

UF Health North's First Birthday



On Saturday, March 19, 2016, we celebrated the first birthday of UF Health North. I wrote a [newsletter](#) about UF Health North about a month after we opened our ambulatory facility there, but even the optimistic spirit of that essay does not capture the degree of success that has been accomplished.

Thus, it is fitting to celebrate the achievements of our faculty and staff who work at UF Health North, and the superb health care we are now providing to a community that previously was without a comprehensive ambulatory facility. I could point to facts and figures. For example, comparing February 2016 to February 2015, daily ER visits have increased from 40 to over 100, and daily faculty practice visits have increased from 40 to 150. The Birthing Center, ORs, imaging suites and laboratories are humming.

A better way to convey the success of UF Health North, however, is from the perspectives of our patients. Here are stories from three patients that capture the spirit of UF Health North. I would like to express my appreciation to Erin VanWey, director of communications at UF Health Jacksonville, as well as Jese Williams, Kristen Sibbitt and others on the communications team, for relating these stories from our patients:

Patient commends UF Health North for its great care and “world-class” design

Yves Rathle appreciates UF Health North's modern design and fell further in love with the facility when he received excellent patient care there.



Yves Rathle

Rathle, a Jacksonville-based architect, has designed a number of medical buildings across the country and believes UF Health North's outpatient medical complex is second-to-none in terms of aesthetic appeal. On top of that, he says its medical staff foster a warm environment that allows patients to feel welcome and comfortable.

Last year, Rathle brought his son to UF Health North, where the teen, a soccer player, underwent surgery on the bottom of his foot. Podiatrist Jason Piriano, D.P.M., performed the operation. After Rathle became familiar with UF Health North and was so pleased with his son's care, he found it natural to return for his own treatment.

Because of conditions with his medical insurance, Rathle needed to undergo three procedures within a month's time. Fortunately, he was able to have all three taken care of in one day by the same surgeon, Michael Nussbaum, M.D.

"I sought out a doctor I knew could do the job," he said.

Rathle, 53, underwent a colonoscopy, had an umbilical hernia corrected and a benign tumor in his left shoulder removed. All the procedures went well for Rathle, who was quite complimentary of his stay from the moment he came through the front door.

"It was almost a resort-like experience," Rathle said, reminiscing about the fresh, modern furniture and decorative accents in the atrium and waiting areas. "It's absolutely first-class."

Rathle was impressed that staff remembered him from when he brought his son there for the foot surgery. He realized the nurses and other personnel also maintain a great balance of professionalism and personal touch. He said he definitely recommends UF Health North to anyone in the region.

"It makes you feel better and puts you in a great frame of mind," Rathle said about the pleasant treatment he received. "All of the staff seem as if they love being there."

Rathle said his only regret is that he wished he would have been the one who designed the building. He looks forward to seeing how the accompanying inpatient bed tower will look once built. That project is expected to be complete by mid-2017.

From UF Health North to UF Health Jacksonville, Patient Gives Staff an A+

Severe, crippling abdominal pain gripped 54-year-old Mark Palmer while at home one August morning in 2015. Having a hard time standing up straight, Mark called his neighbor, who drove him to the closest medical facility — UF Health North.

Staff met Mark immediately when he arrived at the emergency room and settled him into a wheelchair. He was quickly admitted and moved into a bed. This might not be a memorable moment for most patients, especially when in excruciating pain, but Mark remembers it well.

"When I laid in (the) bed at UF Health North, it was the most comfortable bed I've ever been in in my life," he said. "I didn't want to get out of it. That bed was unbelievable."

The nurses checked Mark's vital signs, and laboratory tests and imaging studies were obtained. After reviewing the results, the emergency medicine physician came in to tell Mark he had acute appendicitis.

“Are you sure?” Mark asked. With a previous history of diverticulitis, Mark was certain it was a recurrence. The doctor confirmed the diagnosis of acute appendicitis and explained he would need to be transferred to UF Health Jacksonville for surgery.



Mark and Virginia Palmer

While he waited for an ambulance to arrive to transfer him, he enjoyed his brief stay at the north facility. “It was excellent,” he said. “It couldn’t have been any better. The facility, the equipment and the personnel — you just can’t get any better care. Any time you’re rushed to the hospital, it’s not fun, but the care was great.”

Mark arrived at the Eighth Street location in the late afternoon and immediately headed into surgery.

“Everything about that place was amazing,” Mark said. “The nurses that cared for me — I’ll never forget them. They did such a good job, every one of them. I have to give it an A+.”

