

# Payette Lakes Medical Clinic to merge with St. Luke's

*Patients will see no difference  
in care after Jan. 1 changeover*

**BY TOM GROTE**

The Star-News

Payette Lakes Medical Clinic in McCall will become part of St. Luke's Health System, based in Boise, starting Jan. 1.

The nine doctors and two dozen other staffers who work at the clinic will become employees of St. Luke's, adding to more than 300 other physicians in the region who are partners with St. Luke's, a news release said.

The motivation for the merger is to provide patients the benefits of the business office of St. Luke's and to take business decisions off the doctors, said Dr. Terri Mucha, the clinic's medical director.

"We will continue being the same physicians providing the same quality care for our patients," Mucha said. "The foremost consideration in this change of ownership was how we can improve patient access while ensuring an efficient work environment for physicians."

The clinic will continue accepting the insurance providers it currently accepts, and fees for services will not increase as a result of the transition, she said.

"We are pleased to partner with PLMC," said John Kee, St. Luke's vice president of physician services. "It is a clinic distinguished by its devotion to the community, the quality of the care provided there and its excellent physicians."

The nine physicians working at the clinic will continue staffing the emergency room at McCall Memorial Hospital after the merger is completed Jan. 1.

Also, Meadows Valley Medical Clinic in New Meadows and Salmon River Medical Clinic in Riggins, which are operated by Payette Lakes, will also become St. Luke's physician clinics.

"Our patients can continue to expect the same care they always have received, that has been and will continue to be our commitment to them," said Dr. Jim Dardis, a family practice physician at the clinic.

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The clinic is located across the parking lot from the hospital on Park Street. The building was opened in 2000 when the clinic moved across the street from its previous quarters which is now known as the Allen-Nokes Center.

The hospital purchased the previous clinic building and renovated it to house various offices and services.

The current clinic building is owned by Dardis, Dr. Dave Hall, Dr. Scott Harris and Dr. Dan Ostermiller. The four will lease the building to St. Luke's.

The clinic saw 21,070 pa-

tients in 2008 compared with 19,458 patients in 2000.

Referrals will continue to be sent to the most appropriate specialist and will not be affected by the merger with St. Luke's, Mucha said.

St. Luke's also has a management agreement with McCall Memorial Hospital. As part of that agreement, St. Luke's employs hospital CEO Lee Rhodes and provides a variety of services to the hospital.

Officials of St. Luke's and the McCall hospital have begun formal meetings on expanding the partnership, but no agreement has been reached.