

Twin Falls Times News, Tuesday, April 20, 2010 – by Nate Poppino

Twin Falls hospital CEO resigns

Mark Schwartz, CEO of St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center, has resigned his position, according to a letter provided to the Times-News on Monday.

The letter, sent out by St. Luke's Health System CEO Dr. David Pate, states that Pate will fill in for Schwartz over the next several weeks while determining an interim leader for the hospital. Little more was shared Monday about the circumstances of Schwartz's move, though the matter was presumably a topic of discussion at a Monday evening closed-door meeting of the hospital's board of directors.

Schwartz directed the Twin Falls hospital, the largest in south-central Idaho, for nearly three years. St. Luke's officials announced in July 2007 that they'd selected Schwartz to replace outgoing CEO John Kee, who had overseen the hospital's transition from a county-owned facility to part of a private, regional health system.

Schwartz helped St. Luke's Magic Valley through a number of issues, including the ongoing construction of a new hospital building in northwest Twin Falls and a disagreement with Twin Falls County regarding the lease and remodeling of a downtown clinic building. Pate noted both efforts in his letter.

Schwartz came to St. Luke's after serving 21 years as the CEO of Aurora Medical Center in Hartford, Wis. He received a master's in health care administration from the University of Northern Colorado in 1981.

The news came two weeks after St. Luke's announced the CEO of its Wood River hospital, Bruce Jensen, will move to Twin Falls to help oversee the transition to the new \$220 million facility. Kee will replace Jensen in Ketchum.

Pate wrote in Monday's letter that he will work with the Twin Falls hospital board, physicians and senior leaders to determine who will lead the hospital in the interim. "We will begin a national search for the next CEO right away," Pate wrote, also wishing Schwartz well in the future.

Russ Newcomb, a retired doctor and chairman of the hospital board, declined to add much to Pate's statement ahead of Monday's meeting, which are not open to the general public. But Newcomb did say Schwartz's departure had "been in the works" for a couple of weeks. "I think the letter speaks for itself," Newcomb said.

Twin Falls County Commissioner Terry Kramer, who represents the county on the hospital board, said Monday afternoon he had not known Schwartz was leaving. "It's unfortunate, but it's not surprising," Kramer said, without elaborating on his statement.

Hospital spokeswoman Jody Tremblay said she didn't have anything else to add on the circumstances of Schwartz's departure or what he might do next. "Mark has made significant contributions to the medical center and the community, and I personally have enjoyed working with him, and we wish him the best of luck," she said.