Mark has been back to both locations to visit the staff who cared for him. He is extremely appreciative and is especially thankful that the hospital exists.

“This area needed UF Health North,” he said. “There wasn’t a good, close facility to go to. It’s right there, and it’s state-of-the-art. It’s impossible to get that care anywhere (else) in this area.”

With Mark’s chronic condition, he has spent time in other hospitals, but tells people UF Health North and UF Health Jacksonville are the best around.

Thanks to the excellent care Mark received at both UF Health locations, he is feeling better.

“I’ve experienced other hospitals,” Mark said. “It couldn’t have been faster, and I don’t think they could have done any better. They saved my life, it’s that simple. I owe them everything. I’m very thankful.”

From a Birth Plan to a Birthday: UF Health North Birth Center Looks Back at First Baby Delivered

A “long, pulling cramp” shot through Elizabeth Borders as she was watching a movie on a warm March evening. This was the moment she had been waiting for. One week overdue, Elizabeth knew her daughter was signaling it was time to make her way into the world.

“Oh my God, I think I just had a contraction,” Elizabeth recalled. Not wanting to jump to conclusions too quickly, Elizabeth and her husband, Jamie, waited a few minutes to see if it was really time. Once they were certain, they called their doula, Vonda Bartlett.

A natural birth had always been Elizabeth’s intention, but she quickly realized her birth plan wouldn’t be embraced as easily as she had hoped at her obstetrician’s office. At her initial visit, Elizabeth learned that her doctor was part of a larger practice of seven obstetricians who rotated delivery duty.

“I began to worry that my birth plan would be hopeless in a hospital,” she said. “I had hired an amazing doula, who I knew would advocate for my birth plan, but something still didn’t feel right about having a hospital birth.”

Even though she was unsure about giving birth in a hospital, Elizabeth moved full-steam ahead with her plan for a natural delivery. Thirty-six weeks pregnant, Elizabeth made her way to a birthing class directed by Cindy Williams, a licensed midwife at the UF Health Birth Center, which was scheduled to open the following week. Meeting Cindy in this class is where everything changed for Elizabeth.

After that, Elizabeth had one goal. “I had to find a way to give birth at this new facility,” she said. “I woke up the next morning on a mission.”

And Elizabeth, determined as ever, accomplished her goal. On that warm March evening, Elizabeth, Jamie and Vonda met Cindy at the birth center. They got settled into the delivery suite, where they set up music, lavender scents and candles. When Cindy checked Elizabeth, she was already 9 centimeters dilated.

When the contractions started to become painful, Vonda suggested Elizabeth get into the tub. “The truth is the tub at the birth center felt amazing,” Elizabeth explained. “So amazing that I actually felt like I was no longer in labor.”

Cindy assured her that she was still in labor and she could begin pushing whenever she was ready. After some pushing, Daisy Cameron Borders was born at 9:59 p.m. on March 15, 2015.

As soon as Daisy was born, she was handed to Elizabeth and Jamie for immediate skin-to-skin contact. They were encouraged to delay the cord clamping as Daisy’s time with her parents was made a priority. Elizabeth and Jamie were able to hold her before weight and height measurements were taken, along with the standard newborn testing and shots — just as they had wanted from the beginning.

Five hours later, Elizabeth and Jamie took Daisy home, but still had access to expertise from the Birthing Center. “I was able to talk to ... Cindy the next day on the phone, and then a midwife came to our house for a postpartum check-up,” she explained.



Daisy Borders

Elizabeth continues to rave about the UF Health Birth Center. “I absolutely had my dream birth,” she said. “At the Birth Center, I didn’t have a cookie-cutter birth. With a midwife, I’ve never felt more heard and understood. It was a birth tailored to my specific medical needs, not following a standard hospital checklist.”

One-year-old Daisy has six teeth and is learning her first words. She can say “ma ma ma” and “da da da.” Jamie takes her to the beach every morning to see the sunrise. She loves green beans, avocados and eggs.

“Daisy is hilarious and her laugh is infectious,” Elizabeth said. “She loves dogs and kitties, and her favorite things to do are going to story time at the library and swinging at the park.”

These three stories exemplify the future of UF Health Jacksonville: Architecture and design in which form follows function, superb hospitality and service, contemporary approaches to health care that adapt to the evolving needs of our patients, and, of course, the highest level of expertise from our health care professionals. The adjoining inpatient bed tower at UF Health North is now coming out of the ground and the future looks bright indeed.

The Power of Together,

David S. Guzick, M.D., Ph.D.

Senior Vice President for Health Affairs, UF

President, UF Health