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CAPE FEAR VALLEY
HOKE HOSPITAL
After years of planning, months of construction and weeks of moving in furniture and equipment, Cape Fear Valley’s Hoke Healthcare hospital opened to patients March 9, 2015, marking the start of a new era in Hoke County: For the first time, residents can choose to stay in the county for hospital care and have a choice of which hospital they prefer to visit.

FirstHealth of the Carolinas Moore Regional Hospital – Hoke campus opened in October 2013. Cape Fear Valley’s 41-bed inpatient hospital came online about a year and a half later.

Local medical practitioners we spoke with agreed: it’s more convenient for their patients to have access to a hospital in the county where they can seek advanced care, instead of having to go out of the county for additional tests, planned surgical procedures or to visit a specialist.

And anyone who’s been in a car accident or otherwise needed emergency treatment since the hospitals opened has been able to get to an emergency room without the half-hour race in busy traffic to Cumberland County or Moore County.

How the hospitals will continue to impact the health of Hoke residents – and the local economic climate, as businesses move in to the areas around the hospitals on Highway 401 – remains to be seen. What’s certain is that in the coming years, a new generation of Hoke natives will grow up with Cape Fear Valley Hoke Healthcare and FirstHealth of the Carolinas Moore Regional – Hoke campus ready and waiting to serve their needs.
Heart disease and cancer are the two biggest killers in Hoke County, according to a 2015 study conducted by community health educator Ulva Little of the health department.

The yearly study conducted by the health department provides some information about common health problems in the county, which gives officials an idea what they need to focus on.

The study looks at which illnesses are most likely to be fatal in Hoke County residents. Over the last year, heart disease was the number one killer among the population, while all types of cancer combined came in second. Lung cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, kidney disease, prostate cancer and Alzheimer’s disease also topped the list.

Efforts to educate people about diabetes and programs meant to help them manage the disease long-term appear to have helped in the last several years, as diabetes is dropping lower on the list.

“Diabetes is still in our top 10 causes, but it’s further down the list,” Little said.

The health department continues to focus on the prevention of diabetes, heart disease, sexually transmitted diseases, hypertension and obesity. However, the department also hopes to work on supporting other areas including men’s health, aging, Alzheimer’s and mental health.

“We will try to include more areas of cancer, as cancer is increasing in our population,” Little said.

Additionally, Hoke County is currently ranked number 23 in the state for teen pregnancy.

“The last couple of years, it’s been going up and down like a see-saw,” Little said. Officials haven’t yet figured out why they’re seeing big fluctuations in the teen pregnancy rate from year to year, as Hoke’s ranking has jumped higher and fallen lower over the last several years.

Every few years, the county department performs a more extensive health survey that reveals in greater detail the health of its citizens and what problems they most commonly suffer from. The health department will conduct the next intensive survey in 2016.

According to data from health tracking firm healthdata.org, the life expectancy for women in Hoke County is 78, below the state and national average of 80 and 81, respectively. The average life expectancy for men in Hoke County is also a few years below the state and national average, registering at 73 while the state average is 75 and the national average life expectancy for men is 76.

### Hoke Health Department affects thousands each day

The employees of the Hoke County Health Department touch the lives of thousands of people every day, even if most of those people don’t realize it.

Every time someone steps into a restaurant in Hoke, an environmental health inspector has been there first. When a child gets ready to jump into a public swimming pool, a health department official has checked the water quality. People are protected from communicable diseases like tuberculosis thanks to the testing and quick response from health departments, and if something goes wrong in a community – like the outbreak of Legionnaire’s disease at a local rest home last year – the department is on the ball to stop the spread of disease.

Every day is a busy one at the Hoke County Health Department, Director Helene Edwards said.

“We are a full-service health department,” she said. “We have maternity services, we have family planning, we have BCCCP, which is a breast and cervical cancer program. We have an STI and communicable disease program, we have health education, we have nutrition services which is WIC as well as medical nutrition therapy, and we have primary care which is a program funded by the county that provides services for adults 18 and older.”

From preventative care to health education to environmental health and more, the department’s offices work together to protect and improve the health of Hoke County’s citizens.

The department is credited through Blue Cross Blue Shield and Medcross insurance, and is working on getting the credentials for FirstHealth of the Carolinas insurance so people can visit the department without being out of network, Edwards said. The office also accepts a variety of other types of insurance including Medicaid and Medicare. Additionally, it has people on hand to help clients apply for health insurance coverage.

The department tries to keep costs down as much as possible and also offers payment plans for people on a tight budget.

Most people know the department best for the services it provides for individuals, like routine vaccinations, check-ups and physicals for work or school. Thanks to an agreement with the county commission, the department provides primary services for all county employees, Edwards said.

But that’s far from all the services the department provides.
With thousands of active-duty and retired military veterans in Hoke County, veterans' health needs are an important part of the local healthcare scene.

