

OPINION

OUR VIEW

Sooner than later

We believe members of the Rainy Lake Medical Center Board when they say their actions are guided by a desire to provide the best medical care possible to members of this community and the people who visit.

But we believe the possibility to provide an array of improved care services in this community is by integrating the systems with Essentia Health.

We're disappointed talks toward that end are unwinding. While both sides of the issue say the timing wasn't right and the future may bring other opportunities to consider integration, we say sooner is better.

We understand the \$11 million now held by the local hospital is a lot of money and offers many opportunities. But money can be eaten up quickly by maintaining an aging facility and an increasingly complex reimbursement system with quickly changing requirements and regulations.

And we're worried keeping pace will leave no money for improvements. As an example, consider the costs associated with meeting current and anticipated future regulations in the rehabilitation and renovation of the community's sewer treatment facility.

We understand a desire to maintain local control. But whether considered Falls Memorial Hospital trustees or Essentia-appointed members, most of the members of this Rainy Lake Medical Center Board are closely tied to this community. The 14-member board is made up of seven people appointed by Essentia, five of which are members of the Borderland community:

chairman Charles Helleloid, Brad Reiners, Anthony Stone, Jeff Hardwig and Billy Dougherty. The other two Essentia members may be appointed from outside the community.

Members, as of April, representing the former Falls Memorial Hospital Board are vice president Susan Congrave, Bob Anderson, Bonnie Erickson, Don Billig, Jay Knaack, Jon Talsness and a vacant position formerly held by Gail Rognerud. Confidentiality agreements have made it difficult for individual board members to speak clearly on the issues surrounding negotiations on integration.

But the local element could have retained control of a valuable resource we believe would have multiple and increasing benefits with integration.

We understand there may have been disappointments in the relationship toward integration. But with more discussion, perhaps those troubles could have been overcome.

Clearly, the needs of this community involve more local specialists — visiting or otherwise, financial stability at the hospital and clinic, and more local services. These are the things that make all ages of residents and visitors comfortable, and potential employers and residents, including retirees, look closely and seriously at our community.

Local members of the hospital board were right to move slowly and carefully toward integration with Essentia, but we believe it was a move in the right direction. We urge both sides to consider coming back to the table in an effort toward compromise in the best interests of this community.



Support area United Way: ODC is depending on it

At Occupational Development Center (ODC), we provide employment services and transportation to adults with developmental disabilities, physical disabilities or mental illness.

Funding ODC receives from United Way of Northeastern Minnesota (UWNEMN) allows us to employ individuals who may have a disability but do not qualify for state or federal funding support. These individuals have chronic barriers to employment and are unable to maintain part-time jobs in a traditional setting. Without funding from United Way, ODC would eventually be unable to serve individuals with disabilities who do not have a supportive funding source.

United Way provides funds for organizations that offer services to the most vulnerable people in our county. There is no other organization that does it better than or as cost effectively as United Way. I personally donate to the United Way and feel good knowing that they will make good use of the money and that it will stay in my community. I encourage you to join me in this effort and donate to the United Way because they fund the services



Jenell FELLER
 GUEST COMMENTARY

LIVE UNITED



United Way of Northeastern MN

neighbor the key to your house.

No matter how you look the situation at Boise, our town of 6,000 lost more than 200 jobs and they won't be replaced quickly. We will see an increased need for social services as families struggle to pay bills during the winter months. More families will be using the food shelf. As stress levels increase, you will see more calls to law enforcement. Problems due to addiction also tend to increase during economically stressful times. The fabric of our community will be stretched under this pressure and strain for several years. During these hard times, we need to unite in order to help our children, elderly, vulnerable citizens and all impacted. United Way is the vehicle to make this support possible for our communities.

will be used to offset the cost of a geothermal heating and cooling system that was recently installed in the club. This system is green, efficient and cost-effective and will help ensure the viability of both clubs in the future.

When we won the online vote, we knew that we had a ton of work ahead of us. But the community really came through and made organizing this event as easy as it could have possibly been. Everywhere we turned we found people asking what they could do to help. Not only did we have a ton of volunteers, but the local business community really stepped up to help us out, and our media partners were instrumental in our success. We could not have accomplished this without the support of our entire community on both sides of the border.

Not only did we get the most

votes of any community in Canada, the crowd on hand at the marina was among the biggest and loudest of the 50 communities who have hosted this event over its five year history. TSN, Kraft, and the entire crew were incredibly impressed with our community spirit. Those who came out to the marina on Sunday showed TSN, Kraft, and the rest of Canada what a fantastic community we live in. Standing on stage during the check presentation, we could not see where the crowd ended. I'd also like to acknowledge the contributions of our wonderful volunteers over the past few months, especially those who came out Saturday and Sunday to help us out in the extreme heat.

We could not have done this without you.

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