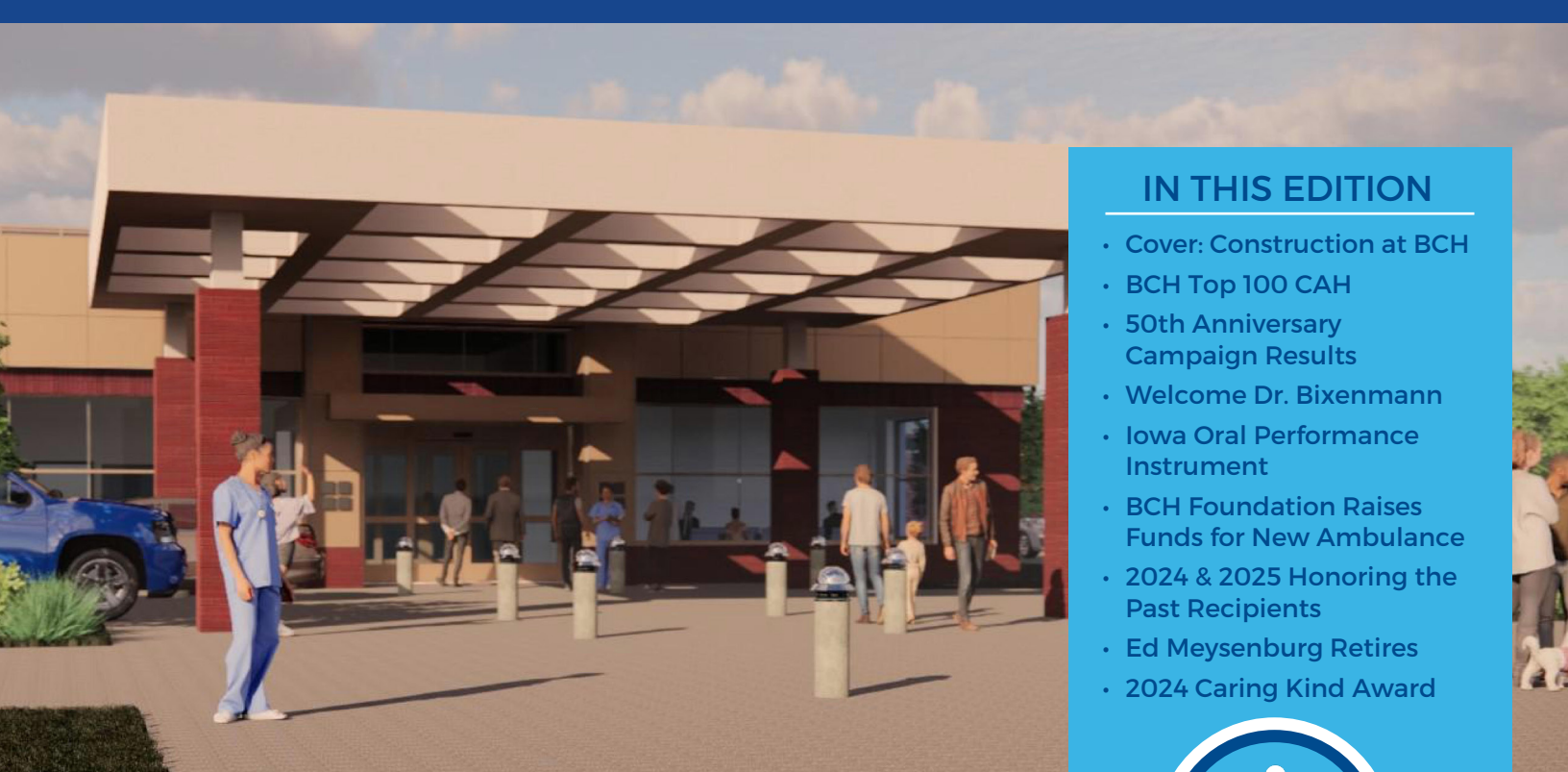


May 2025

HEALTH CONNECTIONS

BUTLER COUNTY HEALTH



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CONSTRUCTION AT BUTLER COUNTY HEALTH

Butler County Health started construction on a new addition in the summer of 2024, that was the result of planning that began in early 2022. The planning sessions took place over the course of almost fifteen months. In these sessions we evaluated clinical space, support space, infrastructure, and parking for Butler County Health, Butler County Clinic, and Witter Family Medicine. The needs were prioritized and a scope for the construction project was approved by the Butler County Health Board of Directors in the fall of 2023.

