



IOWA HOSPITAL
ASSOCIATION

We care about Iowa's health

2023 Annual Meeting
Young Executive Achievement Award
Scoring Guide

Nominee: Catherine Hillestad, Adair County Health System

Letter of nomination and supporting materials (40 points)	Points possible	Points awarded
Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major achievements in his or her hospital/health system in the last three years. Major achievements in the community. Major achievements outside the community. Notable achievements. 	40	
Candidate's ability to meet the intent of the award (30 points)	Points possible	Points awarded
<p>The Iowa Hospital Association's presents the Young Executive Achievement Award to an Iowa hospital or health system young executive whose achievements are noteworthy.</p> <p>IHA solicits nominations for young executives, age 40 or younger and employed as a senior executive in an IHA member organization, who has exhibited skills through a project, program, publication or other activities of importance to health care in Iowa.</p>	30	
Candidate's IHA participation and engagement (30 points)	Points possible	Points awarded
Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance and engagement at IHA conferences and signature events (Annual Meeting, Summer Forum, Hospital Day on the Hill, Governance Forum). Attendance at IHA district meetings. Contributions to the IHA PAC. Membership on an IHA council or committee. 	30	
TOTAL	100	
Reviewer comments: 	Scoring guide: 0-10 Very weak 11-20 Weak 21-30 Average 31-40 Strong 41-50 Very strong	
<i>Reviewer name:</i> _____ <i>Date:</i> _____		



**Catherine Hillestad, MHA, CEO
Adair County Health System**

- Years of service at the hospital / organization: 1 year, 9 months
- Total years of service in health care: 5 years.

Nomination

Julie Douglas, MSHR, Chief Human Resources Officer, Adair County Health System

I write to nominate Catherine Hillestad for the IHA Young Executive Achievement Award. We believe that Catherine embodies the characteristics of this award as demonstrated from the achievements below.

- Since Catherine started at Adair County Health System in 2021, she has recruited seven providers, four specialty and three emergency/hospitalist providers, expanding access for patients in rural Iowa and increasing revenue to sustain the CAH she passionately serves.
- Catherine led ACHS through a Master Facility Planning process. This three-phase plan will serve as the blueprint for the future of the organization allowing for an updated infrastructure, modern facilities and expanded services in clinics, specialty and rehab services and public health. The construction on Phase One is set to begin in 2023.
- Adair County Health System received the Des Moines Register Top Workplaces Award in 2022, for the first time in the organization's history. This prestigious award is based solely on employee feedback and uniquely measures 15 culture drivers that are critical to the success of any organization. Through Catherine's leadership ACHS has become an employer of choice. Catherine has a kind and giving heart and she cares a great deal for all staff and patients. She is a down to earth, fun leader who has created an employee culture focused on quality care, accountability, and integrity.

In her first year, Catherine attained the rate of 4.2 on a 5-point scale for Employee Engagement scores, the highest score in ACHS history. She has been an advocate for employee satisfaction which is evidenced not only in the facilities engagement score but also decreased turnover from 30.2% to 13.8% in less than a years' time under Hillestad's leadership.

Catherine strives to create a work environment that encourages feedback and involvement from staff and it shows. She is constantly out and about rounding and is always open for feedback to ensure that staff and employees have what they need to do their work.

- Alongside Human Resources, Catherine completed an organization wide compensation analysis. This analysis allowed the organization to fairly compensate staff, hire the right people and retain top performers while also being transparent and improving communication about pay.
- Catherine strongly believes in putting the right people in the right roles. She has built a skilled leadership team to take the organization to the next level. Together they are creating clear accountabilities, empowerment, and the right resources, support, and direction to make ACHS a provider and employer of choice.

Catherine recognizes the importance of a stable team and the recruitment and retention challenges of rural healthcare. She has revised her Executive Team's PTO policy and restructured the incentive compensation that is available to her team. This supports work-life balance for her team as well as incentivizes them to work towards the organization's goals. She believes that without a strong Executive Team, she would be unable to do produce the results ACHS has seen.

- Catherine transitioned the staffing model for our county-based EMS service to twenty-four hour shifts rather than twelve-hour shifts. This allowed for a better work life balance for our paramedics and EMTs, created an attractive schedule for recruiting and increased employee satisfaction in the department.
- Catherine is very serious about internal growth at ACHS. She believes investing in growth and development of employees can improve loyalty and retention while also increasing workplace productivity and creativity and create bench strength to support the future of the health system.

ACHS is currently supporting the growth of three LPNs through their tuition assistance program. These nurses are working part-time while they attend school to become RN's and then will move into full-time RN roles upon graduation. Additionally, the system recently promoted three employees into key roles as the Lab Manager, Marketing and Foundation Director and Human Resources Assistant. Two of these employees are also participating in the tuition assistance program to obtain their bachelor's degree in their respective careers.

By promoting and developing talent from within our organization, Catherine has created a culture that values loyalty, hard work and investment in our most valuable asset, our employees. Additionally, she is elevating the organization by increasing the skill sets of our employees to ensure high quality talent pipeline to support the organization into the future.

- One of the items that Catherine cares deeply about is community involvement and engagement. Catherine is very active in the communities we serve. She is actively involved with the Greenfield and Stuart Chambers and is also involved with the Greenfield Economic Development Board.

Catherine also encourages staff to share their talents with our communities. ACHS staff have volunteered hundreds of hours at events throughout Adair County. Here are a just few; First Aid Tent at the Adair County Fair, children's activities at City Park Market, Chamber Coffees, countless parades and city celebrations, food pantry drives, daycare and preschool tours and so many more.

- Catherine currently serves on the Iowa Chapter Board for the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). The society is an international and professional home to more than 48,000 healthcare executives who are leaders within their field and are also committed to integrity, learning, leadership, and diversity and inclusion. The mission of ACHE is to educate, engage, and inspire members as they lead and serve hospitals or other healthcare organizations. Starting in January of 2024, Catherine will be the President of the Iowa Chapter of ACHE, and we know that she will do so with commitment and passion to promote and advance healthcare in America.

Catherine is also the Chair Elect for district D with the Iowa Hospital Association. She will assume these responsibilities in January of 2024. Catherine also serves on the IHA Council on Health Information.

- Catherine has recruited two new Board members and two new Foundation Board members during her tenure at ACHS. This will allow for more community involvement and high visibility to our community to promote our organization.

Summary

Catherine has been serving as Chief Executive Officer of Adair County Health System for two years. Alongside her major achievements at ACHS, she strives to focus on growing organizations and creating a culture of trust and productivity with employees. When asked why she loves working at ACHS she said, “I am so grateful for the opportunity to serve Adair County alongside our dedicated and steadfast employees. Rural healthcare access is so important, especially in today’s ever-changing world. My career is one where I want to serve not only communities, but the dedicated employees with whom we work as well. Together, we are what makes the organization great, which in turn allows for dedicated and quality healthcare for our patients.

IHA involvement

- Council on Health Information, Member, Current since 2022.
- District D, Vice Chair, Current since 2023.
- Attends All District Meeting, Summer Leadership Forum, Critical Access Forum, Women's CEO Retreat, Annual Meeting.
- Attends IHA educational events and webinars.