

## **CHIPPEWA VALLEY HEALTH COOPERATIVE TAKES NEXT STEPS TO BUILD NONPROFIT INDEPENDENT COMMUNITY HOSPITAL**

*Also Working to Fast Track Additional Services to Fill Other Healthcare Gaps  
Created By HSHS/Prevea Exit from Western Wisconsin*

EAU CLAIRE, WI – May 22, 2024 – After significant research, community input, and planning assessments, the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative (CVHC) has taken significant next steps towards building an independent nonprofit community hospital in the Chippewa Valley to help close the significant healthcare gaps left by HSHS and Prevea’s exit from Western Wisconsin.

Since the Cooperative was founded on February 29, 2024, as an independently governed, locally rooted organization committed to making high-quality healthcare accessible and affordable in the Chippewa Valley, the organizing board has moved quickly to fully understand the critical healthcare needs in the region. In addition, the Cooperative has created the organization structures and developed an operational plan to build an independent community hospital with an emergency department as well as other critical healthcare services the region needs to help the community thrive.

“It’s crystal clear that the Chippewa Valley needs a non-profit independent hospital governed by people from the local area to provide additional critical healthcare services, hospital beds, and emergency room access to our community,” said Robert “Bob” Krause, Chair of the Board of Organizers for the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative. “We must have a modern, innovative hospital accountable to the people of the Chippewa Valley, not management teams outside of the region, to make a lasting, positive impact on our community’s health and well-being for generations to come.”

### Plans for the New Hospital

CVHC’s new independent community hospital will have 60-70 beds with an Emergency Room, will be a 501c3 nonprofit organization, locally governed and managed by a local Board of Directors elected by local community members of the cooperative. Community-based, the Cooperative’s new hospital will be cost-effective for local employers, will be open to all qualified physicians in the region, and will accept all government payors, including Medicare and

## Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative Moving Forward to Build Nonprofit Hospital

Medicaid. The Cooperative is exploring the feasibility of a wide range of services to be a part of the new hospital, including cancer care, cardiology, labor and delivery, surgery, radiology, lab, and behavioral health.

“We have talked with many employers in the region about their significant concerns about rising healthcare costs and lowered access to hospital services for their employees with the HSHS closings,” added Krause. “To remain a growing area for business and industry, the Chippewa Valley region must have additional, exceptional healthcare services, emergency room capacity, and hospital beds.”

Importantly, the Cooperative has the commitment from the over 125 independent physicians of the OakLeaf Medical Network’s 27 clinics, which collectively have more than 380 providers, to serve as the medical staff for the hospital. This will allow the new hospital to provide high-quality health care services without the challenges of recruiting new physicians to the area.

“A new modern hospital building is half the equation we need to provide the high-quality health care the community needs,” said Mike Sanders, Managing Partner of 1100 Partners, lead Cooperative hospital and healthcare advisor. “We’re in the extraordinary position of already having the excellent physicians we will need to provide great care for our patients already in place.”

The Board of Organizers is evaluating several locations for the new community hospital campus in Eau Claire and Chippewa counties and seeks to confirm its new campus location by August. Local architect River Valley Architects is working with the Cooperative and has already provided initial concept plans for the hospital.

In addition to planning to build a new community hospital, the Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative has fast tracked planning for additional critical services the region needs as soon as possible including establishing freestanding Cancer and Cardiology Centers.

“While we build the new hospital, the Cooperative will also establish other healthcare services to address our community’s needs,” added Krause.

### Need For Additional Nonprofit Hospital

According to data from the Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center, before HSHS closed Sacred Heart Hospital in Eau Claire and St. Joseph’s Hospital in Chippewa Falls, these two hospitals combined provided 42 percent of the inpatient hospital stays (an average of about 125 patients daily), 32 percent of the emergency room visits (22,000 ER visits) and 35 percent

of the newborn deliveries in the region. The overwhelming majority of patients at Sacred Heart and St. Joseph's were patients of the independent physicians in the Chippewa Valley, as well as patients referred from rural access hospitals and clinics and other independent physicians throughout Northwestern Wisconsin.

While Mayo Clinic Health System Eau Claire and Marshfield Medical Center - Eau Claire have made efforts to increase their overall capacity, neither hospital is able to absorb the demonstrated need for critical health care services in the region.

"It's been less than two months since Sacred Heart closed its Emergency Department, and the other ERs in the area are overwhelmed, and many people are traveling far out of the area to get the critical care they need," added Mike Sanders, lead Cooperative hospital and healthcare advisor. "It's clear that the Chippewa Valley requires an additional ER and hospital capacity for the people in the region to receive the care they need."

While the need for additional ER capacity has been talked about widely since HSHS closed their doors, the needs for more inpatient hospital beds, Labor & Delivery beds, an additional Cancer Center, Cardiac services, and a Critical Care Unit are equally as critical for the region.

"The Chippewa Valley grew past the capacity of the healthcare facilities we had before HSHS closed," said Krause. "Building new, independent facilities for critical health services is important for the vitality of the region."

### Independent Community Hospitals

Community hospitals serving the full range of patients in their communities are doing well across Wisconsin and nationally. There are approximately 1,500 independent hospitals in the United States.

"Well run community hospitals are built to serve the needs of their region and partner with qualified physicians to provide amazing care while operating sustainably," said Sanders. "We are doing long-term planning for exceptional facilities and services that reflect current and projected needs in our growing region."

Community members in the 15-county Chippewa Valley region and physicians licensed to practice medicine in Wisconsin will be able to join the Cooperative for a one-time fee of \$25 and \$100 respectively in June. People can sign up to receive updates from the Cooperative [here](#).

## **About the Cooperative**

The Chippewa Valley Health Cooperative is an independently governed, locally rooted organization committed to making high-quality healthcare accessible and affordable for the residents of the 15 counties in Wisconsin's Chippewa Valley region. Focused on patient-centered care, prevention, and education, the Cooperative strives to make a lasting, positive impact on the Chippewa Valley's health and well-being for generations to come. Formed on February 29, 2024, the Cooperative is a Wisconsin Chapter 193 cooperative, which expects to receive 501c3 tax-exempt determination from the IRS. More information at [www.chippewavalleyhealthcooperative.org](http://www.chippewavalleyhealthcooperative.org).

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