The first phase of the project was to increase the amount of parking on the Butler County Health campus. The parking lot located south of the Witter Family Medicine Clinic and the BCH Audiology and Business Office Building was expanded to twice its original size. This expansion allowed for additional staff parking, in preparation for the construction of an addition to the east side of the current facility. This addition would require that the main entrance to the hospital be temporarily moved back to the 9th Street entrance. A small remodeling project began in February of 2024 that converted the old business office space on the west side of the hospital into temporary admission offices, and new

information technology office space. This work was completed in May of 2024, and shortly after the east entrance to the hospital was closed, with patients and visitors being directed to enter the building through the 9th Street entrance. Work soon started to make room for the new addition on the east side of the building. This included the removal of the old ambulance canopy, main entrance canopy and much of the northeast parking lot. Improvements to 10th Street were also started at this time which included adding new storm sewer drains, replacement of a water main and new paving. These improvements were performed as part of the overall project, and Butler County Health assumed the financial responsibilities for the improvements.

The construction project will consist of approximately 10,000 square feet of new space that will include a new main entrance, new admissions offices, a new outpatient clinic area for visiting specialists, new office space, space for new behavioral health services, a new emergency entrance and support space. The project will also include remodeling approximately 3,000 square feet of space to expand and improve the emergency department for the hospital.



Your Health. Our Priority.



This remodel will include three larger emergency rooms, additional support space for the emergency rooms and a new cardiopulmonary treatment room to perform cardiac testing. The project will also include the replacement of the emergency generator, an air handling unit that serves the acute patient rooms and the main chilled water unit that provides cold water for the air conditioning system. All three of these units have been in service since the early 2000's and have either exceeded their useful life or no longer provide the needed capacity. The generator and the chilled water unit were replaced with equipment that are sized to accommodate the current building and expansion project, but also future projects should they become a reality.

The entire project has a budget of just over \$23 million dollars. This budget includes the construction costs, design fees, equipment and furniture. Butler County Health will pay for the improvements using funds from three



different sources. The Butler County Board of Supervisors approved the issuances of \$10 million of general obligation bonds. These bonds are similar to previous bonds that have been issued to pay for renovations and additions for Butler County Health. The bonds fall under the levy limit for the County Board, and no taxes are assessed to pay for the bonds. The bonds interest and principle payments are made by Butler County Health. Butler County Health Foundation will contribute approximately \$1.5 million of previously pledged funds for the project. The remaining portion of the construction will be funded through hospital reserves, operating income and short term loans.

The project is scheduled to be completed and ready for use by September of 2025. The completed space will allow Butler County Health to provide new services to the community, accommodate more emergency room patients, and allow for growth well into the future.

Health Connections

Health Connections is published by Butler County Health and Butler County Health Foundation. Editor is Laura Daro. Health Connection provides information on healthy lifestyles and news of interest to our community. It is not intended for the purpose of diagnosing or prescribing. Please consult your physician with specific medical questions.

BUTLER COUNTY HEALTH HONORED WITH TOP 100 CRITICAL ACCESS HOSPITALS

Butler County Health was honored as one of the Top 100 Critical Access Hospital of 2024 by The Chartis Center for Rural Health. Chartis is a comprehensive health care advisory firm with expertise in strategic planning, performance excellence, health analytics, informatics and technology, digital and emerging technologies, clinical quality and operations and strategic communications. This annual recognition program, based on the findings of the Chartis Rural Hospital Performance INDEX, celebrates exceptional performance among rural hospitals nationwide. Butler County Health was previously acknowledged in 2018 as one of the Top 20 Critical Access Hospitals for Best Practice in Quality.

The Chartis Rural Hospital Performance INDEX provides the most comprehensive and objective assessment of U.S. rural hospital performance, considering market, value-based and financial metrics. It draws upon publicly available data sets to quantify overall hospital performance in eight pillars.



