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Chris Littlefield

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Photo by Duane Tinkey

During his first week as CEO of Aviva USA last month, Chris

Littlefield made it a point to visit each of the company's locations across the country and to meet

personally with employees.

"I like to be in the game with the rest of the team," said Littlefield, who views his role as that of a player-coach. "I played sports growing up, and that certainly formed a lot of my views around team sports and the importance of good teams, and that's carried on in my professional career."

Littlefield, 43, was named Aviva USA's top executive on Sept. 9. He earned his law degree at the University of Iowa College of Law. As an attorney, he specialized in mergers and acquisitions and corporate securities work before joining The Dial Corp., where as general counsel he led the \$3.2 billion sale of the company in 2004.

He joined AmerUs Group Co. in January 2006, and played an instrumental role in managing the acquisition of AmerUs by Aviva plc.

Littlefield's "overall talent, experience and passion for excellence made him the right person" for the CEO position, said Tom Godlasky, retired CEO of Aviva North America, at the time of the promotion. "Since joining Aviva, Chris has displayed outstanding leadership and dedication."

Littlefield, whose grandparents on his father's side farmed near Monticello, grew up in Cleveland, and earned a business degree in finance from the University of Arizona.

A lunch meeting with Willard "Sandy" Boyd, now president-emeritus of the University of Iowa, helped persuade Littlefield to choose the law school.

"I was just so taken with the fact that he was such a kind, generous man to give his time to talk to someone he didn't know," Littlefield said. "I looked at a lot of schools, but I ended up at the University of Iowa; it was just a great decision."

Another significant mentor has been Herb Baum, retired chairman, president and CEO of The Dial Corp. Shortly after becoming CEO, he appointed Littlefield, then in his mid-30s, to serve as general counsel of the Fortune 500 company.

Littlefield has served on the board of the Hospice of Central Iowa Foundation since February 2007, a position he took after experiencing the value of hospice care that his wife's grandfather received in Phoenix.

"He's been a great supporter of Hospice of Central

Iowa," said Norene Mostkoff, the hospice's president and CEO. "I think he brings great insight, business acumen and passion for our mission."

Greater Des Moines should continue to leverage its strength as a financial services hub, he said. "While I think it's important for communities to always look to diversify, sometimes you forget about your core strengths," he said.

Additionally, "I hope workforce attraction continues to be a pretty high priority for the area, to continue to make this a very livable place," Littlefield said. "It's a great place, not just for families but for financial services professionals overall."

As CEO, "I want to have good, open, honest conversations with our employees and (to ensure) that they're being recognized for the contributions they make," Littlefield said.
