

Entrepreneurial Spotlight

Scott Averill and his wife, Susan, own Wellsville Health and Rehab at 304 W. 7th Street in Wellsville, Kansas. They acquired the business in 2008 and immediately began work to transform it. He has an interesting story about how this all happened: “I stumbled into long term care about 34 years ago. I had no inclination whatsoever of ever working in the healthcare industry.” He had previously worked in the travel business but within a couple weeks of discovering long term care, he said: “I fell in love with the residents and applied for my adult care home license shortly thereafter.”

Mr. Averill worked for the largest provider in the world of nursing homes in the early 1990’s. He then worked for a couple smaller companies over the next 10 years. After deciding he’d like to run his own business, he and his wife acquired Brookside Manor in Overbrook in 2004 and then Wellsville Manor in 2008.

Scott has a great story about how he was able to afford the purchase of Brookside. At that time, his father was 78 years old and he mortgaged his Kansas City home of 40 years which gave them the cash to afford the down payment for a loan. Scott said, “I was extremely grateful for my dad’s support and we paid him back every penny including interest within a few years. He was also a partner in the business until 2011.”

Averill admits, “When we bought the property in Wellsville, it was basically a dumping ground for hospital discharge planners and their hard-to-place patients.” Immediately upon making the purchase, they started to shift the culture to being a great place to live, work and visit. And as we can all see, they physically transformed the building and in 2012 they added 18 assisted living apartments.

Scott’s wife, Susan, was a teacher and coach for 28 years at Santa Fe Trail High School where she won 3 state volleyball championships. After leaving the field of teaching and coaching she joined Scott full time in the family business. Scott and Susan have five children who have all participated in the business in some way over the years. Three of their grown children are still actively involved in the business.

When asked what his biggest challenge is right now, Scott said it was staffing. He said it is extremely difficult to find qualified applicants even when currently offering a \$15,000 sign-on bonus and a one week paid vacation to Hawaii. And even though staffing is such a challenge right now, it is also what Averill considers his biggest success. He said, “We have such amazing people who work with us. We have great teams in both Wellsville and Overbrook.”

When asked if there was some sort of pattern or formula to becoming a successful entrepreneur, Scott said: “You have to be willing to take risks and then be persistent.” He was also asked if he would do something differently if he had the chance and without hesitation he said, “Not a thing! All the jobs I had prior to becoming an owner helped to prepare me for this adventure.”

Scott said his grandfather was his greatest inspiration. As a young child, Scott remembers his grandfather demonstrating a great work ethic. His grandfather was a traveling salesman, calling on

jewelry stores to sell cleaning equipment used in the industry. Averill remembers his grandfather taking his two brothers and himself to call on customers. He was always impressed seeing his grandfather work as many hours as necessary to finish his job each day.

Two business-related books that Averill feels inspired him the most are “In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best Run Companies” by Robert H. Waterman and “Rich Dad, Poor Dad” by Robert Kiyosaki. He felt these two books really helped him focus on the value of business ownership.

To complete our interview, I asked him what three things he would change in the world if he could. Here’s what he told me, “First, I’d have Medicare for all - at any age. Second, I would implement term limits for all elected officials. Lastly, I’d eliminate war.” Scott is 67 and when asked about retirement, he replied, “It doesn’t appeal to me at all. The residents keep me wanting to show up every day. Working in long term care is a great way to make a difference in people’s lives EVERY day! The travel business was fun, but this job is rewarding beyond comparison.”

If you’d like to contact Scott Averill or Wellsville Health and Rehab, you can call or text him at: 785-224-3453. Or you can send him an email at: sgaverill@hotmail.com

