

Signature HealthCARE adds to Hall of Fame

By DAN MEARNS

SPECIAL TO FEELING FIT

Following its mission of revolutionizing the health care industry, Signature HealthCARE of Port Charlotte focuses solely on its residents in terms of care, spirituality and quality of life. The 164-bed skilled nursing facility provides a wide array of comprehensive services tailored to each patient's needs and abilities.

Management and staff has created a nurturing environment where patients receive excellent care while maintaining their maximum level of independence. The improvement and well-being of each patient is a priority.

Signature's Spirituality and Quality of Life programs include the Hall of Fame Cafe, which honors residents for their extraordinary life achievements. This year's Hall of Cafe inductees included residents Sharon Zyskowski and Freddie Jackson, stakeholder Jean Early and community leader Dr. Mark Asperilla.

These outstanding individuals were honored during ceremonies at the Hall of Fame Cafe. Charlotte County Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch served as guest speaker, Alicia McMahon read a special "Hometown Heroes" poem, Administrator Tracy Hooks described the mission of the Hall of Fame and Quality of Life Director Cynthia Clopton delivered opening and closing remarks.

Each inductee received a large, framed certificate with their photo and a narrative of their achievements. Freddie Jackson says he was honored for "Distinguished Military Service and Personal Accomplishments." Born in Georgia and raised in Florida, Freddie was working for a Tampa cement when he enlisted in the U.S. Air Force, where he served for 11 years.

While part of the F-15 air squadron in The Philippines, Freddie spent his free time recording music for pleasure, and he also coached a baseball team and a girls' softball team during his four years there. He also traveled to France, Italy, Spain, England and Germany, as well as all 50 states, during his time in the service.

He recalls one special mission that called for Freddie and his F-4 crew members to drop a bomb into an active volcano in Hawaii. Freddie's final deployment was at Wright Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio, where he served as an administrative officer for four years prior to his retirement from the service.

He settled in Labelle, Florida, where met and married his wife, Ernestine. After 12 years in Labelle, the couple moved to Lehigh Acres, where Freddie worked for an automobile plant distribution company. While returning to the company after a delivery one morning, Freddie suffered a stroke and has not been able to work since. The Signature resident is proud of his time in the Air Force serving his country



PHOTOS PROVIDED

Signature HealthCARE resident Freddie Jackson displays his Hall of Fame Cafe honors with Charlotte County Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch, left, Signature Administrator Tracy Hooks, right and Quality of Life Director Cynthia Clopton.

and proud of his two daughters, five stepchildren, 22 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

"Yes, I've had a good life," Freddie says.

The same could be said of fellow resident and Hall of Fame Cafe member Sharon Zyskowski, who was honored for "Professional and Personal Accomplishment in the Theater, Arts and Entertainment." Zyskowski's certificate notes that she is a member of the Screen Actors Guild and Sierra Club, a lover of animals and nature, and a former member of PETA.

A New Jersey native who grew up California, Zyskowski returned to her home state after graduating from high school. She took the train to New York City, landed a job at a modeling agency and for the next 10-plus years was a professional model. She took up karate to help her stay in shape, which led to boxing training and exhibition boxing.

As a result, Zyskowski became qualified as a "corner person" in the boxing ring and was the first female in Manhattan to earn a boxing license. Meanwhile, her modeling career really took off when she signed with famous Ford Modeling Agency, which sent her to Paris and Italy for modeling jobs and got her acting gigs and commercials, including one with Hall of Fame football player "Broadway" Joe Namath.

Jean Early earned her place in the Hall of Fame Cafe as a 31-year employee of Signature HealthCARE Port Charlotte. Jean was born a twin sister in Japan and moved with her family to Indiana and later to Iowa, where she graduated from high school. She then moved to Florida and became a certified nursing assistant and started her career in 1985 the Port Charlotte Care Center, later Signature HealthCARE.

Jean worked as a CNA until 2005, when she applied to drive the facility bus, got the job and has been driving ever since. She married Signature co-worker Clyde Early, a physical therapy assistant. They have been married 12



New Hall of Fame Cafe member Sharon Zyskowski, seated, receives congratulations from Charlotte County Commissioner Stephen R. Deutsch and Signature HealthCARE executives Cynthia Clopton, left and Tracy Hooks.

years.

Jean has a daughter, two sons, a stepson and eight grandchildren. She has enjoyed her tenure at Signature, where everyone enjoys her wit and gets a kick out of the unique outfits she wears on special occasions.

If you ask Jean why she stayed so long, she'll say, "Because I love putting a smile on our residents' faces."

People the world over are familiar with Dr. Asperilla, whose community leadership, professional accomplishments and public service earned him a place in the Hall of Fame Cafe. In addition to a lifetime of service in the medical profession, particularly with infectious disease, Dr. Asperilla is an entrepreneur, restaurateur, philanthropist, political and community activist.

He started a free clinic for victims of HIV/AIDS, providing more than 2,000 patients free care, is involved with



Longtime Signature HealthCARE employee Jean Early holds her Hall of Fame Cafe's recognition sign alongside, from left, Stephen R. Deutsch, Cynthia Clopton and Tracy Hooks.

ACCESS CARE, which sends medical teams to Latin America, giving aid to more than 30,000 patients.

In Charlotte County, he founded St. Vincent De Paul Pharmacy and co-founded the Virginia B. Andes Volunteer Community Clinic. When Hurricane Charley hit in 2004, the doctor started an emergency prescription refill program and the nation's first free clinic to operate within a FEMA "tent city." He also helped raised \$500,000 for the local Vietnam Wall Memorial.

This is just a small list of Dr. Asperilla's accomplishments. He has received numerous national honors, including the Florida Humanitarian Award from the Florida Medical Association and the Leadership Award from the American Medical Association.

"When things are better for people, the world is a better place," he says.

Signature HealthCARE of Port Charlotte is located at 4033 Beaver Lane, Port Charlotte. For more information, call 941-625-3200.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Food Addicts Anonymous

A 12-step program for those who wish to recover from food addiction. Group meets from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. on Thursdays, at First Alliance Church, 20444 Midway, Port Charlotte. For more information, call 941-380-6550.

NAMI Connection Recovery Support Group

The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) meets from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., the first and third Tuesdays at the Mental Health Community Center (Prospect House), 240 S. Tuttle Ave. Unit B, Sarasota. Connection is a recovery support group program for adults living with

mental illness providing a place that offers respect, understanding, encouragement and hope. It offers a casual and relaxed approach to sharing the challenges and successes of coping with mental illness. All meetings are free and confidential. Call 941-376-9361 or visit the website at namisarasotacounty.org for more information.

Ostomy support meetings

The Charlotte County Ostomy Support Group meets at 2 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month in Port Charlotte. For more information and assistance, contact Jerry Downs at 941-629-7568 or Gloria Patmore at 941-627-9077.



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