



VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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Our Vision for a “Wild, Wonderful and Healthy West Virginia”

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Sharon Lansdale has over 35 years of experience in the health care industry resulting from her work in both the private and public health sectors. The Center for Rural Health Development (the Center) was privatized by state government in 1993, and the following year she became its first private director. Lansdale received her bachelor's degree in pharmacy from West Virginia University and a master's degree from Marshall University in health/adult education. She is a registered pharmacist and has held both hospital and retail pharmacist positions.

In addition, Lansdale served as director of the Division of Health Promotion/Chronic Disease Prevention with the West Virginia Bureau for Public Health, where she managed various federal contracts, as well as the development of the diabetes, injury and tobacco control programs for the State of West Virginia. She has received numerous awards, including West Virginia Hospital Pharmacist of the Year in 1987, and was named Childhood Immunization Champion by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2012.

She has overseen the Center's growth from a non-profit organization solely dependent on grant funding in 1994 to a non-profit business with over \$9 million in assets today. The Center serves as a catalyst for regional collaboration and a creative force on behalf of rural communities to improve the health of West Virginians and strengthen West Virginia's health care delivery system.

Regardless of the outcome of federal health care reform, the health sector, in West Virginia and across the nation, will continue to undergo transformation powered by technological and digital innovations, value-based payment models, quality and cost transparency, and changes in health care providers' relationships with consumers. This transformation is causing considerable disruption as we transition to a new norm in health care. In this environment, board and executive leaders of our legacy organizations who have well served our communities for decades must have generative discussions that consider how health care will be delivered in their communities and what role, if any, their organization will serve.

Additionally, state leaders must remain cognizant that, as one of the most rural states in the nation, new models of health care delivery developed at the federal level or in other states – especially for underserved, urban areas – will not necessarily be the best model for our residents. To address this, rural and state leaders, from both within and outside of the health sector, must work to knit together West Virginia's health care systems.

As the health care sector continues to transform, it will be important that we develop a common



THE Center FOR Rural Health DEVELOPMENT

vision for the health system or systems that best serve West Virginia's communities. In rural communities, our vision is that rural residents have local access to the continuum of health care services that are best delivered in their community or region, with linkages to other needed services, such as specialty medical care, through telehealth or other arrangements.

In addition to transformation in the health sector, West Virginia's economy is also transforming. Our future state economy will be one that is not only based on energy production and manufacturing, but also one that is



supported by small business development in rural communities throughout our state. Thus, we also must keep in mind that, although access to health care services is crucial to being healthy, an individual's overall health is determined to a greater extent by factors outside of the health care delivery system.

Small business owners and young entrepreneurs who want to enjoy West Virginia's natural features to the fullest are more likely to locate in communities where their employees have an opportunity to live healthier lifestyles. They look for communities with access to walkable streets and parks for physical activities, grocery stores or farmer's markets that offer a healthy selection of foods and modern conveniences, such as transportation services and broadband. They want communities that feel safe and have access to good housing, effective education and quality health care.

West Virginia's health care system will continue the transformation spurred by digital innovations, an informed health care consumer, value-based payment models and increased cost and quality transparency. However, to support business development in our rural communities, we must also help to enable local leaders to leverage their community's assets and strengths to fundamentally improve the health of residents and reduce health disparities, community by community, throughout West Virginia.

Our vision is for a "Wild, Wonderful and Healthy West Virginia." No matter what your respective role is – to mitigate the opioid crisis, ensure our children are ready for school and workers are ready to work, or to support economic growth – it all begins with healthy West Virginians. No one of us alone will have all the answers, but the direction we must go is clear. Together, we can achieve this vision. ▽



Sharon L. Lansdale at the Governance and Leadership Forum, an annual event that promotes strengthening rural health care



A rural farm located in the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia