



**CONTACT:**

Pat Dolce, Public Affairs Specialist  
(O) 239-343-8370 - (C) 239-989-2758

Department Mobile/After Hours:  
239-789-5786

**Lee Health Hospital Chefs Compete at the Vegetarian Chef Challenge**  
*Fifth Annual Event Aims to Inspire Healthier Food Choices*

(Fort Myers, Fla. – Nov. 13, 2018) --- An annual tradition now in its fifth year, Lee Health’s culinary team celebrated National Vegetarian Awareness Month with the Vegetarian Chef Cook-Off. This year, four chefs— Shari O’Connor from Cape Coral Hospital, Evelyn Williams from Gulf Coast Medical Center, Kalvyn Luzarraga from HealthPark Medical Center and Chris Chrombok from Lee Memorial Hospital— traveled to each hospital and prepared plant-based dishes. Tasters at each campus cast their votes for their favorite dish and the top two chefs advanced to the final cook-off, which was held on Nov. 12 at Lee Memorial Hospital, coinciding with the start of the American Heart Association’s Eat Smart Month.

Luzarraga and Williams advanced to the grand champion cook-off, where they each had 20 minutes to create a hot entrée for the five guest judges using plant-based ingredients. This year’s judges included Enza LoCascio, RD, Clinical Dietitian, Lee Health; Nicole Menendez, Lee Heart Walk Director, American Heart Association of Southwest Florida; Doug MacGregor, Program Coordinator, Lee Health Arts in Healthcare; Kathy Reynaert-Randall, Certified Lifestyle Medicine Education, CHIP Facilitator, Trainer and Area Developer; and Cassie Kirby, RN, MSN, CPHQ, Senior Program Manager, Accreditation and Quality, Lee Health.

The judges enjoyed both dishes: Williams’ Jamaican Jerk Cauliflower served with brown rice and green beans and Luzarraga’s smoked chickpea wrap with spinach, carrots, cucumber and tahini sauce. This year’s top prize went to Evelyn Williams who also served an almond milk/pineapple/strawberry smoothie in a fresh pineapple.

“The Vegetarian Chef Cook-Off is always a fun and interactive way to introduce people to plant-based food choices,” explains Larry Altier, Lee Health System Director of Food and Nutrition Services. “The chefs enjoy this because it allows them to be creative with these healthy ingredients. We hope this annual event inspires people to try to incorporate more plant-based options into their meal choices.”

Balanced nutrition is a key component of a healthy lifestyle; and a vegetarian diet can help reduce the risk of heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and obesity.

**Photo: LtoR: Kathleen Moore, Director of Food Services, Gulf Coast Medical Center; Larry Altier, System Director Food & Nutrition Services, Lee Health; Evelyn Williams and Kalvyn Luzarraga**

**About Lee Health**

*Since the opening of the first hospital in 1916, Lee Health has been a health care leader in Southwest Florida, constantly evolving to meet the needs of the community. A non-profit, integrated health care services organization, Lee Health is committed to the well-being of every individual served, focused on healthy living and maintaining good health. Staffed by caring people, inspiring health, services are conveniently located throughout the community in four acute care hospitals, two specialty hospitals, outpatient centers, walk-in medical centers, primary care and specialty physician practices and other services across the continuum of care. Formerly known as Lee Memorial Health System, the organization began its second century of service with a new name in 2016. Learn more at [www.LeeHealth.org](http://www.LeeHealth.org)*