

## Sign in a Small Town

A few days ago, when Lola and I were vacationing in Florida, we drove through a small municipality in the north central part of the state. Often, we enjoy taking routes apart from the interstate highways to enjoy the charms of towns and cities not visible from busy freeways.

As we passed through the business district of this particular town, I noticed what was obviously a walk-in clinic. Its name was proclaimed in big, bold letters along the side of a window-less wall: **Medical \_are Center**. The **C** had either fallen off or was removed by vandals. Looking around the property, I observed that the building was in need of paint, and not much yard work had been done around it. Some cars -- I would guess for patients and staff members -- were there, but they looked lost in a large parking lot. The indication was that the clinic might not be as busy as the owners had once hoped it would be.

The building and grounds contained a message, and it is one that has significance for us in Life Care and American Lifestyles. Perception is reality in the minds of people. My determination, and probably that of many others who drove by the property, was that the clinic's owners and operators were neglecting the physical environment. And if they were not paying attention to little (by comparison) details on the outside, maybe they weren't focused on the important concerns (the health needs of their patients) on the inside.

It is an appropriate conclusion, and one that has merit.

As for the centers that we operate, are people shopping for our services likely to be impressed by cigarette butts in the parking lot, or entranceways that need a coat of paint, or hallways that don't shine, or furniture that is tired and worn? Indeed not.

And what if they see staff members smoking just outside the front door? Or they are greeted without much in the way of smiles and good cheer when they enter the facility? Customers and prospects will rate our caregiving by what they see and experience on issues not even related to patient interaction. And whether we may think that is fair or not, it is part of the human makeup.

Let's be certain that we "shine," in every way, when people come to our buildings. Or even when they are driving by.

--Beecher Hunter