

For immediate release:

Hospital CEO accepts new position

Helber to work with many hospitals through OhioHealth

LOGAN – Hocking Valley Community Hospital and President/ CEO LeeAnn Lucas-Helber have been through many changes together in the past 18 years; and on April 30, they will embark on yet another as Helber says goodbye.

Helber has accepted a position with OhioHealth to serve as a liaison with hospitals around the state. “I’m really excited about it, but at the same time, I’m sad to leave here,” she said Monday. “I think I’m going to have an opportunity to continue to make a difference in healthcare at many facilities.”

With a Columbus office, Helber will be tasked with building, sustaining and furthering relationships with hospitals both in and out of the OhioHealth system. The career change will allow her to identify deficiencies at various hospitals for improvement and then give them an opportunity to benefit from shared services and buying power that a relationship with OhioHealth can offer. HVCH became an affiliate of this group while Helber was serving as the Logan hospital’s Vice President of Finance.

Helber’s role at the hospital has grown quite a bit over the last couple of decades. She joined the Hocking Valley family in 1995 as the Network Administrator/ Financial Analyst. Three years later, she was Director of Finance, and then it was on to VP of Finance in 2004.

It was in this role that Helber prepared herself for the next possible step: President/ CEO. With that in mind, she earned her MBA in 2006. The opportunity to take the helm came the following year when she began serving as Interim President/ CEO. The job became officially hers in August 2007.

Just as Helber recognized an opportunity to prepare for a successful future, she’s been doing the same for the future of HVCH. Early in her relationship with

Hocking Valley, Helber designed, built and installed the first local area network (LAN) in the hospital. As VP of Finance, she established a formal budget process that encouraged leader participation and engagement.

Many of Helber's accomplishments over the years have increased efficiency, patient satisfaction and employee satisfaction while also identifying ways to reduce costs. She created the leader scorecard and coached directors through the metric selection and tracking. This resulted in organizational focus and increased the operating margin from 0.1 percent to 9.1 percent over a three-year period.

"There have been significant changes in healthcare, especially over the last five years while LeeAnn has been our CEO," noted Dr. Duane Mart, HVCH Medical Director, "and yet she has managed to maintain a culture of passion and relationships in the hospital and in the community."

Under Helber's leadership as CEO, Hocking Valley Community Hospital has consistently ranked in the upper quartile for patient satisfaction nationwide. The hospital has gone from being in the 50th percentile among hospitals for employee satisfaction to the 91st percentile.

"She's demonstrated outstanding leadership over the years," said HVCH Board President Doug Wells. "She's a high-energy, very positive person to work with and it's going to be difficult to replace her."

Helber also has led the addition of hospitalists to the staff. "This was a collaboration between myself and local physicians. It's one that I'm extremely proud of," said Helber. "Physicians can see patients at their offices, and HVCH can designate a physician who works inside the hospital to see those patients when they are staying here." The purpose is to prevent patients from having to wait until evening to see their physicians and to aid the work-life balance of doctors who would come to the hospital after closing their offices for the day.

Also on Helber's watch, the hospital created the coumadin clinic, the pain clinic and the stroke network. Further progress has come in Urgent Care as it has expanded to create more space for patients. The hospital now sees 32,000 to 33,000 patients in the ER and Urgent Care each year.

In April 2012, HVCH began using the stroke network by using a computer on wheels (COW) that allows a specialist from another hospital to see and be seen by a patient in Logan. The new technology has been getting a lot of play in television commercials recently, and this telemedicine tool was made possible through the hospital's affiliation with OhioHealth.

Now, as Helber prepares to leave Hocking Valley Community Hospital and join OhioHealth, HVCH will prepare to go forward and make progress without her. "She's positioned the hospital and the Senior Leadership Group to carry on the good things she's done over the years," said Wells.

"We'll put a committee together comprised of hospital board members and likely representatives of the county commissioners, physicians and/ or hospital employees, and the Senior Leadership Group," he explained, noting that this will take place within the next couple of weeks. According to Wells, as the group begins talking about the search, the committee may utilize an executive search firm.

In the meantime, Helber -- who will continue to reside in Logan after leaving the hospital -- cherishes her time at HVCH and looks forward to the future.

"Most people in healthcare are called to it, to make a difference, to make a hospital a great place," said Helber. "I deeply feel that I made a difference here. I have more to give and on a bigger stage, I can help even more facilities."

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