



MEDIA RELEASE

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Healthy Kansas Hospitals Centers of Excellence to HaysMed

An Award Ceremony will be at 3:00 p.m. on June 22 in the Rock Garden Cafe

Topeka, Kan. – June 15, 2016 – If you haven't visited Hays Medical Center in a while, you might be surprised by some of the changes you see—and taste. The newly remodeled hospital dining area, now called the Rock Garden Café, is the face of a much broader set of healthy initiatives HaysMed has championed in recent months. The 207-bed community hospital – one of the largest employers in Hays – has made significant changes to its food and beverage policy to promote healthy choices among staff, patients and guests. Hospital administrators, physicians and associates are taking the message out to the wider community as well.

“For decades our core purpose has been to help people be healthy, and that involves more than taking care of the sick and injured – it also involves taking steps to improve population health,” says John Jeter, MD, Hays Medical Center President and CEO. “For us, the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative fell right in line with our core purpose and represents our shared goal for creating healthier Kansas communities.”

That was the driving force behind the hospital's pledge in 2014 to participate in *Healthy Kansas Hospitals*, which is a project of the Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation. The program's goal is to help hospitals provide healthier food and beverage options throughout the facility for hospital employees, patients and visitors.

“The whole concept of health care is changing for the better,” says Stephanie Howie, Fitness Director at HaysMed's Center for Health Improvement, where the prevailing philosophy on fitness can be found in signage that says, ‘Exercise is Medicine.’ “Keeping people out of the hospital has become integral to our mission, and we are doing that by promoting healthy habits and physical activity.”

Within two months of signing the pledge, the hospital formed a Healthy Hospital Committee comprised of diet, fitness, and wellness experts working alongside marketing and associate development personnel. Collectively, the

Committee keeps new ideas coming to fruition, maintains momentum for overall sustainability, and works to engage others in both the journey and the goal. John Fitzthum joined the team as Executive Chef/Food Service Director to oversee the hospital's dietary department. Fitzthum says he recognized something extraordinary about what HaysMed wanted to achieve as a Healthy Kansas Hospital, and he was eager to come on board to help lead the way to better health.

"The health care industry is finally taking a positive turn when it comes to fresh and fun foods," he says. "More and more provider organizations are coming to the realization that the processed, high sodium and nutritiously insufficient foods we've been eating for the last 25 to 30 years have really affected our health—and that eating correctly should be part of a wellness program for the betterment of patients."

Renovations for Rock Garden Café were completed in March. The updated eating area no longer serves fried foods, which have been replaced with more nutritious menu items like homemade hummus, baklava and grilled salmon. The hospital now dedicates a larger portion of its food budget to fresh fruits and vegetables, and more than two-thirds of all beverages served in the hospital have no added sugars. Very few starchy food options are still available, and café pricing and placement strategies make the few remaining unhealthy options more "out of reach" than before.

Through the Café's "Ingredient of the Month" program, they are teaching different ways to prepare healthy foods that satisfy even the choosiest of palates. Recipes involving each ingredient of the month also are published in the local newspaper to expand reach beyond the hospital walls.

Aside from offering healthier items, the hospital also has found fun ways to get people up and moving throughout the day. They added two indoor walking trails for associates and visitors, and they host four 15-minute workout classes every week for hospital associates. They also offer free cooking classes, open to the community as well as hospital staff.

"It's about being a leader in health care, and that means taking care of not only our patients and their families, but also the 1,200 associates that work at the hospital every day," says Howie, whose team also works to educate associates about the benefits of the improvements made with regard to healthy food options and opportunities for exercise.

Outside the hospital, HaysMed has taken an innovative and integrated approach to environmental health as well, reducing waste and increasing the vitality of the environment, purchasing a new dishwasher to save 350 gallons of

water per week, as well as adding a cardboard and aluminum/plastic recycling program. They replaced most of the fescue grass on campus with native grasses and plants that require far less water for upkeep, and the hospital partners with several members of the community—including WorkWell Kansas, the local school district, and others—to create new opportunities to improve public health.

HaysMed has made exceptional strides both inside and outside the hospital. For its outstanding achievements and innovation, HaysMed has been selected by KHERF as one of two 2016 recipients of the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* Centers of Excellence Award. The hospital will receive the award and a monetary contribution to support its continued efforts at a special award ceremony on June 22.

“Our designation as a Centers of Excellence for *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* is a testament to the hard work and dedication of everyone involved, particularly our medical fitness center and dietary department leaders who work tirelessly to keep bringing bigger and better ideas to life,” says Jeter. “Together with their teams, they are finding ways to fuse healthy lifestyle changes into our culture and making healthy living pervasive within the whole organization.”

About Hays Medical Center

Hays Medical Center is a 207-bed, not-for-profit hospital in Hays, Kansas. Services include medical, surgical and pediatric care along with cardiac, neonatal and intensive care units, oncology, joint and spine care, diagnostic imaging; emergency care, rehabilitation and hospice. The HaysMed system includes the St. Rose Health Center in Great Bend which is co-owned with Centura Health and Pawnee Valley Community Hospital in Larned. More than 1,200 associates are employed at HaysMed and its affiliated physician clinics.

The *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative is a project of the Kansas Hospital Education and Research Foundation. Established in 1969, by the Kansas Hospital Association, KHERF’s mission is to facilitate collaboration and innovation to improve health delivery for Kansas communities. The Kansas Hospital Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization existing to be the leading advocate and resource for members. For more information, visit HealthyKansasHospitals.org.

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