

Medical professionals, educators and researchers flocking to Henderson

Chris Vito knows a thing or two about taking advantage of the opportunities available in Henderson, Nev., for medical professionals.

Vito was recruited out of California in 2001 to open the HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital in Henderson – one of the fastest-growing cities in the nation over the past decade and a half. Success was not far behind for Vito and HealthSouth due to the high demand for healthcare providers in the growing Southern Nevada market.

“If you are a physician that is not established in your medical practice, come to Southern Nevada,” said Vito, who is now president/CEO of the Southern Nevada Rehabilitation Hospital. “You can start a practice or join an existing practice and be very, very busy. The opportunity is unbelievable.”

In fact, the opportunity is almost unprecedented and, because of that, Southern Nevada is now emerging as a major medical region.

In the past five years alone, five hospitals have opened to serve the booming Las Vegas Valley population, which is nearing 1.6 million. One of those hospitals is the Siena Campus of St. Rose Dominican Hospitals in Henderson. St. Rose – which is a member of Catholic Healthcare West (CHW), the largest Catholic healthcare organization in the west – will also open one of two hospitals scheduled to open in the valley within the next two years.

The Siena Campus – as well as the HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital – is located in the area known as Mediplex Henderson, one of the ideal locations in Henderson for physicians and medical service providers to be located. Centrally located between two major freeways and connected to the entire Las Vegas Valley by the I-215 Beltway, the area includes more than 400,000 square feet of office space for sale or lease. With St. Rose’s Siena Campus anchoring the new Mediplex, the area is fast-becoming the place to be for medical providers in the area.

“St. Rose’s development can in part be attributed to the phenomenal growth of southern Nevada,” said Rod Davis, president of CHW’s Nevada market area and St. Rose Dominican Hospitals. “Southern Nevada is home to some of the fastest-growing cities in the nation. This

creates a dynamic, ever-changing environment that promotes business growth.”

Having hospitals filled at 90% capacity is almost a given, according to Vito, thus, calling for the need for more beds and more healthcare professionals. This means potential for professionals in the industry.

“You have a chance to go on your own here and do very well in a short amount of time,” Vito said. “Or, many of the medical groups are looking for other physicians to join them and help them out. Many of the groups are stretched thin.”

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Public support is also behind physicians in the state. In November, Nevada voters passed an initiative that limits attorney’s fees in actions against providers of healthcare based upon professional negligence. The amendment limits non-economic damages to \$350,000, eliminating joint and several liability of a provider of health care based upon professional negligence and revising the statute of limitations for the filing of actions.

“It gives physicians faith that insurance premiums are not going to scare physicians away,” Vito said about the passing of the ballot initiative. “Because health care physicians have won that, it made the Southern Nevada market even more attractive.”

The phenomenal growth in Clark County shows no signs of slowing down. The population has risen almost 60% in the past eight years (from 1,040,000 to an estimated 1,641,000) and is expected to continue to grow at nearly six times the United States rate, with an expected 2.7 million to call southern Nevada home by 2018.

Henderson – known for its master-planned communities and high-quality of living – has been at the front of the growth spurt, growing from just 60,000 people in 1990 to currently over 225,000. That population would make Henderson the 14th largest city in the state of California – larger than such cities at Irvine, Glendale and San Bernardino.

Seeing this growth, Henderson has made a concerted effort to not only increase its quantity of healthcare providers, but to ensure that high quality healthcare providers will serve its population base now and into the future. At the same time, visionary people and organizations are taking advantage of what Henderson and all of southern Nevada has to offer.

Last year, Touro University Osteopathic School of Medicine opened its doors in Henderson and accepted its first class of 78 students – out of 1,000 applicants from around the nation. By year three, according to school officials, 125 students will be accepted annually.

Michael Harter, vice president of Touro University-Nevada, said educating physicians in southern Nevada – and developing residency programs – means the physicians are more likely to stay in the area.

“Historically, the place where a physician does a residency is the place where he or she stays to practice,” Harter said. “We want to keep medical students in Nevada to serve their residencies because we know we will keep a good portion of them in the valley.”

But it’s not just physicians who can benefit from the healthy climate for the medical industry in Nevada. Touro University also offers a physician assistant program that addresses the shortage of such professionals in the growing community.

“Southern Nevada is growing expediently, which creates opportunities for medical professionals that are probably greater than any in the U.S.,” Harter said. “On a baseline level, there is absolutely no difficulty in getting a job when you finish training in the southern part of the state.”

Top research institutions are also solidifying southern Nevada as a major medical region.

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Dr. Michael Crovetti is the founder of the Medical Education & Research Institute of Nevada, which is based on the Henderson campus of Touro University. The Institute brings together physicians from around the world to teach new surgical techniques and the use of new instruments on cadavers.

Crovetti said it won't be long before southern Nevada is seen as not just a place that has ample opportunity because of its growth, but a place that is highly respected in the medical field because of highly-trained specialists and cutting-edge medical research.

"There is a new standard of healthcare in southern Nevada and we need to tell the world about it," Crovetti said. "We have a great medical community and a great living

community to support that."

Medical professionals say the affordable cost of living in the valley, easy commutes and access to world class entertainment, shopping and dining make the Las Vegas Valley an attractive place to relocate.

"My wife and I always tell people how great it is to live her," Crovetti said. "You look at the masses of people who have moved here over the last several years – it's a great trend. If you are in the medical field and you are still young, this is a great opportunity for you to grow. It's great not only for business, but for its quality of living."

The quality of life is the reason so many people are moving to Henderson and the surrounding areas. It's also a primary reason

for the large amount of success stories in the area, such as the University of Southern Nevada, which opened Nevada's first school of pharmacy four years ago. This year the school will accept 125 students out of 1,200 applicants for its pharmacy program and is looking to establish a nursing program in the near future.

"Virtually every corner has a new drugstore on it and each one of them needs a pharmacist," said Dr. Harry Rosenberg, founder of the University of Southern Nevada. "The growth is incredible and there is opportunity because of that growth."

For more information on the City of Henderson's Economic Development Division, call (702) 267-1650.

