

The Lindsborg News-Record: Letter to the Editor

The Hospital Moves On

The News-Record had an article Aug. 15 about Larry Van Der Wege resigning the administrator position at Lindsborg Community Hospital to work for the Kansas Hospital Association. I want to thank him for the 26 years he has worked at LCH, especially the last 17 that he has been our administrator, and to congratulate him on his new job, where he will continue to work in health care, but on a statewide basis. I hope many of you will thank Larry for the work he has done to advance health care in our community.

I want to correct one sentence in the News-Record article. Lindsborg Community Hospital is not owned by Salina Regional Health Center. The hospital is owned by the Lindsborg Community Health Care Foundation. LCH entered an affiliation contract with SRHC that started with fiscal year 2013. This contract gives management responsibility of LCH to SRHC. All LCH employees are employees of SRHC. The employees of SRHC's other two affiliates, North Central Kansas Medical Center at Concordia and Memorial Health System at Abilene, are also employed by SRHC.

LCH was the first critical access hospital to affiliate with SRHC, and our contract has been the template for the two subsequent affiliations. There has been a learning curve transitioning from an independent hospital to being part of a system. Larry guided LCH through this transition as seamlessly as possible.

Our affiliation with SRHC has resulted in a fairly remarkable turnaround. While there have been multiple critical access hospital closings in Kansas recent years, LCH is relatively stable. We could not say that in 2012, and the good news does not stop there. An obvious benefit is that we are on SRHC's electronic health record system, so all our patient records are available in Salina. I constantly wonder how we could ever get along without SRHC's help in recruiting, IT support, continuing education, ER backup, and many other areas.

We soon will begin the recruiting process for a new administrator. We will not be rushed, and do not expect to make a hire before Larry's last day, and likely not until early 2025. SRHC and our LCH Board expect good candidates to apply. We believe this will be seen as an attractive position for several reasons. The average tenure of a CEO at Kansas critical access hospitals is less than three years. I believe LCH has had two CEOs in the last 28 years. That is stability, and suggests the trustees understand the difference in management and governance and stay in their lane.

I believe LCH's affiliation with SRHC makes the position attractive. Besides the help they give us, SRHC is arguably the most financially stable nonprofit hospital in Kansas.

One last reason is that Lindsborg is a great place to live. A small, friendly, safe college town rich in the arts, and close to Salina and Wichita.

I expect LCH to go on as normal and that patients will notice no difference in service.

- Chuck Oleen, president, Lindsborg Community Hospital Board of Trustees