

Frank Gehry's Legacy:

Building Awareness of Neurocognitive Disorders

In order to shine the light on Alzheimer's disease (AD) and other neurocognitive disorders including Huntington's, Parkinson's, and ALS, Keep Memory Alive Chairman Larry Ruvo knew he needed a marketing tool that would capture the attention of all. By engaging architect Frank Gehry, Ruvo generated that highly captivating marketing vehicle in the form of a building that would house the work of his avocation, a Center for Brain Health. Be they impressed, intrigued, or skeptical of Gehry's design, they are engaged. They come in. They ask questions. They learn. In short, Gehry's architecture presents an idea and builds awareness; the work done inside builds toward a cure.

According to the Alzheimer's Association, delaying the onset of AD by five years cuts the diagnosis by 50%. Delaying the onset of the disease by 10 years eradicates the disease altogether. Until there is a cure, we know that the best method of addressing AD is early detection, which can be achieved only through awareness.



Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health. Under construction, year end 2009.

The Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health in Las Vegas, Nevada, is not the first Gehry building to draw attention to the broader community in which it resides. In a 2002 article entitled "The Bilbao Effect," *Forbes.com* reported, "With its dramatic architecture, the [Gehry-designed] Guggenheim museum continues to be a major draw, attracting people who would otherwise not come. Bilbao estimates that its economic impact on the local economy in 2001 was worth 168 million Euro to the Basque treasury in taxes. This represents the equivalent of 4,415 jobs. A visitor survey revealed that 82% came to the city of Bilbao exclusively to see the museum, or had extended their stay in the city to visit it."

According to an economic impact study conducted in 2008 by the city of Bilbao, Spain, more than 11 million people had visited the Gehry-designed Guggenheim Museum since its opening 11 years before. Moreover, the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is a leading European cultural institution in terms of self-financing, achieving around 65% of its financing from its own services rendered, again underscoring the power of the building itself as a marketing tool.

The media see it, too. On December 3, 2009, following his visit to MGM MIRAGE'S CityCenter and the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health, *LA Weekly* Architecture Reporter Hugh Hart wrote, "Make no mistake: These buildings are very much about marketing. But instead of hawking fake identities borrowed from New York, Paris or Venice, this new generation of glass-encased

buildings parlay Nevada's most obvious natural resource, the unblinking sun, into nature-based spectacle." He continued, "There's not a stitch of kitsch to be found in the resort town's latest iteration of destination buildings."

That same week, *Bloomberg News* Architecture Critic James Russell visited the Center on a mission for his employer, also noting a personal connection through a loved one who suffers from a neuromuscular disease.

We know that the attention the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health building has drawn from donors, prospective patients, prospective volunteers, the community, and the media has only amplified the initial investment, creating a more profound impact in the long run through the research, clinical trials, and treatment going on within the building's walls.

Keep Memory Alive CEO Maureen Peckman says, "Those with a trained eye realize the architecture is a symbol of hope, and is yet another extension of how we honor those with neurocognitive afflictions."

Perhaps *LA Weekly's* Hart best summed up Ruvo's marketing insight in writing, "[The building] flows out of the ground like a molten expression of intuition incarnate."

Here's a sample of comments reported by volunteers and employees of the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health:

"Whether they think it is beautiful or strange, the building draws them in, wanting to know more."
—Dee King, Director of Volunteer Services

"I was driving by the building, and it struck me as beautifully unique. I saw the sign that read 'We still need help,' and dialed the number while driving. I had seen a couple of photos in the newspaper, but didn't know what was going on inside the building until I attended volunteer orientation a few days later. This is the first time I've ever volunteered, and after three weeks, it feels like the right thing to do. After all, I lost a grandfather to Alzheimer's."
—Amy Meskow, volunteer

"Dr. Bernick is wonderful. People need to come inside this building just so they can meet him."
—Jean Georges, volunteer and caregiver

"I'm frequently asked if the building is falling down. But really, I'm just glad it drew them in."
—Lynn Leavitt, valet parker

"I had a patient and caregiver who watched our building being built on TV, and the images drew them in. They told me now that they're here, they can't believe how incredible the structure is, and how different from a typical doctor's office with all the light and hope it provides."
—Joan Marie Farris, Medical Secretary

"A patient told me that they saw the building and then made an appointment. Now that they are here, they love Cleveland Clinic and feel our Center provides the best care available for Alzheimer's."
—Merena Tindall, Assistant Nurse Manager, R.N.

"Employees in both the post office and Home Depot have seen my Cleveland Clinic badge and said, 'Oh, you work in that unusual building.' It's amazing how much the building has aided the name recognition of the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health."
—Beverly Bowen, Administrator



Keep Memory Alive's LeeAnn Mandarino routinely regales those touring the building with a lively story of her ride to its top