

FACES & PLACES

Support for local HOPE clinic

Thomas Cappiello, Associate Vice President and Financial Advisor for Morgan Stanley Smith Barney in Punta Gorda, also serves as Board President for St. Vincent de Paul Community Health Care, Inc.

According to Cappiello, "Morgan Stanley Smith Barney actively encourages community involvement. The firm allows us the time to support our community charity of choice, as well as financial backing. The Volunteer Incentive Program encourages employees to volunteer and have the firm

support their volunteer work with grants from the Morgan Stanley Foundation."

"I have served on the Board of Directors for the St. Vincent de Paul Community Pharmacy and now St. Vincent de Paul Community Health Care, Inc. for 3 years," he explained. "I have served as treasurer for the past two years, and am currently serving as Board President."

SVDP Community Health Care, Inc. received a grant in the amount of \$1,500 from the Morgan Stanley Foundation to be used for prescription medications for the HOPE Clinic.

The HOPE Clinic was established in 2007 through a joint effort between the **Charlotte County Health Department**, St. Vincent de Paul Community Health Care, Inc., Charlotte County Medical Society, Charlotte County Government, and other community partners to prevent the spread of Hepatitis C and minimize the impact on those infected.

Chronic Hepatitis C infection is the most common blood-borne infection in the United States. Of the estimated 5 million Americans (1.8 percent) infected with Hepatitis C virus (HCV), approximately 337,000 are Floridians. Of that number, an estimated 3,000 are residents of Charlotte County.

The mortality associated with Hepatitis C is expected to double in the next 10-20 years. It is estimated that the direct costs related to Hepatitis C will be \$10.3 billion during the years 2010-2020. According to Dr. John Wong of the New England Medical Center, "Hepatitis C infection is an awakening giant."

Some estimates say the number of HCV infected people may be four times the number of those infected with the AIDS virus. Because they are not clinically ill, most of the people are unaware of their infection. Hepatitis C is the cause of half of the cases of primary liver cancer in the developed world and is labeled the "Silent Killer" because many have no recognizable symptoms for years.

Cappiello has requested that the grant funds be used towards the purchase of medications for eligible patients currently enrolled in the Hepatitis C program at the HOPE Clinic. The goal of treatment in the program is to eradicate the infection in order to prevent complications such as cirrhosis and liver cancer.

For more information on the SVDP Community Health Care, Inc. or to make a donation to purchase life-saving medication for patients at the HOPE clinic, please contact Executive Director, Suzanne Roberts at 276-9570 or SRoberts@svdpchcare.org