

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 lifestyle. I'm Katie Johnson your host and my guest today is Larry Schulz, the CEO at Lake Region Healthcare here to talk with us about some recent exciting recognition for the organization. Good morning, Larry.

Larry Schulz: Good morning, Katie.

Katie Johnson: So we learned last week that Lake Region Healthcare has been named one of the top 100 rural and community hospitals in the United States. That's fantastic news to hear. Tell us about how that award was earned. Is it something Lake Region Healthcare applied for, or how did they earn this recognition?

Larry Schulz: It's a tremendous honor and we're very pleased to receive it. It's not something that you apply for, it's several organizations have gotten together, taking a look at publicly reported data and collected information about hospitals, the quality of care they provide, the cost of those services, and came up with a list. Those organizations include the National Rural Health Association, Rural Health Policy Institute, iVantage Health Analytics and the Chartis Center for Rural Health.

Katie Johnson: How is Lake Region Healthcare affiliated with any of those organizations if at all?

Larry Schulz: We aren't directly affiliated with any of them.

Katie Johnson: I think that that fact along with it not being one of the application-based awards probably makes this award all the more meaningful.

Larry Schulz: Absolutely. I think it's really a tribute to our physicians and our employees for what they do every day to make the patient experience a positive one.

Katie Johnson: So why do you think it is important that we take time to pause and recognize those efforts?

Larry Schulz: It's important because people are working very hard every day to accomplish our mission, which is to improve the health of people in this region and as they go about doing that, they're focusing every day on how can they accomplish the triple aim and that's how do we improve the care experience. How do improve the overall health of the population, and how do we work towards lowering the cost of healthcare, and I'm very pleased with our staff and the focus that they bring to that and to patient care in general.

Katie Johnson: So when you talk about the triple aim and the work that people do towards that, can you give us some examples of what that work is or what it means to work towards improving the triple aim?

Larry Schulz: It's a number of things especially in the customer service area. We have a big focus

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at Lake Region Healthcare on customer service. We have a number of departments. It's not just our physicians and our nurses, and they do an outstanding job and are focused on improving customer service, but it's a lot of other areas too. It's the food service folks who do yeoman's work in providing very nutritious and tasty meals for our patients and visitors. It's the environmental services staff that keep our building functioning and neat and clean to help prevent infections. It's other ancillary departments like our rehab services, PTOT speech therapy, lab x-ray and many others that are working every day to improve the experience for our patients.

Katie Johnson: It really is a testament to how many different people with different talents it takes to run a healthcare organization. I think that it's not only something for Lake Region Healthcare to feel very proud about, it's meaningful to this community to know that our healthcare system that is run here at home, an independent healthcare system, is earning this kind of nationwide recognition.

Larry Schulz: It's really the effort of the almost 1,000 people that are affiliated with Lake Region Healthcare, and I'd like to say that if everybody pulls the rope in the same direction towards accomplishing our mission and our vision, we can make that happen and thanks to the effort of all these folks, we've been recognized nationally and hats off to our physicians and all the employees here at Lake Region Healthcare. I'm very proud of them for their efforts.

Katie Johnson: While we like to tout the recognition we of course remember it's really all about the patients and meeting their needs. That's what results in recognition like this. Can you tell us a little bit about what Lake Region Healthcare does to ensure we are listening to our patients, to our community and what their needs are?

Larry Schulz: Certainly. There are several ways that we do this. One is through a patient advisory council where we've actually invited patients to help us make some decisions on how we deliver care and that group's just been tremendous in offering suggestions to us. We do patient surveys along the way. We do those randomly for people that come in. We now have a system in place in the clinic where we get immediate feedback from patients through suggestion boxes and we take a look at those, make improvements as we can. We ask our employees to come up with suggestions on how we can improve patient care as well. We do a community health assessment every so often with public health and gather information there. We've also had some community forums or community conversations where we've asked the public how we could help accomplish the triple aim.

Katie Johnson: That really just goes to show that it is a partnership, a team effort towards achieving things like this recognition of being one of the top 100 rural and community hospitals in the United States. Anything else that you want to add about the award or Lake Region Healthcare's efforts towards it?

Larry Schulz: I would just like to say thank you again to our physicians, our employees, and all our departments because it's truly a team effort. Also like to recognize our board for the leadership that they've provided in allocating the resources necessary that

allows us to achieve this award and also the countless volunteers that help along the way in our community. We need them as well to help improve the health of our community.

Katie Johnson: Of course, we have to thank our patients for choosing Lake Region Healthcare and supporting us along the way as well, and they've also been extremely supportive of our recent community health challenge. I want to take a minute to talk about Shoot for the Moon. How are you doing on logging your miles?

Larry Schulz: Actually, it's going very well. I've blown right past the total mileage that I said I was going to achieve. I think the seasonably warm weather has helped with that, plus I've tried to make a point of exercising a little bit more and it's going well so far.

Katie Johnson: It's going well as a community as well. We've just gone over the halfway point so as they say, all downhill from here, but I don't know if you can say that when you're in space, but we look forward to culminating this in April at the health expo as well.

Larry Schulz: This is really a fun event and I know our community can do it so I'd urge everybody to get out there and exercise. We've had some really neat stories about people starting their healthy living through these efforts and please sign up if you haven't, and please if you have signed up, continue to help us out.

Katie Johnson: Exactly. Get those miles logged and come April 20th at the health expo, we can't wait to see who wins this year's travel voucher and see exactly how far we got in our effort to go 238,900 miles to the moon. Larry, thanks for joining us this morning. Any last things you want to add before we go?

Larry Schulz: No, it's just a real pleasure to be involved with such great people here in Fergus Falls and all the wonderful things that our employees and physicians and staff and volunteers do for the betterment of our community.

Katie Johnson: Absolutely and the recent recognition of the top 100 rural and community hospitals achieved by Lake Region Healthcare is the topic this morning and I'm visiting with Larry Schulz, CEO at Lake Region Healthcare about an Apple a Day. Larry, thanks for joining me.

Larry Schulz: Thank you, Katie.

Katie Johnson: Larry Schulz and Katie Johnson on Apple a Day reminding you that there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day.

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