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Aurora Medical Center – Bay Area’s Harding Recognized with WHA 2025 Distinguished Service Award

The Wisconsin Hospital Association (WHA) has awarded its 2025 Distinguished Service Award to Ed Harding, president and CEO of Aurora Medical Center – Bay Area. WHA President and CEO Kyle O’Brien, joined by former WHA President and CEO Eric Borgerding, presented the award to Harding on Dec. 12 at the Baird Center in Milwaukee.



L to R: Ben Van Pelt, Area Vice President of Government Affairs, Aurora Health Care; Jeff Bard, Executive Vice President - North Wisconsin Region at Advocate Health Care; Kyle O'Brien; Ed Harding; Eric Borgerding; Gabrielle Finley-Hazle, Division President, Wisconsin, Advocate Health.

WHA’s annual Distinguished Service Award honors a senior health care executive who has demonstrated a long-standing and impactful commitment to advancing health care statewide and in their community.

Under Harding’s leadership, Aurora Medical Center – Bay Area has experienced significant growth and success. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he played a key role in bringing local constituencies together while advocating for staff and patients. Earlier in his tenure, Harding responded to community needs with the construction of the new Marinette hospital in 2014 and provided guidance during Bay Area Medical Center’s acquisition by Aurora Health Care. Beyond the hospital, Harding has remained deeply engaged in the community, serving for many years in the local Rotary and receiving the Paul Harris Award in 2017. He also chairs the board of the Provident Health Foundation, which supports the health and well-being of residents in Marinette and Menominee counties. His leadership has left a lasting impact on the region.

“Ed has dedicated nearly 40 years of his career to health care leadership, 26 of those years here in Wisconsin where he has served in critical leadership roles,” said O’Brien.

Borgerding added, “I’m hard pressed to recall a member leader that has been as supportive of the work WHA does for hospitals across Wisconsin, not just with his tremendous engagement and encouragement of the WHA team and purpose over the years, but by investing time in the organization and governance of WHA. The examples are many, but some of the highlights include Ed serving on the WHA Public Policy Council, WHA Council on Rural Health, Nominating Committee, WHA Advocacy Committee, WHA 501c4 and WHA Financial Solutions Board, as one of WHA’s delegates to the American Hospital Association Policy Board, and lastly, as a very engaged member of WHA’s Leadership Succession Planning Committee.”

Harding was nominated for the award by Jeff Bard, Executive Vice President – North Wisconsin Region at Advocate Health Care. In the nomination letter, Bard wrote, “As the health care industry and health care delivery have evolved, Ed has guided Aurora Medical Center – Bay Area to adapt based on the changing needs of our community. From increasing access to services, advocating for rural health care and leveraging new technologies, Ed’s dedication to serving patients has remained constant.” Bard continued, “Ed exemplifies the spirit of the WHA Distinguished Service Award through his exceptional leadership, deep understanding of community needs and unwavering

dedication to advancing care for all. He has dedicated his life and career to serving the community and his contributions have significantly shaped our organization and made a lasting impact across Wisconsin."

WHA congratulates Harding for his exemplary commitment to his community and the health care industry at large to improve care for all. WHA will make a \$500 donation to the charity of his choice.

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EDUCATION EVENTS

Jan. 14, 2026

Caring for Wisconsin's Caregivers Well-Being First Champion Challenge for Credentialing Kickoff

Jan. 28, 2026

2026 WHA Health Care Leadership Academy

Feb. 25, 2026

2026 Advocacy Day