



**OAKLEAF MEDICAL NETWORK MOVES FORWARD TO CREATE
INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY HOSPITAL IN CHIPPEWA VALLEY**

-Hires Expert Mike Sanders To Lead Planning Effort-

EAU CLAIRE, WI – February 9, 2024 – OakLeaf Medical Network, the largest independent physician association in Western Wisconsin caring for over 30,000 primary care patients, today announced that it has hired Mike Sanders, a nationally respected healthcare executive, to lead the effort to develop a plan to create an independent community hospital in the Chippewa Valley. The network expects to have a detailed short-, medium-, and long-term plan to share in the next three weeks.

“We’ve hired Mike Sanders and the 1100 Partners team to lead this planning effort and bring their incredible expertise, knowledge, and experience, to bear on our community problem,” said Dr. Kyle Dettbarn, Chair, OakLeaf Medical Network. “We are dedicated to doing everything we can to help serve the very real and critical healthcare needs of our region.”

Sanders is well known throughout Wisconsin for his efforts at Monroe Clinic and SSM Health Monroe, an award-winning integrated health system in Monroe, WI.

Community, business, and physician support has been overwhelming since the OakLeaf Medical Network [announced](#) its intention to create an independent community hospital on February 1, 2024, in response to HSHS’s plan to close both Sacred Heart (Eau Claire) and St. Joseph’s (Chippewa Falls) by April 21, 2024.

HSHS has not responded beyond acknowledging it has received OakLeaf Medical Network’s request to open negotiations to purchase the hospital and Prevea clinic facilities. In fact, HSHS attorneys from O’Neil, Cannon, Hollman, DeJong & Laing S.C. indicated that they did not know if HSHS would respond to OakLeaf Medical Network as late as yesterday, February 8, 2024.

“Access to the critical medical services and 100+ hospital beds HSHS has between the two hospitals is urgent for the Chippewa Valley as the other hospitals in the region have stated that they are working at or very near capacity and are not able to absorb the more than 75,000

patients cared for by Prevea and OakLeaf Medical Network physicians across Western Wisconsin,” said Dr. Dettbarn.

OakLeaf Medical Network physicians, along with healthcare providers, community and business leaders, as well as elected and appointed officials across the region, have urged HSHS to keep the hospitals open and offering its critical medical services at the levels in place before the closure announcement while a short-term bridge plan can be put in place with local partners – to no avail. This despite OakLeaf Medical Network’s long history of providing critical physician support to both Sacred Heart and St. Joseph’s for over 30 years, including:

- In 1993, when Midelfort Clinic was acquired by Mayo Health System, OakLeaf Medical Network physicians were the only physicians providing medical services at Sacred Heart and St. Joseph’s hospitals, and the Network offered to enter into a partnership at that time;
- In 2018, when Marshfield Clinic removed its physicians from HSHS to staff its new hospital, OakLeaf Medical Network physicians stepped in and assumed care for most patients at both hospitals. In addition, network physicians recruited new physicians to the hospitals and created the needed hospitalist program and provided ICU and cardiology services for both Sacred Heart and St. Joseph’s hospitals; and
- In 2023, OakLeaf Medical Network approached HSHS to discuss a productive partnership; HSHS declined to engage in discussions with the Network at that time.

OakLeaf Medical Network clinics and physicians remain willing to come to the table with HSHS in good faith to ensure HSHS can exit the region gracefully without putting patients’ care and health at risk.

“We hope we can work with HSHS to keep the doors open and the critical medical services and programs patients across the region need going. At the same time, we can’t wait to get the HSHS information that would expedite developing a short, medium, and long-term plan for an independent community hospital, which we believe will be a large part of the solution to this urgent problem,” said Dettbarn.

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Earlier today, Chippewa Valley Orthopedics and Sports Medicine (CVOSM) [filed](#) a lawsuit seeking an injunction against HSHS to keep Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's hospitals open and serving patients at the same level that existed prior to the closure announcement at least July 21, 2024. CVOSM is a long-standing member of OakLeaf Medical Network and has provided orthopedic surgical and orthopedic trauma services to patients at Emergency Departments at both Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's.

About OakLeaf Medical Network

OakLeaf Medical Network, comprised exclusively of independent clinics, is the largest independent physician association in Western Wisconsin, with over 300 medical providers (125 physicians) with 40 specialties working across 26 clinics in 15 counties. Over 30,000 primary care patients are served by OakLeaf Medical Network providers. Originally founded in 1994 by a local group of physicians committed to preserving the unique values of independent medical practices including personal care, continuity of care, and easier access to care, as a "clinic without walls," the organization has evolved and grown over time.

Today the clinics under the OakLeaf Medical Network include, OakLeaf Clinics (founded in 2015) with its six divisions, Buffalo River Clinic, Chippewa Valley Anesthesia Associates, Chippewa Valley Eye Clinic, Chippewa Valley Eye Clinic Chippewa Falls, Chippewa Valley Neurosciences, Chippewa Valley Orthopedics & Sports Medicine, Confluence Healthcare, DeFatta ENT & Facial Plastic Surgery, Diagnostic Radiology Associates, Eau Claire G.I. Associates, Evergreen Surgical, Foot and Ankle Clinic, Hesse Foot & Ankle Clinic, Interventional Pain Specialists of Wisconsin, Medical X-Ray Consultants, Merrick Plastic & Hand Surgery, Northwest Radiation Oncology Associates, Nystrom & Associates, Pathology, SC, Plastic Surgery Clinic of Eau Claire, Sunrise Family Care Clinic, Thomas Peller, MD, Western Wisconsin Urology, Winding Rivers Counseling, and Wisconsin Brain & Spine Center.

OakLeaf Medical Network clinics are in the following counties: Barron, Buffalo, Burnett, Chippewa, Clark, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, Pepin, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, St. Croix, Trempealeau, and Washburn.

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About 1100 Partners

The 1100 Partners team has a track record of documented success – Top 100 Hospital recognition, Leapfrog “A” results, Medicare Five Star rating, outstanding medical staff and employee engagement, and strong financial results. The 1100 Partners team knows strategy, process improvement, engagement, and what it takes to build strong medical staff, employee, and community partnerships that result in exceptional healthcare.

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