



PRESS RELEASE

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Area senior living and care organizations announce affiliation plans

Photo caption: Leadership of two south central Kansas senior living and care organizations, Bluestem Communities, headquartered in North Newton, and The Cedars in McPherson, have announced an affiliation that will make the The Cedars the fifth Bluestem Communities location. Pictured are LaMonte Rothrock (left), recently retired CEO of The Cedars, and James Krehbiel, President and CEO of Bluestem Communities.

NORTH NEWTON, Kan. – Two area senior living and care organizations – Bluestem Communities, headquartered in North Newton, and The Cedars in McPherson – have announced an affiliation that will strengthen non-profit senior services opportunities in south central Kansas.

The Cedars, a life plan community with more than 300 residents across all levels of care and more than 200 employees, will become the fifth location in the Bluestem Communities network of senior living and care campuses, while retaining its non-profit corporate identity as The Cedars and affiliation with the Church of the Brethren.

The arrangement is slated to become legal on July 1, and integration processes between the two organizations will begin in the months following.

"We are delighted to affiliate with The Cedars, which is a vibrant community and an asset to the greater McPherson community," said James Krehbiel, Bluestem Communities president and CEO. "They are a well-respected organization with a rich 130-year history of serving seniors. Together we can create efficiencies and foster long-term sustainability, enhancing our commitment as a non-profit."

Other Bluestem Communities campuses include the life plan communities of Kidron Bethel Village in North Newton, Schowalter Villa in Hesston, and Bluestem PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly) in McPherson and Hutchinson. Within all of its locations, Bluestem Communities serves more than 890 seniors and employs about 625 staff.

As a life plan community, The Cedars offers living and care opportunities in independent living, assisted living and long-term health care with specialized units for memory care, skilled nursing care and rehabilitation. It is one of the oldest retirement communities in Kansas, first started in the 1890's by the Church of the Brethren. In 1953, the organization relocated to McPherson.

With ever changing climates in the senior living sector, conversations around affiliation began among the two organizations' board of directors more than a year ago.

"When you consider the future of retirement communities, affiliating strong organizations with shared values, goals and a commitment to serving residents will allow The Cedars and the entire Bluestem Communities network to thrive for years to come," said Denise O'Connor-Munsey, Chair of the Board of Trustees for The Cedars.

Growth is not a new concept to Bluestem Communities, which was formed in 2012 with the affiliation of Kidron Bethel Village and Schowalter Villa. Bluestem PACE in McPherson, which provides care services to individuals aged 55 and better and living in their own homes, was added to the organization's services in 2016, and an alternative PACE care site in Hutchinson opened in 2021.

Bluestem Communities operates in a shared services model, which will expand to include The Cedars. Top level executive positions including Chief Executive Officer, Chief Operations Officer and Chief Financial Officer, in addition to Chief of Staff, Human Resources, Marketing and Sales, Accounting, Information Technology, and Fund Advancement, serve the whole of Bluestem Communities.

Each Bluestem campus is led by an Executive Director. The Cedars recently hired Amy Bennett as Executive Director. She took on the leadership role with the retirement of CEO LaMonte Rothrock in May. Rothrock served The Cedars for eight years, the last five as CEO and offers institutional knowledge and expertise. He will serve as a consultant for Bennett and continue as a representative for The Cedars to the wider community throughout the affiliation process.

"LaMonte's love for The Cedars is palpable and he is committed to its success and longevity," said Krehbiel. "We greatly appreciate his willingness to postpone his plans and for his support in this important time of affiliation."

In addition to the Executive Director, other campus-specific staff, including Nursing Services, Dining Services, Risk Management, and Maintenance and Grounds will benefit from collaboration between all Bluestem Communities campuses and shared expertise.

Likewise, residents living at each Bluestem Communities campus enjoy the benefit of expanding their options by having access to amenities and activities at the other locations within the network rather than just at the campus on which they live.

“The mission and culture of The Cedars aligns well with the mission and core values of Bluestem Communities, creating a stronger organization together and reinforcing the commitment to non-profit values,” said Krehbiel.

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About Bluestem Communities

Bluestem Communities is a nonprofit organization in south central Kansas that serves seniors through various living options, care settings and care-centered services. Visit bluestemks.org.