Veterans stand in honor during a Veterans Day service at the county courthouse.

Hoke County Health Department Services

“People Caring For People”

CHILD HEALTH CLINIC: Well baby check-ups and well child care from birth up to age 21 years.

Health Check program: Available for Medicaid recipients and provides well child check-ups, screenings and dental care for children from birth to age 21 years.

Teen-Time: Teen-Time is a Hoke County Health Department sponsored program to provide teen friendly healthcare services offered to teens between 11-19 years of age.

IMMUNIZATION CLINIC: Immunizations are available for children and adults.

Care Coordinator For Children: CC4C helps Children ages 0-5. May qualify for help with finding medical and child care.

FAMILY PLANNING CLINIC: Program Funded By Title X “Be Smart” Family Planning Medicaid Waiver available.

- Annual physicals
- Birth control methods
- Reproductive health counseling for males and females

The North Carolina Breast and Cervical Cancer Control Program (NC BCCCP) provides free or low-cost breast and cervical cancer screenings and follow-up to eligible women in North Carolina. (910) 875-3717 Ext: 2109

PRIMARY CARE CLINIC:

- Health screening & physicals for adult males and females
- Blood Pressure
- Cholesterol
- Blood Sugar

Diabetes Self-Management: Diabetes education helps individuals with diabetes learn how to manage their disease and be as healthy as possible. We offer discounted fees that are based on household income and sliding scale fee.

WOMEN, INFANTS & CHILDREN (WIC): WIC

Program: Provides supplemental food and nutrition education to pregnant & postpartum women and children 0-5 years of age.

NUTRITION EDUCATION/ SUPPLEMENTAL FOODS

Breastfeeding Peer Counselor Program

- Provide information, encouragement and support to new mothers who are breastfeeding
- Offers an essential component to assuring the success of breastfeeding

Medical Nutrition Therapy (MNT)

- Intensive nutritional counseling for high risk infants, children and adults.
- Designed to improve the health and quality of life of the patients/clients.
- Appointment Only

For more information call (910) 875-2298.

MATERNAL HEALTH CARE: A service provided to eligible new mothers. Medicaid accepted.

Care provided through Cape Fear Valley OB/GYN Postpartum Newborn Home Visits: A service for mothers and their babies that promotes health families.

Pregnancy Care Management Program: Supports families with finding medical and child care.

Childbirth Education Classes: Provides information to pregnant mothers and their partners that promote healthier labor and birth experiences. (910) 875-3717 Ext: 2104

HEALTH & WELLNESS PROGRAMS:

Diabetes Support Group: One of the most common reasons people seek out a diabetes support group is to be with people who understand what it is like to live with or care for someone who has diabetes.

Diabetes Prevention Program DPP: Is an ADE & CDC approved program designed to reduce/ prevent Diabetes in people who are at high risk of becoming a Diabetic. For more information call (910) 875-229 Ext: 2131.

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Cardiovascular issues can also become a problem for veterans.

“One of the prevailing health issues that quite a few of the veterans are having now as they come out, a lot of them are having issues with PTSD,” Halliburton said.

What was once called “shell shock” is now better understood as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a stress reaction to traumatic events that can leave a soldier suffering from flashbacks, irritability, depression and other symptoms.

There’s a shortage of mental health services in Hoke County capable of treating these issues, Halliburton said.

“Right now, we’re sending them to the vet center in Fayetteville on Robeson Street,” he said.

Traumatic brain injury, or TBI, is another severe issue that veterans have to deal with.

“Especially the guys who’ve gone to Afghanistan with all the IUDs blowing up all over the place, so they got banged up in the tanks or the trucks and they get thrown all over the place, and there’s a large percentage of them who have TBI,” he said.

The physical wear and tear of military service is also taking a toll on soldiers’ bodies. Back and joint pain is a common complaint from newly retired veterans, Halliburton said.

“A lot of guys are coming out with skeletal issues, muscular-skeletal issues,” he said.

What makes it worse is that, as soldiers transition from the extremely active lifestyle of the military to the more sedentary civilian lifestyle, the change in physical activity can exacerbate the issue.

“They start getting muscle strains and knee aches and ankles and shoulders and all, and a lot of them are getting claims for that kind of stuff,” Halliburton said. That makes access to neurological care also high on the list for veterans’ health needs.

Cardiovascular issues can also become a problem for veterans.

“I go see a neurologist because of my heart condition,” Halliburton added. He has to travel to Moore County to see the specialist, the VSO said.

Combat veterans who deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan, paratroopers and soldiers who worked with munitions, all often have problems with hearing loss or tinnitus, which is a constant ringing in the ears caused by exposure to very loud noises.

“One of that is associated with them jumping out of airplanes, especially Airborne people because they’ve been jumping out of airplanes a lot and they’ve been standing at that airplane door with that wind rushing through there,” Halliburton said. “There’s a lot of field artillery people in this area, they’ve got hearing loss. They all have fire weapons on the left or right side so there’s a lot of that there, too.”

