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Interim St. Luke's CEO eager to tackle position

The interim head of St. Luke's Magic Valley Medical Center says he's eager to tackle the job and leave a legacy of employee development during his year at the helm.

St. Luke's officials said late last month that Mike Reno, a consultant helping the Twin Falls hospital adopt the "Lean" production system used by Toyota Motor Corp., will now head the medical facility as it searches for a new CEO. Former CEO Mark Schwartz's resignation was announced April 19; a nationwide search is planned for his successor.

In a conversation with the Times-News on Tuesday, Reno said he wants to do more than just fill in during his time at the hospital, and is excited to aggressively tackle the issues before him, including a May 21, 2011, move to the hospital's new facility across town. He noted the good timing that allowed St. Luke's Health System CEO Dr. David Pate, a past associate, to tab him for the job after Reno had spent a couple months getting to know hospital staff in his consultant role.

"Timing is everything," said Reno, who worked for hospital systems in Texas and Pennsylvania before joining RWD Technologies of Baltimore, Md. "I can't imagine walking in here last week without the opportunity to meet (everyone)."

Reno had hoped to one day serve in a CEO position over a hospital, he said; he joined RWD in part to round out his skill set.

While managing the complex hospital move, revising its strategic plan and dealing with industry-wide issues of health care, he said he also hopes to "re-engineer" how hospital employees do their work, pushing for a higher quality of work while respecting "staff's time and effort."

Both the hospital's board of directors, who met him at a retreat this weekend, and administrators welcomed Reno to the job and said they're confident of where they're going. The board, largely comprised of area residents, approved Reno's appointment unanimously, said board chairman and retired doctor Russ Newcomb.

"This has been ... probably as smooth a transition as we could have hoped for," said John Groesbeck, the hospital's chief financial officer.