

AHP in the News
Allegiance Health to seek donations
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by Chris Gautz
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A big part of William Kiel's job is going to be changing the way people think.

"My goal is to get people excited about donating to Allegiance Health," said Kiel, who recently became the health system's first vice president of development.

Previously, there hasn't been a clear or easy way for someone to donate.

"The time has come for Allegiance to jump into the arena of fundraising," he said.

Said Georgia Fojtasek, Allegiance Health's president and CEO: "You need a plan and a process for individuals who want to give back."

Fojtasek said part of Kiel's role will be to educate people about Allegiance's community work, to help them make a connection when they think about donating.

"We have not done a good job of telling people what Allegiance Health is all about," she said. "People have their passions to which they want to give. For people who want to give to health care, we want to keep that money in Jackson."

Funds raised will go toward purchasing medical equipment, supporting services in the health system and setting up funds to help patients with specific needs.

Donations could help the uninsured or the underinsured.

This could include a parent who has a child but can't afford a car seat, or a senior citizen who has surgery and needs help paying for medication.

"Allegiance is doing a lot of good things. I don't think it will be a hard sell," he said, undeterred by the sagging local economy.

Since joining Allegiance two months ago, Kiel has been learning about Jackson and meeting with business and community leaders.

He doesn't believe cold-calling is an effective fundraising technique.

"Most of our fundraising will be face to face," he said.

William McGinly, president and CEO of The Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, an organization dedicated to advancing and promoting the health care development

profession, said it is common for hospitals to have such a department, especially nonprofits like Allegiance.

Adding another organization seeking donations in a community shouldn't be seen as competition.

"No one group is going to appeal to every group in the community," he said.

Ken Toll, executive director of United Way of Jackson County, said he thinks it will be a great addition.

"It doesn't matter if the dollars are donated to United Way or Allegiance," Toll said.

"If the net result is improvements in community health, they were dollars well-spent."

Kiel, who has about 25 years of experience in fundraising, comes to Jackson after 11 years at St. Francis Medical Center in Cape Girardeau, Mo. where he served as vice president for development.

When he arrived, St. Francis was raising about \$300,000 annually. Last year, it raised more than \$1 million.

About 60 percent of the hospital's employees were contributors, through payroll deduction.

"I think we're going to get the same kind of support," he said.

After accomplishing the goals he set for himself at St. Francis, he began looking for new challenges.

His goal at Allegiance is to set up an enduring system and organization that will have a positive impact on community.

"The idea of starting a new foundation from scratch was very appealing to me," he said.