

# FORT WORTH BUSINESS PRESS

## COMMENTARY: Time for a new skilled-nursing model in rural health care



Mark McKenzie Aug 3, 2018

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CROCKETT QUOTE IS FIRST PGH OF STORY

I must say as to what I have seen of Texas it is the garden spot of the world. The best land, the best prospects for health I ever saw, and I do believe it is a fortune to any man to come here. There is a world of country here to settle.

– Davy Crockett

And settle we did, starting with small communities, many of which grew into highly populated cities and eventually industrialized regions of our vast state. From ranching to cotton, timber and the oil boom, our state proved itself to be an economic engine due to the industriousness of hard-working Texans.

I agree with Davy Crockett. Texas is the garden spot of the world with the best land, best prospects for health and a great place to stake your roots. For many of the Texans from the past and for many of us today, our roots are founded in the small towns throughout the Lone Star State where big ideas come from small beginnings.

Ironically, it is the small towns and rural regions of our country, including Texas, that are often left out of an equitable distribution of state resources and therefore remain challenged in drawing new businesses, fresh economic opportunities, reasonable wages and often vitally important services, such as health care.

In health care and especially long-term care, distance and resources can create disadvantages for our rural neighbors, where the aging population tends to outpace the rest of the state.

What if we step out of the box, reverse that trend and revitalize the health of our rural towns?

In the case of long-term care, that means bring the latest in skilled nursing care strategies to smaller rural communities often not afforded the resources of facilities in metropolitan locations.

One such business model, Focused Post Acute Care Partners, targets secondary and tertiary markets and regions with smaller populations and older communities where local tax bases often depend on longtime family businesses, mini-malls, industrial warehouses and the occasional super store.

Our locations are in East and West Texas in select markets that will allow us to be successful and adhere to the values we embody as a company, which I believe mirror those in the small towns of Texas.

These communities need a high-quality health care choice and we consider it our job to provide it to them.

So what's the catch?

How can Focused Care be profitable and fulfill its mission?

It's always a balance of business opportunity versus business cost — determining the responsible and sustainable profit margin. As a company, Focused Care needs to reach a responsible return on investment — and that is different in every market.

It has to balance the risk I carry as a single owner. I reinvest in our resident care, team members and technology and make ongoing capital improvements. We are building the right clinical teams to provide high-quality care in Focused Care communities that we have newly renovated and in which we have implemented a company-wide electronic medical record system. Sustaining that model will be the key to our success.

I have the “if you build it, they will come” philosophy and I already see it working.

We are developing important partnerships with ancillary health care services that will allow us to increase the standard of care for our rural seniors by reducing infection rates and hospital readmissions. We are training staff to provide patient-centered care that is individualized and tailored to the immediate and long-term needs of our residents.

On-site staff training for dementia care and expanding therapy services ensure that patients do not have to travel out of their own town and to the nearest city, which could be miles away, to access the care they require. And our expanding electronic medical record system will help modernize administration and create efficiencies that save time and money and, most important, seamlessly document resident care.

However, as I always say, at the end of the day long-term care delivery is about people taking care of people. All the advancement in medical and health information technology does not change that.

Focused Care's mission is on our sign, our door mats — everywhere.

“It Takes a Minute to Change a Life” isn’t a slogan, it’s what we believe. Our personalized care resonates with those community values and the team members in our small-town markets are committed to the residents for whom they provide care.

The best land, the best prospects for health I ever saw ...

Thank you, Davy.

There are parts of our state that look radically different from Mr. Crockett’s day but many of our eastern and western communities still retain that frontier spirit and they are worth the investment.

*Mark McKenzie is the president, CEO and owner of Focused Post Acute Care Partners based in Fort Worth. Focused Care has 23 skilled nursing and short-term rehab communities employing 1,500 team members caring for an estimated 1,300 residents throughout Texas.*

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