

Harlan Stern is newest hospital board member

Written by Chris Lee

Four East Phillips County Hospital District (EPCHD) Board members recently were sworn into office after the April election was canceled due to there being just enough candidates as empty seats.

Three of the four are incumbents who bring multiple years of experience to the table. Steve Young has been a member of the board since 1993, Steve Deaver and Sheryl Farnsworth each begin their second term. Farnsworth was appointed in 2005 to fill a vacancy, and Deaver's first term began in 2006.

The newest member, Harlan Stern, will fill the remainder of Ray Malleck's term which ends in 2012. Gary Rahe is the other EPCHD Board member.

Young, Stern and Deaver took the oath at the May 25 board meeting. It was reported in the June 3 Enterprise Farnsworth would take the oath at the June meeting; however, she was administered the oath Friday, May 28, according to MMH administrator John Ayoub.

Harlan Stern

Stern fills the vacancy left by Ray Malleck and will sit on the board for two years.

Stern retired last July after spending 31 years as president/CEO of Holyoke Coop and Grainland. He said he now has the time and it felt right to get involved.

He joins the board with little experience in health care, and the only experience would be his personal trips to the doctor and time spent putting together a self-funded health plan for

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Grainland. Nonetheless, he is excited to learn how the board works. Having sat through three board meetings, he definitely feels like the greenhorn, he added.

“I think it’s good for anybody when they have an opportunity to serve on a board because they learn a lot,” Stern said. “Hopefully I can contribute something beneficial to the hospital.”

Stern said he is proud of the hospital and the community and is impressed with the administration and the direction things are headed. “They’re really trying to make this an efficient and beneficial operation and hopefully I can contribute to the longevity of it,” Stern added.

In addition to his 31 years at Holyoke Coop/Grainland, Stern has also been involved with Lions Club and nearly 30 ag-related boards in which he said he has chaired a third of them.

Stern and wife Mona have been in Holyoke since 1978. Their family includes son Ryan and his wife Lathy and their daughter Melia of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.; son Trent and his wife Jill and their children Anna and twins Rhylan and Dylan, of Olathe, Kan.; and son Troy, who died in 1982.

Steve Young

Young was appointed in January 1993 to fill a vacant seat and has been very involved ever since and currently serves as board president.

Over the 17 years, Young has seen many changes in the health care field. One of the bigger events during his terms has been the transition into the new facility in 2008. And just recently was the passage of health care reform. “It changes every day,” Young said.

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Another thing Young has enjoyed is getting to know everyone at the hospital. Also, getting to know other people throughout the state involved with health care.

“I just think the hospital is a really important thing to the community and I want to be involved and do what I can to make sure it stays that way,” Young said.

“I’ve been through a lot of things with the hospital. We at one time were struggling a lot financially, but I’ve always been proud of the people at the hospital and how they continue to give good care to all the customers that come in and they stick through it and work hard despite all the other stuff that is going on. I think we’ve got people that really understand business and really care about the community.”

Health care reform is something on the hospital’s mind and Young said even that seems to change every day. “So much of it is that they’ve created the legislation but then it has to be interpreted. It’s just going to be a lot of stuff that we still won’t know how it’s going to affect us.”

Young hadn’t been in the community all that long when he joined the hospital board. He knew he wanted to get involved. “It was really just a matter of wanting to get involved in the community and just be part of things.”

He moved to Holyoke in 1990 and has been involved with Holyoke Volunteer Fire Department, Zion Lutheran Church and MMH Ambulance crew. He and wife Kimberly have three children, Joshua, Kayla and Brittany.

Steve Deaver

Coming off the heels of his first term, Deaver is looking forward to the future. He noted people say the second term in anything is usually the most productive.

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“Very good,” Deaver said referring to his first four years on the board. “I think a lot of progress has been made.”

Deaver was elected to the EPCHD board in 2006 and spent his first four years learning. During his term he saw the transition into the new building. He noted a new building is only as good as the people working in it and it is important to have a quality staff inside. He said this is not just the doctors, but the lab technicians, office staff, administration and everyone involved within the hospital.

Deaver said the future will bring more of the same. Acquiring and retaining new health care professionals is something they are always thinking about. Other future issues will be the reform bill. “There’s a lot of uncertainty out there,” Deaver said. “That’s the thing, we don’t know what’s coming.”

Deaver and his wife Nora who runs Deaver Hardware, have three children. Chuck and his wife Amy, Sara and husband Brady Ring and Nicholas who is engaged to Alysha Strabrava. They also have six grandchildren.

Deaver is a member of the Holyoke Volunteer Fire Department and serves as president. He has also been associated with Boy Scouts and his church.

Sheryl Farnsworth

Farnsworth begins her second full term and was appointed in 2005 to fill a vacancy. She and her husband Mark moved to Holyoke in 2001 when he became manager of Highline Electric Association.

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“It’s been a big learning experience,” Farnsworth said. “The whole medical environment is more complex than I ever dreamed it was.”

Farnsworth believes the biggest upcoming challenge will be dealing with the health care reform program. “No one really knows what that looks like,” she added. “We really don’t know and how do you prepare for something you don’t know.” She believes it will be crucial to stay healthy financially.

Protecting the hospital for the community is just another piece of the puzzle.

Farnsworth’s favorite part would be the community linkages committee. She said educating the community is a key part. “Bringing the community and hospital together has really gone well this last year,” she added.

Another thing the board was involved with was the Quality Committee. There were two board members and hospital employees that met with community members to hear the good, bad and ugly.

“That is a huge risk because you are opening yourself up to hear the hard truth,” Farnsworth said. She added it is OK because now they stop and take a look at what they can change. “It was a hard but good experience.”

The board has also been involved with a three-year strategic plan. One of the goals is to become a preeminent provider of care in northeast Colorado. To do so they will strive for high quality within available resources.

“We do have a three-year plan that makes us continue forward,” she added. “We’ve got a good board and we need to challenge ourselves in growth and preparation.”

Farnsworth is an advocate for the Caring Resource Pregnancy Center and is involved with

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numerous other small things around Holyoke.

Sheryl and her husband Mark have two sons, Jason and wife Jessica and Jared and wife Lindsay. They also have one grandchild.