

Please Sign In and use this article's on page print button to print this article.

Sponsored Content

Kansas City ORBIE Leadership Award recipient Debe Gash on technology's role in the patient and physician experience

Sponsored Content by KansasCityCIO

By The Business Journals Content Studio
Aug 11, 2023



Debe Gash joined Saint Luke's Hospital in Kansas City in 1992 to manage physician services for Saint Luke's Medical Group and serve as a project manager and director of application development in information services. At the time, the public did not have internet access; that would come the following year. The use of electronic medical records (EMR) wasn't on anyone's radar.



Debe Gash, senior vice president and chief digital officer, Saint Luke's Health System

Thirty-one years later, Gash still provides her expertise to Saint Luke's Health System (SLHS), now as the network's senior vice president and chief digital officer, a role she's held since 2017. Saint Luke's has since expanded to a network of 14 hospitals and campuses across the Kansas City region, along with home care and hospice services, a senior living community and more than 100 primary care and specialty offices treating patients in 65 specialty services. Over the last three decades, Gash has shaped the digital experience at Saint Luke's by developing and implementing critical IT strategies, providing technology support, guiding cost-effective clinical and business solutions and fostering a digital culture.

“The mission to serve the community provides personal and professional fulfillment,” said Gash.

For the impact she has had over the course of her career, Gash has been selected as the Leadership Award recipient as part of the 2023 Kansas City ORBIE Awards. The program honors current or former chief information officers who have a proven track record of successful technology leadership, made significant contributions to the Kansas City technology and business community and inspired others through their personal, professional and civic contributions.

Enhancing the patient and physician experience

A defining moment of Gash’s career was the selection and implementation of Epic Systems Corp. as the health system’s electronic medical records software. Epic is the maker of the patient portal, MyChart. “The selection of Epic set the stage to transform Saint Luke’s Health System into a digital health system,” Gash said. That choice and the challenging multi-year effort elevated Gash’s role in the organization.

“The advanced digital front door has offered many conveniences to patients,” said Gash. Through SLHS’s EMR, patients can use a desktop portal or mobile app to find the necessary care; interact with their care team in a variety of ways, including through virtual visits; schedule and check in for appointments; access lab and test results; request prescription refills; and pay bills through various digital methods.

Under Gash's leadership, SLHS has been able to expand telehealth care, providing expanded, improved access to patients. SLHS also developed home-based care models, such as Saint Luke's Hospital In Your Home, the area's first program to offer high-quality, hands-on care through an around-the-clock, virtual platform. Through this program, patients with serious conditions, such as congestive heart failure, pneumonia, gastroenteritis or COPD, who would normally require treatment in an inpatient hospital setting may be able to be treated in the comfort of their own home if they meet a certain set of criteria.

Gash's contributions to boost the hospital system's technologies have also made a smoother experience for doctors and the clinical staff. "Remote work and automation help make them more efficient and create new work experiences," said Gash.

Developing people

The effectiveness of Gash's leadership at SLHS extends beyond the selection of technologies to the impact she has on people she leads. "One of the key aspects of my job is to lead, motivate and develop IT talent so the organization's goals are met. It's key for me to collaborate with others and innovate to accomplish the organization's strategy."

An active leader in the local IT community, Gash helped bring the TechLX (Technology Leadership Experience) to Kansas City. TechLX provides in-depth learning opportunities for mid-level technology leaders. She's also served on the board of the Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society (HIMSS), another organization that focuses on providing career development to health IT professionals. "I've enjoyed encouraging the development of technology professionals in Kansas City," said Gash.

Of her current organization, Gash said, "Saint Luke's has provided me with opportunities to learn and develop. I've been challenged and felt valued for my contributions."