The issues Halliburton sees among local veterans are fairly consistent with the health issues the Veterans Affairs office is seeing in general.

Fortunately, the new Veterans Affairs hospital being opened just across the county line on Raeford Road in Fayetteville should help take some of the pressure off of (See VETERANS, page 6)
Veterans

(Continued from page 5) crowded waiting rooms and overbooked doctors.

“With the veterans clinic, the VA hospital clinic being opened, that’s going to help,” Halliburton said. “That’s in Cumberland County, but that facility is there to serve everybody in this area. But there is a need for psychiatric service.”

Women vets suffer the same kind of health concerns as male veterans, and sometimes have specific issues of their own, Halliburton said. He also occasionally sees veterans, both male and female, who are suffering from sexual trauma.

As the VSO, Halliburton also sees older veterans who served in prior conflicts in years past. Vietnam veterans in particular are at an age where they’re beginning to suffer from health ailments related to age, and some still suffer from problems that started when they were in the service.

“There are quite a few of them. All those Agent Orange, Vietnam veterans, they’re my age, in their 60s, mid-60s, 70s,” Halliburton said. “A lot of them have some Agent Orange and PTSD issues going on. TBI issues, loss of use of their legs because of gunshot wounds and things of that sort. I get quite a few claims from Vietnam veterans.”

There are also a number of World War II and Korea veterans living in the county as well as veterans of the more recent wars, he said.

Overall, the need for counseling and psychiatric services and neurological care is the most pressing issue in Hoke County in terms of veterans’ healthcare, Halliburton said.

“I would like for there to be a little bit more psychological service for them. For them to go all the way to the vet center in Fayetteville to make an appointment…a lot of these guys, they need service right here with the TBI,” he said. “Most of them are going to counseling in Moore County.”

The new Fayetteville VA Heath Center is too new for its impact to be immediately clear, but Halliburton said he’s hopeful it will benefit local veterans.

“It’s going to make some things easier for them, because all those clinics that have been outsourced from the VA hospital are now going to the one right up here. That’s closer, that’s going to be a good convenience for them,” he said.

The new center opened November 3. The 250,000-square-foot facility now houses most of the outpatient services that were previously located on Ramsey Street or at the Village Green and Breezewood clinics, according to the Department of Veterans Affairs. Primary care, mental health, outpatient specialty care and an ambulatory surgery center are housed at the center, located at 7300 South Raeford Road, about 12 miles from Raeford.

The Fayetteville VA Medical Center on Ramsey Street will still be in operation, but will mostly be used for inpatient services, an urgent care center and a few outpatient programs including dentistry and oncology.
resources of large group to Raeford

Longtime Raeford residents might recognize a familiar face when they step into the office of Village Family Dental.

Dr. Lawrence Bullard, DDS has practiced dentistry in Hoke County since 1979, and these days he’s still helping people find their smiles as part of the Village Family Dental team.

“I have taken out a lot of teeth in my 36 years,” he said with a laugh.

The new office on Southern Avenue has been open a little over a year. Before then, the practice worked out of a building next door. Long before that, Bullard had his own independent practice. He joined the Village Family Dental practice four years ago when the business moved into the county.

Besides the Raeford location, Village Family Dental has offices in Fayetteville, Hope Mills, St. Pauls, Eastover and Laurinburg. The St. Pauls office was the very first one founded in 1985 by Dr. Michael Knowles. Later, prosthodontist Dr. Terrance Smith joined the practice.

Over a 30-year period, Village Family Dental has grown to include more than 35 practitioners in all areas of dentistry. Today, the office offers a wide range of dental services, from routine checkups and cleanings to oral surgery, prosthetic dentistry and endodontistry, which is a specialization that looks at oral health inside the tooth. A typical dentist might perform a few root canals a week, but an endodontist might perform two dozen a week.

The practice offers cleaning and fluoride treatments, oral cancer screenings, sealants, general dentistry, and prosthodontics like dentures, crowns and bridges, implants and therapy for people who suffer from temporomandibular joint disorders, better known as TMJ. Village Family Dental doctors can provide cosmetic dentistry, too, including teeth whitening, cosmetic bonding and porcelain veneers and crowns.

“All the services in dentistry are pretty much here,” Bullard said. The practice also has a strong focus on pediatric dentistry and employs specialist dentists who work solely with kids’ oral health.

“Village places a real big emphasis on pediatric dentistry. They have a lot of pediatric dentists and they cater to the little ones,” Bullard said.

Years ago, a child might get a toy if they behaved in the dentist’s chair. These days, it’s common for younger children to sleep through a trip to the dentist with the help of a sedative.

