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Physical Rehab Services: Expanding with Agility

By Jeremy Martin

Formed in Grand Haven in 1968, Agility Health now provides services at 125 locations in 13 states nationwide.

What began as a business offering in-patient physical therapy in the lake-side town has, since 2003, morphed into a Grand Rapids-based company that works with both corporate and individual clients to bring "high value physical rehabilitation and software services" to patients across the country.

After acquiring the company in 2003, CEO Steven Davidson and his partner began a comprehensive overhaul of Agility Health that allowed the company to not only expand beyond the West Michigan market, but to outpace most of its competition in terms of nationwide

growth.

"It was part of our strategic direction to diversify our portfolio. We've been building a couple clinics a year on average since that time," Davidson said. "We also started growing by acquisition in 2010, and have been growing substantially since that time period."

Despite having company-wide growth, Agility takes pride in its individual offices being as locally focused as possible. That's why the Kalamazoo and Portage offices, run by Scott Miller, have had continued success since opening in March of 2007.

"Our goal is to work with people, like Scott, who are good clinical experts and who are looking to partner with people who can provide a nice infrastructure on a variety of levels from accounting to

IT-technology and software, to compliance issues and management," Davidson said.

"The healthcare world is very complicated. And if you can match up good clinicians with good back-office function – and it happens that we do that pretty well – it's a nice marriage of sorts."

The "marriage" has worked out very nicely indeed for Miller, who with his staff of fifteen people sees, between the two offices, roughly 90 to 120 new referrals per month.

Since Miller and his staff – though able to work with nearly anyone – have an athlete-centric focus, they see predictable spikes in clientele throughout the year. Last May's Borgess Marathon in Kalamazoo, for example, brought in more injured athletes than Agility would perhaps normally see.

"They actually had a 'couch-to-marathon' type program," Miller said, explaining that many people unaccustomed to competitive running gave up the couch, so-to-speak, to give the local race a shot. "We did see an increase in injuries – not good for the community, but certainly good for us," Miller said.

The Marathon also gave Agility a chance to educate prospective runners on a number of ways in which preventative exercise and therapy can help lower the chance of a serious injury occurring.

"One of the services we offer is called gait analysis. Basically, it's a comprehensive assessment of not only the usual things – strength, flexibility, range of motion, and so forth – but it also includes what we call a mechanical analysis, where we basically look at these individuals from head to toe. We not only look at their running form and mechanics, but we also give them recommendations on how not to get injured," Miller said.

These types of cutting-edge services are popular with adults, but also with high school athletes who compete in high-impact sports, such as cross country, soccer and track.

Miller's sideline as a professional

lecturer – he speaks up to six times per year, across the country – allows him to stay up-to-date with new trends in the physical therapy industry, and he notes that despite the company's continued overall growth, he would rather see the Kalamazoo and Portage offices excel at a few special practices than offer a laundry list of poorly provided services.

"Our goal is not to be average at 20 things, but to be good at eight things. We really are strategic in terms of who we hire, and a lot of times it's need-based," Miller said.

There has, however, been a need for hiring recently. Miller added four staff members over the last few months: three office workers, along with a part-time physical therapist, joined the Agility team in Southwest Michigan.

Occasionally, Miller will add professionals to the Agility referral list instead of adding full-time employees or, in some cases, recommend patients to talk with professionals such as Dr. Eddie O'Conner, sports psychologist, or Chenel Kerschbaum, a sports nutrition consultant – the latter of whom shares onsite space in Agility's Kalamazoo office.

Agility continues, however, to hire company wide. Davidson said the growing business usually seeks upwards of thirty people at any given time, and currently, openings exist for various therapeutic positions and office staff.

Be it in West Michigan or beyond, Agility Health will continue to "strategically expand" and will do so by employing and retaining qualified, driven and knowledgeable people who will help lead the company into the future.

"We're always looking for opportunities to learn ... and ways that will help us continue to move forward," Miller said.

Jeremy Martin is a freelance journalist based out of Kalamazoo. He can be contacted at 1982jeremy@gmail.com.

Health Care Briefs

Holland – **Holland Hospital** announced that the surgical practice **Lakeshore Surgical Associates of Holland** is joining the hospital's **Lakeshore Health Partners** physician medical group. Lakeshore Surgical Associates, **Drs. Stephen VanWylen, Daniel DeCook and William Houskamp**, will be known as Lakeshore Health Partners – General Surgery. They specialize in thoracic surgery; advanced laparoscopic surgery; surgical oncology; surgical endoscopy; gastroesophageal reflux disease testing.

Grand Rapids - Southwest Michigan has a new pediatric subspecialty center thanks to collaboration between **Lakeland Care** and **Spectrum Health Medical Group** pediatric specialists at **Helen DeVos Children's Hospital**. Pediatric subspecialists will provide health care services at **Health Park Medical Suites** at 3950 Hollywood Road, Suite 240 in St. Joseph.

Grand Rapids – **Saint Mary's Health Care** announced the appointment of **Dr. Philip B. Gorelick** as the medical director of the **Hauenstein Neuroscience Center**. Dr. Gorelick, is an expert in stroke and stroke prevention, has been the **John S. Garvin Professor and Head, Department of Neurology and Rehabilitation, University of Illinois College of Medicine**.

West Michigan - **Bonnie Grevengoed**, medical practice director of **The Fertility Center**, was recently named Midwest Section Council of Leaders member-at-large of the Medical Group Management Association (MGMA).

Lansing - Health insurance companies must spend at least 80 percent of revenues on patient care or rebate policyholders the difference, under a federal ruling. The ruling denies a **Michigan Office of Financial and Insurance Regulation (OFIR)** waiver application that would have diverted \$53 million in projected consumer rebates back to insurance carriers in Michigan. The ruling came from the **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**, which denied an application from OFIR seeking a waiver from the **Affordable Care Act (ACA)** that would allow carriers to keep up to 35 percent of all premiums paid, rather than the 20 percent they are currently allowed under law.

Holland – **Holland Hospital** is being recognized as a national **Best and Brightest Companies To Work For TM**. For the first time in its history, the **National Association for Business Resources** has chosen Best and Brightest award winning organizations at the national level, and Holland Hospital is included in the inaugural group of 87 award recipients.

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