Aron and Annie Fast, both M.D.’s, make a great team. Together, the two are building an 8-month-old medical practice and raising their 18-month-old son, Tyler, in Hesston, Kan.

Aron and Annie, who married between their second and third years of medical school, both wanted to practice in a small town and be close to family. They agreed Aron’s hometown of Hesston, where his parents and sister still live, would be the perfect place.

“We were interested in coming to Hesston because we would have support,” said Annie, who also appreciates working as a husband-wife team. “I really wanted to work together. I like the camaraderie of it.”

The Fasts are no strangers to teamwork, explained Annie, who noted that their practice is an extension of how they studied as a team at The University of Kansas School of Medicine. They feel fortunate to have their joint office, a third location for Partners in Family Care, as not every prospective practice was willing to add two doctors at once. Partners in Family Care operates locations in nearby Moundridge and Inman.

“I didn’t realize how much work it would be to open a new office,” said Aron.

After completing their residencies last summer through the Via Christi Family Medicine Residency program in Wichita, the pair quickly transitioned to setting up their practice, focusing on handling paperwork, hiring nurses, developing systems and adjusting to a new electronic medical record system.

The Fasts saw their first patients in September and expect it to take 18 months to two years to build their full practice. Annie, who is also growing their obstetrics business, admitted there are challenges in their start-up, but those are challenges she wouldn’t trade.

For the Fasts, the hardest part of starting their practice has been re-learning things they took for granted, like referring to different providers.

“When you step out of your normal pattern, you have to figure out how to use local resources, get to know local specialists,” said Aron.

Continuity of care with patients is something they both enjoy. “Our schedule is easier than in residency. Right now, we get to spend a lot of time with our patients,” said Annie.

Aron added, “Our duties change month by month as we add patients, but we have more control over our time in our own practice. The majority of it is spent in Hesston, but occasionally we’ll fill in for our partners at another location.”

This practice is exactly what the
Fasts dreamed of six years ago as newlywed medical students. After they completed a rural rotation in Quinter with husband-wife family physicians Doug Gruenbacher, M.D. and Shelly Gruenbacher, M.D., they were encouraged by the possibility of joint practice. Later, the Fasts met and spent a summer with Paul Ullom-Minnich, M.D. and Marla Ullom-Minnich, M.D. in Moundridge, who are now their coworkers at Partners in Family Care.

“It’s nice to be in a community where people recognize you and your family.”

Aron Fast, M.D.
Partners in Family Care

“Along the way we tried to pay attention to different practice styles, how they set up their lives as well as their practices,” said Aron. “Those two couples demonstrated you can successfully have both partners working and have a family.” The Gruenbachers and the Ullom-Minnichs balance their medical practices while managing bustling households of four and five kids.

“It’s nice to be in a community where people recognize you and your family. People will stop us on a walk and mention how much Tyler has grown since they’ve seen him last,” said Aron.

Annie also enjoys their community-based practice. “In residency you see a patient one time. Here I see my patients at the grocery store and out walking. It makes me feel I am contributing to the community and it’s nice to be a part of that,” she said.

Even while building the new practice, Annie and Aron have found time to rekindle hobbies they put aside during residency. Annie enjoys baking and she has found more time to read for pleasure. Aron likes to run, especially since Hesston has several parks with great running and walking trails. He also has a knack for making furniture. He has made between 35 and 40 pieces, including a dining table and chairs, entertainment center, book shelves, beds, a lamp, a desk and even a shuffleboard table for their basement.

Aron says he and Annie feel accepted by Hesston and communities surrounding it. In residency, he provided locum tenens—temporary coverage for doctors—at Hillsboro Community Hospital through Kansas Locum Tenens. All three programs are managed by The University of Kansas Medical Center, Rural Health Education and Services. “We’ve taken full advantage of all the programs offered by Rural Health and we have benefitted greatly,” concluded Aron.

Path to rural Kansas

Dr. Annie Fast and Dr. Aron Fast completed their residency last summer through the Via Christi Family Medicine Residency program in Wichita.

During residency Annie and Aron participated in the Kansas Bridging Plan, a physician to community match program that offers loan forgiveness in exchange for service and the Kansas Recruitment and Retention Center, a service to assist in exploring job options in Kansas. Aron also provided temporary coverage for doctors at Hillsboro Community Hospital through Kansas Locum Tenens. All three programs are managed by The University of Kansas Medical Center, Rural Health Education and Services. “We’ve taken full advantage of all the programs offered by Rural Health and we have benefitted greatly,” concluded Aron.

Rural Health Education and Services
888-503-4221 • rhealth@kumc.edu • www.ruralhealth.kumc.edu