“It is a lot easier if the little ones are in never-never land,” Bullard said. “Normally, what they do is have a long appointment schedule and they do a lot of work in one appointment.”

When young children come in for dental work, they might get a cup of doctored Kool-Aid that knocks them out. That way it’s less stressful for the child and the dentist can take care of everything during one appointment.

“Lots of times, they like to do everything that needs to be done,” Bullard said.

The pediatric dentists also do hospitalization in the event a child patient has special surgical needs that require the resources of a hospital.

“If they’ve got a patient that needs to be completely out instead of just nitrous oxide and a pill, they’ll go to the hospital,” Bullard said. “All the pediatric dentists at Village Family Dental have hospitalization privileges.”

The surgeons who work on adults also have hospital privileges at area hospitals, he added.

Technological innovations are responsible for the biggest changes in the field of dentistry, Bullard said.

“High-tech, just like everything (See VILLAGE DENTAL, page 8)
Sandhills helps students get health

For Sandhills Community College student Kayonda Riggs, learning to be a pharmacy technician is not only a gateway to a new job, it’s also the first step in fulfilling a dream: becoming a doctor.

“I am studying to be a medical doctor and I had wanted something that could back that up, because you don’t automatically just get into the hospital. You have to go for years of medical training,” she said. “I felt like this will prepare me for the medical industry, being able to be in contact with patients and the medical field.”

Riggs, originally from Louisiana, is one of the students taking advantage of Sandhills Community College’s Hoke Center several Allied Health programs geared at people who want to find work in healthcare without going through a lengthy period of study first.

“All of them are short-term, six-month programs to allow individuals to be able to earn a credential, become equipped in order to acquire the skills that they need to go out in the workforce pretty much automatically,” Hoke Center Director Twana McKnight explained.

The local campus offers four programs: pharmacy technician, EKG technician, phlebotomy technician, and Nursing I.

Riggs was drawn to becoming a pharmacy technician because of the background experience it can give her that will help further her ultimate goal of becoming a physician. She became interested in medicine while studying for her bachelor’s degree, and hopes to eventually use her training to help others.

“Medicine has a great impact on the world,” she said. “It’s such a big scope, it’s part of everyday life.

Village Dental

(Continued from page 7) else,” he said. “Our office here is pretty much completely digital, paperless. We do digital x-rays, they’re stored. All the records are stored on computers and that’s way different than what I had.”

Each treatment room has a television that allows patients to see their x-rays in high definition. They’re also equipped for x-rays, and several are set up to allow for surgical procedures. The Village Family Dental office in Fayetteville additionally has access to high-tech 3D imaging that can give doctors a better idea of what’s going on, which is especially important when dealing with things like dental implants, Bullard said.

“You can get a different view of whatever structure you’re trying to view. …You want to get a 3D image of the width of the bone, and you can see it on that rather than a straightforward old x-ray film that’s one-dimensional,” he said. “It’s used for lots of things. It’s also used for diagnosing conditions that you just can’t see on a normal x-ray.”

The practice of dentistry itself hasn’t changed too much, although the technology has.

“A lot of the equipment we use nowadays is different from what I started out 36 years ago, but a lot of what we do is basically still the same,” he said. “We use the same drill, so to speak. A person comes in to have a tooth taken out, it’s still pretty much the same.”

The practice in Raeford doesn’t routinely perform I.V. sedation dentistry, which is becoming a more popular option for adults who are anxious about a trip to the dentist. However, they can offer pill sedation and the Village Family Dental office in Fayetteville does practice the I.V. sedation dentistry. Additionally, the oral surgeon who visits the Raeford practice each week can perform procedures that require I.V. sedation.

The oral surgeon rotates between offices. Dr. Joe Gliksman, DDS is the oral surgeon who visits Raeford, while Dr. Anthony Maiorana is the main surgeon at the Fayetteville office.

“They have a big surgical clinic in Fayetteville where they see most of the surgical patients,” Bullard said.

That’s one of the benefits of a practice like Village Family Dental, which has a variety of offices: each one can offer a different focus for the entire practice’s patient base without having to send them to a different company entirely for a specialized treatment or procedure.

Besides offering patient services, many of the doctors at Village Family Dental also volunteer to help people with dental problems who aren’t able to afford care through programs like the CARE clinic in Cumberland County and Missions of Mercy. Some have even gone on mission trips to Granada, Nicaragua in connection with the Cristo Sana program.

Village Family Dental is always accepting new patients, Bullard said.

For more information, visit the business website at www.vfdental.com or call the Raeford office at 875-4008. The office hours are Monday-Thursday from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. and Friday from 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
Health is something we appreciate from day-to-day.”

For pharmacy technician student Shirley Nash, originally from Montgomery County, a beloved family member’s personal struggle proved to be the inspiration that drove her to seek training in a medical career.

“My dad became very, very sick, and he was on so many medications he didn’t know he was taking. You have people taking medicine and they don’t even know what they’re taking, they don’t even know what it’s for,” Nash said.

