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Kootenai Health boss Morris announces retirement - next year

Long-time Kootenai Health CEO, Joe Morris, has announced plans to retire in May 2011. "Joe has been with Kootenai Health for 36 years. He has led Kootenai through times of economic downturn, growth, and expansion of services we provide," said Jim Curtis, M.D., chairman of the Kootenai Hospital District board of trustees. "True to form, he has chosen a time to retire that is good for the organization and fits his plans as well."

"Kootenai is in excellent shape financially and organizationally with an exceptional reputation on both a state and national level. This solid foundation will allow new leadership to guide us toward an even brighter future," Curtis added.

"Kootenai Health has been developing a transition plan for three years now," noted Morris. "All the pieces are in place to maintain stable, continuous executive leadership throughout the transition, including a suitable overlap with the new CEO. The timing of this transition is good, considering the factors that make such transitions successful."

Part of that process will naturally include recruitment for the position. Kootenai has worked with an executive search firm to fill top organizational positions for a number of years and plans to use this same firm to help identify qualified candidates. "They understand the culture of our community and our organization and they have a good track record at Kootenai," said Curtis. "They will be working closely with our team to help us bring in the right person."

Morris began his career with what was then Kootenai Memorial Hospital in 1974, accepting the position of CEO in July of 1981. Since that time, he has led the organization through the hospital's expansion to Kootenai Medical Center, including the construction of the existing hospital in the midst of a significant recession.

Morris oversaw the development of numerous joint ventures with physicians and the expansion of key clinical services including the Kootenai Cancer Center and Kootenai Heart Center. He financially positioned the hospital to eliminate property taxes and all long-term debt and has built an excellent management team that will help ensure the medical center's future success.

During Morris' tenure he served as a voice for northern Idaho on a number of regional, state, and national boards. These include both the Idaho and the American Hospital Associations, the Idaho Health Quality Planning Commission, Voluntary Hospitals of America (VHA), VHA Mountain States and Blue Cross of Idaho.

An active community member, he has also served on the boards of Jobs Plus, the Kroc Center, the Coeur d'Alene Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis, Inland Northwest Blood Bank, and many more. "After 36 years as a healthcare executive," said Morris, "I'm looking forward to an opportunity to pursue other interests."