

# LeadingAge Wyoming Newsletter

## Sandy Ward, The Man in the Six Pictures

By Stephen Dow of the Buffalo Bulletin



It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words, but sometimes photos don't tell the whole story.

Consider, for example, Sandy Ward who has served as the CEO of the Johnson County Healthcare Center for the past 30 years.



When Marcy Schueler, director of marketing and public relations at the health care center, was recently asked to compile some photos taken of Ward during his tenure at the center, she could find only six – one for every five years he has worked there.

decades, he has also brought state-of-the-art medical equipment to the facility and overseen the addition of new surgical, birthing and emergency room facilities, along with renovations of the center's clinic and nursing home.

How do you recognize and pay tribute to a man like Sandy Ward? He has meant so much to his community, his facilities and to the associations that represent his organizations. I have known Sandy for many years and have had the good fortune to learn from him. He helped me as a young, brand new nursing home administrator and later he was there to help me as I took on the role of hospital CEO. Sandy has supported

An outsider might interpret the lack of photos as an indication of Ward's lack of impact on the health care center. But the stories of center employees touched by Ward's kindness, vision and good business sense tell a very different story.

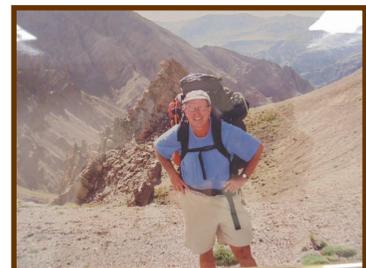
Ward is also proud of spearheading the recent effort to build a new nursing home at the center. The completely renovated Amie Holt Care Center opened last summer.

and served the WHA and was instrumental in starting the Quality Healthcare Foundation which later became LeadingAge Wyoming. I am blessed to be able to call Sandy my friend and will cherish our friendship forever. We found this feature article in the local paper in Buffalo and felt it was a fitting tribute to a great man. Congratulations Sandy on your retirement and on an incredible career. You leave behind an incredible legacy. Keep up the fight!

"People here could talk about Sandy all day," Schueler said. "Literally everybody at this center has a story or two or 10 about Sandy and how much he means to us. He's leaving an incredible legacy behind."

"One of the biggest decisions I ever made was deciding whether we should stay in the nursing home business or get out," Ward said. "In the end, it was a decision I made not based on financial considerations, but the fact that this county needed a nursing home. If we shut down Amie Holt, local residents would have to go out of county for nursing home care."

Ward will retire from the center March 31 to focus on fighting stage 4 salivary gland cancer. Nicole Hobbs, the physicians' services officer for West Park Hospital in Cody, will take over as administrator April 1. Depending on his health, Ward will continue working part time to help train Hobbs through 2017.



According to Schueler, Hobbs will have a tough act to follow. Not only has Ward kept the hospital on budget for three



Sandy Ward—Continued from front page

That meant that the children could only see them once a week. For me, it was a big deal that that didn't happen."

Schueler said that she has learned a lot from Ward over the years. One of those things was how to be a servant.

"There was a time awhile ago when we were really low on CNAs," Schueler said. "Because of this, Sandy decided to receive CNA training so that he could fill in while we were trying to hire people.

As staff members reflected on Ward's love of chocolate and the time he pranked an employee by pretending to be a corpse, the fondness in their voices made it clear that they were no longer talking about their boss.

They were talking about were talking about a mentor. A friend. A father figure. Over 30 years, he has become like family to them.

According to Ward, the feeling is mutual.

"It's been a real honor and privilege to work at the health care center," Ward said. "Before I got sick, I truly loved going to work and looked forward to it every day because I have a tremendous number of friends up there. I think seeing them everyday is the thing I'll miss most when I retire. The staff have truly made this an unforgettable experience for me."



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## St. John's Selects Senior Care Leader



Malenda Hoelscher has been selected as the new Nursing Home Administrator at John's Medical Center's Senior Living in Jackson. She is filling the vacancy left by Nurse Administrator Pat Weber, who retired after 28 years at St. John's.

