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N.D. man tabbed to lead St. Joe's

Timothy Sayler, COO of Altru Health System, will take over Feb. 15

A health services administrator from North Dakota has been chosen to replace Howard Hayes at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in Lewiston.

Timothy Sayler has been the chief operating officer of Altru Health System in Grand Forks, N.D., for three years. He will start on Feb. 15 as the hospital's president and chief executive officer at a salary the hospital declined to disclose. Hayes, 62, is retiring Jan. 7 after 28 years in the position. No interim administrator has been named.

Sayler emerged as the finalist from a pool with at least one local applicant, Tom Pfliger, vice president of professional services at St. Joe's.

Sayler's employer has a staff of 3,700. It includes a 230-bed hospital, a 25-bed rehabilitation hospital and a multispecialty clinic with 200 physicians. By comparison, St. Joe's has about 900 employees and 145 beds. Unlike St. Joe's, Altru Health System is not one of the more than 75 hospitals in the Ascension Health system - the biggest not-for-profit chain of Catholic hospitals in the nation.

The hospital's board made its final decision in consultation with Ascension Health after a search that involved a national recruiter and onsite interviews with five finalists, said Doug Barton, a spokesman for St. Joe's.

The board members were impressed by Sayler's experience developing relationships with outlying rural hospitals in his region, said Dr. Kent Anderson, a radiation oncologist, who is chairman of the St. Joe's board of directors.

That work could be important to St. Joe's in the future because it may seek stronger ties with hospitals in Orofino, Grangeville and Cottonwood, Anderson said.

They also liked his demeanor, Anderson said. "He's a very genuine, sincere, transparent individual."

Those traits help hospital administrators establish trust more readily as they negotiate with groups as diverse as doctors, staff members and other hospitals, Anderson said. "He has a very strong working relationship with physicians."