

## CEO Gizinski is second woman to head hospital in county, rises up ranks

By Ken Datzman

PALM BAY — When Judy Gizinski — the newly appointed president and chief executive officer of Health First's Palm Bay Community Hospital on Malabar Road — walks into her office early in the morning, she pulls the drapes wide open, gets herself situated at her desk, turns the chair to the left, and looks out the window.

The construction view and visible progress of the hospital's expansion seen from her first-floor office gives her an adrenalin jolt more powerful than several cups of Starbucks' espresso.

"Lately, I have been turning my chair more to the left than having it straight ahead at my desk so I can get a view of the \$82 million expansion that is taking place on campus," said Gizinski, who has worked in the community-hospital business for 20 years in Brevard County and in Winter Park, Fla.

"To me, this is excitement. I love it. I can't wait until the project is completed. It's going to be a wonderful service for the

community. We are two months ahead on the construction of the building. It is scheduled to be completed in June 2009 and our goal is to open the facility on time," Gizinski said.

From her office, the view of Palm Bay Community Hospital's future is crystal clear. The roughly 127,000-square-foot expansion will almost double the size of the hospital and position it to better serve this fast-growing community, Brevard's largest city with more than 100,000 residents.

The hospital's expansion will create about 50 jobs, she said. The new hires will include pharmacists, nurses, dietary personnel and housekeepers. "In January," Gizinski said, "we will begin our plans for recruitment. We won't start the hiring process until we are much closer to actually opening the facility."

As more Americans worry about a slowing economy, a new study highlights the important role hospitals play in their communities. Hospitals employ more than 5 million people and rank second as

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BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Judy Gizinski, who started her career with Cape Canaveral Hospital following her graduation from the University of Central Florida, is the new president and CEO of Health First's Palm Bay Community Hospital. The hospital is undergoing an \$82 million expansion that will almost double its size and increase bed capacity from 60 to 152. The project is scheduled to be completed in June 2009.

## Paychecks are expected to increase 3.9 percent

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a source of private-sector jobs, according to an April 2008 report by the America Hospital Association.

The construction will add 92 beds, bringing the total capacity to 152 beds at Palm Bay Community Hospital, which is owned by Health First Inc. Coming on line are two 40-bed units, all private inpatient beds, and 12 intensive-care beds.

"Right now, we have an eight-bed ICU. We encourage the family to be present with the patient around the clock. We do not lock down the ICU and our acuity level is very high. We have some very sick patients in our ICU. And we manage those patients with a family member right in the room. We really believe in a patient-centered model with the family at the bedside," she said.

In general, the three-story expansion, next to the existing facility, will reshape the hospital's footprint in many departments and Gizinski is the top executive in charge of the transformation. She was recently named to her current position and succeeds Gail Schuneman, who stepped into retirement after eight years as president and CEO.

Gizinski leads a work force of 415 people at Palm Bay Community Hospital. In addition, about 200 physicians are affiliated with the hospital.

"We have a very efficient team that works well together," she said. "We try to find the best practice in every model, not just a few models. In everything we do, we try to work together as a team. We are small enough to try to come together and help each other. I saw that happen from the first day I walked into this building. And there are no boundaries in reaching out to colleagues. I think it has allowed us to be very efficient and very lean. It's playing a big role in helping to keep our expenses low."

Palm Bay Community Hospital, which opened in 1992, stayed within the Health First system — a network that includes ownership of nonprofit entities Holmes Regional Medical Center in Melbourne and Cape Canaveral Hospital in Cocoa — and promoted Gizinski.

"I consider this a tremendous honor," she said about

being named president and CEO of Palm Bay Community Hospital.

Gizinski is the second woman to become a president and CEO of a hospital in Brevard. In fact, two of the three presidents in the 16-year history of Palm Bay Community Hospital have been women. "It's certainly nothing new for this corporation (Health First) to put women in top positions," said Gizinski, who cited a number of women within the organization who hold leadership positions.

Judy Killebrew, for example, is the chief operating officer of the largest hospital in Brevard County, the 514-bed Holmes Regional Medical Center. Jennifer McCarthy is vice president of professional support services for Palm Bay Community Hospital. Recently, until her retirement, Margaret Haney was president of Health First Health Plans Inc.

Gizinski previously served as vice president of information technology for Health First Inc. in Rockledge, overseeing about 200 people and running some of the health system's biggest projects over the years. This year, Health First was named one of the nation's top 100 "Most Wired" health systems, according to results of the Most Wired Survey and Benchmarking Study conducted by the American Hospital Association. The study says that patient satisfaction is higher at the "Most Wired" hospitals throughout the nation.

Gizinski says she is a hands-on CEO who has a laser focus on delivering quality services to patients at her facility. It's not uncommon to find her on the floors of the hospital meeting with patients and their families. "The staff embraces it and appreciates it. I ask them if there are any patients they would like me to see."

She joined Cape Canaveral Hospital right out of the University of Central Florida, where Gizinski earned her bachelor's degree in medical-record administration. She later added a master's degree in public health from UCF.

At Cape Canaveral Hospital, Gizinski worked in health-information management and medical-record administration for five years. She then joined Winter Park Memorial Hospital, a 300-bed facility. Gizinski

was employed there for 12 years, working closely with the hospital's staff and its team of physicians.

She worked in the quality department, in utilization review and infection control. During this time, the hospital market in Brevard began to change, driven by population growth and advances in technology. Gizinski followed the developments going on in the county.

"I had always maintained a relationship with Cape Canaveral Hospital, specifically with Larry Garrison (a former CCH president who is now executive vice president and COO of Health First Inc.) and Chris Kennedy (a former CCH president who is president and COO of Health First's new Viera hospital)," she said. "When Chris became president of Cape Canaveral Hospital, he was in the process of recruiting a director of health-information management for the three Health First hospitals."

Gizinski's name was on Kennedy's list of possible candidates for the job. "At first, I said I would help him find the person to fill the position, because I never intended to leave Winter Park. But when I came back and interviewed with him, I realized that this was the job of a lifetime for me and I would be a fool to turn it down. I took the job immediately and never regretted it."

She worked for six years in health-information management at Health First's corporate office in Rockledge. Gizinski ran the medical-record services, including coding and transcription, for the three Health First hospitals. She continued to win promotions, as vice president of information services and later as vice president of information technology.

Less than a third of the nation's hospital emergency and outpatient departments use electronic medical records, according to a report by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nationwide, the use of electronic records in health care lags behind the computerization of information in other sectors of the economy.

Gizinski spearheaded the mission to create an electronic medical record for the Health First system, a big undertaking. "Health First is on the leading edge of the industry," she said.