



MEDIA RELEASE

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Aaron Herbel, Administrator and CFO, Mercy Hospital, Moundridge to Receive Visionary Award

(Aug. 20, 2026) – The Kansas Hospital Association is pleased to announce that the 2026 Donald A. Wilson Visionary Award will be presented to Aaron Herbel, administrator and chief financial officer at Mercy Hospital, Inc., in Moundridge. KHA established this award to recognize individuals who have made an outstanding, innovative contribution to health care delivery, health care financing or other initiatives to improve the health and clinical outcomes in their community. This award honors Donald Wilson who faithfully served as KHA president and CEO from 1982 until his retirement in 2004. The Donald A. Wilson Visionary Award provides KHA members with the opportunity to recognize individuals who have truly been an agent for change in their community and in the hospital industry.

Aaron Herbel has demonstrated exceptional leadership during one of the most challenging periods in Mercy Hospital's history. As the administrator of the smallest prospective payment system (PPS) hospital in Kansas, he recognized early that Mercy's long-term financial sustainability would require bold thinking and difficult decisions.

Although the community was initially hesitant about transitioning to the Rural Emergency Hospital model, Herbel took the initiative to engage physicians early in the process, earning their trust and support. Together, they led a comprehensive community education effort that helped residents understand the reasons for the transition and the opportunities it presented. Through transparent communication and a steadfast commitment to Mercy's mission, he successfully guided the community through significant change while maintaining confidence in the hospital's future.

Herbel has fully embraced the REH model by developing thoughtful financial strategies that maximize its long-term sustainability. He has become a recognized leader in effectively utilizing the monthly REH

facility payments, implementing sound budgeting practices, and ensuring those resources are invested to strengthen the organization. Under his leadership, Mercy has preserved critical workforce initiatives, maintained essential local services, and achieved exceptionally high levels of community satisfaction. His work has become a model for other rural hospitals exploring the REH transition.

Beyond Mercy Hospital, Herbel has emerged as a respected advocate for rural health care. He has worked at both the state and federal levels to improve the REH program so that other rural communities can successfully transition and remain financially viable. His leadership demonstrates that even when communities initially struggle with difficult decisions, thoughtful planning, collaboration and strong leadership can transform those challenges into lasting success.

Herbel 's commitment to improving health care extends well beyond his own organization. Most recently, he accepted the leadership role of the Kansas Centralized Credentialing Advisory Committee, overseeing one of the state's most significant initiatives to modernize provider credentialing. When Healthworks sought a board member to lead this complex project, he volunteered without hesitation, recognizing both the need for innovation and the importance of reducing administrative burdens for hospitals and providers across Kansas.

Herbel is widely respected by his peers for his integrity, vision and collaborative leadership style. He consistently thinks outside the box, embraces innovation, and fosters a positive, team-oriented culture. His willingness to lead through uncertainty, advocate for meaningful change and place the needs of patients and communities first makes him an outstanding leader and an exceptional representative of Kansas hospitals.

Members of the Kansas Hospital Association will recognize Aaron Herbel with the Donald A. Wilson Visionary Award at the KHA Awards Ceremony on Sept. 11. The Kansas Hospital Association is a voluntary, non-profit organization dedicated to being the leading advocate and resource for its members. KHA membership includes 246 member facilities, of which 124 are full-service, community hospitals. Founded in 1910, KHA's vision is Optimal Health for Kansans and Kansas Hospitals.