These pillars include: Inpatient Market Share, Outpatient Market Share, Quality, Outcomes, Patient Perspective, Cost, Charge and Financial Stability. The INDEX is utilized nationwide by rural hospitals, health systems with rural affiliates, hospital associations and state offices of rural health to measure and monitor performance across a variety of areas impacting hospital operations and finance.

“With nearly 1,400 Critical Access Hospitals nationwide, being among the top 100 is truly remarkable. We are deeply honored to see our staff and facility receive this recognition,” said Don Naiberk, CEO of Butler County Health. “We are fortunate to have exceptional staff and medical providers whose commitment to delivering outstanding care is reaffirmed by this significant achievement.”

BUTLER COUNTY HEALTH FOUNDATION 50TH CAMPAIGN EXCEEDS EXPECTATIONS

Butler County Health Foundation announced the 50th Anniversary Campaign in August 2023. The goal of the 50th Anniversary Campaign was to find 50 individuals or organizations that want to insure the future of health care in the community by donating \$5,000. The proceeds from the 50th Anniversary Campaign will be used for equipment to update Butler County Health’s Emergency Department. This equipment includes an emergency room cart, exam lights, equipment carts and a variety of other equipment and instruments. In recognition of the 50 donors who contribute \$5,000, a special 50th Anniversary Plaque, with names of the donors, will be created and placed in the main lobby of the hospital.

Butler County Health Foundation is excited to announce they have surpassed their goal of \$250,000 for the Foundation’s 50th Anniversary Campaign, which ended December 31, 2023. The Foundation has also exceeded the goal of 50 donors of \$5,000, reaching 58 donors of \$5,000. As of December 16, 2024, the 50th Anniversary Campaign has raised \$350,150. Butler County Health Foundation is proud that of this amount, \$53,534 was from Butler County Health employee donations.

Thank you to all of the generous staff and donors!



BUTLER COUNTY HEALTH FOUNDATION 50TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN



Thank You To Our Generous Donors!

\$5,000 DONORS

1. Bev & Dave Struebing
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3. Tammy & Jerry Roh
4. Diane & Russ Moravec
5. James Egr
6. Dr. Joshua & April Sypal
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33. Anonymous
34. Anonymous
35. Greg & Peggy Fiala
36. Doug & Joan Matulka
37. Anna Nolan (Covault) & Allen Covault
38. Anonymous

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40. Vandenberg Electric
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42. Allan & Mary Steinberger
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55. Marcia Sabata
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ADDITIONAL DONORS

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2. Trevor & Michaela Moravec
3. Max & Sue Birkel
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5. Anonymous
6. Triple S. Service LLC, Clint & Amanda Thelen
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8. Anonymous
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12. Steager Lawn Service
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14. Ag Processing Inc.
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2. Christy Palensky
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5. Julie Hoffman
6. Joanne Lukert
7. Megan Worm
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9. Tiffany Busch
10. Barb Byers
11. Sarah Caldwell
12. Susi Coufal
13. Lindsey Crook
14. Laura Daro
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53. Kristine Polacek
54. Anonymous
55. Natalie Hartman
56. Katie Betzen
57. Angela Grubbe
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WELCOME DR. BENJAMIN BIXENMANN

NEUROSURGERY CLINIC AT BUTLER COUNTY HEALTH



Benjamin J. Bixenmann, MD, FAANS specializes in surgery of the spine, brain, and peripheral nerves at The Nebraska Neurosurgery Group, LLC. Dr. Bixenmann grew up in Lincoln, Nebraska, and graduated from Pius X High School in 2001. He earned his Bachelor of Science degree from Hillsdale College in 2005

graduating Magna Cum Laud. Dr. Bixenmann received his Doctorate of Medicine, with High Distinction, in 2009 at the University of Nebraska College of Medicine in Omaha, NE. He completed a neurological surgery residency at the Mayfield Clinic and University of Cincinnati Medical Center in 2015.