She has a heart for the elderly, she said, and hopes to work with them to help them understand their medications and warn them about any possible drug interactions.

Individuals can sign up for the classes at the beginning of the semester. Some require prerequisites and an assessment before students are allowed to enroll, to make sure they have the skills needed to succeed in the program.

Pharmacy technicians are assistants who work in pharmacies to fill prescriptions under the guidance of a pharmacist. EKG technicians perform electrocardiograms, a test that measures the electrical activity of the heart. Phlebotomist technicians are trained at drawing blood for running blood tests. Students who complete the Nursing I program can go on to further study in nursing, or leave with a certification.

All of the programs are meant to help students learn the ropes quickly, earn their credential and go into the field. The programs require a high school diploma and a WorkKeys assessment, but no other specialized training.

The classes run from August until December and from January until May, and occasionally during the summer. All of them are face-to-face, not distance learning or digital learning, McKnight said.

“They have a huge hands-on component,” she said. “You have the instructional piece where the students are learning the theory behind and the concepts behind the actual course, and then you have the hands-on component, which leads into a clinical component, because they want to make sure the students have that exposure.”

It’s a combination of textbook learning and practical application that, put together, creates an intense learning experience for students. The program is challenging, Sandhills Community College professor Dr. Kim Kremer said.

“It’s not a one-year program or a two-year program, it’s a semester program. I am teaching pharmacy math and the medications and other parts of pharmacy,” the professor said. “It’s a lot, and trying to cram in to one semester, I have to really organize and make sure I’m putting my students out there. I have a huge responsibility.”

Kremer is a dedicated professor and the classes are intense, Nash said.

“She has taught me more than you can possibly imagine. I’ve worked in a pharmacy on the sales floor for almost 14 years, and I’ve learned more from her in these past few months than I did that whole time I was in that pharmacy,” she said.

While some of the students who take the classes are straight out of high school, many are “nontraditional” adults seeking to jumpstart a new career or rebuild their lives after an economy-related layoff. That’s part of the beauty of what Sandhills can offer these students, McKnight said. Many of them are able to take one class and become employed, and then, if they’re interested, pursue more health education opportunities and take their careers even further all while making sure the bills are paid.

The Nursing I class is also a prerequisite for anyone who seeks to pursue an associate’s degree.

Typically, anywhere from 15-24 students take the class each semester, McKnight said.

Besides the short-term programs offered at the Hoke campus, Sandhills Community College also offers longer health sciences programs at its campus in Pinehurst. The college has two-year associate’s degree programs in nursing, emergency medical science including the emergency medical technician (EMT) certificate, medical laboratory technology, polysomnography (sleep studies), radiography, respiratory therapy and surgical technology.

Something brand-new to Sandhills Community College is the ophthalmologist’s assistant program. The program is two years long, offered at the main campus in Pinehurst, and trains people to work in ophthalmologists’ offices.

“It’s fairly new to the college but we’re really trying hard to recruit students for that and get it up and running,” McKnight said.

The college administration currently doesn’t have plans to expand to add more medical courses at the Hoke campus, the director said, but added that it depends entirely on the needs of the community and the students.

“When we talk about developing programs, we really want to make sure that we’re mirroring the programs that the college is offering with the needs of the community,” she said. “We also want to make sure that, as these individuals graduate from these programs or complete these programs, there are jobs within the general vicinity for these individuals to find work.”

Many people would rather stay closer to home and will pursue training for jobs that they know are available in their area, McKnight said.

“It’s our job to make sure that we’re looking at labor statistics for our local area, looking at the labor market and making sure that whatever programs we decide to offer mirror the needs of the community,” she said.

Now that both of the hospitals are open, the college is developing relationships with them to hopefully be able to use them as clinical sites for students in training – and put them in touch with locals who leave the Sandhills programs ready to fill open positions.

“We’re trying to make sure that they’re aware of what we are offering and that we are aware of the needs that they have, and that as we have graduates and individuals that complete our programs, we can ensure that we can link them with the HR department at both of those hospitals,” McKnight said.

“Our job at Sandhills is to be able to provide education and training to individuals of Hoke County as well as Moore County in order to equip them with the skills that they need in order to go out and be able to obtain gainful employment.”

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(Continued from page 14)

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(Continued from page 14)
It’s gratifying to make children smile

Dr. Mark Griffies and his daughter, Brandy, both work at the family business Straighten-Up Orthodontics.

Dr. Mark Griffies and his team at Straighten-Up Orthodontics are able to help brighten the smiles of children and adults alike with a variety of techniques. With an on-site lab at the ready, the office is a one-stop shop for straighter teeth.

