

CLINICS

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business in 1996. As more clinics open in Southwest Florida, Rob McGann said, the best ones will emerge.

"It's pretty clear that the urgent care market is a flooded market," he said. "Like other businesses (in the down economy), I think you're going to see a shake out. The best ones will continue to be around and provide a valuable service."

Dr. Larry Hobbs, president of the Florida College of Emergency Physicians, said an urgent-care clinic should have physicians, nurses and staff who have been trained in, or continue to work in emergency rooms. They should be run by a doctor with good credentials and a solid reputation, who is able to use his or her experience and connections to refer the patient to emergency care if need be.

"Just because an office puts the words 'urgent care' on their sign doesn't mean they're capable of providing it," said Dr. Hobbs. "There are a few clinics in Collier and Lee County in which they call themselves urgent care, but they have a nurse (practitioner) that sees the patient."

In addition to being medical director at Southwest Florida Regional Medical Center, Dr. Hobbs runs the Urgent Care Clinic of Southwest Florida in Cape Coral and Estero.

Two trends in the urgent care business, he said, include "individuals who are concerned with making money," by setting up walk-in clinics without properly trained staff. Some of these, he said, have appeared in drug stores or discount stores.

Another trend in urgent care is emergency room doctors who decided to switch their careers to urgent-care or do both. Many urgent care clinics are set up like an ER, to treat patients swiftly, although the environment is less intense.

Examples of times to use urgent care include headaches, skin rashes, sore throats, fevers, lacerations that might require stitches, stomach aches and ear aches — some of the top reasons people visit the ER, according to the Florida Hospital Association.

An emerging specialty

Urgent care is an emerging specialty, like emergency room care was 40 years ago, Dr. Hobbs said.

"Forty years ago we were filling a need (with emergency room doctors) and we developed into a specialty," Dr. Hobbs said. "Urgent care is at that same point emergency rooms were at 40 years ago."

Urgent-care or walk-in clinics may have developed a bad reputation in the 1980s

and early '90s, Dr. Hobbs said, when some people used to call them "The doc in the box." Medical residents might open up a walk-in clinic in a strip mall to make a few extra bucks.

"They didn't work," he said. "They didn't fit the hospital or primary care model. The first wave of walk-in clinics failed."

In the late 1990s, more urgent care walk-in clinics came back into the fold. And in Southwest Florida, as tourist season hits full stride, they're busier than ever.

Dr. Tyrone Median, an ER doctor in Naples who also runs the Naples Medical Center Walk-in Clinic, across from Naples Community Hospital, said, "We see a lot of the seasonal visitors that come to Collier County — the travelers that stay in the hotels that stay in downtown. But we see patients from the outlying area of Collier as well."

His practice helps take the burden off ERs, and off primary care doctors who might be too busy to see patients for their urgent-care needs.

"There's a huge gap in patients that have doctors and don't have access to them," he said. "If you call a doctor who has a full schedule of patients, he may not have the ability to see you and say, 'well come back next week.'"

Like many urgent care doctors, he sees a wide variety of patients. Many urgent care clinics, like his, are set up to do X-Rays, CAT scans, MRIs and blood work, so patients can get a full diagnostic workup on the same day of their visit.

"I do enjoy it because of the variability in terms of what I tend to see and what I tend to treat, which could be almost anything," Dr. Median said. "I see children and I see geriatrics; medical illnesses and surgical illnesses; so it's not limited care."

Dr. Dana Killam, the ER doctor who treated RV salesman Mr. Dunning, started the Accident & Urgent Care Center in the Cape Coral Surgery Center on Del Prado Boulevard in 2005.

He owns the clinic with his wife. There's no sign outside, and the only indication that it existed last week was yellow sign inside the Surgery Center that read "Free Flu Shots" and directed people to the second floor. Most of his patients are referrals.

