

Katie Johnson: Good morning, and welcome to Apple a Day, Lake Region Healthcare's health and wellness program where we feature news and information that you can use to live a healthier lifestyle. I am Katie Johnson, and joining me as my guest today is Larry Schulz, CEO at Lake Region Healthcare. Good morning, Larry.

Larry Schulz: Good morning, Katie.

Katie Johnson: We're approaching the end of the year. As usual, we like to have a little bit of a recap about what has happened at Lake Region Healthcare that's been notable and have you as our guest to talk about those things as we reflect on 2016. I'd like to start by asking how would you sum up this past year at Lake Region Healthcare?

Larry Schulz: It's been a wonderful year, been a year of continued growth and partnership.

Katie Johnson: I think that a highlight would definitely have to be the opening of the new clinic. When we think back to a year ago we had just opened the doors on that new clinic. When you think back on that, what did Lake Region Healthcare hope to accomplish in opening that clinic and how are things going?

Larry Schulz: We're really excited about our new clinic. We set out to do several different things. One was to create access for our patients. It was difficult to get around in the old clinic. The new clinic was designed to make ease of navigating the area much better. We also set out to provide additional space for expanding medical staff. As I've talked about before, our medical staff has grown from 47 seven years ago to about 85 today. That tremendous growth, we just needed more space. We also set out to focus in on creating a better patient experience. We added a number of amenities to the clinic to make the experience better for our patients.

Katie Johnson: I think that's definitely been the case as we see patients enjoying the space, taking in the new space for 20/20, for the Thrifty White Pharmacy and enjoying just those little things like Caribou Coffee and an aquarium, for example. We've certainly heard positive feedback.

Larry Schulz: Absolutely. Every time I walk through the clinic especially in the pediatric area, I see little ones focused in on the aquarium. I know they've enjoyed it, and people of all ages have a lot of very positive comments about our clinic.

Katie Johnson: You mentioned the goal of increasing the space for our growing medical staff. Tell me a little bit about some of the new medical staff or the expanded specialties that have happened in 2016 and why it's important that we continue focusing on that.

Larry Schulz: We've had some real growth in a number of areas. We've had the first full year of services when we've had our full-time cardiologist here. We have a full-time pulmonologist. We're working on getting an entire emergency medicine physician group that's local here. We've recruited some additional providers in that area. We're also expanding in the primary care areas like internal medicine and family

medicine as well. We're excited to expand access to people in our area. As we have that access, people have to travel less for healthcare services.

Katie Johnson: That's definitely important in this part of our state. When we look at the growth, you mentioned at the very beginning growth and partnerships were two keywords that you used to describe the past year. What are some of those new partnerships or acquisitions that have been notable this past year?

Larry Schulz: Several of them. One of them we started participating in an accountable care organization or an ACO. We partnered with other similar size independent organizations, primarily the hospital in Winona. ACOs are a program that were set up by the federal government that looked at the total cost of care. We're working with the hospital in Winona and then some other organizations, the Mankato Clinic, Homestead Community Hospital in Rochester, a hospital in Akon and a hospital in Madison, Minnesota. We're all working together to help accomplish a triple aim and that's how do we improve the care experience, how do we improve the health of the population and how do we work towards reducing the cost of healthcare? By working with those organizations, we are in a rural demonstration project with the federal government. Most of these programs typically are just available in metropolitan areas, and this is a demonstration project to see how it would work in a rural area, and that takes partnerships.

Katie Johnson: I think that's really interesting. It's one of those things that the average patient wouldn't know about our organization. It's important to know that that work is being done, and there is a lot of concentration on improving that experience, care and cost being done by the organization.

Larry Schulz: Absolutely. There are a couple of other partnerships I should mention as well. One of those is an accountable communities of health partnership that we have ongoing with others in our community. We're very blessed in our community. We have a wonderful public health department, and we have a really good working relationship with them. We're working with them and other providers whether it be in long-term care, mental health services, county social services. We're all working together to focus in on how can we create a health community right here in the Fergus Falls area?

Katie Johnson: Another partnership that comes to my mind I'm often asked about. How are things going with Prairie Ridge and the integration that happened with that organization in Elbow Lake?

Larry Schulz: We're continuing to move forward with the integration of bringing Prairie Ridge onboard in partnership with us. That's allowed us to work together to expand into Grant County and some of Stevens County as well in partnership with our friends at Prairie Ridge. It's a good organization, we're glad they're part of Lake Region Healthcare.

Katie Johnson: The Lake Region Healthcare Foundation is involved in a lot of the things that we've

mentioned so far, but one of the things they did this year that is new is a medical professions scholarship. I think it's worth noting these were two \$5,000 scholarships that were offered to students that are pursuing medical careers. Can you tell me why that has been an important step for Lake Region Healthcare and its foundation to take?

Larry Schulz: Very important. As our audience may have heard, there's an impending shortage of providers nationwide. This is an opportunity for us to help students who are interested in pursuing a career in medicine or other hard to find occupations to help them through school when they need it the most. Hopefully, when they're done they'll decide to come back to this wonderful place. We've also found historically that people that have ties to the area come back and provide services to people in this area.

Katie Johnson: Joel Money and Susan Kitzman-Berg were the winners of those scholarships. We should mention a new scholarship application period will open this winter. If you happen to know someone who would qualify, make sure you direct them to our website to find more about that. On a more personal note, you announced that you're going to be retiring this spring. Tell us about what your retirement plans might be.

Larry Schulz: It's going to be the start of a new chapter in my life. I'm going to be looking at perfecting being a grandpa, and also going to be spending some more time at the lake and some volunteer activities of some sort. I've been very blessed over the last 40 years in healthcare administration to get up every morning and work with some amazing people whether they be physicians or staff members, everybody working together. That's been a joy. I'm going to need to replace that time with some other things. I think being a grandpa and volunteering will fit the bill just fine.

Katie Johnson: We certainly wish you the best in that. It might be a little bit too soon to ask, but any idea what we can expect for new leadership at Lake Region Healthcare?

Larry Schulz: The board of directors is now in the process of conducting a search for the person that's going to succeed me. I know they're gathering information from key stakeholders to identify the type of person they'd like to come onboard. This is a wonderful job, and I'm sure there will be many very qualified candidates.

Katie Johnson: Larry Schulz, CEO at Lake Region Healthcare, thank you for your time today. Thank you for reflecting on 2016 with us. Hopefully, we'll have you back one more time before you retire and talk about the vision going forward. For today, Larry Schulz, CEO at Lake Region Healthcare, looking back on 2016 with me here on Apple a Day. Both Larry and I remind you that there is so much to do here. Stay healthy for it. Have a great day and a healthy new year. Thanks, Larry.

Larry Schulz: Thank you.