Dr. Bixenmann has been involved in medical and scientific research throughout the course of his training, receiving multiple research awards and publications in both national and

international peer reviewed medical journals. His awards include the 2005 Marsden award for most outstanding senior research from Hillsdale College, 2007 University of Nebraska Medical Center Department of Internal Medicine's student research award and the 2014 Ellen and Stewart B. Dunsker, MD award for most outstanding clinical research. He has also been recognized by Cincinnati Magazine in their 2015 Top Doctors issue for his innovative research on the diagnosis and management of athletic concussions.

Dr. Bixenmann's operative interests include minimally invasive surgical treatment of all spine problems, surgical and radiosurgery treatment of brain tumors, surgical treatment of brain aneurysms and carotid stenosis, surgical treatment of nerve pain including carpal tunnel and trigeminal neuralgia and management of traumatic brain injury and concussion. Neurosurgery is offered at Butler County Health the third Monday of the month. For more information please contact the BCH Outpatient Department at 402-367-1375.

IOWA ORAL PERFORMANCE INSTRUMENT AND SPEECH THERAPY

The tongue and lips play an essential role in swallowing. The tongue helps support chewing, formation of a lump of food to swallow, and movement of food and liquids in the mouth and to the back of the throat for adequate swallowing. The lips also play an essential role in swallowing. Lip function is important to provide closure to prevent foods or liquids from falling out of the mouth and are used to build pressure to propel food and drink to the throat for swallowing. Without the proper strength in the tongue and lips, it can lead to deficits of the oral stage of the swallow and the pharyngeal stage of the swallow. It may cause increased residue of food or liquids in the mouth and throat after swallowing, food or liquids going close to the vocal folds or below the vocal folds and into the lungs may cause adverse effects such as pneumonia or choking.

The Iowa Oral Performance Instrument (IOPI) is a tool that Speech-Language Pathologists at Butler County Health can implement to measure lip and anterior and posterior tongue strength for swallowing. "During therapy for those with trouble swallowing, we will cater a treatment plan to fit a patient's needs by identifying deficits of the swallow which may include tongue or lip weakness or difficulty with movement of the tongue or lips," explains Lani Eddie, Speech-Language Pathologist at Butler County Health.

The IOPI can help distinguish between muscle weakness and deficits in how the tongue and lips carry out movement for the swallow through pressure sensing technology (IOPI Medical, 2021).

This involves a small air-filled bulb that is placed in target areas for the lips and/or the tongue and the patient squeezing the bulb with the lips or tongue to measure overall strength. Speech-Language Pathologists can compare patient strength to normative values and set the levels of resistance on the IOPI accordingly to utilize as a strengthening tool in therapy. The IOPI also provides visual feedback for patients

in accordance to their performance. This may promote patient motivation and a challenge in their swallowing exercises with aims to improve strength for swallowing. The IOPI provides measurable strength and resistance training for those with deficits of the lips and/or tongue for swallowing in efforts to improve safety and overall comfort when eating and drinking.

BUTLER COUNTY HEALTH FOUNDATION

RAISES FUNDS FOR NEW AMBULANCE FOR BUTLER COUNTY HEALTH

The Butler County Health Foundation's fundraising endeavors have significantly benefited Butler County Health. The proceeds from events like the Foundation Benefit Dinner and Auction and the Foundation Raffle contributing to essential purchases. In 2024, the funds raised were used to help purchase an ambulance for Butler County Health.

The Annual Benefit Dinner in March of 2024 successfully raised \$62,241. Additionally, the 2024 Foundation Raffle raised \$32,530. The Raffle \$10,000 grand prize winner was Chris Polacek. The two \$1,000 winners were Greg Janak and Monte and Penny Pueppke. The

two \$500 winners were Tad Naiberk and Joe Birkel and the additional \$250 winners were Hank Kobza, Jon Eller, Jodi Prochaska, Rex Rehmer, Jim Egr, and Kevin and Amy Slama.

Butler County Health averages 117 ambulance transfer annually. The hospital has relied on three used ambulances over the past 23 years. In 2023, the hospital received a \$75,000 grant to aid in purchasing a new ambulance, which comes with a total cost of \$290,000. This new ambulance is outfitted with custom features aimed at enhancing patient comfort and providing a more efficient workspace for staff during transfers.



