



By Jan Rahn

Managing Editor

With a lot of background experience in health care building projects—a great asset to start with—Jim LeBrun has taken the helm as chief executive officer of Perkins County Health Services.

LeBrun comes to PCHS at a crucial time in the health facility's forward progress.

He officially started May 20 and spent his first few days attending a software workshop in Minneapolis with six other PCHS employees, which gave him a chance to become acquainted with Jennifer Baumgartner, Pam Rowley, Genie Bishop, Amber Uehling, Kristi Griffiths and Shannon Schrotberger.

The native of Minnesota said he had not been looking for a change, but came to Grant in March to check things out after having been aggressively pursued by a hospital recruiter since the first of the year.

At the time he was employed by Regional West Health Services in Scottsbluff, where he served as the chief executive officer (CEO) of Gordon Memorial Health Services in Gordon. That facility includes a critical access hospital, two rural health clinics, long term care nursing home, and assisted living.

LeBrun is getting settled into his position and is enthused about several 90-day goals he has set, along with several first-year goals for Perkins County Health Services.

"There are a lot of really good things happening here, and there have been for a lot of years," he said. "But we have to become more efficient and effective to survive."

He is eager to get to know all of the staff and to become immersed into the community.

Topping the list of his goals is the hospital expansion project.

LeBrun's past experience will be invaluable. He was one of three team members who designed, built, staffed, and opened Valley Lutheran Hospital in Mesa, Ariz., which was originally built as a 120-bed acute care hospital with a foot print to add another 120 beds.

His experience includes work on diagnostic imaging centers, long term care, remodeling projects of patient rooms, surgery suites, laboratory, radiology, emergency department, physical therapy, home health, and a three-story multi-specialty clinic.

“Early in my career I led audits, both operational and financial, in 85 hospitals in 13 states—this was a great experience!” he said.

LeBrun said he prefers a small town setting and relates to rural America. He grew up in Elbow Lake in west central Minnesota and graduated from high school in the small town of about 800 people. He said he is familiar with rural life, with agriculture and with fluctuating temperatures.

“One of the best things about small towns is that everybody knows everybody,” said LeBrun, adding, “One of the down sides of a small town is that everybody knows everybody.”

His parents owned a dairy farm, raised alfalfa, corn, wheat, barley, oats, sunflowers and beans. As a farm kid, he said he spent many hours on John Deere equipment in a state where summers were hot with 95 percent humidity. Winters were on the other end of the mercury with lots of 20-below days.

LeBrun said Norwegian was spoken fluently in five area towns that have since consolidated into one school system. Eighty percent of the residents’ last names ended in “son” or “sen,” he said.

LeBrun attended the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration and accounting. He furthered his education at Ohio State University in Columbus pursuing an executive program in health care financial management. He received a Masters Degree in health administration from the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.

His wife, Mary, grew up in western North Dakota in a small town known for its German Russian Catholic Church with twin towers. She majored in speech pathology and audiology at the University of North Dakota.

The LeBrun family has a son, Eric, of Phoenix and two grandchildren. Their daughter, Nicole, is married and also lives in Phoenix.

Pretty much everything outdoors is how he describes his hobbies and interests. As avid hockey fans, they have been known to drive nine hours one way to take in a professional game.

“We spent four years together at the University of North Dakota supporting the Fighting Sioux Hockey Team,” he said.

They like to garden and both read a lot. Mary has a love of music. He enjoys hunting upland birds, waterfowl, and elk in Wyoming and Montana. Fishing includes both the summer sport and the winter sport of ice fishing.