



News for George Regional Health System Employees

George Regional Health System CEO Paul Gardner Announces Retirement

December 2014

Having served the county and community through its health system for more than 23 years, Paul Gardner is retiring from his position as CEO. “It’s been a tough decision, but I feel it’s time. I’ve put my heart into making healthcare both accessible and affordable for this community and I’m very proud of where it is today.”

Gardner, his wife Cindy, and their three daughters originally came to Lucedale through his job with Horne CPA in Jackson, Miss. “Both Cindy and I were from a small community and that’s where we wanted to raise our children, so I took the position in Horne’s Lucedale office,” Gardner recalls.

In 1991, Gardner was approached by the Board of Trustees about the then-failing George County Hospital. And in 23 years—with the help of great staff—turned the hospital that was once on the brink of closing its doors, into the thriving health system it is today. “Back then, they were paying everything COD (cash on delivery)—there was no credit. Sometimes they couldn’t even make payroll, but they were busy,” he recounts “The hospital just needed help management-wise.”



George County Hospital first opened its doors in late summer of 1950 with seven doctors, five nurses, a book keeper, supervisor of dietary and housekeeping, maintenance, a caretaker, and a cook. Over the years, additional wings have been added to the original structure to house more services and caregivers. In 1991 the hospital purchased Community Medical Center, which then employed three doctors. Today, the medical practice serves more than 6,000 patients each month. In 2006, George County Hospital became George Regional Hospital and the “health system” was born. Managing health services in George, Greene, and Stone counties, it truly had become a ‘regional’ system.

“As many county hospitals throughout the region have battled simply to survive, in some cases failing altogether, George Regional Health System has purchased physician’s practices, added specialty services, enlarged the hospital and built a new sixty bed nursing home. Every one of these important developments has come at the recommendation of Mr. Gardner. Even now, on the eve of his retirement, we are within a few months of embarking upon another significant expansion of our hospital facilities, an undertaking that was first proposed by Mr. Gardner,” explains Jeff Howell, George Regional Health System Board of Trustees President.

Over the years, it’s grown progressively in terms of services offered and staff. Today, the health system includes two hospitals, two nursing homes, five medical clinics, a rehabilitation center and a wellness center. The system also employs more than 400 people.

“The system is stronger financially, and with more services ever offered, than any time in its 64-year history. I especially want to thank all the great employees of the system over the years who have worked hard to bring it where it is today,” Gardner emphasizes.

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An expansion project Gardner and his team have been working on for years has recently moved forward. In June, more than seventy percent of George County voters said ‘yes’ to expanding the health system. Just this year, the first phase of the expansion was completed with an additional 21,000 square foot wing. George Regional Health & Rehab residents are now enjoying much needed space.

“It’s been very rewarding to see the hard work finally coming together. Expanding healthcare services for this growing community has been a long-term dream and I’m especially honored to have been a part of the process,” Gardner acknowledges.

“The Board of Trustees of The George Regional Health System would like to offer our sincerest thanks to Paul Gardner for his dedicated service. We, and the people of George County, are better off because of his efforts and his leadership. We wish him the best in all his future endeavors,” expresses Howell.

Gardner’s retirement will be effective January 1, 2015. “My family and I are excited about what God has planned for us as we enter another phase of life.”

Christy Roberts Earns e-HIM® Award

Christy Roberts, Director of Health Information; Compliance & Privacy Officer, recently accepted an e-HIM® Award for the health system’s advances in implementing the electronic medical record.

Christy is the current President-Elect of the Mississippi Health Information Management Association. The association recognizes and honors individuals, groups, or organizations who have made important advances in areas related to e-HIM® (Electronic Health Information Management). Qualified individuals are Health Information management professionals or organizations who have helped “push the envelope” in the transition to electronic health information management.



George Regional Hospital Receives Top Honors

National Rural Health Day was celebrated on November 20th. George Regional Hospital was also given top honors that day—recognized for overall excellence in outcomes, reflecting top performance among all acute care hospitals in the nation.

“The top quartile performers should be viewed as true market leaders. Through their commitment to performance analysis and improvement, they have established a blueprint for sustainability which other rural hospitals can follow,” said Michael Topchik, senior vice president of iVantage Health Analytics.



GRHS Proudly Participates in Veteran’s Day Parade

