

## WellSpring Recovery Center celebrates remaining infection-free

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent  
Friday, 12 June 2020 07:06

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### **‘It’s a team effort’**

The WellSpring Recovery Center has had to deal with a double whammy of treating patients who come in for drug and alcohol addiction recovery, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic that has disrupted life throughout the world.

But so far, they have been up to that challenge, Bill Camarota, special projects and safety officer at WellSpring said. The center wanted to celebrate its staff and patients remaining infection-free as of May 29, since the pandemic hit the region.

“We jumped into action and put our protocols together to protect our staff and the patients,” Camarota said. “It definitely was a team effort.”

The in-patient population, which Camarota said is 55 as of May 29, is what made WellSpring staff jump into action more quickly and make safety measures tighter, he added.

“We set up a contained screening area in the front and have a one-way access into the building. We’ve been doing temperature and oxygen readings,” he said.

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These readings are done for the staff, as well as for the patients.

Lynette Martinez, clinical director for WellSpring, said the safety measures included setting up a quarantine area for new patients coming in.

“They have to get tested prior to being admitted. Then they await their results which take about three to five days to clear,” she said. “This ensures us the individuals we’re bringing into [the] program are negative [for COVID-19].”

Camarota said the center ensures safety for its staff by having them wear full personal protective equipment during the intake process in a screening area that is separate from the rest of the center’s occupants. Then a COVID test is performed, where they have separate isolation units for both male and female patients.

Patients are not admitted into WellSpring until the results show they are able to enter, which means they have tested negative.

“If the COVID test comes back positive, we call transportation in the city that’s been set up for transportation and we get them down to the hotels, where they can receive doctor or nurse care, food, and so on,” Camarota said.

When WellSpring had its entire staff tested for COVID-19 back in March, everyone’s results came back negative. Camarota credits the results to the actions the staff already takes because of their work.

“I attribute that outcome to the fact that we function with dealing with unpredictability,” he said. “We’re used to dealing with things we can’t see, and now we’re all fighting something we can’t see to protect the population and staff.”

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Camarota said the contributions to and from Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services, as well as the rest of the local community, have played a role in keeping staff and patients safe, which is why he affirms it has been a team effort.

“We stay serious about this every day. If we see things that might show the measures are loosening up, we tighten it back up,” he said.

Bernice Martinez, operations director for WellSpring, said the staff has adjusted to this new normal and continues to heed the rules.

“We put out memos to all the staff. We stress the importance of staying home and coming to work safely,” she said. “They’ve abided by that, which is what’s keeping this place safe for this long.”

Camarota said the staff is also told to be as careful in public as they are at work, because of the services they provide.

“We’ve changed our entire lives around to not only follow rules in the city, but to go to (sic) the extra mile because of where we go and what we do,” he said. “We’re proud of how we’ve kept it, how seriously we take it. We stay concerned about it every day.”

But while they have done their part educating staff on the right steps to take, Camarota said the patients have also been doing their part to cooperate.

“We were forced to put certain procedures in place, which means we have to stop visits, stop certain drop offs, because we didn’t know how we could disinfect some stuff,” he said.

“The patients are going through a tough time already, and to be going through it during a crisis is tougher. We’ve had to combat fear, stress, and keep our staff and clients tight,” Camarota added.

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Bernice Martinez said the weekend visits to patients by family and friends have been changed into phone calls, but the patients have adjusted to those as well.

“They’re really good about it and they’re going along with whatever changes we put in place,” she said.

Lynette Martinez said it’s important to note WellSpring is still open for business and looking to help people struggling with addiction.

“We’re still open, we’re still in the healing business,” Camarota said.

By Cody Begaye  
Sun Correspondent