Stepping into Straighten-Up Orthodontics’ office on Birch Street is like walking into a hotel lobby. Customers are greeted by dark, polished wood, comfortable leather chairs and warm-toned artwork and wall murals painted by hand. It’s only the brushing sinks scattered throughout the office that give away its true purpose. One young patient coming to visit for the first time thought she’d wandered into the wrong place, Brandy Griffies said.

“Mom, this is somebody’s house!” she recalled the little girl saying.

Orthodontist Dr. John Griffies said while some people fear going to see a dentist, they don’t usually have the same fear about an orthodontist visit.

“It’s kind of a clean profession. You don’t have all of the filling material and the shots and all that stuff,” he said. “What’s nice about it is most people enjoy coming to see the orthodontist.”

Displayed in a place of honor is an appreciation board crammed to overflowing with thank-you notes, photos of people showing off their new smiles and other mementoes from patients. The practice has accumulated a lot of happy customers in its years of operating in Raeford. Since setting up shop in 2005, Griffies has added on to the facility twice, expanding the building to include more patient rooms and space for offices.

Mark Thompson, DDS, PA

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Straighten-Up Orthodontics is a family affair, with Griffies’s wife Janice running the office and their daughter Brandy also taking an active role in helping clients. They’re the ones who designed the look of the practice, Griffies said.

“She and Brandy, they can look at something and almost envision what it’s going to look like in the future. It’s almost like what an orthodontist does when you look at crooked teeth and envision what it’s going to look like with straight teeth,” he said.

All of the hand-painted murals in the building are Brandy’s work, her father added.

Griffies attended the University of Notre Dame as an undergraduate and earned his degree in dentistry from the Baylor College of Dentistry. He joined the military and received his certificate in orthodontics from the U.S. Army Orthodontic Training Program at Fort Meade.

He practiced dentistry with the military for over two decades and went on to teach others as an instructor for three Army Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery training programs at Fort Bragg. When he retired from the military in 2005, he was serving as orthodontic consultant to the Army Surgeon General.

Griffies and his wife founded the original Straighten-up Orthodontics in El Paso, Texas while living there. When he retired from active duty at Fort Bragg, it made sense for the family to set up shop in Raeford. Today, they operate the only dedicated orthodontics clinic in Hoke County.

The practice offers general orthodontic work and is able to fit braces for most people in-house. The staff can make nearly any of the customized equipment on-site.

“It’s been five years since I had to send anything out,” Griffies said. It’s part of a personalized experience that the office strives to offer its patients. Besides the office in Raeford, Straighten-up Orthodontics also has an office in Seven Lakes.

While most of the patients that Griffies sees tend to be children and teenagers, adults are increasingly seeking out braces to straighten their teeth.

“Most of who we treat are children, but I would bet you 20 percent we treat now are adults,” he said. “It’s working its way up.”

Even people in their 60s and 70s sometimes visit the office for care, not necessarily for straightening teeth cosmetically but because they need prosthetic dentistry and moving existing teeth around can make the prosthetics fit more easily.

Besides offering basic orthodontic treatment, the office can also perform surgical orthodontic procedures for people who need jaw surgery in addition to other corrective options. The team seeks to provide interdisciplinary care, meaning that if someone needs bridgework or replacement teeth, Griffies works with other dentists to make sure they have all the bases covered.

Besides working with patients, the Griffies have also volunteered with the Cleft Lip and Palate Association, performing dental work for children born with a cleft lip and palate. They volunteered at the Borders Children Clinic in Texas, providing care for those youngsters.

“Really, it became a passion for us both,” Griffies said.

Griffies said he knew early on that he wanted to go into practicing orthodontics for the chance to help others.

“You can make a dramatic difference in their lives. When someone comes in and they will not smile, particularly at that adolescent age, 13, 14 years old, because of the way their teeth look, and you can change their smile and they’ll be grinning from ear to ear when they walk out the door…that’s very gratifying,” he said.

Griffies said that he and his staff work hard to make the experience a pleasant one for their patients.

“The assistants and the staff are, bar none, the best you could ever have,” he said.

The practice serves about 550 patients in Raeford and is ready to provide orthodontic care for more. The office accepts new patients. For more information, call 878-5796 or visit the office’s website at http://www.drgriffies.com.
Dr. Jocelyn Mason knew she wanted to be a pediatrician even while she was still a child herself. “I’ve wanted to be a pediatrician since I was five years old,” she said. “I loved going to the doctor when I was a child. When I got ready to go to medical school, I just thought, I love working with children.”

Today, Mason is one of the team of doctors, nurses and other practitioners who make up the staff of Rainbow Pediatrics, a multi-office clinic that works to keep kids healthy from birth through their teenage years.

“We do routine healthcare for children from zero to 18 years old, and we also do sick care for our patients,” she said.

Dr. Taner Esensoy of Fayetteville founded the private practice in 2005. Rainbow Pediatrics celebrated its 10th anniversary earlier this year, and recently moved into a new office in the Sky Center building on Highway 401 next to the Paraclete XP indoor skydiving wind tunnel.

