

OPINION

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

Palm Beach County needs spine facility

The number of global orthopedic procedures per year is forecasted to approach 28.3 million by 2022, and Palm Beach County will be a hotspot for this activity.

Our county, the capital of Baby Boomer population growth, forecasts a 40% increase in the 65-older population by 2030. This post-pandemic influx of growth to our region ensures there will be great demand for specialists of all kinds, but — in particular — spine and orthopedic care is expected to outpace all other services.

These patients deserve a facility that specializes exclusively in spine and orthopedic surgery, not a generic, impersonal, subpar general hospital where patients are just numbers on the daily docket. And Palm Beach County deserves it, too.

This is why we have joined forces as majority owners to develop the South Florida Spine & Orthopedic Institute. We are 29 board certified, elite surgeons who have been living, operating and raising our families in Palm Beach County for decades. Combined, we have more than a century of orthopedic and spine surgery experience.



By Robert Norton and Elvis Grandic



Not only will we maintain office space in the institute's medical offices and operate out of its surgical rooms, we will also use our vast knowledge as practicing surgeons to govern the institute and ensure its status as a center of health care excellence.

Our commonality is that we fiercely care about our patients, and no longer want to sit by as our neighbors receive subpar treatment.

How do we know they receive subpar treatment? Because we have first-hand experience working in Palm Beach County's hospitals and see that there is a vacuum of quality orthopedic and spinal surgery facilities. Florida used to require a what's known as a certificate of need to open new medical facilities — in general, new facilities could not open near existing hospitals. However, these requirements served to squeeze out smaller medical centers, allowing large hospital systems to form monopolies, stifle innovation and, in the process, keep health-care costs high.

Thankfully, the state repealed these requirements in 2019, and now we have the opportunity to bring a surgical center to South Florida the likes of which the state

has never seen before.

Many of us received specialized training in some of the nation's top spine and orthopedic facilities. From these experiences, we realized there are significant advantages to stand-alone surgical facilities. Not only do they offer the best technology, they also employ dedicated teams solely focused on executing spine and orthopedic procedures every day. The marriage of cutting-edge equipment and surgical specialists offers patients the best results, including lower infection rates, decreased rates of complications, improved surgical outcomes and regained quality of life. Our current Delray Beach outpatient facility, Delray Beach Surgical Suites, routinely receives five-star reviews for its surgical outcomes, friendly staff and efficient operation. We know our new venture will achieve the same results.

However, there has been recent opposition to our proposal by the Alliance of Delray, an umbrella organization of homeowners associations, which has been spreading misinformation about our project. This is not surprising, considering the group's executive vice president sits on the board of directors for Delray Medical Center, one of the Alliance's biggest sponsors. The facility received a 1-star rating from the Centers for Medicare and Medic-

aid Services last year and is one of the large, out of state, for-profit monopolies that has profited from delivering low-quality, overpriced health care. This is exactly what we are trying to change.

These individuals are lobbying against Palm Beach County's best interests. The reasons the Alliance opposes this facility are based on factually incorrect information, positioning us in a light that is not true to our mission or our core beliefs as physicians.

We are a physician owned, physician-led, state-of-the-art facility with one goal: to provide our patients with world-class orthopedic care.

To the residents of Palm Beach County: You may not need orthopedic or spinal care services today, but it is very likely that you will one day — and we can assure you that you'll want your procedure performed in a specialized facility. We hope that the community will support the development of this much-needed, state-of-the-art resource, and that readers will voice their support for this important initiative by visiting soflaspineandortho.com.

Robert Norton, MD and Elvis Grandic, MD are two of the 29 physicians proposing the South Florida Spine & Orthopedic Institute in Palm Beach County.

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

Pride Month ends, but diversity, inclusion are year-round goals

As business leaders in South Florida, we each represent a critical thread in the vibrant tapestry of organizations working together to support our community's education, health and economic infrastructure. One of our essential responsibilities as Broward County champions is to be at the forefront of the diversity, equity, access and inclusion (DEAI) movement to create an inclusive and welcoming South Florida for all. DEAI is more than a once-a-year celebration or acknowledgment; I am calling on each of us to ensure the DEAI ideals are interwoven into our very existence as institutions. By promoting workplace and community authenticity year-round, we can help make Fort Lauderdale a freer and more equal place to live, work and play.

What can DEAI look like for your company? Here are three ways to get started.



By Joe Cox

for moms; and ensuring that the entire community is represented. Staff evokes understanding and acceptance of diversity; all are truly welcome here.

At MODS, our programming and partnerships are key to providing access and an authentically welcoming environment. Leaders can use these examples to spark ideas for their own organizations.

- Reach underserved students and families in the most underserved ZIP codes.
- Host cultural celebrations representing the diverse community.
- Partner with schools and universities to provide unique experiences at no cost or internships that develop workforce skills for those underrepresented in local industries.
- Offer specialized programming or make specific accommodations for individuals with sensory or autism spectrum disorder.
- Offer technology and programming for individuals who are hearing or physically impaired.
- Provide discounted or free admission to underrepresented communities, veterans and active military families.
- Provide access to social service agencies, children and families with limited resources to enjoy our area's cultural institutions. Think beyond your walls by delivering programs out in the community, thereby eliminating the need for transportation, one of the most critical deterrents to accessibility.
- Think broadly about access, including vulnerable populations such as seniors lacking mobility or isolated due to the pandemic.

Engage your partners

The impact of DEAI in your organization can be amplified by your existing partnerships, networks and new contacts. Partnerships strengthen our ability to provide inclusive programming.

