Physician spotlight

Herb Ladley, MD, MBA, FACC

Senior physician, Ballad Health CVA Heart Institute

Chief Medical Officer, Ballad Health Northern Region (Norton, Wise, Dickenson, Lee Counties)

Specialties: Cardiology, Interventional Cardiology, Internal Medicine

Herb Ladley, MD, senior physician with Ballad Health CVA Heart Institute, says moving here to the Appalachian Highlands almost 40 years ago was one of the best decisions he and his wife could’ve made for their family and for his career. First of all, it was the “sweet spot” location halfway between his wife Kathy’s parents in Jacksonville, Florida, and his own in Alexandria, Virginia.

The couple journeyed here from Oregon, where Dr. Ladley had just finished a three-year cardiology fellowship at Oregon Health Sciences University. “It was even prettier than Oregon,” he says, recalling his first impression of the region. “We quickly fell in love with Kingsport.”

The Ladleys loved the climate, the recreational activities and the people, he says. Dr. Ladley also was excited about advancing the rapidly growing cardiology fields of coronary artery intervention and cardiac electrophysiology, specialties he had studied during his fellowship. “I wanted to work at a hospital where I could practice and grow both of these new disciplines,” he says.

The clinical expertise and enthusiasm of Holston Valley Medical Center’s medical staff was a huge draw, as well. It was just the place where his expertise could rapidly help advance cardiac care in his new community. “At the time, the hospital performed limited numbers of angioplasties and had no cardiac electrophysiology,” he says.

As Dr. Ladley’s practice and contribution to cardiac care in the Appalachian Highlands grew, so did his family. “We had two sons, both of whom were born at Holston Valley Medical Center. The public schools were another blessing; our sons flourished in them.”

Sixteen years after the Ladleys made Kingsport their home, Kathy’s father passed away, so her mother lived with them for the next six years. Then when his parents retired and began to have health issues, they moved here, too.

“My parents passed away after living in this community for more than 20 years,” says Dr. Ladley. “All of our parents came to Kingsport not just because we were here, but because they loved the community that embraced them as much as they did Kathy and me.”

As a physician, reaching out to embrace those throughout the region who need heart care still is a high priority for Dr. Ladley.

“The need for quality cardiac care in the Appalachian Highlands is great,” he says. “One of the things that Ballad Health CVA Heart Institute has done very effectively is to reach out into the community to make sure that high quality care is made available to patients as close to their homes as possible.”

To take care to more rural areas, Dr. Ladley travels to Ballad Health CVA Heart Institute clinics in Pennington Gap and Norton, Virginia, as well as seeing patients at the Heart Center in Kingsport, which he helped to establish in 1999. He explains that Ballad Health CVA Heart Institute’s integrated system of clinics and smaller facilities provides a network of even the most complex cardiac care to patients throughout the region. That system also allows for team-based care that includes multiple specialists.

“Part of the uniqueness of Ballad Health CVA Heart Institute is the collaboration of various cardiology disciplines and sub-specialties necessary for the growing complexity of cardiovascular disease - disciplines such as complex imaging, inpatient care, cardiac and vascular surgery, vascular intervention, coronary intervention, complex arrhythmias and structural problems,” he says. “This is what sets our practice apart from most all others around the country.”

Dr. Ladley says things have changed quite a bit, both personally and in heart care, since he and his wife set new roots in the community that has become home. He and Kathy now call their 100-acre sheep farm in Scott County, Virginia, their home.

“Neither of us grew up on a farm but for the last 20 years we have enjoyed our Morning Star Sheep Farm immensely. We’ve also raised dogs - a few Labradors and some drop-off rescued dogs - along with chickens, guineas and other farm fowl,” he says.

“My wife is affectionately known as the ‘Head Shepherdess’ and does most of the work. When time allows, I help mostly with fence line mowing and trimming. Otherwise, I try to do what I am told.”

Making time to chase after their “perfect granddaughter,” is high priority as well these days.

As for changes in heart care, Dr. Ladley says he’s seen many advances during his four decades of practice. “But despite the changes, the focus has always remained the same.” he says, “It’s providing our patients who have cardiovascular disease with the best possible care. And, for me, it’s also continuing to build relationships with patients I’ve cared for through the decades.”