

St. Joe's names its CEO under new ownership

Claypool to head medical center; worked for Ascension Health hospital in Florida

More than three years of uncertainty about who will lead St. Joseph Regional Medical Center have ended with the selection of an administrator from Florida to fill the hospital's top post.

Blain Claypool, 51, resigned as president of acute care last week at St. Vincent's HealthCare system in Jacksonville, Fla., to become CEO at the largest hospital in north central Idaho and southeastern Washington.

St. Vincent's is a part of Ascension Health, the nonprofit Catholic group that owned St. Joe's prior to its acquisition in the spring by for-profit RCCH HealthCare Partners.

Claypool's first day on the job will be Sept. 25. A series of interim CEOs has overseen operations since Timothy Sayler left the position in 2014. Dr. Michael Rooney, who is now chief medical officer, held the post for two years that ended in May 2016. He was followed by Thomas Fitz and Mark Taylor, who were in the job while the hospital made the transition to its new owner.

Now that the issue of the hospital's ownership is settled, Claypool will be able to develop a strategic plan for the millions of dollars pledged by RCCH HealthCare Partners for capital projects. RCCH HealthCare Partners is based in Brentwood, Tenn., and operates almost 20 health care institutions in more than 10 states.

Services now available in places such as Boise, Coeur d'Alene and Spokane will be offered at St. Joe's to limit travel for patients, Claypool said.

"You'll see a higher level of care offered," he said.

Decisions regarding the addition of services will be based on feedback from physicians and other medical providers, hospital staff and community leaders, as well as an examination of data about the types of procedures local patients are most frequently seeking at other hospitals, Claypool said.

Expansion that can happen with existing staff and equipment will come first, followed by others that require capital, Claypool said.

"We are going to grow (St. Joe's) into a regional hospital," he said.

The opportunity to expand access to medical care in a smaller city matches his skill set, Claypool said.

During his time in Jacksonville, he led the effort to construct a new \$110 million hospital in Middleburg, Fla., a community with a population that's similar to the Lewiston-Clarkston Valley. The hospital has 106 beds after doubling in size in its first year because it was so successful, Claypool said, and it offers many of the same services as St. Joe's such as cardiology, obstetrics and gynecology, and orthopedics.

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Prior to moving to Florida, Claypool was chief executive officer of three hospitals for Renown Health in Reno, Nev., and he served as chief operating officer for the University of Nevada School of Medicine.

Claypool said he and his wife spent almost five days in Lewiston and after becoming convinced the job was an ideal fit for them. During the visit, he met hospital employees while she had toured downtown Lewiston and looked at houses.

“We sat down and said, ‘Wow. We hope this goes well.’ ... It felt like home.”

When they’re not at work or school, Claypool and his family of mostly adult children enjoy hiking, mountain biking, camping and snowboarding.

“(The Lewiston-Clarkston Valley) calls to us. We are Westerners.

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