

Katie Johnson: Good morning, and welcome to Apple a Day Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness segment, where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I am Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is Kyle Richards, the new CEO at Lake Region Healthcare, here to introduce himself to the community. Good morning, Kyle.

Kyle Richards: Hello, Katie. It's nice to be with you today.

Katie Johnson: I am so excited that we have this opportunity to get to know you a little bit better with our listeners this morning. You've been here for a few weeks now, and as CEO, I know you've been super busy meeting lots of new people and seeing lots of new places. Thanks for taking a minute out to join us this morning. Let's introduce our listeners to you by starting out to tell them about your career and what got you to this point.

Kyle Richards: All right, that sounds good. I've always been interested in healthcare. As a little child, I had a lot of healthcare issues and needs. I've always been interested in healthcare, and especially looking at the patient-centered care model, and how we can provide care better to our patients, as I went through it as a child.

I went and received my masters of public administration with a health services emphasis at USD, at University of South Dakota in Vermillion. Then from there went on to go for the Sanford Health System, was director in the Sanford Health System in a lot of different areas, and had an opportunity to become a CEO at Sanford Webster Medical Center in Bethesda Home in Webster, South Dakota. From there, went on to be a CEO at Waverly Health Center in Waverly, Iowa, which was just north of Waterloo-Cedar Falls. Then most recently, before this opportunity came along, was at Regional Health in Rapid City, South Dakota. Born and raised in Rapid City, so went back home to Rapid City, and was there for a number of years with the president of Regional Health Network, which I oversaw six different facilities from the Rapid City Health Network area.

Katie Johnson: Wow, what a great 20 years-ish of experience that's led you up to this point. I'm curious what attracted you to Lake Region Healthcare at this point in your career.

Kyle Richards: You know, there's a lot of things that attracted me to Lake Region Healthcare. One of the things that really attracted me was the patient-centered care, and the providers, and the caring staff we have here. It's unbelievable the amount of care that we provide to our communities, outreach, and to be one of the top 100 is just incredible. You don't get that by being second rate. You get that by being first class.

That's the kind of thing that I wanted to be involved with. I wanted to join to be involved with a healthcare organization that had a progressive look at where we're going with healthcare through different modelings of making people well, instead of just treating the sick, making people well. I wanted to be a part of that, as well.

With all those factors coming together, and with the great community of Fergus Falls and the surrounding area, it really attracted my family and myself to this great opportunity. I'm just so happy to be here with everybody right now.

Katie Johnson: Well, we're certainly excited to have you onboard. When we think about the vision that you have for Lake Region Healthcare, what is that? And how do you think we are going to need to go about achieving it?

Kyle Richards: Yeah, I think from my perspective, anyway, we've already started that vision, making people well instead of treating just the sick. We want to make people well, so we've already started that journey. I want to try to look at it from a patient perspective, as well, really patient-centered focus model.

One of the things that myself and the chief nursing officer, Lucia Anderson, started doing was doing rounds on our patients in the hospital, and trying to understand their feedback, and how we can provide better services to our patients and their families, as well. Looking at it from a visionary standpoint, really becoming patient-centered, not that we've not done that already, but doing that even more.

How can we help individuals coming in and navigating this scary thing we called healthcare? Because when we come into healthcare, we're feeling vulnerable, we're feeling not well. We just want to be better, usually. There's a very few times that we come in, and we're expecting those happy things like a baby, those types of things. We're usually coming in, and we're unwell. We don't feel well. We're coming in because of something scary. How can we make that less scary for patients and families? How can we make it so that patients and families are coming to us and trusting us for their care, making sure that we have enough providers and enough access to care for our patients and families out there in our communities, making sure that we have enough specialty care, as well.

Those are all things that we're looking at right now. Those are all things that we're trying to assess and making sure that, from a visionary standpoint, that we're going to be able to achieve in the long run. That's just a few of the many things that I have looking at right now, but want to portray that out to the rest of the organization, as well.

Katie Johnson: If you could describe your leadership style in one word, what would that word be?

