

Husband and wife doctors now at home in Colby

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The Family Center for Healthcare has two new providers working there, a husband and wife who both come from northwest Kansas. They both started seeing patients Wednesday.

Sarah Gabel is from Hays and will work as a family practitioner. One of her areas of expertise is obstetrics. Kelly Gabel will work at the center as a general surgeon.

The son of Larry and Beth Gabel of Colby, Kelly Gabel grew up in St. Francis. His sister Brandi Jones, a teacher at the Colby Public Schools, recently moved here with her husband John Jones, a pharmacist at Dillons.

The couple was considering working in about 10 different places in Kansas, Kelly Gabel said.

"It was pretty evident to both of us that this was not only where we wanted to go, but it was where God was leading us," he said.

Sarah Gabel decided she wanted to be a doctor when she was a sophomore in high school. In college she shadowed Dr. Rich Rajewski, who works in family practice.

"That's kind of where I saw what full scope family medicine was," she said.

She grew to like the idea of working in obstetrics, pediatrics and taking care of an entire family. She said her passion was to work in family medicine in a small town.

When Kelly Gabel worked as an emergency medical technician in high school, he was struck by the relative lack of medical resources in rural areas. He had to go to Denver to have knee surgery, for instance, and wanted to be able to improve the medical care available here.

"It was something that I wanted to do, that I wanted to help out," he said. "I just remember feeling I wanted to know more. I wanted to be able to help out."



Doctor Kelly Gabel and Doctor Sarah Gabel

He met his wife at Fort Hays State University.

"She was my chemistry lab teacher's assistant," he said, "apparently I needed help."

"He needed a lot of help," his wife added.

They graduated in 2004, got engaged before they started medical school in Kansas City, and married in the summer of 2005. The couple said they pushed each other during medical school. They were both thinking about going into family medicine and studied together for their first two years, before Kelley Gabel started thinking about surgery.

They moved to the Detroit area, where Kelly Gabel worked on his five-year surgery residency at Botsford Hospital. His wife worked at Beaumont Hospital, did a one-year fellowship at Oakwood Hospital, and worked at VanBuren Urgent Care while he was finishing the residency, which she pointed out was a lot harder than medical school. Kelley Gabel worked a lot of 100-hour weeks and sometimes put in 130 hours a week. At one point, he worked for 86 straight hours.

"I really was a resident at the hospital," he said.

"It wasn't uncommon for him to not come home at night, because it was no longer night," Sarah Gabel said.

Kelly Gabel said he was one of a few people who enjoyed working on the residency. But seeing the effect the heavy work load had on their lives and how it affected others, the Gabels decided to spend as much quality time as they could when they were together. They joined a church and went to the museum and zoo. On their free weekends, they took trips: to the beach, to go camping, or to Michigan's Upper Peninsula.

"We did what we could when he had the time," Sarah Gabel said.

Kelly Gabel said he had always thought of coming back to northwest Kansas. The Gabels said they had been talking about working here with Scott Focke, manager for the center, since 2008, and they signed a contract about two years ago. The couple took a vacation, and then moved here in early July, they said, adding that they are enjoying life in Colby.

"It feels like we're home, like we're always going to coming back," Kelly Gabel said.

"And now we're finally home," his wife added.



SERITA BLANKENSHIP, Kansas Farm Bureau, talked about farm safety and demonstrated how quickly an accident can happen. She was the key speaker at the Farm Bureau meeting held Wednesday, Sept. 4.

Herald staff photo by Karen Krien



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