

# A HEALTHY ECONOMY

*WESTMARC helps the medical industry become a catalyst for growth in the West Valley*

By MICHAEL GOSSIE

**T**here was a time when many West Valley residents had to travel to downtown Phoenix or the East Valley for specialized healthcare services and treatments.

Times have dramatically changed.

"Whether it's specialized pediatric care, trauma care, cutting-edge heart care, or state-of-the-art cancer care, you can find some of the leading providers of those services in the West Valley," said Rob Gould, president of Banner Health's Arizona West Division.

You need to look no further than the Abrazo West Campus (formerly West Valley Hospital) and Cancer Treatment Centers of America at Western Regional Medical Center — which are separated by less than two miles in Goodyear — to see the healthcare innovation that has taken over the West Valley. Surgeons at Abrazo West performed the first surgery in the Valley using the new da Vinci Xi robotic surgical system. In April, CTCA began the Phase II portion of a first-of-its-kind clinical trial, using a new immunotherapy treatment for patients with advanced small cell lung cancer, pancreatic cancer and connective-tissue cancers, including breast cancer.

So how has the West Valley gone from having a reputation as a bedroom to community to one on the cutting edge of healthcare and medical research?

According to Sharon Grambow, chief operating officer of Sun Health Senior Living and immediate past chair of WESTMARC, the West Valley is well positioned for growth for healthcare organizations because of three factors:

- Demographics and concentration of seniors, who generally are high utilizers of care.
- The supply of healthcare professionals and workforce pool because of the growth of communities like Surprise, Peoria, Goodyear and Glendale.
- The changing face of healthcare which is trending away from the acute episodic incidents to more focusing on health and wellness, managing chronic disease and personal responsibility for an individuals health.

"There will be an explosion of growth away from the traditional hospital campuses," Grambow said, "and the West Valley has the available land to support that growth."

And writing the prescription to help the West Valley capitalize on healthcare opportunities has been WESTMARC.



**Don Freeman**



**Sharon Grambow**



**Rob Gould**



**Sharon Harper**



**Stan Holm**



**Matt McGuire**

## Catalyst for growth

"What WESTMARC has really done well is bringing people together in a way that is starting to build a more definitive brand for the west side of town," said Matt McGuire, president and CEO of CTCA at Western Regional Medical Center. "WESTMARC has an ability to bring thought leaders together to help better position the West Valley and really make it a place that is attractive not just to healthcare businesses, but to other businesses as well."

By serving as the leading advocate and economic development group for the West Valley, Gould said WESTMARC has helped outside companies better understand what the west side has to offer their businesses in terms of a skilled workforce, affordable land, freeway access to major markets and a high quality of life for their employees.

"We've also appreciated WESTMARC's efforts to help lawmakers better understand the positive impact healthcare has on the state and why we need to do all we can to support the healthcare industry," Gould said.

WESTMARC has really help drive the growth of healthcare, Grambow said, because it is uniquely positioned to bring together all the stakeholders — government, business and consumers — to work together for optimal outcomes.

"I am really struck by how friendly and business-minded the political leadership has been in the West Valley," McGuire said. "WESTMARC has an extraordinary ability to bring public and private leaders together to coalesce around opportunities and unique branding that makes the West Valley an attractive place for healthcare businesses and facilities to come."

Once healthcare companies come, economic development experts said other businesses will follow.

"Healthcare is a huge economic development driver," said Richard Hubbard, president and CEO of WESTMARC. "Having the ability to promote high-quality healthcare facilities in the West Valley helps us attract businesses. When you can promote premier healthcare facilities, it really is a draw. Plus, healthcare is a very high-wage industry, so there is the added benefit of having the economic impact of having an elite industry in the region."

Gould agreed that families and employers will often factor in the availability of quality healthcare before choosing where to relocate, "so having high quality health care institutions in the West Valley plays an important role in supporting the West Valley's economic development efforts."

## Maintaining momentum

Experts said one of the biggest strengths the West Valley has going for it as it aims to maintain growth in the healthcare sector is its sizable and well-educated workforce, many of whom reside in the West Valley but currently leave to work elsewhere.

