



MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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KHA Leadership Institute Graduates 29

(Topeka, KS – Sept. 28, 2026) – The Kansas Hospital Association Leadership Institute graduated its 24th class of 29 students on Sept. 11, 2026, at the KHA Annual Convention and Trade Show in Overland Park, Kansas. Students were nominated by their hospital's CEO to be part of this select group. They represent the future leaders of Kansas hospitals.

Helping to build future health care leaders is important to the Kansas Hospital Association. “We are committed to strengthening and promoting the leadership capacity of hospital employees in Kansas,” said Chad Austin, president and CEO, Kansas Hospital Association. The KHA Leadership Institute was established to help hospitals provide professional development opportunities that accentuate the personal skills and abilities needed to facilitate positive change and innovation in Kansas hospitals.

The 2026 Leadership Institute class was diverse. They represented a wide geographic distribution of hospitals from St. Francis to Elkhart and parsons to Holton – there was representation from all parts of the state. Students had been working in health care for as little as a year to 20 years. Several students have been in management positions while others were new managers. Some students also supervisor other staff, from a few to more than 50 employees.

It is important to note that the students nominated to participate in this program were not selected because they needed to learn "management skills." They were nominated because their CEO recognized their potential to be future leaders and wanted to help cultivate that development. Each one of these students made a personal and professional commitment to expanding their skills by attending all six courses of the Leadership Institute.

The curriculum was structured to enhance each student's leadership abilities. Course #1 focused on explaining the difference between leadership and management, identifying organizational values and creating a positive organizational climate. Course #2 focused on enhancing communication skills and grassroots advocacy. Course #3 focused on team building - including how to lead a team and how to be part of a team and Course # 4 examined conflict and conflict management. Course #5 was at the KHA Annual Convention and Trade Show. Students learned about the challenges facing health care.

KHA Leadership Institute Class of 2026 (photo attached)

Braden Anderson, Morton County Health System, Elkhart
Gordon Beightel, Community HealthCare System, Onaga
Amanda Bernbeck, Logan County Health Services, Oakley
Kelsey Brin, Rooks County Health Center, Plainville
Emilee Brown, SCK Health, Arkansas City
Jennifer Carmichael, Hutchinson Regional Medical Center, Hutchinson
Leasha Couchman, Lane County Hospital, Dighton
Kiel Emerson, HaysMed, Hays
Catrina Fickel, Labette Health, Parsons
Henrique Gebara, Freeman Fort Scott Hospital, Fort Scott
Julie Goetz, Salina Regional Health Center, Salina
Amy Huerter, Nemaha Valley Community Hospital, Seneca
Rana Ingram, Clara Barton Medical Center, Hoisington
Stacey Knowles, Meade District Hospital/Artesian Valley Health System, Meade
Sam Lane, Pawnee Valley Community Hospital, Larned
Lacy Lawrence, Greeley County Health Services, Tribune
Jordan McKittrick, Decatur Health, Oberlin
Taylor Mead, Greenwood County Hospital, Eureka
Shelly Moss, Coffey County Hospital, Burlington
Agatha Nickelson, Pratt Regional Medical Center, Pratt
Shane Olson, Mitchell County Hospital Health Systems, Beloit
Heather Rankin, Kiowa District Healthcare, Kiowa
Carla Renyer, Sabetha Community Hospital, Sabetha
Penny Showalter, Rice Community Health, Lyons
Bridget Tillitson, Grisell Memorial Hospital District #1, Ransom
Caley VanLoenen, Graham County Hospital, Hill City
April Walker, NMC Health, Newton
Lori Williams, Holton Community Hospital, Holton
Aubrey Winegarner, Cheyenne County Hospital, Saint Francis

The Kansas Hospital Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization existing to be the leading advocate and resource for members. KHA membership includes 249 member facilities, of which 124 are full-service, community hospitals. Founded in 1910, KHA's vision is: "Optimal health for Kansans and Kansas hospitals."

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