

Faith, family, fun, fairness works for Big Stone Therapies

The four "Fs," faith, family, fun and fairness, have been the foundation for Big Stone Therapies since it opened in July of 1990. That philosophy has made the company successful. It began with just Physical Therapists Wade VanDover and Paul Treinen and their wives Cindy VanDover and Julie Treinen doing the books, in a basement corner of the Ortonville Hospital next to the laundry room. Twenty years later, the business has grown to 180 full and part-time employees with several clinics in 16 different communities.

"Big Stone Therapies wouldn't be where it is today without the grace of God, presenting us with the right opportunities and putting the right people in our lives at the right times," said Paul Treinen, PT/COO. "We have been blessed to be able to work with wonderful physicians, hospital administrators, schools and patients who put their trust in us over the years."

Treinen and VanDover met in the 1980s in Aberdeen, SD, when the two were working as physical therapists for St. Luke's Hospital. They were considering starting their own practice when they received a call from a headhunter representing Ortonville, Graceville, Wheaton and Sisseton Hospitals, asking the two to consider opening a physical therapy practice in the four communities.

The area being proposed was familiar to the men, because Wade's wife Cindy is originally from Big Stone City, SD and Paul's father-in-law Rolly Treinen was originally from the Artichoke Lake area. "The opportunity came to us," said VanDover, "We were excited about it and knew it would take a lot of hard work, but we felt that was where we were meant to be."

By 1998, aside from Ortonville, Graceville, Wheaton and Sisseton, SD, they had opened clinics in Madison and Milbank, SD and the company had grown to 25 employees. VanDover and Treinen could see the potential to keep expanding, but they were so busy with the hands-on work, that they decided they needed to hire an administrator to handle the growing business end of the company.

They knew it had to be the right

person, who shared in their values and wanted to live in their small community. God presented another opportunity for them, and it was right next door to Treinen in Ortonville. Paul's neighbor, Roman Taffe, had a strong business background, and most definitely shared the same core values. Taffe joined them in 2002 and is now part owner and chief administrative officer of the company.

"Roman has been a huge addition to Big Stone Therapies," said VanDover. "He brings such tremendous business experience and technological knowledge and is a great person. We're lucky to have him as a partner."

The three partners have put a lot of hard work into getting where they are today. They prepare business plans and evaluate and set goals on a regular basis. They have an advisory committee and business consultant who work closely with them. They also feel it important to attend national and state physical therapy conventions to learn new techniques, ideas and networking opportunities.

Big Stone Therapies provides therapy to people of all ages in outpatient clinics and inpatient settings, including hospitals, long term care and assisted living facilities. In addition, staff members provide therapies for home health care, school based care and businesses/individual settings.

Big Stone Therapies provides services in 16 communities. They work through the hospitals and long term care facilities in 12 communities including, Ortonville, Graceville, Wheaton, Madison, Browns Valley, Hendricks, Ivanhoe, Minneota, Aikin and Olivia in Minnesota and in Sisseton and Milbank in South Dakota. They own private clinics in the four communities of Baxter, Morris, Marshall and Watertown, SD.

The company has grown into three separate businesses: Big Stone Therapies - which consists of physical therapy, athletic therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy and massage therapy; OccuPro - which works with businesses to promote health and well being of employees, and establishes and maintains wellness plans and works closely with workmen's comp and the insurance

industry to keep employees well and the workplace more efficient; Big Stone Enterprises - which serves as the holding company for their real estate assets.

Of Big Stone Therapies 180 employees, 145 are full-time with benefits. They have very low employee turnover, and the partners feel that is due to the other part of the four "Fs," the family, fun and fairness. They tell their employees that family comes first, and encourage them to work their schedules around their family commitments. They enjoy what they do, which makes it fun, and they strive to be fair in all they do.

Each year three to four employees get the opportunity to take part in the company's mission trip to San Lucas, Guatemala. They provide therapy to underprivileged people there, who can't afford health care. The mission is with other health care workers, organized by the Catholic Diocese out of New Ulm. "Everyone who has gone on the mission, brings back so much from the experience, said Treinen. "It's a great opportunity which we're glad to be a part of."

As for the future, VanDover, Treinen and Taffe are trying to create leadership and ownership opportunities for their employees so Big Stone Therapies will continue in the direction they started.

"Wade, Paul and Roman are not the key to Big Stone Therapies success," said VanDover, "It is being grounded in the Lord and being open to his promptings."

They are grateful for the opportunities and people who have come into their lives over the past twenty years and thank everyone for their encouragement and support. They are especially appreciative of their families who have stood by them and helped them in their decisions throughout the years.

Treinen and his wife Julie live in Ortonville. They have six children, Andrew, Ashma, Hannah, Mary Kate, Nate and Pete. VanDover and his wife Cindy live in Big Stone City with their five children, Joseph, Mark, Claire, Daniel and Paul. Taffe and his wife Carol live in Ortonville. They have three children, Mitch, Charlie and Kelly.