

Maloff Center not just about helping the injured



Rehabbing at the Maloff Center comes with stunning views.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

By Kathryn Reed

People are hobbling on crutches, easing along with a walker and relying on a cane for stability. Clearly, this is a place for healing. But just steps from the entrance is what looks like a state-of-the-art-gym, not just the usual apparatuses in a rehabilitation center.

The dichotomy between patient and tools appears extreme, at least to the lay person.

To those who work here, it all seems very normal.

“Treating the entire patient and not just the injury or symptoms.”



The Robert Maloff Center in South Lake Tahoe is designed to revolutionize wellness on the South Shore. Photo/Kathryn Reed

That is the overriding philosophy of the Barton Center for Orthopedics and Wellness that opened in May in the Robert Maloff Center. The complex is walking distance from Barton Memorial Hospital in South Lake Tahoe.

It's been a gradual opening, with rehabilitation staff starting to work there last week, orthopedics and integrated medicine will move over next week, and the grand opening will be in July.

While words like "performance" and "excellence" were first associated with the facility when it was in its developmental phase, this led to some confusion as to whether this center was for elite athletes or everyone else. It's both, with the "everyone else" being more of the emphasis because there are more of them. "Performance" and "excellence" are defined by the individual without comparison to others.



Chris Proctor is in charge of overseeing all things at the Maloff Center. Photo/Kathryn Reed

“It’s a community building at its heart. And it’s a wellness building at its heart,” Chris Proctor told *Lake Tahoe News* during a tour of the 26,000-square-foot, two-story building. He is the administrative director for the center. “It is available to anyone who is ready to commit to wellness. Wellness should be about how do we approach the whole body.”

Barton has long been a leader in orthopedic medicine, but more on the surgical and recovery side. What the Maloff Center does is allow professionals to work with anyone in what is more of a preventative manner so perhaps they are never in surgery. Every client will get a customized program. It goes beyond what a trainer at a gym would do because assessments involve looking at the whole person – their gait, how one arm might be stronger than another, a leg could be shorter. These and other factors play into how someone should workout/train/strengthen their bodies. Movement analysis is at the foundation of the

assessment.

Nutrition is a component, as is stress management.

Performance and physical therapy are integrated.



Water therapy is part of the protocols at the wellness center.
Photo/Kathryn Reed

While plenty of people will be referred here from a doctor, others can benefit from the physical therapists' knowledge.

The backdrop for the six rehab tables are large windows that open to the forest, with the Upper Truckee River and Johnson Meadow just beyond the trees. It's an incredibly serene setting that is therapeutic in itself.

People are getting treatments in this open setting – no individual, sterile rooms.

The expansive, openness is by design – to physically and emotionally integrate therapy and training.



Athletic equipment is available to anyone who wants to workout. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The goal is not to compete with area gyms. In fact, Barton sees its services complementing what people do at their gym. For \$29/month people can be on a performance plan after an initial assessment; this tells the person what they need to be doing and then a coach tracks the person. People outside of Tahoe could do this version.

An initial assessment costs \$149, lasts up to 90 minutes and includes use of the center for one month.

Unlimited use of the facility costs \$129 a month. This also allows individuals to pop over to the rehab side to work out a kink at no additional cost, and without a referral. Working with a coach is part of the fee, too.

There are also youth programs and community fit classes.

Also on the first floor is the wet room, which includes a series of three pools. One hot, one cold, one where people can

swim or walk. The funding came from Paul Fry's estate. Fry established Tahoe Fracture Clinic in 1964. The well-known physician died in 2015.

A \$10 million donation from Lisa Maloff paid for about one-third of the expenses of the building, including parking garage. A plaque honoring her and husband Bob is in the reception area. She is expected to be at the grand opening next month to see what her money helped create. After all, she was at the groundbreaking.

The center is expected to employ between 25 and 30 people. This changes depending on which doctors are there. There will be six physical therapists and six fitness coaches. Health coach is a certified position.

Upstairs is where the 17 exam rooms are located. This is twice as big as any of the current clinics that Barton operates.



The Maloff Center has openness to it, with the second and first floors visible to one another. Photo/Kathryn Reed

The goal was to create four care stations so the medical team is closer to the rooms. This makes more efficient use of time for employees and should mean patients are getting treated faster.

Unusual in medical exam rooms is the carpet. As Proctor explained, this makes it quieter and warmer. The material can also be mopped to keep it sanitary.

A big change is that the monitor allows for X-rays to be seen in each room so the patient and doctor are not viewing it in the hall, as is the case now at the various clinics. The desks on which the keyboard sits swivels, so medical personnel do not have their backs to the patient. The screens may also be used as an educational tool.

Three of the rooms will be used for procedures, such as injections so the patient does not have to come back.

One side of the second floor is meeting space that can be sectioned off. This is where classes are taught. The dividers double as white boards. Each section has audio-visual capabilities.

In between the two areas is glass, with a view to the first level. All of this makes for an experience that is unlike most medical centers – it's warm and welcoming. Even the brown/gold/blue color scheme is soft, which is noticeable when walking in off the street.

A long hallway with seating, computers and a view to Mount Tallac is for people to gather. The area is a work in progress, and purposefully designed that way. The hope is it will be more of a social area. In this space is the care coordinator hub, where employees will help clients dial in their needs. They are essentially medical concierges.

Barton is still assessing what it will do with its current offices. For certain the 1139 Third St. facility will be

repurposed, possibly into a rural health clinic. A wound care clinic is another need. The rehab center in the hospital will remain, as this new one is meant to be focused on orthopedic needs.