"We don't want to be too busy," Dr. Killam said. "Our patients and I, we're more like a family. We know each other; we know what's going on. Patients follow us and we follow the patients. This clinic, for us, is almost recreational."

Dr. Killam works three or four night-shifts in the ER (7 p.m. to 7 a.m.) and comes to his urgent-care clinic during the day because otherwise, he said, "I'd have too much free time. We do this because we think it's fun." ■

SEWING

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a week — six of them from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. The long hours and inevitably higher payroll, coupled with the fact Ms. Vealey-Ellis' customers have been hankering for a stand-alone location like her shop in Port Charlotte, made her decide to make some changes.

She closed the Alico location and will shut down her Naples business at the end of January.

Instead she is putting everything into a bigger, more-centralized location.

"In reducing stores and payroll, it will allow me to give better customer service and keep my trained staff," Ms. Vealey-Ellis said.

For the same rent she was paying for the spots inside Joann's stores, Ms. Vealey-Ellis now has a 3,000-square-foot store with more amenities and services for customers and less strain on the payroll.

"I believe being a smart business woman you need to look at the trends to stay healthy," she said. "I plan on being around a very long time and meeting the needs of my

customers."

In this new location, Ms. Vealey-Ellis will be offering a full line of sewing machines and fabrics along with a wide array of education classes, such as heirloom, clothing construction, embroidery and quilting.

Ms. Vealey-Ellis has been in the sewing business for nearly 20 years. In that time, she culled legions of loyal customers and won a laundry list of awards and accolades. Right now she is the No. 1 Husqvarna Viking dealer in Florida and holds the No. 3 spot in the country.

And customers like Patti Haglin are excited over having a more centralized location to go and sew.

Ms. Haglin, who lives in the Shell Point Retirement Community, said she loves the fact that she can be at the shop in minutes doing what she loves best.

Ms. Vealey-Ellis pointed out that sewing is a relaxing hobby to take up during times of stress.

"We offer an excellent source of entertainment, education and a new hobby," she said.

For more information about the business, check out A Stitch Connection's Web site www.astitchconnection.com. ■



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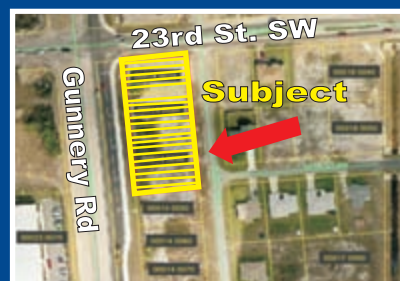


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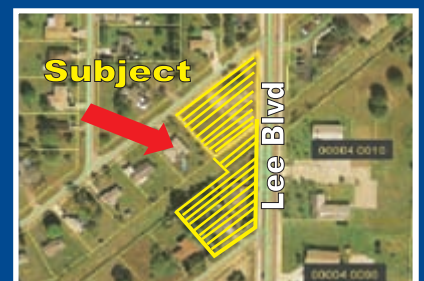
Commercial Property FOR SALE



Property Details:

- Zoned CN-3
- 1 Acre +/- (321 feet of road frontage)
- D.O. In Place
- Busy intersection
- Near Hwy. 82 & Daniels Parkway.

Was: \$385,000 NOW: \$308,000



Property Details:

- Lee Blvd. frontage approx. 470 ft.
- Zoned CS-1
- 71,431 Sq.ft.
- Water & Sewer
- 2 homes w/ conversion potential
- 700 Taylor Ln. Lehigh Acres

Offered at: \$750,000



Property Details:

- Zoned C (Industrial-Business Park)
- Billy Creek Commerce Center
- Multiple Tenants
- Building & Land ■ 8,246 sq.ft.
- 5881 Zip Drive

Offered at: \$925,000



Cape Coral

Property Details:

- Located on Gulf access canal
- Duplex with commercial zoning (P1-W)
- 1,034 sq. ft. under air
- Single car garage each side.
- Great opportunity in a great SE Cape

Offered at: \$369,000



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