

**Idaho Statesman, Saturday, Feb. 12, 2011 – by Audrey Dutton (2 pages)**

## Saint Alphonsus expanding in Nampa

*The Boise-based health system has big plans for the former Mercy North.*

Nampa's population is growing, which means more people trekking to Boise for medical care they cannot get close to home. Saint Alphonsus Health System could change that, with a multimillion-dollar request on the table with its parent company and new services coming this spring and summer.

The man spearheading the expansion is Karl Keeler, the chief executive officer of the 152-bed Nampa hospital known as Mercy Medical Center until Saint Al's took it over last year.



*Karl Keeler, CEO of Saint Alphonsus Medical Center — Nampa, wants to partner with more local physicians “to make it as easy as possible to practice in our facilities.”*

He pledged to invest about \$40 million in the new system that includes both the hospital and an outpatient care center. The merger gave Nampa access to the Saint Al's Catholic health system and helped with coordinating care, Keeler said.

It also combined the forces of Mercy and Saint Al's; there are now seven Saint Alphonsus medical group clinics in Canyon County, with 53 doctors in family practice, cardiology, sports medicine and other specialties. The Canyon County system sees more than 132,000 patients a year.

“The opportunity to partner with Saint Al's in Boise and the larger system — that will improve the care here in Nampa,” said Mayor Tom Dale.

In addition to the hospital and outpatient expansions, he added that Nampa could benefit from more medical care along the I-84 corridor, something Keeler wants to provide in the long term.

“Our focus right now is to keep care close to home and expand services to Canyon County residents,” said Alisha Havens, who directs the hospital's marketing and its foundation.

The hospital is gearing up for a multi-year expansion. Its immediate focus is on 4400 E. Flamingo Ave., the outpatient care center now dubbed the Saint Alphonsus Health Plaza, but still known by most people as Mercy North. But Keeler noted that the Nampa hospital is competing for the long-term funds against the rest of the Trinity Health network.

That includes dozens of hospitals, hundreds of outpatient clinics, and nursing homes and hospice services in nine states. Officials with Michigan-based Trinity are expected to make a decision on the Nampa request in April.

For now, while they wait for a decision on funds and decide on next steps, “we're doing a lot of listening,” Keeler said.

## Opening April 5

At the Saint Alphonsus Health Plaza: a new breast-care center offering digital mammograms, ultrasounds, biopsies, bone-density tests, same-day appointments and a specialized oncology nurse.

Coming by summer

New physicians: obstetrician-gynecologist, family doctor, cancer physician.

At the Health Plaza: more office space, an outpatient surgery center, gastrointestinal specialists, a cancer program.

At the Nampa hospital: a couple of rooms for sleep studies, lab renovations and about \$1 million worth of new drug-delivery machines for every floor to reduce medication errors.

In Caldwell: a new family practice doctor.

In the works all year

- Forging more partnerships with local physicians and specialists.
- Taking steps to get the hospital into the nation's top 10 for patient safety.
- Wound-care services to treat wounds like diabetic foot ulcers and skin grafts.
- Recruiting for Canyon County doctors: pediatrics, internal medicine, general surgery, family practice, heart and lung doctors.