The Rainbow Pediatrics staff includes several doctors who have been named among America’s top pediatricians, including Esensoy and Dr. Shobha Shekhar. The staff has a variety of special medical interests, too. Dr. Janel Zacchilli has special interest in pediatric hematology and oncology as well as pediatric orthopedics, and the practice has an on-staff lactation consultant, Kelli Canady, who works with new mothers who are breastfeeding.

“We really recommend breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is best,” Mason said.

The office can start working with a pregnant mom before her due date so the baby has a pediatrician lined up before the infant even takes a first breath. They can teach expectant parents about important practices like putting a newborn to sleep on the child’s back to avoid the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), and coach parents on what to expect early on in their child’s life.

“It’s all part of giving youngsters the best possible start, Mason said, and she considers it a privilege.

“Being a pediatrician is a very rewarding job. It’s a privilege to take care of children,” she said. “I go to the hospital and see newborns, and I’m probably the third or fourth person to see this child, and have the privilege of seeing them and taking care of them, talking with their parents and being involved in their life from the beginning. I love that about pediatrics.”

The doctors often form a close bond with their young patients over the years.

“You start when they’re zero and you get to see them until they’re ready to go off to college, and it’s wonderful when you have patients that are going off to college and you’ve been taking care of them,” Mason said.

Mason attended the University of Maryland and earned her medical degree from Harvard Medical School in Boston, Massachusetts. She completed her residency in pediatrics at Vidant Medical Center in Greenville, North Carolina and served as chief resident and clinical faculty member at East Carolina University. Today, she’s a fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics and the North Carolina Pediatric Society.

The practice sees around 40 children a day, many of them from military families.

“We have a good number of kids where one of their parents is in the Armed Forces,” Mason said.

Typically, visits are for preventative care or for common childhood ailments, bumps and bruises. This time of year, the doctors are gearing up for flu season.

“We recommend every child come in and get a flu vaccine,” Mason said.

The office keeps the nasal mist flu vaccine on hand for needle-phobic kids and also carries the traditional injection vaccine.

The doctors also work with families to manage chronic issues like asthma and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

The kids-only medical practice is geared at making going to the doctor a good experience for children. From the child-sized chairs in the waiting room to the playful artwork and murals painted on the walls and even exam tables decorated to look like racecars, the Raeford office is full of bright colors to capture little ones’ attention.

Besides the office in Raeford, Rainbow Pediatrics also has offices in Fayetteville, Hope Mills and Dunn. The practice offers walk-in hours daily during the week and on Saturday for current patients who come down with a cold and need to be seen, and can provide typical routine care like vaccinations, sports physicals and asthma management.

The practice is accepting new patients. For more information, visit http://www.rainbowpeds.net or call 904-0404.
Health Department

Hoke County’s Health Department is a huge entity that not only offers preventative care one-on-one at the clinic in Raeford but also houses offices that do everything from inspecting food safety at restaurants to making sure children aren’t exposed to lead in their homes.

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including the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program that strives to make sure all babies get a healthy start in life.

Part of her job involves newborns’ nutritional needs. Doctors support breastfeeding as the healthiest option for newborns and infants, but not every new mother has another woman in her life she can turn to for advice about breastfeeding, Stafford said.

“When we feel like a lot of people fall off is they try, they don’t do well, they go home and their support people at home say, give up, do well, they go home and their people fall off is they try, they don’t,” Stafford said.

To encourage women to breast-feed their children, the department employs a lactation peer counselor. The peer counselor, Sha’vagas Cobb, is a new addition to the department, and works with breastfeeding coordinator Theresa Lloyd to provide support and advice for women who are struggling with feeding their babies.

“It promotes having a healthier child that has the same immunities the mother has. Less ear infections, things like that growing up,” Stafford said. “Less tummy issues, less colickyness. We see better growth and development with those kids, too.”

Stafford also oversees nutritional programs for adults that help them manage their diets. The department’s diabetes prevention program is one big piece that fits into that puzzle.

“Diabetes is very expensive and once you have it, it does progress throughout your life and more than likely, if you have it for a long period of time, you’re going to develop the complications of it,” she said.

The American Academy of Diabetes Educators and the Centers for Disease Control developed the diabetes management and prevention programs offered at the department. The program is meant to help adults who have pre-diabetes learn to better their condition through good eating and exercising habits. Patients must be referred to the program by their doctor but can always call the department and ask for the department to get their doctor’s referral if they’re interested in taking part in it, Stafford said.

For people who already have diabetes, the department offers a management program that’s been running for four years now. The program includes a class that teaches management practices and other good health habits.

“We’re trying some different things to get people coming,” Edwards said.

Additionally, Stafford works to advise people on their diets. She sees adults for weight management, and also sees many children who have food allergies, food sensitivities or gastrointestinal concerns that need the guidance of a dietician.

