

Welcome, Jacksonville

A new facility to serve the Northeast Florida area officially joined the Life Care family Thursday evening. Life Care Center of Jacksonville had quite a coming-out party, with a full house for the dedication ceremony, tours for VIPs who were smitten by the beauty and function of the building, an array of tasty food that had folks going back for seconds and thirds, and an outstanding variety of entertainment, including hula dancers to complement the island theme.

The ceremonial highlight came when Shirley Earl, 97 (who will become the first resident), assisted by Rob Hampton of the Convention and Visitors Bureau and Pat Hammond, executive director of the new center, officially snipped the red ribbon to declare its formal opening. Ms. Earl's introduction and her wielding of the scissors brought cheers and applause.

The program included stirring music by Jimmy Rhodes, Life Care's director of music services; prayers by Pastor Terrence Lucarelli of the Lakewood Presbyterian Church; presentation of the colors by U.S. Navy Seabees; an emotional rendition of the National Anthem by Hadijat Laiyemo, a certified nursing assistant at the center; and community greetings from Joann Nolin, University of North Florida, and Staci Spanos of WJXT News Channel 4.

Don Giardina, Life Care president, and Cathy Murray, chief operating officer, described the Life Care family and operational philosophy.

Department heads introduced were Angelia Smucygz, director of nursing; Karin Costandi, assistant director of nursing; Jill Byars, director of rehabilitation; Polly Creedon, director of admissions; Janice Ryalls, director of community relations; Kathy Schmidt, nurse liaison; Jane Refosco, director of social services; Gale Boice, director of the business office; Sally Kirkpatrick, director of activities; Ellen Gast, director of people development; Steve Padgett, director of dietary and environmental; and Tony Maida, director of maintenance.

Zhi Jian Yu, M.D., Ph.D., is the medical director.

Located on Lenoir Avenue, just off Philips Highway, the 120-bed facility will become a new partner in the continuum of health care for Jacksonville and Duval County, and provide a total economic boost to the area of about \$8 million a year, considering payroll, taxes and the purchase of goods and services.

And it had quite a beginning!

--Beecher Hunter