

## Lessard brings passion for work as new PVCH Foundation director

By **MIKE GILMORE**  
News Director,  
**Hi, Neighbor!**  
Newspapers

For the past three years, the Pawnee Valley Community Hospital Foundation has been dedicated to preserving quality healthcare for the area PVCH serves.

The PVCH Foundation was created in 2012 as a charitable non-profit 501(c)(3) organization to meet both immediate and long-range healthcare needs for Pawnee County residents. Its seven-member board of trustees and director work with private donors through a series of fundraising vehicles to continue to provide quality programs, services, technologies and education opportunities for the community and the PVCH staff.

Linda Henderson was retained as the Foundation's first director. Through the Foundation's first three years, a major challenge was to raise \$1.7 million for the purchase of a new MRI as well as the construction for PVCH's in-house imaging center.

With the third annual Foundation Gala "Moonlight Masquerade" and other fundraising efforts including the annual "Tee Off for Better Health" golf tournament, that funding goal has been reached.

Henderson, meanwhile, notified the PVCH Foundation board that she would be leaving in September, to pursue a position in Salina. The board was then tasked to seek a successor who shared the Foundation's mission of excellence.

After a short search, Mark Lessard was chosen to both direct the Foundation's activities as well as serve as marketing director for the hospital.

Lessard's first official day in his new office was Dec. 15. In the weeks following, Lessard has been working on a final wrapup of the third annual Gala as well as getting a feel for the other programs involving the Foundation.

"The Gala is finished, but I've been working pretty much exclusively the past three weeks on the final wrapup," Lessard said. "What I'm also doing right now is getting a feel for the job, getting a feel for the industry."

"Linda did a fantastic job and she started many programs. There are



**Mark Lessard**

many wonderful programs in place and I just want to continue those.

"I'm not going to have to reinvent the wheel," Lessard added. "There will be some changes in the accounting end, but those are just tweaks that I'm comfortable with. Everyone has their method, and I want to use that, to enhance when and where I can."

Lessard, who moved with his family to Larned in 1999, is focusing his marketing experience in a new direction. Lessard, a native of Grafton, N.D., graduated from Moorhead State University - now Minnesota State University in Moorhead - in 1986 with a degree in marketing. His first post-college experience was in management training with Nash-Finch in Hays. The move to Hays brought accounting experience with the Ellis County Clerk's Office, as well as continued accounting work upon his move to Larned.

In Larned, Lessard has been involved in training as well - mentoring and coaching Larned High School tennis players. A veteran coach of the LHS girls' fall tennis program, Lessard will also be taking the reins of the LHS boys' tennis program in the spring.

His passion for tennis translates well into a business marketing setting, especially a passion for the continued success of PVCH in the community, Lessard said.

"The citizens of this community fought not only to keep the hospital open, but to build a brand-new hospital," Lessard said. "They were passionate in this cause and I share that passion."

"When I met with the Foundation board, I was asked if I could be passionate about Pawnee Valley Community Hospital," Lessard noted. "I told them, 'yes, I can.' You have to love what you do and if you love what you do, that builds passion for the work."

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The Country Living of Larned campus, which is also home to Country Living Memory Care, currently employs 34 staff members and is home to 28 residents.

Laura Smith has been the Country Living director since the opening of

the first residence in 2005. During her tenure with Country Living of Larned, both Country Living and Country Living Memory Care have passed state surveys with zero deficiencies year after year.

Country Living of Larned has maintained a respected reputation as a leader in the assisted liv-

ing industry. The Larned campus provides residences that are welcoming, well-designed and focus on the specific needs of their residents. Individual care and comfort are stressed, and the residences are staffed to provide the appropriate level of assistance for each resident. Each residence

is constructed to exacting standards for quality, and the modern and elegant interiors are designed to help seniors feel independent, secure and dignified.

To learn more about Country Living of Larned or Country Living Memory Care, please call Laura Smith, Director at 620-285-6900.



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Pictured above: David Sanger, MD; Christian Whittington, MD;  
Pictured below: Jenny Manry, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC; Kara Keenan, MSN, APRN, FNP;  
Logan Duerksen, MSN, APRN, FNP-C



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**PRECIOUS MOMENTS GRANDMOTHER AND CHILD** - one of the features of the Healing Garden. Donations are still being accepted at Pawnee Valley Community Hospital Foundation for future additions.