

ACHD Advocate

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From the Desk of Ken Cohen, Executive Director

March has been another busy month for ACHD.

This month Sheila Johnston and I had the pleasure of visiting Plumas Healthcare District, Palomar Healthcare District (along with Howard Salmon, ACHD Board Chair), and West Side Healthcare District.



Dr. Kepple and his team provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges facing Plumas Healthcare District, including: conversations with a neighboring Healthcare District regarding management and collaboration. This was followed by a discussion of the role of LAFCO in consolidation and collaboration of Healthcare Districts as well as ballot initiatives and requirements. Dr. Kepple also provided an update on physician retention and improvements in services that have been implemented. Thank you to Dr. Kepple and his team for their hospitality and review of programs and for being our newest Member of ACHD!

Diane Hansen, Interim CEO of Palomar Health and Hugh King, Interim CFO, provided Sheila, Howard and I, with an overview of the many challenges facing their District. She also provided an update on the progress being made to sell or lease the vacant downtown hospital property. There was also a robust conversation regarding future capital needs related to meeting seismic requirements, within the changing financial landscape related to the Prime Program, as well as the potential impact of future changes to state and federal funding that are presently available under the current Waiver. The value of ACHD to Palomar Health and what additional services would be beneficial was also addressed. Thank you to both Diane and Hugh for your time and hospitality.

Jerry Starr, CEO of West Side Health Care District and Eric Cooper, Chair of the West Side Health Care District Board, provided Sheila and I with a comprehensive tour of their clinic facility; along with an update on the progress of their clinic expansion project. Of note, the West Side Health Care District Facility was recently approved as a federally qualified Rural Health Center which will result in additional financial resources towards operations and capital improvements. We also learned about the economic and demographic changes that have taken place over the past several years in the City of Taft and Kern County, and how these changes have impacted their ability to maintain services and retain physicians and staff.

West Side Health Care District became the 18th Certified Healthcare District and the District received their certification plaque and recognition at their public Board meeting on March 29th. Congratulations to the West Side Health Care District Board, administration and care team on achieving Certified Healthcare District status.



I also had the pleasure of meeting with Godfrey Wilson, CEO, Los Medanos Healthcare District and learning about the challenge facing their district with Contra Costa County and their LAFCO.

The Education Committee met via Webinar on March 7th to continue their examination of the Certified Healthcare District requirements and they are considering changes/updates that may be incorporated into the certified healthcare district process. The Committee will be working with the Board regarding certification enhancements that may include additional best practices and updated legal requirements. Any updates to the Certified Healthcare District program, along with the results of the Education Committee deliberations, will be announced at this year's Annual Meeting.

The Certified Health Care District application process will soon be available for download and submittal via the ACHD Website.

Just a reminder to [register](#) for ACHD's Annual Leg Day which will occur April 16, 17th. Also note, that ACHD will be hosting a CEO networking session over lunch on the 17th. District CEO's, Executive Directors and Administrators are invited to attend a special networking lunch. The objective of this CEO luncheon is to provide an opportunity for Healthcare District CEO to meet and network, discuss issues of mutual interest and challenge; as well as identify other areas for mutual support.

Lastly, during a recent ACHD Outreach Visit, District Executives expressed a desire to receive unfiltered news pertaining to Healthcare Districts in a more timely manner. Currently, ACHD shares positive Healthcare District news in our Monthly Update newsletter and on our website and social media more frequently. Therefore, ACHD will begin sharing news with other Member Healthcare District CEOs and Administrators in an email on a weekly basis.

Special Note

Amber King, Vice President, Government Affairs, will be on maternity leave through mid-July. In her absence please use the following contact information for the Advocacy Team:

- Annie Hohn, Administrative Associate, Advocacy: (916) 266-5204 or annie.hohn@achd.org
- Kelly Brooks, HBE: (916) 272-0011, or kbl@hbeadvocacy.com
- Jean Hurst, HBE: (916) 272-0010, or jkh@hbeadvocacy.com

For Association related questions, please contact Sheila Johnston, Vice President, Member Relations & Administration, at (916) 266-5208, or sheila.johnston@achd.org.