HONORING THE PAST

2024 & 2025 INDUCTEES

Butler County Health developed the Honoring the Past program in 2020, to recognize the contributions that have been made by the individuals through the development and growth of the organization. There have been many individuals that have served as County Supervisors, Hospital Board Members, Medical Staff Members and Employees that have contributed to the success of Butler County Health. Past inductees include: Rita Homan, John Klosterman, Paul Kosch, Dr. Lawrence Rudolph, Janice Struebing, JoEllen Vrbka, Wilfred Kozisek, Jack Tarr, Dr. Victor Thoendel, Mary Ann Vybirl, Jean Glock, Jeanne Jakub, Allan Steinberger, Dr. Jack Kaufmann, Norma Jean Kovar, Beverly Steager and Ron Vaca. In 2024 Honoring the Past Inductees were Kathy Bongers, John Dehner and Dr. Gerald Luckey. In 2025 Honoring the Past Inductees were Martha Fiala and Mary Svoboda.



Kathy Bongers: 1971–2011

JoEllen Vrbka enlisted Kathy Bongers in 1971 to join as a Certified Medical Librarian at the “old hospital”. Initially, she worked part-time, handling transcription tasks for the providers. In 1973, with the construction of the new hospital, Kathy assumed the role of the first Medical Records Director at Butler County Health. During the course of her career, Kathy was instrumental in the organization of medical records, developing a structured filing system that was stored in a locked vault and later through an electronic medical records system. Kathy was responsible for ensuring documentation adhered to required guidelines and emphasized the importance of thorough documentation, as it dictated the accuracy of medical records. This played a crucial role in ensuring accurate coding to optimize hospital reimbursement. Kathy served on the Butler County Health Foundation Board and played a pivotal role in the Advancing

Health Care for Future Generations Capital Campaign steering committee. Kathy actively participated in the Butler County Health Volunteers, holding officer positions for several years. Her dedication and contributions have left a lasting impact on the success of Butler County Health.



John Dehner: 1987–2006

JoEllen Vrbka initially approached John Dehner about a part-time job as a plant manager at Butler County Health in 1987. JoEllen knew of John’s strong work ethic due to John serving with her husband, Dennis, in the Korean War. What began as a part-time position gradually evolved into a full-time role for John. Throughout his tenure, John earned the reputation of being a “jack of all trades.” He took on various responsibilities, including outdoor maintenance tasks like lawn care and snow removal, and even assisted with unlocking vehicles for staff who misplaced their keys by crafting tools to help them out. Additionally, he contributed to ambulance duties alongside colleagues Ron Vaca and Ed Meysenburg, from 1988 to 2002. He took pride in honoring the trust placed in him by both providers and nurses during transfers. John’s adaptability was evident when he willingly transitioned to Purchasing Director in 1993,

stating: “that’s where the hospital needed me.” John received the Caring Kind Award in 1990. He was widely regarded as a positive force within the hospital, lifting the morale of everyone he came in contact with. He was conscientious of the work and never left a job half done. Even upon his retirement from Butler County Health in 2006 at the age of 75, John continued to serve his community by maintaining the grounds at St. Mary’s Cemetery. Reflecting on his experience, John’s wife, Barb, recalls his sentiment after his first day at the hospital when he said: “I have never had so many good people to work with as I did today at the hospital.”



Dr. Gerald Luckey: 1974–2019

Dr. Gerald Luckey has been an active member in the medical community both locally and statewide since 1974. Family medicine to him provides unending challenges because of the rapidly changing aspects of care in all age groups. Dr. Luckey has served on several boards including: the Butler County Health Foundation, board member for the Nebraska Medical Association, board member for the Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians, board member for the Nebraska Academy of Family Physicians Foundation, and Founder and President of the South East Rural Physician Alliance. He was also Medical Director for St. Joseph Villa and David Place. Dr. Luckey has received several accolades throughout his career including:

American Academy of Family Practice Fellow (1988), Nebraska Health Care Association Medical Director of the Year for the Southeast District (1995), Nebraska Quality of Care Award (2002), Nebraska Family Physician of the Year Award (2003), and the Nebraska Rural Health Association Outstanding Rural Health Practitioner Award (2008), UNMC JC Elliot Award (2012), Nebraska Medical Association's Physician of the Year Award (2015) and the UNMC Ted Koefoot for Medical Student Preceptor of the Year (2015). Dr. Luckey practiced medicine for four decades in our community, retiring in 2019. His passion for medicine and leadership was instrumental to the recruitment of the medical staff we have today and the overall success of Butler County Health. His career has paralleled the growth and development of medicine in Butler County. One of the most rewarding honors in his career is the long term relationships created with his patients. In 2010, Dr. Luckey is quoted in saying "I have had the benefit of watching infants that I have delivered grow up and have families and careers, sometimes delivering their children. I have been treating many of my patients since the start of my career in 1974."