"That's due, in part, to the fact that the West Valley is a



**EMERGENCY LANDING:** The Abrazo West Campus is home to a Level 1 Trauma Center.

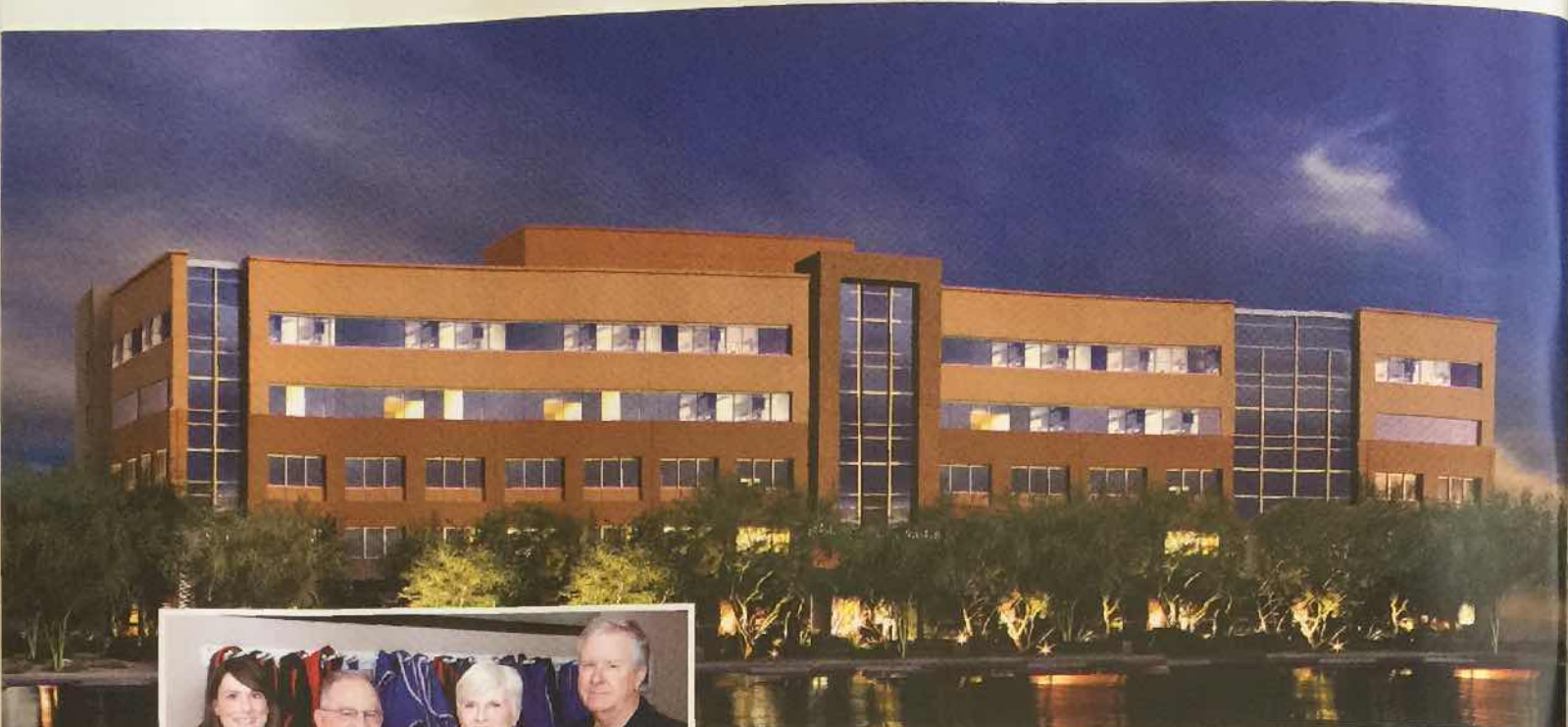
great place to live and play, so it attracts a dynamic and diverse workforce," Gould said. "Additionally, we're fortunate to have so many terrific secondary schools, colleges and universities offering quality healthcare training programs."

Gould said Banner enjoys a close relationship with several of them, including Glendale and Estrella Mountain community colleges, Grand Canyon University, Midwestern University and ASU West.

"Any day of the week, you can find nursing students, pharmacy students and medical students working alongside working professionals inside our hospitals, gaining the experience they'll need to enter the workforce," Gould said.

In addition to a built-in workforce, another strength is the tremendous support the healthcare industry receives from city leaders and economic development officials throughout the West Valley.

"A few years ago, for example, we completed a major \$290 million campus expansion at Banner Thunderbird Medical Center in Glendale," Gould said. "You don't get through a project of that scope and magnitude without extensive cooperation and



**A NEW LEVEL:** Michelle Lawrie, Goodyear's economic development director; Buckeye Mayor Jackie Meck; Goodyear Mayor Georgia Lord; and Litchfield Park Mayor Thomas Schoaf at the Level 1 Trauma Center at the Abrazo West Campus.

support from the city's economic development team, planning department and City Council. At Banner, we don't take that support for granted, and we appreciate it when we see it."

Healthcare leaders universally agreed.

"When I look at the mayors of the communities we serve — Avondale, Goodyear, Buckeye, Litchfield — they are all very progressive and collaborative," said Stan Holm, CEO of Abrazo West Campus.

Not to be ignored when creating a checklist of West Valley strengths is the fact that the region has room to grow.

