



August 19, 2010

Health clinic sees Lee County sheriff's office staff

\$7.2 million in savings projected over 3 years

by *thomas stewart* tstewart@news-press.com

The Lee County sheriff's in-house medical clinic opened earlier this month and began accepting regular office visits Monday.

After opening on Aug. 9, the clinic, located at 14311 Metro Parkway, was initially seeing employees only for health assessments.

The assessments, which include a variety of tests, attempt to catch health problems early, which minimizes health care costs for the sheriff's office.

Through assessments and other measures, the operator of the clinic, Tennessee-based CareHere, has projected a savings of \$7.2 million over the first three years.

The clinic is staffed by two doctors, a physician's assistant, two nurse practitioners, two registered nurses and one radiology technician, Sheriff Mike Scott wrote in an e-mail.

Employees and their dependents do not pay co-pays and prescriptions are free at the clinic.

The sheriff's office spends about \$20 million a year on health care.

Charlotte County, which spends about \$17 million a year on health care, has saved about \$3 million since it began using CareHere for its employees in April 2009, said Bob Pryor, the county's risk manager.

The county has saved by switching employees to generic prescriptions, focusing more on preventative care, and paying less for office visits, among other things, Pryor said.

"We've been pleasantly surprised with it," he said.
