

PASSION AND RESULTS

Packnett Powers Parkview,
Regional Growth

By Tom Schuman



BUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR

Mike Packnett has called Fort Wayne home for less than a decade. But don't let that relatively short tenure minimize the tremendous achievements for his employer, community and Northeast Indiana region.

Ask three people – or 30 or probably 300 – about Packnett, president and CEO of Parkview Health, and here's what they say:

Joe Pierce, president and CEO of Farmers State Bank in LaGrange, who succeeded Packnett as chairman of the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership: "I learn from Mike every time I'm with him. He has a passion for that leadership, for anything he tackles. Mike has a gentle way of moving things ahead, but a very effective way."

Paul Chodak, president and COO of Indiana Michigan Power, relocated to Fort Wayne in 2010: "When you come into the area, you ask, 'Who are the people I need to talk to? Who knows what's going on in the community, who's on the side of moving things forward?' – and Mike Packnett's name came up from about 10 different people I talked to."

Fort Wayne Mayor Tom Henry, serving his second term in office: "Mike has a very unique perspective on life. He believes in thinking way beyond the norm. He's a real visionary. He sees the big picture and what the true possibilities are. What many of us see as limitations, Mike sees beyond that."

All this from someone who had no intention of leaving his native Oklahoma. Packnett recalls the story.

"I got a call from a headhunter who said, 'We've got the perfect job for you'. I asked where it was and he said, 'Fort Wayne, Indiana.' I said, 'You don't have to go any further because I'm never moving north – never.'"

Fortunately, the headhunter called back a few weeks later and Packnett agreed to meet with members of the Parkview Health board of directors' search committee in Chicago. After being the first of a dozen candidates interviewed over a two-day period, Packnett recalls, "I called my wife, Donna, and said there's good news and bad news. The good news is you're not going to have to move north; the bad news is I really like these guys."

The affinity was mutual. And thus begins the story of once Oklahoma stubbornness transforming into Northeast Indiana collaboration.

With open arms

Born in Ada, Oklahoma, the 61-year-old Packnett earned a finance degree from the University of Central Oklahoma before entering the oil and gas industry. He switched careers to health care in 1988 with the Sisters of St. Mercy ("I soon realized this would be my life's work," he remarks). Oklahoma City was facing a choice of passing a sales tax increase to provide an economic jolt or risk becoming a "Dust Bowl" city.

"(Before the Oklahoma City evolution) I'm a native Oklahoman (demonstrating with arms folded), thinking, 'We've never done anything. We never pulled anything together.' Tulsa was the culture center. People there looked down at us, called us Cowtown. And we deserved a lot of that.

"When I came here," Packnett continues, "when I started talking about a new vision for Northeast Indiana, there were a lot of 'me's'; people had their arms folded, going, 'We've never done that.' Having experienced success in the transformation of a city gave me great confidence that we could do that here."

And that is exactly what his Parkview board of directors was looking for.

"We're the largest employer in Northeast Indiana – with about 9,500 people today. It was great that our board looked at me from day one and said, 'We want you to be involved in economic development. We need you to be involved in economic development,'" Packnett recalls. "They have a real belief that as the economy improves, Parkview improves. They really get the integral part that health systems play."

While today's business leaders call on Packnett for his guidance, some of his early visits were to Ian Rolland, longtime head of Lincoln National Life Insurance Co. and the 1998 winner of the Indiana Chamber's Business Leader of the Year award. Affectionately referring to Rolland as the "godfather" for his many community and statewide contributions over the years, Packnett was told that buy-in was needed from a large number of business and community stalwarts to make the regional vision a reality.



Mike Packnett takes pleasure in greeting people and helping meet their needs at Parkview Regional Medical Center.

"He was so prophetic," Packnett says. "Bringing those folks together started at around 25 and now it's over 100 people from 11 counties in Northeast Indiana. We vet all those key issues in our four pillars. To me, the neatest thing is to see 100-plus business leaders, foundation leaders, education leaders and elected officials come together around these things that will make the biggest difference for us."

