



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **For Immediate Release**

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## **Two Kansas Hospitals Named Centers of Excellence**

***Healthy Kansas Hospitals in Hays and Hoisington will be Awarded on June 22***

Topeka, Kan. – June 15, 2016 – Two Kansas hospitals have recently emerged as exceptional innovators in the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative, which is designed to help hospitals lead by example in promoting healthy behaviors. Clara Barton Hospital (Hoisington, Kan.) and Hays Medical Center (Hays, Kan.) have each been selected for the 2016 *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* Centers of Excellence Award.

The *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative 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. Many hospitals, Clara Barton and HaysMed included, are integrating wellness, fitness and community engagement events into their programs as well.

To date, 26 hospitals have formally adopted new food and beverage policies as part of the *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* initiative, and dozens more have signed the pledge to explore policy improvements. Since signing the pledge, Clara Barton Hospital and Hays Medical Center have become powerful role models in their communities and around the state.

“As major employers and often the primary source of health care in their communities, hospitals are well positioned to establish healthy norms and influence healthy behaviors for the public,” says Melissa Hungerford, KHERF CEO and KHA Executive Vice President. “Our *Healthy Kansas Hospitals* Centers of Excellence Award recognizes organizations that excel at providing healthy options, resources and education aimed at creating healthier communities. We congratulate Clara Barton Hospital and Hays Medical Center for their outstanding achievements.”

## **New Healthy Options at Clara Barton Hospital**

“To have healthier communities, we as health care providers must lead by example,” says Jim Blackwell, Clara Barton Hospital President and CEO. “It starts with us—with the health of our hospital leadership and staff—and from there we create new opportunities to improve public health.”

To implement and sustain food and beverage policy changes – and continuously bring new ideas to life – Clara Barton Hospital formed a Wellness Committee to take the reins. Clara’s Corner Café, the hospital’s dining area, now has a fresher, more robust salad bar, more nutritious snacks, and a variety of grilled, baked and steamed menu items in place of fried food options. Sugarless beverages are offered free of charge to all staff, guests, and patients, and soon they will have a smoothie bar serving healthy recipes submitted by Clara Barton staff.

The Wellness Committee also works with the community to promote healthy eating and exercise outside the facility, becoming more involved in local fitness activities. New partnerships with local community organizations are helping Clara Barton extend its reach in public education on specific health and wellness issues.

“It’s about creating a healthier environment for our community and helping people take ownership of their roles in chronic disease prevention and self-management,” says Jane Schepmann, Chief Nursing Officer and head of the Wellness Committee. “We are practicing what we preach and spreading that energy out to the community—we are living out our mission.”

## **New Healthy Options at Hays Medical Center**

“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.”

After signing the pledge, Hays Medical Center formed its Healthy Hospital Committee to spearhead policy changes and ensure continuous development of new ideas to sustain momentum and reach. At the same time the Committee was formed, John Fitzthum joined the team as Executive Chef/Food Service Director. Under Fitzthum’s guidance, 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 available, and pricing and placement strategies put unhealthy options relatively “out of reach” at the Rock Garden Café, the hospital’s recently remodeled kitchen and dining area.

In addition to offering healthier menu items, Hays Medical Center 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.

“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.”

### **Two Hospitals, One Common Goal**

Ultimately, both hospitals hope their efforts will pave the way for similar changes throughout their communities. With the transformational achievements they have already made and many more in the pipeline, it is understandable that Clara Barton Hospital and Hays Medical Center are being recognized as Centers of Excellence for *Healthy Kansas Hospitals*. On June 22, KHERF will present each hospital with an award and a monetary contribution to support future projects aimed at expanding hospital efforts and widening community impact.

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](http://HealthyKansasHospitals.org).

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