story cover story

united homecare and sunshine health collaborate

Rebeca C. Trujillo

What began as an in-house project to solve the ever-increasing demand for one company's services during the pandemic has flourished into a burgeoning collaboration between two South Florida healthcare providers seeking to address a shared —and most compelling—need.

Indeed, United HomeCare® (UHC), a Miami-based, 501 (C)(3) non-profit, community-based home health agency, and Sunshine Health (SH), a wholly owned subsidiary of Centene Corporation, one of the largest healthcare plans in Florida, joined forces earlier this year to expand UHC's Learn & Work™ Program as a means to alleviate the escalating shortage of skilled Home Health Aides (HHA) in the area.

As Roger Lopez, Chief Operating Officer at United HomeCare, and Nelson L. Adams III, M.D., Chairman of the Board of Sunshine Health, announced at a recent press conference in Sunshine Health's Lauderhill Center, the joint effort has been making substantial headway, surpassing expectations with more than 100 students graduating from the program so far.

it's not about "me." it's about "we."

Held at a large conference room in Sunshine Health's Lauderhill center, the press conference included the students engaged in the latest Learn & Work™ Program cycle. As he addressed the audience, Dr. Adams spoke to them directly, focusing on the significance of their participation



From left: Bridget Smith, Director of Case Management, Sunshine Health; Dr. Rudolph "Rudy" Moise, founder and Medical Director, Comprehensive Medical Aesthetics in Miami, and member of United HomeCare's Board of Directors; Roger Lopez, COO, United HomeCare; Dr. Nelson L. Adams, Chairman of the Board, Sunshine Health, and Ann Marie Hinds, MSN ARNP-BC, Learn & Work™ Program Instructor.

in the program.

"The thing that resonates with me is something that doesn't come back: a missed opportunity," he said. "You, soon-to-be-graduates, didn't miss this opportunity. To do what? I'm glad you asked. To serve. To help somebody."

His inspirational speech continued to touch the students, as he emphasized the magnitude of the care the students will be providing, especially to the elderly, upon their successful completion of the program.

"It is not about 'me.' It's about 'we.' The folks at United HomeCare get it. The folks at Sunshine Health get it, too. No man, no woman, no institution is an island. We can't do this work by ourselves. We need

each other. And the long and short of it is that as we age, we need help."

"The focus of the work you will be doing," Dr. Adams added, "is to help those who have more runway behind them than ahead. And I'm here to do one thing and one thing only, and that is to thank you for recognizing that you are the ones we've been waiting for."

an opportunity not to be missed

The individuals participating in the Learn & Work™ Program acknowledge that they are experiencing a highly advantageous opportunity, a double boon that could dramatically transform their lives: first, the prospect to be trained for skills that are in

for a better south florida

high demand in this market —and for that fact, throughout the country—, and secondly, having a job at United HomeCare upon graduation.

Such is the case of Pascale Raymonds, who is fluent in English, Spanish and Creole, as well as Hernan Saenz Lozada and Rosani Irias, who are proficient in English and Spanish.

these new skills to work providing care services to our community's home-bound disabled and elderly residents.

Dr. Adams' mention of an "opportunity not to be missed" refers to the fact that most of the Learn & Work™ students are unemployed or underemployed individuals from some of the area's most disadvantaged and

agency" in the state of Florida.

Conducted by instructor Ann Marie Hinds, MSN ARNP-BC, a family nurse practitioner with extensive experience in urgent and chronic care, the course imparts the fundamental procedures that guide home health aides' work with patients. HHAs-in-training gain significant care giving skills that are in high

The graduation of the latest 2023 class of UHC's Learn & Work Program[™] sheds light on a groundbreaking initiative which provides home health aide training —without charge— to underemployed South Floridians and provides employment with United HomeCare upon a successful completion of the course to meet the increasing demand for at-home care services.

As part of the latest Learn & Work™ group of 15 trainees, Misses Irias and Raymonds and Mr. Saenz Lozada addressed the audience during the press conference, thanking United HomeCare and Sunshine Health for the chance to train as home health aides. They also spoke about looking forward to putting

underserved neighborhoods. The program and subsequent employment opportunities would have a significant impact on the trainees' future.

Training through the Learn & Work™ Program is provided free of charge by United HomeCare, which is now, by statute, the only "teaching

demand in most South Florida communities.

HHAs are tasked with monitoring the condition of their patients, in large part individuals with disabilities or chronic illnesses, reporting any health concerns to the case manager, and assisting the patients with daily living activities, such as



From left: Hernan Saenz Lozada and Pascal Raymonds, HHA trainees participating in the Learn & Work™ Program, addressed the audience and shares their experiences and their hopes for the future with this training. UHC's Manuel Sierra spoke of the trainees' dedication and hard work during the intensive, week-long course.

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Photo left: HHAs-in-training at the most recent Learn & Work[™] Program session pose with UHC's Manuel Sierra.

Top, right: Instructor Ann Marie Hinds demonstrates how to operate a Hoyer lift, a crane-like device that helps caregivers move patients with mobility challenges in and out of bed or bath. Bottom, right: Ms. Hinds guides her trainees on the correct and safe placement of the patient on an electric hospital bed.

bathing, dressing, housekeeping, and other tasks. This care enables patients to age with dignity in the comfort of their home.

