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## **New St. Joe's CEO talks about his background**

*North Dakota hospital he headed competes with famous Mayo Clinic*

The new chief executive officer of St. Joseph Regional Medical Center comes from a hospital that competes with the Mayo Clinic.

The Mayo Clinic is about 350 miles from Grand Forks, N.D., where Timothy Sayler is the chief operating officer of the Altru Health System. About one-third of the patients who receive treatment outside Grand Forks go to the Mayo Clinic, with equal shares heading to hospitals in Fargo or the Minneapolis area, said Sayler, who is joining St. Joe's as its lead administrator on Feb. 15.

The Mayo Clinic is often the standard against which the residents of Grand Forks compare the treatment they get at Altru's 230-bed hospital or its 14 clinics that serve northeastern North Dakota and northwestern Minnesota, Sayler said.

The model Altru Health System follows is one that puts a family practice physician in the center, directing patients to specialists, Sayler said.

The system strives to have a high level of communication between what happens in the hospital and its outlying clinics. Ideally, when a rural clinic patient suffers a heart attack and is admitted to the hospital in Grand Forks, cardiologists have ready access to their medical history. Likewise, when that patient goes home and receives follow-up care in the clinic, the primary care physician gets reports from the hospital.

About 180 of the 200 physicians with privileges to practice in the Altru Health System are on its payroll, so they can focus on what they were trained to do and not on operating a business, Sayler said.

That differs from St. Joe's, where most doctors work for clinics with contracts to provide patient care at the hospital. Like St. Joe's, the Altru Health System has managed to consistently have money left after its expenses in spite of the challenging economy of recent years, Sayler said.

But in spite of the success in North Dakota, Sayler isn't ready to impose the strategies that worked for the Altru Health System on St. Joe's. He expects to spend his first months in his position exactly as his predecessor, Howard Hayes, did, listening to stakeholders in the hospital such as physicians, staff members, community members and health care providers throughout the region.

Only after that will Sayler establish goals for his new employer. "I tend to be very team oriented, very collaborative in my approach."

Sayler, 53, had been in present position for about three years, when he got a call from Ascension Health system, alerting him to the Lewiston job. St. Joe's is a part of Ascension Health system, the biggest chain of not-for-profit Catholic hospitals in the nation.

Sayler pursued the opportunity because it gave him the opportunity to advance to CEO in a town, that like Grand Forks, has a population of about 50,000 people who seem to value community.

It helped that he doesn't expect to mind the odor of Clearwater Paper. Sugar beet processing smells sometimes in Grand Forks, Sayler said.

The timing was also good for his children. One is entering middle school. A second is starting high school. A third is beginning college, and the oldest is already in college.

Initially his wife and youngest three children will remain in Grand Forks to sell their home and finish the school year, but they will move as early as possible in the summer, Sayler said.