



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Community HealthCare System Receives Healthy Kansas Hospitals Centers of Excellence Award**

(Topeka, Kan. – June 25, 2018) – Community HealthCare System of northeast Kansas is walking the talk when it comes to improving the health of the communities it serves. In recognition of the system’s investments in providing and promoting healthier nutritional options as well as serving as a role model for healthy lifestyle choices, the Kansas Hospital Association presented one of two 2018 Healthy Kansas Hospitals Centers of Excellence Awards to Community HealthCare System. The award and a monetary contribution to help support the hospital’s innovative healthy living programs were presented during a special recognition ceremony on June 19.

“We are honored by this award,” said Nancy Willert, RN educator and chair of the system’s LiveWell Committee. “We realize how important it is to create a healthy environment for our associates and the communities we serve. Our system’s mission is to enrich the health and lives of the people we serve. This award shows us that we are headed in the right direction, and it encourages us as we move forward with new initiatives,” she added.

Since joining the Healthy Kansas Hospitals initiative in 2016, Community HealthCare System has broadened its wellness focus beyond fitness and weight loss programs to include healthy nutrition options in hospital food, alternatives to soda and sugary beverages and healthier snack options in hospital vending machines, and access to fresh herbs and vegetables for hospital patients/visitors/staff and community members. Supporting a community-based farmers’ market, offering tastings of pizzas with cauliflower or whole wheat crusts at a community health fair, and sharing recipes for healthier versions of foods such as lasagna and brownies have engaged the community in improving nutritional choices.

“When I’m asked why we do this and spend the time and effort on these health improvement initiatives, I tell people, this not about return-on-investment,” said Todd Willert, CEO of Community HealthCare System. “This is about doing what’s right, and it’s a long-term strategy,” he said. “Our various initiatives are part of a global population health strategy to impact the entire community. It’s about figuring out how to put ourselves in their shoes and help them improve their health, and we have a very broad definition of health. We needed to start with our associates first, and then continue to move out into the community,” he explained.

In 2017, the hospital expanded its community partnerships, working with the Kansas Association for Conservation & Environmental Education to create herb and vegetable gardens at the Onaga campus, where the hospital uses the produce in associate and visitor meals. The system also helped introduce the community to Greens and Gills Greenhouse, a Havensville start-up business growing microgreens via aquaponics. The hospital hosted a public tasting, and uses the produce in its kitchen and provides a venue for sales to hospital associates. System leaders are active members of the LiveWell Committee, and participate in fitness activities – like fun runs – and the L.E.A.N. (Lifestyle, Exercise and Nutrition) weight-loss program.

“While Community HealthCare System had been doing a great deal in terms of fitness and weight loss, Healthy Kansas Hospitals helped us bring all the people to the table and focus on what avenues to take going forward,” Nancy Willert explained. “Strong support from leadership and the board has been critical to the success of our efforts,” she added.

“I’m incredibly proud of the organization,” Todd Willert said. “I’ve been a part of the committee but I know committee members have spent a lot of time and effort working on our health-improvement initiatives over the past two years. These are people who have full-time jobs and the LiveWell Committee and its work is something else they are doing for the good of the organization and the community,” he added.

## **About Community HealthCare System**

CHCS is a nonprofit health care system with a tradition of providing compassionate, high-quality care to the rural communities of northeast Kansas. CHCS's more than 450 associates along with 22 physicians and practitioners serve seven communities in a 10,000-square-mile service area. CHCS includes two hospitals, one in Onaga and the other in St. Marys; seven family practice clinics serving the communities of Corning, Centralia, Frankfort, Onaga, Holton, Westmoreland and St. Marys; two nursing homes and one assisted living facility, Home Health; and four fitness centers. For more information, go to [www.chcsks.org](http://www.chcsks.org).

## **About Healthy Kansas Hospitals**

The Healthy Kansas Hospitals initiative was federally funded through the Kansas Department of Health and Environment Bureau of Community Health Systems FLEX Program. The Medicare Rural Hospital Flexibility (FLEX) program is managed by the Federal Office of Rural Health Policy, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The Kansas Hospital Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization existing to be the leading advocate and resource for members. KHA membership includes 217 member facilities, of which 124 are full-service, community hospitals. Founded in 1910, KHA's vision is Optimal Health for Kansas.

For more information, go to [www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org](http://www.HealthyKansasHospitals.org).

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