

*Ron and Elaine Wulff share their Harney Hospital Foundation journey.*

We came to Harney County in May 2003. Working at one of the busiest hospitals in California gave us the experience we wanted and desired fresh out of college. Elaine (a registered nurse) worked in medical and surgical intensive care, and I (a respiratory therapist) made my way up the ranks and became the director of cardiopulmonary. As exciting as this was, we realized this was not the type of lifestyle for how we wanted to live and raise our kids.

I stumbled across a job opening at Harney District Hospital in Eastern Oregon, and I decided to call, mostly out of curiosity about what Eastern Oregon was like. Denise Rose, the former hospital recruiter, answered the phone and invited us up for a visit.

We came during a weekend in early March to an overcast, rainy day. The town seemed like a ghost town when we arrived, compared to the rat race we were coming from. Our first impression wasn't great, especially after stopping at a local gas station only to hear how awful the hospital was from the attendant who pumped our gas.

However, the people who we met at the hospital were very pleasant and welcoming. The hospital certainly was not built to impress people, as it looked more like an outdated clinic. The hospital that Elaine and I were coming from was newly built, state-of-the-art, and offered all of the specialties imaginable.

By mid-day, we decided that Burns was not for us. However, we attended the dinner that was arranged for us with a few community members and two of the family-practice doctors (Dr. Johnston and Dr. Spence). Both doctors took us to their homes that evening, and we got to see first-hand how they lived. We quickly realized how down-to-earth they both were and how modestly they lived. This was much different than what we were used to, where the objective was to make the most money, live in the biggest house, and drive the most expensive car.

Harney County provided the ideal lifestyle that Elaine and I were looking for. We were searching for a place where we could raise our family and become emersed in a community where most people know one another. So, we signed on with the hospital and sold everything we had to kind of start over and live a simpler life.

Moving here has been a true blessing for us. Our kids were raised in an environment that puts more emphasis on the quality of family life. The hospital has provided Elaine and I with tremendous opportunities to grow in our careers and allowed us to be part of an organization that seeks continual improvement to provide the best and safest care possible for the community.

Since joining the team at Harney District Hospital, we have seen tremendous growth. Thanks to the hospital leadership, including the board of directors, a new hospital was built, and the equipment and technology is very up-to-date. Services have also been greatly expanded due to the many specialty services that are now being offered, and now we have a new specialty care clinic that everyone should be very proud of.

Elaine and I are deeply grateful for what this hospital has provided us. That is why we believe so strongly in the concept of “giving back.” We dedicated a great deal of our time to the hospital and believe in the work that Harney Hospital Foundation does to help offset many of the costs to purchase new equipment or to invest in remodeling and building projects. The Foundation provides a way for us to contribute financially to show our deep appreciation for what has been offered to us.

This past year, Elaine and I both required services offered at Harney District Hospital. The care that we received was of the highest level. We have learned to never take our local healthcare services for granted. We are both very grateful and will continue to contribute to the Foundation as a way of saying, “Thank you.”