"The West Valley is poised for growth because the region is not landlocked by anything tied to state land or Indian territories," Holm said. "It allows businesses to continuously expand and the opening of the Loop 303 has geographically set up the West Valley to succeed for the long run."

Don Freeman, senior project manager for healthcare for The Weitz Company said another advantage of the West Valley for healthcare facilities is the opportunity to get anchored and established in an up-and-coming market.

"Available land and economic development partners willing and able to work with real estate brokers, developers, new businesses and general contractors are the two major factors I see contributing to the growth," Freeman said.

#### PROVIDED PHOTOS

**COMING SOON:** Plaza Companies has partnered with Duke Realty to build a new Class A medical office building on Banner Estrella Medical Campus in Phoenix. The campus features a 392-bed full-service acute care hospital specializing in bariatrics, cardiology, cancer care, pulmonology, maternity services and women's health, neurosciences and orthopedics, among other specialties.

## What's next?

Valley residents don't have to look any further than daily headlines to see that healthcare is continuing to explode in the West Valley. In just the past five years, Gould said Banner Health has invested about \$250 million to expand existing healthcare facilities and to build new ones in the West Valley. This figure is led by the \$161 million expansion project that is nearly complete at Banner Estrella Medical Center in west Phoenix. And in June, Plaza Companies, which is based in the West Valley and is one of the premier medical office real estate firms in Arizona, announced it would help build a five-story addition to Banner Estrella Campus. It will be 70,000-square-foot initially, with future expansion capabilities up to 125,000 square feet.

"We are looking forward to this project and building a facility that will complement the success of the first Medical Plaza on the Banner Estrella campus," said Sharon Harper, president and CEO of Plaza Companies. "This is yet another sign of the growing need for healthcare services in the west Phoenix area. For years to come, this facility will serve thousands of people in need of medical care."

But that's not the only growth Banner is looking at in the West Valley.

"In June, we embarked on a \$2.3 million facelift of the Banner Thunderbird Medical Pavilion, a large medical office building on the campus of Banner Thunderbird Medical Center," Gould said. "Next year, we plan to open a new Banner Health Center on the northwest corner of the Loop 101 Freeway and 75th Avenue in Glendale in the Aspera development. This center will include primary care physicians, specialists and lab and medical imaging capabilities."



The new Banner Health facility will mark the company's fourth in the West Valley, joining Banner locations in Verrado, Estrella and Surprise.

But Banner isn't the only healthcare company expanding in the West Valley.

"We just finished a \$26 million expansion a year ago," Holm said. "In that, we had a south tower that was erected and the third floor was built out and we have shelf space on the first and second floors. We added operating room suites. We built out two operating rooms and have shelf space for future growth there. We are poised with shelf space to continue to grow with the community."

At CTCA, McGuire said he is deep into the process of planning for growth.

"We initiated a five-year master capital planning process about three months ago and will be working with our board over the summer about what that will include," McGuire said. "We are looking at options that include adding on to the existing footprint, but we also recognize where healthcare is moving, meaning much more care in the future is going to be delivered in outpatient settings."

McGuire said than in addition to adding about 200 parking spaces and finishing off a couple areas that are currently shelf space

PROVIDED PHOTOS

**FUTURE IS NOW:** The Abrazo West Campus was the first hospital in Arizona to receive the robotic-assisted da Vinci Xi Surgical System, which offers patients less invasive options and faster recovery from a variety of surgeries. The new technology provides advanced robotic technology including high-definition, 3-D visualization. It also allows for enhanced dexterity and greater precision and control for the surgeon.

within the hospital, executives at CTCA are looking at adjoining acreage around the hospital for potential expansion opportunities.

"Instead of adding on, we're exploring what it might look like to take a more campus approach for our hospital," McGuire said. "A lot of that will be decided in coming months."

As the healthcare industry continues to grow and medical innovation defines the West Valley, the region has developed a swagger that has made it an attractive place to do business.

"The west side has also been hurt historically by its reputation as a bedroom community," Gould said. "A thriving healthcare industry on the west side is helping change that perception. Today, in many of the communities we serve, our hospitals are the largest local employer, allowing residents to find quality, well-paying jobs in the same communities where they live and play." **AB**

## WEST VALLEY'S MAJOR EMPLOYERS

Here are the largest employers of West Valley residents, with the number of employees:

**Banner Health**, 7,690

**Luke Air Force Base**, 5,690

**American Express**, 3,700

**Grand Canyon University**, 3,550

**Amazon**, 3,020

**APS/Palo Verde**, 2,740

**Abrazo Community Health Network**, 1,940

**PetSmart**, 1,860

**JBS Packerland**, 1,100

**Shamrock Foods**, 1,040

**Swift Transportation**, 960

**HonorHealth**, 950

**UnitedHealth Group**, 940

**Lockheed Martin**, 800

**Honeywell**, 790