



For Immediate Release

November 3, 2017

**Nomination Narrative for MHA Trustee of the Year:
Omanez Fockler, Texas County Memorial Hospital**

When Omanez Fockler decided to become a nurse, she didn't know she would have the opportunity to take care of patients in her hometown of Houston, MO where, at the time, a hospital did not exist.

Texas County Memorial Hospital (TCMH) opened its doors in November 1958, and Fockler, a newly pinned RN, began working at the hospital in March 1959. Back then, the hospital only staffed one RN per shift, so Fockler was the only RN working at TCMH during her shift. Fockler recalls times early in the hospital's history when she was helping a physician with an emergency in the hospital's two-room ER while assisting a woman in labor and caring for inpatients that were recovering from surgery. Just like the rural physicians she worked with, Fockler was well-versed as a nurse in the diverse skill set required to be an RN at a hospital in rural Missouri.

As a nurse at TCMH, Fockler advocated for and helped start and grow hospital services like physical therapy, cardiac rehabilitation and candy strippers. Deeply aware of the needs and challenges faced by rural hospitals, Fockler advocated on a state level for LPNs to receive certification to administer IVs. She also started certification courses at TCMH for nurse assistants. To simply sum up her career, Fockler said, "I loved caring for people." Fockler retired from TCMH in March 2000, with a 37-year nursing career that spanned med surg, OB, cardiac rehabilitation, ER, infection control, surgery and time in hospital administration as director of nursing.

Fockler's service to her community and to her local hospital did not end with her retirement. In November 2000, Fockler was appointed to complete a term as a trustee on the board at TCMH, and she has continued to serve as a publicly elected board member when that first term was complete.

As a member of the TCMH board of trustees Fockler has served in the secretary/treasurer role and as vice chairperson of the board. She was chairperson of the TCMH board of trustees for six years. Fockler volunteers annually to serve as board member on the hospital's budget planning committee. She is also the board representative on the hospital's ethics committee, the home health advisory committee and hospice advisory committee. Fockler served as a hospital board representative on the TCMH Healthcare Foundation's "Care for Your Future" capital campaign steering committee, a public representative and spokesperson for the project. She also made personal connections with people in the community asking for donations for the project.

During Fockler's years of trustee service, gross revenue at the hospital has more than doubled to over \$65 million. The TCMH Healthcare Foundation was revitalized and has raised over \$24 million to benefit the healthcare needs of Texas County and the surrounding area.

As a board member, Fockler has supported and helped lead TCMH into building new primary care clinics in Houston and Cabool and in expanding primary care services to build a clinic and an ambulance base in Mountain Grove. An in-house MRI, a sleep studies laboratory, non-emergency transportation services, a cardiopulmonary rehabilitation clinic, and a retail pharmacy have all been part of the hospital's expansion of services with Fockler's support as a TCMH board member.

Fockler also supported the largest construction project in the history of TCMH--a \$19 million, 56,000-square foot expansion that included new emergency, medical surgical, radiology and admissions departments at the hospital. The new construction opened in 2013. TCMH was the first hospital in the state to receive FEMA funds to help build a tornado safe room which was completed in 2015, and construction is currently underway on the hospital's campus to build a new surgery department.

Recruiting and retention of physicians at TCMH is a challenge that Fockler recognizes and responds to by always taking the time to meet potential physician candidates that are at TCMH for site visits, answering any questions a physician candidate may have. Fockler and her fellow board members have supported the expansion of primary care services at TCMH to recruit an OB/GYN, a certified nurse midwife, a pulmonologist, and a pediatrician. At times when recruiting to fill a particular position was extremely difficult, Fockler supported creative means the hospital used to fill physician vacancies and to meet patient healthcare needs, and she never advocated for simply ending a search, always believing that the right candidate would come along.

Fockler's love of nursing continues, and she regularly attends Nurses Day events at TCMH. Fockler has served as a guest speaker during Nurses Day at TCMH. She is also a committee member for the DAISY nursing award committee at TCMH. She also regularly attends the hospital's annual "Celebration of Employees" to hand out service awards, and many times Fockler will take the time to share a few words about a long-tenured employee receiving an award.

TCMH began producing an "Annual Report" beginning with the 2002 fiscal year at Fockler's urging. Printed copies of the report are made and distributed, and the report is also printed in the local newspaper. Regardless of the financial picture (there have been "down" years), Fockler tirelessly promotes the hospital and seeks to educate the public about the issues and achievements of their community hospital.

Unlike many lay people that join a hospital board of trustees, Fockler joined the TCMH board with a wealth of healthcare knowledge from years of personal experience. She has continued to grow her knowledge of healthcare as times have changed, an active participant in hospital board meetings and educational conferences. She reads literature and follows healthcare-related news. Fockler seeks additional information regarding issues related to healthcare when appropriate, and she advocates on behalf of TCMH with local, state and federal legislators when needed. Fockler has also been an active participant in strategic planning at the hospital, listening to the administrative leadership and managers in the hospital and asking appropriate questions and making appropriate suggestions. Her history in the hospital and the community is also valuable in the planning activities of the hospital.

Fockler's passion for TCMH and the healthcare of the community is tied to her faith in God. Fockler has been described as a "prayer warrior" for the hospital; she shares that she prays daily about hospital issues and for the hospital and the staff.

Houston, where TCMH is located, is a town of about 2,500 people. Texas County, although geographically large, is home to about 25,000 people. Fockler was born and raised in Texas County, and has spent her whole life living in the County. Many people know Fockler as a neighbor, former hospital employee, or community member. In rural America, it's nearly impossible to serve on a well-known governing board without that knowledge not being well-known in the community. Fockler is no different. Fockler wears her passion for TCMH on her sleeve; she advocates for TCMH whenever she has the opportunity. When community members have questions about hospital activities, it's not uncommon that they will reach out to Fockler as a board member at the hospital.

Omanez Fockler has been an important part of Texas County Memorial Hospital since 1959, and she would be an excellent representative for the Missouri Hospital Association's Trustee of the Year.

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