



## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Edwards County Medical Center Receives *Healthy Kansas Hospitals Centers of Excellence Award***

(June 12, 2019) – In 2018, Edwards County Medical Center created a Worksite Wellness Committee charged to provide employees with the tools and resources to improve their health. Policy changes and incentives for employee participation have produced tangible results, and employees are enjoying healthier food and beverage options and using the on-site fitness center more frequently. In recognition of the hospital's work to reduce sugary beverages, offer more fresh fruits and lean meat options, provide healthier snacks and flavored waters in the vending machine and incentivize physical activity, the Kansas Hospital Association has presented one of two 2019 *Healthy Kansas Hospitals Centers of Excellence Awards* to Edwards County Medical Center in Kinsley, Kansas. The award and a monetary contribution to help support the hospital's wellness activities were presented during a special recognition ceremony on June 7 at the hospital.

"We are honored to be recognized with this award," said Jim Hansel, chief executive officer. "We want to be sure our employees are healthy – physically and mentally," he said. "Our employees are here to take care of people in the community, so the hospital needs to take care of its staff members."

"There are very few things that you can invest in that are more important than people. We're creating a partnership with our employees by showing we care. As a result, we've seen a tremendous decline in employee turn-over. We have built a lot of trust," he added.

Working closely with the Edwards County Health Organization, the hospital also has implemented several health improvement initiatives for the community, including tobacco use cessation, bicycle safety awareness with an emphasis on wearing helmets and physical activity events. "The hospital should be a role model for the community, and through our wellness activities and policy changes, we are trying to set a positive example," Hansel said.

“It is humbling to receive this award,” Hansel said. “We didn’t initiate our wellness focus for the purpose of winning an award. Promoting wellness is part of serving our community,” Hansel noted. “It’s humbling to see our hospital and community recognized for doing the right thing.”

Admitting she felt a little “un-deserving,” Worksite Wellness Committee Co-Chair Brandi Wheaton said her group’s focus was on making employees enjoy working at the hospital. “It’s nice to see our hard work recognized,” said the physical therapy assistant.

The Worksite Wellness Committee has changed employees’ attitudes about being involved in improving health. “In the beginning, committee meeting attendance was mandatory. Now people are volunteering to serve on the committee. Everyone enjoys doing things to make employees happier,” she said with pride.

While meeting some resistance initially with the decrease of pop, chips and candy options in the vending machine, employees, patients and visitors now enjoy the flavored water options, nuts and protein bars. With a goal of reducing sugary options by 50 percent, Wheaton reports that “about 65 to 75 percent of the vending machine options are healthier,” and when the healthy options are sold out, people ask when the machine will be refilled.

“I believe one reason we have been successful is by making fitness fun,” said Krystle Jacobs, director of Human Resources and Marketing. “We try to do a fitness challenge every-other month, such as water consumption or tracking your steps, and then we award prizes. We have a competitive group, so allowing them the chance to push each other helped drive our positive results,” she explained.

“I’m really proud of the staff, especially the ones who have taken leadership roles in implementing the Worksite Wellness Program,” Hansel said. Leaders of the wellness initiative include Brandi Burkhart, a medical laboratory technician; Jacobs; and Wheaton. “I’m so proud of this team. They come to me with ideas, and then they just run with them, and I love to see the results,” Hansel said. “We didn’t set out to win an award – the hospital got involved in employee and community wellness because it’s the right thing to do. It’s exciting to be recognized, but it’s not why we do it,” he said.

## **About Edwards County Medical Center**

Edwards County Medical Center is a 12-bed Critical Access Hospital, with a 10-bed geriatric/psychiatric unit, located in Kinsley, Kansas. The hospital is proud to provide top quality care for Edwards County and the surrounding area. In addition to providing in-patient care, Edwards County Medical Center operates an emergency medical services agency and an eight-bed acute long-term care swing bed unit. Convenient outpatient resources include radiology, laboratory services, physical therapy and cardiac rehabilitation. The hospital also has wellness and fitness centers. Contractual arrangements make specialized outpatient diagnostic services available, including mammography, MRI, nuclear medicine and sonography. The hospital owns Midway Clinic, a rural health clinic where eight providers deliver family medicine services. Through contractual relationships, Edwards County Medical Center offers regular access to specialists in areas including cardiology, general surgery, gynecology, podiatry, psychiatric services and orthopedics.

## **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 222 member facilities, of which 125 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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