"Those of us who met with Malenda during the interview process were struck by her personal warmth and compassion," said Paul Beaupre, chief executive officer of St. John's. "These qualities, combined with her administrative skill set, make her the right leader to bring our community's

senior living services into the next phase of development."

The interim executive director of the Living Center, Sarah Graham, will continue to be responsible for day-to-day operations as Hoelscher gets her feet on the ground.

Hoelscher brings with her a wealth of experience serving as director of nursing services at a 158-bed skilled nursing facility in Vermont, a program director of a 36-bed transitional care unit and director of a 34-bed acute rehab facility in South Dakota.

Before taking the job in Jackson she served as the health care administrator for the Sublette County Rural Health Care District in Big Piney.

She was responsible for the operational management of the district, including clinics in Marbleton and Pinedale as well as ER, lab, radiology and ambulance services.

In addition to executing budget and policy she advanced a team that advocated for strategic goals and was

a key figure in developing the affiliation with St. John's Medical Center to enhance health care for residents of Sublette County.

"It's my hope to get my feet on the ground, get a feel for where the team is at and where the culture currently is," she said. "I'm very impressed with a lot of the work already being done and that has been done. If the opportunity presents itself to integrate some of these other changes we will work together to make that happen. And if there are other ideas that come up, all the better."

That includes listening to seniors themselves.

"Their stories are amazing," Hoelscher said. "We can learn so much from them."

## LAW Advocating in DC

LeadingAge held its national PEAK conference last month in Washington DC. The conference was excellent and insightful. Time was spent meeting with state association executives and delegates from those associations, discussing the overall direction of LeadingAge and charting a path forward on items including advocacy, policies and procedures, workforce initiatives and many other topics. There were several days of break out session focusing on innovative resident care models and best practices.

Representing LeadingAge Wyoming was JoAnn Farnsworth of Weston County Health Services. During the meeting, JoAnn and I had a chance to make visits to our federal representatives on the Hill. JoAnn and I spent time visiting with Congresswoman Cheney, Senator Barrosso and Liz Schwartz from Senator Enzi's office. This was right before the AHCA was scheduled to be voted on in the House and time was spent talking about slowing things down and making sure that any changes to the ACA were done right.

A request was made to take a look at what the AHCA would do specifically to the state of Wyoming and to the providers in our state. A discussion was had about what Medicaid would look like in the future and creating parity for non-expansion states and those states that had expanded Medicaid. We let them know that we realized there were problems with the ACA but that moving too quickly without a true understanding of what the unintended consequences of AHCA could be would be very concerning and could cause damage to the care delivery model in Wyoming.

JoAnn and I spent a great deal of time talking about the Rules of Participation and the heavy burden the new regulations were placing on nursing homes in Wyoming. We explained that there was the potential that some of our facilities may not be able to meet all the new RoP. We also talked about the new survey process and the emphasis that was being placed on higher deficiencies

and that civil monetary penalties would be attached to those deficiencies. We explained that levying those penalties could potentially cause nursing homes in the state to have to close their doors. We asked for immediate help with regulatory relief.

LeadingAge Wyoming is out front and working hard to advocate and represent our members. We have established strong relationships with our elected officials and are lucky to be able to speak frankly and freely with them as we all try to protect healthcare and the patients we care for here in Wyoming.



## “The Power of Purpose”

**2017 Spring Conference**

**May 17-18, 2017**

**Hilton Garden Inn**

**Casper, Wyoming**

**307-266-1300**



# Lovin' Life at New Horizons Care Center

"Get'n Mov'n' is a new walking program that we have started at our Care Center. We crank up the music and ask the residents, 'Who is ready to walk.' They are so cute. They either smile and say they are ready or they complain a little, but once they are up and going, we all have a blast!

All of our staff gets involved so there are plenty of eyes including our floor nurses and aides; our restorative aides and also our CNO, Traci Harrison; Activity Director, Aspen Beall, Social Services Director Cathie Nunn.

Rather than a walk and dine program, where residents walk from their recliners to the table, with our program residents are encouraged to walk as far as they can, and they are starting to keep score! So watch out, we are getting bikini season ready at the care center and having a great time!"

*Michelle Horrocks, RN  
Upstairs Supervisor*



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