself and your loved ones from a stroke is to understand your risk and how to control it. Some risk factors for stroke can be changed or managed, while others cannot.

Risk factors for stroke that can be changed, treated or medically managed:

- ▶ Abnormal heart rhythm
- ▶ Diabetes
- ▶ Excessive alcohol use
- ▶ Heart disease
- ▶ High blood pressure
- ▶ High cholesterol and lipids
- ▶ High red blood cell count
- ▶ Obesity
- ▶ Sickle cell disease
- ▶ Smoking

Risk factors for stroke that cannot be changed:

- ▶ Age — For each decade of life after age 55, the chance of having a stroke doubles.
- ▶ Race — African Americans are at the highest risk for death and disability from a stroke.
- ▶ Gender — Stroke occurs more often in men, but more women die from stroke.
- ▶ History of prior stroke — Patients with a history of stroke are at a higher risk for having additional strokes.
- ▶ Heredity or genetics — The chance of stroke is greater in people with a family history of stroke.

WHERE YOU LIVE

Strokes are more common among people living in the southeastern U.S. than in other areas. The region is commonly referred to as the "Stroke Belt" and includes Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and North Florida. Because of differences in lifestyle, race, smoking habits and diet, stroke mortality is at least 10% above the national rate.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

A stroke is a medical emergency that requires immediate attention. If you experience any signs or symptoms, go directly to an emergency room or call 911.

The UF Health Comprehensive Stroke Program works with multiple county EMS services and can mobilize around the clock to diagnose and stabilize stroke patients, minimizing the risk of permanent disability and preserving quality of life. Our program has received accreditation from the Agency for Health Care Administration as a Comprehensive Stroke Center. Visit UFHealthJax.org/stroke to learn more.

Veterans Employee Resource Group

Supporting Our Veterans

Employees who are veterans, family members of veterans and supporters of our military are welcome to join the Veterans Employee Resource Group, or VERG, at UF Health Jacksonville. The mission of the VERG is to provide veterans and current military service members with valuable information, educational opportunities, guidance and benefits that will enable each veteran to achieve their highest career aspirations and actively support community involvement.

The VERG also supports patients admitted to the hospital who are veterans by visiting them and honoring their service to our country. Each veteran is presented with a flag representing their line of service, such as Army, Navy, Coast Guard, etc. and a special certificate.

Monthly Meetings

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of each month from 12 to 1 p.m. in the Coleman Room located on the 10th floor of Tower II at UF Health Jacksonville.

Special Events

In addition to monthly meetings, the VERG also hosts special events throughout the year, such as the annual Veterans Day event in November at UF Health Jacksonville. They also share community events and opportunities with members.

Volunteer Opportunities

Being a part of the VERG offers employees a chance to volunteer and get involved in the local community. One major volunteer initiative the VERG supports is the Watch Stander Program run by The Fire Watch, a nonprofit organization focused on ending veteran suicides. The Watch Stander Program mobilizes 10,000+ community members to be vigilant to the concerns of veterans and to direct them to the support they need. UF Health Jacksonville regularly holds training sessions to certify employees to become official “watch standers.”

Recently, the VERG was designated as Veterans Safe Place by The Fire Watch for exceeding more than 50 members who were trained as watch standers.

If you are interested in joining the VERG or becoming a watch stander, please email VeteransERG@jax.ufl.edu.



From top to bottom: The Veterans Employee Resource Group meets the second Tuesday of each month; VERG members attended the 2023 Memorial Day service hosted by the city of Jacksonville; From L to R: Ann-Marie Knight, VP of community engagement and chief diversity officer at UF Health Jacksonville; Mo Bijani, VERG chair; Thanh Hogan, VP of clinical operations at UF Health Jacksonville; Derek Collins, the regional program director for The Fire Watch.



REHABILITATION PROGRAM FOR MOBILITY DISORDERS

By Wes Taff

Helping patients with mobility disorders get back into the swing of things.

The UF Health Jacksonville Neurology and Rehabilitation departments offer a specialized golf and exercise program designed for individuals with Parkinson's disease, tremor and other movement disorders. The program is the first of its kind in the region and addresses symptoms of balance difficulty, tremor, incoordination, stiffness and slower movement, which can limit participation in recreational activities.

A team of board-certified neurologists, physical therapists and experienced golf instructors have designed the six-week program to incorporate both golf-related and neurological rehabilitation for a fun and effective treatment approach. The goal of this program is to improve mobility, overall golfing performance, quality of life and participation in one's favorite sport.

"We help with those big, rotational movements that are involved in golf, so that people can get better at their game," said Sara Young, PT, DPT, OCS, a UF Health Jacksonville physical therapist. Young is a former collegiate golfer who played Division I golf at Florida State University, where she won the MVP team award her senior year. She is also a two-time PGA Minority Women's Golf national champion. Young is Titleist Performance Institute certified and has been instructing adult and junior golfers for years.

A netted turf area and ceiling harness system offer a safe and therapeutic environment, while devices such as a golf launch monitor help gauge changes in golf skills by measuring swing, speed and angle. This helps in determining if a patient's mobility is progressing or declining.

"In our golf program, we specifically work with lack of arm swing and difficulty with trunk rotation, among other things," said Heather Barksdale, PT, DPT, NCS, MSCS, a UF Health Jacksonville physical therapist who specializes in adult patients with neurological deficits.

For golfers with Parkinson's disease, tremor and other movement disorders, optimizing performance also means taking

advantage of leading-edge treatments, such as medications, as well as deep brain stimulation.

Joseph Legacy, MD, a UF Health Jacksonville neurologist, has specializes in movement disorder and neurology. Legacy is also a former Division I collegiate golfer who attended Loyola Marymount University on an athletic scholarship, where he was the men's golf team captain for two seasons.

"Our program is aimed at addressing the most common symptoms often seen in these individuals, such as tremor, balance difficulty and incoordination, stiffness and slowed movement," said Legacy.

"Our physicians and therapists at UF Health Jacksonville are subspecialists who can individualize care to your needs in order to help you get back on the course, and stay on the course as long as possible," said Ramon Bautista, MD, chair of the department of neurology at the UF College of Medicine – Jacksonville and the Phyllis Sohn endowed chair in neuroscience. "Golf is one of the major recreational activities in Northeast Florida. As a leading academic health center, our team will be at the forefront of developing best practices to help golfers with Parkinson's disease continue to enjoy the game they love to the fullest extent."

The golf rehabilitation program for mobility disorders started in December 2022. Three patients have completed the program, five are currently enrolled, and another five patients are waiting for their evaluation approval before they can begin the program.

"Emerging research shows golf has a large, measurable benefit on quality of life, movement coordination and balance, and helps reduce fall risk in Parkinson's patients," said Young.

Visit UFHealthJax.org/rehab to learn more, or call 904.427.8900 to schedule an appointment. A physical therapy referral is required for participation.

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NEWSLETTER DEADLINES

September/October: July 1
November/December: Sept. 1
January 2023: Oct. 1

Submit your copy and photos via
email to **openlines@jax.ufl.edu**.

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