

Bravo to Business

Meridian Health Services

*A new name and era
in health care for
Central Indiana*

BY DARREL RADFORD | PHOTOS BY KYLE EVENS

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Dr. Randy Brown, part of Meridian Health Services MeridianMD program, evaluates a patient. MeridianMD offers services for children and adults.





The Meridian Health Services Board of Directors, from left to right: Charlie Sursa, Fund Development; Al Rent; Brent Webster, Board Chairman; Hank Milius, President/CEO; David Gobble; Doug Loy; Vicki Tague; Brian Ring; Wayne Shaffer; Micah Maxwell; Sue Ann Pflum and John Bowles.

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For the mother who has diabetes and suffers from depression. For the child who has never spoken a word outside of home because of abuse. For adults and teens battling drug addiction. For senior citizens with psychiatric issues who need hospital care.

In all of the above cases and so much more, Meridian Health Services strives to be Central Indiana's "whole person" health expert — a team of medical professionals determined to integrate all aspects of health care under one systematic umbrella.

"Meridian Health Services understands the powerful connection between the body and the mind and is creating a new holistic approach to health care," said Hank Milius, the organization's chief executive officer. "Treating the whole person, rather than independent parts alone, is resulting in happier, healthier patients."

Formerly known as Meridian Services, Milius said the new name of Meridian Health Services is being launched this month because of the organization's dedication to creating a healthier community. In an effort to do this, a primary medical care unit — MeridianMD — has been added into the core services.

"As a result, a true medical home has been created, where doctors, nurses and counselors coordinate treatments and medications seamlessly to address the total health of a person," Milius said.

Brent Webster, Meridian Health Services' board chairman, said the board members thought it was particularly important to make sure patients have access to a primary care physician.

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“Meridian Health Services understands the powerful connection between the body and the mind and is creating a new holistic approach to health care. Treating the whole person, rather than independent parts alone, is resulting in happier, healthier patients.”

— HANK MILIUS,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

At right: Dr. Sarfraz Khan, MD leads the medical staff at Meridian Health Services.



“We found many times patients don’t have a regular doctor, a major obstacle to a person’s complete health,” Webster said. “Studies show life expectancy of people with a chronic mental illness is 25 years less than the average person due to the lack of primary medical care.”

Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary defines the word “meridian” as a “high point.” Certainly this Meridian has lived up to that description over the past decade. Consider:

- Meridian has one of just four nationally accredited Child Advocacy Centers (CAC) in the state. Through the work of the CAC, rates of cases accepted for prosecution went from 25 to 80 percent. “The bad guys are being dealt with,” Milius said. “The victims are being treated.”
- Revenue and job creation for the organization has tripled in the past 10 years.
- New clinics have been added in Richmond, Winchester, Rushville and Indianapolis, joining those in Muncie, Portland and New Castle, including opening a specialty center for children and families — the Suzanne Gresham Center — and the primary medical clinics and hospital care.

Last year, Meridian served more than 10,000 clients through its 10 primary locations serving more than 20 counties in Indiana.

But statistics, even as good as those are, can’t compete with the appreciative looks on the faces of those patients as they benefit from Meridian Health Services.

For Milius, the organization’s success is a true team effort, starting with a talented and active board of directors.

“They have played an important role in establishing a vision and our staff has done an excellent job of making that vision become a reality,” Milius said. “Many of our board members have chaired United Way cam-

paigns and been leaders in other community projects. They also helped lead in the strategic approach of Meridian’s health-care integration.”

Milius had worked in Michigan, Missouri and even Alabama before being drawn to Muncie.

“I came here because of the potential I saw for this organization,” Milius said. “This is a strong community with a Division I college and a top-tier hospital. There is a nice cohesive health care system in place. Everyone wants to work together for the good of the patient.”

Meridian’s staff is talented, experienced and diversified, according to Milius. Staff numbers here have grown from 200 to 600 in the past 10 years, a statistic that reflects both the depth of what Meridian Services offers and the ever-changing needs of this area.

Staff members include licensed physicians, nurse practitioners, clinical therapists and social workers who provide evaluations, therapy and medication reviews tailored to each individual’s unique needs. Medical services also include an after-hours clinic, full-service pharmacy and in-patient care.

In-patient medical care is represented on Meridian’s Gero-Psychiatric unit on IU Health Ball Memorial Hospital’s third floor. Milius said the focus is on senior citizens and combining physical and mental health specialized for the elderly.

Not only does Meridian’s spectrum of services connect medical and behavioral health, but it also delivers social health programs focused on human services like independent living support, job skills training, foster care for special needs children as well as counseling and support for child abuse victims.

“Meridian is the first and currently only behavioral health care system in Indiana to offer such care,” Milius said.

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