Through partnerships with local business and government leaders, we ignite conversations and create action. For example, Opening Doors is the umbrella initiative for MODS' accessibility programs, launched in 2018. Our commitment to the LGBTQ+ community was shaped and supported by an advisory task force composed of 20 dedicated LGBTQ+ community leaders and advocates.

Now more than ever, it is imperative to center equity and inclusion in decision-making, to take collective action to raise the voices of the most vulnerable and to reach out and open doors wherever we can. Fort Lauderdale is a community with a long history of collaborative efforts, including public and private partnerships that make a difference. We are in a solid position to make decisions grounded in equitable principles and collectively work differently than before. Join us in reimagining our community as one where everyone feels welcome. Starting now.

Joseph P. Cox is president and CEO at the Museum of Discovery and Science.



This undated image shows student cheerleader Brandi Levy in front of Mahanoy Area High School in Mahanoy, Pennsylvania. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that her profanity-laden social media post was protected by free speech rules. DANNA SINGER/ACLU

ANOTHER VIEWPOINT

After Supreme Court win, student free speech rights still in danger

On June 23, 2021, the Supreme Court issued its decision in *Mahanoy v. B.L.*, ruling for the first time on whether public schools can constitutionally regulate off-campus student speech.

The court held that high school student Brandi Levy was unconstitutionally disciplined by Mahanoy Area High School in Pennsylvania after she posted a profanity-laced Snapchat rant when she failed to make the varsity cheer squad, proclaiming "f— school f— softball f— cheer f— everything." Despite granting Levy a historic First Amendment victory, the decision leaves students and their parents in limbo as to when, exactly, schools can reach into their homes, their personal social media, or their leisure activities to punish young people for what they say.

This uncertainty is chilling for young people who, particularly in middle and high school, are experimenting and evolving in their ability to express themselves. They need the space to do this on their own time — so long as it is lawful — without facing retribution from their schools. But the Justices in the *Mahanoy* case declined to offer any clear line-drawing about when off-campus speech comes within the school's reach, offering only this vague guidance:

- Schools bear a "heavy burden" to justify interference with political or religious speech.
- Schools have a duty to protect students' right to express unpopular viewpoints.
- Parents usually have more authority than schools to regulate off-campus expression.

These principles leave an ocean of gray area and will not prevent schools from wrongly punishing students. Consider the following examples.

In Georgia, a Troup County student was expelled for "gang-related" conduct after he posted his rap video on YouTube that was paid for and filmed in the presence of his mother on a weekend. The school took issue with some of the hand gestures displayed in the video and the fact that the student was holding what appeared to be a handgun. The *Mahanoy* case provides no clear answer as to whether the school overreached, other than to suggest that the mother's approval of her son's artistic expression should have carried significant



By Clare Norins

weight.

Also in Georgia, a North Paulding High School student was suspended for posting on her Twitter account, after school hours, images captured on her personal cell phone of crowded school hallways during the COVID-19 pandemic that a school superintendent described as "criticizing our reopening efforts."

Would this be considered "off-campus" speech since the images posted were taken at school? Does critique of a school's response to a public health crisis qualify as "political" speech? These questions are still uncertain.

There are many more such examples with no definite resolution after the court's decision. A Michigan high school senior was suspended for posting on social media a picture of dirty, yellow-ish tap water running from a school bathroom sink. A Hispanic student in Massachusetts was suspended for "posting on his Facebook page that racists should not be teaching Spanish," even though he did not name his school or identify any specific teachers.

In some of the foregoing scenarios, school authorities eventually rescinded students' punishments after the situation received national media coverage. In others, the students sued their schools. But for every case where a student's off-campus speech rights are eventually vindicated, there are many others where the trampling of rights goes unredressed. This is not healthy for young people's development or for our ideals of a society in which self-expression is cherished and parents retain core responsibility for their children's conduct outside of school.

Schools, students and parents need clear guidance, or the parameters of what students can and can't say when outside of school will continue to be chillingly unpredictable. We should therefore celebrate that the *Mahanoy* case affirmed Brandi Levy's right to profane free expression, but recognize that the larger fight for student free speech is far from won.

Clare Norins is an assistant clinical professor at the University of Georgia School of Law, and director of the school's First Amendment Clinic. She also serves on the board of the Georgia First Amendment Foundation.

Add a diversity statement to your mission

Expand your mission to include a diversity statement that explains your commitment to DEAI. For example, here's what we included at the Museum of Discovery and Science (MODS):

We welcome individuals from all walks of life to visit, experience, connect and discover inspiring science. We support all family structures, creating a culture of hospitality where diversity is celebrated. Our doors are open to everyone: individuals and families with physical and emotional disabilities and disparities in education, social and economic status. We embrace our truly diverse community of various ethnicities, religions, gender identification and sexual orientations.

Include your key constituents in the development of this statement to reflect the voice of the people and ensure buy-in. Clearly state your values.

Infuse DEAI into your plans, strategies and tactics

Make an organizational commitment to inclusion, reaffirming that commitment as a goal of your strategic plan, similar to the No. 1 goal of our museum's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, which states, "Engage our community and expand our impact by providing substantive, memorable and accessible experiences." From a tactical standpoint, this means infusing a "MODS for All" mindset into our daily planning and operations; creating an inviting visitor experience for members and allies of the LGBTQ+ community and those with varying abilities and income levels; promoting diverse hiring practices; offering enriching staff training and leadership; providing specialized programming for individuals with sensory needs; furnishing on-site amenities such as an all-gender restroom and nursing station

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