Gallup resident Don Holland attributes his 86 years of relatively good health to the Rehoboth McKinley Christian Health Care Services Wellness Center where he works out most mornings from 8:30 am to 11 am. He enjoys the comforts of the new facility such as the numerous workout machines, space to exercise and natural lighting.

“The old building was okay, but it was small and crowded,” said Holland, whose nickname was “Roadrunner” at the original facility where he could run from machine to machine. “Now this place is like state of art with tons of equipment and you don’t have to be Arnold Schwarzenegger to come here. The body is a complex machine and has to be kept in good shape for a long, healthy life.”

Holland began his association with the center when it was in its original, smaller home, a former kidney dialysis center where Holland went for rehab treatment after suffering from West Nile disease he contracted for mosquitoes while campaign at Navajo Lake.

The former IBM engineer who retired in 1995 attributed his walking with a walking stick and not needing a wheelchair to a workout routine of lifting 80 pounds of free weights, 30 minutes on an exercise bike and using a workout station with several pieces of equipment. He also uses hand weights along with leg and arm body strengthening equipment.

Hundreds of Residents Benefit

Holland is just one of hundreds of area residents that rely on the RMCHCS Wellness Center as part of its healthcare outreach to Gallup residents, one of the services the hospital employs in its ongoing effort to provide residents with healthy lifestyle choices, most of which are free to area residents.

The center is a regional therapy center unique in its offering as the only therapy facility in the Gallup area providing three types of care occupational, speech and physical therapy.

The Wellness Center can receive up to 7,000 patient visits per year, receiving referrals from wound centers, orthopedists and other specialized treatments, even rare diseases. Residents are treated for occupational injuries, strokes, sports ailments and accidents. The center provides three physical therapists, two physical therapy assistants, two occupational therapists and three speech language pathologists.

The center also houses the physical activity component of RMCHCS's Diabetes Prevention Services, a five-year funded grant program. The 1.6 million-dollar center was built with funds raised from a two-year effort through the hospital's fund-raising arm, the Western Health Foundation.

"Situated in a former kidney dialysis building, the Wellness Center is a state-of-the-art facility, which complies with the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services' line-of-sight standards that emphasize patient safety in rehab settings. Our top floor is 9,200 square feet with therapy offices that look out over the clinic along with numerous windows and a centered skylight that illuminates the building with natural light," Greg Kirk, director of the Wellness Center, said.

Community Center

In addition to traditional medical treatments, the center takes on the persona of a community center. The two-story facility offers rehab services on its top floor while the bottom-floor serves as a 24/7 hospital employee fitness center.

The gym also operates the “Silver Sneaker” aftercare program where community members who no longer require formal therapy treatment can continue using the gym to practice a healthy lifestyle at no charge.

Fitness classes are conducted in the mornings and evenings.

There is also a “teaching kitchen” designed for cooking demonstrations and space to provide healthy choices in a simulated grocery store setting, blood drawings and more.

In addition to the center’s medical wellness outreach, it also reaches out to the community in other ways.

The center partners with the Big Brothers Big Sisters organization by mentoring local youth. It also fixes up old bicycles for the local Boys and Girls Club, which not only provides youths with recreation but reinforces the center’s goal of wellness care by enabling the city’s kids to take advantage of Gallup’s numerous rocky terrains with a fleet of mountain bikes.

Holland WARDS Off Aging

“You know, it’s a shame more people don’t come here,” said Holland, who finds the center is filled with friendly people who encourage each other in their pursuit of health. “A lot of people become workout buddies and from there build strong friendships, almost a giant family. It is

important for older people not to get lazy. Many people who were muscular when they were younger don’t stay in shape and the muscle turns to flab. You need to get your muscles back, so your immune system stays strong. Obesity can turn to diabetes and you don’t want that. I plan to be around to see the future.”

By William Madaras

Glass Lantern PR