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September 16, 2010

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Camden-Clark Memorial Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital announced today their intention to join the statewide West Virginia United Health System.

Tom Jones, CEO of United health Systems, said the health system envisions purchasing St. Joseph's as Camden-Clark simultaneously affiliates itself with the health system.

"The joining of these fine institutions into our statewide system with the specific mission of delivering high quality health care throughout West Virginia will bring tremendous opportunities to residents of the Mid-Ohio Valley," Jones said.

Papers are being filed with the Federal Trade Commission this week for the proposed affiliation. A letter of intent for a certificate of need with the West Virginia Health Care Authority will be filed within days, he said.

A press conference was held today with Mike King, CEO at Camden-Clark, Jack Julius, CEO at St. Joseph's and Steve Peterson, chief financial officer at Signature Hospital Corp., the owners of St. Joseph's Hospital. Also attending were Parkersburg Mayor Robert Newell and Dr. Christopher C. Colenda, chancellor of Health Sciences at West Virginia University. Patsy Hardy, state secretary of health and human resources, also attended.

Jones said the regional hospitals have been hit hard by reimbursement cuts and competition from doctors' offices and clinics. He said when the West Virginia legislature created the health system, it specifically called for a creation of a coordinated integrated, efficient and efficient health sciences and delivery system in West Virginia.

King said incorporating both hospitals in the statewide system anchored by WVU's teaching hospital "will improve the efficiency of our operations."

"And we will expand and enhance our services in ways many of us never dreamed possible under the existing arrangement," he said.

The affiliation could partially reverse spiraling health costs and the community may benefit from programs and specialties never before offered in the Mid-Ohio Valley, King said.

West Virginia is faced with an aging population, increased competition and reduced reimbursement, he said.

"We can deal with these challenges, but we can't if we stand still," King said. "Both Camden-Clark and St. Joseph's are blessed with highly professional and competent boards, physicians and employees. I look forward to a healthy, robust creative partnership.

Peterson, said the efforts of dedicated employees, a committed medical staff and supportive board brought stability to the institution since it was purchased by Signature in 2007.

"At Signature, we always want to do what's best for our hospitals in the communities we serve," he said. "Given this opportunity to combine St. Joseph's with (the health system) and Camden-Clark to create a stronger, better place to receive quality care, this partnership seems like the best thing for everyone involved," Peterson said.

Julius called it an historic affiliation. St. Joseph's joins other quality health care providers like Camden-Clark and the health system, he

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Jack Julius, chief executive officer at St. Joseph's, left, an...



said.

"This historic affiliation will make Parkersburg a destination for healthcare services in this region," Julius said. "We believe the two hospitals already here, now strengthened by this affiliation, can serve the people of the Mid-Ohio Valley best."

More details in the Friday issue of The Parkersburg News and Sentinel.

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