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Opinion>Bradenton Herald Editorials

Manatee Glens, a stronger role in mental healthcare here with Centerstone alliance



Families and individuals with mental health issues and addictions in Southwest Florida -- and Manatee County in particular -- sit on the cusp of stronger services from one of the Southeast region's ground-breaking and best-known healthcare providers. Manatee Glens, a specialty hospital and outpatient practice, plans to join forces with Centerstone, a multi-state behavioral healthcare organization.

This will enable the two nonprofits to improve client services by implementing the best practices both offer now. Manatee Glens will benefit from Centerstone's resources and expertise while Centerstone will gain an ally with a national reputation for innovation in patient services.

When this affiliation moves forward in January -- it's not a merger by any means -- Manatee Glens will become Centerstone of Florida. That agreement will put Manatee Glens into a close association with 155 Centerstone locations in Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Tennessee.

This marks Nashville-based Centerstone's first foray into Florida, an expansion that speaks volumes about the reputation that Manatee Glens has established during 60 years of serving our community's mental health care needs. This new alliance will yield "synergies of expertise," with Manatee Glens gaining access to Centerstone's analytics, grant-writing and other well-honed skills while sharing its innovations in outpatient and inpatient services.

Manatee Glens will keep its board of directors and its longtime president and chief executive officer, Mary Ruiz. All of its assets and revenue will be preserved and remain in local control. No services or employees will be cut. In fact, client care will be enhanced.

This is a complete win-win for this community. Manatee County will gain a great deal with this boost in mental healthcare with this close affiliation. Centerstone's subsidiaries include:

- The Centerstone Research Institute, which specializes in healthcare advances and information technology. In today's rapidly expanding digital world, no organization can afford to sit still but must employ the latest state-of-the-art upgrades to keep pace with an evolving healthcare industry where patients are the focus.

- Centerstone Military Services, which cares for members of the armed forces, veterans and their families and loved ones nationwide. This is especially important locally with our large population of veterans.
- Advantage Behavioral Health, which is designed to improve patient care and outcomes via stronger management.
- Centerstone Health Partners, which integrates care clinics to serve physical and behavior needs of patients.
- Centerstone Foundation, the organization's philanthropic powerhouse.

In a discussion with the Herald Editorial Board, Ruiz and Centerstone CEO David Guth Jr. shared their enthusiasm for this affiliation -- and for good reason. The two have known each other for two decades, and this new marriage -- after a year-long courtship -- is a matter of the mutual admiration each had for the professional capabilities and achievements of the other organization.

The affiliation promises to pump more money into local efforts to treat individuals and families torn by mental health challenges. Today, Manatee Glens serves about 16,000 clients a years for trauma, addictions, psychiatric illnesses and emotional disorders. Additional resources will enable the speciality hospital to touch and improve more lives.

One of the best initiatives Centerstone brings is the goal to eliminate suicide. With education and outreach, the organization aims to save those vulnerable to taking their own life and bring them back into a healthy vitality that their loved ones will appreciate greatly.

Every community deserves a vibrant mental healthcare provider. We're blessed with one of the finest in Manatee Glens. We wholeheartedly welcome Centerstone to our healthcare family.