

The Chelsea Standard

Chelsea-area wellness foundation launched

The May 1 merger of Saint Joseph Mercy Health System (SJMHS) and Chelsea Community Hospital (CCH) will yield some healthy-and unexpected-returns for the greater Chelsea community, thanks to a \$25 million commitment from SJMHS to fund a Foundation devoted to supporting "significant programs to improve health and wellness in CCH's service area."

Administrators and members of CCH's Board of Trustees secured the commitment during discussions leading up to the merger.

Once it's fully operational, sometime in late 2009 or early 2010, the Chelsea-Area Wellness Foundation (CWF) will function as an independent non-profit organization. However, it will leverage local resources and partner with the two hospitals on many issues. Under the terms of the merger, the Foundation will have significant assets to further its work. In addition to the \$25 million commitment from SJMHS, CWF has been endowed with ownership of the Chelsea Wellness Center and a 50 percent stake in Silver Maples of Chelsea, in partnership with United Methodist Retirement Communities.

The CCH Board of Trustees began selecting Foundation board members last fall, focusing on physicians and nurses, public health professionals, and individuals with financial management experience.

According to Pat Conlin, CCH Board chair at the time of the merger and a current member of the CWF Board of Directors, "The mission of the Foundation is to make our community a healthy place for all residents. Therefore, we were looking for people who were excited at the prospect of creating new and boundless opportunities for improving the health of those in our CCH communities."

In all, 15 individuals were chosen from the Foundation's service area. Among the board members are Kathleen Griffiths, CEO of Chelsea Community Hospital, and Garry Faja, CEO of Saint Joseph Mercy Health System, whose presence will, according to Conlin, "allow for greater continuity between the hospitals' efforts and the work of the Foundation."

As its first order of business, the board hired registered nurse and professional health services administrator Amy Heydlauff to serve as the Foundation's executive director. A graduate of the University of Michigan's School of Public Health, Heydlauff previously served as director of

utilization management for Chelsea Community Hospital and, prior to that, clinical quality assurance auditor for Parke-Davis/Pfizer.

According to CWF Search Committee member Jim Woods, "During our interviews with her, Amy articulated an exciting vision for the future of the Foundation and the health of our communities. That passion and vision, coupled with her close ties to the community, made her a great choice to lead this promising new venture."

Heydlauff herself has high expectations for the Foundation and its impact on the surrounding communities.

"We anticipate distributing an average of \$1 million in grants annually," she said. "In order to be good stewards of

this amazing opportunity, we will seek out community non-profits that exemplify best practices in the areas of health and wellness. Our goal will be unparalleled health for the residents of our service area. Ideally, we'd like visitors to ask, 'How can we duplicate this?' And we'd like journalists and bloggers to write stories about the way our communities are leading a national trend toward improved health."

Currently, the CWF Board of Directors is conducting careful research on measurements of community health and establishing the necessary business practices, policies and systems to begin funding selected grant applications. The Foundation intends to keep the public fully informed and will issue regular updates on progress and funding plans.

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