Martha Fiala: 1930-1979

Martha Fiala began her career at David City Hospital in 1930 at just 13 years old, working as a temporary cook. During this time, she lived in the hospital's provided quarters, earning a starting wage of one dollar a day, plus room and board. In her spare time, she assisted with various hospital tasks, such as making bandages and washing walls. Her dedication and hard work led to a promotion in 1938, when she became the head of the Dietary Department. Martha was known for her strong work ethic and deep compassion for serving others. Her commitment to the hospital became a family tradition, as she recruited her sisters and later her daughter, Bev Steager. During her time in the department, automation was limited, there were no dishwashers or large freezers, meaning the meat supply had to be ordered daily, and the staff canned their own vegetables. In a 1979 article in The Banner Press, Martha reflected on the minimal changes in food

preparation throughout her career. The biggest shifts came when government regulations prohibited the use of fresh farm products and when Medicare requirements introduced a consulting dietitian for meal planning. The only formal complaint she ever received from inspectors was about the employee cookie jar, which needed to be replaced to meet updated standards. Martha was widely recognized for her homemade, from-scratch meals, featuring dishes like roast duck, dumplings and sauerkraut. She took great care in ensuring patients received appetizing meals, even when their diets were restricted. After 49 years of dedicated service, she retired from Butler County Health in 1979, earning the distinction of being the hospital's longest-serving employee.



Mary Svoboda, CRNA: 1962-1994

Mary Svoboda was the first Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) at Butler County Health. She was initially recruited by Dr. Kaufman in 1962 for a procedure at the old hospital. Throughout her career at Butler County Health, she credited medical staff such as Dr. Rudolph, Dr. Thoendel and Dr. Luckey for their commitment to advancing medical practices. One notable example was the implementation of the Apgar Scoring test for newborns, which was introduced after attending a seminar in Virginia with Dr. Rudolph. She valued the mutual trust and collaboration she shared with the medical staff. In 1980, Mary partnered with Jim Cuddeford from Bryan Health to mentor anesthesia students, becoming the first mentor for these students in Nebraska at Butler County Health. She took great pride in providing students with a rural hospital experience, where they learned to perform spinals, epidurals, and general anesthesia, procedures they often had limited opportunities to practice in larger hospitals. Colleagues recognized Mary for her exceptional communication skills with the nursing staff and her attentiveness to the anesthesia care she provided. She approached her work with a calm demeanor that reassured both staff and patients. For Mary, the greatest reward of being a CRNA was the ability to help others. She provided anesthesia services at Butler County Health until 1994, when she chose to dedicate more time to her role as a CRNA in the United States Army.

ED MEYSENBURG RETIRES

AS BUTLER COUNTY HEALTH FOUNDATION DIRECTOR



Ed Meysenburg began his career with Butler County Health in May 1994 as a part-time ambulance driver, while simultaneously working in the Water and Sewer Department for the City of David City. In 1998, Ed transitioned into a dual role as the Executive Director of the Future Generations

Health Care Foundation (now Butler County Health Foundation) and Purchasing Director for Butler County Health. Ed became the third Foundation Director since its establishment in 1992. By 2013, his focus shifted solely to serving as the Foundation's Executive Director until his retirement in December 2024.

Ed oversaw the planning and development of the Butler County Health Foundation, as Executive Director. He managed day-to-day operations, identified and cultivated relationships with major donors, educated community groups about the Foundation's mission, administered donor recognition programs, coordinated annual giving campaigns, and applied for healthcare grants. Additionally, he facilitated annuities, organized Board of Directors meetings and distributed Foundation funds as directed.