Chodak notes there were very few, if any, events he attended in which Packnett was not already involved as a current or past champion. He describes the challenge of regional leadership.

"Bringing people together is prioritizing the agenda that's going to move the entire community (or region) forward. People have very strong opinions on how that should work," Chodak explains. "Having the interpersonal skills and leadership skills to maneuver within that organization of very successful folks who are leaders in their own right



Packnett acknowledges the critical role of all team members – from nurses and Parkview Samaritan emergency pilots to Tina Colwell, his assistant and administrative manager.



– that’s the height of the challenge. Mike is just so adept at that.”

Or, in Pierce’s words, “Mike has a great ability to take a broad vision of the future and concentrate that on to a fine point. He’s done it for Parkview Health System; he’s done it for the Northeast Indiana economy.”

More than a game

The potential of building a downtown baseball stadium for Fort Wayne’s minor league baseball team in 2008 was not universally popular. Presented with the opportunity to invest in the naming rights for the ballpark and to spur economic development, Packnett terms it the most difficult decision in his tenure at Parkview.

Following the determination to move forward and after carefully crafting a memo to Parkview Health stakeholders, Packnett remembers hitting send on the email and being bombarded with negative responses. The volume and the intensity of the messages were unprecedented.

“For us, it wasn’t about baseball. We believed so much in this type of catalytic project that it was the right thing for us to do for downtown economic development,” he contends. “Fast forward five years and you’ve got 400,000 to 500,000 people going through there. Excellence pervades throughout that facility.

“It has exceeded everyone’s expectations. It’s more about an experience downtown than a baseball game,” Packnett reflects. “It helped change our psyche. That is part of what we were hoping, but you never know. People are proud of Parkview Field, the restaurants downtown, the mayor’s vision for the riverfront. It was that rallying project that brought people together like never before.”

Mayor Henry cites the convention center expansion and updated library as other important developments in a similar time frame, but adds, “There’s no question that Parkview’s presence served as a catalyst for new development downtown (Courtyard by Marriott hotel and a mixed-use housing/office/retail complex to name a few). They served as a foundation; it turned our downtown around significantly.”

And, to their credit, some of those same critics who lamented the original Parkview investment sent Packnett another email a few years later. This time, they talked about their great family experience and even inquired about some tickets to do it all over again.

Healthy approach

Parkview, of course, is primarily focused on the business of health. One of the primary factors that lured Packnett from Oklahoma was the opportunity to be part of building a major medical facility from the ground up. Parkview Regional Medical Center (which opened its doors in March 2012) is a state-of-the-art facility that is part of a system that includes hospitals in six Northeast Indiana counties, specialty facilities and a 500-member Parkview Physicians Group.

“Our facilities are just bursting at the seams,” Packnett reveals. “Every day, Monday through Friday, our regional medical center is above capacity. The number one reason for our success is our physicians. They’ve come together with this idea of how we can have the best personalized health care journey for everybody we serve. We have about 1.8 million contacts with people every year.”

Packnett is equally as comfortable walking through the medical center greeting long-time employees and others he encounters as he is in the board room. The big smile and warm handshake – what Chodak

The Mirro Center for Research and Innovation is an important addition to the Parkview campus. The hospital system's investment in Parkview Field has triggered dramatic changes in downtown Fort Wayne.

describes as a gift – come naturally. After all, he worked in both health care housekeeping and maintenance roles. He takes the position of servant leadership to a whole new level.

“The definition I like the most is that you are chief among equals. I love everything about that definition,” Packnett exclaims as his voice rises. “I learned so much (while working in housekeeping and maintenance), how critical every job is in a service industry like we have. The idea of servant leadership may not work in all segments of industry, but it works so well in health care.”

The work, he reiterates, is all about quality of life for those that Parkview serves.

