

Pawnee Valley Community Hospital shares success story with state panel

By **MIKE GILMORE**
News Director,
Hi, Neighbor! Newspapers
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A state panel tasked with finding Kansas solutions to healthcare delivery problems in the state’s rural areas met in Larned Tuesday morning to discuss behavioral health issues.

First, however, their hosts at Pawnee Valley Community Hospital treated them to a rural hospital success story.

The Rural Health Working Group, a state panel formed by state leadership and headed by Lt. Gov. Jeff Colyer, M.D., has been traveling the state collecting information on Kansas’ healthcare system with the goal of making recommendations to the State Legislature when it convenes in January.

“The Governor and I have been looking at our healthcare issues across the state for a number of years,” explained Colyer, as the group convened for an hour-long session with Pawnee County Commissioners, PVCH Board of Trustees members, Chief of Staff David Sanger, M.D. and others involved in local

healthcare at PVCH’s St. Joseph Meeting Room.

“A lot of things have happened, most of which we can’t control as a state,” Lt. Gov. Colyer said. “There are a lot of things we can control and Kansas has always been a real leader in being very pragmatic in getting things done. We were a leader in setting up the original Critical Access Hospitals and in fact, we have more rural hospitals than any other state. We know that it is not just the hospital building, but it is the people inside and the community that goes around it. It is our patients and families that contribute to our lives in Kansas.

“Last year, the Governor in his State of the State Address charged us with beginning the conversation of how we can seriously impact what is going on with rural healthcare in the state. We’ve had several meetings; we will have one more meeting to finalize recommendations.

“We are hearing from a large variety of people that have some really good ideas and have shared their experiences of what works and what

doesn’t work that have been very, very, valuable.”

The panelists were introduced to the history of healthcare in Pawnee County through a video presentation that traced early options through the establishment of St. Joseph Memorial Hospital in 1951 and beyond.

Pawnee County Attorney John Settle and Shae Veach, Vice President of Regional Operations and Marketing at Hays Medical Center, then explained to the panelists how the residents of Pawnee County, faced with the potential closure of their 50-year-old local hospital in 2009, banded together to preserve and protect not only their facility but its vital Critical Access Hospital license in the four years following.

That process, driven with community support, led to a unique management partnership with HaysMed that enabled the county to fund and construct a brand-new facility in 2013.

Settle explained that the process actually began with the spring 2009 announcement by Central Kansas Medical Center and Catholic Health



RURAL WORK GROUP VISITS PVCH - A rural healthcare work group headed by Kansas Lt. Gov. Jeff Colyer, M.D., meets at PVCH Tuesday morning to discuss rural healthcare in the state. (photo by Mike Gilmore)

Initiatives that St. Joseph would be closed by the end of that year.

The Pawnee County Commissioners then took their desire to fight the closure to local residents, which overwhelmingly passed a 1 percent sales tax to fund healthcare in the county.

The sales tax also funded research and court costs associated with retaining and keeping St. Joseph’s CAH license. After a successful lawsuit, HaysMed and the county joined in partnership to hold the license through a five-year renewable agreement, allowing the county to retain ownership of the facility, equipment and the license, while HaysMed provided managerial services.

The affiliation agreement was structured entirely with CAH license in mind, Settle told the panelists. “At the time, we were not absolutely sure that CMS would allow the transfer of the license,” Settle said. “We chose to pursue a change

of membership status rather than an asset sales agreement. Through HaysMed Partners, Inc., the license is held for the county as owners and HaysMed as management partner.

“It’s not a typical arrangement but it is a simple process,” Settle said. “The structure stays in place as long as the affiliation agreement is in place.”

Hospital revenues fund the hospital, Veach explained. The 1-percent sales tax is being utilized to fund bond payments, with the goal of retiring the first of two 20-year bond issues in 10 years.

“Pawnee Valley Community Hospital is really a remarkable story,” Veach said. “I travel to a ton of critical access hospitals throughout northwest Kansas and PVCH is not typical of what you see in northwest Kansas.”

Providers, Veach noted, are also central to the success of hospitals and their rural communities.

“If you have no providers, you have no culture, you have no revenue,” Veach said. “In many rural communities, the hospital is often the largest employer. Without the hospital, the community loses population, the culture declines.

“We began our relationship knowing that there were services that HaysMed could provide so that Pawnee Valley could focus on services that the residents need,” he said.

“It’s been a great partnership.”

Behavioral health discussion - Following PVCH’s presentation, the panel turned to discussion of behavioral health issues.

Eric Van Allen, who represents the Boston-based behavioral health management company Beacon Health Options, told the panel that Kansas spends about \$400 million annually on behavioral health - including about \$175 million through the Medicaid program.

In his presentation, Van

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HaysMed welcomes new cardiologist

(Reprinted from Nov. 22, 2016 Tiller & Toiler)

HAYS - HaysMed Medical recently welcomed Dr. M. Javed Ashraf, M.D., interventional cardiologist, to the medical staff.

Dr. Ashraf received his medical degree from Punjab Medical College/University in Pakistan. He completed a residency in internal medicine from Tufts University/Baystate Medical Center, Mass.

Dr. Ashraf also completed fellowships in public health medicine from Umass and cardiology and interventional cardiology, peripheral vascular intervention from Tufts University.

Dr. Ashraf is now seeing patients in the DeBakey Heart Institute at HaysMed.



Dr. M. Javed Ashraf

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