Environmental Health

Jeff Eudy serves as Environmental Health Programs Coordinator, and even though he and his staff work out of a different building, they are still technically under the Health Department’s umbrella.

Eudy and his three-person team of Roland Little, Erik Johnson and Dawn Wilkie are tasked with enforcing state laws on everything from restaurant food preparation to septic systems. The inspectors spend most of their time in the field to conduct safety checks and, where necessary, let business owners and homeowners know when something’s wrong and must be corrected.

With the population boom in the area over the last years, it’s made their job even more hectic.

“Hoke County is a very fast-growing county. In 2012, we were ranked eighth fastest-growing in the U.S.,” Eudy said. “We do 500 inspections per year through the lodging program. … Anyone building a house with a septic system, building a daycare, school, anything like that, they have to come through us.”

The department inspects all restaurants in the county – even the hospital cafeterias – and posts the results so customers can see the eatery’s letter grade and decide whether or not to eat there. The results are also available online at http://hoke.nc.gov.com/links/cfm.

Inspectors also visit all school lunchrooms four times a year, and are even tasked with checking on any tattoo artist parlors. (The county had three tattoo artists a few years ago, Eudy said, but all of them have moved on to other counties.)

More rarely, the office also has to investigate a child’s exposure to lead in the home. Some old homes still have lead paint, and some window mini-blinds made in other countries contain enough traces of lead to make a child sick from lead poisoning. If a routine blood test reveals a child’s lead levels are abnormally high, Eudy may get called in to try and figure out where the exposure is coming from.

Public Health

Cynthia Morton, MPH, BSN, RN supervises a team of nurses at the health department who work with patients on everything from routine tuberculosis testing required for job placement to family planning and sexually transmitted disease screenings.

The nursing and lab staff members at the department include Melissa Baxley, Ellen Chavis, Cheryl Williams and Shawanna James. They’re the ones that most patients visiting the department for a TB skin test, flu shot, routine vaccination for their child or appointment for a cervical cancer screening will work with.

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helping children be healthy and happy.

The CC4C Care Coordination for Children services are free for children from birth to five years old and is meant to target kids who have long-term medical conditions, are referred by a doctor or are dealing with challenging levels of stress, such as in the case of a child living in foster care.

The CC4C program assigns a case manager to perform home visits, arrange doctors’ appointments, visit the doctor with the family and child and work with the family to refer them to community resources to meet the child’s needs.

It’s all about protecting vulnerable children and making sure parents have support and education about their child’s development and health, Porreco said.

“Any child that gets referred, whether they have private insurance or no insurance, we have an obligation to get them the services they need,” she said. Right now, the department works with between 300-400 children a month on average who are part of the CC4C program.

Porreco also works with expectant mothers, whether they’re uninsured, on Medicaid pregnancy care or have private insurance and need to be followed more closely due to a risk factor.

“There are priority risk factors associated with that. Not every woman will be followed. Smokers or people who were smoking when they got pregnant, any indication of domestic violence, substance abuse, history of mental illness, history of pre-term delivers, late entry into prenatal care, short time between previous pregnancy and current pregnancy, chronic illness…all sorts of things,” she explained. “Our goal is for healthy mommies and healthy babies, and if anybody has a priority risk factor, then the doctor needs to get that to us.”

The department also works with mothers who suffer from postpartum depression, but the team sometimes has a hard time getting women back in for their appointments after they give birth, Morton said.

“Women are not understanding the importance of the postpartum visit. We’re running into lately a lot of women who are not showing up for their postpartum,” she said. That puts women and babies at danger for a variety of reasons, she said.

To try and make sure they can follow each patient after they give birth, Morton also conducts postpartum home visits for newborns.

“I talk a lot about development at that visit, and they can call themselves and say they want a postpartum home visit,” she said. “And I’ll take a little bib or something, a gift.”

Teens and other programs

The department offers many more programs and services for people of all ages, according to health educator Ulva Little-Bennett and Cornelia Murchison.

The Teen Time program, a clinic just for teenagers, is held the first and third Monday of each month from 4-7 p.m. at the health department. Teen Time allows teenagers a chance to participate in self-empowerment and nutrition classes, get screened for communicable diseases, drop in if they’re not feeling well and need a sick visit, or if they need reproductive healthcare, annual physicals for sports or immunizations before going off to college.

In conjunction with Hoke High School, the department also offers the Baby Think It Over program, which issues each teen an electronic baby doll that not only behaves like a real child but also records how long it takes the teen parent to respond when the baby cries.

For more information on any of the programs the Health Department offers, contact the department at 875-3717.
Hoke Family Medical Center
For more than 14 years, Hoke Family Medical Center has provided medical care to families in downtown Raeford. For your convenience, Hoke Family Medical Center offers on-site lab.

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