

Katie Johnson: Good morning and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness show where we feature news and information you can use to live a healthier life. I'm Katie Johnson, your host, and my guest today is Ashley Hunstiger. She's a physician assistant joining our emergency medicine team, and here to introduce herself to our listeners in our community this morning.

Good morning, Ashley.

AshleyHunstiger: Good morning. Hello, everyone.

Katie Johnson: Thank you for joining me. It's always exciting to introduce new members of our team to the community and particularly, I think as we are expanding the emergency department staff, it's really exciting to talk about having a full staff of local providers in our emergency room, because that makes such a difference to the experience that our patients have there. And we recently introduced people to Matt, one of the other physician assistants joining the team. And the team there just continues to grow, and we're so excited to have you joining as well.

Tell us a little bit about your background. Where did you come from before landing here?

AshleyHunstiger: Yeah, I was born, raised, graduated high school from Sauk Centre Minnesota, so not too far away. I did my undergrad studies at the University of Minnesota in the Twin Cities. I earned my bachelor's degree in kinesiology there. After graduation, I worked for nearly three years as a patient care extender at the St. Cloud Hospital in the pediatric unit. After that, it confirmed my love for medicine and I went to PA school in Billings, Montana, and I recently graduated from there, and here I am.

Katie Johnson: What inspired you, maybe, to pursue specifically a physician assistant role and emergency medicine as a specialty?

AshleyHunstiger: Yeah. My sister is actually a emergency medicine physician. She practices down in Fort Myers, but I've always had an interest in medicine. You could say it's familial, I guess. I think seeing the relationship of the physician and the physician assistant, I gravitated more to the physician assistant role. I value team work and team building, and I think that physician assistants portray that role to perfection.

Emergency medicine in particular, to answer the second part of that question, I've always enjoyed the fast paced high acuity care, critical care of the emergency department. But it's really the impact that I can have on patients and their families during that time. It's always a bad day when a patient has to come to the ER. So I think having that impact is what is most appealing to me about the ER.

Katie Johnson: So kind of related to that, what's important to you when it comes to providing really high quality care? Like you said, it's a stressful time for families-

AshleyHunstiger: Sure.

Katie Johnson: And for patients when it's an emergency, what do you think are kind of the cornerstones of really making that difference that you talk about?

AshleyHunstiger: Yeah, patient centered care. I think it's all about the patient, their families and their wishes and their desires. So I'm a proponent of shared decision making and having those conversations and educating my patients on making that decision together.

Katie Johnson: That's great. So Lake Region Healthcare, you said it's not too far from your home. That might have been one factor, what were the other reasons that made you decide, "Lake Region Healthcare is where I'm supposed to be right now."

AshleyHunstiger: Yeah. Growing up, we actually had a family cabin not too far from ... Within the Lake Region, essentially. So I've always loved this area, the community itself, the people here, the outdoor activities. Everything about this community has been something that I've loved since a kid. And I think having the opportunity to come back and practice rural medicine, which is a passion of mine, in a community that I have historic attachment to is something that I am very excited about.

Katie Johnson: You mentioned outdoor activities. What are the things you like to do when you're not practicing medicine?

AshleyHunstiger: All things outdoors. We do a lot of fishing, hiking, camping, boating, we like to live the lake life. Outside of outdoor activities, I enjoy cooking, doing yoga, spending with friends, family.

Katie Johnson: All things that sound like a perfect fit for this community and for this organization. Anything else that you want our listeners to know about you as we visit this morning?

AshleyHunstiger: Just that I'm excited to join this community, I'm excited to be part of Lake Region family and I can't wait to be a part of your health care team.

Katie Johnson: Well, we are certainly glad to have you, Ashley. Again, Ashley Hunstiger, a physician assistant joining our Emergency Medicine Department, and so happy to have you on board as we expand the team of local providers, providing local care 24 hours a day in our emergency department. So important to our community. We welcome you to Lake Region Healthcare and to Fergus Falls.

AshleyHunstiger: Thank you very much.

Katie Johnson: Ashley Hunstiger, and Katie Johnson on Apple a Day today, reminding you there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.