Kyle Richards: My leadership style, servant leadership. That's what my style is all about. I feel like I'm here for the staff, the employees, the providers, the community, the patients, the families. I'm here to serve, and that's my role is to serve, break down barriers, break down those things that stand in the way of delivering excellent patient care. That's where I come from. I have a lot of background as far as being a servant leader, reading a lot of different books and a lot of different seminars. I just gravitate to that leadership style more than any, so that's my leadership style in a nutshell.

I try to be interactive. I try to be out and about. People may not see me a whole lot

in this office area, but out and about in the community, out and about in the hospital, in the clinics, into our locations around Fergus Falls, as well.

Katie Johnson: That's great. You've already mentioned the wellness, helping people stay well, preventing illness, not just being here for people when they're sick. Why do you think it's important that healthcare organizations help patients be healthy and well, in addition to treating them when they're sick?

Kyle Richards: You know, it's one of the missions that we probably have fallen down on in the past with healthcare, is that we do a transactional kind of relationship, where we're just treating the sick, and we're not trying to promote the healthy wellbeing. When we do that, we win for everybody. We're not providing the care that's outside of the setting that they need, so they're not coming in when they have a cold or a sniffle. In the ED setting, we actually have different settings, and those types of things. Trying to prevent those illnesses saves dollars for the healthcare industry, saves dollars for taxpayers, so that's what we want to do.

We want to make sure that we're part of the solution to this larger picture of this healthcare, maybe crisis some call it, in the US right now. We're spending a lot of dollars from gross domestic product standpoint on healthcare, so how can we make sure that we're spending less dollars and providing better care? That's what we need to do as far as a healthcare community, and if we can do that from Lake Region's standpoint, I think all the better. We can be a model for the nation on that, to lower the healthcare cost for everybody by treating patients to be well, instead of not have that transactional standpoint of being sick.

Katie Johnson: That's a big shift, but I like your approach that says, if we can do it in Fergus Falls, anyone can do it anywhere.

Kyle Richards: Exactly, exactly. We can be on the cutting edge, just the same as Boston, or Minneapolis, or wherever. We'll be on the cutting edge, as well.

Katie Johnson: Tell us a little bit about your family. Who made the move to Fergus Falls with you?

Kyle Richards: Definitely. I have a beautiful and talented wife named Tammy. She's a music background, a music teacher by background. She has a wonderful array of instruments in our house. We have the steel pans and those types of things. She's a wonderful addition, I think, to the community, as well. She will be out and about and active, so I've been blessed to be married to her for a number of years, 19 years to be exact.

Then we have Alec, who's our 13-year-old, very tall for his age. If you see somebody kind of my height, as well, he's actually only 13. But he's one that looks forward to being involved in the school, and plays instruments, as well, and does a lot of different things. He'll be out and about, as well.

Then I have [Aliya 00:09:24], who's my daughter. She's 10, and she loves dance. She loves to be active in water sports and those types of things, too, so they're really

looking forward to getting started with the school here in Fergus Falls and being a part of the school system here, too.

Katie Johnson: We're so excited to have your family in our community. You all have probably heard our tag line by now that there's so much to do here, stay healthy for it. What does your family like to do to stay healthy for the things to do around here?

Kyle Richards: We love the water activities. Lake Region, it's one of those things, so we love the water activities. We love to be out on the lakes doing water sports and those types of activities. But we also like to bike. I like to bike, myself. Golfing, if we have time to get out there, I'm not sure if it's golf, or it's just chasing the white ball around, but it's one of those, anyway. We love to do that.

We have a couple of dogs, as well, that we go walk on the trails and things like that, too, a couple big Newfoundlands. They're gentle giants, but big, lovable dogs, so we love to go walk on the trails.

Katie Johnson: We look forward to seeing you and your family around the community, and we look forward to your leadership as we lead Lake Region Healthcare in this community to being one of the healthiest places to live in Minnesota. Thanks for joining our team.

Kyle Richards: Thank you so much, and I look forward to meeting a lot of different individuals here in Fergus Falls, as well as surrounding communities. Just glad to be here and be a part of this great organization called Lake Region Healthcare. Thank you so much.

Katie Johnson: Kyle Richards, the new CEO at Lake Region Healthcare, my guest today on Apple a Day. Kyle and Katie both remind you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.