

Martini lauds Palm Drive stroke care at Taft Street

Local vintner and former Santa Rosa mayor thanks crew for saving his life

by David Abbott
Sonoma West Editor

Published: Friday, July 16, 2010 10:16 PM PDT

SEBASTOPOL — On March 3, at about 2:40 p.m., former Santa Rosa Mayor and Taft Street Winery owner Mike Martini's world flipped over.

"Imagine your worst possible drunk as an adolescent, and then spin on a baseball bat. Double that and you'll get an idea how dizzy I was," he said to a gathering of Palm Drive staffers at a party last Friday celebrating Palm Drive's recent certification as a nationally recognized stroke care facility.

Martini and his wife Susan were eating at a Sebastopol restaurant when his stroke hit. He became unresponsive, and realizing that "time was of the essence," Susan took the steps that saved Martini's life.

"I told him he had 30 seconds to answer me or I was calling 911," Susan said.



A-TEAM – The Palm Drive stroke program has already benefitted members of the community. Pictured left to right: Palm Drive's Interim CEO Mike Lieb, ER Director Dr. Jorge Gonzalez, Stroke Program Coordinator Val Takes, Dr. Allan Bernstein, Taft Street owner and former Santa Rosa Mayor Mike Martini and Dr. Michael Holmes.

Twenty minutes later, Martini was in the care of the Pal

According to Martini, hospital staff made all the appropriate arrangements. When he had been transferred to a facility in San Francisco, he was ready to go home.

He was transferred back to a facility in Santa Rosa, where they "expressed consternation and asked: Why are you here?" Martini said.

To celebrate his new-found connection with Palm Drive and its staff, Martini invited a cadre of hospital staffers, administrators and board members to his tasting room to thank them for their care and draw attention to the facility's new status as a certified stroke center.

In June, the Palm Drive Health Care District received notification that it had become a Primary Stroke Center, joining Kaiser as one of only two hospitals in the county to meet national standards for treatment of stroke patients.

The certification means the hospital meets or exceeds national standards set by the American Stroke Association and the American Heart Association for treatment of stroke patients.

Palm Drive's medical personnel receive advanced training in stroke care and the use of clot-busting drugs, and neurologists are available 24 hours a day and 7 days a week.

A stroke patient — such as Martini, who went to his local hospital during a critical time in his event — can be examined, diagnosed and begin treatment within one hour of arriving at the emergency room.

The main engine behind the hospital's newfound calling as a stroke center, is the addition of Sebastopol resident Dr. Allan Bernstein to its staff.

Bernstein, who grows apples on property not far from Taft Street's tasting room on Occidental Road and Barlow, has been the preeminent neurologist in the Bay Area for more than 30 years.

He was instrumental in the development of Kaiser's stroke care program, and was happy in his brief retirement.

"My 2-month retirement ended abruptly at Palm Drive," Bernstein said, as he addressed the gathering in the late afternoon sun. "It's an incredible team with a seamless arrangement."

Bernstein complimented his co-workers, saying that "It's fun to walk in the door," and "easy too, after being a stroke director at Kaiser.

"There are no turf battles. All we needed was a plan to make it happen," he added. "Thanks for making it work. No conflict of who's going to do what when."

The Palm Drive Health Care District board president Nancy was on hand as well.

"I want to echo some of these comments and broaden them," she said. "It's the team of the hospital that makes it work. The success (is the result) of not a single board member or donor, but the community. A community that works together works."

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the U.S. and the leading cause of serious, long-term disability. Most strokes are caused by blood clots that shut off the supply of blood to areas of the brain.

The brain cells quickly begin to die unless clot-busting drugs are administered within three hours of the first stroke symptoms.

Fortunately for Martini, his wife — who had a kidney transplant 11 years ago — was alert to his problem and the hospital was just a few minutes away.

"I can't imagine a safer place, with unbelievable care," he said.

If the hospital can achieve 157 stroke admissions per year, not only will it save many lives, but it could mean an additional \$823,545 in net income.