

Posted: 6:00 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 9, 2015



Pediatric practice marks 50 years

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By Hannah Poturalski

Staff Writer

FAIRFIELD — A local pediatric practice celebrating 50 years in business this year continues to grow and adapt to changing times.

Pediatric Associates of Fairfield — started in 1965 with one pediatrician, Dr. Stanley Goodman of New York — grew during the early 1970s to add four additional pediatricians, Drs. Philip Dreznik, Jean Janelle, Robert Lerer and Thomas Catalanotto.

“At that time you gave out your home phone number and made house calls,” said Dr. Lerer, board member for Pediatric Associates.

The practice quickly outgrew its original location on Hicks Boulevard in Fairfield before moving to Boymel Road. The practice moved again in late 2014 to behind Jungle Jim’s.

Pediatric Associates also has locations in Hamilton, West Chester Twp. and Harrison.

With now 11 pediatricians, three nurse practitioners and an administrative and medical staff of 60, the practice sees about 15,000 patients a year.

Arshawnda Neely, of Fairfield, who was a patient at Pediatric Associates during her childhood, now brings her three-year-old son Josiah to the practice. She said there are still some of the same nurses and doctors.

“They’re just a really good practice; everyone is sweet there and remembers your face when you go there,” Neely said.

Neely said any time she has a concern with her son she is able to get a same-day appointment to be seen quickly. She is now pregnant and plans to bring her second child to Pediatric Associates as well.

All four locations of Pediatric Associates added the electronic medical records system, Office Practicum, in October 2013 that allows the offices to communicate with each other and Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center. They also digitized historic records.

“They’ve transitioned to what’s going on in the world,” Neely said.

Mike Infantino, chief financial officer since 1990, said the pediatric practice self-funded its electronic medical records system with the help of some federal incentives.

“That allowed us to get over the hurdle of the expense for electronic medical records,” Infantino said.

Dr. Lerer said when the original five senior partners were in place in the 1970s, the practice would still see monthly cases of meningitis and severe cases of polio. He said through immunizations, those preventable diseases are virtually non-existent now.

Lerer said children used to be admitted to the hospital for things that can now be treated at home, such as a wheezing baby. He said the advancement of medications has “totally changed hospitals having children’s wards.”

Lerer, who was recruited to be a general pediatrician for the practice, said he set up the county’s first neonatal intensive care unit in 1985 at Fort Hamilton Hospital. He would later establish Mercy Health — Fairfield Hospital’s Level II nursery. He also started a program for children with developmental disabilities.

Lerer said after Dr. Janelle joined the practice as Butler County’s first pediatric allergist, he created the county’s first allergy lab for children. It continues to conduct allergy research today.

Lerer said many of the 15,000 annual patients to Pediatric Associates are on Medicaid. He said the practice always strives to serve poor populations. He said decades ago they’d even accept payment in the form of tomatoes and other produce.

Pediatric Associates of Fairfield

List of Providers

Dr. Thomas J. Catalanotto, MD FAAP

Dr. Nicole S.M. George, MD FAAP

Dr. Monica C. Oerther, MD FAAP

Dr. Ravi Ramachandran, MD FAAP

Dr. Marc A. Richardson, MD FAAP

Dr. V. Wade Weatherington, MD FAAP

Dr. Jeannine M. Allee, MD FAAP

Dr. Jennifer S. Haskell, MD FAAP

Dr. Warren S. Webb, MD FAAP

Dr. Michelle Burch (Beitzel), MD FAAP

Dr. Kristin Dinkelaker (Habel), MD FAAP

Janice Brooker, Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

Christine Brown, Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

Bree Rumpke, Certified Pediatric Nurse Practitioner