Ed is best known for his fundraising efforts, having spearheaded five significant capital campaigns during his tenure:

- **2000 Ambulance Campaign:** Raised approximately \$30,000 for a new ambulance.
- **2001 X-Ray Equipment Campaign:** Raised \$38,000 to help replace X-ray and ultrasound machines at the hospital.
- **2005 "Advancing Health Care for Future Generations" Campaign:** Raised \$587,000 for the expansion and remodeling of Butler County Health.
- **2014 Dr. Larry Rudolph Medical Recruitment Fund:** Raised \$450,000 to assist in recruiting Dr. Robert Daro and Dr. Joshua Sypal.
- **2023 50th Anniversary Campaign:** Surpassed expectations by raising \$350,150 to purchase equipment for the Butler County Health Emergency Department.

Ed also initiated numerous fundraising events for the Foundation, including the Foundation Golf Tournament, the Annual Benefit Dinner and Auction and the Foundation Raffle. He organized internal events for Butler County Health employees, such as the Hospital Week Silent Auction, Foundation Book Fair, Bed Sheet Fundraiser and Uniform Fundraiser. These efforts resulted in the purchase of vital hospital equipment, including a fetal monitor, EZ lift patient stand, ambulance cot, kitchen oven, cardiac monitoring system, nurse call system, wellness center equipment and the construction of the helipad.

Ed has seen many changes during his time at the hospital and foundation. Ed highlighted the significant physical transformations of the hospital, noting, "The hospital building has changed so much in the past 30 years, and the Foundation helped fund a lot of these changes." He also recounted the challenges brought on by COVID-19 in 2020, which forced him to adapt fundraising efforts to remote communication methods such as mail and email. Despite these challenges, the Foundation continued to thrive under his leadership.

Ed embraced technological advancements during his time as Executive Director. Initially, the Foundation worked with a consulting firm to manage annuities, which involved external paperwork processing. However, in 2013, the adoption of Crescendo Interactive software enabled the Foundation to handle quotes and paperwork in-house. Additionally, the introduction of QuickBooks simplified bookkeeping and improved reporting for the Foundation Board.

When asked about his greatest accomplishment, Ed shared, "Completing the major campaigns and building friendships and connections with the supporters of the Foundation have been the most rewarding parts of my 26 years. That's been just awesome."

Caring Kind Award 2024

PAIGE KREITMAN, RN

The Nebraska Hospital Association Caring Kind award has been given to Nebraska's most caring and compassionate hospital employees for 45 years. The award honors outstanding health care employees who have demonstrated compassion for patients, cooperation with co-workers and dedication to excellence in their job responsibilities.

Hospitals throughout the state actively participate in this annual tradition by nominating one exceptional individual from within their ranks. These nominees, representing the heart and soul of their respective institutions, exemplify the qualities that define the Caring Kind award. The selection process involves a careful consideration of the nominee's demonstration of compassion towards patients, collaboration with co-workers, and unwavering dedication to excellence in their professional responsibilities.

Butler County Health is proud to honor Paige Kreitman as a 2024 Caring Kind recipient. Paige began her career as a Registered Nurse at Butler County Health in 2018. She is an exceptional nurse who consistently goes the extra mile for her patients, often visiting them on her days off or bringing crafts to entertain swing bed patients. Paige is known for her patient and kind demeanor, maintaining professionalism and a positive attitude. Her

fellow coworkers expressed that they look forward to working with Paige, as she puts a smile on everyone's face and is always willing to lend a helping hand. Paige's compassionate care and thoughtfulness toward staff and patients represents the essence of the caring kind award.

"Being chosen by my coworkers as the Caring Kind recipient last year truly meant a lot to me. It was a reminder that the little things I do to support and care for others really does make a difference."



Pictured is Paige Kreitman and Don Naiberk, CEO at the Caring Kind Luncheon.

2025 BCH Foundation Dinner & Auction

The Butler County Health Foundation Annual Dinner and Auction held on March 8, 2025 raised \$49,420. These funds were used to purchase Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Equipment for Butler County Health. Some of the equipment includes an Arm Bike, Lateral Trainer and Core Stix.



Pictured is Madison Helman, RT with the new Arm Bike and Core Stix in the Cardiopulmonary Department.



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