

## SWFL's new psych hospital fills a gap

VANDY MAJOR / FLORIDA WEEKLY



The recently opened Park Royal is the only mental-health hospital in Lee County.

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It was painful. Doctors fighting doctors. Egos shooting down egos. Mouths hijacking momentum. But there was good intent. That's the way Greg Gardner remembers it. And that's the way he tells it — the initial meetings of the Lee County Mental Health and Addiction Coalition, a group aligned to set a strategic plan, one to improve the lives of those in need of mental health care.

"Everybody had a different opinion of whose problem it was," Mr. Gardner says of those inceptive meetings back in 2008. "Everybody was throwing blame."

Community Health Visioning 2017 — an effort steered by Lee Memorial Health System to envision and enact optimal health care in Lee County — had identified mental health as a plight of paramount concern. The county had been without a psychiatric hospital since the close of Charter Glade Hospital in 2000. The nearest state hospital, G. Pierce Wood Memorial in Arcadia, had closed in 2002. There were beds for those in crisis, those admitted involuntarily after being assessed as a danger to themselves or someone else, but as far as any preventive inpatient psychiatric care, there were no beds in all the county.

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# HIDDEN TREASURES

*The Peace River reveals the past*



MARK RENZ / COURTESY PHOTO

Fossils found in and around the Peace River have contributed to national collections. A major scientific review of these finds begins in April.

BY EVAN WILLIAMS  
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A MAJOR SCIENTIFIC REVIEW OF FOSSILS found in and around the Peace River is set to begin in April. But for decades, amateurs, from first-time fossil hunters to wise river guides, have found the teeth and bones of animals from the strange and wild ancient world that used to exist in Southwest

Florida.

Eight of us were looking for fossils recently in water that was only about a foot or two deep, but in the rainy season sometimes rises as high as 12 feet, said local guide Mark Renz. We were standing in the Peace River in Brownville Park in Arcadia, about midway between where it empties into Charlotte Harbor and where

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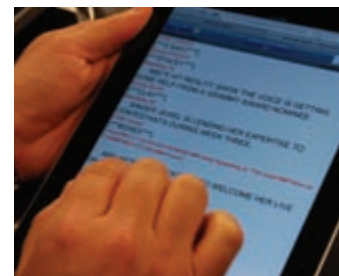
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### Going green

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