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Hospital CEO has vision 'to do more'

Expanding the cardiac program and acquiring the adjacent St. Stanislaus Catholic Church property are two ideas being examined by the new chief executive officer of St. Joseph Regional Medical Center.

"We believe that we have the potential to do more," said Timothy Sayler, who took the top job at the Lewiston hospital in February.

Sayler had been the chief operating officer of Altru Health System in Grand Forks, N.D., which ran a hospital that did about 4,000 diagnostic procedures a year involving heart catheterization.

St. Joe's does about 75 per year and could possibly handle as many as 400-500, said Sayler, who spoke Tuesday at the annual meeting of Valley Vision at the Red Lion Hotel in Lewiston.

Cardiac patients are one of the biggest groups that seek medical care outside the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley. But a number of issues still have to be worked through before any decisions are made, Sayler said.

St. Joe's is among 100 medical centers in the country that do heart catheterization tests without having cardiovascular surgery that is needed in exceedingly rare emergencies, he said.

Plus St. Joe's doesn't put in stints, mesh tubes that open up arteries.

If a problem is detected during a test patients have to leave the area to get a stint. "To have a broader program you need more cardiologists."

At the same time St. Joe's is eyeing the St. Stanislaus site, Sayler said.

"We're talking with them, but that's going to require a lot of discussion ... Certainly we're interested for our long-term needs," he said.