

Zimmerer excited about leading chamber

By GRACE PETERSEN

gpetersen@norfolkdailynews.com | Posted: Thursday, January 16, 2014 9:42 am

Mark Zimmerer isn't a stranger to the Norfolk Area Chamber of Commerce.

In fact, Zimmerer — who earlier this week was announced as the organization's new president and chief executive officer — has served as an ambassador and, most recently, on the chamber's board of directors.

"It inspired me, looking at the future leadership that's in place at the chamber. . . It seemed like a good fit at the time and an opportunity," Zimmerer said.

Zimmerer succeeds Dennis Houston as chamber president and CEO. Houston resigned late last year to accept a similar position in Colorado.

Zimmerer will start his new position around Feb. 17, leaving his duties as the director of occupational health at Faith Regional Health Services.

"It's very hard to leave Faith Regional, obviously. I've been there 10 years," he said. "They've given me great opportunities to improve my leadership skills and develop as the person I am. For that I'm very grateful."

He also has served as the director of the Northeast Nebraska Child Advocacy Center since its inception.

"The child advocacy center definitely is my baby. It's hard to leave," Zimmerer said. "I hope to stay a part of it somehow, whether I'm on their steering committee or just helping with fundraising events and so forth. I'll be a phone call away from them if they need anything."

For those who don't know Zimmerer, he describes himself as a people person and very approachable. He also enjoys forming partnerships and coaching up team members to become change agents in the community.

"I see a great team in place. The groundwork is already in place," he said. "With the chamber



Zimmerer

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executive committee, we're just going to build off of what we already have started. It's not going to be re-creation of the wheel."

As the new president, Zimmerer said he and the executive committee will hold a strategic planning session in March to create a two-year plan that outlines the chamber's priorities, goals and objectives.

Zimmerer also said he doesn't plan on making significant changes but believes the chamber tries to do too many things.

"In my interview, I said I don't think we need to look at a to-do list, it's a what not to do list — chop some of those things off because you don't want to be spreading the staff and myself too thin because then you're not making anybody happy," Zimmerer said.

The chamber, he said, is bigger than one person, so it's important to get the board involved.

Zimmerer said he's looking forward to his, and the chamber's, future.

"I'm excited about the opportunity to work in a different way with my peers and colleagues . . . truly humbled by the fact that it was my peers that thought I was right for the job. That's always exciting to see that you have the respect," Zimmerer said. "This is not going to be an easy job, but with their support, I think we can accomplish some great things."