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Trustee Spotlight: Eric Cooper, West Side Healthcare District

In an effort to show our appreciation to Healthcare District Leaders, ACHD will begin highlighting the invaluable contributions of Trustees in their community. We recognize that the work and passion of our Trustees often go unrecognized and it is our goal to share the positive impacts Trustees make in their communities.



What inspired you to run for a seat on the West Side Health Care District Board?

I was asked to join the Board in the year 2000 to fill an open seat vacated by a Trustee that resigned and moved out of the District. I was inspired to serve and become active in the community after returning home from San Diego to help expand my family business.

Although I had no background or experience in health care, the idea of serving appealed to me because the Board was fairly unknown and I could offer my time and service with minimal commitment. Little did I know, that would be the farthest thing from the truth. Three years prior to my appointment, the West Side Health Care District sold its struggling hospital to Dignity Health (formerly, Catholic Healthcare West). They agreed to own and operate the facility for 4 years with a plan that appeared beneficial for all. My first year on the board coincided with the 4th and final year of that commitment. The writing was on the wall as Dignity meticulously informed the community that small rural hospitals were dying and in fact, the hospital they purchased from us and promised to run was the most unprofitable of all and would soon be closed. Suddenly, I found myself entering one of the most challenging and frustrating experiences of my life as I served on a board from a small under-served community that was about to wage a battle with a large, well funded health care behemoth that would decide the fate of our 65 year old hospital.

What is one accomplishment that the Board has implemented that you are most proud of?

After years in the making and serving on the board for 18 years, I am most proud of our brand new, state of the art outpatient medical facility that will break ground in mid-2018. Following the re-purchase of our property from Dignity Health we demolished our outdated hospital and our new Clinic signals the first phase of our long term plan to develop a 10 acre medical campus on land owned and operated by the district. Future plans include facilities and services geared toward serving the health and wellness needs of our under-served community.

What is your District best known for?

The West Side Health Care District is best known for its long history of serving the residents of Taft and outlying areas of our District. As one of the oldest and continuously run districts in California, we are proud of the accomplishments of both our Board Members and medical professionals through the years. Today and in the future, we look forward to further position our organization to be the nucleus of the health care providers and service groups in our community, helping to strengthen services and better serve the residents.

If money were no object, what services would you want your District to implement?

If money were no obstacle, I would fill our 10-acre campus with modern facilities, staff and well-run services that would not only service the health care needs of our District, but would meet the growing needs of patients from all over the central valley. Our 10-acre medical campus in Taft can become a premier destination for health care from the beginning of life to the end. Our District is so under-served in facilities, health professions and access to specialty health care the citizens of our District will welcome anything we have the financial resources to offer and support!

What advice would you give someone considering election or appointment to a Healthcare District?

Serving on a Healthcare District Board can be one of the most rewarding and challenging of all public service positions. Health care is a difficult, confusing and costly industry. A Healthcare District Board Member should enter into the position ready to check their personal agendas aside. They should be prepared to make a positive contribution and know that anything worth working for takes time, patience and dedication. Being a Board Member is often times thankless and frustrating, but at the end of the day, there is nothing more satisfying than being a part of an organization that helps equip, support and enable health care professionals with the tools and funds they need to save lives and make a difference.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I love to travel and vacation with friends and family. Especially with my wife Kathy, who is a 3rd grade teacher and my son Rex, who is a 7th grader. I am blessed with a successful, family owned business that affords me the opportunity to serve on the West Side Health Care Board and to call Taft, California my home!

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Legislative Day is Around the Corner!



It's just around the corner... join us for our 2018 Legislative Day, April 16-17 in Sacramento!

Legislative Day is a great opportunity for our attendees to learn about the issues impacting Healthcare Districts, collaborate with colleagues to create legislative solutions, and make their voices heard in the Capitol. But don't take our word for it--click on the video below to hear from our 2017 attendees!