“We **know** (emphasizing the word) that the cost of health care is too high. We have to get to people earlier in their disease stage. Our focus on their well-being earlier is going to save the entire system so much money but more importantly yield a much better life for those people. We're redesigning our care models to leverage physicians' time, to get more teams of people around the patient.”

Spreading his wings

The lists of Packnett's organizational involvement and awards received are lengthy. Asked to talk about some of his passions, he identifies The Rescue Mission (meeting the needs of the homeless through ministries in Allen and nine surrounding counties) and the efforts of the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership and Greater Fort Wayne Inc. (he led the committee that combined the local chamber and economic development groups).

“We've been trying to come alongside (The Rescue Mission) to help with health care for the homeless,” he shares. “They have such a great leader in Donovan Coley. I love being part of that group and seeing the commitment that so many people have.”

With the economic development entities, the focus has been on talent. Packnett notes that what started with getting 18-year-olds ready to enter the workforce has continually scaled down to younger ages.

“Now we're working on the prenatal side and studying so much about brain development. If we don't deliver a 4-year-old ready to learn, they're going to get on that path that is not the right path.”

The personal path for Packnett – when not in the role of busy executive/community



leader/family man – takes him to the waterways.

“I used to play golf, and I didn't play it well,” he jokes. “Being on the water, especially fishing – there's just something magical about it. That's really one of the few times I can get unplugged.”

Maintaining the focus

While the accomplishments have been many and the current work continues, Packnett becomes even more animated and enthusiastic when discussing what lies ahead for both the health care system and the Northeast Indiana region.

“For Parkview, the real effort is around making sure we have great coordinated care throughout the whole continuum. We've spent money on facilities, electronic records,

convenient locations, but in five years I hope we have a very high percentage of our people we serve who know they would not want to go anywhere else for care.

“We understand what they want out of their health care,” he continues. “It's the idea of these personalized health journeys. We talk a lot about population health management in our field. What I don't like about that is it's up here (raising his hand up near his head) at this level. What I really like about where we're going is it's much more personalized.”

On the economic development side, Packnett and other leaders have spent a number of years honed in on reversing the region's slide in per capita income. It was a necessary, although not always glamorous,

focus. The emphasis has shifted to “The Road to One Million” goal of increasing the area population to that number as part of its Regional Cities Initiative application.

“Road to One Million beats the heck out of that per capita income slide. I’m tired of showing people and people are sick of seeing it,” Packnett says with a laugh. “This is a huge, audacious goal to go from 800,000 some people to a million people by 2025. It requires the pillars of Vision 2020 and puts the accent more on quality of life than we’ve ever done before. This metric of a million people seems like a magical number to me.”

Beyond the numbers, here’s how Packnett plans to measure success:

“In 2025, I want to talk to the people who are 25 today, 35 then, and ask them if they feel like we’ve made real progress in getting to that quality of life you talked to us about 10 years ago. That overall sense of satisfaction, sense of pride in the region and community is different when you’re adding people.

“We’ve got to do it at a 2% (annual) clip (to get to a million),” clarifies Packnett, before lowering his voice to a whisper and confiding, “It seems like we ought to be able to do that,



With security a major concern at all medical facilities, Parkview has its own police force.

but we haven’t been growing at 2%.”

Don’t count the region out. The three people we talked to – Pierce, Chodak and Mayor Henry – about Packnett were all asked

what makes him successful in his employer and community roles. Their unanimous answer: passion. And passion often goes a long, long way.

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STEEL DYNAMICS WOULD LIKE TO CONGRATULATE

MIKE PACKNETT

FOR IGNITING YOUR PASSION

Steel Dynamics would like to congratulate Mike Packnett for being named this year’s Business Leader of the Year. Mike has tirelessly served Fort Wayne and the surrounding region for many years. His servant leadership and advocacy for those in need has strengthened our communities in countless ways.

Thank you, Mike, for igniting your passion to benefit all those around you!