The training session delves into more intricate procedures required to care for bed-bound and wheel-chair-bound patients as well. Developing a working proficiency in maneuvering a Hoyer lift, for example, is among the program's objectives.

"As a primary care physician, when these patients come to my office and they are being cared for at home, I can see the difference," he said. Patients respond much better "in an environment that they're familiar with."

Dr. Moise shared his insights into the level of care and caring that "goes a long way" in assisting the elderly and disabled with personal College of Osteopathic Medicine (DO) and Business and Law at University of Miami (MBA, JD).

"I did what you are going to do (when you graduate) and now I'm a physician. I want you to think big. You're starting with this right now, but there are opportunities to grow."

The training program has become a stepping stone to higher-levels of education and employment in

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We need each other. And the long and short of it is that as we age, we need help." Dr. Nelson L. Adams

Rudolph "Rudy" Moise, D.O., a family physician, founder and medical director of Comprehensive Medical Aesthetics in Miami, and member of United HomeCare's Board of Directors, is emphatic in his support of the Learn & Work™ Program and the invaluable transformation that skilled home health aides make in patients' lives.

and companionship care services, including but not limited to bathing, grooming and dressing.

He motivated the trainees to "not stay where you are," telling them about his path as a Haitian-born young man working as a nursing home orderly in Chicago. He went on to study Medicine at the University of Illinois (BA) and the Chicago health-related professions, as Learn & Work™ participants are inspired to seek opportunities in the field.

a most successful collaboration

"The alliance with Sunshine Health has been invaluable in the program's development," stated Roger Lopez during his allocution at the press conference. "The collaborative effort that we have established with the SH team has allowed us, at United HomeCare, to go out and recruit students."

The Learn & Work™ sessions in Broward County are offered at Sunshine Health's spacious Lauderhill Center; classes are limited to 12 to 15 trainees who gather to learn the essentials of one-on-one patient care.

Intimately grounded in the South Florida community, United Home Care® and Sunshine Health identified four clear-cut issues early on, which strengthened their commitent to collaborate and expand the Learn & Work™ Program:

- The mounting number of elderly and disabled patients requiring athome care,
- The consistent shortage of skilled personnel to assist home-bound residents with their basic needs,
- The demand for job opportunities

for the area's under/unemployed adults, and

 The workforce development program's ability to develop a fastpaced, practical occupational instruction that would become a sound source of competent home health aides.



Learn & Work[™] Program instructor Ann Marie Hinds. MSN ARNP-BC

"The members of Team Sunshine consistently show their commitment to the Learn & Work™ course, making it the most successful program that United HomeCare has engaged with an outside partner," Mr. Lopez declared.

"In the nine sessions we've had since January, there have been 115 graduates, most of them caring for UHC patients thanks to the skills acquired through the Learn & Work™ Program."

The trainees were recruited from underserved South Florida communities and as newly minted HHAs, they will return to care for patients in those neighborhoods.

The next Learn & Work™ Program training session is scheduled for early 2024. Enrollment is currently open.

For more information call United HomeCare at (305) 764-2203 or visit *unitedhomecare.com*.



Headquartered in Broward County and with offices across the state, Sunshine Health is among the largest healthcare plans in Florida. Offering coordinated care and a network of support for our members, Sunshine Health is transforming the health of the community, one person at a time.

Sunshine Health is a wholly owned

subsidiary of Centene Corporation.

It offers government-sponsored managed care through Medicaid, Long Term Care, the Health Insurance Marketplace (Ambetter), and Medicare Advantage and Prescription Drug Plans (Wellcare). Its specialty plans include the Child Welfare Specialty Plan serving children in or adopted from the state's Child Welfare system; the Serious Mental Illness Specialty Plan for people living with serious mental illness; and the Children's Medical Services Health Plan, operated by Sunshine Health on behalf of the Florida Department of Health for children and adolescents with special healthcare needs.

For more information, visit SunshineHealth.com.



There's just no place like home.

United HomeCare® (UHC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization born of United Way Miami, with a history spanning 50 years helping families care for their aging relatives and transforming the landscape of home and community services by promoting independence and quality of life for older adults, disabled adults, and family caregivers.

A trusted industry leader known for pioneering advances in home care programs, disease management services, and educational support programs for seniors, UHC is a designated Community Care for the Elderly (CCE) Case Management Lead Agency, Alzheimer's Disease Initiative Agency for Florida's Alzheimer's Disease Initiative (ADI), Managed Long Term Care Home Care Services Provider, and United Way Miami Impact Partner that holds a market leadership position in Miami-Dade County since 1973, and currently serves Miami-Dade, Monroe, and Broward counties. UHC is dedicated to helping you or someone you love live at home independently-because "There's just no place like home."

For more information about how you can help United HomeCare® in our mission of caring and about our available services to Miami-Dade/Broward residents, call (305) 716-0710 (Miami-Dade) or (954) 463-1100 (Broward).

For UHC's Learn & Work™ Program, please call (305) 764-2203. Or visit unitedhomecare.com, avusconnect.org, or empleos@unitedhomecare.org.