



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Toniann Richard, 816.249.1529, Toniann@hccnetwork.org

HCC's New HR Director Brings Expertise from Nation's Capital

(March 4, 2018 – Lexington, Missouri) Health Care Collaborative of Rural Missouri (HCC) has hired a new director of human resources: Brook Balentine. She came on board at the end of January and spent the past few weeks visiting various HCC locations, and getting to know staff members she'll be serving in her new role. "It's a great organization. They do a lot of amazing work," she said. "I'm trying to absorb as much as I can, learning about the team and how I can best be a part of it."

She recognizes how intimately people, including HCC's employees, are connected to technology whether through a laptop, an iPad, a cellphone, or whatever the case may be. "It's important to make sure we have the right HR database, and everything is automated," she noted. "Even things as simple as checking your paystub will be online now."

Since she grew up in a small town in southeastern Kansas, Balentine understands firsthand the value of quality rural health care. "It's very important for everybody to have access to the right health care. I'm learning about our network and how we try to help improve every aspect of a person's health. HCC has great providers and is a good fit with communities."

Absorbing the lingo related to clinics and medicine is part of her learning curve. "But many of the services we try to help people with, I'm very familiar with," she said.

Balentine spent more than a decade on Claire McCaskill's staff, starting with the former Missouri senator's 2004 gubernatorial race. McCaskill lost her run for governor, but soon turned her eyes toward Washington. "I started working on her senate campaign in August 2005," Balentine said. "After we won in November 2006, Senator McCaskill asked me, 'So you're going to D.C., right?' And I said, 'Yeah! Of course, I am!'"

Over the next year or so, Balentine performed HR duties in the nation's capital to help get McCaskill's D.C. office up and running. "We had a sort of mantra in Senator McCaskill's office: 'If you're really happy in your role, then you can do really great things.' Even though I worked for someone who represented a certain party, we didn't operate along political lines." Instead, the goal was making sure staff and constituents received the resources they needed.

-more-

In 2008, a field representative position opened in McCaskill’s Kansas City office. The successful candidate would be responsible for 30 northwest Missouri counties, including Lafayette. Excited by the prospect of working more closely with the public, Balentine took the position, packed her bags, and headed back to the Midwest.

Her passion for helping underserved communities receive the resources they need fired Balentine’s drive to help rural residents navigate government-sponsored programs. She also assisted nonprofits in finding grants or other funding opportunities to help build their organizations.

“We did all kinds of different things, whether it was working with an area agency on aging, or various municipalities on water projects, or the USDA on rural development,” she said. “My role changed over time, and I worked my way up until I was running the office that last year.”

McCaskill lost her senate seat in the November 2018 election. “Though the results weren’t what I had hoped, I think it’s all worked out very well. I’m extremely happy to be where I am now, with new challenges.”

Balentine’s extensive experience in hiring, office management, training, and professional development—as well as her savvy working with governmental entities—should dovetail well with HCC’s mission to *Cultivate partnerships and deliver quality health care to strengthen rural communities.*

“Having some knowledge about how government systems operate, I think, is going to be very useful to this organization and to the patients we serve,” she said. “The tie between what I did before and what I’m doing now is this: I can make the connections. I would have constituents call into my previous office and we would do all we could to try and connect them with the right resources. That’s very similar to the work that’s done here. Constituent services, patient services—it’s all figuring out how to help people where they are.”

Any possibility her new position will ever take her to Jefferson City, advocating for rural health issues? “I don’t know. I don’t believe that policy or that political hat will ever really go away for me,” Balentine said. “But for now, my focus is making sure our HCC employees have everything they need for things to go smoothly. I’m so grateful to be here and excited for this opportunity.”